GULF BLUE NAVIGATOR

Cohort 1 – Final Report

August 13, 2024

LEVANTA TECH

BLUE iQ

Mythos AI

OSCILLA power

seasats

V2 FORENSICS

NVision Solutions inc

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1 Executive Summary

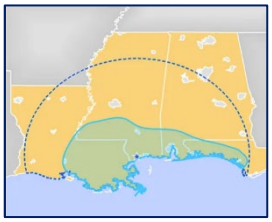
The University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Blue Navigator business accelerator is an innovative initiative designed to support blue technology startups in the sstate by providing them with access to unique regional resources, state-of-the-art facilities, and a robust network of industry, academic, and government partners. Managed by NVision Solutions Inc. within USM's larger Gulf Blue initiative, the program aims to accelerate the growth and development of startups focused on the 6 marine technology domains targeted by Gulf Blue including Aquaculture, Marine-Friendly Plastics, Ocean and Coastal Data Analytics, Smart Ports, Sea-Space Systems and Uncrewed Maritime Systems. By leveraging the distinct characteristics and challenges of the Gulf of Mexico, the program fosters the advancement of cutting-edge solutions that address critical needs in the blue economy.

1.1 Purpose and Goals of the Cohort 1 Session

The primary purpose of the Cohort 1 session was to provide a comprehensive and immersive experience for six selected blue technology startups. The program aimed to shorten their development timelines, enhance their market access, and foster strategic partnerships with key stakeholders in the region. By offering access to advanced research facilities, mentorship, networking opportunities, and year-round access to warm coastal waters, the Gulf Blue Navigator Program sought to accelerate the growth and scalability of these startups, positioning them for long-term success in the blue economy.

1.1.1 Differences from the Pilot Cohort

In 2023, USM conducted a pilot cohort to test concepts and processes before launching Cohort 1 in 2024. Lessons learned from that experience led to the following changes for Cohort 1.



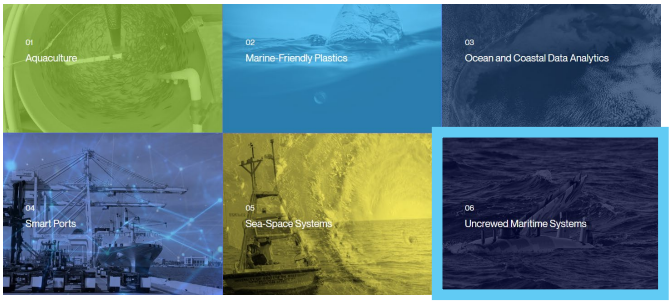
GBN Stakeholder region

Local Stakeholder Team – In the pilot cohort, USM partnered with SeaAhead in Boston, MA who runs a New England blue economy cluster. For Cohort 1, USM moved to a support team of local companies to exploit Gulf knowledge and relationships key to helping startups on a high-tempo, intensive schedule and use people personally invested in the success of the region for the long-term health and success of the accelerator. The team included USM's Gulf Blue which includes USM and the USM Research Foundation, NVision Solutions Inc.

for Program management, Fulcrum Sales and Marketing for recruitment and mentoring, and Questus for pitch deck development and market mentoring.

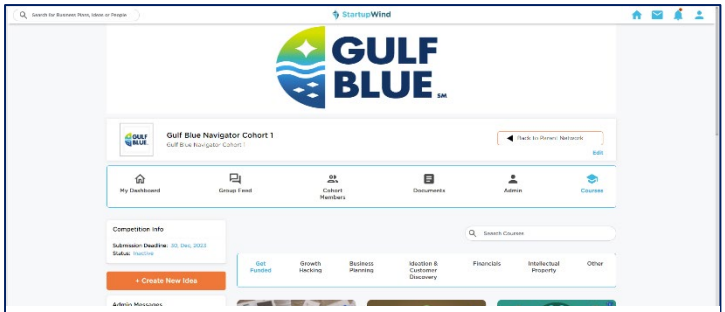
Selecting US Companies – The Selection Committee limited recruitment and applications to US companies. The Gulf Blue technology domains largely server US customers, especially the US government. The pilot cohort had two foreign companies which limited many of the potential customer interactions and site visits for national security reasons. So for Cohort 1, only US companies were targeted to maximize the impact of the accelerator on the businesses and the state.

Single Domain Focus – The pilot cohort accepted company applications from all six Gulf Blue technology domains. This approach required almost six times the amount of expert resources required to help different types of companies and made finding speakers relevant to all companies difficult. Rather than brining in speakers and experts targeted to a specific industry, the Navigator had to choose between a resource relevant to only one or two industries or stick to generic resources relevant to all businesses but which did not take full advantage of the resources unique to the Navigator. For Cohort 1, Gulf Blue selected the "Uncrewed Maritime Systems" domain as the focus which allowed for much more targeted content and even allowed several of the participants to collaborate on projects because of their shared are of interest. Gulf Blue allowed companies with smart uncrewed technologies such as buoys and sensors to participate who were in the impact radius of the technology domain.



The Navigator team selected Uncrewed Maritime Systems as the Gulf Blue technology domain for this cohort.

StartupWind Portal – USM invested in StartupWind, an AI-powered unified innovation and mentoring platform for universities, state economic development agencies, small businesses and startups. This web portal allows accelerators to scale



The Gulf Blue StartupWind platform is the Navigator always-available management portal.

their services without additional staff through always-available tools and content. Gulf Blue used it to register mentors and build profiles for them, receive startup applications for the Navigator, judge the applications, serve educational content for startups, and more. Because the portal could deliver online content at the startups' convenience which was delivered in person during the pilot cohort, it allowed Gulf Blue to reduce the timeline for the cohort session from 6 months to 4 months allowing startups to stretch their dollars further by reducing scheduled travel allowing them to accomplish more during the session by having more control over their time.

Reduced Timeline – Gulf Blue shortened the session timeline from 6 months to 4 months to maximize the cohort startups' in-person time and reduce the strain on their busy schedules and tight budgets. Both the single-domain focus and the StartupWind portal enabled this more efficient use of time. It created very little downtime for the startups when they were in town and made it easier to rally supporting organizations around the smaller number of events which relied heavily on sponsored and donated resources.

1.1.2 Summary of Key Achievements and Outcomes

Cohort 1 of the Gulf Blue Navigator Program successfully concluded with significant achievements and positive outcomes for all participating startups. The cohort included six innovative companies, each making substantial progress in their respective fields of blue technology. Highlights of the session include the development and testing of new technologies, formation of strategic partnerships, securing of additional funding, and engagement with potential customers and stakeholders. The program facilitated meaningful industry connections, provided critical mentorship, and offered exposure to regional assets that have collectively advanced the startups' growth trajectories. Additionally, several companies have committed to maintaining a presence in the Gulf region, further contributing to the local blue economy.

2 Background of the Gulf Blue Navigator Program

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program was established to support the burgeoning blue technology sector in Mississippi by leveraging the unique environmental and economic conditions of the Gulf of Mexico and take advantage of Mississippi's position as only one of five Gulf states and

one of only 22 states with an ocean coastline. The program is a collaborative effort between The University of Southern Mississippi, NVision Solutions Inc. and its Unmanned Coast SBA Regional Innovation Cluster, and other key partners, including the USM Research Foundation, Jackson State University. This initiative is designed to attract and nurture startups focused on marine and coastal innovations, providing them with unparalleled access to state-of-the-art facilities, expert mentorship, and a network of industry and government connections. The program's ultimate goal is to foster innovation, drive economic development, and address critical challenges within the blue economy by supporting the growth and success of cutting-edge startups.

3 Selection and Structure of Cohort 1

Cohort 1 was carefully selected from a pool of over 260 applicants spanning three countries, ultimately narrowing down to six promising blue technology startups in the uncrewed maritime systems domain. These companies were chosen based on their innovative solutions, potential for market impact, and alignment with the program's focus on uncrewed systems. The structure of the cohort involved a comprehensive four-month program that included workshops, site visits, networking events, and one-on-one mentorship sessions. Each company received tailored support to address their specific needs, ranging from technical development and testing to business strategy and market entry. The program also provided logistical support, including travel and accommodation, to ensure that participants could fully engage with the resources and opportunities available.

4 Detailed Description of the Program Structure

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program was meticulously designed to provide blue technology startups with a holistic and immersive experience over a four-month period. The program's structure included a series of intensive workshops, hands-on site visits, and high-impact networking events. Each startup was given access to advanced research facilities, including state-of-the-art wet labs and co-working spaces, tailored to support their specific technological and business development needs. The program also featured interactive sessions with industry practitioners, customized mentorship, and strategic guidance to help startups navigate the complexities of the blue economy. Additionally, the cohort benefited from year-round access to the Gulf of Mexico's coastal waters for real-world testing and validation of their technologies. This comprehensive approach ensured that the startups could accelerate their development timelines, refine their products, and enhance their market readiness.

4.1 Key Events and Activities During the Program

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program featured a series of key events and activities designed to maximize the growth and development of the participating startups. The program kicked off with an in-depth tour of local facilities, including the Gulf & Ship Island Building, which provided the startups with a foundational understanding of the regional blue economy. Throughout the four months, the cohort participated in multiple site visits to leading research centers and companies, such as the Mississippi Research Consortium and the Infinity Science Center, offering firsthand exposure to cutting-edge technologies and industry practices.

Workshops and seminars led by industry experts covered crucial topics ranging from intellectual property management to market entry strategies. The program also included regular networking events, such as the monthly Gulf Blue Networking Event and the Industry Expo, where startups had the opportunity to pitch their ideas, engage with potential partners, and receive valuable feedback from seasoned professionals.

Gulf Blue Navigator Demo Day

A highlight of the program was the Demo Day event held at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, where each startup presented their progress and innovations to elected officials, government agencies, potential investors, and industry stakeholders. This event provided significant visibility and opened doors for future collaborations and funding opportunities. Additionally, the program offered one-on-one mentorship sessions tailored to the specific needs of each startup, ensuring personalized guidance and support throughout the duration of the program.

4.2 Resources and Facilities Provided to the Cohort

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program offered an array of resources and facilities to support the growth and development of the participating startups. Each company had access to state-of-the-art research facilities, including advanced wet labs and specialized equipment, enabling them to conduct essential testing and validation of their technologies. Co-working spaces were provided at the historic Gulf & Ship Island Building in downtown Gulfport, fostering a collaborative environment where startups could work alongside peers and mentors.

The program also facilitated access to the University of Southern Mississippi's renowned faculty and staff, who provided expert guidance and support across various technical and business domains. Startups benefited from the use of local coastal waters for real-world testing, allowing them to refine their innovations under actual marine conditions. Additionally, the program included tailored mentorship from experienced professionals in the blue technology sector, offering strategic advice and industry insights.

Financial support was another critical resource, with the program covering essential expenses such as travel and lodging for the cohort's duration. This comprehensive support structure ensured that startups could focus on their development and growth without the burden of logistical and financial constraints. By providing these extensive resources and facilities, the Gulf Blue Navigator Program created an optimal environment for innovation and success in the blue economy.

5 Cohort Selection Process

The selection process for the Gulf Blue Navigator Program's Cohort 1 was rigorous and focused on identifying startups with the most innovative and impactful solutions in the blue technology sector. Key criteria included the potential for technological innovation, alignment with the program's focus on uncrewed systems, and the feasibility of their proposed solutions for addressing critical challenges in the marine and coastal environments. Additionally, the selection committee evaluated the startups' business viability, including their market potential, scalability, and the strength of their business models.

Each applicant was required to submit a detailed pitch deck outlining their technology, market strategy, and development plans. The committee, comprising industry experts, academic leaders, and representatives from NVision Solutions Inc. and other partners, reviewed these applications meticulously. Startups were also assessed on their ability to leverage the unique resources and conditions of the Gulf of Mexico to advance their technologies. The selection process aimed to identify companies that not only had strong technological propositions but also demonstrated the potential for significant economic and environmental impact in the blue economy.

5.1 Selection Process Design

The selection process for Cohort 1 of the Gulf Blue Navigator Program was designed to be thorough and competitive, ensuring that the most promising blue technology startups were chosen. The process began with a call for applications, which attracted over 260 submissions

from startups across three countries. Each application was required to include a detailed pitch deck and a comprehensive business plan.

The selection committee, composed of industry experts, academic leaders, and representatives from NVision Solutions Inc. and other key partners, conducted an initial screening to narrow down the applicant pool. This screening focused on the alignment of each startup's technology and business model with the program's objectives. From this initial pool, 16 applicants were shortlisted based on their potential for innovation, market impact, and alignment with the program's focus areas.

The shortlisted startups were then invited to present their pitches to the selection committee during a series of virtual a meetings. These presentations provided an opportunity for the committee to engage directly with the founders, ask in-depth questions, and assess the startups' readiness for the program. Based on these presentations, the final six startups were selected to join Cohort 1. This rigorous process ensured that the chosen companies were well-positioned to benefit from the program's resources and support, and to make significant contributions to the blue economy.

5.2 Final List of Selected Startups and Their Profiles

The final selection for Cohort 1 of the Gulf Blue Navigator Program included six innovative startups, each bringing a unique approach to blue technology and uncrewed systems:

1. **Oscilla Power Inc.** - Based in Washington, Oscilla Power is developing an advanced wave energy converter designed to power uncrewed vessels, tapping into the vast renewable energy potential of the world's oceans.
2. **V2 Forensics** - Headquartered in Mississippi, V2 Forensics focuses on innovations in data extraction, decryption, and parsing for uncrewed vessel activity, enhancing cybersecurity and simplifying investigative processes.
3. **Levanta Tech.** - This Missouri-based company is creating a versatile drone capable of floating on the ocean surface, collecting data, and flying swiftly on demand, offering a new tool for oceanographic research and environmental monitoring.
4. **Mythos AI** - From Florida, Mythos AI is advancing automation and self-driving technologies for vessels, aiming to increase the resiliency of waterways and address workforce shortages in the maritime industry.
5. **BLUEiQ** - Operating out of Massachusetts, BLUEiQ is developing dual-use passive acoustic sensing technology to protect marine biodiversity, reduce the impact of human-made noise, and enhance ocean safety and security.
6. **SeaSats Inc.** - California-based SeaSats Inc. is focused on creating high-endurance, modular, and portable uncrewed surface vessels with user-driven interfaces and easy payload integrations, providing a powerful solution for various maritime applications.

Each of these startups has registered with the Mississippi Secretary of State and established a presence in the Gulf and Ship Island Building in downtown Gulfport, MS. Their participation in the Gulf Blue Navigator Program marks a significant step towards advancing their technologies and contributing to the region's blue economy.

6 Program Activities and Timeline

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program's Cohort 1 featured a series of meticulously planned events and meetings designed to maximize the startups' exposure to industry insights, networking opportunities, and hands-on learning experiences. The program's timeline included several key activities:

1. **Cohort 1 Demo Week (June 10-13)**:
    - June 10: Optional travel day for cohort delegates to arrive early on the Coast.
    - June 11: Arrival of cohort companies, lodging provided at the White House Hotel, and a dry run for Demo Day at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center.
    - June 12: Demo Day event, including Mississippi Power Fam Tour Lunch and evening pitches by cohort companies, followed by networking.
    - June 13: Customer and partner meetings, testing sessions, and travel home.
2. **Cohort 1 Visit 1 (February 19-22)**:
    - February 19: Travel day and arrival of cohort delegates.
    - February 20: In-depth tours of local facilities and an introductory dinner.
    - February 21: Industry Expo and Gulf Blue Networking Event.
    - February 22: Gulf Coast Business Council breakfast meeting, cohort onboarding, and initial mentoring sessions.
3. **Cohort 1 Visit 2 (March 11-13)**:
    - March 11: Travel day.
    - March 12: Visits to the Infinity Science Center, Stennis Space Center, and other key sites, including presentations and tours.
    - March 13: Debriefing and networking meeting.
4. **Cohort 1 Visit 3 (April 1-4)**:
    - April 1: Travel day and lodging arrangements.
    - April 2: Filming and media interactions, VIP dinner.
    - April 3: SBIR Road Tour at Jackson State University.
    - April 4: Customer and partner meetings, testing sessions, and future planning.
5. **Cohort 1 Visit 4 (May 6-9)**:
    - May 6: Travel day.
    - May 7: Exit interviews, business meetings, and baseball game networking event.
    - May 8: Briefings, presentations, and faculty-sponsored lunch.
    - May 9: Customer and partner meetings, testing sessions, and travel home.

These detailed agendas and minutes, as documented in the program's records, ensured a well-organized and impactful experience for the startups, providing them with the tools and connections needed to advance their innovations.

6.1 Description of Site Visits, Workshops, and Networking Events

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program included numerous site visits, workshops, and networking events designed to provide startups with comprehensive support and exposure:

- **Site Visits**: Included tours of the Gulf & Ship Island Building, Mississippi Research Consortium, Infinity Science Center, Stennis Space Center, and NVision Engineering Integration Facility.
- **Workshops**: Covered topics such as intellectual property management, market entry strategies, and federal business opportunities.
- **Networking Events**: Featured the Gulf Blue Networking Event, Industry Expo, and multiple social gatherings, including a VIP dinner and a Shucker's baseball game networking event.

These activities were designed to immerse the startups in the regional blue economy, facilitate meaningful connections, and provide valuable insights into the industry.

7 Achievements and Outcomes

The following highlights some of the successes tracked during the Navigator sessions for the entire group as well as unique benefits to each company.

7.1 Cohort-wide achievements

WLOX produced video for each startup for USM's "Tech Thursdays" series on local television. The series shares researchers and Cohort participants insights, innovations, and how their projects are and can impact Mississippi and the Gulf Coast as a whole. Cohort 1 members were interviewed by WLOX's TV Host, Jim Tabor, who has worked for WLOX since 2003 and has interviewed many large and small businesses across the MS Gulf Coast.

USM Tech Thursdays

The Navigator team accompanied the cohort to the "America's Seed Fund Road Tour" on April 3. The Road Tour is a national outreach effort led by the US Small business Administration to connect innovators and entrepreneurs to non-dilutive, technology funding opportunities provided through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, known as "America's Seed Fund". America's Seed Fund Road Tour plays an important role in encouraging participation in innovation and entrepreneurship by members of underrepresented groups while supporting the mission of the SBIR/STTR programs to support scientific excellence and technological innovation to build a strong national economy. This event allowed startups to meet with government agencies about potential funding. These meetings were especially important to LeVanta Tech and Oscilla Power who were both looking for defense agency partners.

The America's Seed Fund Road Tour

The Navigator team introduced the cohort to officials at the NavalX Gulf Coast Tech Bridge. The Tech Bridge fosters collaboration between three Southern Navy commands that serve as the region's super-connector, tying together regional government, industry and academia to solve Naval challenges in coastal regions. The Navigator team also set up a visit with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane Division. The mission of NSWC Crane is to provide acquisition engineering, in-service engineering and technical support for sensors, electronics, electronic warfare and special warfare weapons. NSWC Crane also works to apply component and system-level product and industrial engineering to surface sensors, strategic systems, special warfare devices and electronic warfare systems, as well as to execute other responsibilities as assigned by the Commander, Naval Surface Warfare Center. The focus of NSWC Crane is "Harnessing the Power of Technology for the Warfighter" including drones and sensors. The Command Lead, Dr. Sandy Zehr, met with each company and provided connections into the Naval Research Laboratory at both Stennis and nationally.

In the following individual company success stories, many of them were predicated on each company's selection into the Navigator which they used to apply to additional accelerators, conference appearances, and other events.

7.2 Oscilla Power Inc.

The Navigator assisted Oscilla Power in finding a way to transition their Department of Energy Phase II SBIR to a Navy or NOAA Phase II, tailoring it to uncrewed system requirements. DOE funded their platform as a generic energy system but their ultimate customer base will be maritime drones operated by ocean-focused agencies.

Oscilla Power was listed as one of the major players operating in the Marine Energy market area in The Brainy Insights News Release in February. The Brainy Insight offers consulting and tailored research reports to help clients make informed decisions. The study includes the analysis of more than 30 countries for each part. The report analyzes driving factors, opportunities, restraints, and challenges to gain critical market insight.

(Triton-C at Tow. Image credit: Oscilla Power)

Oscilla Power – Triton C

Oscilla Power was featured in Enlit.World's article, "Out of the blue: Marine energy technologies driving energy transition" Enlit offered exclusive insights into every aspect of the energy agenda via articles, videos, podcasts and directories. The article specifies Oscilla Power's Triton and Triton-C wave energy systems, their features, and future commercialization of Triton-C's technology, including setting up a launch site at the Wave Energy Test Site in Hawaii and eventually a full-scale demonstration with the US Navy.

Oscilla Power and their successful showcase of their wave energy converter off the coast of Maine in December, showing the technology's ability to generate power despite harsh weather, was highlighted in EnvironmentalEnergyLeader.com's article in February. Environment+Energy Leader promotes sustainability and corporate responsibility by equipping business leaders with essential knowledge, insights, and tools necessary for a positive influence globally.

Oscilla Power and their IMW Triton-C wave energy converter was featured in InspeNet'com's new article, "Triton-C presented: the offshore wave energy converter". The article details Oscilla Power's collaboration with Advanced Structures and Composites Center (ASCC) at the University of Maine and the Maine Maritime Academy to deploy and test the Triton-C in open water off the east coast of the United States. The goal was to test and evaluate the payload and survivability of the device on a large scale in a real ocean environment and use those results to improve engineering.

7.3 V2 Forensics

Gulf Blue partner Questus also worked with V2 to tailor their pitch presentation which they presented three times throughout the session culminating in the final presentation on Demo Day. The Navigator also provided V2 with access to multiple maritime uncrewed systems to test their drone forensics software used by law enforcement and the military primarily on aerial drones previously.

V2 Forensics attended the SOFWeek2024 in Tampa, FL in May 2024. Special Operations Forces (SOF) Week is a convention and exhibition for the entire SOF community, including key military decision-makers and over 60 nations with Government reps, offering discussions, hands-on technology demonstrations, and breakout sessions for the collaborative exchange, innovation, networking, and strategic partnerships.

V2 Forensics partnered with Mission Darkness to develop a drone shield. It was featured in NewsShooter.com's blog, "The Mission Darkness Recon Faraday Drone Shield"in March. The specialized faraday bad was specifically designed to effectively shield drones and other small UAVs from radio frequency (RF) signals.

V2 Forensics, attended the Techno Security & Digital Forensics Conference in June. The conference has grown to one of the most important resources for corporate network security professionals, federal, state and local law enforcement digital forensic specialists, and cybersecurity industry leaders. Its purpose is to raise awareness of developments, teaching, training, responsibilities, and ethics in the field of cybersecurity, digital forensics, and eDiscovery.

7.4 Levanta Tech.

LeVanta Tech entered the Navigator with the goal of achieving first flight for their unique float-and-fly HALIA drone. The Navigator team helped LeVanta import their prototype fuselage from Romania to Gulfport. The USM Marine Research Center team helped LeVanta assemble their prototype and get it into operation. By Demo Day, LeVanta had conducted an initial water test.

Based on discussions starting at the SBA Road Tour, the Air Force invited the owner Kelly Echols to submit a Direct-to-Phase 2 SBIR. The Navigator team helped him write the proposal and submit it on the due date, which was Demo Day. LeVanta won the SBIR budgeted at $1.8M. The MRC team has continued to help LeVanta with on-the-water testing to get to its first flight. Gulf Blue also introduced LeVanta Tech to stakeholder Seemans Composites which specializes in the carbon fiber composites that the HALIA is constructed from. Seemans donated composite pieces for LeVanta to convert the interior wood prototype frame to carbon fiber. The Navigator team also worked with the State of Louisiana Technology Council to create a research partnership between LeVanta and the University of New Orleans for controlled tow tank testing.

The LeVanta Tech HALIA drone

7.5 Mythos AI Inc.

Mythos AI at the Port of Venice, LA

Mythos AI, demonstrated their autonomous hydrographic vessel, Archie, to stakeholders at the Port of Venice, LA for navigation solutions. Louisiana has some of the most complex navigation challenges in the nation due to the constant changes in the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers. Mythos AI vessel and software promises to provide rapid channel monitoring.

The Navigator team introduced Mythos AI to the directors of the Port of Gulfport, the director of the Port of Pascagoula, the executive director of Hancock Port and Harbor (Port Bienville), and the President of the National Oceans and Applications Research Center (NOARC). Mythos AI performed successful demos for all 3 ports, and has started discussions with the state about a shared vessel for the Mississippi Coast. NOARC has commissioned a paid pilot with Mythos AI to do a rapid survey of the 12-mile Gulfport channel and deliver the data within 24 hours for emergency storm clearance surveys which NOARC intends to market to federal and state governments.

Mythos AI is also planning to permanently stage a demonstration vessel in Mississippi due to its central location on the Gulf Coast to continue to market Gulf states.

7.6 BLUEiQ

BLUEiQ had numerous successes during their session and took full advantage of Navigator

resources. They set up a demonstration sensor in the Gulfprort channel to monitor vessel traffic for port security applications. They deployed multiple sensors within USM's CUBENet sensor array in the Gulf of Mexico.

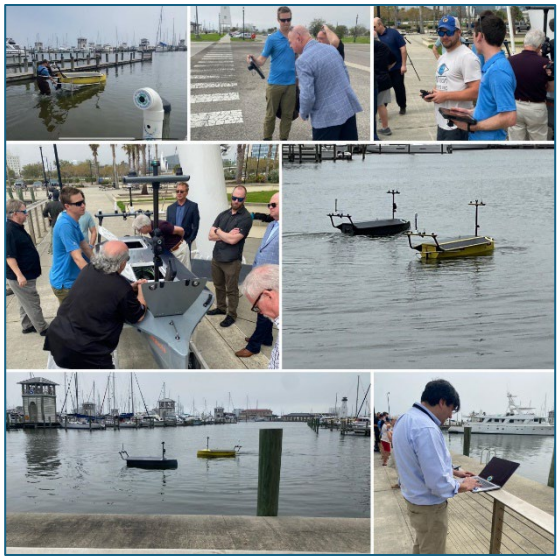

Deploying BLUEiQ OpenEar systems in the Gulf of Mexico.

BLUEiQ also integrated their sensor into Gulf Blue anchor-tenant OceanAero's Triton sail-and-dive platform for demonstration to Navy customers. BLUEiQ also integrated their OpenEar sensor platform with fellow cohort member Seasats' Lightfish drone for tests in the Pacific.

The Navigator team introduced BLUEiQ to executives at the Mississippi Aquarium including Vice President of Veterinary Services and lead researcher Dr. Alexa Delaune who is supporting multiple projects with the OpenEar platform. The first project is adding OpenEar hydrophones to the dolphin habitat at MSAQ. This system will provide invaluable research data for scientists working to preserve the dolphin population in the Mississippi Sound and the Gulf in general. It will also be part of an interactive exhibit for the public which will help them identify each of the four dolphins by their signature clicks. MSAQ is also working with BLUEiQ to record the sounds around healthy coral reefs which have been proven to promote the growth of lab grown coral in MSAQ's coral transplant program. MSAQ hopes this research will progress to growing deepwater coral in a lab which has never been done before. The Navigator team is seeking corporate sponsors for this project but also helped BLUEiQ submit a Gulf Coast Restoration Fund (GCRF) proposal in collaboration with the aquarium.

7.7 SeaSats Inc.

Seasats entered the Navigator with significant backing from L3Harris and notable projects on the West Coast. They were seeking to get into the Gulf of Mexico market for research customers, commercial customers, and additional Navy commands.



Seasats and BLUEiQ demo in the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor.

Seasats, held a demonstration at the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor of their two autonomous surface vehicles (ASV), named The Lightfish. Cohort 1 member BLUEiQ attached their hydrophone technology to one of the ASVs to demonstrate their machine learning-enabled software. The demonstration was open to the public and included participants from the Navy, NOAA, state and local government, and local blue economy industries.

Seasats and BLUEiQ collaborated to attach BLUEiQ's Hydrophone to Seasats Lightfish. A recent trip around Cortes Bank, CA covered 251.7 nautical miles in 116 hours. MassChallenge, a nonprofit for connecting startups, experts, corporations, and communities to grow and transform businesses and economies, promoted their collaboration on LinkedIn.

Seasats spent their third session with Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) in March. CDL is a nonprofit organization that delivers an objectives-based program for massively scalable,

seed-stage, science- and technology-based companies. CDL's mission is to enhance the commercialization of science for the betterment of humankind.

Seasats showcased the Lightfish ASV in conjunction with the BLUEiQ OpenEar in May at the IGNITE22 event at AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles, CA. IGNITE22 is a networking event the invites entrepreneurs, innovators, and future thinkers to come together and explore the blue tech industry with exhibits and demonstrations on land and in the water.

Seasats CEO, Mike Flanigan, spoke on a panel at the 401 Tech Bridge in March. Mike and NavalX Deputy Director Scott Bewley remotely took control on the Lightfish 2,600 miles away as it returned from 100+ mile journey where it was visiting a National Data Bouy Center's offshore platform. 401 Tech Bridge helps innovators get their products out to market and into customer hands. Collaborating with deep networks across business, government, academia and national defense and public safety, 401 Tech Bridge provide people, programming, and equipment to bring new technologies to market faster.

Seasats participated in WEST 2024 in San Diego, CA in February. WEST 2024 is the premier sea services conference and exposition on the West Coast. WEST is now in its 34th year of bringing military and industry leaders together. Co-sponsored by AFCEA International and the U.S. Naval Institute.

Seasats attended the Oceanology International March 10-12 in the United Kingdon. The Oceanology International event brings together 500+ exhibitors linking the three key players in the ocean industry: businesses, academics, and government, featuring live on-water demonstrations and interactive seminars looking into the future of the world's oceans and ocean technology.

Seasats was featured in BreakingDefense.com's news article, "Commander: Navy's new Task Group 59.1 to usher unmanned systems into 'operational realm'". The article breaks down an interview with US Navy's Task Group 59.1 commander Lt. Luis Echeverria and their role in integrating maritime drone into real-world operations. Echeverria and Task Group 59.1 are working with some unmanned surface vessels including Seasats' Lightfish.

NOARC funded Seasats for several paid pilot projects along the Mississippi Sound and USM conducted tests with the LIghtfish as well.

7.8 Metrics and Indicators of Success

- **Funding Secured**: Collectively, the cohort startups secured over $2 million and counting in additional funding during the program directly related to Navigator assistance and activities.
- **Partnerships Formed**: Each startup established at least three new strategic partnerships with industry, academic, or government entities.

- **Technology Development**: All startups achieved significant milestones in their technology development, including prototypes, testing, and validation.
- **Market Readiness**: The program facilitated the market entry of several startups, with at least two securing initial commercial contracts.
- **Regional Engagement**: Five out of the six startups committed to maintaining a presence in the Gulf region, contributing to the local blue economy.

7.9 Testimonials and Feedback from Participants

- **Oscilla Power Inc.**: "The Gulf Blue Navigator Program provided us with unparalleled access to testing facilities and expert mentorship, accelerating our development timeline significantly."
- **V2 Forensics**: "The connections we made through the program have been invaluable, opening doors to new partnerships and commercial opportunities."
- **Levanta Tech.**: "The resources and support offered by the program were crucial in refining our technology and preparing us for market entry."
- **Mythos AI Inc.**: "The program's focus on practical applications and real-world testing was exactly what we needed to advance our technology."
- **BLUEiQ**: "We gained not only technical insights but also valuable industry connections that will help us scale our impact on marine conservation."
- **SeaSats Inc.**: "The collaborative environment and access to cutting-edge facilities made a significant difference in our development process."

These achievements and outcomes reflect the program's success in fostering innovation, supporting technological advancement, and contributing to the growth of the blue economy.

8 Challenges and Lessons Learned

The Navigator team will use the following challenges and lessons learned to guide future cohort sessions.

8.1 Challenges Faced During the Program

The Gulf Blue Navigator Program encountered several challenges throughout the Cohort 1 session:

1. **Logistical Issues**: Coordinating travel and accommodation for the startups posed logistical challenges, especially given the varied schedules and needs of each company.
2. **Resource Allocation**: Ensuring that each startup had access to the appropriate facilities and resources required careful planning and occasionally led to scheduling conflicts.
3. **Technology Integration**: Some startups faced difficulties integrating their technologies with existing systems and infrastructure, requiring additional technical support and adjustments.

4. **Market Penetration**: Startups encountered challenges in identifying and engaging with potential customers and partners, highlighting the need for more targeted market entry strategies.

8.2 Lessons Learned for Future Cohorts

The experiences and outcomes of Cohort 1 provided valuable lessons for improving future iterations of the Gulf Blue Navigator Program:

1. **Proactive Planning**: Emphasize proactive planning and early coordination for logistical arrangements to avoid last-minute issues and ensure smooth operations. One option discussed was having all cohort members use part of their funding to rent a vehicle during their visits or work out travel arrangements individually.
2. **Customized Support**: Tailor resource allocation and technical support to the specific needs of each startup, recognizing that different technologies and business models require different types of assistance. The Navigator team is already proactively reaching out to subject matter experts and mentors ahead of the next cohort.
3. **Enhanced Market Engagement**: Develop more targeted market engagement strategies, including personalized introductions and matchmaking with potential customers and partners, to facilitate quicker market penetration. While most of the engagements were highly successful, there is always room for improvement in this area.
4. **Feedback Mechanisms**: Establish robust feedback mechanisms to continuously gather insights from participants and stakeholders, enabling ongoing improvements and adaptations to the program.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the lessons learned, the Gulf Blue Navigator Program can continue to enhance its support for blue technology startups, driving innovation and growth in the blue economy.