



Annual Report 2023



NORTH DAKOTA
**SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS**

Your Ideas - Our Expertise - Your Success

PARTNER & SUB-AWARD HOSTS



PROGRAM INVESTORS

Adams County Development Corp.

Alerus Financial

Aspire Bank

Bank North

Bell Bank

Benson County JDA

Bowman County

Bowman County Development Corp.

Bremer Bank

Capital Credit Union

Cavalier County JDA

Choice Financial

City of Belfield

City of Bowman

Consolidated Telecom

Cornerstone Bank

Dakota Business Lending

Dunn County JDA

Eddy County

First International Bank & Trust

First Western Bank

Forward Devils Lake

Gate City Bank

Grand Forks County

Grand Forks Region EDC

Greater Fargo Moorhead EDC

Lake Agassiz Development Group

McKenzie County JDA

Minnesota Business Finance Corp.

Mountrail County JDA

NDSU Research & Technology Park

North Central Planning Council

North Dakota Opportunity Fund

Rolette County

Rugby JDA

Starion Financial

Stark Development Corporation

Town & Country Credit Union

Towner County EDC

UND Center for Innovation

US Bank

Vision Bank

Western State Bank

Williston Economic Development

INTRODUCTION



Friends, partners, and colleagues -

Thank you for taking the time to review our 2023 Annual Report! The past year has been a year of building - building up our small businesses, our programming, our partnerships, and our entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The pages that follow are filled with highlights from our year, sharing the important work of this program in communities big and small, all across this great state. Our success stories might just shine the spotlight on a familiar face or business within your own community. We are grateful to our many business clients across our state, and we are proud to support a small piece of their story as they build their businesses, contribute to their communities, and inspire others to do the same.

Also in these pages, our staff have shared some of their passionate reasons for serving our state's ever-tenacious entrepreneurs and small businesses. ND SBDC staff consistently demonstrate the ability to drive positive change and help businesses and communities reach their full potential. They have made meaningful differences in the lives of those they assist, and they do it with professionalism, integrity, and a personal desire to meet the highest of standards. I wouldn't be able to report all this good news without these experts on our team. If you get a chance to tell an ND SBDC team member that you appreciate what they do day in and day out, please do!

In early 2023, the network kicked off a new strategic plan with implementation planned through the end of 2025. The feedback from a broad group of stakeholders, including staff, host entities, partners, and investors, identified three distinct areas of focus for us: Capacity and Human Capital, Intentional Partnerships, and Performance Excellence. We are looking forward to making progress in these strategic areas to impact our long-term success, growth, and diversification; and in turn, that of our clients, state, and economy!

It is important to also mention that the ability to build up our program in ways that we have not in the past, is in large part due to the support of the Bank of North Dakota during the 2023 ND Legislative session. With a shift in state match funding to be allocated now and in the future from the Bank of North Dakota, we are able to look at strategic growth. We appreciate the efforts of that team, our state legislators, our advocates, and advisory board members in supporting this priority.

As we inch closer to our 40 year anniversary as North Dakota's largest and most impactful small business development program, we see great things on the horizon for the ND SBDC and North Dakota's small businesses. We will continue to do what we do best: building up our small businesses and positively impacting our communities... because when small businesses thrive, communities thrive, North Dakota thrives.

TIFFANY FORD
State Director

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ALAN HAUT
U.S. SMALL
BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

Alan Haut, District Director, is responsible for overseeing SBA services across North Dakota. As the nation's go-to resource and voice for small business, the SBA provides counseling, capital, and contracting expertise so businesses can confidently start, grow, expand, or recover. Al's SBA career has included many positions, including Economic Development Specialist, Loan Officer, Lender Relations Specialist, & Deputy District Director. "I'm a strong proponent of the SBDC network seeing first hand what a great resource the SBDC is for small business owners – new business owners and experienced owners. The ND SBDC is a dedicated group of advisors that provide invaluable guidance and support to our small businesses."



**DR. AMY
HENLEY**
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH DAKOTA

Amy Henley is the dean and a professor of management at the UND Nistler College of Business & Public Administration. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas in Arlington in the area of organizational behavior and psychology. Henley's research interests include distributive and procedural justice, compensation and pay fairness, and intragroup processes. Dr. Henley has co-authored papers that have appeared in numerous top tier academic journals. "The ND SBDC is integral in launching and supporting businesses in our state. We are proud to support these efforts and watch innovation grow," says Henley.



JOSH TEIGEN
DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE

Josh Teigen serves as the North Dakota Commissioner of Commerce, where he oversees economic development, tourism, marketing, workforce development and community development efforts for the state. Josh Teigen is an accomplished private sector executive, entrepreneur, and investor. "North Dakota's economic engine is firing at a record rate. We have managed to attract capital investments that will transform our economy for generations to come. The ND SBDC is integral to our success in ensuring economic prosperity and quality of life moving forward. Without the ND SBDC, our communities are left with gaping holes for cultivation of future businesses which will increase prosperity, quality of life, workforce attraction, and help make our communities as strong and vibrant as they can be."



**KELVIN
HULLET**
BANK OF
NORTH DAKOTA

Kelvin Hullet serves as the Chief Business Development Officer at the Bank of North Dakota. In his role, he assists in implementing the BND mission of supporting business, industry and agriculture in the state. "North Dakota Small Business Development Centers play an important role in entrepreneurship and business expansion in our state," shares Hullet. "It is an honor to be asked to serve on the Board and be a part of this important mission." One of BND's priorities for Hullet is to provide oversight of legislatively directed programs administered by the Bank. This includes funding for the SBDC. Prior to BND, Hullet served for 13-years as the President of the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber.

STATE ADVISORY BOARD



Ray Berry

Ray Berry is co-founder and CEO of OmniByte in Fargo, ND. An NDSU graduate, he is a life-long ND resident and brings over 30 years of experience in the fields of engineering and technology together with his passion to accomplish OmniByte's mission: Improve the safety and lives of mobile workforce personnel. The ND SBDC has been an important partner for OmniByte from its beginning in 2015, and through different stages of growth globally. Ray is an advocate and staunch supporter of small business and of the SBDC organization.



Shannon Duerr

Shannon Duerr is the Executive Director of the Cavalier County Job Development Authority, where she has been employed since 2007. She is a member of several organizations including Economic Development Association of North Dakota and the Mid-America Development Council. Shannon is passionate about ensuring that small businesses in rural communities receive access to the same services and programs available in larger communities.



Chris Moen

Chris Moen serves as a Financial Advisor and Consumer/Small Business banking lender for the Northern Valley Market. He specializes in providing clients with holistic financial planning needs, and is an active member in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. After seeing the massive impact the ND SBDC has had on his referred clients, he knew he wanted a more active role on the board to continue the great work being done in our community and state.



Missy Feist-Erickson

Missy Feist-Erickson is the Vice President of Peoples State Bank of Velva, a locally owned community bank with offices in Velva and Minot. She is also the treasurer for the Minot Area Chamber/EDC and serves on the Governor appointed board, Commission on Status of Women. Missy believes that small business is big business! Through the partnership with the ND SBDC and her bank customers, she has seen firsthand the key role ND SBDC plays to assist in the success of businesses of all kinds.

Cherie Harms is President/CEO of Leonardite Products in Williston, a mining & processing facility serving the agriculture and oil industries globally. In addition to serving on the ND District Export Council, Harms is a founder of the Humic Products Trade Association and a Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation board member. She uses ND SBDC services and in 2022 received the "Champion of the SBDC" award during the Williston Economic Development & ND SBDC annual banquet.



Cherie Harms

Ryan Jilek is a graduate of NDSU with an Electrical Engineering degree. After 22 years as a small business owner and SBDC client, he took a role in economic development as the Executive VP of Stark Development Corporation. Ryan has been active with workforce, business recruitment and expansion, as well as strengthening an environment that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. The services provided by the ND SBDC are vital tools to support this effort.



Ryan Jilek

Cheryl Kary is an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. She holds a Ph.D. in Communications and Public Discourse from UND. In 2013, she established the Sacred Pipe Resource Center, a non-profit organization serving the American Indian population in Bismarck-Mandan. She has worked within and with Tribal communities and populations for a majority of her career, advocating for Native people and Tribes in a variety of volunteer efforts.



Cheryl Kary

Teran Doerr Is the Executive Director of Bowman County Development Corporation and currently serves as the Past President of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota and past chair of the Rural Development Council. In her role on the advisory board, she understands the invaluable resource the ND SBDC provides in economic development across the state and also the specific impact it plays in rural communities in North Dakota.



Teran Doerr

Thank you

Our sincere thanks goes out to our advisory board in 2023. Their input from across the state continues to be extremely valuable. We appreciate their time, knowledge, and insight. We extend our gratitude to those whose terms have ended.

IMPACTS



1,787

Individual Clients Advised



8,240

Hours of Advising

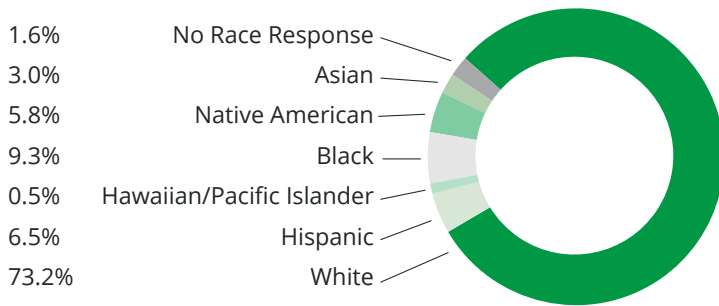


\$82,707,624

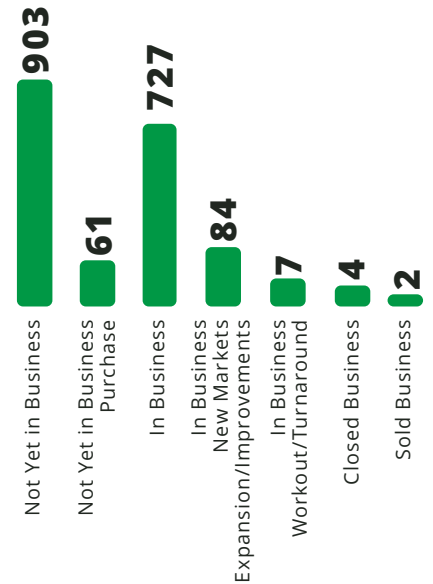
Client Capital Formation

RACE/ETHNICITY

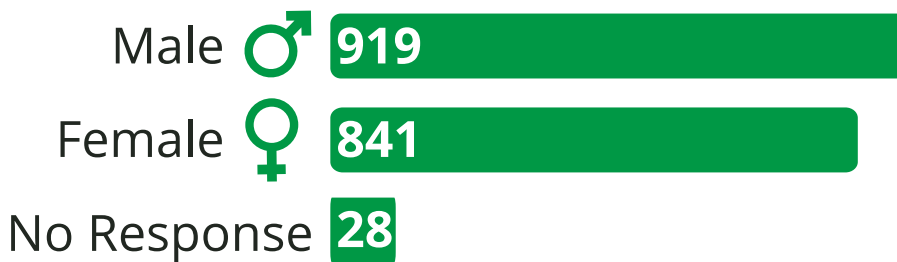
Individuals are able to choose as many categories as are applicable



BUSINESS STATUS



GENDER



INDUSTRY SEGMENT

6

Top 12 categories displayed due to space limitations.



105

New Businesses Created



4,693

Jobs Supported



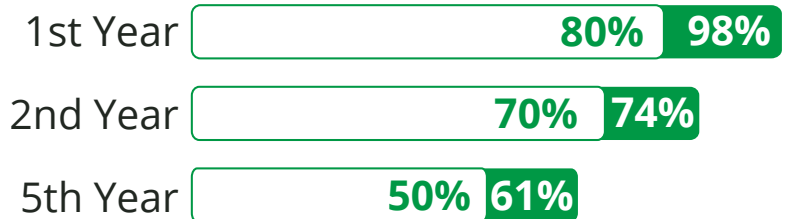
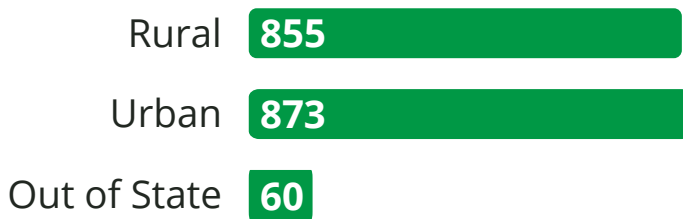
709

Training Attendees

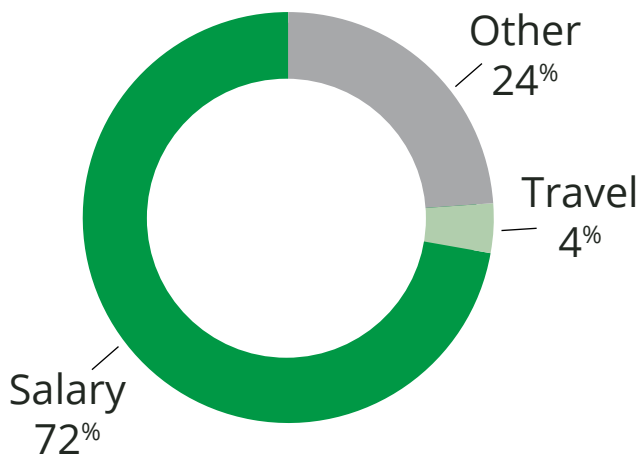
RURAL vs. URBAN SUCCESS RATE

Out of state clients may be assisted if their intent is to locate their business in North Dakota or if they are working with a North Dakota lender.

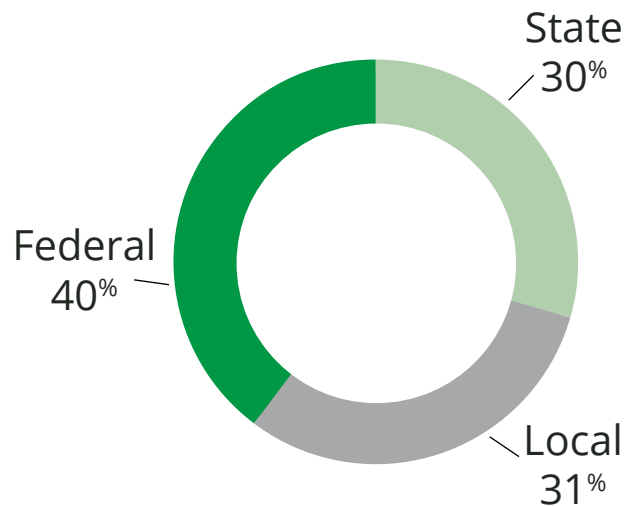
National average of businesses remaining open over time (white bar) as compared with those assisted by the ND SBDC (green bar).



EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



FUNDING SOURCES





BISMARCK CENTER IMPACTS



TYLER DEMARS

MSL, ABI

CENTER DIRECTOR

- Originally from Minot, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in August 2022

Q&A

What do you look forward to at work each day?

I look forward to helping people who aren't sure where to start. As entrepreneurs and business owners, your attention can be pulled in all directions. A favorite part of my work is talking through a client's current situation and identifying 3-5 action items they can focus on right now to move the needle for their business.

What do you wish more people knew about the SBDC?

I wish that more people knew we don't only work with startups, but existing businesses as well. We regularly assist seasoned business owners with business expansions, cash flow analysis, turnaround work, exit & succession planning, and more!

What has been one of your most memorable clients and why?

Helping someone get their business off the ground is always memorable, but some of the client stories I'm equally proud of are when we help someone make an informed decision to not start a business before they pour more money and resources into it. I believe an underrated ROI for the SBDC is how we reduce the cost of failure so that people can make informed decisions on opportunities.



8

New Businesses Created



353

Jobs Supported



235

Individual Clients Advised



\$2,430,657

Client Capital Formation

SUCCESS STORY

DL'S STRAWBERRY KOOLER

VELVA - DL's Strawberry Kooler is a popular bar and grill that holds a special significance for its current owner, Donna Lynn Knutson. Donna had previously worked at the establishment when it was under her mother's ownership. After ten years, Donna's mother made the decision to sell, and Donna, having gained firsthand experience of the dedication and hard work required to run a business, recognized the potential when the opportunity arose in the spring of 2022. However, being a science teacher for over thirty years, she was unsure how to navigate the business world and realized she needed assistance to get started.

Donna's vision for the bar and grill was to create a more kid and family-friendly environment. She renamed it DL's Strawberry Kooler, for Donna Lynn's, symbolizing the personal touch she had planned. Her goal was to establish a warm and welcoming atmosphere that would appeal to a broader customer base.

As a first-time business owner, Donna encountered various challenges, one of which was managing the financial aspects. Like many small business owners, she found accounting overwhelming. Fortunately, Donna discovered the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC) through Peoples State Bank in Velva, ND. She sought guidance from a business advisor, who helped her create a business plan and provided support throughout the loan process.

Demars photo courtesy of Jacy Joe Photography



Thanks to the assistance of the ND SBDC, Donna was able to develop a solid business plan that led to securing a loan and setting her on the path to success. "I obtained the loan and had a business plan to follow," she explained. Armed with a well-structured plan, Donna got started on her improvement plans, expanding the offerings to cater to families and the surrounding communities. The result was a happy customer base, great food, and a fun place to be.

Since becoming the new owner, Donna has experienced remarkable growth, attracted a larger clientele, and garnered tremendous support from the community. She has been able to complete her planned transformation, providing an enhanced and enjoyable atmosphere for her customers.

Her positive experience with the ND SBDC led her to recommend the services to other small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories

BOWMAN CENTER IMPACTS



LAURA WEBER
CBA®, ABI
BUSINESS ADVISOR

- Grew up on a farm/ranch near Ralph, SD
- Started with the ND SBDC in July 2013.



4
New Businesses Created



91
Jobs Supported



43
Individual Clients Advised



\$727,719
Client Capital Formation

Q & A

Are there any important partnerships or collaborations that have had a significant impact on your work?

My work would not be possible without key partnerships and collaborations. Working with local development organizations and lenders allows for

greater opportunities for clients. Advisors and clients receive a direct impact from being knowledgeable and building those relationships.

What do you wish more people knew about the ND SBDC? We are a great resources for start-ups but can also provide invaluable assistance to existing businesses. Advisors are able to assist with reading financial statements and compare the operations to industry standards, strategize to identify areas of growth potential, work through problem solving to overcome challenges, and celebrate the wins!

PAWSITIVE K9 CARE

SUCCESS STORY

BOWMAN – Gracie, a dog lover, took her fondness for animals and turned it into a thriving business when she was just in 8th grade. She founded her pet care company in the spring of 2019, offering services such as pet sitting, dog training and agility.

The spark for Gracie's business started during a camping trip in 2018. The campsite had a dog agility site that she was able to use with her own dog. Use of that site made her recognize an unmet need in her area.

Soon after, Gracie learned about the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC) from her mother. After attending the session together, she registered for one-on-one advising and described it as, "Going above and beyond what I needed to help me reach my goals."

The ND SBDC played a vital role in helping her secure funding for her grooming expansion by assisting

with financial projections. Helping her formally put together a business plan was also part of the process to prepare for seeking commercial funding.

While her love for dogs is the foundation of her success, Grace



acknowledged the importance of her support system. Family and friends motivated her to pursue her dreams. Her investment in education, particularly business and accounting classes, proved invaluable, helping her make informed decisions.

Even though she encountered doubt from others due to her age, which became a challenge she overcame with determination and resilience.

Looking back, Gracie praises the ND SBDC for helping her present a professional business plan and establishing trust with financial institutions. Their guidance contributed to her organization and growth, enabling her to reach her business goals. When asked if she would recommend the ND SBDC services to other entrepreneurs she enthusiastically agreed, attributing much of her success to the essential support she received.

Gracie shared this piece of advice for aspiring entrepreneurs: "Don't care what other people think. Your dreams are yours...you can make them come true. Don't let other people determine how and what you build. Put in the work and keep a confident mindset."

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories



DEVILS LAKE CENTER IMPACTS



ASHLEY LOUW
CPBA, ABI
BUSINESS ADVISOR

- Originally from Portland, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in December 2020

Q&A

What does your typical day look like?

Every day varies. Some days I know I have client appointments all day. Other days, I may not start the day with appointments scheduled, but end up with emails and phone calls that give me tasks and projects that fill the day.

What do you wish more people knew about the ND SBDC?

I wish more people were aware of the program and all that it could provide them. The services are available at no-cost to the client, the assistance can alleviate some of the work that the lender or client need to do - and it's not just for people looking to start a business. There is so much more the program and advisors can assist with!

What do you look forward to each day at work?

I enjoy working with clients. Each one brings something new and different to my plate. Because of the clients, I often get to research things, learning and strengthening my knowledge base. Each year I get to learn and grow and I look forward to what 2024 clients will bring to the table.



4

New Businesses Created



168

Jobs Supported



63

Individual Clients Advised



\$1,988,000

Client Capital Formation

SUCCESS STORY

583 THERAPY

DEVILS LAKE - In the heart of the Lake Region, a group of therapists embarked on a journey to create a place for occupational, physical, and speech therapy services.

Jessica Anderson, Heidi Brown, and Emilee Luehring, all shared a common vision. In August 2022, they decided to turn their aspirations into something tangible. The concept of a therapy center that could offer a more flexible and personalized approach to its clients and community was the driving force behind this venture. However, finding the time and

The success of 583 Therapy can be attributed to the team's deep-rooted connections within the Lake Region. They were able to build a strong client base by offering services for pediatrics and other specialty services that weren't offered at other locations.

What began as a modest venture soon blossomed as 583 Therapy rapidly built up a caseload, allowing them to hire additional staff sooner than anticipated. The ND SBDC played a pivotal role in this journey.



Ashley Louw and Sandy Shively, their ND SBDC advisors offered comprehensive assistance, from help with the business plan development to financial projections.

In the end, 583 Therapy was able to obtain financing through First United Bank and North Central Planning Council, along with owner investment. "The financing received was particularly crucial during the startup phase," said Luehring.

resources to tackle the additional business responsibilities proved to be one of the toughest challenges.

To navigate the complex world of business ownership, 583 Therapy sought guidance from the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC). Recommended by local businesses and their financial lender, the ND SBDC provided invaluable support and direction.

The groundwork began in March with extensive building renovations, and by mid-June, 583 Therapy opened its doors.

"Starting up your own business is very stressful and overwhelming; at times, it can seem like it's not worth it. However, it is absolutely worth it in the end and very rewarding. Don't lose sight of your goal, and keep following your dreams," said Luehring.

The process the owners of 583 Therapy went through highlights the importance of community support and the valuable guidance from the ND SBDC, offering assistance and encouragement to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories

DICKINSON CENTER IMPACTS



15

New Businesses Created



196

Jobs Supported



131

Individual Clients Advised



\$2,380,490

Client Capital Formation

MATT ELLERKAMP

MBA, ABI

BUSINESS ADVISOR

- Originally from Culbertson, MT
- Started with the ND SBDC in March 2022

Photo courtesy of Lynette Locken Photography

Q & A

What do you wish more people knew about the ND SBDC?

That we are much more than just start-up assistance. ND SBDC advisors provide assistance throughout the entire business life cycle from start-up to growth, maturity, and exit or succession.

What do you look forward to each day at work?

Advising clients in making informed and smart business decisions versus assumptions.

What inspired you to pursue your current role?

Coming from a family of small business owners, I know the vital impact they provide to a community. The more small businesses a community has, the more resilient the local economy, providing a higher quality of life for its citizens.

THE BOOM CLOSET

MOTT - The Boom Closet, a firearms store specializing in new and used guns, optics, accessories, and more, is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of western North Dakota. Owned and operated by Ben Boyll, this family and veteran-owned business not only serves the needs of its customers but also embodies the values of self-reliance and community support.

Ben's dream of owning his own business began years ago. And it was only in the past couple of years, after formulating a solid business plan, that this dream started to take shape. In September 2022, Ben purchased a location for The Boom Closet. By November 2022, the business was conducting initial sales, leading to a grand opening on January 28th, 2023. The journey from concept to reality was swift and purposeful.

Running a small business comes with a learning curve. Daily operations and juggling multiple tasks, often as a solo entrepreneur, is challenging. Effective time management has proven essential in overcoming these hurdles.

Ben's journey was made possible with the assistance of the ND SBDC

SUCCESS STORY

and the guidance of his Dickinson business advisor, Matt Ellerkamp. Ben learned about the ND SBDC through his primary lender and after he discovered that he could get start-up assistance, including help with business plans, financing, and sales projections, he made an appointment. After assistance with his financial projections, Ben was able to get a loan



package that included a traditional lender, the Bank of North Dakota, a regional loan program, and the local development corporation.

The Boom Closet has expanded its in-store inventory significantly. The

business has also strengthened its online presence, aiming to become the premier firearms dealer in southwest North Dakota.

The ND SBDC brought expertise and advice to the table, particularly when it came to compiling essential sales projections for financing. This streamlined the process of obtaining business funding, making it relatively stress-free. Ben strongly encourages other small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to utilize ND SBDC services.

Ben's advice to other entrepreneurs thinking of starting their own business, "Expect to be at your business every day and to not make much money personally in the beginning! This is something that I anticipated when starting my business and it helped to have those expectations in place before taking the leap."

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories



FARGO/SOUTHEAST CENTER IMPACTS

Q&A

**PAUL
SMITH**
MS, EDFP,
CVGA, ABI
CENTER
DIRECTOR



- Originally from Chicago, IL
- Started with the ND SBDC in June 2015

What do you find inspiring about your job? I am inspired by the resilience of small business owners. It's a privilege to walk alongside them in their personal journeys, and rewarding to work with great partners in a resource-rich, collaborative ecosystem.

Are there trends small businesses should take into account? AI will continue to impact our work in profound ways. By automating routine tasks, AI can help increase efficiency and boost creativity. Look for more AI integration with the tools we use every day.

**CHRIS
ERWIN**
MBA, MSML,
ABI, CBA
BUSINESS
ADVISOR



- Originally from Fremont, CA
- Started with the ND SBDC in January 2022

What inspired you to pursue your current role? My inspiration for pursuing this role stemmed from a deep appreciation for aiding small business owners in overcoming challenges. The driving force was my desire to assist entrepreneurs committed to realizing their American Dream of business ownership. The resilience and hope evident in their pursuit of a better future for themselves and their families is truly motivating.

What do you find inspiring about your job? Motivated by aiding small business owners, my aspiration to help entrepreneurs achieve their American Dream of business ownership is fueled by their resilience and hope for a better future.



17
New Businesses Created



1,245
Jobs Supported



518
Individual Clients Advised



\$10,420,192
Client Capital Formation

SUCCESS STORY

UNCLE CHARLIE'S GOURMET SNACKS

FARGO – In 2018, Clayton Cottman, a passionate cook, took the bold step of starting his own business, a journey that would take two long years to materialize. Despite the challenges he faced along the way, Clayton never wavered in his commitment to his dream. In 2020, Uncle Charlie's Gourmet Snacks entered the market, marking a significant milestone for Clayton.

"It's very exciting to turn my aspirations into a tangible reality each day!" For Clayton, one of his favorite aspects of being a business owner is the sense of fulfillment he experiences daily. "Witnessing the progress of my business unfolding before my eyes is an indescribable feeling of accomplishment."

Clayton found the ND SBDC while searching online for local small business resources. Though unsure of what to expect, Clayton was very excited to receive comprehensive support from the ND SBDC.

Fargo / SE Center Director Paul Smith assisted Clayton in developing a professional "lender-ready" business plan and detailed financial projections, and helped him prepare critical loan documents for funding opportunities.

One of the most significant hurdles Clayton faced was securing financing for his early stage business. Building strong relationships with financial institutions, banks, investors, and lenders proved to be a daunting challenge. However, Clayton's determination and resilience propelled him forward.

With the support and guidance of the ND SBDC, Clayton successfully secured funding through the GFM EDC Growth Initiative Fund and the North Dakota Development Fund. The expertise of the SBDC in business planning and financial analysis proved to be invaluable. "The funds received through the EDC and ND Development Fund were instrumental in the growth of Uncle Charlie's Gourmet Snacks," says Clayton. "No entrepreneur can succeed in isolation. I'm so glad that I used the guidance, assistance, and connections of the ND SBDC."



Uncle Charlie's Gourmet Snacks has grown substantially since its inception. The products are now available in over 250 regional retail locations, including major grocery stores, popular convenience stores, and specialty stores. This expansion has allowed Clayton to reach a wider audience and connect with customers who appreciate the unique flavors and quality of his snacks.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories

GRAND FORKS CENTER IMPACTS



20

New Businesses Created



454

Jobs Supported



240

Individual Clients Advised



\$4,268,287

Client Capital Formation



NICOLE EVANS

CBA®, ABI

CENTER DIRECTOR

- Originally from West Fargo
- Started with the ND SBDC in January 2017

POPLERS MUSIC

SUCCESS STORY

GRAND FORKS - From a young age, Joshua Gratton has had a passion for music and a dream of owning a music store. In 2017, he began working at Popplers Music, a Grand Forks staple that originally opened in 1909. After five years of employment, Gratton had the opportunity to purchase the business and went for it. He was able to reach his ownership dream while also feeding his passion for music.

Joshua's journey to becoming an entrepreneur was driven by his strong dedication and a deep love for music. He devoted extensive hours to studying business, including college courses, taking advantage of online resources, and attending conferences. He looked for advice from mentors and gained valuable insights from a range of jobs.

When the opportunity came about to purchase Popplers Music, it was what he had been waiting and preparing for. The store, with locations in Grand Forks and Sioux Falls, provides a wide range of musical instruments, supplies, and educational services.

A key component of Joshua's journey to success was the role of the ND SBDC. Early in the process of working to purchase the store, the ND SBDC was recommended to Joshua by a personal advisor. He recognized the value of diverse outlooks when making crucial decisions. Nicole Evans, ND SBDC Grand Forks Center Director, was able to assist with financial projections to help prepare Joshua for the financial aspects of the purchase and future operations.

Popplers Music has thrived, owing



its success to Joshua's commitment and the strength of his team. He gives much credit to the hard working and dedicated team across both locations noting that they are what makes the business successful.

Joshua was pleased with the insight and expertise received from his ND SBDC advisor, Nicole. "Regardless of if you have no experience or years of experience working in finance, working with someone that has a process setup to analyze financials, helps you gain insight. Not only can it show you what other entrepreneurs have done to purchase a business, it is another data point that will help you move forward with confidence."

Q&A

What is the number one piece of advice you would give to someone looking to start a small business? Do not rush the process. All too often things get overlooked, not discussed, not thought of. Take your time learning about the market, your service or product, the money, time, and attention it will take. Owning your own business is a whole different view than just working for one.

What is a skill you have that you have found most valuable in your role? I also own and run my own small business. Being able to talk to clients from that place of experience can make the process a bit easier.

Are there trends that small business owners need to take into account? Cybersecurity is not a trend, but I am finding that more and more people are starting to recognize its importance. Clients are starting to give it the time and attention it needs.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories



MINOT CENTER IMPACTS



MARY BETH VOTAVA

BCA, CMEA, CBA®, VCA, ABI,
CERTIFIED EXIT PLANNING ADVISOR

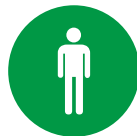
CENTER DIRECTOR

- Born and raised in Minot, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in July 2000.



13

New Businesses Created



247

Jobs Supported



165

Individual Clients Advised



\$2,846,650

Client Capital Formation

Q&A

What is the number one piece of advice you would give to someone looking to start their own business?

Do not rush. Take the time to write a business plan. Developing strategies and processes are necessary to ensure you can meet business demands, grow capacity, and be profitable.

What inspired you to pursue your current role? I did not know much about the ND SBDC when I applied many years ago. My experience and education qualified me for the job, but the work has made me stay. It is rewarding work. The program has grown tremendously through the years and has had a positive impact on our clients' businesses and our communities. I am extremely privileged to collaborate with great co-workers and clients that help me feel accomplished in the work that I do each day.

TURTLE MOUNTAIN VETERINARY SERVICE

SUCCESS STORY

BOTTINEAU - In 2005, Dr. Jill Franks embarked on a journey into small business ownership, starting her own veterinary practice in Bottineau, ND. Fresh out of vet school, she answered an ad from the Bottineau Economic Development Corporation recruiting a veterinarian. Intrigued by the community and the area, Jill decided to take the leap into entrepreneurship, even though she had no prior experience in running a business.



In August 2005, Turtle Mountain Veterinary Service was born, providing both large and small animal veterinary services to the Bottineau community and surrounding areas.

Jill first learned about the ND SBDC through the Bottineau Economic Development Corporation. She initially used the ND SBDC services to formulate a business plan to secure startup financing. During advising sessions with Mary Beth Votava, Jill expected assistance in identifying weaknesses and inefficiencies in her business. She sought advice on improving profitability and resilience.

Mary Beth helped Jill analyze her finances and pinpoint areas for expense reduction. Additionally, they worked together to identify staff inefficiencies, ultimately leading to improved profitability. Thanks to SBDC's guidance, Turtle Mountain Veterinary Service has witnessed an improvement in its profit margin.

Turtle Mountain Veterinary Service has come a long way from its humble beginnings with a staff of just three. Today, it has several employees, allowing it to serve a larger client base and expand its practice range. Within a decade, the business outgrew its initial space and moved into the

current spacious and modern facility. The business has worked with the ND SBDC for many years, coming back during phases of growth for additional guidance and assistance. Mary Beth Votava, the Minot Center Director, has been there to help every step of the way. From initial appointments back when things were starting in 2005, through the building of a new facility, and continuing today.

"Mary Beth has provided me with valuable and realistic guidance through the years and continues to do so. She is even a bit of a therapist and has helped me navigate some rough times and been instrumental in maintaining my morale during those periods. I'm not sure I would still be here today without her guidance."

Jill regularly reminds herself that she's still here nearly 20 years later, a testament to her unwavering determination. Turtle Mountain Veterinary Service continues to thrive, serving its community and fulfilling Jill's dream of independent entrepreneurship.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories

WILLISTON CENTER IMPACTS



24

New Businesses Created



1,939

Jobs Supported



392

Individual Clients Advised



\$57,645,629

Client Capital Formation

HOME COMFORTS

SUCCESS STORY



WILLISTON – Dale and Bev Salmen embarked on a unique entrepreneurial journey in their sixties, allowing for new purpose in their lives. Dale first arrived in the area to take on drywall projects and was drawn in by the local charm. In 2014, he began working with his brother-in-law at a wireline company in Williston, and Bev followed in 2015.

The couple's venture began when they stumbled upon an empty retail space, sparking their entrepreneurial spirit. With the help of a friend who had interior design expertise, they made the decision to establish a home interior focused retail store.

In 2017, Home Comforts officially opened, specializing in bedding, florals, furniture, and home décor. Their best-selling products include pillows and sheets. Bev's commitment to helping people create cozy home environments was apparent, and they carefully select items from various vendors and artists.

Their shared passion for connecting with people through art was a driving force in their journey to Williston. Their dedication has paid off as they consistently expand their business. Bev states, "We've grown every year, so that's been huge."

The ND SBDC and Keith Olson, their advisor, played crucial roles in their

journey. Dale expressed his gratitude, noting, "He (Keith) gave us seemingly unbiased and educated advice. Because he knows all the resources, he gave us his opinion on what it would be like. And he was so spot on."

The Salmen's lending package for their initial Home Comforts location included a commercial loan from First State Bank, a Bank of North Dakota buy down program, and the local Star Fund, along with owner investment. Their ongoing dedication and utilization of available resources transformed their vision into a thriving business.

Read this full client success story, along with others, at ndsbd.org/success-stories



**CYRENA
WEEKS**
BUSINESS
ADVISOR

- Originally from Williston, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in 2021

What do you wish more people knew about the ND SBDC?

I wish that anyone looking to start a business knew that SBDC service are available to them at no-cost. Advisors can take them step-by-step through the process and we are passionate about helping entrepreneurs.

What do you look forward to each day at work?

I look forward to helping our clients reach their dreams. When we sit down and discuss the process of starting their business, it is the best feeling. Their excitement is contagious. When a client is overwhelmed and we are able to take things one step at a time so they better understand it, it is a great day at work!

Q&A



**KEITH
OLSON**
*CBEC, BCA, CVGA,
PMC, CEPA, CBA®,
ABI, MCMEA, EDFP,
SMPS, CE, APBA*

CENTER DIRECTOR

- Originally from Adams, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in March 2003

What do you wish more people knew about the ND SBDC?

The depth of knowledge and skill our advisors have. We have many unique skill sets and experiences that are here for our clients to draw upon.

What is the number one piece of advice you would give someone looking to start their own business?

I frequently hear that they want more time. Starting a business is the opposite - it gives you less time in the short term. If you don't spend the time building it, it will have the opposite effect. You have to find a balance of working on your business and in it.



**KAYCEE
LINDSEY**
CBA®, ABI
BUSINESS
ADVISOR

- Originally from Hazen, ND
- Started with the ND SBDC in 2010

What do you look forward to each day at work?

I look forward to helping strengthen my community, whether that is helping someone looking to start a business, someone looking to expand their business, or someone seeking information and tools they can use to support their existing business.

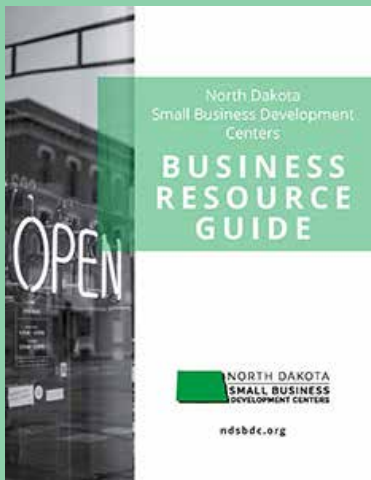
What is the best skill/quality you can have in this job?

In my opinion, passion. I thrive from seeing the success of clients because I know that their success not only impacts them, but also the communities they serve.



NEWS & PROJECTS

UPDATED RESOURCE GUIDE



In 2023 we updated and reworked our Business Resource Guide. Not only was there some new and updated information that we wanted to get into the guide, we also wanted to rework the content to flow in an order more helpful to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Throughout the guide, links to reference materials and resources were updated. Additionally, we added information about cybersecurity, exit and succession planning, and expanded the information related to access to capital, with

many of these sections including references to our additional guides and materials.

The new guides have been distributed to all of our center locations. If you would like some on-hand at your partner location, reach out to our Lead Center and we'd be happy to send some your way.



Shop North Dakota (ShopND.com) is an "amazon-like" shopping experience showcasing businesses and

products from North Dakota. From buying your favorite Pride of Dakota item or a gift card from a local restaurant, to a scarf from a local boutique or lures for your next fishing trip, you can add it all to your cart with one check-out process. This free-to-use platform is for local small businesses to come together and sell their products and services online. The site offers support to sellers from a live team assisting with your shop, products, and orders. A key component is that North Dakota small businesses can all sell on one website, providing convenience and an incredible variety of products for shoppers to choose from with just one checkout. Businesses have the option to sell products, services, events, virtual or customizable products, and gift cards through the site.

To take advantage of this opportunity, a business needs to be in good standing with the ND Secretary of State and be a registered client of the ND SBDC. Use the QR code to become a seller:



2023 ND SBDC STATE STAR



Laura Weber, Business Advisor in Bowman, was awarded the 2023 State Star for the ND SBDC, an esteemed recognition that highlights her outstanding

commitment and contributions to the small business community in North Dakota.

Every year, the America's SBDC State Star Award is presented to individuals who have consistently demonstrated exceptional performance, made substantial contributions to their networks, and champion the success and growth of small businesses within their state or region. Laura was celebrated at the national level during the annual America's SBDC conference, which took place the first week in September in Nashville.

Laura's passion for rural entrepreneurship is evident in her role as the Business Advisor for the Bowman SBDC since 2013. She specializes in helping

small businesses in rural areas thrive. In addition to her work with small business clients, Laura has also dedicated her time and expertise to various nonprofits.



Pictured: Laura and Tiffany at the ASBDC State Star Recognition event at the Grand Ole Opry.

CLIENT SUCCESS



ASR BRANDS GRAND FORKS

Paul Carlson, founder of ASR Brands, embarked on his entrepreneurial journey to design and sell aftermarket roofs and sound systems for Polaris Rangers and golf carts.

Overtime, ASR Brands experienced remarkable growth. Paul expanded his offerings to include installation. Demand for his products constantly exceeded supply.

Reflecting on his experience, Paul wholeheartedly recommends the ND SBDC services to other small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. "It's a place you have to start at. They have so much information, guidance, and connections."



THE BAKERY SHOPPE OAKES

After attending culinary school, Brittney Harty realized that her passion lay in culinary arts and decided to pursue a career in baking and cooking.

Her business journey started by forming her LLC in January of 2023 and officially opened The Bakery Shoppe in March. The Bakery Shoppe specializes in providing freshly baked breads and sweets. The Bakery Shoppe has experienced growth since opening, with plans to expand the menu and hire employees.

Impressed by the assistance of the ND SBDC, Brittney highly recommends their services to other entrepreneurs. She emphasizes the importance of asking questions and seeking guidance.



THE RANGE WILLISTON

Jeremy Stahowiak and Eli Black shared a passion for golfing and hunting. Recognizing the challenge of practicing these sports year-round in the northern climate, they conceived the idea of The Range to offer indoor golfing and shooting simulations. The unique blend of golfing and shooting simulators set The Range apart from traditional entertainment options.

The story of The Range also highlights the crucial role of community support in the entrepreneurial journey. The ND SBDC Williston Center, led by Keith Olson, Center Director, played a significant role in assisting Jeremy and Eli with business planning and securing financial support.



VALKYRIE FITNESS TRAINING LAKOTA

In May 2021, Katie Peavy officially established Valkyrie Fitness Training, although she had been operating as a sole proprietor under the same name since 2011. Her business offers a wide range of fitness services, nutrition programs, and even home gym design.

The pivotal turning point in Katie's journey came when one of her personal training clients recommended the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC) upon learning of her dream to open a brick-and-mortar gym. Intrigued, Katie sought their guidance to explore available resources and determine the feasibility of her vision.

The ND SBDC proved to be an invaluable resource for Katie. Their expertise and support in financial planning and analysis alleviated her concerns about the risks involved. Thanks to their assistance, Katie gained the confidence to move forward with her plans.

To fellow entrepreneurs, Katie recommends, "Heed advice only from those you would trust for business guidance and seek the mentorship of successful business owners." She emphasizes the importance of understanding that there is always more to learn, and constructive criticism should be seen as an opportunity for growth.



TESTIMONIALS



Laura has been **WONDERFUL** to work with. She is **ENCOURAGING** and **HELPFUL!** Responds to questions **QUICKLY** and provides **QUALITY** content. I have enjoyed my experience with the ND SBDC.



Ellen Roundy
Bowman



Paul provides that **KNOWLEDGEABLE** and personal approach that always leave you with the best options and more!



Curt Foley
CSC Innovations
Fargo



ND SBDC service is **INCOMPARABLE.** No amount of money can pay for my experience with the Dickinson Center.



Alice
Aleezah Enterprises
Dickinson



Mary Beth has been an absolute **LIFE SAVER!** She went above and beyond to navigate all the things that are required and then some.



K.L.
Minot



Tyler did an **OUTSTANDING** job. He was quick with customer service and provided what was asked for!



Scott Sandquist
Bismarck



The staff is very knowledgeable, dependable, and amazingly friendly, as well as encouraging. I definitely recommend the ND SBDC.



Seth Bercier
Rolla



Keith's knowledge for start up businesses in Williston has been **INVALUABLE!**



Connie Boreson
Williston



Our SBDC advisor was **EXTREMELY HELPFUL** when we started our business. She was always just a phone call away at any time.



Drew Henderson
Windy's Bar and Pizza



Nicole is **INVALUABLE** as she is always a step ahead of all of my questions. She is willing and able to assist all of my business needs!



Clarence
Attainable Wealth
Grand Forks

NETWORK PROGRAMS

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS

The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) program is a one-stop-shop for service members, veterans and military spouses looking to start, purchase, or grow a business. VBOCs provide training workshops, including Boots to Business (B2B) and Boots to Business Reboot, as well as business development assistance such as training, advising, and resource referrals. B2B and Reboot are entrepreneurial education and training programs open to Service members, National Guard and Reserves, Veterans of all eras, and their spouses. VBOC of the Dakotas provides services in both North and South Dakota.



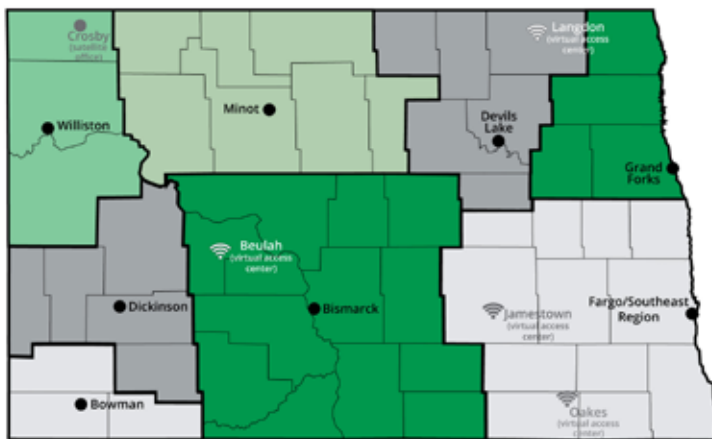
The North Dakota APEX Accelerator is a resource for assisting ND businesses in obtaining federal, state, and local government contracts. Advisors work with businesses to identify government contracting opportunities. They provide confidential, no cost, one-on-one counseling on how to obtain, manage, and comply with contracting requirements for the Department of Defense (DoD) and other federal agencies, state and local governments, as well as businesses with government prime contracts.



U.S. Small Business Administration



Funded in part by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.



**Location information can be found at:
ndsbdc.org**



A black and white photograph of a city street. The street is wide with a double white line down the center. On the left side, there are several cars parked along the curb. On the right side, there are more cars parked, including a dark SUV and a dark sedan. The buildings are multi-story with many windows. Some buildings have awnings. The sky is overcast with clouds. A large green rectangular overlay covers the top left portion of the image. The text "ndsfdc.org" is written in white on the green overlay.

ndsfdc.org