

2023 Annual ICIC Conference

*Reflecting on Shared Experiences,
Reuniting for Community Empowerment,
& Renewing Our Commitment to Helping
Small Businesses Thrive*

MIAMI, FL, USA, December 22, 2023
/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Initiative for
a Competitive Inner City (ICIC)

successfully hosted its 2023 Annual Conference, themed "Reflect, Reunite, Renew," from December 11-12 in Miami, Florida. Presenting sponsor Santander US, and a group of other prominent corporations and institutions, enabled ICIC to host its first in-person gathering since 2019, drawing an engaged audience of approximately 650 attendees.



Bringing together a diverse community of small business owners, thought leaders, and corporate stakeholders from across the United States and Canada, the conference aimed to reinforce growth strategies and build strong communities. The event provided a platform for fostering meaningful connections among entrepreneurs and business leaders, emphasizing the power of collaboration and shared experiences.

The welcome reception held at Cervceria La Tropical set the stage for the conference, featuring opening remarks from William Porro, Assistant Director for the Office of Innovation & Economic Development for Miami-Dade County; Christina DeLay, Head of Small Business & Corporate Social Responsibility at Santander US; and Steve Grossman, CEO of ICIC. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and anticipation as attendees embraced the opportunity to reconnect with peers and establish new connections.

The full-day conference the next day at the Hyatt Regency Miami showcased engaging and heartfelt speakers who shared insights and experiences to inspire and empower the audience. Keynote addresses from Santander's Christina DeLay; Alberto Perlman, CEO and co-founder of Zumba Fitness, LCC; Ingrid Hoffmann, TV Personality, Author, and Host of Simply Delicioso; and several ICIC alumni speakers, including TJ Douglas, founder and CEO of Drink Progressively Group; Amber Lawson, Principal of Aspire Construction & Design; and Brittany Raji Alberty, Founder of The Marketing Midwife, left a lasting impact on conference participants. Panel sessions also featured valuable contributions from community partners, including the City of Baltimore Small Business Resource Center, Florida State Minority Supplier Development Council,

Georgia Minority Business Development Agency Business Center, LISC, and Small Business Majority.

The day's activities included a dynamic "Shark Tank"-Style Pitch Competition, featuring pitches from alumni of ICIC programming, demonstrating the innovative ideas emerging from under-resourced communities. The Business Growth Marketplace provided a platform for ICIC alumni businesses, ecosystem partners, and conference sponsors to showcase their products and services, fostering collaboration and business opportunities.

The Closing Ceremony highlighted the presentation of the Inner City 100 Awards, recognizing the 100 fastest-growing businesses in underserved communities across the U.S. for the 25th year. This momentous occasion underscored the resilience and success of small businesses driving economic growth in challenging environments.

Santander US, the principal and presenting sponsor, held a food-based entrepreneur breakout track as well as the graduation of the Fall 2023 cohort of the Cultivate Small Business program. The ceremony featured remarks from Babson College instructors, Christina DeLay, Head of Small Businesses & Corporate Social Responsibility at Santander US, and the live announcement of \$300,000 in capital grant awards to the graduating class. The program, fully funded by Santander US, has been instrumental in providing mentorship, coaching, and capital grants to 180 food-based entrepreneurs annually in major markets this year. Since its inception, Cultivate Small Business has reached over 500 entrepreneurs.

Additional sponsors, including Chevron, FedEx, Edward Jones, Bank of America, Regions Bank, Bain Capital, Boston Consulting Group, Appleton Partners, Arctaris Impact Investors, and Salesforce, played crucial roles in making the conference a success.

Steve Grossman, CEO of ICIC, remarked, "Through the power of connection, the 2023 Annual Conference was a resounding success, embodying our unwavering commitment to drive economic growth and create opportunities for small businesses in under-resourced communities. This gathering serves as a testament to the transformative impact that collaboration, diverse voices, and innovative ideas can have on accelerating entrepreneurship. The connections forged here are strong, unbreakable ties that weave the fabric of a thriving and resilient small business community."

Reflecting on the conference, Christina DeLay of Santander US added, "Santander is proud to be a part of this transformative experience, actively supporting bold, imaginative leaders from diverse communities who advance inclusive economic prosperity. Our commitment goes beyond financial assistance; it's about building communities where businesses thrive, dreams come to life, and entrepreneurs get the practical support they need to make a lasting impact."

[About ICIC](#)

Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) is the widely-recognized authority on accelerating

small business growth in under-resourced communities. Founded by renowned Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter in 1994 as a research and strategy organization, today ICIC drives inclusive economic prosperity in underserved communities through innovative research and programs to create jobs, income, and wealth for local residents.

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