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ATLANTA

# Building Economic Bridges: Connecting with the Caribbean at Islandpreneur Power Fest 2024

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The Mayor's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs (MOIIA) is no stranger to the Islandpreneur Power Fest. The relationship began in 2023 when the CEO of Islandpreneur, Ife Badejo, brought the winners of the Sint Maarten National Youth Pitch Competition to Atlanta, where MOIIA staff connected them with Atlanta-based institutions to help expand their initiatives. As a result of this visit, Badejo invited MOIIA to attend future Islandpreneur events to connect with Caribbean entrepreneurs.

This year, MOIIA's Nick Mulkey, Ecosystem and Experience Architect, was able to attend the 2024 Islandpreneur Power Fest, held from June 27th-29th in Sint Maarten.

Islandpreneur Power Fest is a collaboration between Islandpreneur and the U.S. State Department's Mission to the Dutch Caribbean designed to empower women business owners from both the Dutch Caribbean and the United States and to enhance women's access to skills and networks that are vital to entrepreneurship.

The primary objective of the visit, Nick says, was to promote Atlanta as a place to do business regionally.

One of Mayor Andre Dickens's goals for his tenure is to turn Atlanta into one of the top five startup hubs in the nation.

To achieve this, Atlanta must tap into other entrepreneurial hubs internationally. The Caribbean has been a target for mutual expansion due to its increasing talent pool, expanding digital scene, and opportunities for innovative tech solutions.

By going global, the City can position Atlanta as a place to expand businesses, creating what Nick refers to as “economic bridges,” which hold opportunities to benefit both the City of Atlanta and entrepreneurs abroad.

Accompanying Nick on this mission were representatives from Atlanta Tech Village, one of Atlanta’s premier tech startup hubs, Venture Atlanta, the leading venture capital expo of the city, and the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurship (RICE), the distinguished business accelerator for black-owned businesses in the country.

In addition to the existing network of resources for new businesses, Atlanta is considered one of the fastest growing areas for entrepreneurs. In 2024, Home Bay ranked Atlanta as the top city to start a business, and the state of Georgia has been consistently ranked as the top state to do business for the past ten years in a row. Atlanta also remains a hub for Black-owned businesses and ranks as one of the most educated cities in the entire United States, behind only to Arlington, Virginia.

The mission also allowed MOIIA and its partners to continue exemplifying Atlanta as a global city and introduce entrepreneurs from the Caribbean to a market they may not have considered. As Atlanta’s international presence continues to grow, and especially as the 2026 World Cup comes to Atlanta, the City must continue to spur interest in Atlanta as a top destination for business, travel, and lifestyle.

In addition to connecting Atlanta to established entrepreneurs in the Caribbean, MOIIA is also committed to youth success. After a beneficial visit to Islandpreneur Power Fest, Nick welcomed the winners of the 2024 National Youth Pitch Competition at Atlanta City Hall, creating a full circle moment from MOIIA’s first introduction to the initiative in 2023.

As the collaboration between Atlanta and the Caribbean deepens, the mission to Islandpreneur Power Fest 2024 highlights a future of mutual growth and opportunity. By building economic bridges and connecting entrepreneurs from both regions, Atlanta is solidifying its goals for expanding as an entrepreneurial hub. This mission supported the City's ambition to become a top startup destination and Atlanta's commitment to fostering global partnerships, showcasing its vibrant business ecosystem that will continue to attract attention as a premier destination for innovation and technology. ♦

