Cortex and LaunchCode announce new tech talent initiative for St. Louis’s growing geospatial industry

ST. LOUIS - Innovation nonprofits LaunchCode and Cortex Innovation Community have announced a partnership to meet a critical need for specialized technology talent in the national security and geospatial industries in the St. Louis region. LaunchCode and Cortex will pilot a program to train veterans with a high-level national security clearance for in-demand technical roles, providing an infusion of talent to foster local growth of geospatial firms.

Sam Fiorello, Cortex President and CEO, says, “As our region continues to build upon its global strengths in the geospatial and national security industries, we must ensure that employers can find the talent that they need to be successful. Cortex is very proud to partner with LaunchCode on this critically important talent development offering for our region.”

The project will address a combination of challenges. One is the relatively small pool of skilled candidates with active national security clearances. Because it can take as long as three years to gain this level of clearance, putting already-skilled candidates through the clearance process is a long and costly solution for employers. The second challenge is that veterans with active clearances required for these roles often lack the necessary technical skills and will experience other barriers to transitioning into the civilian workforce. Through a program that directly matches companies with transitioning veterans who have already obtained the necessary security clearances and quickly training those veterans in the exact skill set needed, LaunchCode and Cortex will create a pipeline of local cleared talent companies need to grow and thrive.

“The STL 2030 Jobs Plan calls for inclusive growth, sector focus, and increased collaboration. Cortex and LaunchCode are embracing that approach with this project,” said Jeff Mazur, LaunchCode Executive Director. “We’re solving a specific but important problem by cultivating
talented people with the hard-to-find qualifications companies need. At the same time, we are breaking down barriers and providing pathways into geospatial careers for veterans.”

“The criticality of coding in support of our national security objectives has never been greater. Quite simply, we are in a race -- and we need bright, new talent on our team. This innovative training program is just the jump-start we need,” said Robert Cardillo, former director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

The initiative is already supported by a generous $250,000 grant from the Berges Family Foundation, which will fund the delivery of two initial cohorts of a full-time program for transitioning veterans. Through their partnership agreement, Cortex and LaunchCode have committed to fundraise jointly for the additional necessary program costs related to development and refinement of cutting-edge curriculum.

Employers and leaders in need of cleared technology talent and interested in hiring graduates from the pilot program are encouraged to visit and sign up for more information at solutions.launchcode.org/cortex.

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The Cortex Innovation Community is a catalyst for innovation that brings together big-thinking problem solvers with state-of-the-art resources, facilities, and innovative programming to inspire and drive collaboration.

LaunchCode is a national nonprofit creating economic opportunity by adding new talent to tech ecosystems across the nation through free, accessible tech training and apprenticeship and job placement.