

Good morning Chairman Monson and members of the House Appropriations Committee, Education & Environment Division.

My name is Deidre Hillman, State Director for your ND Women's Business Center (NDWBC). We are hosted by the organization CTB, formally known as Center for Technology and Business. CTB is a stand alone 501(c)(3) located here in Bismarck providing service across all of North Dakota.

NDWBC has two physical locations, one in Bismarck and one in Fargo. We employ staff in each city, who are responsible for covering their respective territories (Bismarck staff cover the Western half of ND, Fargo staff covers the Eastern half.

The NDWBC was formed in 1999 and is a shared partnership between the Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) and the State of North Dakota; through the ND Department of Commerce and CTB. The federal dollars mandate a 1:1 cash match and State dollars are leveraged to help meet that requirement and fulfill duties under the ND Women's Business Development Office (century code section: 54-60-15) along with the guidelines in the federal notice of award from SBA.

In 2016, the NDWBC was selected as the Women's Business Center of Excellence award winner from the SBA among all 105 WBC across the US for providing innovative women focused training opportunities.

This national recognition and exceeding goals for more than three years in a row were essential to the NDWBC being awarded a second federal grant from SBA in April of 2018 to expand the NDWBC program.

That additional federal award brings in an additional \$300,000.00 of new federal dollars to ND per biennium. Together both federal awards total \$600,000.00 (\$300,000 from the new grant) federal dollars per biennium which requires a 1:1 cash match.

This year we also were able to leverage an additional \$840,000 in CARES Act Funding towards specific COVID related training for small businesses in North Dakota.

A large portion of the CARES Act dollars were used to create custom software we call The NDWBC Library which launched in January 2021. This on-demand training includes topics such how small business owners manage remote employees, supply chain disruption, remote customer support, to name a few. The trainers who developed the material are made up for subject matter experts from our region, many of them small business owners themselves with expertise in the topic and is free to access.

We ask for the States continued support so that we can continue to secure the federal dollars awarded and fulfill the duties outlined to support and serve female entrepreneurs across North Dakota. I have provided a hand-out highlighting our impact and growth trends.

We do ask you for your continued support to bring the \$600,000 federal dollars into the state so we may continue our support of the women of North Dakota. Our programming is unique and I would like to quickly tell you about two women who've entered our doors and now have businesses.

Erin Sorensen, is now the owner of Home Instead Senior Care of Hazen. She received business advising services through our Bismarck location. This is a franchised business and offers home health care for senior patients who do not need to be hospitalized but require more care than a volunteer or family caregiver can provide. After our meeting, Erin acquired access to capital through grants from the state to grow her business.

I want to thank you again for your consideration and will take any questions at this time.

Karen Schmidt and Dawn Hager
Balancing Goat Coffee Co. in Mandan, ND
Est. January 2020

Karen Schmidt and Dawn Hager, longtime friends and former co-workers, wanted to go into business together. Looking for balance, they realized they wanted to offer it to their clients as well, which is why they opened Balancing Goat Coffee Co. a coffee shop and yoga studio, combining caffeine with relaxation. Partnering with yoga instructors, offering an all-day menu, roasting their own coffee beans is part of the whole experience.

"Our goal was to create a place where you can break out of the mundane, make it your second home, and feel relaxed."

Before breaking ground on their new location, Schmidt and Hager booked a business advising with NDWBC for training in the areas of general business services, marketing and branding, financial management, and human resources.

"The staff was helpful and knowledgeable. The training sessions we received were full of great nuggets of information that we took back and applied to our business. NDWBC provided us with the opportunity to network and meet other woman business owners who shared their experiences and advice as well as the pitfalls to avoid. These connections were very beneficial to us prior to and after opening our business. Not only did they provide us with training, connections, and general business knowledge, but they also continue to inspire us and provide us with support and motivation. We think of NDWBC as a valued friend in our business adventure."

Balancing Goat provides in-house roasted coffee, fresh fruit smoothies, smoothie bowls, pastries, baked goods, all-day breakfast, lunch, and much more. They partner with Transitions Yoga, another woman-owned business, to manage the yoga studio.

Balancing Goat Coffee Co. offers customers a way to relax and start or end their days on a balanced note.

Kelani & Tyler Welstad
Turbo Septic Service LLC in Upham, ND
Est. April 2020

Turbo Septic Service LLC provides and services portable toilets and offers servicing of residential and commercial septic. Turbo Septic Service LLC started when Kalani and Tyler Welstad realized the need for a portable toilet rental company in rural, north-central North Dakota. After receiving brochures from a couple of portable toilet companies, Kalani started to feel overwhelmed despite her business background. I had worked for a "Woman-Owned Business," Jost Construction, several years prior, and I knew I wanted to own a majority of the company. My previous boss, Darla Jost, majority owner of Jost Construction, told me to reach out to NDWBC."

"I somewhat understood what it meant to be "Woman Owned," but I definitely needed to know more. I had so many questions about grants, funding, and the process of becoming state and federally certified."

Kalani booked her business advising session for business plan development, counseling services, government procurement, and grant opportunities.

"The knowledge, excitement, encouragement, and positive feedback I received from NDWBC was amazing! I was so scared when the call started, but by the end of the meeting, I was fired up and couldn't wait to get started! NDWBC was so knowledgeable and helpful. I felt that I could reach out to them with any questions I had."

"Nothing can replace the feeling of having support! When this idea first presented itself to us, I was lost. But the encouragement and the guidance of NDWBC calmed my nerves and gave me the confidence to move forward! I have nothing but great things to say, and I will continue to reach out to NDWBC for advice, guidance, and encouragement!"

Allie Seely and Carley Schutt
Pride Pups in Fargo-Moorhead, ND
Est. August 2020

Pride Pups is Fargo-Moorhead's first dog grooming salon with Fear Free Certified professionals dedicated to supporting local non-profit organizations! The salon is owned and operated by Allie Seely and Carley Schutt. Their mission was developed when the owners realized their passion for grooming and animal welfare and turned it into a next-generation dog salon.

Using Fear-Free practices, Pride Pups offers a calm, comfortable grooming experience and rehabilitates dogs that have had negative experiences in the past. Pride Pups donates half of its tips to non-profits that benefit animals, women, and the LGBTQ+ community.

"Opening a dog grooming salon in the middle of a pandemic has had its fair number of challenges, but it has been very rewarding. The main obstacles have been obtaining grooming equipment for the salon and funding for a loan to pay for the necessary equipment and start-up costs. Due to the pandemic, there was a shortage in steel and other supplies that distributors needed to make the equipment that Pride Pups was trying to purchase. Luckily, we were able to borrow equipment from the previous owner of the space until ours was delivered."

"We have been fortunate to have an outstanding team of supporters, including NDWBC (or as we like to call them, our Pride Pups Pack) to help us make our dreams come true. The most rewarding aspect of owning and operating Pride Pups has been the

opportunity to make the grooming experience as enjoyable for the dogs that are entrusted to our care as it is for us. We never fail to find fun and joy in every day."

Dan Coleman

Dakota Property Services in West Fargo

Est. January 2020

Dakota Property Services offers residential and commercial rooftop and driveway/parking lot snow and ice removal, general home maintenance, yard care, lawn mowing, spring and fall cleanup, and more. Owner Dan Coleman was introduced to NDWBC through the F5 entrepreneurship program. The odds were against Dan, a three-time felon recently released from jail with no credit and a baby on the way. Dan reached out after graduating from the entrepreneurship class because he wanted to start his own business, often one of the only employment options for felons. NDWBC connected him with a local lender and helped him write his business and financial plans. He received a small business loan to jumpstart his lawn care service company. The lender credited his business plan and financials as the reason Dan's venture was funded. NDWBC worked tirelessly to help Dan get another chance after a rough past.

"I am incredibly thankful and fully credit NDWBC and Dakota Business Lending for playing a huge part in my success. I opened my business at the start of the pandemic. I have had to be creative and expand, offering more and more services all the time. I even installed Christmas lights!"

Dan is the definition of turning one's life around and is an inspiration to NDWBC as a truly successful client.