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Cintrifuse and Indy's Powderkeg Partner to 'Take on Coastal Tech Ecosystems'

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Photo Credit: Cintrifuse

By Courtney Gabrielson

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Cintrifuse and Indianapolis-based innovation community [Powderkeg](#) have announced a partnership aimed at helping the Midwest "take on coastal tech ecosystems," the two entities announced Thursday.

The move will connect the network of the 15,000 tech entrepreneurs across the country within the Powderkeg network with those within Cintrifuse's Greater Cincinnati-based members.

"The impetus for us was to see two great tech communities in the Midwest doing amazing things individually," Matt Hunckler, founder and CEO of Powderkeg, told Cincy Inno. He added that the partnership will unite the momentum of these cities together and "amplify their entrepreneurs."

Hunckler added that the partnership will help each geographic area strengthen its startup ecosystems' weaknesses. He cited his organization's [Indianapolis Tech Census Report](#), which found that "50 percent of tech leader respondents said they struggled to raise capital in the state of Indiana."

The partnership will allow the two entities to share the perks of each others' memberships with each others' members at a discount. A press release on the move gave specifics: "Cintrifuse members will receive a discount to Powderkeg Founder Membership, the community-as-a-service platform, and Powderkeg Founder Members now have a Cintrifuse

membership with benefits including venture investor curation, 1:1 funding advice and connections with potential customers," it reads.

For participating members, these shared amenities are "really plugging them into the Cincy startup and national network," Hunckler said. "It's sorta like 1+1=3 when you start [partnerships like that]."

"What we're doing here is what Silicon Valley and New York City do really really well," Hunckler continued. "They have an amazing density of resources. Their density comes from geographic [closeness]. We're never going to have that in Indianapolis. ... But what we can have is digital density. Our focus is to bring these resources into one network to better connect entrepreneurs with one another, with entrepreneurs in the network, talent in the network, customers in the network."

The technological moment helps make now a perfect time of a partnership like this. "One of the niche concepts behind what we're doing is the idea of community as a service," he said. "Technology is a big part of this story. Things that we have available now, we didn't have five-10 years ago, [like] better connected networks and the tech to better connect them."

Wendy Lea, CEO of Cintrifuse, told Cincy Inno that the unification of nearby startup communities through partnerships like this will prove a significant boon for the Midwest.

"It's cool that Cincinnati has [a startup community], and Columbus has one and Indianapolis has one. It's cool in its own right, it's really significant," she said. However, when "these connected points share a network, it puts more shots on goal. That's really what startups need."

She added that "good business is about good relationships," and "having a platform that expands across geography is match made in heaven."

"I'm so excited. It's almost like my fantasy is coming true in front of my eyes," Lea continued. "I think startup communities' business is becoming serious business, relative to economic development in the Midwest. This is not a toy anymore ... it's time for this region of the Midwest to giddy up and pull all these piece-parts together."

This partnership does that. "All we've done here is took the vision, the assets and put them to work and just activated them," Lea said. Cintrifuse and Powderkeg have "all been doing work on different piece-parts, [but] our hearts are with the same core customer, who are taking a risk to start something, that will likely need risk capital, venture capital to grow."

Working together doesn't just make sense for entrepreneurs. "I'm really proud to be Matt's partner," Lea added. "He's bright, he's ambitious, he really understands how things roll in the Midwest. What he's building will be essential and strategic to scaling communities like Cintrifuse and StartupCincy."

The two organizations will have events celebrating the union in April and May. On April 25, Powderkeg will host an [Indianapolis Pitch Night](#) with Eric Weissmann, vice president at Cintrifuse, at The Hi-Fi Indy. On May 17 at Union Hall, Cintrifuse will host Fuse50 Cincinnati, a one-day conference.

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