

## Follow the Sun campaign offers cash to businesses that relocate to Miami

By Ashley Portero

Businesses searching for reduced expenses, lower taxes and, of course, sunny weather need look no further than South Florida.

That's the pitch the Miami Downtown Development Authority is making to out-of-state companies with its new "Follow the Sun" campaign. The DDA is doubling-down on its effort to recruit new ventures to the region by offering up to \$50,000 per year to qualifying businesses that intend to relocate to or expand in downtown Miami.

**Nitin Motwani**, co-chair of the Miami DDA Enterprise, said concerns about a spike in Covid-19 infections in northern cities could be another factor that drives some businesses south.

"The pandemic, coupled with unbearable tax policies in many cities, is enticing more people to downtown Miami each day, and we have every reason to believe that activity will continue into 2021 and beyond," he said.

The DDA **launched a campaign** to bring finance firms to the region from high-tax states in 2013, a move to attract higher-paying, professional services jobs to Miami. Since the campaign began, dozens of companies – including Icahn Enterprises, Universa Investments, Boston Private and more – have relocated to or set up offices in the Miami-area.

The Follow the Sun campaign incentives are open to businesses with at least 10 employees that earn a minimum salary of \$68,000 per year. Businesses can earn a one-time payment of \$500 per employee and receive up to \$50,000 per year. A company may not receive more than \$150,000 within a three-year period.

"We are primarily focused on financial services companies, technology firms, and companies looking to setup a regional headquarters in Downtown Miami," said DDA Executive Director **Christina Crespi**.

The authority allocated \$200,000 of its FY 2020-2021 budget to fund the program, Crespi said. That amount could be raised at the board's discretion.

The DDA notes that Florida is one of only seven states without a personal income tax, a significant advantage for high-income earners and business owners. New proposals to raise taxes in New York, Illinois and California – the latter is considering a top tax rate of 54% for millionaire residents– are expected to spur more relocations to South Florida, the DDA said.

The Sunshine State's low-tax environment has helped fuel South Florida's transformation into the "Wall Street of the South," the DDA reports.

The number of SEC-registered investment advisors (RIA) in downtown Miami almost doubled from 2014 to 2019, according to an analysis from the DDA and analytics firm Convergence. Full-time employees working for RIA's increased by 55% during that period and assets under management in the downtown area were up 61%, the report said.