- [**Technology**](#)

South Florida initiative trains local talent for tech careers, tackles 'brain drain' problem

Employers, educators and students gathered at Miami Dade College on Feb. 5 for Miami Tech Works' Future Workforce Development summit. *JORGE CASTILLO*

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South Florida has a challenge.

Businesses say they can't find enough qualified technology workers to fill open roles. Meanwhile, new university graduates with technology degrees report they cannot access job opportunities in the region.

Miami Tech Works is filling that gap. The group, an initiative that connects employers and educators to build a sustainable job pipeline, reports it has helped train 1,000 people for technology industry careers since its launch, with a focus on in-demand roles like data scientists and software engineers. Half of that group has been matched with full-time jobs while others have been placed in internships or temporary project-based learning roles.

"We want to dispel the statement that there's no tech talent in South Florida," Miami Tech Works Director Terri-Ann Brown said Wednesday during the group's Future Workforce Development summit at Miami Dade College. "We know that's not true."

'We need to be intentional about creating opportunities'

Founded two years ago, Miami Tech Works is an initiative powered by a $10 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge.

The initiative collaborates with businesses and local colleges like Miami Dade College and Florida International University to match technology students and graduates with work experience that can help them land entry-level tech jobs.

South Florida gained more than 66,000 new tech jobs between 2020 and 2023, Miami Tech Works reports. Those jobs span sectors, with everything from cruise lines to home builders in need of software engineers, cybersecurity specialists and other technology roles.

While local colleges and universities are graduating students with technology degrees, many struggle to secure jobs in the tri-county area. Instead, large companies often import talent or hire remote workers for those positions.

That's not necessarily a slight on the local workforce said Antonio Delgado, vice president of innovation and tech partnerships at Miami Dade College. In some cases, companies are simply stuck in the status quo and turning to the same recruiters or universities they've always worked with to fill open roles. Other businesses are not even aware of the kind of programs offered at local institutions such as Miami Dade College, which has the state's first bachelor's degree program in artificial intelligence.

"Big companies need to be intentional about creating opportunities for interns and early-career employees from South Florida," he told the *Business Journal*. "If you don't invest in local talent, how can the ecosystem keep growing?" Graduates who are unable to find work locally often relocate to other cities or states, part of the Miami's "brain drain" problem, Delgado said.

IT management firm Kaseya, health tech company eMed, investment firm Blackstone and homebuilder Lennar are examples of large companies that have established internships and other opportunities to help local technology graduates enter the workforce, he said.

For example, Miami-based Lennar added more than 100 tech interns from local colleges in the last year.

"We're using AI, robotics for 3D-printed homes and drones to survey land," Cristina V. Rodriguez, director of early careers at Lennar, said during a panel discussion at the Future Workforce Development summit. "We're a tech company that happens to build homes."

Matching small businesses with local talent

It's not that every business is reluctant to hire South Florida locals. Some can't afford to.

The Miami-area is a region dominated by small and medium-sized businesses, a challenge for people searching for internships or early career training. Many small companies do not have the budget or time to train young workers on the job.

Miami Tech Works is stepping in to make it easier. The group covers the costs to place local college students and new grads in temporary micro-internships at businesses that otherwise couldn't take them on.

The project-based learning roles give tech grads real-world experience they can put on their resume to help them find a full-time job. Some students have gone on to get hired by companies like Meta and Amazon.

Large businesses are assisting with the effort. Miami Tech Works reports Blackstone is funding an initiative to place 350 interns at small businesses in South Florida.

Delgado said there also needs to be a focus on branding. He said educators and economic development officials should focus on telling the story of everything South Florida has to offer, such as Miami Dade College's AI and cybersecurity programs, FIU's College of Engineering and Computing and the University of Miami's health care innovations.

"It needs to be widely understood that if a business has an opening, these schools have talent that can be tapped," he said.