

House Bill 52 Report





Opening Message

The suite of eight economic development programs reauthorized by the 2019 Montana Legislature through House Bill 52 provide tools that form part of the backbone of a comprehensive economic develop strategy in Montana. These programs strategically enable the small businesses and entrepreneurs who power Montana's economy. First developed in 2000, reauthorized in 2009 and again in 2019, this proven set of business development programs is designed with intention to support each phase of growth.

The state carefully tracks metrics of success. The state's investment remains \$3.365 million each year, which in turn provides an exponential return in each of our communities. A big part of why the state's investment is so impactful is because it allows Montana to bring in matching dollars from federal and other partners. From 2012-2019, these programs supported 15,000 businesses and made available 12,000 jobs for Montanans!

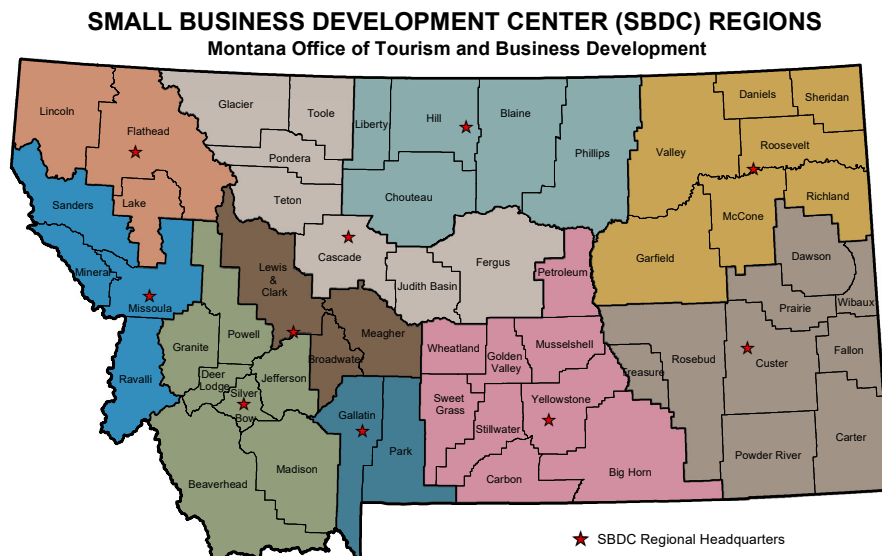
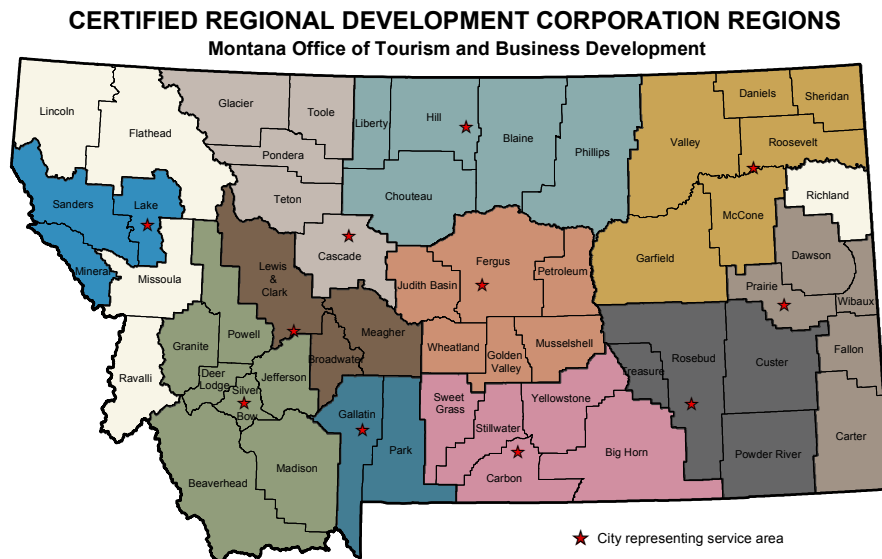
	2001-2009	2010-2019	2020-2027
Cooperative Development Center	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE			
Growth Through Agriculture	\$1,250,000	\$625,000	\$900,000
Food & Agricultural Development Centers	\$0	\$300,000	\$600,000
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE			
Small Business Development Centers	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$325,000
Small Business Innovative Research Program (MTIP at MSU TechLink)	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Certified Regional Development Corporations (funded in 2003)	\$425,000	\$425,000	\$625,000
Montana Manufacturing Extension Center at MSU	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$500,000
Export Trade	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Montana Board of Research and Commercialization Technology	\$4,850,000	\$1,275,000	\$0
Business Recruitment	\$175,000	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$7,440,000	\$3,365,000	\$3,365,000

These are the annual funding levels per program.

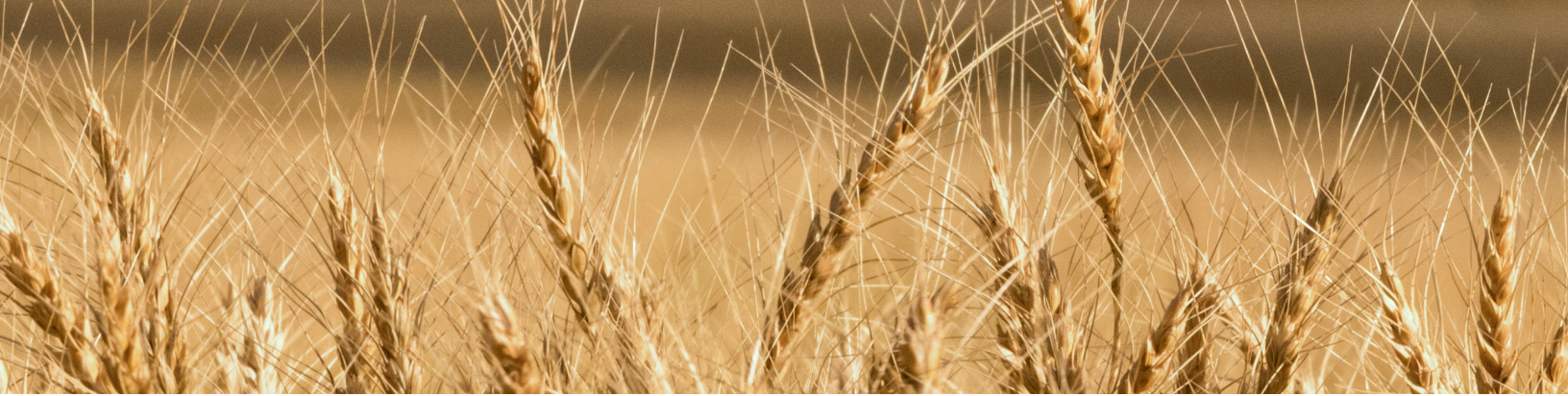
This report marks the beginning of a more streamlined and consistent approach to measuring the impact of the programs housed within the Montana Department of Commerce. We listened to lawmakers who said they wanted to better understand the collective impact of investing \$3.365 million into Montana businesses.

The Department has streamlined its definitions of jobs and businesses supported across all of its business development programs, and is using one tool, Salesforce, to organize information provided directly from business clients, regional economic development partners and university partners. This tool will also allow the Department to better inform lawmakers and the public of impacts that are more difficult to measure.

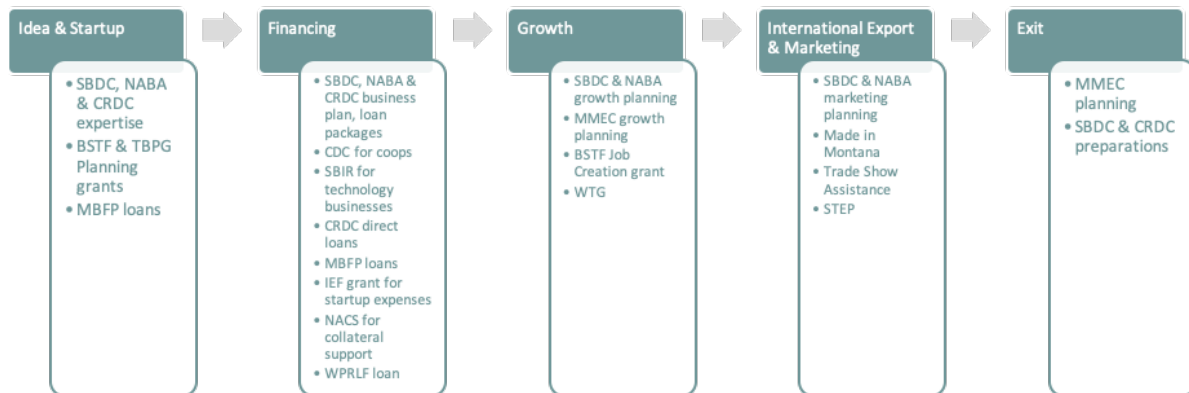
Most of the programs reauthorized by HB 52 invest in local communities with on the ground resources around the state. These aren't solely a collection of grant programs, instead, they largely support regional technical assistance centers and professionals in communities in nearly every corner of Montana. This regional approach is critical to ensure hands-on support for business and entrepreneurs.



The Montana Department of Commerce is a resource for small-scale makers, innovative startups, well-established brands that sell their products globally – and everything in between. The Legislature's \$3.365 million annual investment allows the Department to access a broader network of federal support, it powers regional expertise, and it helps businesses go from a good idea to an international exporter.



Idea to International Exporter



As part of a comprehensive approach to economic development, Montana deploys a toolbox of programs, including the HB 52 programs, to strategically target critical points in the pipeline of business development. Montana businesses are supported by the Montana Departments of Commerce and Agriculture from their very first product or service idea, through startup, financing, and growth, and even to international sales. These programs provide technical assistance, expertise, support, and grant and loan dollars for a myriad of Montana businesses, including manufacturers, main street businesses, service providers, tourism businesses, etc. Additionally, this support is not centralized and difficult for Montana companies in rural areas to reach; rather, Commerce hosts a statewide network of business assistance resources, providing localized assistance in every corner of the state, with specialized services for disadvantaged businesses.

Taking an idea and turning it into a profitable business is a monumental process, and the complexity of it can be daunting for entrepreneurs. Most start out as ill-funded solopreneurs who already have a day job, spending every free moment they have tinkering with an innovation in their garage or sketching out their idea on a napkin. Alone, the process can be overwhelming and take much longer than with help.

IDEA & STARTUP

The first place entrepreneurs can turn for guidance on turning their idea into a startup business is one of the state's ten Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs); those registered with a Montana tribe can also work with one of eight Native American Business Advisors (NABAs). Entrepreneurs can walk in the door of their local SBDC or NABA, sit down with an expert and discuss the feasibility of the startup, using financial projections and market research from the SBDC's national network. The SBDC may also help the entrepreneur via their local NABA or Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) – there are 11 to choose from – to apply for the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund's (BSTF) Planning Grant or the Tribal Business Planning Grant (TBPG) to fund a feasibility study, business plan, etc., which can increase a new business's chance of accessing traditional bank financing.

Once the idea looks promising, the SBDC or NABA can help the entrepreneur with their business plan, perhaps referring them to the Cooperative Development Center (CDC) for guidance on starting up and financing a cooperative, if that business structure makes the most sense. For technology-based businesses, the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program can provide funding to help the entrepreneur complete necessary research and development and to get the product ready for sales.



FINANCING

Usually the next step for an entrepreneur is to obtain financing for their startup expenses and operations. SBDCs, NABAs, and CRDCs provide expert technical assistance, helping entrepreneurs to prepare their documentation for loan packages, and CRDCs can provide loans to local startups to help them apply for other grant and loan programs. Additionally, the MicroBusiness Finance Program (MBFP) can help with startup expenses. The Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Grant is available to help enrolled tribal members with start-up and expansion expenses, and the Native American Collateral Support (NACS) financial instrument helps bankable businesses to meet collateral requirements for traditional bank financing.

GROWTH

When a manufacturer has established demand and is in the production growth phase, their local Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) Business Advisor can help them plan and implement growth and innovation projects, such as facility layout, equipment purchases and implementation, cost and capacity planning, inventory systems, processes and procedure development, and the SBDCs and NABAs also help with growth planning. If this growth includes hiring employees, MMEC can also assist with hiring, training and retention activities. The business can also access BSTF Job Creation grant funds to help pay for capital expenditures, such as wages, equipment, construction materials, etc.; and the Primary Sector Workforce Training Grant (WTG) can help offset the cost of training the new employees. The MBFP can also help with financing this growth.

INTERNATIONAL EXPORTING + MARKETING

As business grows, the sales pattern for most manufacturers and service providers develops in concentric circles radiating out from local, regional, and national, to international markets, depending on their marketing goals. SBDCs and NABAs can help companies to develop and execute their marketing plans. For local markets, manufacturers can take advantage of the Made in Montana program's marketing opportunities. To develop regional and national customers, businesses could use ExportMontana's Trade Show Assistance Program grant for exhibiting at trade shows within the USA. Montana exporters can benefit from ExportMontana's international marketing expertise when they are ready to develop international customers for their products, and they can use the State Trade Expansion Program grant for international trade shows, foreign language translation, international product certification, etc. For growing manufacturers, MMEC can assist with new product development, operational enhancements, technology integration, and regulatory compliance, among other things.

EXIT STRATEGY

When it comes time for the business owner to consider the exit strategy or transition of the business to a family member, employee, outside buyer, etc., the process can be just as daunting as the startup phase. MMEC, SBDCs, and CRDCs offer the financial and strategic expertise the business owner needs to plan a successful strategy and begin the transition process.

The Montana Department of Commerce's idea to international business services provide entrepreneurs expertise and assistance every step of the way, removing startup and growth barriers, and improving the chances of long-lasting business success. More in-depth information on the programs funded through 2019's HB 52 are as follows.

Montana Cooperative Development Center

The Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) is a 501c3 organization whose mission is to promote and develop cooperatives to meet the economic and community needs of Montana. The \$65,000 received annually through the Montana Department of Agriculture is leveraged to match the \$200,000 Rural Cooperative Development Grant through USDA-Rural Development every October. MCDC, founded in 1999 as part of the Montana State University-Northern, became an independent organization in 2004 and continues to serves all 56 counties of Montana. MCDC is the administrative branch of the Montana Council of Cooperatives, a trade association serving all sectors of the 160 cooperatives in Montana. MCDC is part of the economic development community and partners with other statewide and regional organizations across the State. Current initiatives include wholesale grocery store cooperatives, workforce conversions, investment cooperatives, meat processing cooperatives (branding, distribution, facilities), grass bank and young producers, childcare, housing, and labor and shared service cooperatives.

Cooperative Development Specialists in Montana are housed in ten Economic Development Organizations across Montana: Beartooth RC&D, Native American Development Corporation, Headwaters RC&D/Butte & Silverbow Economic Development Corporation, Mountain West Economic Development Corporation, Snowy Mountain Economic Development Corporation, Park Local Development Corporation, Eastern Plains Economic Development, Great Northern Economic Development, Ravalli County Economic Development Authority, BearPaw Economic Development.

State Investment	\$65,000
Leveraged Investments:	
USDA- Rural Development	\$179,302
Montana Council of Cooperatives (Association)	\$5,000
Private/Other Funds	\$63,077
Total Investment	\$370,456

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Cooperatives Formed	2
Cooperatives Assisted	16
Businesses assisted not cooperatives	22
Number of Businesses incorporated no cooperative.....	1
Groups working with us to explore cooperative business model	20

October 2019 to April 2020

Certified Regional Development Corporations

The Certified Regional Development Corporations (CRDC) program was created by the 2003 Montana Legislature to encourage a regional approach to economic development that facilitates the efficient delivery of economic development programs by supporting regional capacity. A CRDC must be a private, non-profit corporation, and apply for certification through a competitive state Request for Proposal (RFP) process. CRDCs work directly with businesses to help them access capital, grant and loan programs, and provide technical assistance. There are 11 CRDCs spread across the state; Havre, Joliet, Baker, Wolf Point, Butte, Ronan, Helena, Bozeman, Colstrip, Great Falls, Lewistown. Each CRDC serves multi-county regions.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Total Number of Loans Closed	20
Total Dollar Amount of Loans.....	\$1,574,343
Dollars Matched by Businesses for Loans	\$8,081,417
Number of Jobs Created	48
Number of Jobs Retained.....	50
Number of Businesses Assisted	470
Number of Projects Assisted	429

January to March 2020



Strategic Partnership: Montana Craft Malt

Montana Craft Malt started its six-year relationship with the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture back in 2014 when a Commerce-created industry study showed the potential for growing, making and selling Montana-made beer malt. Fast forward to 2020 and Butte-based Montana Craft Malt was cutting the ribbon on its \$25 million state-of-the-art malting facility designed to capitalize on the world-class quality and high quantity of barley grown in Montana to provide the microbrewery and micro-distillery industries with customized products.

Brewing and distilling is big business. In Montana alone, 92 breweries use an estimated seven million pounds of malted grain each year. Montana Craft Malt saw an opportunity in the industry since most malt used in Montana comes from out of state, and brewers around the globe are always seeking high-quality specialty malts.

The six-year path from moving an idea to a realized innovation was done with the coordinated support of the Montana Departments of Commerce and Agriculture. What started with industry research quickly turned into the development of a business plan under the advisement of Butte's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Big Sky Trust Fund Planning Grant program. Montana Craft Malt then sought guidance from the Montana Technology Innovation Partnership (MTIP) to develop its Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant application. From there, Montana Craft Malt worked with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) to develop design and engineering plans for its facility. Montana Craft Malt was successful in competing for a Growth through Agriculture (GTA) grant award which helped purchase state-of-the-art malting equipment.

Along the way, the Montana Board of Investments supported the project with financing. With its Butte facility under construction, Montana Craft Malt started developing its international market connections thanks to the ExportMontana team and the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). When it was time to hire, Montana Craft Malt turned to the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Job Creation grant program to support the creation of new, good-paying jobs.

Montana Craft Malt's story shows what can happen when private business teams up with strategic government support: an expanding craft malt industry can take root in Montana, where we're known for growing the best grains in the world – soon, we'll be known for making the best malt, too.

Montana Manufacturing Extension Center at MSU

The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) is a statewide manufacturing outreach and assistance center staffed by full-time professionals with extensive experience in manufacturing and business in a variety of industries. MMEC serves the thousands of manufacturers in Montana by helping them assess and improve their manufacturing operations, providing trainings and workforce development, and leveraging research and technological developments at state and federal entities to keep manufacturing competitive in the state.

MMEC is headquartered at MSU in Bozeman, with remote offices in Billings, Missoula, Kalispell, Great Falls, and Butte (opening 2020).

MMEC is also part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network. NIST is a non-regulatory agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce that promotes U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness. MEP is a public-private partnership with centers in all 50 states and Puerto Rico dedicated to serving small and medium-sized manufacturers. MMEC's advisory board helps guide how MMEC serves Montana's manufacturers.

State Investment	\$500,000
Leveraged Investments	\$540,000
Total Investment.....	\$1,040,000

METRICS FOR SUCCESS	SFY2020 Goal	SFY2020 Metric
Clients served	77	151
Jobs added and retained	298	182
New and retained sales	\$29,800,000	\$25,292,000
Cost savings and avoidance	\$4,172,000	\$4,518,020
New investment	\$8,940,000	\$5,147,676
Clients surveyed	44	30

State Fiscal Year 2020

ExportMontana

ExportMontana helps Montana manufacturers and service providers sell outside the USA. Assistance provided includes market assessment, access, and development so Montana-based employers can take advantage of regional, national and international trade promotions and grants for developing new markets. Available programs include the Trade Show Assistance Program grant for exhibiting at national trade shows, and the federally-funded State Trade Expansion Program grant for international marketing. The state's \$300,000 statutory appropriation is used to access federal matching funds from the Small Business Administration which was \$401,818 in FFY 2018.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Businesses supported through grants, consultations, trainings.....	386
Funding provided for market development activities*	\$540,919
Sales from market development activities*	\$25,159,189
Jobs retained or created from market development activities*	183

**Trade shows, etc.
July 1, 2019-May 22, 2020*

Responding to Crisis: Commerce-Supported Companies Step Up During COVID-19

As the novel Coronavirus spread closer to home early in 2020, Department of Commerce-supported businesses quickly shifted their product manufacturing lines to support the needs of the global pandemic.

Distilleries in nearly every corner of Montana started making hand sanitizer and shipping it to hospitals and health care centers by the truckload. **“We are just trying to get it out to the people who need it the most,” Gulch Distillers co-owner Steffen Rasile told the Helena Independent Record. “We felt like it was our duty to help out where we can. We are in a unique position, so we decided to step up.”**

Gulch Distillers, Bozeman Spirits and Headframe Spirits are among a handful of other spirits-turned-sanitizer companies that have accessed Commerce’s State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant dollars to expand their reach. The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center also assisted the distillers quickly shift their operations by hosting weekly conference calls where they collaborated on many issues, including finding bottles. It was MMEC that secured bottle and cap donations for the Montana businesses from Berry Global in Indiana.

Montana’s well-known pet accessory maker West Paw also shifted their manufacturing of indestructible dog toys and pet beds to make face masks for healthcare workers.

According to its website, West Paw worked to retool their Bozeman, Montana production facility, leveraging the skills of their employees who normally might be making dog toys, beds, collars, and leashes. “As a purpose-driven certified B Corp, we live our values of community and employee support by unleashing the capability and skills of our staff to make an impact,” says Spencer Williams, President and CEO of West Paw.

West Paw was MMEC’s first client in 1996 when Williams bought the company, and their relationship with Commerce started in 2006 when it first worked with the ExportMontana team. Since, it has grown to a large international exporter with assistance from the State Trade Expansion Program and Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Planning Grant program.

Several plastic injection molders in Montana; including Spark R&D, PDM, Diversified Plastics, Blackhawk, and Creative Sales; collaborated to produce nearly 20,000 facemasks for Bozeman Health and Billings Clinic. These masks were invented by Billings Doctor Dusty Richardson and made national news. Montana Silversmiths, Salient Technologies, and Thompson Precision also collaborated to produce these “Montana Facemasks” using their 3D printers.

These companies stepped up to make in-demand products and were able to adapt quickly through the support of the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center at Montana State University. MMEC partners with and is funded through Commerce.

“Seeing Montana’s manufacturers collaborate to meet the demands of the crisis in Montana is truly inspiring,” said Paddy Fleming, Director of MMEC. “Former competitors are now talking about how they can better work together in the future and there are even a few of them talking about forming joint ventures!”

Going from making pedicabs to protective face shields like Bonner-based Coaster Cycles, or from making world-class Gortex flyfishing waders to sewn surgical gowns like Bozeman-based Simms Fishing – these Montana-made companies have stepped up in a big way to respond to the crisis.

Small Business Development Centers

The Montana Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is Montana’s premier provider for entrepreneurial and small business assistance. The program is funded through a partnership with the Small Business Administration (SBA), Montana Department of Commerce, economic development organizations and higher education institutions. Montana SBDC’s Business Consultants assist business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs with low-cost training opportunities and no cost, one-on-one advising that is customized to meet their needs. The SBDC network supports ten centers across the state, focusing on counseling and training in areas such as financial analysis, business planning, strategic planning, loan packaging, financial projections, business management and market research to help small businesses achieve their goals of growth, innovation and success.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Number of Clients Served.....	1,025
Number of Training Attendees	1,280
Number of Jobs Supported	3,144
Number of Business Start Ups	56
Capital Infusion Amount.....	\$34,505,216

July 1, 2019-March 31, 2020

Windrift Hill

Amber Hofstad, part owner of Windrift Hill, said her handmade, locally sourced goat milk soap and lotion business in Conrad, Montana, relied on multiple programs operated through the Department of Commerce to expand in 2017-2018. Hofstad said the knowledge and ongoing support from Jason Nitschke of the Great Falls Development Authority – part of Montana’s network of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) – helped throughout the two-year expansion.

“Jason is a great resource and very helpful in all aspects of business, if he doesn’t have the answer, he finds the answer or finds the best person for business owners to turn to,” Hofstad said.

Hofstad said Windrift Hill also turned to the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) for the food safety and manufacturing expertise of Claude Smith, who created plans for Windrift’s new manufacturing facility and worked directly with contractors to ensure safety regulations would be met.

Additionally, assistance through the Bear Paw Development Corporation’s Food and Ag Development Center (FADC) located in Havre made it possible for Windrift Hill to receive \$45,000 in financing through the Department of Agriculture’s Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) program. A \$25,000 grant and a \$20,000 loan through GTA allowed Windrift Hill to speed up production to make 65 gallons of product in the same amount of time it previously took to make seven gallons.

“I can honestly say that without the combination of all these programs Windrift Hill would still be struggling to find the help, support and correct equipment needed to grow,” Hofstad said.

“Our business has continued to grow, we have since hired employees and been able to reach new markets because we have been able to focus on growing WDH instead of focusing our energy on things the programs assisted us with. These people can take so much burden off a small business owner and make things that were once impossible seem possible again.”



Community Pillar: Spika Design & Manufacturing

Spika Design & Manufacturing, one of the largest employers in Lewistown, has relied on programs through the Department of Commerce at various points throughout its prestigious tenure. The manufacturing business serves such customers as the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, NASA and Facebook out of its 15,600 sq. ft. production facility in Lewistown.

This family-owned and operated business is a pillar of the Lewistown community. The company's CEO, Katie Spika, says Spika rewards the dedication of their employees by offering wages above the statewide median and makes a meaningful impact on the local community through contributions to the local economy.

Several programs funded through or operated by the Montana Department of Commerce have helped Spika become the success it is today. Recently, the Snowy Mountain Development Corporation, which is a part of Montana's network of Certified Regional Development Corporations (CRDCs), Workforce Training Grants, the knowledgeable staff at the Department of Commerce's ExportMontana team, and Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) have all provided Spika with technical assistance, grant funding, and expertise at different turning points in the company's history.

These programs have allowed Spika to expand into foreign markets and grow the company's sales. In fact, at times, Katie says, international customers account for a quarter of the company's sales. Spika has also been able to improve the quality and efficiency of their design and manufacturing, and hire additional employees.



“We would not be near the company we are without their support,” Katie says.



Small Business Innovation Research Program

The Montana Innovation Partnership (MTIP) is powered by MSU TechLink, and is a strategic partner for Montana innovators, entrepreneurs and inventors to help them access critical Research and Development funding and craft effective commercialization plans.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Number of Clients Served.....	41
SBIR/STTR Proposals Submitted	14
Number of Training Attendees	168
Number of Training Events Held.....	10

July 1, 2019-May 6, 2020

Food and Agricultural Development Center Network

The Montana Food and Agricultural Development Center (FADC) Network helps Montanans innovate and grow businesses that produce and commercialize food, agricultural and renewable energy products and processes, creating wealth in our communities and on our farms and ranches. The centers - located in communities throughout Montana - operate as a statewide network serving community-based businesses.

The centers support economic development by ensuring that more of the state’s food, agricultural and energy dollars circulate in Montana. The network provides training, coaching and technical assistance, including: product development, testing and analysis, regulatory compliance training, food processing, business planning and development, market research, business networking, access to financing, cooperative development and education on industry dynamics and technologies.

Currently, the State of Montana is served by eight FADCs, including: Bear Paw Development Corporation in Havre, Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development in Red Lodge, Great Falls Development Authority in Great Falls, Great Northern Development Corporation in Wolf Point, Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development in Butte, Lake County Community Development Corporation in Ronan, Prospera Business Network in Bozeman, and Ravalli County Economic Development Authority in Hamilton.

Prior to the passage of HB 52, state law limited the number of FADCs to four. HB 52 removed the limit on the number of centers, allowing for the current make up of eight centers and a more equitable distribution of services throughout the state. Additionally, HB 52 moved FADCs under the decision making authority of the Agriculture Development Council. With the new grant structure, Montana Department of Agriculture staff monitor these grants from award to close-out for compliance. Additionally, the Department’s Marketing staff works with FADCs to collaborate on projects that promote and expand Montana’s food and agriculture industries.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Jobs Retained	344
Jobs Created.....	43.5
Leveraged Funds.....	\$6,643,000
New Clients	50
Businesses Assisted.....	91
Counseling Sessions - Hours Paid Time	522
New Products	26

Growth Through Agriculture

The Growth Through Agriculture Program is a competitive grant and loan program whose mission is to strengthen and diversify Montana's agricultural industry through loans and grants that assist with the development of innovative agricultural business organizational improvements, the commercialization and marketing of new agricultural products in order to keep pace with a transforming agricultural industry, and to create new jobs and expand small business opportunities.

The Agriculture Development Council, a seven member independent body consisting of industry representatives spanning food, agriculture and economic development, reviews applications and selects successful projects for program investment. The program is administered by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

The Program is administered by staff at the Montana Department of Agriculture. Eligible projects should primarily add value to Montana's agricultural products, have prospects for achieving commercial success given the current personnel, experience and resources of the applicant and have the possibility to create and/or retain jobs in Montana. Examples of project activities include, but are not limited to: equipment purchases, advertising and promotion, and consultant services such as engineering costs. A \$1 for \$1 match is required for all types of Growth Through Agriculture projects, including both grants and loans. The maximum award from the program is \$150,000; up to \$50,000 in grant funding and up to \$100,000 in loan funding. Post-award, projects are monitored until close-out for compliance by Montana Department of Agriculture staff.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Awards Summary

Total Awards	39
Total Grant Amount	\$670,992
Total Loan Amount	\$239,600
Total Award Amounts	\$910,592

Program Metrics

Increase in number of Full Time Employees	111
Increase in number of Part Time Employees	43
Increase in Gross Annual Sales.....	\$126,317,188.69
Projected Annual Payroll of New Jobs	\$8,260,633

Numbers based on projections provided by FY20 awardees

Growth Through Agriculture Funding at Work

Strick's Ag is a family-owned grain merchandiser located in Chester. In 2017, Strick's Ag was awarded a grant of \$49,488.44 and a loan for \$100,000 for construction and equipment purchases to assist in the expansion of the processing facility.

“Strick's Ag was able to start off the construction of our pulse-processing plant because of the grant and loan from the GTA program, however, the program's assistance stretched farther than just the grant and loan funds. Staff from the Montana Department of Agriculture was instrumental in our ability to meet some of our first customers who placed orders to get our plant operational. Strick's Ag grew from a company of 8 employees before the GTA award, to having 25 full time employees now.”

Jillien Striet, Stricks Ag

