

2024

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

APRIL 28 - MAY 4, 2024



BUILDING ON AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS BOOM



U.S. Small Business
Administration

sba.gov/nsbw

CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

SCORE is proud to co-host the National Small Business Week Virtual Summit with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).



In 2023, SCORE HELPED CREATE:

31,167
SMALL BUSINESSES

152,115
TOTAL NEW JOBS

SCORE empowers entrepreneurs through expert guidance and resources for small business success.

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U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

April 28, 2024

It's National Small Business Week — the U.S. Small Business Administration's annual celebration of America's 33 million small businesses and innovative startups that power our economy and define our neighborhoods. This year, we celebrate as the Biden-Harris Administration's small business boom enters its fourth year of historic growth. With a record-setting 5.5 million new business applications filed in 2023, the total number of new business applications filed since President Biden took office is now nearly 17 million.

This small business boom is no accident. The Biden-Harris Administration is investing in America, and landmark legislation like the American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act, and Inflation Reduction Act continue to foster favorable economic conditions that allow small businesses like yours to start, grow, and be resilient.

The small business boom is about hope and opportunity. The Biden-Harris Administration is leveling the playing field and working hard to ensure small businesses can compete and access expanded opportunities. When small businesses thrive, America thrives as they are the backbone of our economy and the heartbeat of our communities. Small businesses have historically created two-thirds of net new jobs, employ nearly half the workforce, produce more than 40% of our economic output, and deliver the products and services we depend on every day.

To support our nation's entrepreneurs and improve their success outcomes, the SBA provides funding, knowledge networks and free advisory services, revenue opportunities with government contracts, and strategies for expanding to digital and global markets. We ensure small business resilience by providing disaster assistance to small businesses and their communities at their most vulnerable time. The SBA works with more than 1,800 lending partners, more than 300 investment companies, nearly 400 growth accelerators, and more than 1,600 small business centers that include Community Navigators, Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and SCORE chapters. We are proud to help make the American dream of business ownership more attainable to aspiring entrepreneurs in every corner of the nation.

As a tribute to our nation's entrepreneurs, we honor their vision, determination, resilience, and impact: *Thank you for being the dreamers and innovators that our nation needs. Your big ideas, talent, and drive are an inspiration to us all.*

America's economy is only as robust as the collective vitality of its small businesses — and under the Biden-Harris Administration, small business owners and entrepreneurs are in a stronger position than ever. This week, we turn the spotlight on their successes as we celebrate National Small Business Week 2024.



Isabel Casillas Guzman
SBA Administrator

JEANE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE, CHAIR
JONI ERNST, IOWA, RANKING MEMBER:

MARIA CANTWELL, WASHINGTON
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, MARYLAND
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
MAZIE K. HIRONO, HAWAII
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA
JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, COLORADO

MARCO RUBIO, FLORIDA
JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
TIM SCOTT, SOUTH CAROLINA
TODD YOUNG, INDIANA
JOHN KENNEDY, LOUISIANA
JOSH HAWLEY, MISSOURI
TED BUDD, NORTH CAROLINA

SEAN MOORE, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR
MEREDITH WEST, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-5175 FAX: (202) 224-5619

April 28, 2024

Dear Friends:

As the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am delighted to welcome you to the 61st annual National Small Business Week. It is an honor to recognize and celebrate the contributions of American small businesses.

National Small Business Week is an incredible opportunity to highlight our nation's entrepreneurial spirit. I commend the small business owners recognized as the Small Business Persons of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Your achievements exemplify the hard work and ingenuity of so many small business owners across the country.

Our nation's more than 33 million small businesses form the foundation of our economy, especially in states like Iowa. Small business owners lead in their communities, employing over 61 million American workers.

Every day, I am amazed by the innovation and dynamism small businesses bring to our economy. I want to acknowledge SBA's role in supporting small business owners. From contracting to mentorship, their resources are a valuable part of our nation's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Together, with Chair Shaheen and my colleagues, we are focused on ensuring SBA works for entrepreneurs and small business owners in every part of our country.

I am thankful for the millions of Americans who boldly pursue their dream of owning a small business. I wish you continued success in your endeavors.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joni K. Ernst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joni K. Ernst
Ranking Member

JEANE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE, CHAIR
JONI ERNST, IOWA, RANKING MEMBER:

MARIA CANTWELL, WASHINGTON
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, MARYLAND
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
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JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, COLORADO

MARCO RUBIO, FLORIDA
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April 28, 2024

Dear Friends:

As Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I welcome you to the 2024 National Small Business Week Award Ceremonies. Congratulations to all of the Small Business Persons of the Year winners. In particular, I want to recognize Susan Borchert and Betsy Harrison from New Hampshire. Their work, with the help of the Small Business Administration (SBA), has resulted in a practice with more than 85 professionals helping Granite Staters overcome mental health challenges.

National Small Business Month is a time to highlight the important contributions entrepreneurs make to our country and to reflect on what we can do to make sure the American dream remains open to each and every one of us. More than 33 million small businesses employ more than 61 million workers. In fact, for the past 20 years, small businesses contributed to approximately 40 percent of the United States' economic activity. This amounts to trillions of dollars generated for the national economy.

As a former small business owner, I understand the need for Congress to enact policies that will help entrepreneurs access capital, innovate and compete in the 21st century economy. The Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee remains focused on ensuring that SBA can fully serve small businesses by hiring the necessary staff to connect small business owners to the programs they need to grow.

From tackling the soaring cost of quality child care to finding ways for America to stay competitive on the global stage, I commend each of you for your work. Thank you for daring to dream big. I hope you will serve as ambassadors for the SBA resources that help fuel prosperity in local communities across the country.



Congratulations,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanne Shaheen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

Jeanne Shaheen
Chair



Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2501 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0515

Dear friend,

As Chairman of the House Committee on Small Business, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this year's National Small Business Week in Washington, D.C.

Small businesses play a vital role in our nation's economy, employing over 60 million Americans and accounting for nearly half of our nation's economic output. The importance of small businesses cannot be overstated, providing essential goods and services to communities across the country.

Starting a small business is a leap of faith that requires entrepreneurs to make sacrifices in their own lives to pursue the American Dream. As someone who has run my family's small business for over 50 years, I understand the struggles many of you have faced at one point or another in your journeys to success.

The House Committee on Small Business is the voice for Main Street America in Washington, D.C., where too often, your concerns and input get overlooked. Rest assured, the Committee remains committed to defending and standing up for every small business across the country.

Over the past year, the Committee has made significant accomplishments – passing bipartisan legislation to increase transparency in government contracting, helping small businesses understand and comply with federal regulations, and increasing outreach to veteran owned small businesses.

Through working with my colleague, Ranking Member Nydia Velazquez, and all our committee members, the Committee is committed to fighting for America's small businesses and working on behalf of our nation's job creators like yourselves.

The entrepreneurial spirit is core to the American Dream, and I commend you for carrying on that spirit for future generations.

In God We Trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Roger Williams
Chairman
House Committee on Small Business



Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Ranking Member, House Committee on Small Business
April 28, 2024

Dear friends:

National Small Business Week is a time to celebrate entrepreneurs for their incredible achievements and the outsized role they play in American life. Our nation's 33 million plus small businesses make up the backbone of our economy. Small firms empower nearly half the private workforce and contribute 40% annually to our nation's GDP. Simply put, small businesses are the engine of our economy, pillars of our communities, and a key part of what makes this country great.

Over the past few years, the power and potential of American small businesses have been on full display. Since 2021, over 16 million Americans have filed applications to start new businesses. At the same time, our economy has added 15 million jobs, with the majority being created by small businesses. As we celebrate small businesses this week, I am particularly proud of the great progress small firms have made in the wake of the pandemic and how they continue to move our country forward.

As Ranking Member of the House Small Business Committee, I am working diligently to ensure small firms have the resources they need to harness this momentum and build on their progress. As policymakers, we must focus on expanding access to capital, increasing federal contracting opportunities, and providing support for counseling and educational opportunities to ensure small businesses have the resources they need to thrive.

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to this year's award winners. These awardees represent small business owners, lenders, and advocates who all embody the American entrepreneurial spirit. I would also like to thank Small Business Administration Administrator Guzman and SBA leadership and staff for their work in putting this week's events together and their dedication to American small businesses. I wish you a joyful, productive, and inspiring National Small Business Week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nydia M. Velázquez".

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

PHOENIX AWARDS



Phoenix Award for Outstanding Small Business Disaster Recovery

Jacqueline Bernetta Tate Smith

Owner

The Coffee Shoppe

Selma, AL

Jacqueline Tate Smith is a long-time entrepreneur and community leader in her hometown of Selma, Alabama. She owns and operates The Coffee Shoppe, a local eatery and specialty coffee shop that opened in November 2011.

On January 12, 2023, devastating and destructive tornadoes ripped through Selma. Jacqueline was first introduced to the SBA in 2020 after receiving an economic disaster relief loan due to the pandemic. She turned to the “blue shirts” from SBA’s Office of Recovery and Resilience (ODR&R) again to assist her in her disaster relief recovery, receiving another economic injury disaster loan to continue The Coffee Shoppe’s brand of excellence in customer service and community engagement.

As a leader in her community and the local Chamber of Commerce, she understands the historical significance of Selma as the “birthplace of the Civil Rights movement,” and the many opportunities for small businesses to welcome visitors to learn a part of American history.

Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Public Official

Dirk J. Guidry
Councilman
Terrebonne Parish
Chauvin, LA



Terrebonne Parish, LA Councilman Dirk Guidry (District 8) first took office Jan. 2012. He continued serving until early 2024. Dirk served as Chair of the Parish Community Development and Metropolitan Planning Committees.

He's a member of the Parish's American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, and School District's "Partners in Education." For his above and beyond efforts to support his community and work closely with SBA's recovery assistance programs, Guidry received an Award of Excellence Medal from the 1st Battalion 129th Field Artillery unit, deployed to the Parish to support Hurricane IDA recovery. The public presentation ceremony highlighted how Dirk was instrumental in creating an ongoing recovery center in the aftermath of the hurricane.

Dirk's a lifelong resident of Chauvin, LA. He served in the U.S. Air Force for six years. Upon returning home, he married Wendy Price in 1987 and have two daughters, Crystal and Abby. For almost 30 years, they've operated the Pizza Express in Chauvin.

Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Volunteer

Leanne Rogers Lovell
President
Wynne Relief and Recovery
Wynne, AR



Leanne Lovell, a thirty-year resident of Wynne, AR, started the non-profit, Wynne Relief and Recovery, after an EF-3 tornado devastated the city on March 13, 2023. Moments after the impact, she received a personal call from Mayor Jennifer Hobbs, to lead the tornado recovery.

As a result, Leanne set up a 21,000-foot distribution center, managing over 200 volunteers a day, with doctors, and counselors to serve medical and mental health needs to disaster survivors. Her recovery efforts supported the federal response, including SBA's Office of Disaster Recovery, by disseminating information from her social media accounts, conducting several local radio interviews, and securing temporary housing for families.

Leanne's leadership in the commitment to the recovery and now resiliency of the City of Wynne, is an expression of her unwavering thank you to the community that supported her in her personal time of need. Leanne was awarded the 2023 Cross County Citizen of the Year.

SMALL BUSINESS PERSONS OF THE YEAR



Alabama Small Business Person of the Year

Shanna L. Ullmann
Managing Partner, Owner
Transformation Partners, LLC
Tuscaloosa, AL

Shanna Ullmann, Ph.D., is the founding partner of Transformation Partners LLC, offering consulting, employee learning and development programs that empower higher education, federal government, U.S. military, and corporate clients. Transformation Partners, LLC began in 2000, as a statewide training provider, and has since expanded its training across multiple states. Over the years, the firm transformed from a small, one room office, to a full-scale office facility for planning and training implementation.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the firm's client commitment leading to decreased net sales. The firm was able to receive a \$50,000 SBA EIDL loan which allowed Transformation Partners LLC to not only remain operational in 2020, but also enabled the business to secure several Department of Defense and higher education contracts. With this financial support, Transformation Partners was able to reduce its training fees and provide gratis advisement to many clients, resulting in increased client engagement, sales, and expansion of new clients by 63%.

Alaska Small Business Person of the Year

Kali C. Bennett
Owner
The Waterworks
Anchorage, AK



Hot water has run in Kali Bennett's blood as a young girl. Growing up in the ski hamlet of Girdwood, Alaska, she came of age downhill skiing while learning about the hot tubs in her family business, The Waterworks. Kali's natural entrepreneurship spirit was evident in her high school years where she started a chapter of the Rotary Interact and a small business cleaning tub.

Now in its 47th year, The Waterworks has expanded locations, grown its team and spearheaded the path to digitally-enabled sales and services. Kali credits her SBA 7a loan that allowed her to purchase a building and expand retail floor space.

Arizona Small Business Person of the Year

Austin J. Tsosie, *Chief Executive Officer*
Daniel V. Riggs, *Chief Strategy Officer*
Diné Development Corporation
Scottsdale, AZ



Diné Development Corporation (DDC) was created in 2004 to generate economic prosperity for the Navajo Nation by providing government agencies and commercial firms with high-quality IT, professional, environmental, research, and development services. Through expansion, the corporation has grown to over 700 employees and encompasses a portfolio of companies that offer a wide range of capabilities.

Austin Tsosie has shaped the organization's culture, building operations, fueling business development, and enhancing tribal relations. Dan Riggs possesses over 20 years of portfolio management and leadership experience in the federal contracting industry, bringing success in business development and growth sectors.

DDC received support from the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) and the SBA Arizona District Office's 8(a) team, where they participated in the SBA's 8(a) program.

Austin is an active contributor to the Navajo community, devoting time as a baseball coach for children, mentoring aspiring Navajo professionals, and serving as Board Chairman of the US Business Federal Contractors Association.



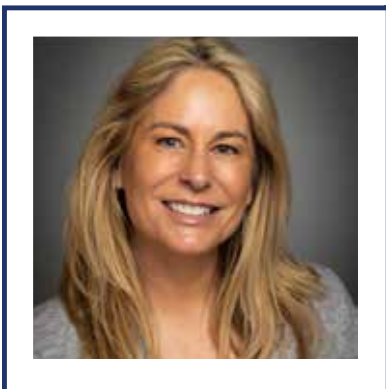
Arkansas Small Business Person of the Year

Lynette West
Owner
HealthWear Inc.
Jonesboro, AR

Lynette West owns HealthWear Inc., a medical uniform and accessories boutique in Jonesboro, Arkansas. HealthWear Inc. was opened in 2013. In 2015, Lynette became the new Managing Partner, turning the store into a successful business with the help of three employees.

Lynette worked with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center to obtain advising related to business management. During the pandemic, Lynette received an SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan and an Arkansas Ready for Business Grant, allowing the store to remain open and keep employees on board.

Lynette is a graduate of the 2021 SBA Emerging Leaders program, which taught her how to manage and grow her business. In 2022, Lynette and her husband Kent purchased the business and employed seven people. Lynette frequently cross-promotes with small businesses in the area and encourages local and small business shopping.



California Small Business Person of the Year

Carrie A. Schmidt Poyner
President/CEO
BC Schmidt Construction, Inc.
Colusa, CA

Ms. Carrie Schmidt Poyner holds licenses in general construction, general engineering, concrete, electrical, demolition, and modular construction. She has owned and managed her own business for 25 years.

She founded BC Energy LLC, inventing an Off-Grid Electric Vehicle Solution—a relocatable containerized system with a 120kW battery, 11 kW solar, and 200 amps power, supplying 2 level-2 chargers. Awarded a GSA Zone D MACC contract for infrastructure improvements across the 14 western states, incorporating electrification.

COVID adversely affected BCS, decreasing sales, net income, and equity. It took years to bounce back, addressing supply chain issues, labor problems, cost escalations, access to capital, and remote work. BCS retained all employees. Today, BCS sees an increase in sales, net profit, and employees.

Carrie actively contributes to professional organizations like the Society of Military Engineers and the Associate of General Contractors. She is also an engaged member of Women Construction Owners and Executives.

BC Schmidt Construction, Inc. has participated in SBA's 7j training program, PTAC, SBDC, Federal Technology Center, and Women's Business Center trainings. Carrie's leadership and commitment to excellence have been instrumental in the company's growth and success.

Colorado Small Business Person of the Year

Christine and Alan Herron
Owners/Founders
Achieve Sports Center
Aurora, CO



The Herron family started Achieve Sports Center in 2013, providing a safe, and welcoming environment to challenge youth through athletic development and competition.

Utilizing SBA lending resources through a CDFI, the Herron's acquired less than desirable commercial space, transforming their facilities into community assets, which provide activity programs to urban youth. Achieve Sports Center promotes health, fun, and fitness for everyone, by providing gymnastics, ninja, court sports, fitness instruction, and open play for children, adults, and seniors.

Over the past 11 years, the Herron family has created and sustained over 30 jobs, growing to a current staff of 123 employees. Despite a COVID-19 shutdown, Achieve Sports Center showed resilience, finding ways to continue services despite limitations from health mandates.

The Herron family gives back to the community through volunteer and financial support to several organizations that support children with disabilities, and by serving as Council Chairperson for the Colorado Development Disabilities Council.

Connecticut Small Business Person of the Year

Maria Christina Miranda
Chief Creative Officer
Miranda Creative, Inc.
Norwichtown, CT



Maria Miranda started Miranda Creative 35 years ago in a two-bedroom apartment with one employee, herself.

A Woman and Minority-Owned business, Miranda Creative, now a community of 30, is a brand management agency. Teams (called cohorts) deliver innovative design solutions, strategic brand management, and digital services to empower organizations to achieve their goals.

The SBA's PPP and EIDL funding were vital in helping the business remain stable during the pandemic and allowed the agency to grow between 2020-2023. The pandemic also allowed many employees to work remotely, making the proximity to the office less important and led to the expansion of their geographic footprint with employees working from Boston, Charleston, and Milwaukee.

Miranda Creative supports community re-investment, supporting conferences, and purchasing pallets of pet food for local food banks so families are not choosing who to feed in their households. In addition to financial support, Miranda Creative provides pro-bono hours to non-profits, to ensure fundraising efforts, job retention and overall operations.



Delaware Small Business Person of the Year

Amy Lord Hughes
Owner
Lord's Landscaping Inc.
Millville, DE

In 2016, Amy Hughes assumed control of the family business Lord's Landscaping. Immersing herself in the company, she was determined to focus on survival. Under her leadership, the business experienced growth, including a 400% increase in revenue. In 2019, she bought the business outright and now has seven distinct business lines: the Garden Center, the Merc Luxury Home and Gifts, landscaping/hardscaping design, irrigation/maintenance, and events.

Amy attributes her success to a strong work ethic, her dedicated/loyal staff, SBA funding, mentorship from local SCORE Chapter, and keeping the mission of the business – “Growing for Good: use the property for a purpose, create better lives for employees and the community” -- front and center.

Lord's commitment to the mission is notable. One event, Whimsical Woods, has raised over \$100,000 for the Ball4All Foundation. Amy is also one of the founders of the Fund for Women and a local benefactor for Women of Will.



Washington, DC Small Business Person of the Year

Manuel Calin Cosme
President & CEO
CFO Services Group Inc.
Washington, DC

Manuel (Manny) Cosme is President and CEO of CFO Services Group Inc., an accounting firm in the nation's capital since 2012.

With more than 20 years of experience in the business, Manny started CFO Services to “fill the gap” for new, small, and growing organizations with accounting expertise and services beyond tax preparation and bookkeeping.

Since its inception, CFO Services has grown to 27 employees, and made major leaps in total sales and net profits.

In addition to benefiting from the SBA's COVID EIDL program, CFO Services conducted pro bono Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) workshops assisting more than 700 business. Manny is also involved with the Association of Latino Professionals - DC Chapter, and LULAC, the largest and oldest Hispanic organization in the U.S. advancing the economic and educational condition of Hispanic Americans.

Florida Small Business Person of the Year

Yanet Herrero
Chief Executive Officer
Kings Service Solutions
Orlando, FL



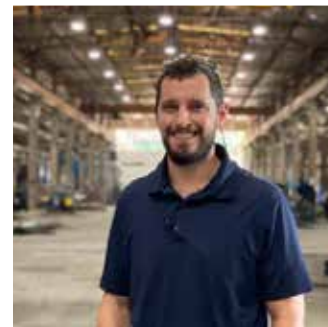
Spurred by her family's legacy, Yanet Rodriguez, a Cuban American entrepreneur, started Kings Service Solutions in 2007. From a modest start with six full-time and 37 part-time employees, Yanet expanded her commercial cleaning business, now spanning three states with 87 full-time and 162 part-time staff.

Her leadership earned national accolades, including Prospera's Success Story of the Year and the Don Quijote Award for Hispanic Business of the Year. Collaborating with the Florida SBDC at UCF and PTAC, Yanet was able to grow her business and secure contracts with industry giants like Lockheed Martin and Walt Disney World.

Yanet leveraged vital SBA assistance for business continuity and staff retention during the pandemic. She also secured an SBA 504 loan.

Georgia Small Business Person of the Year

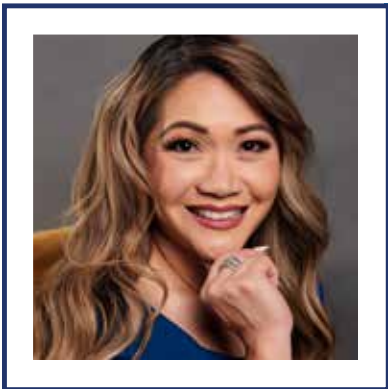
Eric Williams
President and CEO
Unified Defense | Prince Service & Manufacturing
Byron, Georgia



Eric Williams is the President and CEO of Unified Defense | Prince Service & Manufacturing, two manufacturing companies in Middle Georgia that provide metal components to defense and commercial sectors. Eric founded Unified Defense in 2016 and acquired Prince Service & Manufacturing in 2022. He operates the two organizations as a single entity.

Eric has been an SBDC client since 2017 and has received \$2.2 million in SBA loans to help finance and expand his organization. Unified Defense added 80 full-time positions in 8 years and expanded a 10,000 square-foot facility to almost 500,000 square feet today. SBA lending helped Eric expand his overall operation with the purchase of Prince Service & Manufacturing, ultimately creating more jobs in Middle Georgia.

Eric grew up in Northeast Ohio in a family of manufacturers and entrepreneurs. His goal is to operate an organization where customers, employees, and partners work collaboratively to create a great place to live and be successful.



Guam Small Business Person of the Year

Jessica Leon Guerrero

President

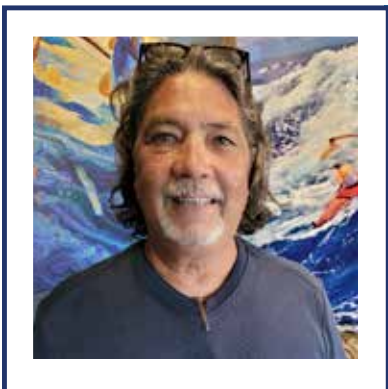
M80 Systems, Inc.

Asan, GU

Jessica Leon Guerrero, President and Owner of M80 Systems, Inc., leads a woman-owned business that has evolved since its inception in 1994. Initially focused on office systems furniture, M80 Systems now offers a diverse range of services, including warehousing, distribution, inventory management, office product solutions, sourcing, custom carpentry, flooring, and product and contract management. With over two decades of experience in government contracting, M80 Systems has made a strong impact as a federal contractor.

Jessica has utilized resources offered by the Guam SBA's Office, Small Business Development Center, and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center. Additionally, M80 Systems benefited from an Economic Injury Disaster Loan during the pandemic. The company has facilities in Guam and Hawaii.

Jessica actively supports local charity events, including the American Cancer Society for Life, Guam Children's Museum and Women Rising.



Hawaii Small Business Person of the Year

Ronald Panzo

Managing Member

Nalu's South Shore Grill

Kihei, HI

Ronald Panzo opened his first restaurant at Lulu's, in Kihei in 2003 as a junior partner. He expanded to Lahaina and Waikiki. In 2015, he sold Lulu's in Lahaina and opened up Lulu's in South Shore Grill. In 2019, Ronald opened another restaurant, Ekolu's Kitchen1279 in Kihei.

The pandemic affected restaurants, but with SBA PPP, EIDL loans and local clientele, they rebounded. He currently employs 58.

Ron's compassion for those affected by tragedy led him to co-found the Lei of Aloha for World Peace, a tradition of weaving a mile-long lei to gift to communities struck by tragedy. In 2009, he founded Tools for Schools, giving school supplies to children in Hawaii.

In 2023, a wildfire devastated Lahaina, Maui. He launched Lahaina Keiki Relief Fund, giving backpacks and 600 meals a week to affected families. Maui has not fully recovered, but with a strong local clientele and Ron's commitment to serving the Maui community with Aloha, his restaurant is still thriving.

Idaho Small Business Person of the Year

Jeanne McFall
Owner
RIVHAB, PLLC
Eagle, ID



Jeanne McFall, owner of RIVHAB, PLLC, a fisheries and wildlife conservation engineering and construction company, launched the business in her hometown of Eagle, Idaho, in 2019. McFall quickly expanded into federal contracting through the WOSB and 8(a) program with the assistance of APEX and SBA alongside support from the Idaho Women’s Business Center.

In 2022, RIVHAB received an SBA 7(a) loan that was critical in the growth and success of the business to compete, invest in technology, and assemble a team of six employees to serve the Pacific Northwest.

RIVHAB has two decades of specialized experience in addressing aquatic habitats, watersheds, and wetland restoration. They provide technical solutions in wildlife habitat improvement, water resources, geomorphology, wetland, and floodplain design.

McFall is a champion of the environment and her community, volunteering her time to fish and wildlife organizations and sponsoring community charities.

Illinois Small Business Person of the Year

Jacqueline Jackson
President
Kilwins
Chicago, IL



Jacqueline “Jackie” Jackson is the Owner/President/Operator of Ah Ha Chocolates Fudge and Ice Cream dba Kilwins. With seven stores in Hyde Park, Michigan Avenue, Navy Pier, Andersonville, Evanston, River North and Geneva, Jackie has grown her network from one store in 2012 with 10 employees to well over 75 employees in her Chicagoland network.

Jackie’s business received three Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) to help support and retain her business during challenging times. She later received another SBA loan to expand her Navy Pier buildout and repair the Michigan Avenue store that was damaged by vandalism.

Jackie is a regular participant in local chamber of commerce events, was appointed by the mayor of Chicago to serve as SSA Commissioner (Special Service Agent) on Chicago’s Southside, and serves on the boards of the Chatham Business Association and the Chicago Loop Alliance Group.



Indiana Small Business Person of the Year

DuJuan A. McCoy, President

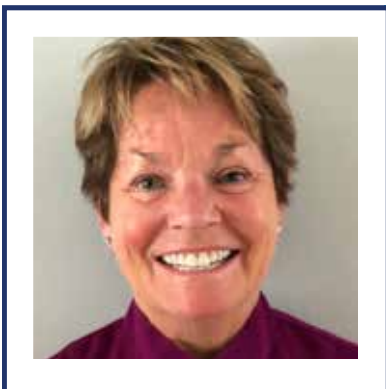
CEO and Founder

Circle City Broadcasting

Indianapolis, IN

After 30 years building TV stations for others, Indianapolis native DuJuan McCoy bought his first seven TV stations in 2008 with the help of an SBA-backed loan. In 2019, McCoy passed the reigns of his first ownership then came home, founded Circle City Broadcasting, and bought sister stations WISHTV and MyWindy23. As COVID devastated 2020, McCoy used an SBA Paycheck Protection Program Loan (PPP) to stay on the air. Currently, Circle City Broadcasting is the only Black-owned media company in a top 25 market.

McCoy supports the community through the DuJuan and Tina McCoy Foundation and partnered with Ivy Tech Community College spearheading the Multicultural Media Producing Program, a hands-on training designed to build diversity in media teaching technical skills needed to put on a TV broadcast. MMPP's first cohort graduated this winter; a second is underway.



Iowa Small Business Person of the Year

Cathy Bishop

President

Aggies, Inc.

Sergeant Bluff, IA

Cathy Bishop is the President of Aggies, Inc., a BBQ catering company in her hometown of Sergeant Bluff, Iowa.

A 1983 graduate of Texas A&M (the Aggies), Cathy spent ten years in Colorado as a Bank Examiner. She had always dreamed of being an entrepreneur though, and in 1994 Cathy came home and opened Aggies. Aggies began as a restaurant with some catering, but in 2009 Aggies pivoted to catering full time and turned the restaurant into an event venue.

Like most restaurants, Aggies was affected by COVID. Aggies started "COVID Carryout" where customers could place pick-up orders from a daily menu posted on Facebook. This concept, along with two PPP loans and a Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) award from SBA, helped Aggies survive the pandemic without laying off any employees. Aggies has grown since and currently employs over 50 full and part-time employees.

Cathy serves on the board of the Siouxland Chamber of Commerce and, through Aggies, supports many local charities and organizations.

Kansas Small Business Person of the Year

Dallas Michael Haselhorst
President
Treetop Security, LLC
Hays, KS



Dallas Haselhorst is the owner of Treetop Security, LLC, a cybersecurity firm located in Hays, Kansas, that specializes in securing and protecting customer data.

Haselhorst is an information security engineer, researcher, and entrepreneur. He founded and managed an IT service provider until its acquisition in 2016. He then founded TreeTop Security with the primary focus of improving the cybersecurity posture of small businesses.

The pandemic halted Treetop Security's growth momentum in 2020. Their sales pipeline dried-up and they gained only one new client that year. The SBA's PPP loan was a critical financial resource that helped the firm maintain its staff and strategize a response to the crisis. SBA's PPP loan allowed the firm to recapture and grow its sales when the economy opened back up.

Haselhorst is also the founder of STEM Harvest, a non-profit technology-centric education space for kids located in Hays, Kansas. When not working, Dallas enjoys promoting STEM education.

Kentucky Small Business Person of the Year

Ines M. Rivas-Hutchins
President
INTEC Group, LLC
Lexington, KY

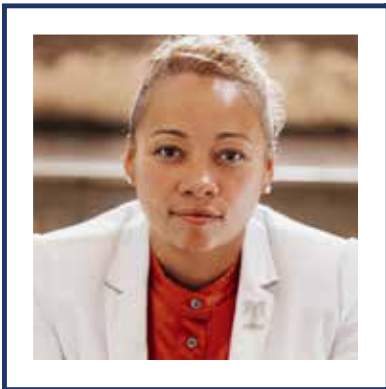


Ines M. Rivas-Hutchins, founded INTEC Group, LLC in 2014, after having experience working for other contractors in the industry. Originally from Valencia, Venezuela, Ines moved to the United States in 1999, with a background in Architectural studies.

INTEC Group is an Economically Disadvantaged Woman Owned Small Business (EDWOSB), SBA certified HUBZone, and 8(a) Certification Program participant firm in the State of Kentucky that specializes in all aspects of general construction. INTEC Group has a successful history of providing products and services to the federal government including the U.S. Department of the Army and the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

INTEC Group has grown each year at a rate of about 20%, and currently has 24 employees. During COVID-19, the company was financially in a good place, the only concern was managing its workforce and concerned staff.

Ines M. Rivas-Hutchins serves on several boards in her community and is a proud sponsor of the Stem 4 Girls program.



Louisiana Small Business Person of the Year

Iam C. Tucker

President & CEO

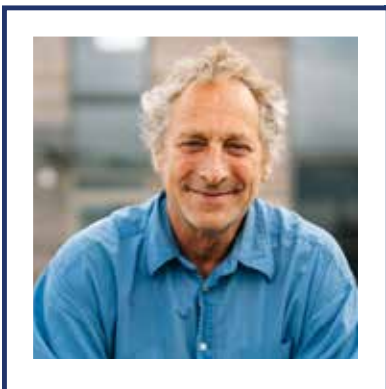
Integrated Logistical Support, Inc.

New Orleans, LA

Iam C. Tucker is the President & CEO of Integrated Logistical Support, Inc., a civil engineering firm in New Orleans, Louisiana. ILSI Engineering provides services in the civil engineering field, specializing in sewer, water, street, and drainage design projects.

As a 2nd generation owner of ILSI for over 15 years, she has generated more than 100 contract awards across various state, local, and federal agencies. She has grown the company from 9 employees to 50 employees, with a revenue of over \$2.7 million.

Ms. Tucker is graduate of the SBA 8(a) Business Development Program, and she utilized the financial assistance available through SBA loan programs. Under her leadership, ILSI Engineering continues to extend and expand the company's capabilities and clients both locally and nationally.



Maine Small Business Person of the Year

Matthew Polstein

Owner

New England Outdoor Center

Millinocket, ME

Matt Polstein became a registered Maine Guide in 1982 and established New England Outdoor Center in the small town of Caratunk along the Kennebec River. By 1995, Matt decided to expand and add a property on Millinocket Lake with cabin rentals and land for recreation.

In 2001, Matt purchased 280 acres of land to build a seasonal activity center and started looking for more opportunities to grow. Just as the local economy was starting to recover after the 2008 financial crisis, the COVID pandemic disrupted every tourism business. With PPP loans from SBA, NEOC was able to keep their staff on the payroll and ensure that they could last until the 2021 season.

Matt has now been able to work on all the plans he had put on hold since 2008. With a 7a loan from SBA, NEOC added a year-round event center, and an activity center to facilitate a range of activities, as well as a microbrewery and wood-fired pizzeria to cater to NEOC's guests.

As a true advocate of his community, Matt serves on committees and supports organizations active in Maine's rural areas. These range from serving on the Millinocket Town Council and Maine Community Foundation, to name just a few.

Maryland Small Business Person of the Year

Rose M. Li
President & CEO
Rose Li Associates
Bethesda, MD



Rose Li is President and CEO of Rose Li Associates, a research firm in Bethesda, MD.

In 2003, Rose started RLA in her home with a goal of moving science forward through research and collaboration. The company works in three areas: research and analysis, science communications, and multimedia and event production.

RLA later moved to a facility in Chevy Chase, MD with staff in Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. RLA benefited from SBA assistance, landing \$25M in 8(a) multi-year federal contracts and subcontracts for the National Institutes of Health, leading to a 118% increase in personnel and tremendous increases in revenue, net profit, and net worth.

SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) helped RLA continue to pay staff for six months while the office was closed during COVID-19.

Rose serves as President of the Li Education Foundation, promoting, advancing, and developing Chinese history, culture and education. She was appointed by Maryland Governor Larry Hogan to serve on the boards of the Maryland Commission on Aging, Maryland State Board of Education, and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation nominating committee.

Massachusetts Small Business Person of the Year

Stephanie Vanderbilt
Owner
Coastal Windows & Exteriors
Beverly, MA



Stephanie Vanderbilt is the owner of Coastal Windows & Exteriors, a home remodeling company based in Beverly, MA. A former teacher for the hearing impaired, Vanderbilt's passion for service and perspective of educating people with special needs helped guide the establishment of the business which she started with her husband.

Since its beginning in 2011, monthly gross revenue has multiplied by 10X, and today Stephanie manages 30+ employees. Mentoring sessions with SBA resource partner, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), helped Stephanie lay the foundation for success as a woman-owned business in a predominantly male-dominated industry.

After starting with an office above a warehouse – Coastal Windows & Exteriors now has a storefront office in downtown Beverly, MA with a newly expanded sales team devoted to education, outreach and training.

Stephanie gives back to the community in a number of ways, including over \$300,000 in donations given to Habitat for Humanity; and their own initiative "Roofs for Heroes" which donates roofs to veterans in need.



Michigan Small Business Person of the Year

Tiffany Klingensmith

President

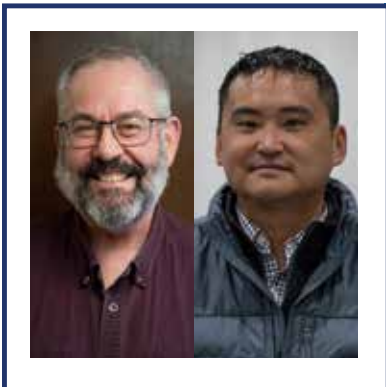
Unconventional Solutions, Inc.

Wixom, Michigan

Tiffany Klingensmith, President of Unconventional Solutions, Inc. (USI) launched her business in September 2002, after a major family crisis. She is a certified repair and protective paint expert with over 15-years' experience in providing customers with corrosion, erosion and chemical attack solutions.

In 2012 as the company continued to grow Tiffany purchased a building for her headquarters with an SBA 504 loan in Wixom, MI. She also expanded and opened two additional locations, in Ohio and Indiana. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic she closed the Indiana location. Currently she has 17 employees that staff the Michigan and Ohio operations.

Through all the ups and downs she contributes her time to the Great Lakes Women Business Council (WBC) and volunteers by mentoring to women business owners.



Minnesota Small Business Person of the Year

Micah Eveland, Owner/CEO

Kent Eveland, Owner/Board Member

Scamp Trailers

Backus, MN

Micah Eveland, CEO and President of Scamp Trailers, took over leadership of the company from his father Kent Eveland in 2022.

The Eveland family founded Scamp Trailers in 1971, producing 130 trailers per year. Today, they produce 700 units annually, and manage 74 employees.

Micah and Kent mitigated the impacts of the pandemic by ensuring a friendly, family-oriented culture. These efforts to keep a stable business culminated in an expansion of facilities and staff to meet demand and capitalize on new markets.

In 2022, the company underwent a 12,000-foot expansion, resulting in a 20% production increase. The Small Business Development Center served as a trusted advisor and business analyst providing nearly 80 hours of SBA-backed consulting services to guide this development.

The Eveland family is dedicated to their rural Minnesota community and donates their time and resources to local programs and charities, and by ensuring the availability of quality, year-round jobs in the area.

Mississippi Small Business Person of the Year

John Ruskey
Owner/Founder
Quapaw Canoe Company
Clarksdale, MS



John Ruskey is owner and founder of the Quapaw Canoe Company located in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

Quapaw Canoe Company provides adventures and expeditions by canoe, kayak, or paddle board on the Mississippi River. John started Quapaw Canoe Company in 1998 with one aluminum canoe. With growth in sales and several locations, today Quapaw has 12 employees and 2 franchises.

Like most businesses, John's business suffered during the pandemic. Quapaw Canoe Company received two SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, which helped the company survive the pandemic. John also received counseling from the Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

John was awarded the Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award and the St. John's College Award of Merit for distinguished and meritorious service to the Mississippi River for outstanding achievement in the arts and exploration.

Quapaw Canoe Company donates trips and volunteers to help achieve equal access for all with low-income schools and youth groups.

Missouri Small Business Person of the Year

Charlie M. Downs III
Owner
Sugarfire Smokehouse
St. Louis, MO



Charlie Downs founded Sugarfire Smokehouse in 2010, growing it to 14 locations (some of which are franchises) along with several sister restaurants. Company-owned locations currently employ 170.

Sugarfire uses locally sourced ingredients when possible—with suppliers listed right on their website. Winners of local and national awards, featured on national cooking shows, and great press writeups are some of their accolades.

They are good corporate citizens—giving to local and national charities and placing a donations link on their homepage.

While Sugarfire's growth has been explosive, there were also missteps and issues. During the pandemic they closed locations in Iowa and Florida, and as the pandemic wound down, so did locations in Texas and Illinois.

Sugarfire was able to keep their remaining locations open during the pandemic thanks to SBA's Paycheck Protection Program and SBA's Restaurant Revitalization Fund which allowed them to continue to pay their employees and keep their patrons safe from COVID.



Montana Small Business Person of the Year

Loretta L. Bolyard, PhD

Co-Owner/Founder

Mountain West Psychological Resources

Butte, MT

Loretta L. Bolyard, PHD is the co-owner/founder of Mountain West Psychological Resources, an outpatient-based clinic offering a full-spectrum of services, including mental health counseling, psychiatric medication management services, and neuropsychological assessment based in Butte, Montana.

Loretta's life journey unfolds from a challenging upbringing in a disadvantaged background, raised by a single mother contending with significant developmental disabilities. As a Shriner kid grappling with spine issues, a pivotal moment occurred when she secured a scholarship for undergraduate studies, ultimately discovering her calling as a neuropsychologist. Her diverse professional history includes roles as a Forensic Psychologist, Behavioral Health Care Psychiatric Consultant, numerous academic awards, and contributions to various journals.

SBA Resource Partner, the SBDC in Butte, MT assisted Loretta with her business plan, cash flow projections and loan packaging to acquire financing in 2022. This allowed the business to expand, build a new facility in a designated Opportunity Zone and increase the number of providers at the facility.



Nebraska Small Business Person of the Year

Michael Moravec, PT, DPT, OCS

Owner

Bluffs Physical Therapy

Scottsbluff, NE

Michael Moravec, PT, DPT, OCS, owns Bluffs Physical Therapy, a physical therapy clinic in Scottsbluff.

In 2018, Michael worked with U.S. Small Business Administration resource partner, Scottsbluff Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), to help him form a business entity with a business plan and financial projections. Michael obtained funding and opened a small rental space with one employee. Quickly growing in clients and staff, Michael contacted the NBDC again in 2019 to assist with financial projections to construct a larger building.

The 2020 COVID pandemic necessitated social distancing restrictions, reducing staff to one. As restrictions were lifted, Michael returned his employees one at a time. Fortunately, Michael's construction on the new building was nearing completion. Michael officially moved his company to a larger building, which is currently staffed with 24 employees.

Michael serves on multiple community boards, volunteers, and donates yearly to various organizations, schools, and other programs.

Nevada Small Business Person of the Year



Wanda Luna

Owner

Universal Furniture Design, LLC

Las Vegas, NV

Wanda Luna an immigrant from Honduras founded Universal Furniture Design, in 2013. They manufacture custom furnishings for the hospitality industry.

Starting in her garage, she now occupies 9018 sq ft with 15 employees. They are known for their craftsmanship and affordable quality products.

The shut down in 2020 resulted in no new business. Wanda's leadership and with existing projects, they survived, despite soaring prices of cost of goods especially lumber. Forced to reduce hours she never laid off an employee. Their SBA EIDL loan was instrumental in this effort.

2023 has been their best year ever; highlights include 14 projects at a new Las Vegas hotel and an extensive guestroom remodel at another have quadrupled prior year's numbers.

Wanda is the president of the LV chapter of NEWH, a national hospitality association. She supports local charities, the Good Deed Project helping low-income families and the Bright Young Girl Organization assisting well-being and dignity of young girls in need.

New Hampshire Small Business Person of the Year



Susan Borchert, PhD, Partner

Betsy Harrison, LCMHC, NBC-HWC, Partner

Counseling Associates, PLLC

New London, NH

After many years of working together and a mutual vision of providing affordable healthcare, Susan Borchert and Betsy Harrison, co-founded Counseling Associates (CA) in 2004 leveraging their combined 40 years of clinical expertise.

Their practice offers comprehensive mental health therapy including treatment for anxiety and depression, couples therapy, career counseling, and substance abuse services for individuals from all backgrounds and communities. During the past several years CA has expanded to five locations and increased its reach through telehealth options. The organization is comprised of over 85 professionals, who benefit from opportunities through internships and mentoring programs that foster the development of future mental health providers.

Betsy and Susan's community engagement extends beyond their practice, with active participation and volunteer work with many state and federal agencies and several schools. Their strategic approach included years of consultation with NH SBDC working on their commitment to sustainable growth. They also benefited from the SBA PPP Loan during the pandemic to maintain their team during those uncertain times.



New Jersey Small Business Person of the Year

Isabelita Marcelo Abele

President / CEO

U.S. Lumber, Inc.

Woodbury Heights, NJ

Isabelita “Lita” Marcelo Abele, President and CEO of U.S. Lumber, Inc. migrated to the U.S. and now is one of the few women CEOs in the lumber industry.

Her company supplies lumber, plywood, and related materials and serves New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Notable projects in the company’s portfolio include Philadelphia’s Convention Center, Lincoln Financial Field, and the New Jersey School Construction Corporation, which earned U.S. Lumber, Inc. recognition in Diversity Digest.

Lita’s business received a PPP loan to maintain payroll and ensure future success. Lita has increased overall sales and created jobs for her community. Lita has received more than 50 distinguished international, national, regional, and local business awards and media features.

She has been a prime contractor with the federal government for over 20 years. Lita is involved with several charitable organizations with a focus on education. The Rowan College of South Jersey recently launched the “Lita Marcelo Abele Institute for Women in Business Studies.”



New Mexico Small Business Person of the Year

Christopher J. Sweetin

Co-founder/CEO

Triskelion Group of New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM

Chris Sweetin, an honorably retired Air Force Veteran (20 years), started 3D Security Training Solutions in 2014, which grew into Triskelion Group of New Mexico (TGoNM). It comprises 3D Security Training Solutions, 3D Security Investigative Services, and 3D Security Services Group. He’s the co-founder/CEO of this multifaceted company in New Mexico.

Sweetin’s SBA relationship began in 2015 with the Veteran Business Outreach Center (VBOC) and Boots to Business (B2B). Since then, he’s used other SBA resources: B2B Reboot, Emerging Leaders, Resource Partners’ counseling and services, and funding. These resources have helped his business grow from four employees to 67 and contract with private and government clients nationwide.

Sweetin has volunteered over 1,200 hours and \$35,000 to help his community. He’s the co-founder and President of the NM Professional Security Association and founder of the Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce Veterans Business Support Coalition.

New York Small Business Person of the Year

Aneesa T. Waheed
Chef, President, Founder
Tara Kitchen
Schenectady, NY



Aneesa T. Waheed is chef, owner and founder of Tara Kitchen, a Moroccan restaurant which she started in Schenectady, NY in 2012, after falling in love with Moroccan cuisine while visiting Marrakech. In the last decade, the business has grown to six locations including NJ, NY, and India.

Aneesa and the Tara Kitchen team faced incredible challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aneesa received an EIDL loan through the SBA in 2020. Prior to that, she had received a PPP loan. Since dine-in service wasn't possible, Aneesa used the financial assistance to offer take-out and weekly specials.

Throughout the pandemic, Aneesa maintained her staff and even grew her business. She credits SBDC's in NY and Albany as well as SCORE's support for her success. She now has close to 50 employees.

She dedicates time to charitable initiatives from local schools to Tara Incubator for women-and minority-owned businesses offering her services for free. She has received numerous recognitions for her professional and charitable work.

North Carolina Small Business Person of the Year

Dylan Gehrken
President
Greasecycle
Raleigh, NC



Dylan Gehrken is owner of Greasecycle, an innovative business focused on used grease recycling. Founded in 2009, the company has grown steadily each year. Gehrken started the company with his old college laptop, used van and drive to collect grease!

Greasecycle supports restaurants, commercial kitchens, and manufacturers by providing grease trap cleaning, waste processing, cooking oil recycling and preventative care. The company then converts the waste into renewable energy sources to environmental sustainability. From 2020 to 2024, the company grew from 28 employees to 66 in now 12 NC & SC locations. Sales rose from \$6.5 million in 2020 to over \$22 million in 2022.

In 2022, Greasecycle expanded with an SBA 504 loan through BEFCOR (Business Expansion Funding Corporation). This multi-million-dollar project allowed them to continue growing the company with the addition of a Charlotte, NC facility. The company provides paid internships for college students who are mentored by the sales team. They also financially support environmental university research.



North Dakota Small Business Person of the Year

Cherie Olson Harms

President/CEO

Leonardite Products, LLC

Williston, ND

Cherie Olson Harms is the majority owner and CEO of Leonardite Products LLC, a mining and processing operation in Williston, ND. The company was formed in 2008 to purchase a leonardite mining operation that included an idle processing plant. Leonardite is an oxidized lignite found naturally in Western North Dakota. It is used in agricultural fertilizers and oil drilling fluids. The company sells its product domestically and exports to 12 countries worldwide.

Rebuilding the processing plant to expand capabilities was key to growing a viable company. Additional challenges were faced including embezzlement and the pandemic. Leveraging multiple SBA loan programs and the North Dakota SBDC, Harms has met the challenges with the guidance she received and that has led to better margins and consistent net profits.

Harms contributes to and serves on the boards of multiple charitable organizations, including the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, regional hospital foundations, and the Great Plains Food Bank.



Ohio Small Business Person of the Year

Ericka Adams

Founder

Adams Dental Assisting Academy

Gahanna, OH

Ericka Adams, an Army Veteran opened Adams Dental Assisting Academy after 30-plus years in the dental field. She has equipped her academy with modern equipment and technology giving students a realistic and immersive learning environment.

Ericka recognized the financial gaps in the community, lowered tuition, and partnered with The Ohio Department of Education to participate in the Second Chance Grant Program. This program covers a portion of tuition costs for students who have started a program elsewhere and did not finish.

Ericka utilized counseling and capital resources through SBA Micro lender The Economic Community Development Institute (ECDI) to help sustain and grow her business.

In Ericka's spare time, she volunteers at a local retirement community and supports St. Jude.

Oklahoma Small Business Person of the Year

Angelene Ripley Wright

Owner

Ida Red

Tulsa, OK



Angelene Ripley Wright helped create the concept for Ida Red’s first store in 2008 before buying the business in 2016. Ida Red’s now has three locations and 16 employees in the Tulsa area. Ida Red General Store is a retail shop offering unique gifts, nostalgic treats, Oklahoma goods, and a family friendly atmosphere.

Wright purchased the business with an SBA loan and was helped through the COVID-19 pandemic with two PPP loans and a COVID-19 EIDL loan. She has doubled the employee count since buying the business.

Ida Red supports numerous local charities including 100 percent of proceeds on special merchandise for the Tulsa Area COVID-19 Response Fund and the Red Dirt Relief fund. The store donated a portion of their store sales during the Juneteenth weekend to the Tulsa Race Massacre Foundation and the Juneteenth Foundation.

Oregon Small Business Person of the Year

McKean Banzer-Lausberg, CEO/Co-Founder

Michael Branes, Head Brewer

Colin Rath, Director of Pubs

Eric Banzer-Lausberg, Director of Sales

Migration Brewing, LLC

Portland, OR



Migration Brewing started from a conversation about going into business among four friends McKean Banzer-Lausberg, Michael Branes, Colin Rath, Eric Banzer-Lausberg. The four quickly realized that they shared not just a passion for great beer; they shared a value set about life and the role that beer plays in it. A dream was born, and with the help of an SBA loan they were able to open the doors to their brewpub in Portland, OR in 2010.

What started as a 3000 square foot neighborhood brewpub with eight team members has grown to six retail locations totaling 40,000 square feet and a staff of 45. In 2010, Migration Brewing produced and sold 217 beer barrels and in 2023 produced 10,000 beer barrels distributed across Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Colorado, Japan, and Thailand.

Migration Brewing is an active member of the community giving generously to local causes and actively supporting a wide array of charitable fundraisers.



Pennsylvania Small Business Person of the Year

Dorothea Spencer

Owner/CEO

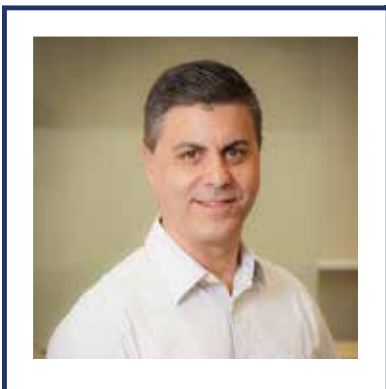
D. Gillette Industrial Services, Inc.

Easton, PA

D. Gillette Industrial Services, founded in 2002, is an SBA 8(a) business solely owned by CEO Dorothea Spencer. DGI has 15 employees and specializes in the design, fabrication, repair, and assembly of parts and equipment for the lifecycle sustainment of military customers' assets, the federal government, and worldwide commercial and foreign military clients.

DGI's expansion occurred when competitors focused on outsourcing and when women were underrepresented in the manufacturing sector. In 2016, Spencer became one of the few women-owned manufacturing companies certified in the 8(a) program. Between 2017 and 2023, DGI's revenues grew by over 9,200% and its profits grew by over 6,000%.

DGI secured SBA COVID EIDL and PPP loans to weather the pandemic and sustain DGI's operations. Spencer is a 2017 graduate of SBA's Emerging Leaders Program. She serves on the board of the Developmental Education Services of Monroe County. DES provides support to developmentally challenged adults.



Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands Small Business Person of the Year

Eduardo Diaz-Armigon

President

Baldwin Animal Hospital, PSC

Guaynabo, PR

After working as a veterinarian for different Veterinary Medical Centers in Puerto Rico, Dr. Eduardo Díaz-Armigón identified a business opportunity for his professional career and decided to establish his own clinic and hospital. He applied for an SBA-guaranteed loan to make improvements and purchase equipment for his new project.

Baldwin Animal Hospital, PSC, is a licensed veterinary clinic and hospital located in Guaynabo founded by Dr. Diaz in November 2010. This veterinary facility provides medical care and emergency services for canines, felines and other exotic pets. His clinic also offers a wide range of services including boarding, professional grooming and pet taxi transportation.

Dr. Diaz recently expanded his operations, acquiring an existing full-service veterinary clinic that has been in operation for over 38 years. Dr. Diaz used an SBA 7(a) loan to purchase the business and has increasing his number of employees to 18.

Rhode Island Small Business Person of the Year

Brian Matthew Goldman
Chief Executive Officer
Big Blue Bug Solutions
Providence, RI



The nation's smallest state has the largest celebrity (at least by height) in Nibbles Woodaway, who stands 58 feet high on the side of Interstate 95, welcoming all as they travel Rhode Island's busiest highway. Nibbles, a giant termite replica, is the distinctive mascot of Big Blue Bug Solutions, a pest control company.

Founded in 1935 as a one-man operation, the now 3rd generation, family-owned company has over 100 employees with locations across New England. Under CEO Brian Goldman, the company has continued to be named one of the best companies in the state to work for, ensuring both customers and employees are treated like family. During the pandemic, Goldman utilized a PPP loan to help keep employees on payroll while still finding new ways to provide service to customers during the most uncertain of times.

Goldman has continued the family legacy of giving back to the communities it serves. Supporting entities such as Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the Ronald McDonald House, to creating Operation ROVAC to support the RI Veterans Home each year, the impact the Goldman family and Big Blue Bug Solutions have in the community is easy to see, no matter how tall the mascot.

South Carolina Small Business Person of the Year

Vickey Evans
President
CORG Management Group, LLC
Columbia, SC



Vickey Evans is the President of CORG Management Group, a women-owned, economically disadvantaged, HUBZone, and 8a business established in 2008. CORG Management Group has grown to expand into three states since formation headquartered in South Carolina with offices in Georgia and North Carolina.

Vickey has increased revenues since entering the contracting assistance programs. Employees have grown from 3 to currently 55 employees. Sales revenue and net profit have also increased, growing over 300%.

The SBA has been instrumental in helping Vickey navigate federal contracting in the 8(a) Program, utilizing assistance from Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), now APEX Accelerators (APEX), and graduating from the Emerging Leaders Program to help facilitate growth.

Vickey contributes time and money in support of local community and charity and has served on several boards and participated in local organizational committees in support of her community.



South Dakota Small Business Person of the Year

Nick Heineman, *Member/President*
Greg Heineman, *Managing Member*
Look's Marketplace
Sioux Falls, SD

Look's Marketplace (69th Street Look's Market, LLC), owned by father-son team D. Greg and Nicholas "Nick" Heineman, has been providing a successful history of products matched with neighborly guest care since 1883. Nick's food industry experience paired with Greg's decades of business experience make an excellent combination.

During the pandemic, Look's Marketplace leveraged Small Business Development Center (SBDC) guidance and SBA 504 loans to grow into a 17,000 square foot remodeled marketplace, increasing services and the number of employees from 16 to 110. Look's Marketplace offers a local neighborhood grocery store, butcher counter, bakery and delicatessen, micro-brewery, wine and liquor sales, and many onsite dining opportunities.

The Heinemans have a strong philosophy of investing in the community and actively support fundraising efforts for several Catholic charities.



Tennessee Small Business Person of the Year

Craig Charles
President
Crown Cutz Academy
Johnson City, TN

Craig Charles is the owner of Crown Cutz Academy, which includes two barber schools in the Appalachian areas of TN and VA.

In 2017, Craig opened his first barber school, a location in downtown Johnson City, TN with the help of the local Tennessee SBA resource partner the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). In 2020, his entrepreneurial journey continued with TSBDC assistance and Craig expanded to a second location in Bristol, VA.

Since Craig opened his first barber school, he's established himself as a figure in the barbering community and an advocate for mental health and domestic violence awareness. Craig also serves as a barber ambassador for the Confess Project of America, where he travels across the country training barbers about mental health and domestic violence awareness.

Craig was recently honored with the Barber of the Year Award in 2022. He's also made contributions to mentorship and guidance in the barbering industry through podcasts, information sessions, NPR interviews and features in Black Enterprise and Yahoo's In the Know.

Texas Small Business Person of the Year



Tamiko Bailey
President and CEO
Bailey's Premier Services, LLC
Fort Worth, TX

Tamiko Bailey is a US Air Force service-disabled veteran and the President and CEO of Bailey's Premier Services, a multi-state defense contractor that provides aircraft maintenance and other support services to the United States government and state and local agencies.

Tamiko has over 30 years of combined military and industry experience. During her military career, she worked in an aviation environment supporting an F-15/F-16 squadron and she served two tours of duty in Saudi Arabia. Tamiko started Bailey's Premier Services out of her garage and established the business as an LLC in 2010. Advice from the Small Business Development Center led her to utilize SBA loans to refinance existing debt and establish working capital. Today, the business has employees working at military bases across 11 states. Bailey's Premier Services recently expanded its operations internationally and operates with 167 employees.

Utah Small Business Person of the Year



Autumn McGregor
Founder/CEO
Zion's Tiny Homes
Hurricane, UT

Autumn McGregor, the driving force behind Zion's Tiny Homes, has overcome severe adversity in her life and has become a beacon of innovation and inspiration for others. She started her business venture in 2017 and together with her 14 employees, she not only provides customizable tiny homes nationwide but also an affiliated nonprofit community for homeless and abuse survivors.

With the support of a 504 SBA Loan, Zion's Tiny Homes expanded to a 5,000 sq ft. property, allowing her to double production and create additional jobs. Autumn's philanthropy extends beyond her non-profit and includes Zion's Tiny Homes donating a tiny home to someone in need.



Vermont Small Business Person of the Year

Dr. Kerry Boyle

Owner and Founder

Integrative Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

Montpelier, VT

Dr. Kerry Boyle is a licensed acupuncturist and doctor of Acupuncture in Montpelier, Vermont.

Kerry became interested in natural healthcare while working at health food stores in the 90s. She then pursued education at Bastyr University in Seattle Washington graduating with a Masters in Acupuncture in 2003. She spent 4 years traveling internationally and implementing and launching acupuncture on board cruise ships.

In 2008 Kerry returned home to Vermont and founded Integrative Acupuncture. Her passion for her patients and leadership has allowed IA to grow to three locations, serving about 300 people per week. Her team of 12 consists of acupuncturists, massage therapists, naturopathic physicians, and valued support staff.

She plans to continue advocating for more Vermonters to receive access to Acupuncture care via her legislative work with the Vermont Acupuncture Association and People for Acupuncture.

Kerry is a 2023 graduate of SBA's T.H.R.I.V.E. Emerging Leaders Reimagined program.



Virginia Small Business Person of the Year

Anil Boinapalli

Chief Executive Officer

Sky Solutions, LLC

Herndon, VA

Anil Boinapalli is Chief Executive Office of Sky Solutions, LLC, a tech service company in Herndon, Virginia.

Established in 2008, Sky Solutions focuses AI and machine learning technology on business process challenges in the public sector, healthcare, life sciences, and financial services industries. Thanks, in part, to assistance from SBA's 8(a) program, Sky Solutions and has grown to more than 160 employees servicing over 30 clients on 100+ projects, expanding from a home office setup to a 5500sqft facility as of 2023 and a presence in 15 states.

Active in his community, Anil organizes a charitable match program within the company, and he and his employees volunteer at local shelters, providing essential support to individuals in need. The company and its employees also participate in local toy drives and make food bank donations. Anil is also a member of the ATA Business Committee and TiE Global where he mentors entrepreneurs.

Washington Small Business Person of the Year

Heather McDowell
Founder and Steward
Seattle Green Earth Cleaning
Seattle, WA



Heather McDowell launched Seattle Green Earth Cleaning in 2013 with the goal of creating an eco-friendly, socially responsible company to improve the lives of clients, employees, and the community.

Initially working out of a home office and storage unit, the company has grown to support 46 team members. SGEC eventually acquired their own building with offices, a warehouse, and staff amenities.

In 2023, Heather participated in the SBA T.H.R.I.V.E Emerging Leaders Reimagined program, honing her strategy for growing the company through employee development and a cooperative leadership model.

The company is an active supporter of the local food bank, a regular donor to local charities, and volunteers their cleaning services to local organizations and to regular cleanup of their adopted city street.

West Virginia Small Business Person of the Year

Lisa Fritsch, President
Peter Fritsch, Chief Technology Officer
Adam Leach, VP of Operations
Chet Tobrey, VP of R&D
Agile5 Technologies, Inc.
Fairmont, WV



Lisa Fritsch, Peter Fritsch, Adam Leach & Chet Tobrey are the owners and executive team of Agile5 Technologies, Inc., a systems architecture and software development firm specializing in enterprise software systems for the U.S. Government.

In 2011, Agile5 started as a vision to improve the future of technical and program management support. Twelve years later the business has grown from an 80 square foot office to an operation of more than 90 employees in two locations, in North Central West Virginia and Huntsville, Alabama.

In the early years, Agile5, like many small businesses, faced issues obtaining access to capital. The executive team knew to expand their business they needed to bring on more employees. Their short-term capital could not cover more than two months of payroll and receivables could take up to 75 days to collect from some clients. SBA was able to step in and offer an SBA-backed line of credit that was approved within a week. In addition, they have received SBA assistance through counseling with the SBDC, training from the West Virginia District Office, and contracting guidance with WOSB and HUBZone certifications.



Wisconsin Small Business Person of the Year

Eric Rupert, Founder
Sam McDaniel, CEO
Jessica Benish, COO
Fortune Favors
Cottage Grove, WI

Eric Rupert, chef and co-founder, describes Fortune Favors' caramelized pecans as his crowning achievement. The Fortune Favors team--Eric, Sam McDaniel, and Jessica Benish--has created a million-dollar firm in just five years.

Launching in 2018 with strong retail sales and SBDC help with rapid expansion, COVID forced a quick pivot to online selling backed by SBA COVID EIDL and PPP loans. With 1000% online sales growth, Fortune Favors has expanded into wholesale markets. SBA has powered its rebound with a credit line to purchase inventory; a 504 loan for a plant; and a 7(a)-working capital loan. They recently partnered with a Wisconsin chocolate firm to make a new candy bar to augment their three pecan flavors and distribute to 500 outlets nationally. The firm now has 10.5 employees.

Eric, Sam, and Jessica support local food pantries and arts organizations. They source pecans from New Communities, a Georgia consortium of Black-owned farms.



Wyoming Small Business Person of the Year

Dr. Erica Higgins
Owner
Empowered Chiropractic
Casper, WY

Dr. Erica Higgins is the owner of Empowered Chiropractic, specializing in neurologically based chiropractic care in Casper, Wyoming.

In 2020, after receiving her doctorate, she established her practice and now enjoys serving families in Central Wyoming.

With steady growth over the last 3 years, she has been able to increase both staff and the number of patients she serves.

Erica's practice suffered during the pandemic and credits SBA's 7(a) loan program for her success in opening, and ability to maintain staff.

Dr. Higgins serves on as a board member for the Wyoming Chiropractic Association and is also active in women's business and national chiropractic mentorship groups.

SPECIALTY AWARD WINNERS



SBA 8(a) Graduate of the Year

Wilbert G. Johnson
CEO/President
Cetechs
Mesa, AZ



Wilbert Johnson, Jr. is the owner of Cetechs, a healthcare, program management, administration, and engineering service located in Mesa, Arizona.

In 2009, Wil started Cetechs and months later, won several contracts which served as the company's starting point. By using lessons learned, Cetechs secured more contracts and diversified the company's core services. With a growth in contracts, today Wil manages 42 employees.

Cetech's President is an SBA 8(a) program graduate and won the 2018 SBA Emerging Leaders Program Graduate Award, the 2019 Arizona Small Business Development Center Success Award, and the 2020 Goldman Sachs Award. Wil was selected by the Small Business Administration (SBA) located in Phoenix, Arizona to participate in the Emerging Leaders program.

Wil contributes his spare time aiding veterans, families, children, and adults in the community facing challenges of all kinds.



Small Business Investment Company Emerging Manager of the Year

Marilyn Adler, *Managing Partner*
Liddy Karter, *Founding Partner*
Mizzen Capital, LP
Stamford, CT

Mizzen’s objective is to provide debt investments into US-based, underserved companies in the lower middle market, tailoring capital structures to fit small businesses’ needs while prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of investment strategy. A certified women- and minority-owned firm, Mizzen embraces diverse perspectives and seeks to foster a collaborative culture based on trust, respect, and integrity.

Mizzen targets its investing activities in companies across a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, industrial, business services, healthcare services, information technology, and energy transition. Target investments range in size of up to \$30 million in companies typically generating revenues of less than \$100 million and with EBITDA below \$10 million.

Since SBIC licensing in 2020, Mizzen has so far invested in 36 companies, with approximately 44% located in underserved low-income areas and 64% in smaller enterprises, creating a projected 1,724 jobs.



Small Business Investment Company Established Manager of the Year

Kirk Griswold, *Founding Partner*
John Kirwin, *Founding Partner*
Keven Shanahan, *Managing Partner*
Michael Bailey, *Partner*
Don Charlton, *Operating Partner*
Argosy Private Equity,
Wayne, PA

Argosy’s objective is to grow the revenue and profit of small businesses by improving operations and ultimately spurring job creation. For over 27 years, Argosy has pursued its investment strategy in 6 SBICs, the most current licensed in 2021.

Argosy targets lower middle market investments in family and founder-led businesses with a majority being in smaller enterprises. Argosy’s focus includes niche manufacturing and B2B services companies largely located outside urban and suburban areas, including LMI and HUBZones. Argosy implements its proprietary process, a business system of over 40 best practices to support and grow small businesses.

Since 1997, Argosy has invested \$1.0 billion into 135 small businesses headquartered across 34 states with operations in 45 states and employing over 46,000 employees. Argosy has a track-record of increasing revenue by 56% by the third year of investment and has achieved an average 44% job creation rate per company.

Veterans Business Outreach Center Excellence in Service Award

Mark Scott
VBOC Director
Mississippi State University
Starkville, MS



Mark Scott is the Director and Program Manager for the Mississippi State University Veterans Business Outreach Center. He is responsible for the planning, organization, and execution of the VBOC cooperative agreement with the Small Business Administration. Mississippi State University has hosted the VBOC Program since 2015.

Mark's background includes serving as an officer on active duty, in the national guard/reserve component of the Army and holding key roles in business development for Raytheon Company in the defense contracting sector. Post-Retirement, Mark co-founded a consulting business focusing on the defense community.

He holds a Political Science degree from MSU and an MBA from Norwich University (Summa Cum Laude). Mark and his wife, Debbie, have two children, LTC Mark Scott JR (Army) and LTC Susan Scott (Air Force).

Surety Bond Guarantee Agent of the Year

Kenneth C. Turner
Vice President
KOG International, Inc.
Enola, PA



Kenneth C. Turner is Vice President of KOG International, Inc., a surety bond agency established in 1990 in Westtown, Pennsylvania. KOG International, Inc., participates in the SBA Surety Bond Guarantee Program.

Kenneth has been providing bonds to contractors throughout the mid-Atlantic region and beyond since 1996. He has developed an extensive network of surety contacts and brings these resources together with years of expertise to serve his clients better.

Turner placed his first client in the SBA's SBG Program in 2003 and actively promotes SBA-backed surety bonds to small businesses today.



Small Business Subcontractor of the Year

Dr. Richard John Mayer

President

Knowledge Based Systems, Inc.

College Station, TX

Dr. John Mayer began Knowledge Based Systems, Inc. (KBSI) in 1988 in College Station, TX after earning his Ph.D in Industrial Engineering from Texas A&M University.

KBSI is a research, engineering and systems analysis, consulting and systems/software development company. KBSI has been awarded research and development contracts. Over the past 35 years, the company has developed technologies in areas such as engineering design, simulation modeling, forecasting and cyber security which has been used by the Air Force, Navy, Army, NASA, and Homeland Security.

Their ASSURANT technology fills a national defense need to bolster cyber resiliency and survivability across all weapons systems, especially with the Department of Defense.

KBSI has worked closely with SBA's resource partner the local Small Business Development Center on many occasions.



Small Business Exporter of the Year

Felipe Arroyave

President & Founder

Spectrum International LLC

Atlanta, GA

Based in Georgia, Spectrum International designs and manufactures specialty contact lenses. Felipe Arroyave, a Colombian who immigrated to the US at 18, spent the next 17 years working in the vision industry while completing a degree in international business. In 2017, he began his own company. Today, he employs 28 individuals and sells to 65+ countries.

Spectrum International was founded "to create a world that sees better." Its US-made technology is sold almost exclusively abroad, to patients who would not otherwise have access to innovative vision solutions.

In 2022, Arroyave earned an SBA State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant through the Georgia Department of Economic Development to offset costs of attending the Arab Health Trade Show.

His company now operates a philanthropic arm entitled 'Changing Lives' that gifts vision treatments and products free of charge to those most in need.

Arroyave serves on the Georgia District Export Council where he helps others expand abroad.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence - Construction



Felicia A. Bell
Business Diversity Manager
Bechtel Corporation
Reston, VA

Established in 1898, Bechtel is an engineering, construction, and project management company with approximately 38,000 employees.

In the past year, Bechtel contracted with a small minority owned business to create a dedicated portal and website for the small and diverse business community. This portal allowed small businesses to register their company with them and upload certifications and capability statements as well as provide a narrative on previous work history.

Bechtel has mentored five small businesses over the past two years. In addition, they have collaborated with various SBA District Offices, Small Business Development Centers and APEX Accelerators to educate and network with small businesses.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence - Services



Lauren Terry
Federal Small Business Liaison Officer & Program Manager
Jacobs
Greenwood Village, CO

With \$15 billion in revenue and a global workforce of approximately 60,000, Jacobs provides a full spectrum of professional services including consulting, technical, scientific and project development for the federal government and private sector.

Since 1993, Jacobs has mentored more than 100 small business concerns to enhance their skill level to compete for larger volume work and increase their participation in future projects. One of their more successful relationships is with an SBA certified 8(a) contractor that has been on-going since 2016.

Jacobs also routinely uses SBA's Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS) database as a market research tool to find new potential small business concerns. Use of the DSBS has allowed them to provide their project teams with small businesses to include on bid lists when previously only "other than small business" concerns had been identified.



Prime Contractor of the Year

Sean Gibbs
President/CEO
Action Manufacturing Company
Bristol, PA

Sean Gibbs assumed the role of President of Action Manufacturing Company (Action) in 2014 after serving as the Vice President of Business Development for seven years. Action, located in Bristol, Pennsylvania, was established in 1946 and now has over 300 employees.

Action manufactures precision ordnance products including fuzes, explosives, electronics and a variety of defense items for the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines. Action has produced over four million M739A1 fuzes over the last ten years with delivery remaining early or on time on every military order. These fuzes are used in electro-mechanical rocket, missile, artillery, mortar and tank devices not only for the Department of Defense but domestic prime contractors also.

While Action was engaged in high volume production, they worked closely with the federal government to improve the safety and operation of the fuze as weapon systems changed.



SCORE - National Chapter of the Year

Lisa Foster
Chapter Chair
SCORE SE Wisconsin
Milwaukee, WI

SCORE, a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration, named SCORE SE Wisconsin the 2024 Chapter of the Year for its outstanding support of small businesses.

In 2023, SCORE SE Wisconsin:

- Provided 2,400 mentoring sessions – a 70% increase from the previous year
- Supported more than 1,000 small businesses – a 33% increase from the previous year
- Increased workshop attendance by 500%

The chapter hosted, co-hosted, or participated with community partners in 73 events with specific outreach to small business owners in Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, veteran, Indigenous and rural communities.

“I’m grateful to receive recognition for what we have achieved,” said Lisa Foster, who serves as chair of SCORE SE Wisconsin and associate district director. “More importantly, I hope that by sharing how we’ve adopted new approaches and built new partnerships, SCORE will reach and serve more people who need help overcoming challenges on the road to running a successful business.”

Small Business Development Center Excellence and Innovation Award

Marcia McGilley
Director
Aurora-South Metro Small Business Development Center
Aurora, CO



The Mission of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is “To empower Colorado businesses to thrive.” The Aurora-South Metro SBDC offers no-cost and confidential one-on-one consulting, low-cost workshops and events, and business resource referrals to entrepreneurs in Arapahoe & Douglas counties in Colorado.

The Aurora-South Metro SBDC has been a part of the Colorado Network since the program began in 1989. The Center covers Arapahoe & Douglas counties, and a small part of Adams County. The city of Aurora is a majority-minority city and thus the SBDC Center has collaborated with many refugee, immigrant, and underserved communities.

Specifically, the staff have a commitment of fostering growth and resilience for clients and the team’s dedication and strategic insight have manifested in local economic impact. The Aurora SBDC is successful in equipping entrepreneurs in the communities that they serve and makes a difference in the world of small business.

The entire staff have contributed to the success of the Service Center, and all are commended.

Women’s Business Center of Excellence Award

Shawntay LaNesha Dixon
Director of Business Education
Great Lakes Women’s Business Council
Livonia, MI



Shawntay LeNesha Dixon currently serves as Director of Business Education at Great Lakes Women’s Business Council, serving over 15,000 business owners through its programs.

Shawntay has worked in developing and implementing business development programs. Under her leadership, the WBC, an SBA Resource Partner, received recognition as a Women’s Business Center of Excellence by the U.S. SBA Michigan District in 2020. In 2021, she was recognized with the prestigious Marsha Bailey Leadership Award by the Association of Women’s Business Centers.

Shawntay enjoys helping women entrepreneurs, representing their voices on Capitol Hill on multiple occasions and sharing the impact women make on the economy and in their communities.



SBA T.H.R.I.V.E. Cohort of the Year 2023 Awardee

Seattle Cohort

The Seattle cohort from SBA T.H.R.I.V.E. 2023 boasted a diverse and robust group of entrepreneurs and business owners. This cohort of 24 local businesses stood out for its balanced gender representation, with equal numbers of male and female participants, and a notable presence of businesses holding Women-Owned Small Business certifications.

With the majority of businesses in the mature 5–9-year age bracket, and a commendable 25% operating for over two decades, this cohort reflected both established operations and experienced leadership.

The Seattle cohort’s ambitions align with a drive towards substantial growth and profitability, alongside a commendable commitment to local community engagement and market expansion. This cohort’s profile provides a window into the vibrancy and entrepreneurial spirit that characterizes Seattle’s business landscape as part of the SBA T.H.R.I.V.E. 2023 program.



SBA T.H.R.I.V.E. Cohort of the Year 2023 Awardee

North/Metro Puerto Rico Cohort

The North/Metro PR cohort from SBA T.H.R.I.V.E. 2023 presented a diverse snapshot of 20 local entrepreneurs and business owners, offering insights into the duration of their business ownership, gender identity, business certifications, number of employees, revenues for the years 2021 and 2022, as well as their stated business goals.

The majority of owners from the North Metro PR T.H.R.I.V.E. 2023 cohort have been in business for 5–10 years, with a relatively even distribution among other durations of ownership. In 2021, 42% of these businesses generated between \$1,000,000 and \$4,999,999 in revenue. The most common goals for these businesses were increasing revenue and profit, creating a plan for growth, and creating new jobs.

These insights reflect a group of relatively established businesses with a desire to grow further, both in revenue and by expanding their operations and contributions to their local communities. The stable or increasing revenues indicate potential success in these objectives among a diverse group of companies at different stages of maturity and recognition.

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U.S. Small Business
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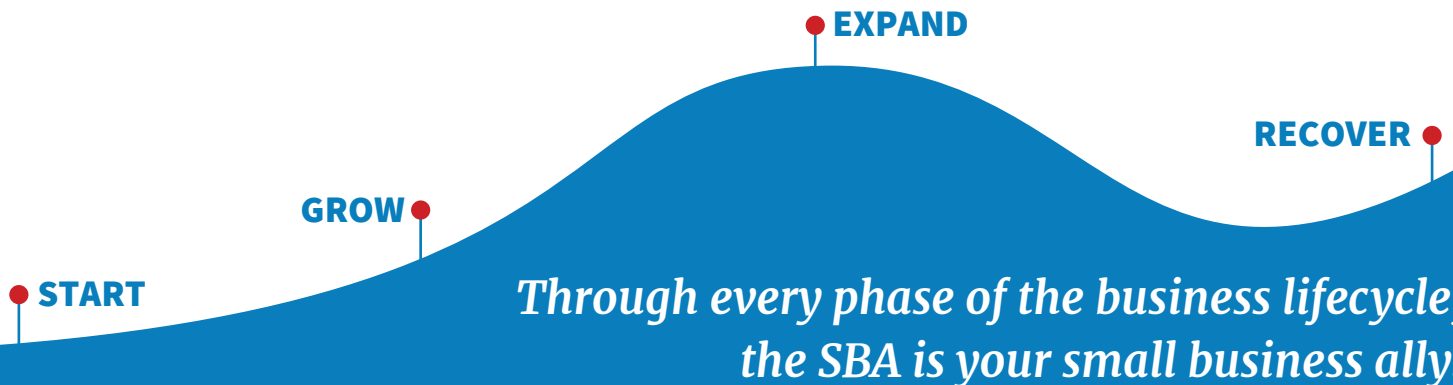


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