The Miami Foundation, with the help of a $20 million, three-year grant from Wells Fargo, is launching a Small Business Initiative to help historically disadvantaged and diverse-owned small businesses in Miami own more of their businesses’ assets, such as property, equipment, and technology.

Open for Business Initiative

The Small Business Stakeholder Advisory Group is a leadership circle of local visionaries with deep expertise about the small business ecosystem who will inform and advise the Foundation and guide our strategic thinking on investments related to this initiative.

All invited individuals demonstrate the following essential qualities for participation:

- Deep love and commitment to our community
- Prioritization of diversity, accessibility, and inclusion - focused on elevating voices, spreading power equitably and increasing opportunity for all
- Enthusiasm for collective impact – strong desire to find new ways to collaborate and connect across issue areas and lines of difference
- Passion for ensuring the success of minority-led, small businesses in Miami

Responsibilities

- Actively participate in quarterly virtual meetings with the Foundation for at least a 1-year term
- Share their expertise at meetings as both an individual and a representative of their respective organization
- Serve as a phone-a-friend for Foundation as appropriate throughout the year related to this initiative

Participants may be paid a small annual honorarium.
MILEYKA BURGOS-FLORES
Executive Director
The Allapattah Collaborative CDC

Mileyka Burgos-Flores is a Dominican-American activist in Miami, Florida. She is the founding Executive Director of The Allapattah Collaborative, CDC, a non-profit organization focused on implementing place making techniques to foster identity, supporting wealth building strategies for marginalized communities of color and advocating for policies/procedures that support equitable, comprehensive and sustainable community development. Mileyka holds a bachelor degree from the University of Miami and a master degree from Florida International University.

She has dedicated much of her time to advocating for social justice in marginalized communities by establishing and assisting organizations focused on developing youth, empowering people, and celebrating culture. She is an avid advocate of strategies that foster equity, upward mobility, identity and economic vitality in immigrant communities of color.

In 2017, Ms. Burgos was selected as a “Neighborhood Hero” to join a group of community activists who lead social innovation projects to move forward the City of Miami. In this program, she focused on creating a pathway of ownership for small business owners who are being displaced from their long-standing storefronts. In the past ten years, she has focused on the Little Santo Domingo section of the City of Miami by developing strong partnerships and more in-depth knowledge of the issues facing this community, its history, and the work of community leaders who came before her.

Ms. Burgos-Flores is the founding Vice President of Miami Next Leaders and a previous board member of Dade Heritage Trust, Allapattah Community Advisory Council, The Advocate Program and FIU Research Center for Minority Institutions. She was the 2013-2014 Executive Director of the Dominican American National Foundation and later joined the YMCA of South Florida as a Senior Program Director managing high profile grants and programs. She is a 2016 University of South Florida Community Real Estate Development Fellow, 2017 Miami's New Leaders Council Fellow, 2018 Radical Partner's Leadership Lab Neighborhood Heroes Fellow, 2019 University of Miami Community Scholars in Affordable Housing and the 2019 NALCAB's Pete Garcia Community & Economic Development Fellowship.
A South Florida native, Santra is the Executive Director of the Miami Workers Center, a membership-based organization, organizing towards dignity, power, and self-determination with domestic workers, tenants, and families in Miami, FL. Santra developed her own leadership as an anti-classism and anti-racism community advocate and is committed to centering the leadership of Black and Immigrant working-class people. Santra has been very active in her community, founding Avanse Ansanm, an organization that engages, connects, and builds power among Haitian-American Millennials. Santra graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor's in Health Science, and from Florida International University with a Master of Public Health in Policy and Management.
Fabiana Estrada is the Director of Lending for the Southeast Region for Ascendus.

She joined this Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) in 2010.

During Fabiana’s management as Regional Director, her community received more than $3.6 million in capital which sustained over 600 jobs in local neighbors. In addition, Ascendus supports with financial education to minority racial/ethnic groups, immigrants, and women entrepreneurs. Because of that Fabiana represented Ascendus in 2020 at the Senate Committee Hearing to work on resources for an equitable and sustainable recovery for small business owners affected by the Covid 19 pandemic.

In 2012, The South Florida Community Development Coalition recognized Fabiana’s achievements with the Economic Opportunity Award and more recently the SBA awarded Ascendus as the Mission Based Lender for two consecutive years -2018-2019- and the SBA State Community Lender for 2019.

Fabiana is from Argentina where she graduated from the University of Buenos Aires with a degree in law.
Joan M. Godoy is a powerful and resourceful connector by nature. Proud to own and run Radical Partners, a Miami-based social impact accelerator that invests in leaders, engages locals, co-designs solutions, and builds coalitions to strengthen communities. She spends her life promoting opportunities and elevating the voices of others, through leadership and community engagement programs, strategic consulting, coaching, trainings, and coalitions that ignite and accelerate change. She's one of the co-founders of the Fuckup Nights Movement in Miami, a board member for The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade and Philanthropy Miami, a proud alumni of the Global Shapers Community, and an idealist by choice.

Joan a Clinical Psychologist, with a masters degree in International NGOs, and 15+ years of intercultural and international work experience in social impact (Guatemala, The Netherlands, Costa Rica, Chile and the United States), eager to transform lives and systems, together.
Michaeljohn Green currently serves as the Vice President, Fund Director at the Dade County Federal Credit Union. Mj has lived in 6 states but moved to Miami Florida from Seattle Washington. He studied Management information Systems and Economics at Harris Stowe State University, he proceeded to work in grass roots organizing with Acorn but later found a home working for one the nation's top CDFI's in Justine Petersen. His success and passion for finance lead him to jobs at Bank of America, JPMorgan, Well Fargo and The Bank of Montreal. While working with the Private Wealth Team at The Bank of Montreal managing over a half a billion dollars with not one black or brown client, creating wealth in minority communities has now become his calling. With that passion working with a Miami-based Community Development Corporation and managing the CDFI seemed to be a natural fit.

As Fund Manager of the Community Fund of North Miami Dade, Mj started a small business lending program focused on minority entrepreneurs. Most recently Mr. Green has help in the creation of The Rise Miami Dade Fund a county supported program to support small businesses ecosystem though this current pandemic. The RISE Fund lent money to over 900 business in MDC in a 6 months period helping support over 4,500 families. Mr. Greens primary goal is to provide access to capital and technical assistance to black and other minority owned businesses. As well as working to support the diverse small business community in Miami, Mj is actively engaged in communities across the country and sits on the board of the Africa Town Land Trust, Leadership Miami Executive Team, First Place Scholars, Merit XP, The Lucy Project, MDC Small Business Enterprise Board and the African American Alliance of CDFI CEO's.

Other than being advocate for wealth in urban communities, Mj is a basketball fan, traveler and proportionate of all things that help LMI Communities thrive.
AHMED MORI
Vice President of Community Economic Development
Catalyst Miami

As Vice President of Community Economic Development, Ahmed oversees worker and investment cooperative development, small business assistance and community building, and other programs centered on community wealth and economic democracy. As an attorney and community economic development activist, Ahmed has worked with and represented worker cooperatives, tenants battling eviction in both courts and through advocacy, and affordable housing and community development nonprofits in Miami, South Texas, and New York City. He has a JD from Columbia Law School, an MA in Political Economy from Columbia University, and a BA in Philosophy from Florida International University. Ahmed serves on the board of The Allapattah Collaborative CDC.
Pilar Guzman Zavala is the CEO of Half Moon Empanadas, a fast-casual food concept in Miami, offering over 16 flavors of Argentinian-style empanadas. Under Pilar’s leadership, Half Moon Empanadas is embarking on a national expansion to create a new food category in America, the empanada.

Before joining Half Moon Empanadas, Guzman-Zavala worked at The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation managing the National Programs grant process. Her previous work includes: Director of the Office of International Affairs for the state of Veracruz, Mexico; Consultant at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, and Marketing Director at TIYM Publishing Company, publisher of the Anuario Hispano-Hispanic Yearbook.

Pilar graduated from Georgetown University in 2005 with a Master’s Degree from the School of Foreign Service, where her studies concentrated in international economic development. She also graduated cum laude from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM, Mexico) in 2001 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

Pilar’s passion is to empower women and minority-owned entrepreneurs; as a strong local community supporter, Pilar is determined to make a difference in Miami, and in the lives of the next generation of Hispanic entrepreneurs and women. She is a Ricardo Salinas Scholarship recipient for the Aspen Institute, and a Young American Leaders Program fellow from Harvard School of Business. She is a mentor for women and food entrepreneurs in Miami. She has been a mentor to the WIN Lab Miami from Babson College, and the FIU Startup Food Lab. Pilar is a Venture Café and Impac Fund board member, and she has recently been elected board member for the Master of Science in Foreign Service Program at Georgetown University. Pilar is also a past board member of Amigos For Kids. She is also a Miami Leadership and a Miami Fellow graduate. For her commitment to her community, Pilar was awarded the top 25 most influential women in South Florida by the South Florida Business Journal.

Pilar lives with her husband, Juan and is the mother of Diego and Sofia. They live in Miami, FL.
Kenasha Paul is the Founder and CEO of the Black Professionals Network (BPN), the fastest growing degree-to-industry professional pathway organization with the mission to advance careers, power up businesses, and build up social capital for black professionals. Her work is centered on connecting like-minded black professionals together and sourcing advancement opportunities from public and private companies with a passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As of December 2021, she was named by Mayor Francis Suarez as the Director of the Venture Miami Opportunity Program, housed at FIU’s Office of Engagement as part of the novel partnership between City of Miami and Florida International University. She serves as a critical connector, alongside the Venture Miami team, by connecting women entrepreneurs of color with investors, venture capitalists, and resources in #MiamiTech.
Awards-winning television journalist, Myrna Sonora considers she did not achieve her maximum success until she was able to shape the business of Arizona's major Hispanic television stations. Professionally trained as a journalist, Myrna began her career as a reporter for WLTV Univision 23 in Miami, where she rose through the ranks to become Central American Bureau Chief and Senior Correspondent for the Univision Network, Hispanic Affairs Director for Fox Affiliate WSVN 7, News Director for WSCV Telemundo 51, and later Vice-President for News and Public Affairs of her first station, WLTV Univision 23. Myrna then became the first General Manager of a Univision television station to have come from the field of professional journalism.

As Vice-president and General Manager of the Univision and Telefutura television properties in Arizona, Myrna was tasked with building a state-of-the-art broadcast facility in Phoenix, Arizona. During her tenure, Univision 33 grew to become one of the top ten properties of the Univision Television Group, billing over $22 million, and won multiple awards, including the Best Newscast recognition from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

In 2011, Myrna became the first Regional Vice President of Prospera (then called Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida) for the South Florida region. As such, she has been responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations and growth of the organization's regional office, promoting the Prospera brand, raising local support for the mission, and building and developing a strong business consulting team for all services within the region.

During its decade of service to South Florida, with Myrna's leadership, Prospera has provided individual business consulting to more than 5,000 clients and marketed over $23 million in loans, helping those with established businesses to create or retain over 9,900 local jobs. Prospera's total economic output in the region has been $1.84 billion, with $586.3 million in labor income and $40.9 million in direct state and local tax revenues.

Myrna serves as Co-Chair of the SFCDC (South Florida Community Development Coalition) and Anchor Host for the Aspen Institute Latinos & Society Program (AILAS) Miami Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee. She was appointed by Commissioner Eileen Higgins to serve on the Miami-Dade County Economic Recovery Task Force formed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She lives in Miami and is the proud mother of Julian.
Michael Spring serves as director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, where he is responsible for supervision of a public arts agency with an annual budget of more than $53 million and a staff of more than 100. He represents the Department on numerous cultural and civic organizations including service as chairman of the board of the Florida Cultural Alliance, secretary of the board of directors of Americans for the Arts, a founding board member and officer of Americans for the Arts Action Fund, member and past President of the United States Urban Arts Federation, chairman of the 5-county regional arts alliance, the South Florida Cultural Consortium, and director of the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council.

In 2004, he helped lead the work to pass a referendum for the Building Better Communities bond program, dedicating more than $450 million for building the next generation of Miami-Dade's cultural facilities, ranging from major new art and science museums to theaters and neighborhood arts centers. In 2007, he assumed the additional responsibility of leading Miami-Dade County's outstanding Art in Public Places program, commissioning new work and caring for a collection of more than seven-hundred art works. In 2011, the Department of Cultural Affairs opened the new Arquitectonica-designed, South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center in Cutler Bay, a campus that includes a 966-seat theater, an activities and classroom building, and outdoor concert lawn.

In conjunction with a major re-organization of Miami-Dade County government, the Department also assumed responsibility in 2011 for operating three cultural facilities, formerly managed by the Parks Department: Miami-Dade County Auditorium; Caleb Auditorium; and African Heritage Cultural Arts Center. Operating and programming cultural facilities constitutes a major expansion of the Department's role in the community. From 2014 to 2020, he served as a Senior Advisor to the Mayor for the County's Cultural Affairs and Recreation portfolio, including oversight of the arts, parks and library departments.

Over the thirty-nine years he has served the Department of Cultural Affairs, Michael Spring has helped build Miami-Dade County’s cultural community into a more than a $1.4 billion annual industry comprised of more than 1,000 non-profit cultural groups and thousands of artists. He has a B.A. degree from the University of Miami and earned an M.A. in painting from New York University, involving studies in Venice, Italy. He continues to paint and pursue his interests as a visual artist.
Leo Toca is Vice President - Senior Social Impact & Sustainability Specialist with Wells Fargo managing the South Florida region. He has been with Wells Fargo since 2009 and assumed his current role in March 2021. Leo mobilizes Wells Fargo resources to maximize market leadership, team member engagement, and strategic investments to generate impactful community solutions.

He executes on enterprise-wide community programs and initiatives to promote and enhance the well-being of the communities we serve in the following focus areas: Housing Affordability, Small Business Growth, Financial Health and Sustainability. He develops and maintains relationships with key community nonprofits, government agencies and elected officials as well as internal Wells Fargo leaders and partners in Community Relations, Corporate Communications, Marketing, Government Relations, Risk/Compliance, Community Lending and Investment, Mortgage Market Outreach and Diverse Segments Representation and Inclusion.

Prior to joining Wells Fargo, Leo served as the Community Development Program Manager for JPMorgan Chase in New York. Leo’s career stretches more than twenty-four years in banking; including areas of Community Development, Community Relations and the Foundation. He has received numerous awards and recognition for his dedication and service and has been featured in several publications including Miami Today and Long Island Hispanic Magazine.

Leo has served on several local boards including Neighborhood Housing Services of South Florida, Overtown Youth Center and ACCION East. In 2011, he completed the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Leadership Miami program and was awarded the 2011 Sales and Service award from Wells Fargo for his dedication to the community.

Leo earned a BA in Economics from Fordham University and a Carroll School of Management Certificate in Corporate Community Relations from Boston College. He was a six-year member of the national Wells Fargo Diversity and Inclusion Council.
Brian Van Hook is Regional Director of Florida SBDC at Florida International University (FIU).

Florida SBDC at FIU has a team of business specialists who have worked one-on-one to help Miami-Dade and Florida Keys businesses weather the pandemic. Between 2020 and January 15, 2022 FSBDC at FIU consultants have assisted over 3,500 businesses impacted by COVID-19. During this time, SBDC consultants have secured $200.6 million in capital and $98 million in government contracts for clients. Lastly, the FSBDC at FIU also helped launch 169 new businesses in the midst of the pandemic.

Prior to joining FIU, Brian was Policy Director of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship, where he oversaw research and legislative activities. Previously, he served as legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, advising her on issues related to disaster recovery, economic development, and international trade. A native of Louisiana, Brian, has over almost seventeen years of experience with disaster recovery and business continuity. In these roles, Van Hook has assisted businesses recovering from such disasters as Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Sandy, Midwest tornadoes, and the BP oil spill.

Brian received his M.S. in International Affairs from Florida State University and his B.A. from Louisiana State University. He is a certified Business Continuity Professional.
Keon Williams is a native of Miami, Florida, born in the heart of one of Florida’s oldest Black communities called Historic Overtown. Mr. Williams has over 20 years of relevant experience in Non-profit Management, Business Development, Business Financing and Issues-based Advocacy. Mr. Williams currently serves as the CEO and President of Urban Gateways, a for-profit business enterprise and most recently served as the Assistant Director of Strategic Community Investments for Urban Philanthropies before transitioning to pursue his current ventures. Mr. Williams most impactful initiatives while at Urban Philanthropies includes navigating the organization through the successful startup of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), to provide financial and technical assistance to small businesses and emerging nonprofits in South Florida’s urban communities; The Overtown Business Boot Camp, providing residents with startup capital and technical assistance to assist with creating a new business; and Co-Founded The Urban, a 58,000 square foot, open air venue, located in Historic Overtown that will features local food trucks and popup vendors in additional to custom designed shipping containers for a centralized bar, retailers and art installations.

Mr. Williams is the past Chairman of the Overtown Community Oversight Board, whose purpose is to encourage and support housing, job creation, economic and business development, educational opportunities, historic and cultural preservation, and to provide written recommendations to the City Commission regarding those activities. Mr. Williams credits the motto “Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve,” as the bedrock of his dedication and commitment to advocating for disenfranchised communities.

Mr. Williams currently serves on the following community boards: Community Reinvestment Alliance of South Florida, Overtown Children & Youth Coalition, and The Equitable and Advocacy Collective.
LIA YAFFAR
Executive Director
Community Fund of North Miami Dade

Lia Yaffar serves as the Director for the Community Fund of North Miami Dade, a subsidiary of Opalocka Community Development Corporation (OLCDC). In this role, she is responsible for the Certified CDFI’s functions supporting its mission including small business lending and portfolio management. Lia’s work in the Community Fund also includes overseeing the technical assistance program and growing the size of funds available for lending to small businesses and affordable housing.

Prior to joining the Community Fund, Lia spent over 20 years in the financial services industry including banking, brokerage, and insurance at institutions including HSBC Bank, Espirito Santo Bank and Charles Schwab. Her most recent professional experience includes several engagements her consulting practice, Y-vas LLC, focused on business improvement. Responsibilities in prior roles in other organizations included sales management in banking and brokerage with P&L responsibility and oversight of financial and operations areas.

Lia graduated from George Washington University with an MBA in Finance and also holds a BBA from the University of Miami in Finance.

Lia has served as Director in the Salvadoran American Humanitarian Foundation (SAHF) since 2007 and as Director at the Bakehouse Art Complex, and as Treasurer since 2018. She is a native speaker of Spanish and English, is fluent in French, and has working knowledge of Portuguese.