

Data Analytics Bootcamp Successfully Expands Technology Workforce, Prepares About 20 Western New Yorkers for New Careers in Tech

Launched by a coalition of five Buffalo employers and TechBuffalo, the Data Analytics Bootcamp provided 12 weeks of free training to expand community access to tech jobs

BUFFALO, N.Y., June 9, 2022—Earlier this year, several of Buffalo's largest tech employers and regional nonprofit [TechBuffalo](#) launched a collaborative program focused on their shared goal of developing and attracting technology talent. Today, thanks to their support for the Data Analytics Bootcamp, 19 Western New York residents have completed the training program, preparing them for new careers as part of the region's fast-growing tech and innovation ecosystem.

Backed by [ACV Auctions](#), [Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York](#), [M&T Bank](#), [Moog](#) and [Rich Products](#), the [Tech Academy Data Analytics Bootcamp](#) provided 12 weeks of immersive training to empower students with in-demand skills for essential technology roles. Upon graduation, participants immediately became job candidates for available data analyst positions with regional tech employers. Several have already been hired, and the others will continue to receive extensive job placement support to identify, interview and secure new career opportunities. Throughout the program, TechBuffalo cultivated ongoing collaboration among the employer partners, and now it's supporting the bootcamp grads by facilitating connections to jobs within its network of tech companies.

All the students who enrolled in the program successfully completed it—and according to [General Assembly](#), the global skills training expert that facilitated this bootcamp and has administered similar programs in cities across the country, 100 percent retention is a rare achievement for an intensive, community-based bootcamp, especially the first time it's offered.

"In other cities, employers compete relentlessly for technology talent—but in Buffalo, business leaders are collaborating to develop solutions that address their collective talent needs and uplift our community," said **Kelly Martin, Head of the Tech Academy**. "We're grateful to the local employers who answered our call to join the coalition and support the Tech Academy Data Analytics Bootcamp, the first program of its kind in Buffalo. It was an important next step for our city's tech and innovation ecosystem as we accelerate our work to build talent pipelines that help our community access tech careers. Congratulations and thank you to the students who invested so much time and energy to complete the 12-week program and are now ready for jobs in tech."

A resilient and determined group with diverse backgrounds and career experiences, Buffalo's first-ever community bootcamp class has impressed their instructors and area employers. Among the students already hired:

- **JahJah Quarles**, who was raised in Buffalo, will join M&T Bank. Quarles joined the Data Analytics Bootcamp following a seven-year career as a corrections officer in the state's Department of Corrections, a role that helped prepare him to be a composed, critical thinker even in high-stress situations.
- **Namita Acharya**, a resident of Williamsville, was hired by ACV. Acharya came into the program with no data experience but was quickly inspired by the collaborative atmosphere and opportunities available within the tech sector. She previously worked in higher education, serving in roles focused on recruiting and fostering belonging for international students.
- **Souleymane Barry**, a resident of Buffalo, is the latest tech hire for Moog. Barry jumpstarted his career by joining the bootcamp, as he continues to pursue a bachelor's degree in computational and applied mathematics from the University at Buffalo. Previously, Barry worked with the WNY Law Center and UB's Educational Opportunity Program.
- **Waheedulah Faiz**, a Buffalo resident, was hired by Evergreen Health, one of many local organizations interested in the aspiring data analysts trained through the bootcamp. Faiz arrived in Buffalo last year after leaving his home in Afghanistan, where she worked for the U.S. Embassy and the Afghanistan International Bank. He enrolled in the bootcamp because she saw it as a path toward greater stability and a rewarding career as his family gets settled in their new home.

The bootcamp was designed to serve traditionally underrepresented groups in technology, especially people of color and women. The Tech Academy, TechBuffalo and their five employer partners co-created the bootcamp program to be accessible to anyone interested in a career in technology. All program costs were covered by the sponsoring employers, which made the program free for participants. No technical experience or college education was required to enroll, and students received a stipend to cover living expenses during the program. Of the students participating, about 52 percent identified as a person of color and 63 percent indicated their household incomes are below Erie County's median income.

To support the students during the program and further reduce any expenses they may have experienced, Douglas Development donated food for lunches and covered their parking costs.

The Tech Academy, which M&T Bank launched in late 2020 to expand and strengthen the region's tech workforce, hosted the bootcamp at its location on the 23rd floor of the Tech Hub at Seneca One. General Assembly provided students with instruction in data collection, analysis and visualization. They learned how to transform data into compelling stories and actionable insights

to help organizations make data-informed decisions—which is a skillset in high demand regionally and nationally. In addition, students were offered support from career coaches and social impact specialists to help them navigate any challenges and successfully complete the program.

“Launched as a pilot program to inform future community-based training initiatives, this first Data Analytics Bootcamp has already attracted interest from additional companies that want to join the coalition of employers to expand local workforce training opportunities,” said **TechBuffalo President & CEO Sarah Tanbakuchi**. “While we’re proud of the collaboration among local employers, we’re even more proud of our students who came from so many different walks of life to participate in this program and become the newest members of Buffalo’s tech workforce. The early impacts generated by the Tech Academy through this bootcamp and its earlier initiatives demonstrate its capabilities to foster regional collaboration and develop homegrown technology talent.”

“In modern economic development, talent is the key differentiator that separates companies and entire regions from their competitors. What’s special about Buffalo is that local employers here know we’re stronger together—and this Tech Academy Bootcamp is the perfect example of how we’re collaborating to build a diverse, inclusive workforce and make Western New York a magnet for technology talent,” said **M&T Bank Chief Information Officer Mike Wisler**. “Investing in tech training programs that are accessible to all makes a difference in people’s lives, strengthens local businesses and helps unleash inclusive economic growth. With more technology talent, Buffalo will attract more and create more high-growth tech companies.”

“It’s an honor for ACV to have been a partner in supporting the inaugural Western New York Data Analytics Bootcamp and to collaborate with our region’s innovation leaders to help transform local, driven talent into skilled technologists,” said **Bahman Koohestani, Chief Technology Officer at ACV**. “All the hiring partners came together with a common goal of propelling the region forward as a tech and innovation hub, and I don’t think this will be the last time we collaborate in a similar fashion. I, along with the entire ACV family, am incredibly proud of all the students for completing this rigorous, immersive program—not an easy feat! Through the program, we are thrilled to welcome three new data analysts who will support many of ACV’s key business units and functional groups with data analysis and problem solving to enhance operations and innovation.”

Kevin Ruggiero, Chief Information Officer at Moog, said, “This pilot bootcamp has been a fantastic learning experience for the students and the participating companies. It has connected us with talented individuals from different backgrounds we otherwise would likely never have met. Deepening the local technical talent pool while bringing exciting new opportunities to this inaugural class of graduates is truly a win-win. We’re proud at Moog to have been a part of this.”

“We’re pleased to be helping create new pathways to tech careers, and proud of the individuals who are taking steps to expand their skills and contribute to the future success of our region,” said **Dr. Michael Edbauer, President, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York**. “Collectively we are addressing the need to grow our local technology talent by providing equitable opportunities for everyone in our community to engage in career development.”

“One of the most inspiring themes to come out of the Tech Academy Data Analytics Bootcamp is that it’s never too late to upskill and reimagine the future,” said **Jon Zirnheld, Director, IT Business Operations at Rich Products**. “Our inaugural cohort included a diverse and talented group of students who are sure to make an impact with their future employers, and we’re excited to see what’s next for both this innovative concept and the program’s graduates.”

“The rising demand for technical skills in Buffalo mirrors workforce dynamics in cities across the U.S. and globally – companies are eager to hire skilled talent but struggling to meet these staffing needs through traditional recruitment,” said **Lisa Lewin, CEO of General Assembly**. “The Tech Academy embodies the promise of what multi-sector collaboration can accomplish, from expanding education access to reaching more diverse candidates. We’re proud at General Assembly to work with such exceptional nonprofit and hiring partners, and play a role in forging new pathways for communities to reskill and pursue jobs with higher pay and greater stability.”

About the Tech Academy

Embedded inside the Tech Hub at Seneca One, the Tech Academy helps develop, attract and retain the technology talent that Western New York needs to compete in the modern economy. As a community asset that emphasizes access for all, it develops and delivers educational programming that creates pathways to tech careers for the community and upskills and reskills the existing tech workforce. Launched by M&T Bank in late 2020, the Tech Academy collaborates with community partners and regional employers to build a more diverse, inclusive workforce and make the region an attractive destination for technologists.

About TechBuffalo

TechBuffalo is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization whose mission is to grow an inclusive and accessible technology ecosystem in Western New York. In collaboration with educational institutions, community organizations and industry professionals, TechBuffalo is working in the community to build a stronger technology culture in our region. For more information, visit its

website, www.techbuffalo.org, and follow TechBuffalo on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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