[Start Co.](#) is a venture development organization originally founded to grow the jobs of tomorrow in Memphis, TN through the building and accelerating of early stage startup technology companies and growing the ecosystem of support resources. Towards this end, Start Co. launched Memphis' first accelerator program in 2011. Since then, Start Co. has executed 12 accelerator programs and helped thousands of entrepreneurs and dozens of companies. In response to unique demographic, economic and civic needs and opportunities, Start Co. expanded and evolved its mission and related programming. In connection with high tech entrepreneurship, Start Co. created and manages a validation investment fund and angel network including a portfolio invested companies. Start Co. has also provided innovation services and related programming to Memphis-based Fortune 1000 companies, colleges and universities; and various governmental entities. The programming targeted resource cultivation, startup and intrapreneur engagement, and civic growth opportunities. Start Co. has partnered with the City of Memphis, Shelby County, the University of Memphis, Rhodes College and the Memphis public library system.

Memphis is home to one of the nation's most serious, pervasive and sustained poverty challenges in the country. As a result, many of Start Co.'s programs and partnerships, especially in the areas of civic and economic development, have focused directly or indirectly on the underlying issue of poverty. In 2013, the City of Memphis and various public and private entities funded a partnership with JumpStart America, an initiative funded by the Economic Development Administration and several national foundations. The resulting report coined the phrase "Entrepreneurship for Everyone." The report strongly suggested that Start Co. help a wide array of public, private and philanthropic partners apply the tools of design thinking and entrepreneurship to address Memphis's economic and social challenges. Following this recommendation, Start Co. has partnered with a regional foundation to explore the root causes of and potential solutions to the "digital divide" [the 50%+ of Memphis's population without access to computers and broadband internet connections]. Start Co. has also played a critical role in creating an organization that teaches inner city children to code. Start Co. is also working with various civic and non-profit organizations in their efforts to support minority and women-owned small businesses. In each case, the foundation of Start Co.'s work and success depend on introducing its partners to the tools, processes and programs of innovation and entrepreneurship.