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FIU receives \$2.5 million SBA grant to help local businesses

MIAMI (Oct. 28, 2021) – Florida International University has received a \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Community Navigator Pilot Program. The funds are earmarked for improving underserved entrepreneurs’ access to government programs that provide assistance in launching a new venture, growing a business or managing unexpected business interruptions.

The Miami-Dade Small Business Resource Navigator Program will focus on small businesses, including microbusinesses with fewer than 10 employees, owned by women, veterans, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

“This grant is a game changer to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Miami-Dade County for underserved small businesses,” said Brian Van Hook, regional director of the [Florida SBDC at FIU Business](#) (FSBDC). “It will help break down long-standing programmatic silos among the small business providers and spur entrepreneurship in our community.”

The FSBDC will serve as the hub of the program and will work with six Miami-Dade organizations to support local businesses and help create jobs:

- Ascendus, a Community Development Financial Institution assisting small business owners, especially minorities, women and immigrants, with capital and financial literacy;
- Branches, a community organization active in southern and northern Miami-Dade focused on micro-businesses;
- Economic Development Council of South Miami-Dade, a not-for-profit economic development organization representing municipalities and business organizations in southern Miami-Dade County;
- Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, the oldest Black chamber of commerce in South Florida, which provides training, networking and consulting for black, minority and women-owned businesses;

- Prospera, an economic development non-profit specialized in providing bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their business
- StartUP FIU Procurement, a university-based incubator program for minority-owned businesses seeking procurement opportunities.

Together, they will provide one-on-one assistance in the areas of business development, access to capital and financial assistance, contracting and procurement, as well as training, guidance in selecting resources, and networking opportunities.

“The Community Navigators Pilot Program is a critical tool for supporting the unique needs of our businesses owned by women, veterans, and economically disadvantaged individuals,” said Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, member of the U.S. House of Representatives Small Business Committee. “I am so excited to see this new program benefit the Florida Small Business Development Center (FSBDC) at FIU. This SBDC has been a crucial resource for my office as we continue to assist small business owners all over the 27th district.”

The FSBDC provides no-cost consulting and guidance on topics including financial management, business strategy, access to capital and market analysis. The center began offering services in Miami-Dade County in 2014 and expanded to Monroe County in October 2018.

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About FIU Business:

Florida International University's [College of Business](#) plays a pivotal role in the development of global business leaders. With more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students, FIU Business is widely recognized for its expertise in international business, real estate, data analytics, entrepreneurship, healthcare management, and a broad range of financial services. Its faculty ranks among the Top 100 in the U.S. in UT Dallas' survey of business research productivity. For more information about FIU Business, visit www.business.fiu.edu.

About FIU:

[Florida International University](#) is a [Top 50 public university](#) that drives real talent and innovation in Miami and globally. Very High research (R1) activity and high social mobility come together at FIU to uplift and accelerate learner success in a global city by focusing in the areas of environment, health, innovation, and justice. Today, FIU has two campuses and multiple centers. FIU serves a diverse student body of more than 58,000 and 260,000 Panther alumni. U.S. News and World Report places dozens of FIU programs among the best in the nation, including international business at No. 2. Washington Monthly Magazine ranks FIU among the top 20 public universities contributing to the public good.