TAMPA BAY wave

2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator

Recap Report



Powered By

NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

In Partnership With

thecontinuum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tampa Bay Wave's **2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator** continued the innovation seen in the first Bluetech|X accelerator that was launched in 2025. All Tampa Bay Wave accelerators connect world-class resources from our nationally-recognized programs with industry-specific expertise and strategic connections to support the growth of an emerging technology sector for the Tampa Bay region: the Ocean Economy.

Five (5) exceptional startups were selected for this year's cohort, representing a wide range of technological advances, including: 3-D printed reef infrastructures, aquatic data aggregation, predictive disaster response enhancements, environmental sampling and enhanced public safety system warnings coordination.

Through the program, Wave connected startups with strategic partners and advisors from various industries including marine transportation, logistics, control systems, energy, tourism, software development, as well as leaders from non-governmental organizations and the military.

The 2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator was made possible, thanks to a $14 million four-year federal grant awarded by the **U.S. Department of Commerce** and the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).** This grant was awarded to a collaborative partnership, called The Continuum, of which Tampa Bay Wave was one of seven partner organizations that span across Florida and the U.S with the goal to provide comprehensive support to these emerging technology companies with a broad spectrum of year-round programs along with industry expertise, strategic connections, mentorship, and access to private investment capital.

Collectively, well over 100 hours of mentoring and other support were provided to this year's cohort companies from Wave's Mentor Network as well as Wave's BlueTech|X Advisory Council, a carefully chosen group of sector-specific advisors, each playing a vital role in the Ocean Economy. Tours of several maritime-related facilities, such as the Florida Aquarium, were incorporated into the curriculum, and the concluding Pitch Night was hosted at the Port of Tampa Bay Cruise Ship Terminal.

The 2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator was another resounding success! Wave is grateful to all those who helped make it so successful, and we look forward to providing updates on these startup companies as they progress. We also look forward to hosting BlueTech|X again in 2027, strengthening Tampa Bay's reputation for maritime-related technology and building a stronger, more-resilient innovation-driven economy in Florida and across the U.S. for years to come.



Linda Olson
CEO, Tampa Bay Wave

Thank you, NOAA!

In December 2024, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") awarded a four-year, $13.9 million federal grant through the NOAA Ocean Enterprise Accelerators program to The Continuum, a partnership of seven (7) organizations, including Tampa Bay Wave.

The Continuum represents a national network of accelerators, economic development organizations, academic institutions, and professional industry and ocean networks. Through this funding, the partners will run a total of twelve (12) accelerator cohorts supporting innovative tech startups in the ocean enterprise industry, with four (4) of those cohorts run by Tampa Bay Wave through our BlueTech|X Accelerator, now in its second year. In 2026, The Continuum also awarded $1.2 million in non-dilutive Technology Development and Commercialization (TDC) funding to 14 startups in January, followed by $323,000 to 4 more in April.

Tampa Bay Wave is extremely grateful to the U.S. Department of Commerce and NOAA for this generous support, as well as for their leadership in supporting emerging technologies and innovation-driven economic development.



St. Pete INNOVATION DISTRICT

thecontinuum

Alison Barlow

Chief Executive Officer

The BlueTech|X Accelerator is part of The Continuum's coordinated network of ocean enterprise accelerators. This program is of particular importance in Florida, where the ocean economy contributes approximately $96 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP).

The program equipped the startups with critical insights and connections, enabling them to adapt their innovations to deliver the ocean related data and intelligence critically needed across industries.

2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator Partners - The Continuum

Accelerating Innovation in the Ocean Economy

The Continuum was formed in late 2024, thanks to a $14 million grant from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with the goal to accelerate BlueTech innovation. Seven distinct organizations came together to form The Continuum is helping entrepreneurs thrive and scale impact in the ocean economy with critical resources, insights, and opportunities that span across Florida and U.S.

Morningstar: The Continuum Awards Funding to 4 Ocean Enterprise Startups

2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator Cohort

1Print LLC



Dread Not



ONA Protocol



SampleServe



SwimSmart



2026 Cohort Companies



"I love what Tampa Bay Wave is doing for founders. This program is so different from any other accelerator in the country right now for Ocean Tech."
"...the fact that we have the option of accelerators like this that can help us get there and get there faster with innovation. I'm really excited about that.

Shawna Ruff -Founder & CEO

1Print LLC (Pompano Beach, FL)
1Print (1print.one) uses 3D concrete printing to build coastal and land infrastructure such as artificial reefs, seawalls, and breakwaters in complex shapes traditional molds can't achieve.
Founder(s): Fredrik Wannius, Adam Friedman | Website: https://1print.one/

Dread Not, Intention Labs (Seattle, WA)
Dread Not transforms predictive disaster response, connect communities for coordinated evacuations and create economic mobility for business.
Founder(s): Shawna Ruff, Soufiane Hassou | Website: https://www.intentionlabs.io/

ONA Protocol (Madrid, Spain)
ONA is aggregation and intelligence infrastructure for the Blue Economy, turning fragmented aquatic data from sensors, operators, and institutions into standardized, traceable datasets and decision-grade intelligence for operators, insurers, and model builders.
Founders(s): Nil Diaz | Website: https://onaprotocol.com/

SampleServe, Inc. (Traverse City, MI)
SampleServe makes software for digitizing environmental sampling, project planning, in-field data collection, chain of custody, and lab reporting, mainly for environmental, drinking water, and wastewater testing.
Founder(s): Russell Schindler | Website: https://www.sampleserve.com

SwimSmart Technology LLC (Marquette, MI)
SwimSmart makes beachfront safety technology. Public alerts, emergency response coordination, weather/wave monitoring, and water quality tools for lifeguards and beach management agencies.
Founder(s): Jacob Soter | Website: https://swimsmarttech.com/

2026 BlueTech|X Cohort Spotlight



After BlueTech|X, ONA Protocol is planning to relocate from Spain to the U.S., building on the partner network it grew in Florida during the program and bringing its work closer to the communities and coastlines it aims to serve.

Nil Diaz
Co-Founder & CEO
Madrid, Spain



Following BlueTech|X, DreadNot is carrying its momentum to the West Coast, taking part in Seattle's One Ocean Week and Seattle AI Week to connect with leaders across the ocean and AI communities.

Shawna Ruff
Co-Founder & CEO
Seattle, WA



Fresh off BlueTech|X, SampleServe was selected as a finalist for the World Economic Forum Global Prize for Innovation in Water 2026, building on its proven work at scale in Texas, where its app supports a statewide program serving 7,200 utilities.

Russell Schindler
CEO
Traverse City, MI

BlueTech|X Alumni Spotlight



Michael Anderson
Co-Founder & CEO
Tampa, FL

BlueTech|X 2025 alum **Seagate Space** is building the future of offshore space access right here in Tampa Bay. The team recently spotlighted its first demo module prototype, funded by Space Florida and built by Tampa Ship in Port Tampa Bay, as the first building block of its modular maritime vision. Seagate Space was also named a finalist for Tampa Bay Tech's Emerging Tech Company of the Year, a recognition that reflects its belief in the region as a growing maritime and defense innovation hub, home to USSOCOM, USCENTCOM, three seaports, and Tampa Bay Wave Accelerator Program. With more announcements about its local footprint on the way, Seagate Space is one to watch.

BlueTech|X 2025 alum **SkyTL** is tackling one of the most critical data gaps facing wildfire managers. The company earned a NOAA SBIR Phase II award to advance WindTL, its wildfire ember forecasting system that uses hyper-local wind measurements from drones to better predict how embers spread in wildland-urban interfaces, where forests meet residential neighborhoods. In this next phase, SkyTL will expand the system to track how fire fronts move and estimate flame height using drone imagery and vegetation fuel models, then test and integrate it with current wildfire service providers. It's a powerful example of blue and climate tech protecting communities on the ground.



Rocio Frej Vitalle
Co-Founder & CEO
Tampa, FL

BlueTech|X Advisory Council



Alison Barlow
CEO of St. Pete Innovation District



Isabelle Bart
Curriculum and Program Development Lead
Braid Theory



Andy Bennett
President of National Center for Responsible Government Contracting



David Bly
Senior Strategist
TECO



Michael Kahle
CAPT (ret.) of US Coast Guard



Greg Ross-Munro
CEO of Sourcetoad



Paul Sohl
Florida High Tech Corridor

Mentor & Investor Networks

Advisory Council + Mentor Network

Founders in the program were paired with a community of 298+ volunteer mentors who share a passion for supporting early-stage companies. Some brought specialized knowledge in areas like HR, go-to-market planning, and trademark law, while others stepped in as ongoing CEO coaches.

The programming created natural opportunities for founders and mentors to meet and build meaningful relationships, resulting in an average of 20 - 30 direct connections and over 100 hours of hands-on support for each startup.





Investor Network & Demo Day

Throughout the 2026 BlueTech|X Accelerator, startups gained access to Tampa Bay Wave's national network of 600+ investors through a highly personalized matching process. Instead of broad outreach, Wave's investor team reviewed each investor's thesis and made targeted introductions based on fit, a hands-on approach made possible by the cohort's intimate size of five companies.

Wave continues to grow its investor presence in key markets like New York City, Austin, and San Francisco, while also helping founders prepare for investor conversations and pursue non-dilutive funding through SBIR/STTR programs.

Programming

The 2026 BlueTech|X cohort companies had access to **mentoring and support, including workshops and training sessions** featuring an impressive lineup of expert speakers. Founders also benefited from numerous one-on-one coaching with our Mentor Network of over 260 professionals.

Venture Capital

- Raymond James
- Tampa Bay Ventures
- DeepWork Capital
- Grand VP
- Pulse Fund

Industry Experts

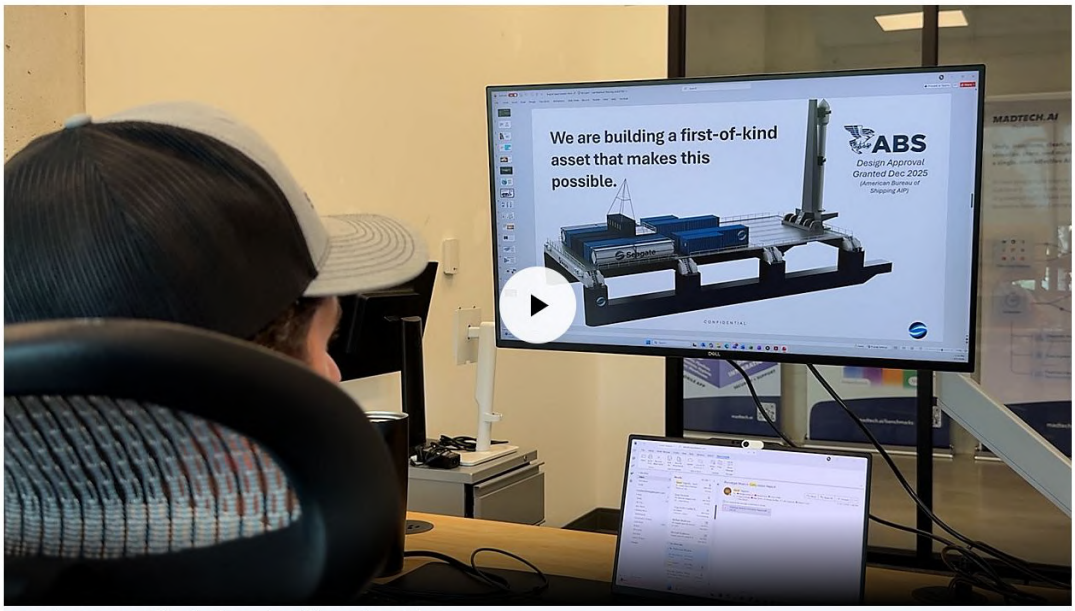
- Rocket Proforma
- Thoropass
- St. Pete Innovation District
- The Continuum
- Responsible Government Contracting
- University of South Florida
- Florida Institute of Oceanography Research
- CMS Engineering
- Duke Energy
- Tampa Shipyard

Sessions

- Solution Showcase
- Cohort Surge
- Alumni Panel
- Building with an Exit in Mind
- CEO Roundtable
- Shipyard Tour
- Founder Hacks
- Branding and Marketing Session
- VC State of the Union
- Mentor Surge
- Funding Hacks
- Financial Projections
- VC Panel
- Leveraging AI tools to Maximize Outbound Sales
- Government Selling Tall
- The Florida Aquarium Tour

Media & News

SPECTRUM NEWS BN 9



Seagate Space CEO Michael Anderson shows his vessel's prototype.

What Tampa Bay's blue economy growth means for local jobs

BY JT LYNCH | TAMPA
UPDATED 9:38 AM ET SEP. 08, 2026 | PUBLISHED 6:15 PM ET SEP. 03, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. — Tampa Bay economic development leaders are focusing on the region's growing blue economy, a water-based sector tied to ports, shipping, defense and other industries.

One example is Seagate Space, a Tampa Bay-based company that is developing an offshore rocket launch vessel.

Very much like a SpaceX droneship that recovers the first-stage booster, but Seagate Space's vessel will also be able to launch a rocket.

Michael Anderson, the company's co-founder and CEO, said Seagate Space is a little more than a year old and is currently in the prototype phase.

"This is a render of our offshore launch platform," Anderson said, showing off a rendering. "I should say one of the designs that we've conceptualized."

Anderson said the first part of the full-sized prototype is currently being built in Port Tampa. He said the company's goal is to support space missions from the water.

"We want to be the first company to launch a liquid-fueled, orbital-capable rocket at sea from U.S. shores since the early 2000s," Anderson said.

The Tampa Bay Economic Development Council said the blue economy is becoming a focus for business growth in the region.

Craig Richard, the council's president and CEO, said Tampa's development has long been tied to its access to water.

"Civilization has built around ports and water, you know, since the beginning of time," Richard said. "Tampa is no different. We emerged from an opportunity to do trade along the water."

Richard said Port Tampa, area military bases and the region's university system are assets for companies considering Tampa Bay. The council's newest strategic plan focuses on growing a talent pipeline for blue economy businesses.

"If we build the type of talent pipeline that the blue economy needs, companies will come," Richard said. "That's today's economic development mantra. If we build it, they will come."

Curriculum Days



Government Selling Talk with Andy Bennett - President National Center for Responsible Government Contracting and TBW Mentor



Networking event with Seaworthy Collective - Tamara Zissman, Founder Success Director



The Florida Aquarium Tour with 2026 BlueTech|X cohort





Tampa Bay Wave - Challenge Coin Presentation

Signature Events - Welcome Reception

Tampa Bay Wave opens every program with a Welcome Reception, and culminates with a Community Pitch Night. Both events serve to engage local business community and other partners.

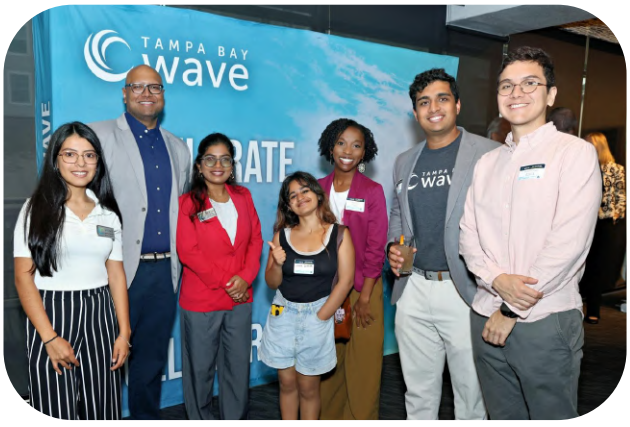




U.S. Representative Gus Bilirakis
Florida's 12th Congressional District



U.S. Representative Kathy Castor
Florida's 14th Congressional District



Tampa Bay Wave Staff



Nathan Hendriksen, TBW Development Manager

Signature Events – Pitch Night





Nil Diaz - ONA Protocol CEO & Co-founder, Alison Barlow - CEO of St. Pete Innovation District



Dr. Richard Munassi - Accelerator Managing Director (TBW), Austen Legler - Manager of Founder Success at Seaworthy Collective, Fredrik Wannius - 1Print CEO & founder



Jacob Soter - SwimSmart CEO & founder, Amit Agrawal - Investor Relations Director (TBW) and Prat Reddy - CORE and Community Growth Manager (TBW)



Signature Events – Pitch Night



Captain Matthew Thompson - Vice President of Operations and Karl Strauch - Vice President of Marketing at Port Tampa Bay with Linda Olson TBW CEO & President



BlueTech|X Panelists: Alison Barlow - St. Pete Innovation District, Colin Polsky, PhD - Florida Office of Ocean Economy, Michael Anderson - CEO/Founder, Seagate Space



2026 Tampa Bay Wave BlueTech|X founders



The Continuum team members, Tamara Kahn Zissman - Founder Success Director at Seaworthy Collective , Austen Legler, Alison Barlow and Prat



Wave Staff



Linda Olson
President/CEO



Dr. Richard Munassi
Accelerator and CORE Managing Director



Demelza Genest
Chief Operations Officer



Dee Garcia
Director of Development & Strategic Partnerships



Amit Agrawal
Director, Investor Relations & Platforms Operations



Prat Reddy
Manager, CORE and Community Growth



Therese Feeman
Brand Marketing Leader



Nathan Hendriksen
Development Manager



Anthony Morin
Venture Center Operations Manager



Stefany Pazmino
Accelerator Programs Associate

Wave Board of Directors



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Interim-Chair



Penny Parks
Inmediate Past Chair



Santo Cannone
Immediate Past Chair



Linda Olson
President/CEO



Catherine Wilhelm
Treasurer & Finance Committee chair



Lew Jolly
Program Strategy Committee Co-Chair



Kailah Matyas
Program Strategy Committee Co-Chair



Rob Brown
Fundraising Committee Co-Chair



Andrew Smith
Fundraising Committee Co-Chair



Nick Outman
Seed Fund Committee Chair



Cathy Ryan-Reneer
Branding and Strategic Communication Committee Co-Chair



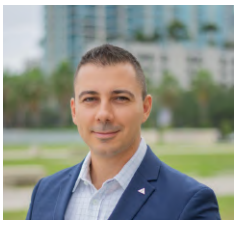
Shane Needham
Branding and Strategic Communication Committee Co-Chai r



Tom Cockriel
Governance and Ethics Committee Co-Chair



Amanda Milligan
Governance and Ethics Committee Co-Chair



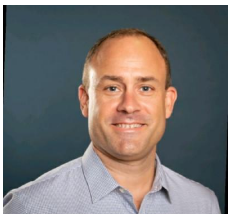
Petar Besalev



Jennifer Bryk



Jose Fourquet



Taylor Johnston



Brian Model



Jack Murray



Miraj Patel



Greg Pierce



Kathleen Shanahan



Elizabeth Urbanski



Lauren Weiner



Aaron White

ECONOMIC IMPACT

BUILDING FLORIDA'S TECH ECOSYSTEM

SINCE OUR PROGRAMS LAUNCHED IN 2013

680+
STARTUPS SUPPORTED

$2B+
CAPITAL RAISED

7,700+
NEW JOBS CREATED

36
EXITS

ACCELERATING FLORIDA'S INNOVATION ECONOMY

- AI
- DefenseTech
- MedTech
- FinTech
- EdTech
- CyberTech
- IoT
- SaaS
- eCommerc
- Hospitality
- HealthTech
- MarTech
- CleanTech
- BlueTech
- InsureTech

BUILDING BETTER FOUNDERS



STARTUP FOUNDERS FROM **30** COUNTRIES SHOWCASED TAMPA AS AN INNOVATION HUB

26 COMPANIES RELOCATED TO TAMPA BAY

ANNUAL REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

1,248
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

1,300
HOTEL ROOMS

450
FLIGHTS THROUGH TPA

500
MENTORING HOURS

2,500+
TRAINING HOURS

Tampa Bay Wave Sponsor & Partner Community

Federal Support

EDA U.S. Economic Development Administration

NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration U.S. Department of Commerce

SBA U.S. Small Business Administration

Economic Development Partners

Hillsborough County Florida | EDI2 Economic Development Innovation Initiative

Pasco County Florida

City of Tampa Florida

Pillars of Innovation

A-LIGN

APPSPACE

Bank of America

Celestar Passion for the Mission

Florida Funders

Nielsen Foundation

the florida high tech corridor

Foley & Lardner LLP

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Justworks

KUDUCOM

NEXTPATH Workforce Solutions

Vinik Family Foundation

Regions Foundation

SPC St. Petersburg College

TECO An Emera Company

Thoropass

University of South Florida Research & Innovation

USF Muma College of Business University of South Florida

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Tidal Wave Sponsors

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levo Health

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TampaBay.Ventures

Trenam Law

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DeepWork Capital

Insight Assurance

nix

PLG Potomac Law

Regions

Seacoast Bank

Shumaker

sourcetoad Development Studio

SouthState

Southwest

VW | workscapes

Partners

Cyber Florida

Florida-Israel Business Accelerator

Frank E. Duckwall Foundation Making Tampa Bay A Better Place

Harness

GVN

IN BIA

lp

prospera

SOFWERX

Chambre de Commerce CanadaFlorida Chamber of Commerce

svb Silicon Valley Bank A Division of First Citizens Bank

edc St. Petersburg Area Economic Development Corporation

TBLC The Tampa Bay Latin Chamber of Commerce

Tampa Bay Tech

USF University of South Florida

Veterans Florida

TAMPA BAY wave

THANK YOU!

For questions, please reach out to:
Linda Olson,
CEO, Tampa Bay Wave
linda@tampabaywave.org

Follow Wave on social media:

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