



AMERICA'S
SBDC
MONTANA

2023 Annual Report

Guiding Montana Businesses to Success



A Message from the Montana SBDC State Director

According to the SBA Small Business Profile, in 2023 Montana small businesses accounted for 99.3% of all Montana businesses. They employed over 252,000 people or 67% of the total workforce. Montana's small businesses are vital in driving economic activity in urban and rural communities across the state. Providing resources and guidance for small business success remains a top priority for the Montana Small Business Development Center (MTSBDC).

The MTSBDC serves entrepreneurs and small businesses through no-cost, confidential counseling and low-cost training related to business plan development, financial management, operational processes, loan application support, marketing initiatives, succession planning, and much more. Our Regional Directors and Business Advisors support clients every day across many industries.

Montana entrepreneurs and small business owners continue to be the backbone of local economies throughout the state. They provide jobs, shopping, dining, entertainment, and essential services for their local communities. This report highlights clients across the landscape of Montana, and the incredible successes they have achieved with the assistance of the MTSBDC. We are proud to publish this summary of our economic impact for 2023.

Chad Moore
Montana SBDC State Director



Our Team



Lori Gilliland
Associate State Director
Lead Center



Libbey Lea
Public Relations Specialist
Lead Center



Lorene Hintz
Regional Director
Billings SBDC



Kayla Vokral
Business Advisor
Billings SBDC



Courtney Loeffler
Regional Director
Butte SBDC



Logann Lovshin
Business Advisor
Butte SBDC



Kristi Gee
Regional Director
Bozeman SBDC



Rich Gannon
Business Advisor
Great Falls SBDC



Lyndsay Bruno
Rural Business Advisor
Great Falls SBDC



Joe LaPlante
Regional Director
Havre SBDC



Ryan Loomis
Regional Director
Helena SBDC



Josh Bennett
Business Advisor
Helena SBDC



Rob Driscoll
Regional Director
Kalispell SBDC



Tracy Baker
Regional Director
Miles City SBDC



Jennifer Stephens
Regional Director
Missoula SBDC



Jordan Stordahl
Business Advisor
Missoula SBDC



Quincy Walter
Regional Director
Wolf Point SBDC



Jason Nitschke
Senior Child Care
Business Advisor
Zero to Five

Advisory Council



Paddy Fleming
Director
*Montana Manufacturing
Extension Center*



Julie Jaksha
Market President
Ascent Bank



Reed W. Bassett
Community Banking
Relationship Manager
U.S. Bank



Joe Fanguy
Vice President of Strategic
Development
Blackfoot Communications



Shandy Hanks Moran
Commercial Lending Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Dan Gorton
Director
Three Rivers Bank of Montana



Tracy McIntyre
Executive Director
*Montana Cooperative Development
Center*



Ex-officio: **Brent Donnelly**
District Director, Montana Office of Field
Operations
U.S. Small Business Administration

2023 Economic Impact

New Businesses Successfully Launched **81**

Total Clients Counseled **1,593**

Training Events Hosted **92**

Training Attendees **644**

Client Loans Approved **68**

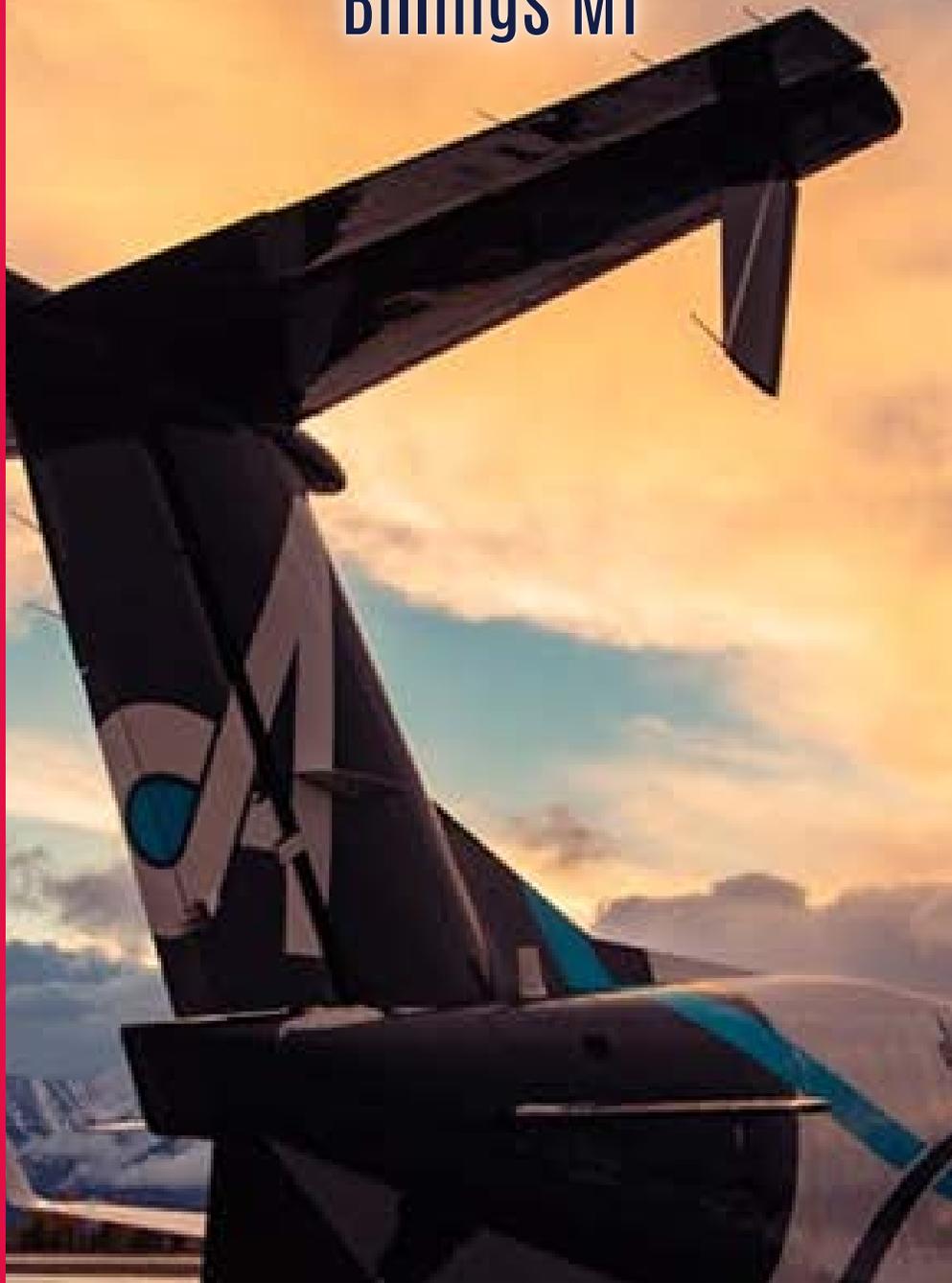
Jobs Supported **3,716**

\$23,996,566

in Financing Obtained by Clients

Alpine Air Express

Billings MT



In 2019, Alpine Air had plans to expand its fleet of cargo aircraft, which meant that Chuck Dubell, the owner, anticipated an increase in their staff too. The newly acquired aircraft would need improvements before they could be put to use. Along with mechanics, Alpine Air required more pilots and flight followers to support the growing fleet.

Chuck reached out to SBDC and Big Sky Economic Development Authority to learn about the Big Sky Trust Fund Job Creation Grant. However, when COVID-19 posed challenges to the process, SBDC Regional Director Lorene Hintz and other BSEDA staff stepped in to help by requesting extensions. With the grant funding of \$125,000 and a matching amount of \$125,000 from Alpine Air, a total of \$250,000 was invested to create 25 high-paying jobs in Montana.

In the past three years, Chuck has continued to expand recruiting efforts and hiring staff at all Alpine Air locations.

Lorene Hintz, the Regional Director, stated, "Working with Alpine Air was a great experience. They were very responsive to every request to complete the Big Sky Trust Fund application and fill out the quarterly reports."

Alpine Air plays a crucial role in the regional economy. The services they provide support small businesses, offer good-paying jobs, and contribute to the economic growth of Montana. By investing in Montana and with the support of the SBDC, Alpine Air can continue to grow and impact our economy.

"From the first phone call to Big Sky Economic Development Authority, Lorene was quick to explain the grant process, answer questions and make recommendations specific to our business."

Chuck Dubell, Owner



Meadowlark Brewing

Billings, MT



"Through the valuable efforts of the SBDC, we were able to access the Big Sky Trust Fund Job Creation Grant and were able to offer new employees a competitive, living wage. The SBDC staff were thoughtful, insightful, and made the process very easy."

Travis Peterson, Owner

Travis Peterson began expanding Meadowlark Brewing from Sidney to Billings in 2019. The original brewery had reached its maximum capacity for the canning process, and Travis wanted to supply his products to additional retailers. Unfortunately, the project faced setbacks when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, causing supply issues and increased project costs. Despite these challenges, the project persevered and was completed, opening its doors in 2022.

Although Meadowlark began brewing and canning its products, obtaining the necessary licensing to serve the public took approximately a year.

Meadowlark Brewing faced additional challenges when expanding, particularly in hiring and retaining employees. Travis utilized various resources, such as the BSTF Planning and Job Creation grants, the SBA 504 lending program, and the SBDC for help with projections and business planning to make Meadowlark's vision a reality.

SBDC Regional Director Lorene Hintz assisted Travis in accessing the grant needed to offer new employees competitive, living wages. They have created 12 full-time and 36 part-time jobs in Yellowstone County, with roughly a 50-50 split in equity and loan funds for a \$5,000,000 project.

"Travis' journey from running a small brewery in Sidney to building one of the largest in the state is a testament to his inspiring entrepreneurship, unwavering perseverance, and remarkable brewing and business skills," stated Lorene Hintz.

Molly & Friends

Laurel, MT



"Kayla willingly shared her expertise and all the education opportunities. Whenever I had a question, Kayla answered it or directed me to the appropriate person or office. I am extremely grateful for the knowledge and support of Big Sky Economic Development."

Jodi Mackay, Owner

Big Sky Power and Solar

Livingston, MT



"I was looking for help with a business plan and cash flow projections. Kristi was helpful in providing feedback on both and explained the needed changes."

Matt Dean, Owner

Prospera
BUSINESS NETWORK

In 2023, Matt Dean decided to open his own electrical contracting business. Matt has over 20 years of experience in the electrical industry. He holds a master electrician license in four states and a journeyman license in two. Matt is also a member of the Montana Renewable Energy Association and belongs to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Matt knew he had the qualifications but needed help with a business plan and cash flow projections to secure a loan.

Matt reached out to the Bozeman SBDC Regional Director Kristi Gee for assistance. Kristi worked with Matt to develop his business plan and cash flow projections. The assistance prepared Matt to approach a lender and secure a loan to purchase the necessary equipment to start his business.

With the establishment of his company, Big Sky Power and Solar, Matt became the only union electrical contractor in Livingston. He promotes the learning of the electrical trade by referring individuals who are interested to the local union. He encourages cross-functional collaboration, driving apprentices, journeymen, and foremen to complete projects within strict deadlines.

Today, Matt enjoys more freedom and is free to choose projects that fit his schedule. He is proud to own one of the few union solar contracting businesses that specializes in solar power installation. Matt hopes to continue filling this need in his community and provide job opportunities in his field.

Kristi Gee Regional Director

Mountain West Psychological Resources Butte, MT

Mountain West Psychological Resources (MWPR) was founded in 2015 by Loretta Bolyard and her husband, Darren Hoffman. MWPR is a locally-owned business that makes a significant contribution to the Butte community. It is an outpatient clinic offering a full spectrum of services, including mental health counseling, psychiatric medication management services, and neuropsychological assessment.

Loretta requested SBDC services when she needed assistance expanding her business. The Butte team helped with a business plan, cash flow projections, and loan packaging to acquire financing of \$1.3 million. With the SBDC's guidance, Loretta was able to expand her business, build a new facility, and expand the number of providers at the facility.

In September 2023, MWPR transitioned into their newly constructed 4,000-square-foot office building. This significant development positions them for future growth and expansion, not only in terms of staffing but more crucially, in the capacity to serve a greater number of patients with mental health needs. Their long-term plan involves the addition of four more mental health providers and three full-time employees.

MWPR addresses unique challenges and needs of the community that are often prevalent in rural communities. Their ongoing commitment revolves around guaranteeing that our community continues to offer access to mental health services while reducing the need for residents to travel long distances for treatment.



"With the support of the SBDC, we turned our dreams into milestones and aspirations into achievements. Thank you for supporting mental health in Butte America. It takes a community."

Loretta Bolyard, Owner



R&C Lumber

Deer Lodge, MT



"Headwaters SBDC helped our company get the capital we needed to support our growth goals and position us for future success in Powell County and beyond."

Lin Hicks, Co-Owner

R&C Home Improvement was originally established in the 1980s in Deer Lodge as a family-owned hardware and home improvement store. In 2021, the business was purchased and officially became R&C Lumber. They offer a complete line of building supplies, lumber hardware, tools, flooring, paint, plumbing, and other home improvement products.

R&C Lumber fills a niche in the community by offering residents a variety of products.

Lin reached out to the SBDC when he needed technical assistance to expand the business and explore funding opportunities. Regional Director Courtney Loeffler helped Lin create a comprehensive loan application, refined business plan, and cash flow projections. R&C Lumber obtained financing for \$600,000 from Headwaters RC&D. This allowed them to continue to grow their operations while developing a stronger online presence to reach a wider customer base.

R&C Lumber is committed to creating and retaining jobs within a rural community. They currently employ 16 full-time employees and one part-time employee. In the next three years, they hope to hire four additional full-time employees.

R&C Lumber has not only thrived but also played an instrumental role in shaping the local economy and supporting countless families. They are essential in providing homeowners, DIY enthusiasts, contractors, and builders with the tools and materials they need to enhance, renovate, or maintain their homes and properties.



Eden Feeds

Great Falls, MT

Tom and Laura Kropf started Eden Feeds after recognizing the need for an animal feed company that prioritizes non-GMO, local ingredients. While initially intending to cater solely to the local market, their enterprise quickly gained traction, resulting in statewide distribution and expansion beyond the borders of Montana. As the business began to expand, Tom and Laura recognized the need for assistance with their internal accounting and financial management.

When they first consulted with SBDC Business Advisor Rich Gannon, they had not established a formal accounting system. Rich helped them set up an accounting system so they could track their cash flow and monitor their accounts payable. He also helped analyze projected sales needed to make hiring and expansion decisions.

The business has undergone tremendous growth in recent years. In the first four months of 2023, Eden Feeds has already achieved sales that nearly match its total sales for all of 2022. Gross sales in 2023 are projected to approach the \$1 million mark, a 400% increase from just two years prior. However, managing this explosive growth can be challenging. To address this, Rich and Tom collaborated on a plan to help the company manage its cash cycle more effectively.

In addition to providing local animal owners with a high-quality product, Eden Feeds sources its ingredients from local farmers. This approach adds value to Montana-grown commodities and helps to boost the local economy.



"Rich Gannon has been an indispensable help in getting us on top of our bookkeeping and guiding us through the growth of our business."

Tom Kropf, Owner

Great Falls
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE
MONTANA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CDFI

Furternity House

Conrad, MT



In 2020, Mandy Wood embarked on a unique venture. Mandy's passion for animals helped her recognize the absence of a comprehensive boarding facility in Conrad. Mandy's vision was clear, but she recognized the intricacies of launching a business. She contacted the SBDC to address two crucial needs, financial projections and an online presence.

Business Advisor Rich Gannon helped Mandy refine her business plan and create accurate financial projections. Rich ensured her loan packaging was robust and aligned with her business aspirations. The assistance helped Mandy successfully receive a Commercial Bank Loan. Additionally, they worked together to create an engaging website to establish an online identity for Mandy and her business, Furternity House.

Rich stated, "Mandy was a pleasure to work with. She consistently followed through on our discussions and readily implemented the business strategies and suggestions I proposed. Mandy's openness to feedback and drive to improve her business made her an ideal client."

Furternity House is now thriving with fully occupied kennels that are often booked weeks in advance. Their influence extends beyond their kennel gates. It's not merely a business; it's a community asset. By offering a dedicated pet boarding spot, they have become an essential choice for pet owners, relieving them of worries when they need to be away.

"The assistance I received from Rich with creating a business plans, market research, and guidance in marketing advice was pivotal to our company's success. The SBDC helped us connect with others in our local community and gave me the confidence to follow through with the scary side of opening this business."

Mandy Wood, Owner

Omie's Pizza

Heart Butte, MT

Nickolas Crawford started Omie's Pizza with the vision of creating a thriving restaurant in Heart Butte. He was inspired by his Grandmother Omie, who made pizza from a traditional fry bread recipe. From order-taking to pizza preparation, Nickolas handled every aspect of the business. As demand surged, the need for efficient online order processing became apparent.

Nickolas turned to the SBDC for help building and maintaining a website. He decided to attend the "Website in a Day Bootcamp" training. This one-day training addressed Nickolas's pressing need for an online ordering solution. Before this, Omie's Pizza solely relied on telephone orders, causing delays in the cooking and delivery process. Not only did Omie's Pizza participate in the full-day boot camp, but Business Advisor Rich Gannon also provided individualized guidance to Nickolas. After finalization, the website was quickly launched and proved transformative, processing more than 300 online orders in the first month.

"It was rewarding to work with Nickolas as he added online ordering for his business. Guiding him through this digital transformation and seeing the tangible positive impact on his business operations was exciting," Rich stated.

Omie's Pizza holds a significant role within the Heart Butte community, serving as its exclusive restaurant option. The restaurant also plans to expand into Browning in late 2023 or early 2024. Omie's Pizza has transformed from a local eatery to an online-order-savvy restaurant, cementing its position as a community cornerstone.



"With the help of the SBDC I now have an awesome website, and my sales have increased at least 15%! Now I have a marketing platform that I can understand, a better accounting of my orders and inventory, which also helps my productivity."

Nickolas Crawford, Owner

Great Falls
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE

MONTANA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CDFE

Beaver Creek Perk

Havre, MT



"Beaver Creek Perk was really needed in Havre. Without the SBDC and their host, this project would not have been possible. They were both very knowledgeable."

Brian James, Owner

Brian James and his mother, Faye, envisioned opening a wholesome place where people could gather to enjoy a cup of coffee and a bite to eat. They wanted to create an event space that their customers could enjoy. When Brian and Faye began the process of opening the coffee shop, they had questions and were looking for financing, so they reached out to the SBDC for help.

Regional Director Joe LaPlante helped Brian and Faye create a business plan and cash flow projections. They also had questions on the overall business process and had many brainstorming sessions with Joe to figure out the best route to open their business.

Brian and Faye received a Revolving Loan Fund and financing from Bear Paw Development Corporation that allowed them to officially open Beaver Creek Perk. Since opening, Brian and Faye have been able to hire eight full-time employees. They have plans to open a drive-thru that will add four more employees.

Beaver Creek Perk is a great place for people to gather and for students to study. In addition to the coffee shop, there is an event room to hold meetings, workshops, birthday parties, and other large gatherings. Brian and Faye made sure their business still has room for expansion, including three retail spaces and parking lot space for the drive-thru.



Billmayer Ranch

Helena, MT

KC Billmayer, owner of Billmayer Ranch, wanted to do more with his cattle operation instead of only selling commercially. KC wanted to start a retail store selling his local ranch-raised beef but did not have much experience with the retail side of the business. He reached out to the SBDC to receive assistance with a business plan and grant applications.

Regional Director Ryan Loomis met with KC several times a month to make sure he was on the right track and following his goals. Together they created a business plan, cash flow projections, and grant applications. With Ryan's help, KC was able to open the BR Beef Outlet, where he supplies two local restaurants with products while donating extras to local fundraisers and youth sporting events.

The BR Beef Outlet has been open since December 2022 and continues to have growing support from the community. They are creating relationships with new and returning customers. As a small business, they strive to support other small businesses in Helena by carrying outside products that go hand in hand with their goods.

"Billmayer Ranch was great to work with! Their innovation and drive to serve the community are outstanding, especially with such high-quality products. It was fun to work with them and see them do so well," stated Ryan.



"We have had an outstanding experience working with the SBDC. We are very fortunate to be working with them."

KC Billmayer, Owner

Dee-O-Gee

Helena, MT



When Diane Stilson's dog developed health issues in 2021, she began searching for quality food and supplements. She discovered Dee-O-Gee in Bozeman, after a holistic veterinarian's referral. Diane was impressed with the store and the associates, who were very helpful and knowledgeable. She soon discovered that Dee-O-Gee was looking for franchise partners.

Diane started investigating the franchise and learned about their species-appropriate and holistic approach to pet care, as well as their philosophy of taking care of pets and customers. She felt Dee-O-Gee was a needed business in Helena that aligned with the community and her passions.

Diane had little business experience and was referred to Regional Director Ryan Loomis at the Helena SBDC. With Ryan's help, Diane was able to secure an SBA loan for \$876,000, which allowed her to open her business in Helena. Dee-O-Gee currently has one full-time manager, four part-time employees, and two commission-based groomers. As the business grows Diane plans to add up to four more groomers.

"Working with Ryan at the SBDC in Helena has been a really valuable experience as I've started my small business!"

Diane Stilson, Owner



In October 2022, Sarah Lewis decided to open her own business to produce residual income to fund her dream of providing seniors with a solution to financial problems and housing. She knew how much her children enjoyed boba and decided that would be the perfect venture. Sarah had the drive but needed assistance getting started. She reached out to Flathead Valley Community College and the SBDC to sort through ideas.

Sarah met with Regional Director Rob Driscoll to create a business plan and financial projections. Together they searched for a location for Sarah's boba trailer and decided on her location on Hwy 2. Rob also conducted primary research with a boba company in California to help understand the boba industry.

With Sarah's hard work, Bubbles & Boba was successfully launched in less than two months. Bubbles & Boba currently has four employees and plans to hire more as the business demands. Sarah purchased a third boba truck and is now operating out of four locations. She plans to continue growing her business and hopes to continue providing funding to assist seniors in the Kalispell community.

Rob said, "Sarah Lewis is a fine example of making an idea a reality."

Bubbles & Boba

Kalispell, MT



"Flathead Valley Community College and the SBDC provided exceptional planning skills and helped me walk so I could run. I had four to five ideas that Rob helped me prioritize."

Jodi Mackay, Owner



Terry's Small Engine Repair Evergreen, MT



"Rob helped me write a business plan and financials to secure a loan from Far West Bank."

Matt Gates, Owner



Matt Gates had always admired Terry Williams and his small engine repair shop in Evergreen. When Matt was a child, he would visit Terry's shop and dream about owning his own business one day. In late 2022 Terry's Small Engine Repair became available for sale when Terry wanted to retire. As a veteran himself, Matt jumped at the opportunity to buy the veteran-owned business. However, Matt needed assistance creating a business plan and financial projections, so he contacted the Kalispell SBDC.

Regional Director Rob Driscoll helped Matt complete loan applications, create a business plan, and financial projections. Matt acquired \$50,000 in local financing from TrailWest Bank and purchased Terry's Small Engine Repair in January 2023. When Matt purchased the business, he agreed that Terry could continue working when his health permitted. Matt knew he had big shoes to fill and wanted to continue successfully running the business just like Terry did.

"Matt Gates is a third-generation Montana military, and I am proud the SBDC could be a trusted advisor in helping Matt buy and scale Terry's Small Engine Repair," stated Rob.

Matt hopes to hire two new employees and purchase additional property to expand his business. He is committed to going above and beyond for the Evergreen community, reflecting over 50 years of quality service.

June's Bungalow

Miles City, MT



"Tracy was great to work with and helped us write our business plan and financial projections so we could secure funding!"

Mike and June Esser, Owners

Seventeen years ago, Mike and June Esser opened June's Bungalow in Colstrip. The Essers grew up in Miles City but moved to Colstrip to fulfill June's dream of starting a restaurant. They pride themselves in making all their food from scratch, including hand-breaded chicken strips, house-made sauces, and a variety of delicious desserts. June's Bungalow is a family business, with one of their sons cooking and their daughter waitressing.

The Essers decided to move back to Miles City and take their successful restaurant with them. They looked at several existing restaurants and purchased The Airport Inn. Mike and June needed help writing a business plan and financial projections, so they turned to Miles City Regional Director Tracy Baker for help. Tracy helped them secure a contract for deed with the previous owner of The Airport Inn for \$750,000. She also assisted them by creating financial projections and writing a business plan. June's Bungalow in Miles City officially opened on April 10, 2023.

The business name will continue to be June's Bungalow and will continue to have great, homemade food. They will continue to be locally owned and family-operated. The Essers hired four more part-time employees and one full-time employee. By purchasing an existing restaurant, Mike and June were able to ensure Miles City wouldn't lose a small business.

Mike and June's business philosophy is to cook and serve the best food they can to keep their customers returning again and again.

Mountain Colors Yarn

Corvallis, MT

Diana McKay and Leslie Taylor started Mountain Colors Yarn in 1992. They decided to start with yarn products they thought they could sell while creating flexible hours for other moms and themselves. Their business took off, and they enjoyed building it over the years and participating in the fiber arts community. In 2022, after surviving 2020 and 2021 with COVID-19-related challenges, Diana and Leslie decided to sell their business and the building out of which it operated.

After receiving an email about the SBDC, they reached out to Regional Director Jennifer Stephens at the Missoula SBDC for support. Jennifer gave Diana and Leslie a lot of information along with strategies for selling. After connecting routinely for a few weeks, Jennifer provided feedback and suggestions for Diana and Leslie's "Mountain Colors Sell Packet." With the packet completed, Jennifer helped them find a professional to appraise the business. She also helped brainstorm ways to get the information to interested people.

With Jennifer's help, Diana and Leslie were able to analyze Mountain Color's financial performance to select an appropriate asking price that was attractive to buyers and beneficial for the seller. Later when the business sold at a price the owners were happy with, Jennifer provided an attorney referral for the transaction paperwork at a reasonable fee. Diana and Leslie said, "Jenn was extremely knowledgeable and helpful to us."

"We wish we had found Jennifer 10 years ago. She was knowledgeable, logical, easy to talk to, and encouraging."

Diana McKay and Leslie Taylor, Owners

Amy Paden witnessed the need for childcare in the Missoula area and knew she could help. She was ready for a change after 17 years in the public school system. Amy had a passion for working with children in early childhood but had never owned or operated a business. She turned to the SBDC for guidance with budgeting, startup assistance, and business planning.

Amy turned to the Missoula SBDC and was referred to the network's childcare business specialist, Jason Nitschke, who is embedded at Zero to Five Montana and the Montana Child Care Business Connect program. Jason helped Amy with market research, team-building, project costing, and strategic planning, among other things. Amy was able to obtain \$663,000 in financing for start-up costs and officially opened her business, plAyBCs, on August 1, 2023.

plAyBCs is an Early Childhood program based in a safe and comfortable home setting. Children are emotionally supported in social interactions and are provided with a variety of experiences in this sensory-rich environment. plAyBCs is licensed for eight full-time slots and currently serves 13 families.

The opening of plAyBCs has increased the amount of high-quality, licensed childcare slots in Missoula. Amy has enabled parents to re-enter the workforce and advance their careers confidently. Her hard work has created economic growth and significantly impacted the Missoula community.

plAyBCs

Missoula, MT



"The SBDC has played an integral role in my business from conception to opening. I couldn't have done it without the business expertise shared through one-on-one sessions with Jason, that led to the creation of a budget and business plan that ultimately has led to a viable business start up in Missoula."

Amy Paden, Owner



Big Sky Renovisions

Froid, MT



"We knew it was the right time to leap, but we needed guidance. We wanted to understand the steps involved and determine if it was truly feasible, and that is when we found Quincy."

Alisha Maiolo and Austin Oelkers, Owners



In January 2022, Alisha Maiolo and Austin Oelkers started detailing vehicles for Fox Ford in Wolf Point to supplement their income. Local communities began to hear about their hard work, and the demand for their services continued to grow. Alisha and Austin decided to take their detailing business, Big Sky Renovisions, full-time and knew they needed guidance to be successful entrepreneurs.

Alisha and Austin reached out to the Great Northern Development Corporation and SBDC Regional Director Quincy Walter for help. Quincy was able to help them create a business plan, loan applications, and cash flow projections. With this assistance, Alisha and Austin were able to secure a Commercial Bank loan and Great Northern Development Corporation's GAP financing to help them purchase their new building in Froid.

After buying their shop in July 2023, Alisha and Austin once again reached out to Quincy for technical assistance and training recommendations. They attended a Quickbooks training and were directed to the REAP program to equip their businesses for future success. To celebrate all their hard work, Big Sky Renovisions held a grand opening party in September to celebrate their success.

"Austin and Alisha are the small business startup success we wish for every business in our region. They were so much fun to work with and you can see their passion and dedication to their business. They continue to ask questions on how to grow their business, which we know will succeed," stated Quincy Walter.

BILLINGS SBDC BUSINESS ADVISOR WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE



The Montana Small Business Development Center Network, headquartered at the Montana Department of Commerce, announced that SBDC Business Advisor Kayla Vokral of Billings was named Montana's 2023 State Star.

The State Star is a national award received by outstanding SBDC employees from around the country. Vokral will be honored next month at America's Small Business Development Center Conference in San Diego. Award nomination criteria include exemplary performance, significant contributions to the program and a strong commitment to small businesses.

"Kayla's work has greatly benefited our southcentral Montana entrepreneurs," said Scott Osterman, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. "Montana's Small Business Development Center clients are fortunate to have access to Kayla's innovation and leadership as they navigate their businesses to success."

Vokral and her regional director, Lorene Hintz of Big Sky Economic Development, provide confidential one-on-one consulting and training for entrepreneurs and small business owners across a nine-county region. Lorene Hintz said, "Kayla goes above and beyond in everything she does. She is self-motivated, innovative, creative and spunky!"

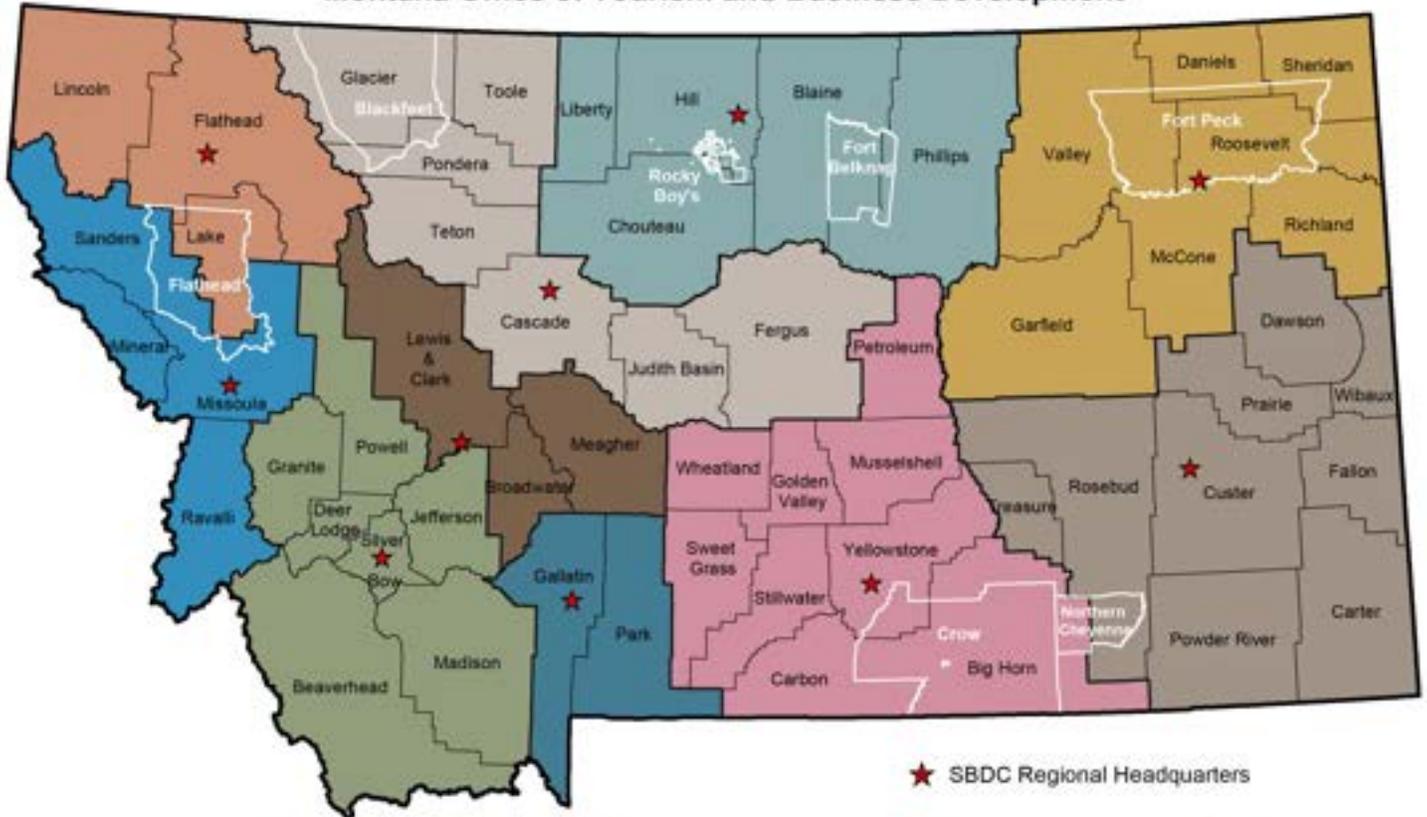
"Kayla has surpassed our expectations, as well as the expectations of her clients," said Chad Moore, Montana SBDC State Director. "Entrepreneurs thrive under her consulting; this is well-deserved recognition."

In 2022, Vokral enhanced opportunities for small businesses by serving as the point person for four large events in her region. Those events included the Rise and Restore Conference, Expert Week, the SBDC Day Cake Walk and a high school entrepreneur market. Expert Week featured themed days where volunteer accountants, marketing experts and attorneys provided free thirty-minute sessions to clients. The week ended with the Expert Week Tradeshow, which showcased 17 business resource partners who set up booths and talked with clients. Vokral was also instrumental in developing "The Vault at 201 N. Broadway" podcast for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"Being recognized as State Star is truly an honor and a privilege. I'm incredibly fortunate and grateful to have found a career that I love. Working with small businesses is both exciting and constantly evolving," said Kayla Vokral. "I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Montana SBDC network for believing in me and supporting my work with entrepreneurs and small businesses."

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC) REGIONS

Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development



★ SBDC Regional Headquarters

 Bear Paw Development Corporation Havre - (406) 399-1557	 Flathead Valley Community College Kalispell - (406) 756-3836	 Great Northern Development Corporation Wolf Point - (406) 653-2590	 Helena College University of Montana Helena - (406) 447-6376	 University of Montana Missoula - (406) 243-4770
 Big Sky Economic Development Authority Billings - (406) 254-6014	 Great Falls Development Authority Great Falls - (406) 771-9022	 Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. Butte - (406) 533-6780	 Prospera Business Network Bozeman - (406) 587-3113	 Miles Community College Miles City - (406) 874-6168

Map by: Census & Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, 301 S. Park, Helena, MT 59620-0505, (406) 841-2740, email: ceic@mt.gov <http://ceic.mt.gov>

Billings Regional Center

Big Sky Economic Development
406.254.6014

Bozeman Regional Center

Prospera Business Network
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Butte Regional Center

Headwaters RC&D
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Great Falls Regional Center

Great Falls Development Authority
406.836.2078

Havre Regional Center

Bear Paw Development Corporation
406.399.1557

Helena Regional Center

Helena College
406.447.6376

Kalispell Regional Center

Flathead Valley Community College
406.756.3836

Miles City Regional Center

Miles Community College
406.874.6168

Missoula Regional Center

University of Montana
406.243.4770

CONTACT US

Wolf Point Regional Center

Great Northern Development Corporation
406.650.2524



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