

ENGAGING RHODE ISLAND'S HISPANIC-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP WEB PRESENCE THROUGH THE WIX WEB-DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

PROVIDENCE - **The Rhode Island-Israel Collaborative (RIIC)** and the **Rhode Island Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** have partnered with tech company **Wix (NASDAQ: WIX)** to engage Rhode Island's Hispanic-owned small businesses in developing their web presence through the Wix web-development platform. The program will provide local students with in-demand job skills, which will then be put to use in building those small businesses' web presence. RIIC CEO Avi Nevel said, **"We at the Rhode Island-Israel Collaborative consider it an honor to initiate collaboration between our partners in Israel and Rhode Island, particularly for the benefit of Rhode Island's Hispanic community."**

At launch, the program will recruit 50 Hispanic students from local universities. Selected students, who will be fluent in both Spanish and English, will learn the fundamentals of the Wix website-creation platform. After training, each of these students will be partnered with a local Hispanic-owned business that lacks a web presence. This opportunity will allow students to learn and put their new skills to use for their partner businesses. In time, the program's organizers hope to expand cohorts to reach all of Rhode Island's communities.

A new web presence will allow participating businesses to expand their reach in the market, attracting potential new clients and expanding their sales activity – a critical asset in the time of COVID-19. Oscar Mejias, president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, explained, **"In Rhode Island, COVID-19 has had a huge negative impact on the Latino community. New technologies have become so crucial to business success, and that is the importance of this project – it will allow 50 Hispanic businesses, and the people that own them, to thrive and continue contributing to Rhode Island's economy."**

Thanks to generous contributions from Wix, participating businesses will have no startup costs; the company will also provide each business with a free, one-year business premium plan and access to the Wix learning center.

The sentiment was echoed by Dror Shaked, Senior VP Business Development at Wix.com **"Today, more than ever, being online is crucial for small business survival. It is one of the only ways businesses can navigate the ever-evolving technological landscape of our world." Small businesses are crucial to our local communities and our overall economy, and we don't want to lose them over something as simple as having a better online presence. Helping small businesses take the first step can go a long way. Additionally, we are providing students with skills and real-life work experience that will make them more hireable to future employers, something that is vital, given the current unstable job market that they'll soon be entering. We want to do whatever we can to ensure that these communities not only survive the pandemic but prosper."**

The Consulate General of Israel to New England has also agreed to contribute funds to assist in running the program and prize money for the students. Consul General Zeev Boker said, **"We are proud to support and help fund this venture, which will bring Israeli digital innovation to empower local Hispanic small businesses and give Hispanic college students the opportunity to sharpen their entrepreneurship skills."**

The program will start in the next few weeks and will last during the academic year “2020 – 2021”

For more information about sponsorships and partnering opportunities and universities who would like to have their student involved are encouraged to contact **Avi Nevel** at info@theriic.org , or **Oscar Mejias** at info@rihispanicchamber.org .



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to New England
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