URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/creating-an-entrepreneurial-ecosystem/

Irma Olguin, Jr., CEO and co-founder of Bitwise Industries, explains how her company builds technology ecosystems in underestimated cities. The key, she finds, is to meet the needs of the individual communities they serve by not only offering technical training, but also by addressing the non-technical barriers that might keep people from investing in their skills, from transportation issues to lack of childcare.

## Transcript

- I do a lot of work on entrepreneurship internationally, 00:00:06,220 and a lot of folks coming to Silicon Valley to look to replicate what's happened here but we often caution them that things need to be tailored.. Did you have to customize or match to the unique circumstances in each of the communities that you entered? - Absolutely, I mean the folks that we are focused on 00:00:25,210 and the folks that we most want to serve have real life challenges, right? The thing that we see a lot is that entering into the technology industry has very little to do with whether or not you are great at math in the fifth grade.. Like that's really not what it's about.. It's really about do you have the space in your life where you can focus on gaining a new skill and invest in your own future? Which a lot of folks who are coming from generational poverty or generational disenfranchisement simply don't have, they simply don't have the space in their lives.. And so what does that look like in Fresno? That means that transportation is an issue.. That means that childcare is an issue.. That means that cash in your pocket is an issue.. Now that's Fresno where we have this massive sprawl and lots of ag acres and so just a lot of distance, literally physical distance to travel, to get from where you live to where your technology education might take place.. That's not gonna be the same thing in Buffalo, New York, right? It's not gonna be about sprawl.. It's probably gonna be about things like folks who are working nights and weekends, right? And having technology education that meets them where they are and flexible schedules and probably childcare there too and so yes, tailoring our wraparound services is really, really critical to being successful in another place..

And it's paying attention to those non-technical barriers to entry that we think we are exceptional at that's actually the thing that we understand best.. We didn't invent a new way to teach JavaScript, right? As they say, "We just focus on the things that prevent people from learning it," and that really is the difference between what Bitwise does and what others, so to speak competitors might do...