TAMPA BAY wave

2026 Tech|X Accelerator

Recap Report

Powered by

Nielsen Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 TechX Accelerator represented the ninth year of success, thanks to the unwavering support of The Nielsen Foundation's commitment to ensuring unbiased opportunities are available to talented tech founders from across industry verticals. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3), Tampa Bay Wave does not take any equity from participating companies, thus the impact of this year's accelerator program, along with the programs in the prior eight years, would not be possible without the critical support of The Nielsen Foundation. We are very grateful for this support and happy to share the impressive impact metrics and examples in this report.

The 2026 cohort consisted of 15 tech startups recruited from across the US and beyond, selected from 138 applicants, many referred by Wave's ecosystem network members, including alumni companies.

The highly-credentialed startups selected for this year's 2026 cohort participated in an intensive multi-week program that included dedicated mentors, one-on-one coaching with notable tech founders, sales and pitch coaching, and investor introductions, all in an environment designed to support high-scale growth. The companies also benefit from ongoing support through Tampa Bay Wave's connections and access to further accelerate their development.

These companies received over 500 hours of mentoring and other support during the program, as well as invaluable exposure through press, social media, and Wave's signature events. The Welcome Reception was hosted at Lions Eye Institute, and the Pitch Night was held at Feeding Tampa Bay, two amazing community service organizations in their own rights. Andrea Bertels, President and Executive Director of Grantmaking of The Nielsen Foundation, graciously opened remarks via video, followed by a short video provided by Greg Celestan, from Celestar.

Included herein are highlights from the 2026 TechX program, as well as updates about alumni companies from prior years, so that The Nielsen Foundation can celebrate success with us. We have provided an aggregated recap of metrics dating back to the inaugural 2018 program, noting that the 126 startups that have been supported to-date are far outperforming our benchmark comparative. They've created 1,850 jobs, attracted $467 million investor capital, achieved $120 million in new revenue, and demonstrated what founders solving real-world issues through transformative technology can accomplish.

On behalf of all of us at Tampa Bay Wave, we are so grateful to The Nielsen Foundation for making the 2026 Tech|X Accelerator another success, and for the combined impact that your investment in Wave's mission delivery has had for the participating founders and for the recipients and users of the technologies they introduced to the market over the last nine years.

Linda Olson
CEO, Tampa Bay Wave

Thank you to our Tech|X Accelerator Named Sponsor

Tampa Bay Wave ("Wave"), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit technology accelerator, expresses sincere gratitude to The Nielsen Foundation for the generous and long-term sponsorship of the 2026 Tech|X Accelerator. This critical support enables Tampa Bay Wave to continue our mission of fostering cutting-edge startups for all and driving the growth of Florida's innovation economy!

Nielsen Foundation

Tampa Bay Wave is honored to be a Nielsen Foundation Signature Program awardee. We value our long collaboration as a strategic partner to deliver on the Foundation's commitment to support efforts that leverage data and technology enabling social impact.

This year's TechX Accelerator was featured in the Tampa Bay Business & Wealth magazine article entitled "Tampa Bay Wave unveils 15 startups selected for latest tech accelerator cohort."

Nielsen Foundation

Andrea Bertels

President and Executive Director of Grantmaking

"At the Nielsen Foundation, we have proudly supported the TechX Accelerator for nine years as part of our mission to power and advance more inclusive innovation in the media and technology industries. Seeing this cohort come together to solve complex real world challenges through technology is exactly the kind of innovation that we hope to support."

Nine Years of Impact & Success

Our nine-year partnership with The Nielsen Foundation has been instrumental in advancing inclusion within the tech ecosystem, providing tailored mentorship to founders driving innovation in sectors like fintech and healthcare. This sustained support has consistently catalyzed growth, resulting in a surge of high-caliber applicants and heightened engagement from the investment community.

Looking back to 2025, our first eight cohorts—comprising 111 startups—had collectively raised nearly $410 million and created 1,750 jobs. These companies outperformed their peers in similar accelerators, raising $2 million more in funding on average and creating approximately 5 additional jobs within a year of program completion. When benchmarked against national zero-equity programs, our Tech|X Accelerator startups demonstrated significant outperformance, raising an average of $3 million more in funding and creating 9 additional jobs.

As of July 2026, those numbers have climbed further. Across 9 years and 126 supported startups, aggregate results now include $467 million in private capital investments, $24 million in SBIR/STTR funding, 1,850 jobs created, and $120 million in reported revenue. On a per-startup basis, this equates to $3.9 million raised, 14.7 jobs created, and an average revenue of $1 million.

Comparative Averages as of 2026:	
Tampa Bay Wave Tech|X (years 1-9)	***Other Leading Program***
*Per Company Raised: $*3.9 Million *Per Company Jobs: 14.7*	*Per Company Raised: $668,604* *Per Company Jobs: 4*

The efficacy of our model is clearest when **comparing the trajectories of Tech|X founders against their baseline stats upon entry: we have achieved 3.7x capital growth (a 270% increase), added more than 14 new jobs per company, and realized 3.4x revenue growth (a 240% increase).** These results underscore the immense value of our programs in supporting purpose-driven founders. The Nielsen Foundation's multi-year commitment remains the bedrock of this success, driving year-over-year growth in both the visibility and the competitive quality of our applicant pool.

2026 Tech|X Cohort Spotlight

Opalite Health

Dr. Cathleen Kuo MD
CEO
Palo Alto, CA

Opalite Health, co-founded by CEO Dr. Cathleen Kuo MD (who deferred an acceptance into a Neurosurgery Residency to start the company), joined the 2026 Tech|X Accelerator to scale its real-time AI medical interpretation platform, built so that language never stands between a patient and the care they need.

Delivering HIPAA-compliant interpretation across 150+ languages, Opalite has been validated against certified medical interpreters — with over 90% fewer errors, at 50% lower cost.

Shortly after the program, Opalite announced an investment from Robinhood Ventures Fund II, joining Rebel Fund, Forum Ventures, and more. As it scales, Opalite is expanding access to safe, timely care for the millions of patients with limited English proficiency.

Vetavize

Vetavize, founded by CEO Anthony Rivera — a former Navy SEAL and former Amazon — joined the 2026 Tech|X Accelerator to scale its platform helping veterans claim the federal benefits they've earned.

Using intelligent automation, Vetavize guides veterans through the VA claims process with health assessments, secure document storage, and its AI-powered HERO Report.

During the program, Anthony credited the Tampa Bay Wave team with driving key business development introductions for the company. As it scales, Vetavize aims to become the gold standard for post-military life for all veterans and their families.

Anthony Rivera
CEO
Orlando, FL

Alumni Spotlight

Tukki

Ramiro Roballos
Co-founder & CEO
Buffalo, NY
2025 Tech|X

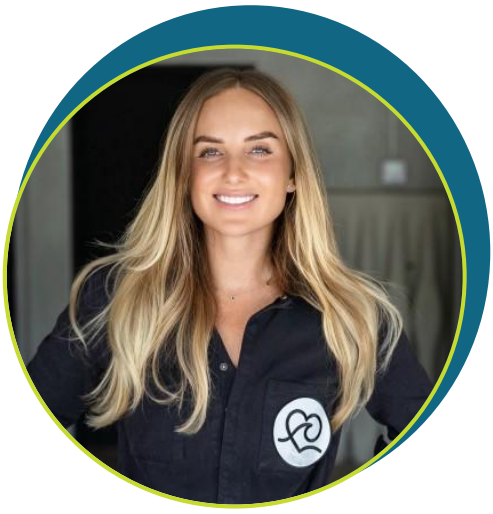
Ramiro Roballos, co-founder and CEO of Tukki, participated in the 2025 Tech|X cohort to scale the company's mission of making U.S. immigration simple. Tukki combines AI-powered technology with in-house immigration attorneys to streamline the visa and green card process in a single transparent platform.

Since completing the program, Tukki was named winner of 43North's 11th annual startup competition — standing out among 1,000+ applicants to secure a $1 million investment. The win capped a year in which Tukki tripled its revenue and grew to a team of roughly 30.

KIND DESIGNS

Anya Freeman, founder and CEO of Kind Designs, participated in the 2023 Tech|X cohort to scale a bold idea: 3D-printing "Living Seawalls" that protect shorelines from erosion and storm surge while restoring marine habitats — fabricating panels up to 20 times faster than traditional methods.

Since completing the program, Kind Designs has raised over $16.5 million and earned national recognition, including Time Magazine's "Best Inventions of 2025" and Fast Company's World Changing Ideas Awards. With installations across South Florida and beyond, the company is reimagining coastal protection for communities facing rising seas.



Anya Freeman
Founder & CEO
Miami, FL
2023 Tech|X

Mentor & Investor Networks

A Star-Studded Mentor Network delivered over 100 hours

Our startups gained unparalleled access to a powerful **network of over 300 volunteer mentors** dedicated to fueling early-stage innovation. From specialized guidance in HR, go-to-market strategy, and trademark law to transformative one-on-one CEO coaching, our structured programming fostered deep, meaningful partnerships. The impact was significant: **each participating startup secured dozens of direct connections** and leveraged over 100 hours of intensive, hands-on mentorship.

A Record-Breaking Investor Demo Day!

The 2026 Tech|X Accelerator has set a new benchmark for startup success, leveraging Tampa Bay Wave's formidable network of over 750+ investors from throughout the United States. Our **marquee Demo Day shattered previous records, attracting investors** across every funding stage and securing immediate, actionable interest for every participating startup.

Beyond this milestone, Wave's dedicated investor team is aggressively scaling its footprint in key innovation hubs—including New York City, Austin, and San Francisco—while providing founders with best-in-class, hands-on support in investor readiness and non-dilutive funding strategies like SBIR/STTR. With our **portfolio companies now surpassing a combined $2 billion in capital raised**, Tampa Bay Wave continues to cement its position as a premier national accelerator, consistently outpacing other non-profit programs in impact and growth.

2026 Tech|X Recruitment & Selection

55%
Applications Outside of FL

16%
Applications Outside of US

15
Companies Selected

The 2026 Tech|X Accelerator year-round recruitment efforts attracted another cohort of exceptional tech startups ready to scale. Tampa Bay Wave's reputation as a "best-in-class" accelerator, combined with its extensive networks, continues to help attract top-level founders seeking strategic connections and expert guidance needed for long-term success.

We also credit the success of this year's recruiting cycle to *The Nielsen Foundation* and their long-term support, which has enabled Tampa Bay Wave to build a national reputation and a strong track record for scaling purpose -led startups. Because of this long-term support, we continue to see an increasing number of applicants, along with strong applicants referred by our alumni companies.

The 2026 cohort exemplifies the exceptional talent we're attracting. The founders brought impressive backgrounds from global brands such as Amazon, Oracle, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, Shell, Tulane University, Apple, Boeing, PayPal, Yelp, Wells Fargo, Cisco, Quest Diagnostics, Mastercard, Mass General Brigham, Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan Chase, Techstars, McKinsey & Company, Bayer, NHS, HP, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and more.

Additionally, with degrees from top institutions like Harvard University, Yale University, Cornell University, Duke University, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), United States Air Force Academy, Wharton/University of Pennsylvania, Tulane University, Texas A&M University, Ohio State University, Northwestern University, UCLA, University of California Berkeley, University of Virginia, University of Florida, Universidad de Chile, Brandman University, University of Maryland, University of Miami, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, Boston College, Imperial College London, University of Delaware, University at Buffalo, Emory University , further demonstrating the value of Tampa Bay Wave's growing network of academic partnerships.

Key Recruiting Metrics

- 138 Total Applications received
- 55% of applications from outside Florida
- 16% of applications from outside the US
- 30 Semi-Finalists selected from initial screenings
- 15 Companies selected for the cohort

Nielsen Foundation

2026 Tech|X Accelerator Cohort

CABANA

casera

Grovity

HYBRON

kneu HEALTH

LastMinute

Listra.ai

Loyalink

Opalite Health

Rahm Sensor Development

SSINDEX
RISK • SUSTAINABILITY • REPUTATION

Surgicure Technologies

Vetavize

2026 Cohort Companies

This program exceeded every expectation—the depth of expertise and genuine commitment to founder success is remarkable. ***Tampa's startup community is unlike anywhere else, with a collaborative spirit that drives real innovation.*** *The connections we've made through Tech|X will be instrumental as we scale, and we're honored to be part of this thriving ecosystem. Thank you for creating something truly special.*

Neeraj Singh Bhavani, Co-Founder & CEO

Cabana (New Orleans, LA)
Cabana is the first integrated behavioral health platform bridging clinical care and shared human experience to deliver continuous daily support and outcomes at scale.
Founder(s): David Black, Heather Townsend
Website: yourcabana.com

Casera (Seattle, WA)
Casera is an AI-native Enterprise Case Management Platform that helps hospitals reduce avoidable days and improve patient progression.
Founder(s): Neeraj Singh Bhavani, Alex Levin
Website: casera.ai

CryptoMate (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
When every transaction becomes a product, every community can fund its own financial future.
Founders(s): Alan Boryszanski, Guido Fernando De Luca
Website: cryptomate.me

Grovity (Miami, FL)
Grovity is an enterprise platform designed to build, orchestrate, and continuously manage a digital workforce of AI Employees that securely automate and optimize critical business processes.
Founders(s): Samuel Urquijo, Manuel Steremberg, Miguel Urquijo, Juan Esteban Rios
Website: grovity.ai

2026 Cohort Companies - cont'd.

Hybron, Inc (El Segundo, CA)
Hybron is an advanced composites manufacturing company.
Founder(s): Brennan Lieu, Aaron Guo
Website: hybron.com

Kneu Health (London, UK)
Kneu Health delivers FDA-cleared, smartphone-based continuous monitoring for Parkinson's disease and dementia, transforming everyday interactions into clinically meaningful insights that enable earlier intervention and support a new standard of care.
Founder(s): Caroline Cake, Dr. Kinan Muhammed
Website: kneuhealth.com

LastMinute (Peabody. MA)
Enabling healthcare providers to fill shifts quickly and efficiently while reducing operational costs.
Founders(s): Leo Dassa, Leslie Hirshberg
Website: trylastminute.com

Listra.ai (New York, NY)
Listra is the AI execution layer for accounts payable, resolving exceptions, communicating with vendors, and syncing cleanly to finance systems.
Founders(s): Andrew Anton, Taylor Lilley
Website: listra.ai

Loyalink (Santiago, Chile)
AI-native platform that transforms customer and employee experiences into actionable intelligence that drives business growth.
Founders(s):Cristian Pérez, Emilio Deichler, Felipe Navarrete, Miguel Correa
Website: loyal.ink

2026 Cohort Companies - cont'd.

Opalite Health (Palo Alto, CA)
AI medical interpreter that helps healthcare providers speaking any language.
Founders(s): Cathleen Kuo, Alex Mehregan
Website: /opalitehealth.com

Rahm Sensor Development (Orlando, FL)
Rahm builds contact-free monitoring systems that detect human distress in real time
Founder(s): Vik Ramprakash
Website: rahmsd.com

SSINDEX (New Haven, CT)
Yale-backed AI SaaS platform that helps companies anticipate operational risks, replace traditional surveys, and optimize sustainability investments through stakeholder analytics
Founder(s): Rod Castro, Ignacio Torres
Website: ssindex.com

Surgicure Technologies (Cambridge, MA)
Surgicure Technologies is a medical device company committed to improving patient outcomes through innovative airway management solutions—from hospital ICUs to the battlefield.
Founders(s):Irena King, PhD
Website: surgicuretech.com

TechNovaTime (Pompton Lakes, New Jersey)
TNT turns screen recordings of healthcare employees into digital replicas that execute work inside any existing system.
Founders(s): Youssef Abubaker, Cameron Cubra, Andrew Gelbard
Website: technovatime.com

Vetavize (Orlando, FL)
Vetavize is the Turbotax for veteran benefits! We help employers save on unnecessary healthcare costs for their veteran employees through our AI and automation technology.
Founders(s): Anthony Rivera
Website: vetavize.com

Programming

The 2026 Tech|X cohort companies had access to **over 500 hours of mentoring and support, including 70 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 300 professionals.

Featured Speakers

- **Venture Capital**
  - Raymond James
  - Tampa Bay Ventures
  - Top Mark Partners
  - Las Olas Ventures
- **Industry Experts**
  - JustWorks
  - Locality Bank
  - Omni Public
  - FounderSuite
  - Rocket Proforma
  - JP Morgan Chase
  - Thoropass
  - Wilson Sonsini
  - Gunderson Dettmer
  - Insight Assurance
- **Founders/Alumni**
  - Payfinia
  - Threatmate
  - NeuroFlow
  - Nuuvia
  - Endless Health
- **Founders/Alumni**
  - SBIR Funding, Process, and Hacks
  - Exploring the US Government as a Customer
  - State of Venture Capital
  - Financial Projections and Modeling Best Practices
  - Alternative Funding Sources (Family Office, Venture Debt, RBF, Crowdfunding)
  - Building with an Exit in Mind
  - Tax-Advantaged Strategies
  - Enterprise Sales Strategies & Hacks
  - Enterprise Marketing Strategies
  - Professional Business Presentations
  - Growth Strategies and Scaling Up
  - Demystifying Payroll and HR
  - Sourcing and Managing Talent

Press & PR

Tampa Bay Business Journal Inno article link

Mentor & Community Partner Networks

Founders coming through Wave programs talk extensively about the connections they made by being in our Accelerators. Below are some examples of the networks they meet.

Wave's Mentor Network

Wave member companies have access to a wide network of professionals in our 300+ all volunteer Mentor network. These professionals have a passion for helping early stage startups. Some offer their expertise on specific topics (such as HR or trademark laws), while others may coach a startup on an ongoing basis, depending on what support the founder(s) need. We host regular Mentor mixers to build strong trusted relationships. Startups receive at least 20-30 direct mentor connections during their time in the program resulting in easily 100+ hours of consulting help.

Our Mentor Network is currently showcased on our website.

Wave's Community Partner Network

Wave has also built a strong community partner network, with both formal and informal agreements in place. We connect our member companies to a wide range of community partners, such as our economic development partners and others who can help our startups build their base in our community.

We also provide introductions to others ESO (entrepreneur support organizations) in the ecosystem to encourage their participation and to magnify their visibility and exposure. Logos from several of our community partners are shown below but more may be found on our website.

Notables from Tampa Bay Wave's Community Network

CYBER FLORIDA at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

the florida high tech corridor

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

TiE Tampa Bay

edc St.Petersburg Area ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

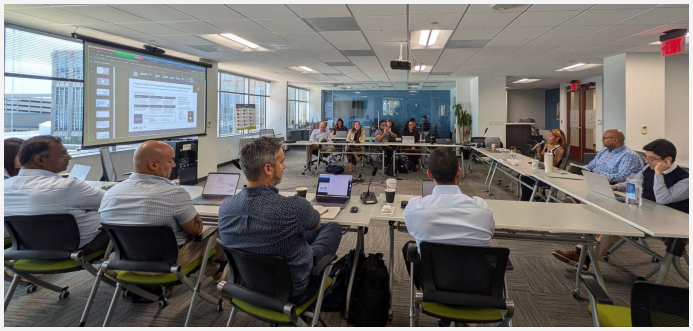
TAMPA BAY FLORIDA

PCED PINELLAS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum Days

2026 Tech|X Mentor Surge

VC Panel with Brian Model from Top Mark Partners, TJ Fleming from Deep Work Capital, Jamie Allison from New World Angels



SVB Session with Jaisa Gooden from Silicon Valley Bank

Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati Session with Derrick Rowe

Cohort Dinner at Forbici Modern Italian

Signature Events

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.

Linda Olson CEO, TBW with Sandra Murman Former County Commissioner

Cohort Group Photo

Derek Barnett with Amit Agrawal, Investor Relations Director TBW

Matteo Arrango, Tony Selvaggio, and Liza Marie Garcia

Signature Events – Pitch Night

Key Speakers

Andrea Bertels
President, Nielsen Foundation
Video Link

Greg Celestan
President, Celestar
Video Link

Our community enjoyed powerful presentations from our Tech|X founders and featured speakers!

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

Jonathan Truong
Sr. Mgr, National Programs and Partnerships

Prat Reddy
Manager, CORE and Community Growth

Therese Feeman
Brand Marketing Leader

Nathan Hendriksen
Development Manager

Vinay Govindaraju
Investor Relations Senior Associate

Stefany Pazmino
Accelerator Programs Associate

Wave Board of Directors

Penny Parks
Board 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

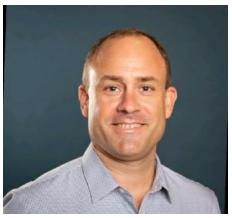
Tom Cockriel
Governance and Ethics Committee Co-Chair

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

670+
STARTUPS SUPPORTED

$1.8B+
CAPITAL RAISED

7,300+
NEW JOBS CREATED

32
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

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 FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

Justworks

KUDUCOM

NEXTPATH WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

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

VINIK FAMILY FOUNDATION

Tidal Wave Sponsors

DELTA | virgin atlantic

GUNDERSON DETTMER

HWH HILL WARD HENDERSON

levo HEALTH

Rays Baseball FOUNDATION

TampaBay.Ventures

TRENAM LAW

Corporate Friends of Wave

brownrudnick

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

INBIA

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

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Follow Wave on social media: