

# Look

BUSINESSES WORTH SUPPORTING

PEOPLE WORTH MEETING

STORIES WORTH READING



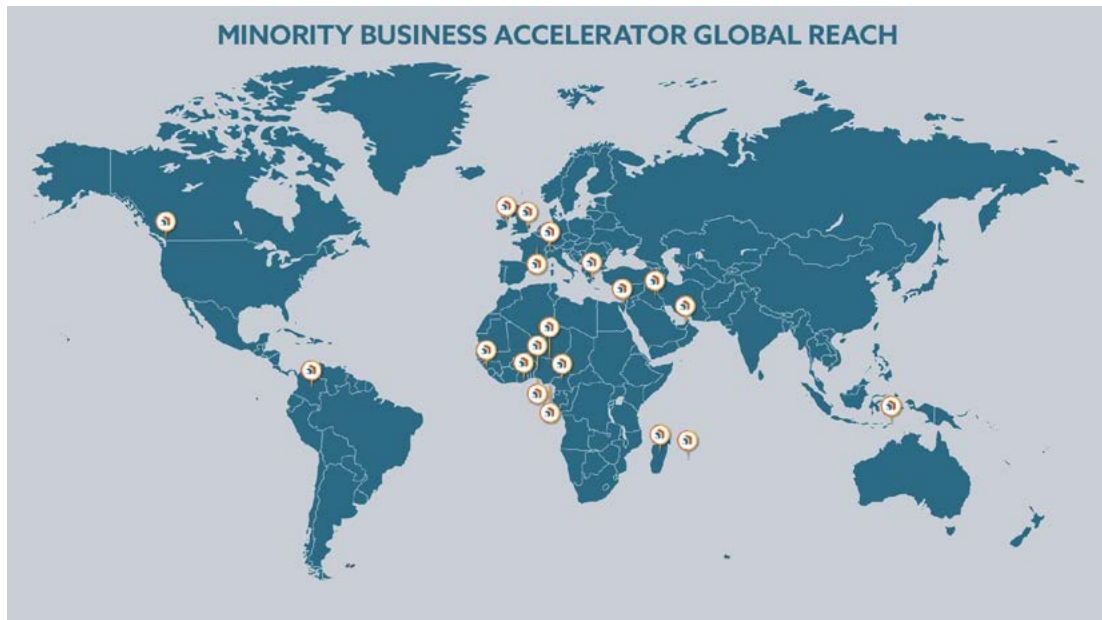
TAMPA BAY  
CHAMBER

Economic Inclusion

When we started our Vision 2026 plan, we did that with a focus on what we wanted to see into the future, not just in 2016. As you'll see in the pages of this Annual Report, it's that clarity of focus and purpose that allowed us to accomplish great things in 2023 to the benefit of our region. The alignment of programs continues to strengthen the Tampa Bay Chamber as a **Hub For Business**, a **Catalyst** for business success, and as an **Inclusive Organization** with best practices fueling economic success across neighborhoods.

Last year, we saw the involvement of Chamber Members take off and Membership grow exponentially. We remain in the top 2% of Chambers in the country, accredited and rated 5-Stars by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Also in 2023, more than 5 chambers of commerce from across the country looked to our member engagement, community partnerships and programming as models of "best practices". Chambers from as far away as Oklahoma, hosted their annual benchmarking trips here in the Tampa Bay region to learn more.

And in a thrilling moment our Minority Business Accelerator was globally recognized during the World Chambers Congress in Switzerland, last July! Since then, more than 20 chambers of commerce, and business development organizations in 5 continents have reached out to Chamber staff hoping to replicate components of the accelerator in their own communities.



To say that I am deeply proud of these accomplishments is no exaggeration, but even deeper is my gratitude for the Chamber Members, Board of Directors and Committee Volunteers fueling the success stories spotlighted on the pages of this Annual Report. We have swung our Chamber doors wide open, so that every single member is welcomed to come in, grab a seat at the table, roll up their sleeves and get to work!

To our member companies I say thank you for an unforgettable year! And to the reader who is not, I say join us and be part of a movement where ordinary people do extraordinary things for the good of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Rohrlack'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Rohrlack, DBA, CCE  
President & CEO  
Tampa Bay Chamber



# MINORITY BUSINESS ACCELERATOR



Our partnership with **TECO** and **Tampa Bay Buccaneers** continued in 2023. During each home game, a member of MBA Cohort '23 was spotlighted.



MBA Cohort '23 learned the power of S.W.O.T. - examining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in their business.



A proud moment for all six MBA entrepreneurs in Cohort '23 upon completion of their program.



**Canviiv** (Cohort '24) secured a historic contract with the largest healthcare group purchasing organization in the USA.



**Paragon Cyber Solutions** (Cohort '24) won Small Business of the Year in the category of 5- 20 Employees.



June - The Minority Business Accelerator was a finalist in the Best Chamber Model of Innovation category, competing with chambers from Turkey, China and Chicago.

The Minority Business Accelerator launched its first Cohort in 2018 and by 2023 had graduated 5 Cohorts of MBA entrepreneurs. The accelerator's targeted curriculum spans approximately 2 years and serves Black and Hispanic owned businesses and organizations in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Polk and Manatee counties. Covering all major aspects of owning a business, it's designed to increase capacity, create jobs and build wealth, and was the first accelerator of its kind designed for small businesses in the region rather than startups.

**253+**

**Total Employed by  
'23 & '24 Cohorts**

**\$8.14M+**

**Gross Sales**

**\$400K+**

**Company Secured  
Capital**

**MBA COHORT 2023**

- Floyd Freeman, Cabletics
- John Diaz, Ceiba Ltd. Co.
- Max Volmar, Jr., M&G Janitorial Services
- Charles Jackson, Mijan Construction
- Damaris Ortega, Ortega Custom Cabinets
- Kalvin Weathersby, Power Civil Construction Services

**WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS**

In June 2023, the Tampa Bay Chamber was one of only two chambers of commerce from the U.S.A. invited to speak at the World Chambers Congress about the accelerator. Since then, more than 20 organizations from around the world have followed up with us to learn more about it and specific components they might replicate in their own communities.



*All metrics are self-reported.*



**Learn More About The Minority Business Accelerator**



# MINORITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM



In addition to quarterly workshops, MEP entrepreneurs are connected to supplier diversity programs across the region.



The Management Suite Workshop gave MEP participants insightful information on leadership.



The creative behind the Chamber's 2023 Year in Review video debuted at Annual Meeting was MEP graduate Kinard Robinson of **Empowering Creative**. Filming took place at **Vu Studio** Tampa Bay.



MEP entrepreneur Meloni Waller fine-tuned her public speaking, serving as the Moderator for the Chamber's Work Redefined State of the Workforce breakfast in the fall.



MEP entrepreneurs learned from subject experts at the Florida Small Business Development Center at USF.



MEP 2023 graduate, **M & R Café Southern Cuisine**, went on to be profiled by Fox 13's local cooking show.

The Minority Empowerment Program provides support, mentoring and training to small businesses and non-profit organizations not yet ready to scale. MEP entrepreneurs benefit from the access of a Fit 3 level membership, gaining knowledge and expanding their network during the early stages of their business trajectory. This targeted approach serves Black and Hispanic owned organizations to codify more inclusive approaches to business growth in our region.

Sponsors make it possible to host quarterly, specialized programming and cover nearly all the costs of each participant's top-level membership during the program year. Many advance to our Minority Business Accelerator with its higher threshold of annual earnings.



## Minority Empowerment Program

### MEP 2023 ENTREPRENEURS

100 Black Men of Tampa Bay, Inc.  
The Color of Wellness Media  
Creamy Crack Body Cream  
Creative Growth Services  
Edward Jones Advisor  
Halo Solutions, LLC  
Imperial Cabinets & Millwork  
Kidney Care Coaches  
M & R Catering  
The Mainframe  
The Management Suite  
MB Strategies  
Rolanda McDuffie CPA  
The Spa by Folashade  
Spanish Consultants Inc.  
Vikings Junk Removal  
We Think Marketing Group, Inc.  
Wing Boys Deli  
zSofTech Solutions



[Learn More About The Minority Empowerment Program](#)



# BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP



Business Around the Bay session led by 2023 Board Chair Brian Butler, brought together business leaders from various sectors.



Circle of Influence sponsored by **Florida Blue** - June sold-out event featured Greg Holland, the newly appointed President & CEO of the **Straz Center for the Performing Arts**.



Get Connected in December was the last of 6 speed networking events in 2023.



Competitive Edge: The Entrepreneur Experience in April featured business owners of **Bay Food Brokerage**, **Ortega Custom Cabinets**, and **Willa's**.



Coffee Connection - These quarterly events are hosted by the Chamber's Ambassador Committee.



Tampa Bay @ Sunset in April brought members together at **Saint Leo University's** Tampa campus inside this former cigar factory in West Tampa.

In 2023, our Chamber experienced a 38% increase in event attendance, with engagements up at every level of membership. For the first time since 2020, we surpassed pre-COVID event attendance. We highlight seven events bringing Tampa Bay businesses together

**12,600+**

**Attendees**

**180+**

**Events**

#### **AFTER 5**

The evening networking events are held quarterly at Chamber Member companies in various industries

#### **BUSINESS AROUND THE BAY**

Chamber Members in top Fit levels and Board Members are invited to these productive forums, discussing current challenges in the workforce and sharing intentional approaches to diversifying teams and boards.

#### **CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE**

This breakfast series is offered exclusively to top-tier members three times per year and connects Chamber members with key influencers in the region.

#### **COFFEE CONNECTION**

The morning networking events are held quarterly at our Chamber office and hosted by the Ambassador Committee, helping guests make the most of their Chamber benefits.

#### **COMPETITIVE EDGE**

This series sparks courageous, insightful conversations, helping members with professional development, employee relations, and the realities of entrepreneurship.

#### **GET CONNECTED**

This interactive speed-networking event has Chamber members deliver their 2-minute elevator pitch to other guests in attendance in a fun, supported environment.

#### **TAMPA BAY @SUNSET**

These unique gatherings happen six times per year and are exclusively hosted by Chamber member companies and organizations.



[Learn More About The Chamber's Networking Events](#)





Success Story: Ice Cold Air

[Watch Video](#)

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Success Stories: Livy O's & Ortega Custom Cabinets

[Watch Video](#)

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Building Legacy

[Watch Video](#)

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Minority Business Accelerator Recognized at World Chambers Congress

[Read Story](#)

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Minority Business Accelerator & Minority Empowerment Program Featured in "2023 In Review" Video

[Watch Video](#)