

Knight Foundation granting more than \$1 million to fuel Miami's startup scene

BY ROB WILE

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Raul Moas, Miami program director of the Knight Foundation. JOSE A. IGLESIAS
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The Knight Foundation announced Thursday approximately \$1.1 million in spending to spur entrepreneurship in Miami.

Eight local groups will be awarded as much as \$250,000 each. The largest grantee is Black Angels Miami, a soon-to-be-launched organization of black investors focused on increasing spending on minority-owned startups. Other recipients include Venture Cafe Miami, the Miami Herbert Business School, and the Idea Center at Miami Dade College.

Knight has also allocated funds to support the launch of two other local entrepreneurship organizations: Function, described as “a membership organization that connects Miami’s investor and private wealth community” designed to fund early-stage tech startups; and Craftspeople, which will

hold monthly workshops led by “seasoned founders and venture builders” to help mentor fledgling startups.

Raul Moas, Knight program director for Miami, said the investment announcement reflects Knight’s interest in helping Miami “level up” as a startup, innovation and entrepreneurship center along the lines of Austin or Atlanta. In 2019, a Knight-backed report concluded that the groundwork to build successful high-growth companies had been laid, but that further investment was needed.

“We’ve broken through,” Moas said. “We now have viable, growing companies that have found success. The question is: What gets us to the next echelon, and helps our ability to attract and retain exceptional talent and capital.”

Here is the full list of grantees:

Black Angels Miami (\$250,000): “To contribute to a more diverse and inclusive venture investment landscape within Miami’s startup community by supporting the launch of Black Angels Miami, an angel investment group connecting its members to top-notch startups while also increasing the number of black angel investors.”

Function Collective (\$240,000): “To elevate Miami as a source of investment capital in the global venture capital ecosystem by supporting the launch of Function, a membership organization that connects Miami’s investor and private wealth community and activates them in early-stage technology investments across the hemisphere.”

Venture Cafe Miami (\$160,000): “To expand the diversity of high-growth businesses in Miami and engender a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem through *Passport*, a program that trains and connects founders in low-growth businesses with each other and with partners to enable these businesses to transition to higher-growth.”

Craftspeople (\$140,000): “To increase the availability of high-growth company building expertise so that Miami’s founders do not have to look elsewhere for guidance and mentorship by supporting the launch of Craftspeople, a membership organization that brings together entrepreneurs through monthly workshops led by seasoned founders and venture builders.”

Black Men Talk Tech (\$100,000): “To support more successful tech ventures led by black men by better connecting black entrepreneurs and investors through the expansion of the Black Men Talk Tech conference.”

Miami Herbert Business School (\$100,000): “To increase the flow of global leaders and knowledge coming through Miami by supporting a speakers series featuring distinguished leaders in business and venture building.”

The Idea Center at Miami Dade College (\$50,000): “To create additional avenues for new participants to enter Miami’s startup ecosystem, and to create a denser, more familiar community of entrepreneurs and high-potential talent by supporting the local chapter of 1 Million Cups, a national network of weekly meetups by and for entrepreneurs.”

Out In Tech (\$50,000): “To support community building and career advancement within Miami’s startup community for LGBTQ+ stakeholders by supporting the launch of the Miami chapter of Out in Tech.”



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