

A dramatic desert landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of deep purple, blue, and orange. Several bright, jagged lightning bolts streak across the upper half of the frame. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of saguaro cacti are prominent, with one large cactus on the left and several smaller ones scattered across the scene. The overall mood is intense and atmospheric.

2020-2021 PILOT PROGRAM

REMOTE TUCSON REPORT

STARTUP
TUCSON

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As an economic development organization, part of Startup Tucson's mission to contribute to the positioning of Tucson as a city that is nationally known as a great place to work, play, and live. Launched in November 2020, Remote Tucson was a coordinated community initiative to entice talented individuals who were currently employed in high-paying remote work positions to permanently relocate to Tucson while continuing to work remotely for those same employers, therefore stimulating our local economy.

Through a comprehensive platform, remote workers discovered the attractiveness of Tucson as a new home. The Pilot used a powerful communications strategy and platform that showcased the attributes of the Tucson community. Selected participants were offered a cultivated list of perks and incentives to make the choice to relocate to Tucson and their arrival in our city seamless. The impact of the initial pilot exceeded expectations, garnering international and national attention, hundreds of applications and most importantly, resulting in the relocation of 10 amazing new professionals and their families to our Tucson community.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

After researching similar programs around the country and working with our collaborators to define success, Startup Tucson implemented the following program strategy:



Exclusive Benefits & Perks



Relocation Assistance



Get Plugged into Community

Focus on the Candidates that are the Right Fit

- Find individuals that are the right fit for our community and that want to be involved so more likely to stay after the program concludes
- Target folks with pre-existing connections to Tucson (snowball campaign)

Emphasize Creative Incentives

- Focus on emphasizing connections and unique benefits of Tucson, not cash, telling a unique story about Tucson
- All benefits were designed specifically to ease the applicant's relocation experience and make sure they are connected into the Tucson community as quickly as possible.
- Final benefit package included \$7500 in benefits combined of cash, local perks, and connections.

Build Community Partners and Collaboration

- Collaborated with in-kind partners and sponsors to create and expand perk package and share the message
- Used a Snowball Campaign to increase the overall reach of the campaign

Use Effective Engagement

- Included community onboarding as part of our perk package and "soft-landing" strategies involving some of our partners like
 - Ambassadors Committee and direct pairing with TYP member based on compatibility questionnaire to help ensure successful move and transition to Tucson
 - Partner relocation services and real estate connections
- Practicing ongoing engagement for program participants including welcoming them all in-person, group happy hours and events and a group Slack channel.

"Remote Tucson was an especially appealing program because it offers connections into the communities that I want to be involved in...I am currently considering a couple of cities but this program has been the tipping point. It is the community and it is the connections."

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

To assess the success of the pilot program, Startup Tucson focused on the following performance indicators:

- **Applications:** Number of eligible applicants to complete the online application.

- **Marketing Outreach:** Coordinated marketing to secure views, website traffic, social media mentions and shares.
- **Successful Recruitment:** Number of successful relocation within 6 months of acceptance.
- **Program Satisfaction:** Self-reported satisfaction of the program from program participants, generating positive testimonials and reviews
- **Earned Media:** Local, regional, and national earned media covering the program and awareness of Tucson as a whole.
- **Economic Impact in Dollars:** Calculation of economic impact in dollars, including annual travel, supporting local businesses, and housing.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Eligibility

To be considered for the Remote Tucson program, we asked that applicants meet all eligibility requirements:

- Ability to Move to Tucson Within 6 Months of being accepted
- Full-Time Remote Employment Outside Tucson and Pima County
- 18+ Years Old
- Eligible to Work in United States
- Requirement to stay in Tucson for at least a year from move date to collect all perks

Application

All potential applicants were required to complete an online application to be considered for the program. The Application included questions about the applicant's professional and personal life and was designed to try to ensure that candidates selected would be a good long-term fit for Tucson and have a desire to contribute to our community. In total, the application was over 50 questions long.

Recruitment & Marketing

Startup Tucson employed a snowball recruitment strategy to maximize the impact of program support, our partners and attract candidates with a vested interest in Tucson. The marketing strategy included the following components:

- **Start Local, Expand National, Leverage Influencers:** To maximize cost-per-click and program success, our initial marketing strategy was focused on encouraging current residents to "nominate" a friend or family member who wanted to move to Tucson, but would benefit from the additional incentives. This strategy gained local buy-in and improved our chances of a long-term relocation and investment in our community.
- **Earned Media:** Additional emphasis was placed on creating a compelling story that would attract earned media. We worked to engage national media outlets in collaboration with our cross-promotion partners to attract local, regional, and national media.
- **Targeted Marketing:** Working with a group of University of Arizona Marketing Masters Program students, background research was performed on what markets outside of Tucson and specific demographics would be a good fit for our program. Modern social media targeting strategies to focus marketing efforts on these demographics were developed. Limited paid marketing was done to these groups since the success of the snowball campaign was so strong but these campaigns are ready to be used for future rounds of the program.

Perks Package

Our final perk package for participants included the following benefits. In continued support of our local community, 7% of Remote Tucson funds were directly reinvested into the local community by purchasing perks from local artisans, restaurants, and arts organizations.

- \$1,500 in cash for each participant to help support moving expenses
- One-year of GIG internet provided by COX
- Housing support provided by SouthwestUrban and partner career support provided by the Talent Store
- Over three-months of complementary use at Tucson's various coworking locations including La Suprema Works, Common Workplace, Historic Brings Coworking and the Post Workspace
- Complimentary hotel nights at the soon to be completed Hampton Inn/Home 2 Suites by Hilton Downtown Tucson
- Welcome benefits including a local gift basket valued at \$250 that featured local food and goods, a curated night out in downtown Tucson, a Visit Tucson attractions passport, a Pedego Day Pass to explore the city
- Community memberships within Tucson Young Professionals and an art or cultural organization of the applicants choice

In addition to these perks and benefits, all selected applicants were paired with a member of the program's Welcome Committee, led by Tucson Young Professionals, to help them plan for their relocation and arrival in Tucson.

Sponsors & Partners

The pilot of Remote Tucson was truly a collaborative effort of a number of organizations and supporters in Tucson. We are so very grateful to all of our partners and sponsors.



Primary Partners



Additional Partners



PROGRAM RESULTS

Applications & Marketing Reach

The pilot application opened in Winter 2020. In just six weeks, we received over 4,000 visits to the website. From this we received 600 applications from 39 states in the United States, and three international applications. The top states represented were California, Texas, Washington, Illinois and New York.



REASONS FOR INTEREST



COST OF LIVING: 51%



RAISE A FAMILY/QUALITY OF LIFE: 51%



CULTURE AND COMMUNITY: 31%



WEATHER/OUTDOOR LIVING: 31%



FAMILY TIES: 23%

Their reasons for considering Tucson included Cost of Living, Quality of Life, Culture and Community, Outdoor Living and existing family ties.

They came from a variety of industries including:

- Technology
- Engineering
- Telecommunications
- Cybersecurity
- Health Care
- Higher Education
- Venture Capital

Some of the employers represented in the applicant pool included Apple, Reddit, Adept Games, GitHub, Salesforce, CBS Interactive, OCA Ventures, Zillow.

After 6 weeks of the snowball campaign and receiving over 600 applications, Startup Tucson decided to close the application.

Selecting the Cohort

Of the 600+ applications, approximately 200 were what we considered “highly qualified leads” meaning in high-paying permanent remote work positions and in situations that would allow them to relocate to Tucson within the immediate 6 months. Of these qualified



leads, the average household salary was \$128,000. Additionally 59% of them reported an existing connection to Tucson of some kind.

From these applications, we selected a group of 45 to invite to private information sessions on the program and learn more. After the info sessions, all 45 re-opted in as still interested in the program and confirmed their availability to move within the 6-month period required by the program. From these 45, a committee of partners helped select the final 10 participants for the program based on their a) likelihood to become a long-term, engaged community member b) adding a needed subject matter expertise to our community (high tech industry experience), c) diversity in race/ethnicity/gender/family makeup and d) passion for our community and community contribution/volunteerism.

Economic Impact

Our 10 recipients resulted in 22 total individuals moving to Tucson and are employed at Apple, Reddit, Facebook, LinkedIn, Teach For America, Wasserman, Pfizer Inc., Salesforce, Forward Together, Digitas Health and Github among other locations. The combined annual household income of this first cohort is 2.2 Million of outside dollars to Tucson.

2.2 MILLION

Combined Annual Household Salary of First Cohort

In addition to the direct economic impact of their salaries on our local economy, they are also contributing in other ways by:

- Creating increased travel to Tucson by family and friends
- Becoming new volunteers and mentors in our innovation ecosystem
- Donating and getting involved with our local non-profits

Additionally, we have learned that many non-selected applicants have relocated to Tucson anyway. If they have told us about their move, they are still receiving support from TYP and Startup Tucson with relocation assistance, just no perk packages.

National Attention & Press

The Remote Tucson program has received an overwhelming response from the media at the local, regional, national and even international levels. Below includes a list of some of the publications that have featured the program.

- **National Media**
 - [Smarter Travel](#) These U.S. Destinations Will Pay You to Move There
 - [Lonely Planet](#) Would you relocate for \$10,000? These US spots are offering incentives for remote workers
 - [Wall Street Journal](#) How Remote Work is Reshaping America's Urban Geography

- [AXIOS](#): COVID-19 scatters tech hubs for young talent
- [TechRepublic](#): Airbnb and remote talent programs join forces for ultimate relocation deal sweetener
- [New York Times](#): Remote Work's Last Hurrah: 6 Spots to Make Your Summer Office
- [MarketWatch](#): These relocation programs offer unique incentives to inspire your big move
- **Regional and Local Media**
 - [Minnesota Public Radio Marketplace Morning Report](#) Tucson hopes to lure high earners to work remotely from the city
 - [AZCentral](#) Working remotely? Tucson may have a space for you
 - [KOLD13](#) Remote workers given incentives to relocate to Tucson
 - [BizTucson](#) Startup Tucson Aims to Recruit Remote Workers to Tucson
 - [BizTucson](#) Startup Tucson Officially Launches Program, Perks to Lure Remote Workers
 - [Tucson.com](#) Tucson looks to lure out-of-state work-from-home employees with perks
 - [Tucson.com](#) Hundreds apply to relocate to Tucson through incentive program
 - [KGUN9](#) Tucson recruiting remote workers to relocate here
- **International Media**
 - Representatives from publications with viewers in Holland, Switzerland and soon to be France have flown to Tucson to do video stories on the program and its participants. These feature stories were on Dutch public broadcast TV and will be in a Swiss paper and part of a French mini-doc.
- **Economic Development Programs:**
 - In addition to the press, Startup Tucson has also received inquiries from economic development departments across the country on how we built our innovative approach to this program and to study the results of the program.
- **Local Recognition:**
 - Startup Tucson was recognized locally by the Metropolitan Pima Alliance as a finalist in their annual Common Ground Awards for the collaborative nature of the project.
 - Remote Tucson is also included in both the Sun Corridor Pivot Playbook and the Tucson Metro Chamber Workforce Blueprint as a strategy to support in economic development moving forward.
- **National Sponsorship:**
 - AirBnB is a confirmed perk partner for the 2021 cohort!

MEET OUR NEW TUCSONANS

OUR PILOT COHORT



Ahmad, Product Manager (FitBod) and Noor, Sales Productivity Operational Associate

(LinkedIn): Ahmad Taleb was born and raised in Tucson. He played football for the Palo Verde '06 state champ team, and is a generational legacy UArizona family. He is currently a product developer at Apple. His wife Noor works for LinkedIn as a Sales Productivity Operational Associate, and previously for Google, YouTube, and Facebook. She is also a creative entrepreneur in her own right with an Etsy shop with her own creations. They have enjoyed their time in Silicon Valley as a way “to get the knowledge and experience I needed to return home and be a benefit to my community.”

When they are not working, they have been involved in their community as Arabic translators, coaches, and youth leaders. They enjoy the outdoors and love hiking and camping. Ahmad is trained in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. They look forward to having the space and time to build a family and contributing meaningfully to Tucson’s community.

“
My wife and I would be a great fit for the Remote Tucson program because of what Tucson means to us and the importance it holds in our lives. Coming home is more than just packing our bags, it's the opportunity to finally give back to the community that's so important to us.
”

Alex, Account Executive, (Salesforce) and Mari: After spending the last 5+ years in San Francisco, we're looking forward to getting out of our cramped apartment and returning to Tucson, where we both spent time during college. Alex is a San Francisco Bay Area native who enjoys playing/watching sports, drinking good beer, and going to comedy shows. Mari grew up in Hong Kong and came to the United States to attend the University of Arizona. Hong Kong to

Tucson was quite a culture shock, but she obviously enjoyed her time enough that she had a strong desire to move back 10 years later. Mari is half Japanese and interested in finding a Japanese community in Tucson. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, hiking, and travelling. Joining us in Tucson will be our 4 month old puppy, Pepper!

Calder, Vice President, Public Relations and Communications, (Wasserman) and Lisa, Events Manager:

The Hynes family have deep connections to Tucson as they are both Wildcats and Calder grew up in Tucson (“Go Fighting Penguins!”). After years of bouncing from New Orleans, New York City, and now LA--they are looking to put down roots as their family has grown. Both Lisa and Calder are leaders in national entertainment. As an events manager, Lisa has worked on some of the world’s biggest events such as The Super Bowl and the Kentucky Derby. Calder Hynes is currently the head of public relations and communications for sports agency Wasserman, working with world-class athletes such as Megan Rapinoe, Russell

Westbrook, Klay Thompson, Diana Taurasi, Marshawn Lynch, Giancarlo Stanton, and Katie Ledecky. Prior to Wasserman, Calder worked in the public relations departments of a number of professional sports teams – the Los Angeles Lakers, Brooklyn Nets, New Orleans Hornets, and Miami Dolphins. They are both deeply committed to community service, volunteering, and working with underserved communities and community beautification projects. Xander and Harlow keep the family on their toes and are a big reason that the Hynes family is excited to come home to Tucson.

Native Arizonans, we are eager to raise our own family in a similar environment that we experienced growing up, and are looking forward to being closer to the ones we love.

Cameron, Senior Digital Strategy Manager (Pegs): Cameron discovered Tucson because of the UA and excitedly returns to friends he made during his college years. After graduating from the UA with a BA in political science, Cameron did Teach for America and then received a Masters degree from Lipscomb University in Nashville, TN. His wife is a technology director at a Fortune 500 company. Together, they have lived and traveled all over the world and are looking to settle down and invest in a community that is thriving and growing. They have visited Tucson several times and love all the things that it has to offer. They look forward to making the most of the outdoor activities, building websites/other technology, enjoying art, music, and the dining experience famed in Tucson. Cameron and his wife will buy their first house and can’t wait to learn more about the culture in Tucson.

Erika, Senior Marketing Manager, (Pfizer) and Justin (Raytheon): Erika Bean has several degrees in Molecular and Cellular Biology and Cancer Biology, from the University of Arizona. She currently works for Pfizer as a Senior Marketing Manager. As an alumni, Erika has deep connections to Tucson and she is passionate about community service through her work at the Junior League, as a Community Food Bank volunteer, a Youth on Their Own volunteer, and a

Ronald McDonald House volunteer. While she has loved living in New York City, this opportunity from Remote Tucson has helped her decide she would love to return to the Old Pueblo community to pursue her passions for running, hiking, and motorcycling. She will be joined by her husband who works for Raytheon.

Kinsley, Director Research/Evaluation (Teach for America) and Bobby: Kinsley is a “Tucson native who has been dying to come back.” She describes one of her major reasons for wanting to participate in Remote Tucson program as an opportunity to invest “in making an impact in the place where I grew up, and raising my son in a place that has shaped my values for diversity, reverence for community, and hope for a thriving and inclusive community.” She has Masters degrees in Secondary Education and Teaching and in Social Work. She is currently the Director of Research and Evaluation for Teach for America. She is looking forward to introducing her hometown to her son and her husband who will be joining her (and of course their fur baby!).

Nick, VP Group Director Account Planning, Digitas Health: While born and raised in Brooklyn, Nick fell in love with Tucson during his years as a pro cyclist. He is also a self-professed theater fan who is deeply interested in supporting and investing in Tucson’s creative and theater communities. Professionally, Nick has been involved in a number of high profile startups and tech companies as a creative market researcher and CMO. He is an experienced and passionate startup mentor. Remote Tucson was an especially appealing program “because it offers connections into the communities that I want to be involved in...I was considering a couple of cities but this program has been the tipping point. It is the community and it is the connections.”

Niraj (Raj), Senior Software Engineer (Reddit) and Malvika, Creative Producer (Facebook): Raj and Malvika were drawn to Tucson because of Malvika’s love of film-making. After getting her MBA from Wharton, and before joining Facebook, she worked on a film that was filmed at Old Tucson Studios. She fell in love with the city, its culture and its beauty. Growing up in India, the hot Tucson summer felt just like home! The couple moved from San Francisco, both with jobs in the tech sector. Raj, a rebel with a keyboard, works for Reddit and Malvika is a Creative Producer for Facebook. Raj writes. He used to be a journalist with the Wall Street Journal where he thought he would change the world with his writing. Instead his own life was changed forever when he was sent to India as a foreign correspondent. He is always trying to recreate the magic he discovered in India and he feels that Tucson - with its mix of people, authenticity, cultures, geography, heat and the monsoon and even the really spicy food - comes very close. He is currently working on writing a book which he hopes to finish in his lifetime and hopes that at least all of his 12 twitter followers will buy the book. In Tucson, he is excited to eat at every pizza place and meet every Tucsonan. In Tucson, Malvika is excited to get back into Salsa and other Latin dance forms. Professionally, Malvika is a film producer and works at Facebook. She discovered Tucson in 2015 when she came here to shoot a western, at the Old Tucson studios. She spent a month here in August amidst the heat and the monsoon and immediately got reminded of her home, India. She is amazed at the number of local artists and galleries here and cannot wait to meet/see all of them.

Sarah, Senior Program Manager of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (GitHub): Sarah Oyetubo is a Certified Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practitioner and Senior Program Manager of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at GitHub where she leads the diversity, inclusion, and belonging strategy for GitHub's Engineering, Product and Development teams. She lives by the term "ubuntu", the South African philosophy of humanity which translates to "I am because we are." With leadership and influence working for Fortune 500 corporations, Sarah has a proven track record for leading people through transformational change as demonstrated in various strategic and highly visible projects — from the building of a small museum to scaling D&I across an organization. Before joining GitHub, Sarah was at the helm of Bedrock Detroit's first Diversity and Inclusion strategy, a full-service commercial real estate company specializing in the strategic development of urban cores. Sarah also spent five years working for companies such as Dell Technologies/EMC, where she played a pivotal role in the development and execution of strategies, programs, and best practices needed to create inclusive and effective corporate cultures by attracting and retaining diverse workforces. Her initiatives in D&I have reshaped organizational policies and contributed to the unification of multidimensional corporate cultures. Sarah is the proud first-generation American daughter of Jamaican and Nigerian parents. An avid traveler, she addresses groups on what she knows best — diversity and inclusion in the workplace and living a fulfilled life. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Michigan, an avid admirer of underground art scenes, and a DIY enthusiast.

Vivek, IT Manager, (Forward Together), and Kitana, Educational Materials Developer:

Vivek is a self-taught technologist and is passionate about the ways that technology can enhance mission-driven work. The couple has many friends and family members in Tucson, and they felt the time was right to leave San Francisco and build a new life in Tucson. Vivek is an avid musician, and credits the Tucson Parks and Recreation system for helping him to have access to music. He would like to give back to help other children have access to arts education. In his free time he has been teaching himself to build and repair guitars and is looking forward to a little more space to spread out, reconnect with family, and become an active contributor to the Tucson community. Dr. Kitana Ananda is a cultural anthropologist, writer and researcher with a doctorate from Columbia University. She currently works to make educational materials accessible to all children through her work in education. Her husband Vivek, a Tucson native, also works for a nonprofit organization whose mission is to transform culture and policy through a multi-racial community of change-makers that secure rights, recognition and resources for all families.

NEXT STEPS

Continued Engagement

Of our cohort of ten, eight of them have already completed their move to Tucson and the remaining two are working on their final arrangements to relocate. The group is active on Slack channel with the Startup Tucson team and their TYP Ambassadors. They have been interacting with each other and settling into their new lives here in Tucson. Startup Tucson has helped to organize meet-and-greet events and plans to engage them at least quarterly to keep them engaged in Tucson and continue to support their needs.

Round 2

Is Remote Work here to stay? This is the question on everyone's minds as cities start to open after COVID. While the total number of remote workers may change post-pandemic, many individuals in our target demographic are discovering they like remote work and are looking to remain in these types of positions long-term. Since remote workers do not replace current opportunities for local residents, and therefore are net positives for growth and economic development. Startup Tucson believes there will continue to be a talented pool of remote work candidates to pull from and that the program can continue to have a large impact in Tucson.

Startup Tucson plans to run another round of the Remote Tucson program in Fall/Winter of 2021. The goal would be to increase the cohort size to a max of 25 individuals per cohort. This allows perk partners to remain involved and each cohort the ability to get to know each other and form meaningful connections. In scaling the program, we could run multiple cohorts a year but would like to keep the size to 25 or below.

Confirmed partners for Round 2 include the City of Tucson and new national perk partner AirBnB. Additional local perk partners have also already expressed interest in getting involved.

The strategy for Round 2 will be to start by emailing the qualified leads list from Round 1 and asking them to reapply if still interested. It will include a smaller snowball campaign and more targeted marketing campaigns to reach a larger audience.

Support the Program

To reserve your sponsorship spot for our next cohort, email liz@startuptucson.com. Sponsorships range from \$2,500 - \$25,000.

About Startup Tucson

Startup Tucson is a nonprofit working to transform the Southern Arizona economy through entrepreneurship and innovation. As the one-stop-shop for entrepreneurship in Tucson, we work to increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of businesses in our community and enhance the ecosystem by creating pathways for interested individuals to join the tech talent pool. Through high-quality, low-cost technical assistance, coaching, mentoring, and community building, we advance the economic future of our region by reducing the barriers to creating a successful business. We believe entrepreneurship empowers individuals and communities to meet their full potential when resources are made accessible and equitable. Our model is designed to allow previously under-represented entrepreneurs and individuals to join the growing startup and tech workforce. We imagine a Tucson that is known as an ideal place for entrepreneurs to start a successful business and workers to find a rewarding career.