

# ANNUAL REPORT

PROGRAM YEAR 2020 - 2021

**we**VENTURE®

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER at FLORIDA TECH  
BISK COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



# Respond and Recover

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Navigating the second year of a global pandemic, **weVENTURE Women's Business Center in the Bisk College of Business at Florida Tech** remained on the front lines of local efforts to mitigate the economic challenges facing many small businesses.



weVENTURE WBC staff assisted businesses with applying for federal relief programs like Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and *Economic Injury Disaster Loan* (EIDL) and hosted webinars focused on COVID-19 strategic response. We also began a new Peer Group model of targeted business support, pairing small groups of clients with a subject matter expert to work through timely strategic challenges like Human Resource Management (HRM), Safety and Operations, and Digital Marketing.

Thanks to funding from the CARES Act, weVENTURE WBC was able to provide our signature IGNITE 360(R) Business Mentoring Program at no cost to COVID impacted businesses and hire additional business coaches. This **expanded capacity allowed us to better support businesses throughout the Space and Treasure Coasts**. In fact, weVENTURE WBC was able to help almost three times the number of clients we normally serve in a year. This is an incredible increase in client load and we thank the 75+ mentors and volunteers who stepped up to help as well.

In July of 2021, just as the number of COVID-19 cases began to spike again in Florida, our funding from the CARES Act was set to expire. However, in August the U.S. Small Business Administration announced **weVENTURE WBC was one of just 14 centers around the country** to be awarded additional CARES Act funding to continue our COVID-19 emergency response programs. The Resiliency and Recovery Demonstration (RRD) grant went into effect in September of 2021, and will allow our center to continue operating with increased capacity until August of 2022.

This report is a summary of weVENTURE WBC programs and their impact from October 2020 to September 2021, our core SBA grant program year. It has been our honor to be a resource to small businesses during this difficult time. **#WEmeanbusiness**



# ECONOMIC IMPACT

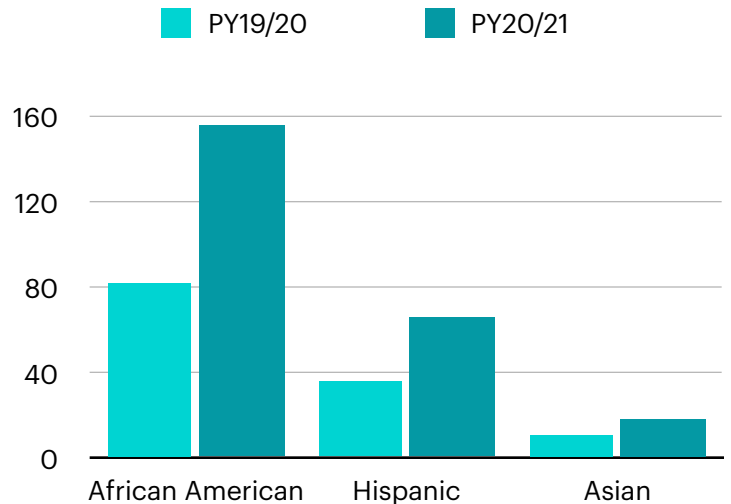
PROGRAM YEAR 2020 - 2021

**917** Unique Clients Served

**258** start-up businesses (in business >1yr)

**69%** of clients are women; **31%** men

By focusing our outreach efforts, we were able to nearly double the number of African American and Hispanic clients served.



**502** small business owners received **1,281** hours of 1:1 counseling and coaching provided by our team of over 75 mentors, subject matter experts and Florida Tech Professors, in addition to our outstanding team of Business Coaches on staff.

**62** Group Training sessions were held, almost all virtually due to COVID-19, providing **878** clients with the support they needed to navigate this unprecedented time.

**77** NEW Jobs Created

**849** Jobs Retained

**\$675,520** PPP Loans

**\$509,180** NEW Business Loans

**\$596,570** Equity Investments

## REGIONAL SUPPORT

Thanks to funding from the CARES Act, weVENTURE WBC focused on making our services more accessible to clients on the Treasure Coast, more than doubling the number of clients from Indian River and St. Lucie Counties.

	% of Clients by Region		
	Space Coast (Brevard)	Treasure Coast (Indian River & St. Lucie)	Central FL
PY19/20	75%	7%	18%
PY20/21	67%	16%	16%

**147** Unique Clients

## “CLIENT TESTIMONIALS”

“It has been a difficult year for human resource professionals. The weVENTURE Peer Group has been a tremendous resource. The group sessions and 1:1 consultations have helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses and how to best communicate and serve my team.

**Very thankful and would recommend this Peer Group to others!”**



**Stephanie Snyder,**  
HR, Rock Paper Simple



“Lovett’s Adventure World is an all-inclusive, indoor family entertainment center coming to Port St. Lucie, Florida. Partnering with weVENTURE WBC has been an amazing experience as they provide expert business mentoring via the **IGNITE 360 Program**. Working with Kathy Register and Jay Brewer, we were able to build a strategic plan to take our business to the next level. We gained valuable information and new business relationships.

**We are excited to continue working with weVENTURE WBC!”**  
*Rachel Lovett, CEO Lovett’s Adventure World*

**“I was skeptical** thinking 5 weeks was not much time to change my mindset. I had an anxiety and stress problem. **I feel more peaceful and optimistic.** I recommend this program for someone who is looking to positively reframe their mindset and come out stronger after each session.

**The Brave Method Peer Group program is an investment in yourself with a big ROI!”**



**Sara LaManna**  
Owner, Greater Florida Insurance



Read more client testimonials on our website at:  
<https://weventure.fit.edu/about-weventure/client-testimonials/>

## NEW PROGRAMS

The Upstart Cocoa Minority and Small Business Program was formulated to encourage businesses to locate or relocate to Cocoa, while supporting minority entrepreneurs with business skill sets, start-up and marketing expenses. The forgivable loan is available to racial minorities and women-owned small businesses, who **receive personalized support via the weVENTURE WBC IGNITE 360 program**. Two businesses were selected in this inaugural year of the program, which we hope will expand in the coming years. To learn more, visit [www.choosecocoa.org](http://www.choosecocoa.org)



The U.S. Small Business Administration selected a multi-institutional collaboration led by the Florida High Tech Corridor (The Corridor) among eight winners of its first Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Catalyst Competition, established this year to recognize model partnerships addressing the gaps for underrepresented entrepreneurs nationwide.

### the florida high tech corridor

The Corridor team aims to elevate the role of underrepresented women-owned businesses across the 23-county region's innovation ecosystem by enhancing the inclusivity and participation of women entrepreneurs in the SBIR program.

Four university-based entrepreneur support organizations across the state, including **weVENTURE WBC at Florida Tech**, are partnering with The Corridor to establish a structured network of mentors and role models, equip women entrepreneurs to develop competitive SBIR grant applications and streamline commercialization pathways for their resulting STEM innovations. Available data shows just 13% of SBIR grant recipients nationally are women – a statistic The Corridor team eventually hopes to change through this intentional partnership approach. To learn more visit <https://floridahightech.com/innovation-investments/sbir-facilitation/>

weVENTURE WBC was 1 of 14 organizations in the country awarded additional funding from the Women's Business Centers (WBC) Resiliency and Recovery Demonstration Grant under the SBA's [Office of Women's Business Ownership \(OWBO\)](#). The purpose of the grants is to establish or continue innovative projects that aim to improve service delivery, training, and support provided to women-owned businesses impacted by COVID-19.



"The growth and recovery of women-owned small businesses is essential to our nation's economy. During the pandemic, our Women's Business Centers have played an integral role in meeting the needs of women entrepreneurs during an especially challenging time," said Natalie Madeira Cofield, Assistant Administrator for SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership.

## MAKING HEADLINES



weVENTURE WBC Executive Director Kathryn Rudloff was a guest columnist in Everything Brevard Magazine throughout 2021. In case you missed it, here is a quick recap:

### **July: No Pressure, No Diamonds!**

Diamonds and other precious gems are valuable because we appreciate the unique conditions necessary to make them and are inspired by their unique beautiful qualities. How precious then, are each of us? We are all diamonds in the making.

### **September: Validation for Work at Home**

Earlier this year, LinkedIn announced they were adding “Stay at Home Mom” and other caretaker titles to the list of available job titles for individuals to add to their online, public resume. The announcement came in response to negative backlash, after 2.4 million American women left the workforce from March 2020 to March 2021 and publicly beseeched the company to provide better options to reflect the career choices they were making to support their families during an unprecedented year.

While this might seem like it is a small change, let me tell you this is a BIG DEAL in terms of raising awareness to the significant impact taking time off can have on women and their careers, as well as the economic impact their unpaid labor has on our economy.

### **November: Small Businesses Should Embrace AI**

Just as the invention of the printing press and steam engine ushered in periods of rapid global change, spurring the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution respectively, the rapid development of computing technology and data networks has ushered in the next phase of global economic change. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers small businesses some new and unique ways to work smarter, not harder.

## MAJOR EVENTS



*Kelley Higney*  
FEMALE SMALL BUSINESS OWNER  
OF THE YEAR AWARD



*Rochelle Hood*  
EXCELLENCE IN MENTORSHIP  
AWARD



*Dr. Kelli Hunsucker*  
DR. MARY HELEN MCCAY STEM  
AWARD



*Shalarie Highsmith*  
WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE  
INDIVIDUAL CHAMPION AWARD



*Lockheed Martin*  
WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE  
BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARD



*Tara Pagliarini*  
ZONTA YELLOW ROSE FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY  
SERVICE AWARD

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**2021**  
*Women Who  
Rock Winners*



2021 Women Who Rock Awards were held virtually on March 23, 2021. The winners were selected from a record 65 women and businesses nominated by their peers and the general public across five categories. They were announced during the annual celebration in honor of Women's History Month.

"We are honored to celebrate such hard-working, deserving women and local businesses who have persevered during an extremely challenging year and are wonderful examples of leadership in action," said weVENTURE WBC Executive Director, Kathryn Rudloff. "Through their commitment to helping others, each has demonstrated the heart of a servant leader and helped create a community where women are supported, encouraged and inspired."



Appreciating the value of lessons learned the hard way is only possible if we give ourselves time to reflect and learn from them. That inspired the theme for the IMPACT Summit, “No Pressure, No Diamonds.”

The three speakers at the IMPACT Summit each presented to the full audience and then led a breakout session so participants could dive deeper with a small group. Here are the speakers:

- Angie Sullivan, owner of Stumpy’s Hatchet House in Cocoa, shared her story of strength and determination in the face of adversity. She inspires women everywhere to find positive growth opportunities, even in life’s darkest moments.
- Stephanie Lopez, Ph.D., an executive coach, is passionate about leadership development and team cohesion. A Florida Tech alumna, Lopez specifically helps leaders become more authentic and self-aware, which enables greater resilience, stamina and flexibility in the face of demanding and difficult leadership challenges.
- Lauren Hodges is co-founder of Performance on Purpose, LLC and founder of Total Body Training, LLC, two performance coaching companies focused on advancing leadership. She works with leaders and their teams around the world to help them show up at their best both personally and professionally.

One lucky participant also received a custom-designed diamond necklace by [Staci Sullivan’s Jewelry & Design Studio](#). One raffle ticket was included with registration.







*With the right shoes,  
She can conquer the world!*

On November 18, 2021, **450 women and a few lucky guys** came together for an unforgettable evening in the Sun Aviation Hangar in Vero Beach. The evening began with a wine tasting from 6 different California brands while enjoying lite bites and shopping from 10 local woman-owned businesses in the marketplace. The Wall of Wine sold out in 30 minutes and the Mystery Bag and Key to the Closet Raffles were a huge hit! Violinist Char Good dazzled the stage as guests transitioned to the seated portion of the program. Emcee Anna Valencia-Tillery did a fantastic job leading the show, Cindy Grossman announced the Best in Shoe Awards and the EverGreen Media ladies introduced our King of Sole! Auctioneer Geoff Cowen got the entire crowd excited about the 5 live auction packages, **raising over \$60,000 in 30 minutes**. The grand finale was a jaw-dropping fashion show featuring fashions from four local woman-owned boutiques. In total, the event brought in just **over \$150,000 net profit** to support weVENTURE WBC programming for the next two years!

View pictures at: <https://www.facebook.com/winewomenandshoesverobeach>

*Thank you to all the sponsors and the many volunteers who made this event possible!*

**TED**Women2021

Thursday, Dec. 2  
on Zoom

Presented by

**TED<sup>x</sup>**  
FloridaTechWomen

TEDxFloridaTechWomen, an independently organized TEDx event, took place on December 2, 2021. This special Zoom-based gathering was open to Florida Tech students, parents, faculty, staff and alumni in the U.S. and around the world. Featuring a selection of speakers from the annual TEDWomen 2021 conference, attendees also had the opportunity to participate in breakout discussion groups.

The independently produced event, operated under a license from TED, was organized by a committee of staff from weVENTURE, Student Affairs and Alumni Affairs with a shared desire to expand knowledge and empower the Panther community to serve the diverse economic, cultural and societal needs of local, state, national and international communities. You can watch and read more about the speakers at <https://tedwomen2021.ted.com/>

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- [Indira Ceville Borgella](#) | Treasure Coast Communication
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- [Karen Montas](#) | Johnson & Montas, P.A.
- [Rebecca Moon](#) | Rodan + Fields
- [Shayla Murray](#) | Oil of Joy Church Ministries
- [Dr. Theodore Richardson](#) | Nathan M. Bisk College of Business at Florida Tech
- [Wendy Romeu](#) | Alluvionic
- [Tracy Sorzano](#) | PNC Bank
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- [Linda Stout](#) | SunTrust Bank now Truist
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**Mission:**

Dedicated to igniting the economic power of women and entrepreneurs. We partner with clients to create sustainable business growth that strengthens “Main Street USA” and assists with talent attraction for large corporations.

**Intention:**

We venture to be the leading regional voice and resource for all women in business. Offer support and programming for every stage of a business’s life span and leadership development for emerging female leaders.

**Powered By:**

Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The federal grant is matched by investment from community partners, private grants and donors like you.



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