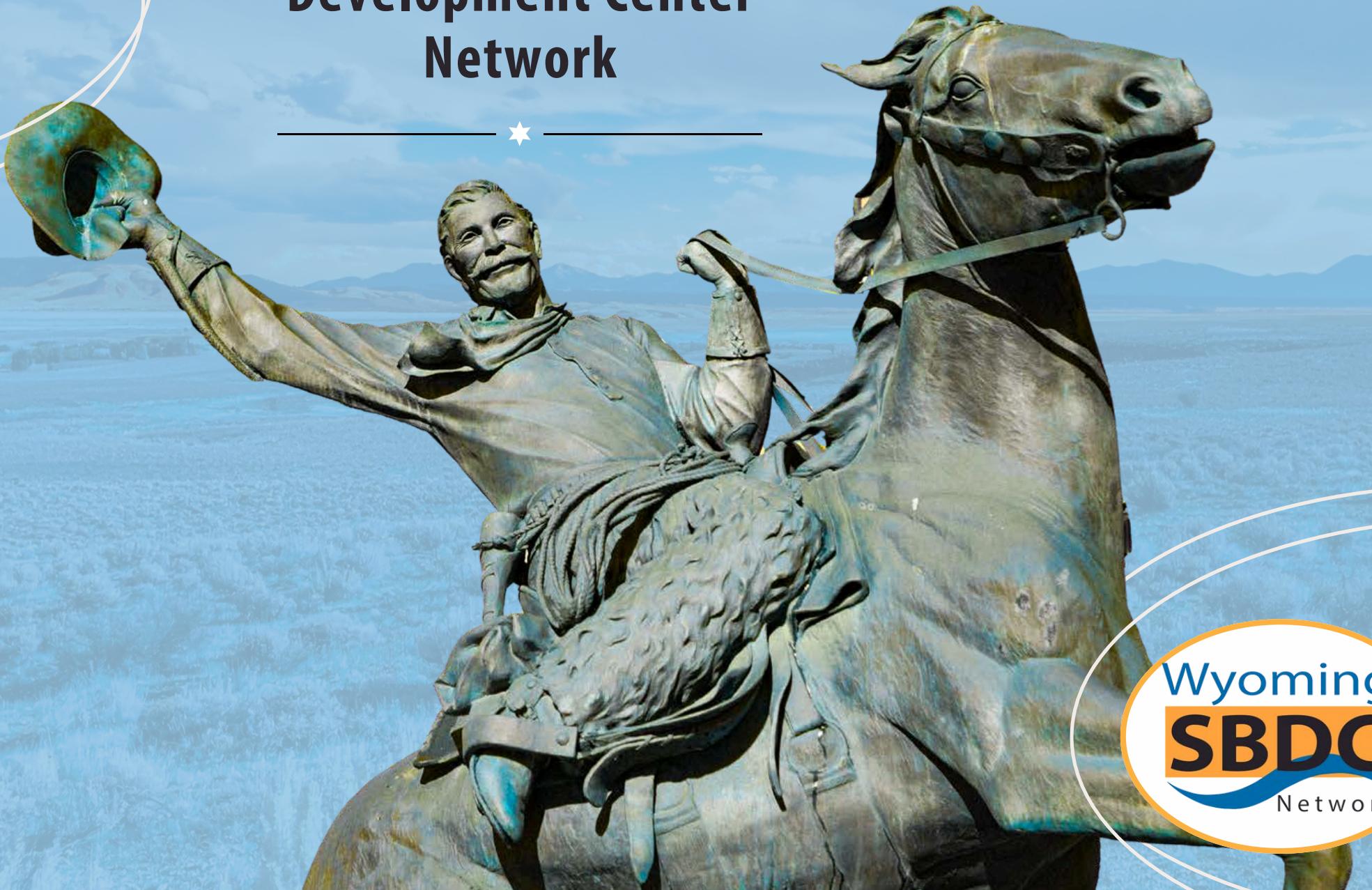


2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

# Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network

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A MESSAGE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# Parag R. Chitnis

Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
Professor of Molecular Biology  
University of Wyoming  
Laramie, WY



I am delighted to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network. This past year has showcased the determination and ingenuity that characterizes Wyoming's entrepreneurs and the communities they serve.

Throughout 2025, small businesses have remained the lifeblood of Wyoming's economy, creating opportunities, fostering innovation, and strengthening the fabric of our communities. The Wyoming SBDC Network has stood alongside these businesses, delivering tailored advising, practical resources, and the expertise necessary to thrive in today's dynamic marketplace.

Our SBDC team's reach extends to every corner of the state, bringing vital support to entrepreneurs in both our urban areas and our most remote communities. This report captures the meaningful outcomes of that work: the businesses launched and expanded, the jobs created, and the economic momentum generated across Wyoming.

Our partnerships with the Wyoming Business Council, state and federal agencies, and private sector leaders have amplified our ability to serve, ensuring the SBDC Network remains a trusted resource for business growth and economic development.

As we look to the future, our resolve remains firm. The Wyoming SBDC Network will continue championing the entrepreneurs who power our state's economy through responsive services, strategic partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to Wyoming's economic vitality.

I am grateful for the exceptional work of our SBDC team and the entrepreneurial drive of Wyoming's small business owners. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient economic foundation for generations to come.



Wyoming's entrepreneurial spirit has never been stronger, and I'm continually grateful for the privilege of supporting the business owners who power our state's economy.

This past year, the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network has witnessed remarkable determination from our clients—entrepreneurs who navigate challenges with creativity, adapt to changing markets with agility, and build businesses that strengthen their communities. Their success is our success, and their vision drives everything we do.

Our fiscal year 2025 results reflect the collective effort of many partners. Thanks to the support of the Wyoming Legislature, the Wyoming Business Council, the University of Wyoming, and the U.S. Small Business Administration, we've been able to deliver meaningful assistance when and where it matters most. In fiscal year 2025, every dollar invested in our network by the State and the University returned \$18.88 to the state's economy through capital infusion. We supported 1,025 clients with customized advising, offered 65 training opportunities to 962 attendees, helped create 31 new businesses, and played a role in supporting 2,017 jobs across various industries.

Our network's efforts have touched professional, scientific, technical, food, health care, childcare, and other services, retail, manufacturing, construction, and hospitality – representing the diverse entrepreneurial spirit of Wyoming.

What energizes our team most isn't found in spreadsheets, although important, it's in the conversations with the café owner expanding to a second location, the manufacturer solving a complex supply chain challenge, the startup bringing an innovative idea to life, and addressing childcare deserts. These are the moments we love and that remind us why our work matters.

I'm especially appreciative of the University of Wyoming for providing the foundation that allows our network to reach every corner of the state, and to our funding stakeholders whose investment in small business development creates ripples far beyond any single transaction. Most importantly, thank you to Wyoming's entrepreneurs for trusting us to be part of your journey.

As we move forward, our commitment remains unchanged: to provide expert, confidential guidance at no cost to businesses at every stage, in every industry, across every Wyoming community. Here's to another year of Wyoming businesses doing what they do best—building, growing, thriving, and supporting their communities.

A MESSAGE FROM

# Jill Kline

**State Director**  
**Wyoming Small Business**  
**Development Center Network**



# OUR IMPACT

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## Capital Impact

### Proven Impact to Wyoming's Economy Since 1994

In the last 31 years, the Wyoming SBDC Network has added over \$335 million to Wyoming's economy through capital infusion alone (not counting government contracts, SBIR/STTR awards, tax generation, client sales growth).

Looking solely at the 2025 federal fiscal year, every \$1 invested by the State of Wyoming in the Wyoming SBDC Network returned \$18.88 to the state's economy through capital infusion.

Additionally, our government contracting services last year helped Wyoming small businesses successfully compete for federal, state, and local contracts worth over \$61 million.

Our Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) assistance also led to over \$2 million in awards from the state's Phase 0/00 program and federal Phase I/II programs."

### The Standard For Reliable Reporting

The Wyoming SBDC Network is meticulous in its record keeping to ensure that our numbers are accurate, our impact is meaningful, and that our funds lead to the best possible impact for the state. In fact, in its most recent review of all 52 federal entrepreneurial assistance programs, the U.S. Government Accountability Office listed SBDC's as the standard for all other organizations to follow. Additionally, our impact must be attributed to us directly by our clients in order to maintain our National Accreditation certification and we undergo annual reviews from our funding partners.



# Our Impact



For every **\$1** invested by the State of Wyoming in the Wyoming SBDC

**\$18.88** is returned through capital infusion.

**Total Capital Infusion**

**Government Contracts**

**SBIR/STTR Grants & Contracts**

**\$12,819,079**

**\$69,000,000**

**\$2,442,852**



# Wyoming SBDC Network Annual Metrics



## Business Starts

31

## Clients Served

1,025

## Jobs Created and Retained

92

## Jobs Supported

2,017

## Capital Infusion

77 Transactions resulting in \$12,819,079

# Wyoming SBDC Network Metrics



**Client Sales  
Growth**  
**\$725,015**

total dollar amount  
increase since FY 2023

**Network Event  
Attendees**  
**962**

**Network Trainings Held**  
**65**

## Market Research Center

**Unique Clients  
Served**  
**214**

**Resulting in  
269  
projects**



# Top Industry Breakdown and Jobs Supported

What kinds of businesses do SBDC Network clients own?

21% Professional, Scientific, Technical Services

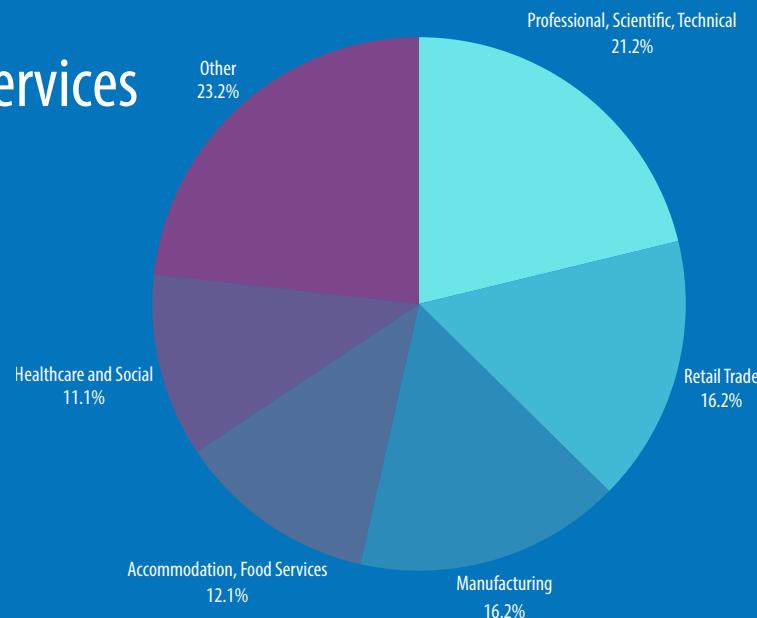
16% Retail Trade

16% Manufacturing

12% Accommodation and Food Services

11% Health Care and Social Assistance

23% Other Services



SBDC JOBS  
SUPPORTED

2,017

APEX JOBS  
SUPPORTED

1,084

THIS METRIC INCLUDES THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN A BUSINESS WHILE WORKING WITH THE WYOMING SBDC NETWORK. TRACKING THIS NUMBER ULTIMATELY DEMONSTRATES HOW MANY JOBS OUR SERVICES SUPPORT INDIRECTLY. THE U.S. DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY ESTIMATES 1,390 JOBS WERE CREATED OR RETAINED AS A RESULT OF THE MORE THAN \$69 MILLION OUR CLIENTS RECEIVED THROUGH STATE, LOCAL, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS IN FY24.

# Cybersecurity

## Ongoing Supplemental Program

The U.S. Small Business Administration selected the Wyoming SBDC Network to administer a two-year program to assist small businesses in protecting themselves against cyber-attacks. The Cybersecurity for Small Business Pilot Program launched in September 2023 and will continue through August, 2026 with a one-year extension added to the original two-year program period.

Although technology solutions are important in combating attacks, this program focuses on behavior change through advising and training opportunities. Human behavior accounts for over 90% of cyber-attacks and online scams. Program offerings include no-cost, one-on-one short- and long-term advising for small businesses. Several SBDC staff were trained extensively to provide specialized cyber readiness training to our clients. Monthly webinars are also presented to focus on basic cyber readiness practices, such as recognizing phishing attacks, securing login credentials, and performing effective data backups.

12

ON-DEMAND  
EVENTS RELEASED

60

CYBERSECURITY  
INTERNAL  
TRAINING HOURS

Completed by staff



## YEAR TWO METRICS

48

CLIENTS SERVED

335

ADVISING AND  
PREPARATION  
HOURS

Paul Johnson,

Cybersecurity for Small Businesses  
Program Manager

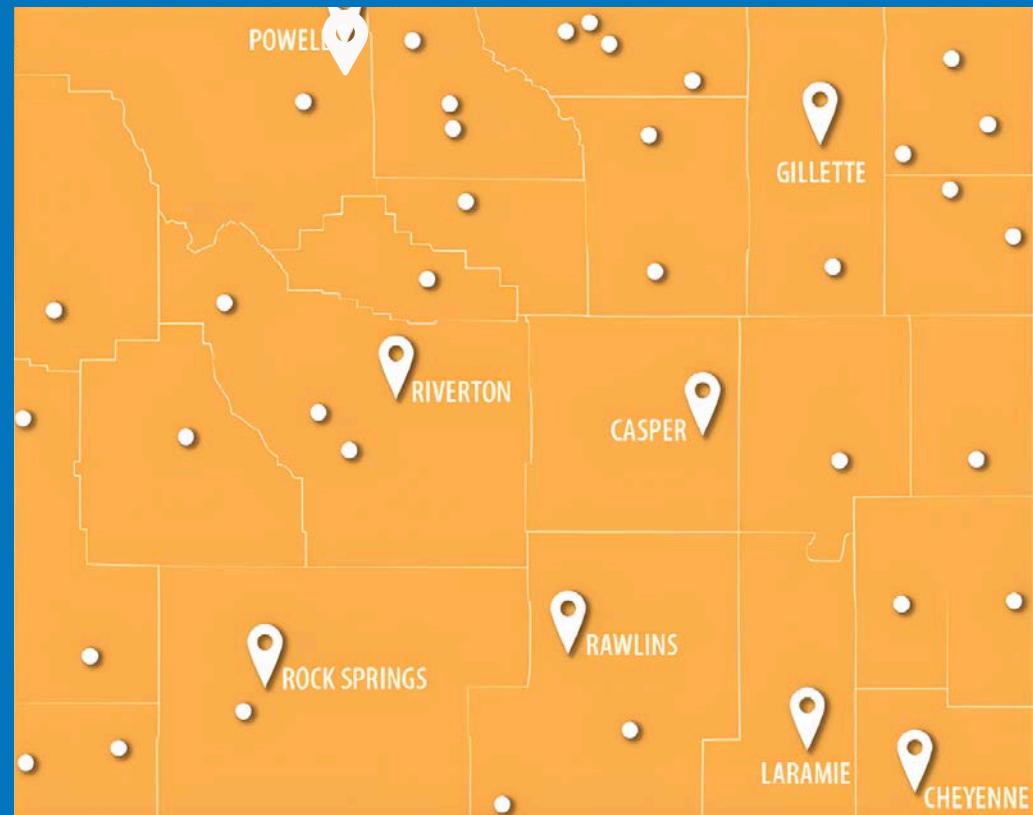
# About Us

The Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network provides no-cost, confidential training and one-on-one advising to help entrepreneurs and small businesses succeed. SBDCs are a nationwide network of the most comprehensive small business assistance in the United States and its territories. In addition to federal funding provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Wyoming SBDC is supported with funding from the Wyoming Business Council and the University of Wyoming (UW). UW serves as our Host organization and all staff are UW employees.

We have eight strategically located offices throughout the state. Our regional directors serve and help entrepreneurs in every county. The Wyoming SBDC Network offers advising, training, and education, in every stage of the business lifecycle and in any industry.

Our services are offered in-person or virtually and are always available at no-cost and completely confidential thanks to support from our host and funding partners. The Wyoming SBDC Network is here for your business from start-up to succession and everything in between.

# Locations



# Wyoming SBDC Network



## Entrepreneurs Helping Entrepreneurs

Our certified experts are equipped to solve any small business challenge. Through our statewide network, you gain access to specialized support for startups, growth, and specific needs, including but not limited to:



**Tierra Price,**  
Procurement Specialist

**P.J. Burns, SBDC**  
Campbell, Crook, Johnson, Sheridan and Weston Counties  
[pj.burns@uwyo.edu](mailto:pj.burns@uwyo.edu) | (307) 682-5232  
• Marketing  
• Cybersecurity  
• Leadership & Management  
• Human Resources

**Rob Condie, SBDC**  
Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater, and Uinta Counties  
[rcondie1@uwyo.edu](mailto:rcondie1@uwyo.edu) | (307) 352-6894  
• Bookkeeping Strategies  
• Business Banking/Loan Preparation  
• Alternative Financing Options\*  
• Se Habla Español

**Devan Costa-Cargill, SBDC**  
Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park and Washakie Counties  
[dcostaca@uwyo.edu](mailto:dcostaca@uwyo.edu) | (307) 254-7755  
• Leadership & Team Development  
• Human Resources  
• Business Plan Development  
• Marketing Plan Assistance

**Jeff Engell, SBDC**  
Albany and Carbon Counties  
[jengell@uwyo.edu](mailto:jengell@uwyo.edu) | (307) 760-1375  
• Business Plan Development  
• Banking and Loan Application  
• Exit Planning  
• Business Valuation

**Kenny Overby, SBDC**  
Laramie and Goshen Counties  
[koverby@uwyo.edu](mailto:koverby@uwyo.edu) | (307) 772-7371  
• Start-Ups  
• Business Plan Development  
• International Trade  
• Customer Relations

**Steen Stovall, SBDC**  
Converse, Natrona, Niobrara, and Platte Counties  
[sstovall@uwyo.edu](mailto:sstovall@uwyo.edu) | (307) 234-6683  
• Business Development/Operations  
• 2nd Stage Business Strategies  
• Capital Acquisition  
• Customer Relations

**Kyle Trumble, SBDC**  
Fremont and Teton Counties  
[ktrumble@uwyo.edu](mailto:ktrumble@uwyo.edu) | (307) 349-9701  
• Marketing/Social Media  
• Pitch Prep  
• Business Operations Analysis  
• Business Model Generation/Innovation

**Sarah Mikesell Grawny, APEX Accelerator**  
Serving Statewide  
[smikes3@uwyo.edu](mailto:smikes3@uwyo.edu) | (307) 757-6869  
• Government Contracting  
• Proposal Assistance and Review  
• Training and Facilitation  
• Public Policy

**Tierra Price, APEX Accelerator**  
Serving Statewide  
[tprice13@uwyo.edu](mailto:tprice13@uwyo.edu) | (307) 343-0765  
• Government Contracting Processes  
• Business Certifications Assistance  
• Bid/Proposal Development  
• Required Registrations & Systems

**Kelly Haigler Cornish, Wyoming SBIR/STTR Initiative**  
Serving Statewide  
[haigler@uwyo.edu](mailto:haigler@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-2904  
• Technology Development  
• Commercialization Plans  
• Intellectual Property  
• SBIR/STTR Innovation Funding

**Monica Patten, Research/Commercialization**  
Serving Statewide  
[mpatten1@uwyo.edu](mailto:mpatten1@uwyo.edu) | (307) 460-1831  
• Innovation Research  
• Commercialization Plans  
• Intellectual Property  
• Technology Development

**Paul Johnson, Cybersecurity Program**  
Serving Statewide  
[pjohns45@uwyo.edu](mailto:pjohns45@uwyo.edu) | (307) 314-5208  
• Cyber Readiness Planning  
• Security Training  
• Risk Assessment  
• Policy Development

**Kayley Achi, Market Research Center**  
Serving Statewide  
[kayley.harrison@uwyo.edu](mailto:kayley.harrison@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-2688  
• Market Research  
• Digital Marketing  
• Social Media Management  
• Search Engine Optimization

**Missy Burns, Market Research Center**  
Serving Statewide  
[mburns11@uwyo.edu](mailto:mburns11@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-5405  
• Market Research  
• Social Media Optimization  
• Branding Strategy  
• Marketing

**Missy Burns,**  
Market Researcher



**Jill Kline, State Director**  
[jkline@uwyo.edu](mailto:jkline@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-3405

**Jim Drever, Associate State Director**  
[james@uwyo.edu](mailto:james@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-3593

**Andi Kelly, Accounting**

[akelly14@uwyo.edu](mailto:akelly14@uwyo.edu) | (307) 851-2029

**Ty Schanck, Marketing**

[tschanck@uwyo.edu](mailto:tschanck@uwyo.edu) | (307) 343-0925

# Services

## Business Planning

- Business Plan Development/Review
- Strategic Planning
- Business Valuation

## Financial

- Cash Flow Projections
- Financial Analysis
- Bookkeeping
- Business Taxes
- Payroll

## Funding

- Access To Capital
- Business Loan Application Review
- Alternative Financing
- Innovation Contracts/Grants

## Government Contracting

- Finding Contracting Opportunities • Training
- Registration Assistance
- Proposal Review

## Growing A Business

- Business Operations
- 2nd Stage Business Strategies
- International Trade

## Management Issues

- Human Resources
- Sustainability
- Operations/Logistics
- Business Succession Planning

## Marketing

- Marketing Plans
- E-Commerce
- Website/Social Media Assistance
- Graphic Design
- Search Engine Optimization

## Market Research

- Situational Analysis
- Demographic/Psychographic Data
- Website/Social Media Analysis
- Geographic Information Systems

## New Ideas & Inventions

- Technology Assessment
- Product Development
- Technology Commercialization • SBIR/STTR Application Funding
- Phase I/II Application Review

## Resiliency Assistance

- Strategy Development
- Risk Management
- Cybereadiness
- Disaster Recovery
- Emergency Preparedness

## Starting A Business

- Business Advising
- Training on a Variety of Topics
- Business Plan Development
- Finding Funds

And More!  
Visit [WyomingSBDC.org](http://WyomingSBDC.org)  
to see our full list of services

# Video Testimonials



The Wyoming SBDC Network launched an initiative in September of 2024 to incorporate video testimonials and success stories on our media channels with the goal of engaging our clients, partners, and community.

These videos highlight clients and partners on their journeys, with topics ranging from what interested them in starting a business, to how the Wyoming SBDC Network assisted them in achieving success. These testimonials are featured on our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube) as well as our website and monthly newsletters. We are proud to showcase our clients and partner contributions and hope their stories inspire others to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams and collaborate across the state.

[youtube.com/@wyendotbiz](https://youtube.com/@wyendotbiz)

# Client Success Stories

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Read more about our clients, their business journeys, and how the Wyoming SBDC Network has helped them achieve success.

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**BLACKTOOTH AEROSPACE**  
SHERIDAN, WY

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**FRONTIER FLAME**  
GLENDO, WY

---

**BRUNTON INTERNATIONAL LLC**  
RIVERTON, WY

---

**JAVA MOON**  
SHERIDAN, WY

---

**HANK'S RENO JUNCTION TRAVEL PLAZA**  
WRIGHT, WY

---

**BOB'S DINER AND BAKERY**  
GREYBULL, WY

---

**WHOLE SOUL CONSULTING**  
CASPER, WY

---

**OUTLAW MMA AND FITNESS**  
CASPER, WY

---

**BELLA FUOCO WOOD FIRED PIZZA**  
CHEYENNE, WY

---

**POWER THEORY**  
LARAMIE, WY

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# Blacktooth Aerospace - Sheridan, WY



**Blacktooth Aerospace**, a Sheridan-based startup founded by Dr. Kelly Brennan in December 2023, is a testament to the power of innovation and the importance of strategic partnerships. With a vision to revolutionize the fields of mechanical engineering and materials science, Brennan has embarked on a journey to develop high-performance solutions for critical applications such as ballistic protection, impact absorption, and thermal management.

To navigate the complexities of launching a startup and securing funding, Brennan turned to the Wyoming SBDC Network. "I first learned about the SBDC Network from emails from the Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce," he recalls. The network's suite of resources proved invaluable in shaping Blacktooth Aerospace's trajectory.

"The most valuable service has been the Phase 0 program through WSSI," Dr. Brennan highlights. "However, a number of the SBDC's other programs have also been extremely helpful. Cybersecurity assistance, entrepreneurship workshops/webinars, market research, and the connections and introductions made by SBDC staff have been critically important," he adds.

Beyond financial support, the SBDC Network provided guidance in areas like market research and customer engagement. By leveraging the network's resources, Brennan was able to gain a deeper understanding of his target market and refine his commercialization strategy.

**Dr. Kelly Brennan**

Blacktooth Aerospace's innovative approach to materials science has garnered significant attention. By focusing on developing advanced materials with exceptional properties, the company aims to address critical challenges in industries ranging from aerospace to defense.

Through connections made by SBDC staff, Blacktooth Aerospace participated in the University of Wyoming's Fall 2024 cohort of the NSF I-Corps program. This program helps small businesses to identify potential customers and to determine what their real needs are. "The customer interviews were where the potential for success was readily apparent," Dr. Brennan says.

Within a short time span, Blacktooth Aerospace has achieved several significant milestones. Securing its first major R&D contract with the military is a testament to the company's innovative potential and the trust it has earned from industry leaders.

As Brennan looks to the future, he envisions Blacktooth Aerospace as a leading provider of advanced materials solutions. The company's commitment to research and development and strategic partnerships signifies continued growth and success.

"Embrace humility, be open to advice, trust in yourself, and face your fears with courage," Dr. Brennan advises aspiring entrepreneurs. These principles have laid a strong foundation for Blacktooth Aerospace's future.



# Frontier Flame - Glendo, WY

In the heart of Glendo, Wyoming, a culinary dream fueled by family and a dash of green chili was realized from the shared vision of Michelle Belt, her mother Zenda Lange, and her sister Ashley Durand. Frontier Flame opened its doors in April 2024.

"My mom has always wanted her own restaurant," Michelle explains. "She has been a chef for over 30 years. She has managed many restaurants around Wyoming and Colorado and in March 2024 she was asked by one of the local business owners if she wanted to lease their restaurant. She was so excited! She asked my sister and I if we would like to be a part of this new business. We agreed and my mom signed the contract with them."

Soon after, Frontier Flame relocated. "The owner of Kim's Place asked us if we would be interested in buying her restaurant," Michelle says. "We knew buying our own place would be better for us in the long run. So, we bought the restaurant."



**Ashley Durand**

Initially, navigating the seasonal rhythms of a tourist town presented its challenges. "Trying to decide what the best business hours would be with a small staff has been a challenge," Michelle says. Through trial and error, Frontier Flame has found their rhythm.

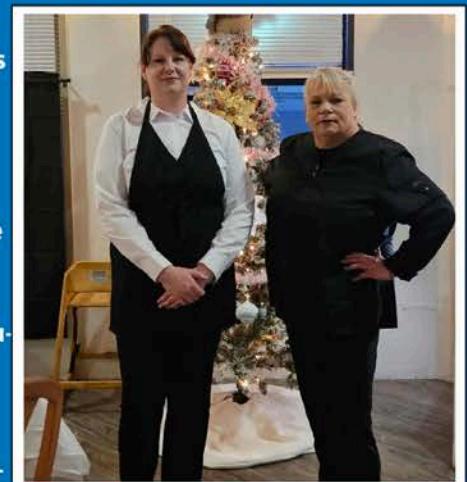
Each member of the team brings unique skills to the table: Zenda's renowned culinary expertise, Ashley's seasoned bartending skills, and Michelle's diverse background and entrepreneurial drive.

Before Frontier Flame, Michelle Belt had aspirations of business ownership. Seeking more information about the process, she met with Steen Stovall at the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network. "Steen was extremely helpful! He helped me with market research for a laundromat, writing a business plan, and gave me information about business licenses," Michelle recalls.

The Wyoming SBDC Network came back into the picture for the family's new restaurant and proved to be a beneficial resource for the business. "From information on LLC's to social media advice, the services and resources provided by the SBDC has been a blessing! The market research was a big help." Michelle says of her work with Steen and the SBDC team. "There is a comfort in knowing that if I am having trouble solving a problem, that they will be there to help me solve it."

Frontier Flame has received great reviews, and they plan to expand their business soon using the business' secret ingredient: Zenda's legendary homemade green chili. "My mom Zenda has developed an excellent green chili recipe over the years. We have plans to 'can' it and sell it in stores," Michelle shares.

Michelle also envisions Frontier Flame expanding to multiple locations and diversifying her own entrepreneurial portfolio with other businesses. As for advice to other entrepreneurs, she emphasizes the importance of having a strong team. "You can be the hardest working person, but you can't do it all."



**Michelle Belt and Zenda Lange**

# Brunton International LLC - Riverton, WY



**Lauren and David Heerschap**

In Wyoming, where the spirit of innovation and resilience thrives, Lauren Heerschap and Brunton International LLC has emerged as a beacon of entrepreneurial success. Lauren has been recognized as Wyoming's 2025 Small Business Person of the Year by the Small Business Association, acknowledging the dedication and the growth of her business and commitment to the community.

Lauren's story began in the Jemez Mountains of Northern New Mexico, where she was inspired by the landscape and her favorite activity, rock climbing, to study geology. During a Wheaton College geology field camp in the Black Hills of South Dakota in the summer of 2000, Lauren was first introduced to a Brunton geological compass, a tool that would later play a pivotal role in her life. "It became an essential part of my toolkit," Lauren recalls, "Little did I know, years later, I'd be leading the very company that made it."

After earning her master's degree in geology from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2003 and marrying David Heerschap in 2004, Lauren worked for the Colorado Geological Survey and a small oil and gas firm. In 2007, she accepted a position teaching at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, where she taught introductory geology, geographic information systems (GIS), field methods, and summer field camps. In 2013, while teaching a field methods class, an idea sparked: a new model of the Brunton compass that could take geological measurements more efficiently and intuitively. David created prototypes in their garage and in 2014 they approached Brunton with their innovative product, resulting in the successful Axis Transit, which hit the market in 2016.

"We saw an opportunity to improve a classic tool," Lauren explains. "We wanted to make geological measurements more efficient and intuitive." This innovation brought them into the folds of Brunton, and after moving to Wyoming to help launch the Axis, they were eventually asked to take over the brand in 2021, bringing it back to U.S. ownership after 25 years.

Taking the helm of Brunton International LLC, based in Riverton, Wyoming, Lauren became the first female geologist to lead the company in its 130-year history. "Taking over a historic brand like Brunton was a huge responsibility," Lauren says. "We wanted to honor its legacy while also driving innovation and growth." Brunton's compasses are manufactured in Riverton, Wyoming, where strong effort is made to source materials regionally through local partners like Legacy Molding.

The local Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provided support to Lauren for certification information. "The SBDC has been an absolute lifeline for us," Lauren emphasizes. "Audie Cunningham, our local advisor, provided invaluable guidance and support, especially with SBA certifications."

The SBDC's assistance proved pivotal in navigating the complex process of obtaining Woman-Owned Small Business and HUBZone certifications. "Janean Forsyth and the APEX Accelerator were instrumental in helping us wade through the certification process," Lauren notes. "Their expertise made a significant difference."

Both long-standing and new military contracts are an important part of Brunton's business. "These contracts are vital for our growth," Lauren explains. "We're enthusiastic about our strong relationships with the military and are very excited about launching Brunton's first mil-spec lensatic compasses this spring."

Under Lauren's leadership, Brunton has seen significant growth. Website sales have surged, and the company has expanded its workforce, now employing 28 people. Moreover, Brunton has tackled ambitious projects, including the illumination of the M2 military transit and the development of a digital GPS-enabled transit.

Despite facing obstacles, Lauren has remained steadfast. "Financial challenges and legal hurdles are part of running a business," Lauren reflects. "But we've learned to navigate them, thanks to our resilience and the support of our community."

Brunton International LLC is committed to giving back to their community. The company donates engraved transits to geology students, supports field scholarships, and contributes to organizations like Big City Mountaineers and Disabled Veterans of America. Lauren and David also actively participate in local charitable events to help raise funds for community services. Lauren serves on the Board of Trustees for the Geological Society of America (GSA) Foundation and is a founding board member of the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Business Alliance (WYORBA). She also co-leads her daughter's Girl Scout troop, demonstrating her commitment to community and leadership.

Janean J. Forsyth, Program Manager of the Wyoming APEX Accelerator, highlights Lauren's exceptional qualities. "Ms. Heerschap has demonstrated a unique ability to collaborate and innovate with others. Her integrity and grit are apparent in her leadership of Brunton and in her charitable endeavors."

Lauren Heerschap uniquely represents important entrepreneurs across Wyoming, overcoming challenges, taking risks, and strategically growing. Congratulations to Lauren and Brunton International LLC on being awarded Wyoming's 2025 Small Business Person of the Year.



**Lauren Heerschap**

# Java Moon - Sheridan, WY

When Megan Cook acquired Java Moon in December 2021, her intention was to preserve the cherished legacy of the historic business in downtown Sheridan, while infusing it with a dynamic energy to propel it forward. For years, Megan had dreamed of owning a business downtown with a communal ambience. "I wanted to create a welcoming vibe where people can come to gather, to meet with friends and enjoy great food," she explains. The menu at Java Moon ranges from made-from-scratch pastries to hearty lunch options and bespoke catering.

Navigating the challenges of the food and beverage industry, Megan has demonstrated a keen understanding of the market. Her strategic management has resulted in over 20% sales growth annually the last 3 years. Despite competition for employees in Sheridan's tight labor market. Megan's ability to balance profitability with quality service has been pivotal to Java Moon's success.

Recognizing Sheridan's need for a comfortable and professional meeting space, Megan recently introduced 'The Phases,' a private conference room within Java Moon for meetings or collaborative projects. This addition offers a valuable resource for local businesses and professionals. The Sheridan Press writes: "The personalized service, fresh daily offerings, and inviting atmosphere make Java Moon more than just a coffee shop – it is downtown Sheridan's community hub."



*Megan Cook*



Java Moon also serves as a platform for local artists and musicians. As reported by the Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce, "Java Moon supports local art and music by partnering with SAGE Community Arts to feature a local artist each month and hosts the Sheridan Junior High Choir and guitar classes a few times each year." Megan is also actively involved in local boards and charities, including the Whitney Benefits Board and Make-A-Wish Wyoming.

"As a customer, you immediately feel the sense of community and supportive workplace culture she has cultivated," writes Zoila Perry, Executive Director of the Downtown Sheridan Association. As Megan considered expanding the business, she was presented with new obstacles. The high cost of real estate and limited locations in Sheridan necessitated strategic planning. The Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) played a role in offering advising and market research services. This collaboration provided Megan with the necessary tools and insights to make informed decisions about her expansion.

Megan's vision for Java Moon continues to evolve. In August of 2024 she acquired a lease on Coffeen Ave. for a second location to serve a broader clientele, offering a drive-thru option for those on the go, with the expansion providing a much-needed community space on the other side of town. "This location will serve locals as well as tourists as it is easy to access off of the interstate," Megan notes, excited for the opportunities a second location will provide.

Java Moon Station opened in February of 2024, offering Java Moon's food and drinks on the south side of town. "Opening the Station was a lot of hard work, but totally worth it. Offering great fresh food and a place to gather on this end of town is just what the Sheridan community needs." Megan Cook's dedication to her business and love for her community is a blend of business acumen and commitment to creating a welcoming and thriving space for people to meet, eat something delicious, or simply have a cup of coffee.

# Pridgeon Inc. – Hank's Reno Junction Travel Plaza - Wright, WY

From humble beginnings catering out of his mother's kitchen to owning the bustling Hank's Reno Junction Travel Plaza in Wright, Wyoming, Hank Pridgeon's story is one of entrepreneurial spirit, devotion to community, and a passionate drive to succeed.

Hank's journey began in 1982, the day after his high school graduation, with a \$10,000 loan and a vision. "I always knew I wanted to be in the food-service business," Hank recalls. "It was just a matter of finding my niche." That niche evolved from catering to a steakhouse, then a cafe, and finally, the comprehensive travel plaza that stands today, a testament to his ability to adapt and expand. Notably, this expansion has been marked by strategic growth, moving from a 2,100 square foot leased space in 1987, to the current expansive travel plaza, which includes a 4,000 square foot kitchen upgrade and corporate offices added in 2021.

The Reno Junction Travel Plaza isn't just a truck stop; it's a destination. With Sinclair fuel pumps offering various octane levels and DEF, a restaurant serving everything from buffalo burgers to prime rib, a bar, a convenience store, and even the newly acquired 18-room Reno Junction Lodge motel, it caters to the diverse needs of travelers and locals alike. "We like to have fun," Hank explains, a philosophy that permeates every aspect of his business, from quirky decor like the saddled dinosaur out front, to exceptional customer service. "We like our customers to have fun, and we join them."

This unconventional approach has paid off. Hank's business thrives on a foundation of genuine connection with his customers, particularly the truckers who frequent his establishment. "Truckers and bikers are the most loyal customers ever," he says. "If you treat them right, they're not only going to come back but are going to tell friends they should stop here. It's like having an extended family."

Hank's commitment to community extends beyond his business. He supports local charities, volunteering his time, and even providing emergency assistance during crises, such as the EF-2 Tornado Response at the North Antelope Rochelle Coal Mine. As Robby Gallob, Town of Wright Emergency Manager, attests, "His heart is bigger than any person I have ever met." Hank's generosity is not just about financial contributions; it's about being present and responsive to the needs of his community. He has also dedicated many years to community boards, including the Wright Town Council, the Wright Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Wyoming Liquor Association.



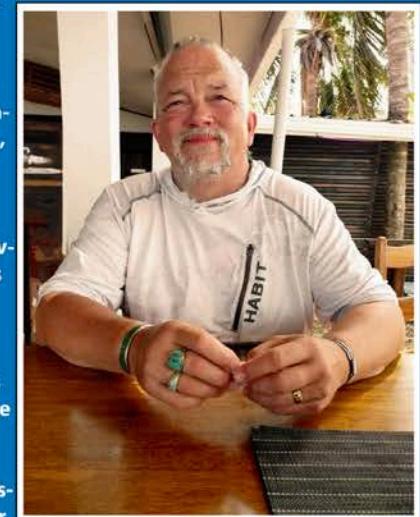
A key element of Hank's success has been his ability to navigate the economic landscape of Wyoming. He credits the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) with providing valuable support throughout his business journey. Assistance from P.J. Burns, Northeast Regional Director for the Wyoming SBDC, and utilization of the Wyoming Business Council's resources has helped Hank make informed decisions and adapt to changing market conditions, especially during difficult times like the 2020 pandemic.

"2020 was undoubtedly our most challenging financial year with the government mandated shutdowns," Hank admits. "But as an essential business, the truck stop remained open, and we continued to pay all of our employees." This dedication to his employees has fostered long term loyalty, with multiple staff members having been with Hank for over a decade.

Hank's entrepreneurial spirit extends to addressing the challenges facing his community. Recognizing the shortage of workforce housing, he purchased apartment buildings and a motel to provide affordable accommodation for his employees and visitors. "We're a bit unique because we're not on an interstate highway," Hank explains. "We're on the busiest intersection in the state, because of the energy industry around here." This strategic location, combined with his understanding of his customer base, has allowed the business to thrive even during economic downturns.

Hank's success is also due to his genuine love for his work. "I get bored real easy, and I always have to have something to do," Hank says. "People tell me I'm a workaholic. I do take time with family and friends, but a lot of that involves business because all of my daughters and my ex-wife have been involved in my business too."

Hank Pridgeon's dedication to Wright, and his ability to see opportunity where others see obstacles, has created a thriving business and a legacy of community support. His story isn't just about business success; it's a testament to the enduring power of rural entrepreneurship, proving that with hard work, genuine care for others, and a dash of unconventional spirit, one can build a lasting and impactful legacy.



**Hank Pridgeon**

# Bob's Diner and Bakery - Greybull, WY

Nestled in Greybull, Wyoming, Bob's Diner & Bakery, owned by Robert and Deanna Skillman, is a great spot for a homemade batch of biscuits and gravy, a fresh-baked dessert, and a large mug of coffee. The diner also boasts a renowned breakfast challenge and selection of homemade jams and jellies. But Bob's Diner, and the family behind it, are responsible for much more than offering savory eats – their business has become an important part of the town of Greybull. To recognize the commitment to their business and community, Robert, Deanna, and Bob's Diner & Bakery have been selected as the winners of the 2025 Spirit of Wyoming Award.

Robert and Deanna forged the dream of Bob's Diner from unique backgrounds. Robert, immersed in the bustling atmosphere of his parents' restaurant from a young age, learned the nuances of food service and the importance of hospitality. Deanna, raised amidst the steadfast values of ranch life and inspired by her mother's passion for baking, harbored a lifelong aspiration of owning her own bakery. In 2020, Bob's Diner & Bakery opened its doors.

The Wyoming SBDC Network assisted in the diner's formative stages, providing guidance and expertise in a variety of areas. "The Wyoming SBDC was invaluable, helping us with everything from legal structure to financial planning," Deanna says. "(Regional Director) Devan Costa-Cargill works hard to keep us in the loop about small business opportunities that we normally would not see. (The SBDC) really helped us understand our revenue needs, which was critical for a successful start." This support helped in the purchase of their building and the adjacent property, which now serves as both a source of lease income and a community arts space.



Bob's Diner & Bakery has become a place where the community gathers to celebrate, support, and connect. The diner has hosted charity events, the Big Horn County Arts Guild, and has a wall showcasing the talents of local artists. Robert and Deanna also support organizations like 4H, FFA, and the Annual Firefighters Dinner. Recently, Bob's Diner & Bakery launched a monthly Open Mic Night, raising funds for local families facing medical crises. Robert is also involved in the Greybull Chamber of Commerce and stresses the importance of the family's commitment to the town's economic vitality. "Beyond the charities," Robert says, "We want to see our community grow in a positive way."

Last year, Bob's diner was featured on America's Best Restaurants – an event that brought the community together for a celebratory watch party. "It's just a neat place to be," says regular Charlie Baumer. "They're always fresh and you just come down and have coffee and a cookie. You can talk about anything and everything."

The Skillman's resilience has been tested by profound personal challenges, particularly their son Ayden's heart transplant journey. Balancing the demands of running a thriving business with the emotional and logistical complexities of supporting a child facing a critical medical situation was immense. Despite these hardships, the family and diner have persevered, overcoming challenges and continuing to evolve and grow.

Bob's Diner & Bakery embodies the essence of Wyoming's spirit. Through their unwavering dedication to community, resilience in the face of adversity, and commitment to serving quality food in a hospitable place, Robert and Deanna have created something special. Their generosity and commitment to Bob's Diner & Bakery make them deserving recipients of the 2025 Spirit of Wyoming Award, recognizing the profound and lasting impact they have had in the lives of others.



Robert and Deanna Skillman

# Whole Soul Consulting - Casper, WY



*Rev. Jessica Boyce*

For Rev. Jessica Boyce, the launch of Whole Soul Consulting in March 2025 was the culmination of 15 years of ministry and a deep-seated desire to be a healing force in the community. As a charitable corporation focused on providing guidance for those who have experienced religious trauma, Whole Soul Consulting fills a unique and vital need in Wyoming.

Rev. Boyce earned her Masters in Divinity and specialized certifications, and has an extensive background as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. This experience has uniquely qualified her as a leader and resource for individuals and families seeking a healthier, happier future.

The journey into entrepreneurship, however, presented new challenges. "With this new venture, I had to look at my strengths and weaknesses in new ways," Rev. Boyce explains. "The places where I didn't have the natural gifts, like finances, had to be supplemented in ways I hadn't needed to explore before. It's ok to not be great at everything, you just have to be honest about those qualities, and find people who do have that strength to work alongside you."

To navigate these challenges, Rev. Boyce turned to the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network where she found practical guidance and a sense of reassurance.

"I was so nervous," Rev. Boyce explains, "and I left each meeting with Steen Stovall (Regional Director) with a to-do list, feeling empowered to accomplish them. This was especially true with regulations, business licenses, insurance, etc."

Beyond the foundational elements, Rev. Boyce benefited from the SBDC's expertise in online presence. "The (Market Research) group did the full website analysis for me, which was great but totally overwhelming," she shares. "(They) went through it page by page with me, and that was fantastic. It helped me to understand how to communicate my message online. I had to change about everything, but it was good!" she shares. "Starting a business is hard and scary. Every empowering, positive, and informative resource available should be used."

While Whole Soul Consulting is still in its early stages, Rev. Boyce is taking steps to build for the future and encourages others who are on the fence to take the chance. "In this process, I've learned that I am stronger and braver than I thought," she says. "There is a great community of small business owners who are encouraging and want to welcome others into this little club."

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to remember patience and self-compassion. "Spend lots of time thinking and dreaming and exploring options. Take time to let it all fall into place. It's a journey, and it has ups and downs, but give yourself grace to learn and ask questions."

The entrepreneurial journey has also offered unexpected connections. "It has been wonderful meeting people that I otherwise would not have encountered," Rev. Boyce explains. "Being fairly new to Casper, this journey has allowed me to get to know the community better, understand its needs, and discern how I can positively contribute to it."

Looking ahead, Rev. Boyce is optimistic. "In five years, I hope my practice is thriving, and I'm still learning and connecting to the community in meaningful ways."



# Outlaw MMA and Fitness - Casper, WY

Opening Outlaw MMA & Fitness in Casper, Wyoming in July 2024 was a deeply personal entrepreneurial endeavor for Billy Walters. "I have been a combat sports athlete for 38 years and I believe that training helps not only competitors but also in life," Billy shares. "It is a great outlet for young people and adults alike."

Born from Walters' desire to provide a constructive and safe environment, particularly for Casper's youth, Outlaw MMA offers Fitness Boxing, Muay Thai, Brazilian JiuJitsu, Luta Livre, MMA, Taekwondo, and Kung Fu.

Like many small businesses, the initial hurdle of start-up funds was a significant challenge for Billy. He secured a private investor and has been using grassroots marketing methods to continue growing. "We started with only a few (clients) and have grown to almost 80 clients currently," he says. "We have been able to secure better equipment and better mats for training over the last year."



*Billy Walters*



In early development stages, Billy worked with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network for guidance navigating financial projections. "The SBDC helped me with the numbers on my business plan and that helped me secure funding," he states. "The process was fun, and I learned a lot. I already have referred others to use this program. The SBDC personnel were great at answering questions and were very patient while I worked to understand everything."

Success stories are already emerging from Outlaw MMA and Fitness, which boasts athletes competing for international titles. This tangible success validated Billy's vision early on. "When we opened and people were so excited, we went from 5 people in a class to 20 overnight," Billy recalls. "The support of the community around us – that's led to the success of our gym family."

Louie Wilkinson, a 17-year-old Outlaw MMA athlete who recently qualified for world championship competition in Brazil is a shining example of the gym's local impact. As reported by the Cowboy State Daily, Billy sees reflections of his own past in Louis' journey. "Boxing pretty much saved my life," Billy shared with the publication, explaining his drive to help kids through the same sports that have been a lifeline for him.

Billy believes the secret ingredient to Outlaw MMA and Fitness' appeal is simple: "I think just being genuine and caring about our clients. This is a place to become more confident in yourself. A place to relieve stress. A place to improve your health mentally and physically. Showing compassion to our clients and not just being here for money." This philosophy, combined with Billy's pillars of focus on honest and compassion has resonated with the Casper community.

Looking ahead, Billy has ambitious plans. "Within 5 years we plan on having the best combat sports gym in the state. Securing local and international titles," he projects. "We are already making plans to start our own fight promotion and hope that will excel us to the next level locally." For aspiring entrepreneurs, Billy offers advice rooted in his own journey: "Be patient – don't try to do everything at once. Take your time at the beginning so you know where you're going and how to get there. Be smart with your opening costs. Remember, people like to see the improvements as you grow because they grow with you. So don't be afraid to start small."

# Bella Fuoco Wood Fired Pizza - Cheyenne, WY

Bella Fuoco Wood Fired Pizza has been a Cheyenne staple for years. Known for its Neapolitan-style pies cooked in a traditional wood-fired oven, the restaurant evolved from a food truck started around 2013 by original owners John and Maria Kopper. Bella Fuoco is nestled in a renovated historic downtown home, offering a cozy, neighborhood feel with a spacious patio. The previous owners, Eric and Kelly Dalton, who acquired the business in 2021 after Kelly had worked there as a server since 2017, maintained the winning formula.

In May of 2025, Bella Fuoco began a new chapter when the previous owners sold to longtime employee Brenna Kosowicz. Officially taking ownership in August, Brenna continues to uphold the unique aspects of Bella Fuoco, including being the only wood-fired oven in Cheyenne.



**Brenna Kosowicz**

Brenna has been appreciative of the community's support during Bella Fuoco's ownership transition. "Regulars that I've been serving here for a long time are still supporting me", Brenna says. The community recently voted for Bella Fuoco as best of the best for pizza.

As a first-time business owner, Brenna sought help with the unfamiliar aspects of acquisition, like operating agreements and entity structures. She connected with Kenny Overby, business advisor for the Wyoming Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network. "It could be really helpful because it's just objective advice and it's accessible to everybody".

Brenna is already putting her mark on the business by making creative changes, such as revamping the drink menu and focusing on marketing. Looking to the future, Brenna has plans to expand. "In the next five years, I want to look at trying to expand, and I have thought about doing a second location". She emphasizes consistency in her daily efforts to Bella Fuoco's success: "I think doing your best every day, even when you don't feel good and things like that, just showing up the best that you can consistently, I think can be the answer".

# Power Theory - Laramie, WY



What if you could see energy? Not as an abstract number on a utility bill, but as a living, breathing part of an organization. For Keon Mobasher and the team at the University of Wyoming, this question wasn't theoretical. It was a direct response to seeing leaders forced to choose between people and power.

Power Theory Inc., a venture launched on the final day of 2023, was established with a mission to make sustainability visible, measurable, and actionable. Armed with a blend of engineering prowess, business acumen, and psychological insight, the team developed the PowerTwin platform—a “digital twin” that transforms complex facilities into intuitive, data-driven ecosystems.

The platform can feed real-time data – such as temperature, energy consumption – into a virtual model where managers can monitor what's happening in real-time, simulate the effects of potential changes, and use artificial intelligence to predict future problems.

For the university, this technology is a game-changer. Instead of relying on monthly utility bills and reactive maintenance, administrators can use the PowerTwin platform to see which buildings are consuming the most energy and why, empowering them to take immediate action. The system can predict that a critical HVAC component is likely to fail before it breaks down, and allows for simulated scenarios, such as the energy savings from installing new windows or the impact of adjusting thermostat settings across campus.

A brilliant idea is one thing; convincing a large organization to trust a new startup is another. The initial hurdle of credibility led the team to smaller pilot projects, proving their value proposition with results, and methodically building a foundation of trust. Yet, the question of how to scale and reach the right decision-makers, remained.

The team engaged with the Wyoming SBDC Network's WSSI program, who provided mentorship and crucial early-stage funding support for development. This relationship proved to be a door to new opportunities. Keon Mobasher, co-founder of Power Theory Inc., recalls a pivotal moment that accelerated their business' trajectory. “The SBDC's sponsorship of our participation in the SBIR Conference in June 2025 directly led to our first Department of Defense subcontracting deal,” he states.

The conference yielded more than 35 valuable connections and illuminated a path into the competitive world of federal contracting – a breakthrough that validated the broad potential of their technology.

Power Theory's momentum has been building. The team has graduated from the gBETA Accelerator, are completing the NSF Ascend Engine Accelerator, and have successfully launched three pilot projects across Wyoming. Evolving from a concept into a proven platform that benefits communities and the planet, Power Theory operates at the intersection of high-tech and human-centric design. “We don't just provide data; we deliver insights that save money, prevent problems, and empower people to make better decisions,” Mobasher explains.

When confronted with the same rejections that many startups endure, the Power Theory team refined their approach with each conversation: “Persistence is everything. You'll hear countless ‘no's’ before you get to a ‘yes,’ but every rejection teaches you how to refine your approach.”

Power Theory is proving that the most powerful innovations are born from a desire to solve real-world problems. With a vision to become a national leader in technology, this Wyoming-grown company is building a business for a smarter and more efficient world.



Platform screenshot

# Our Stakeholders and Partners

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**The Wyoming SBDC is your starting point to connect with entrepreneurial resources in Wyoming.**

In addition to providing no-cost confidential advising and technical assistance on various topics, the Wyoming SBDC will also make the connections you need with our partners. The organizations listed here are just the beginning. Talk with your Wyoming SBDC Network advisor to find more connections for local small business assistance.



U.S. Small Business  
Administration



# 2025 Wyoming SBDC Network

## *Statistics at a Glance*

### Capital Impact

**\$12,819,079**

SBDC Capital Infusion

**\$69,000,000**

Government Contracts

**\$2,442,852**

SBIR/STTR Awards

### Other Metrics

**2017**

SBDC Jobs Supported

**31**

SBDC New Business Starts

**1025**

SBDC Clients Served

**1084**

APEX Jobs Supported

**65**

Network Training Events

**962**

Network Clients Trained



U.S. Small Business  
Administration



*Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)*