



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Launch New York appoints Branden to lead Finance & Operations and elects new Officers on the Board of Directors**

*Upstate New York, July 27, 2015* – Launch New York has named Mark Branden to the position of Director of Finance & Operations. In this role he will provide overall operational support for the organization while coordinating the Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR) Program.

Launch New York also re-appointed David Colligan (Colligan Law), Jordan Levy (Softbank Capital), George Chamoun (Synacor), Zachary Shulman (Cornell University) and James Wadsworth (Hodgson Russ) to the Board of Directors. The Board elected Colligan as Chair and Levy as Vice Chair and named Launch NY CEO Marnie LaVigne as Secretary and Branden as Treasurer.

“Launch NY’s leadership team is positioned to drive the organization deep into the next phase of entrepreneurial development in Upstate New York.” said Colligan, “With our recently launched Seed Fund, the continued expansion of the EIR program, and our collaboration with ecosystem partners across the region, we are now implementing our plan as a full-fledged venture development organization modeled after the best practices around the country.”

Levy added “Upstate New York has so much untapped entrepreneurial potential. I’m committed to being a part of the effort to leverage the innovation and the passion in the region to drive successful start-ups. Angel investors and venture capitalists, whether they have ties to the region or not, are already starting to notice what’s happening here, so it’s perfect timing to have someone with Mark’s background join Launch NY to help lead its new seed fund, mentoring services and operations.”

Branden’s experience in financial analysis, start-ups and venture capital will serve Launch NY well as he oversees Launch NY’s EIR Program. To date EIRs based in Buffalo, Ithaca, Rochester and Syracuse have worked with more than 350 new businesses across the 27 counties of Upstate New York. Considered one of the cornerstones of Launch NY’s mission profile, the EIR Program matches seasoned entrepreneurs with local start-ups and provides them business coaching, mentoring, training, networking opportunities, and improved access to funding resources.

Branden will also be responsible for managing the financial affairs of the organization, including the new non-profit Launch NY Seed Fund, which is designed to fill gaps in early stage funding and prepare high-growth potential startups to be investment-ready viable businesses.

He is one of the principal organizers of the successful Buffalo Startup Weekend, which has seen more than 150 participants in its four years.

“I am excited to join Launch NY and look forward to working with Dr. LaVigne and the entire Launch NY team to help and support entrepreneurs and startups across Upstate New York.” said Branden.

Most recently a vice president with Seneca Holdings, the investment arm of the Seneca Nation of Indians, Branden has also worked at Summer Street Capital Partners, General Atlantic, and Duff & Phelps.

His degrees include a Bachelor of Science from the New York University Stern School of Business and an MBA from the University at Buffalo. In addition to serving on the boards of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Foundation and Hasek's Heroes, Branden is also an active volunteer with the City of Buffalo Animal Shelter.

### **About Launch New York**

The mission of Launch New York, Inc. (Launch NY) is to identify, support and invest in high-growth, high-impact companies and catalyze the entrepreneurial culture in the 27 counties comprising Upstate New York. Launch NY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit venture development organization that promotes economic development activities and uses best practices, proven activities of experienced business mentoring, and seed capital investing in order to create venture capital-ready (deal-ready) companies which have the promise to create significant economic wealth and jobs for our region. (For more information, see [www.launchny.org](http://www.launchny.org))

Launch NY was formed as a result of a collaboration between stakeholders and regional economic development leaders in Upstate New York to create successful, sustainable strategies that would foster entrepreneurial success across the entire 27-county area and break down silos between organizations and cities. Launch NY is headquartered in Buffalo and has regional co-location with partner organizations in Binghamton, Ithaca, Rochester and Syracuse.