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Tampa Bay Wave Secures NOAA Grant
to Unveil BlueTech|X Accelerator in
Collaboration with the University of South Florida
and the St. Pete Innovation District



Tampa, FL - February 20, 2024 - In a significant boost to the growing ocean-based technology sector, Tampa Bay Wave, Inc. (Wave), heralded as Florida's leading startup accelerator, has been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This grant positions Wave at the forefront of "Catching the Blue Wave: Accelerating America's Ocean Economy," an initiative under NOAA's 2023 Ocean-Based Climate Resilience Accelerators funding program. This initiative is part of a broader effort by NOAA, which has distributed 16 grants totaling \$3.9 million nationwide, aimed at fostering small businesses and entrepreneurs who are pioneering ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes-based climate solutions.

In partnership with the University of South Florida (USF) and the St. Petersburg Innovation District, Tampa Bay Wave will channel these funds into crafting the BlueTech|X Accelerator. This groundbreaking program is set to energize the blue economy by supporting entrepreneurs through technology development, capability demonstration, market introduction, and investment acquisition, particularly in the vital regions of Tampa Bay and the Florida Gulf coast. Leaning on over a decade of expertise in running top-tier accelerator programs, Wave, alongside USF and the District, will integrate vast networks and resources, including access

to maritime technology firms, customer connections, unique data sets, and highly desired in-water testing/demonstration capabilities.

"The impacts of climate change are visible in communities across America every day," said NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad, Ph.D. "This ocean-based accelerator program connects the government, the private sector, academia, tribes and stakeholders to innovate and produce new ocean, coastal and Great Lakes technologies at a pace that supports the urgent need for resilience nationwide."

Linda Olson, CEO of Tampa Bay Wave, expressed excitement about the new venture: "As a lifelong resident of Florida, I am deeply committed to preserving our region's invaluable coastlines and beaches. This generous NOAA grant allows us to expand our decade-long collaboration with USF, launching an innovative accelerator focused on ocean-based climate resilience. The BlueTech|X Accelerator is not just a step towards safeguarding our natural resources but also a move to bolster Tampa Bay's innovation ecosystem, creating high-value tech jobs in the process."

Echoing this sentiment, Dr. Sylvia Thomas, USF's Vice President for Research and Innovation, stated, "USF is poised to make a substantial contribution to the BlueTech|X Accelerator, leveraging our Gulf Coast research facilities, faculty expertise in oceanography and environmental and marine sciences, and strong ties with Tampa Bay's entrepreneurial community."

"Tampa Bay has one of the southeast U.S. largest concentrations of blue economy professionals with a long history of working together to solve critical issues. I am excited that this grant will provide the opportunity to deepen our work with innovators who seek bold solutions to important questions facing our coastal community", said Alison Barlow, Executive Director, St. Petersburg Innovation District. The Innovation District is home to both the Ocean Team and the Maritime and Defense Technology Hub, two maritime sector collaborations that will benefit from products, services and talent generated by the BlueTech|X Accelerator.

About the NOAA Climate Resilience Accelerator Program:

NOAA's Climate Resilience Accelerator Program is structured in two phases, focusing on the initial development (Phase One) and subsequent expansion (Phase Two) of accelerators that align with NOAA's mission to tackle climate resilience challenges. The program encourages collaboration among federal, state, and local agencies, NGOs, industry groups, and academia to pinpoint specific regional and sector needs. Phase One awardees, such as Wave, will be instrumental in shaping innovative solutions in ocean renewable energy, coastal and ocean carbon sequestration, hazard mitigation, and ecosystem services.

Wave's Legacy and Mission:

Since its inception in 2013, Wave has successfully run 34 accelerator cohorts, attracting tech startups nationwide and internationally. These programs have nurtured businesses across diverse sectors, including the TechDiversity, CyberTech|X, FinTech|X, LatinTech and TechWomen Rising accelerators, by providing mentorship, investment training, and strategic networking opportunities. Through these accelerators and its CORE program, Wave has supported over 500 startups, facilitating over \$870 million in funding and creating more than 5,000 jobs, underscoring its pivotal role in Florida's economic development.

For more information on the 2023 NOAA grant recipients, visit <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/biden-harris-administration-invests-39-million-for-ocean-based-climate-resilience-accelerators>.

ABOUT TAMPA BAY WAVE:

Tampa Bay Wave, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit providing entrepreneurs with facilitated access to the resources, expertise, and capital they need to grow vibrant technology-based companies in Tampa Bay. Since March 2013, Tampa Bay Wave has supported more than 500 tech startups thanks to grant funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), plus support from its economic development partners Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa. Tampa Bay Wave also receives support from individuals such as Michael and Korrine Fraser, as well as from corporations and foundations such as: A-LIGN, Bank of America, Encore Bank/STi, DeltaAirlines/Virgin Atlantic Airlines, DCE Productions, The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC), EY, Florida Business Development Corporation, Florida Funders, Foley & Lardner, KnowBe4, Kuducom, NextPath Career Partners, Nielsen Foundation, Rays/Rowdies Foundation, Southwest Airlines, Tampa Bay Ventures, TECO, Truist Foundation, and Vinik Family Foundation. Tampa Bay Wave is a member of the Morrow (formerly Global Accelerator Network) network of accelerators. For more information, visit www.tampabaywave.org

ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA:

The University of South Florida, a high-impact research university dedicated to student success and committed to community engagement, generates an annual economic impact of more than \$6 billion. With campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF serves approximately 50,000 students who represent nearly 150 different countries. U.S. News & World Report has ranked USF as one of the nation's top 50 public universities for five consecutive years, and this year USF earned its highest ranking ever among all universities public or private. In 2023, USF became the first public university in Florida in nearly 40 years to be invited to join the Association of American Universities, a prestigious group of the leading universities in the United States and Canada. Through hundreds of millions of dollars in research activity each year and as one of the top universities in the world for securing new patents, USF is a leader in solving global problems and improving lives. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at www.usf.edu.

ABOUT ST. PETE INNOVATION DISTRICT:

The St. Pete Innovation District (District) is a public-private partnership formed in 2016 to foster economic development, learning, and inspiration by bringing people and organizations together. The District spans 600 acres south of downtown St. Petersburg along the Tampa Bay waterfront. Its membership exceeds 50 organizations including University of South Florida, NOAA, U.S. Geological Survey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Woolpert, Saildrone, Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Bayfront Health and the City of St. Petersburg. These partners work together across the marine science, life science, and technology sectors to grow the STEAM workforce, incubate new entrepreneurial ventures, and forge strategic partnerships. Visit stpeteinnovationdistrict.com

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