

Denver lacking as hub for immigrant entrepreneurs

The Denver Business Journal - 5:30 PM MDT Monday, June 11, 2007

Denver hasn't become a hub for immigrants starting engineering and technology companies, according to the results of a survey released Monday.

The survey was done by the Duke School of Engineering and the University of California, Berkeley, School of Information and funded in part by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

Researchers surveyed 1,572 companies in 11 of the leading tech centers in the United States to find out if a key founder was foreign-born. The tech hubs were in Denver, Chicago, Austin, Boston, New York, Portland, Ore., Research Triangle Park, N.C., San Diego, Seattle, Silicon Valley and Washington, D.C.

Denver ranked third for the tech centers with the lowest rate of companies founded by immigrants, at 19.4 percent. Portland, Ore., had the lowest rate, at 17.8 percent, followed by Research Triangle Park at 18.7 percent.

The most, at 52.4 percent, were in Silicon Valley.

The survey revealed a national average of 25.3 percent of tech startups were founded by immigrants, compared to 31 percent of companies emerging in the tech hubs studied.

The authors of the study found startups in major tech centers "usually have a higher concentration of immigrant-founded startups than their state average. These data underscore the importance of localized clusters of technology and engineering activity in both attracting and supporting immigrant startup activity."

But Denver and San Diego, where 31.6 percent of the companies studied were founded by immigrants, were called notable exceptions.

"In both centers, a significant proportion of the technology and engineering activity is related to military activities, from which immigrants are often excluded," according to the study.