

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

TEXAS SOUTH-WEST SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER NETWORK

**Texas Small Businesses
Innovate, Grow, and Thrive:
Small Business Success
in the Texas South-West**



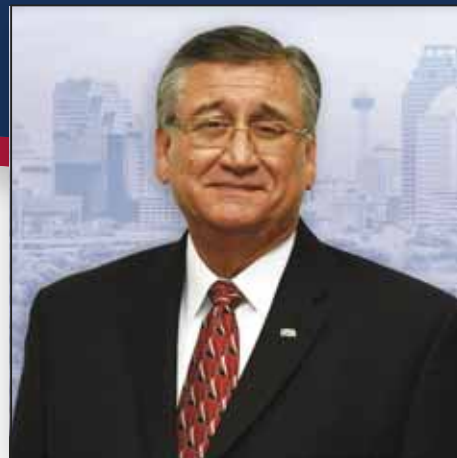
AMERICA'S
SBDC
TEXAS SOUTH-WEST

Message from the Executive Director



Innovating, Growing and Thriving

"Building the Texas Economy One Business at a Time"



On behalf of the Texas South-West SBDC Network, it is my pleasure to present our 2023 Annual Report. For over 40 years, this network has served small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs with high quality advising, training, and market research. The SBDC is recognized as a nation-leading service provider, and our mission is to foster small business success.

Anticipating and responding to market changes can be a key factor to success for small business owners. This year, the Texas South-West SBDC (TXSW SBDC) Network assisted over 32,000 small businesses to navigate an ever-changing economic climate. Many SBDC clients not only survived but were able to innovate and expand, which contributed jobs and revenue growth to the Texas economy.

Our commitment to building the Texas economy, one business at a time, is evident by the long-term advising assistance to those 32,000 clients and other relationships we build throughout Texas. Our support of these clients not only generates increased capital to their small businesses, but also creates significant tax revenue for both state and federal governments which is greater than the direct cost of providing the service. For every \$1.00 invested in the Texas South-West SBDC Network, a return on investment (ROI) of \$6.42 is generated.

As our state and nation continue to navigate uncharted economic terrain, the Texas South-West SBDC Network will continue to serve as the most effective and efficient method to champion small business owners and fuel the growth of our local, regional, and statewide economy. Our collective efforts will not only preserve the entrepreneurial spirit but also ensure a thriving future for Texas.

Thank you for your unwavering support. We look forward to continuing our shared work of "Building the Texas Economy One Business at a Time".

For Texas,

Albert Salgado
Executive Director
Texas South-West SBDC Network

Texas South-West SBDC Network

FY 2023 Client Results

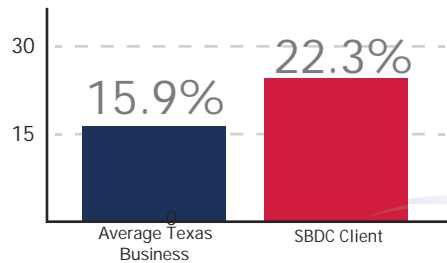
"SBDC long-term advising assistance is highly valuable from a public policy perspective because it returns tax revenues to state and federal governments, as well as value and capital to its clients, that are greater than the direct cost of providing the service. For every \$1.00 invested in the Texas South-West SBDC Network, a return of \$6.42 is generated."

– 2023 FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL INDEPENDENT STUDY BY JAMES J. CHRISMAN, PH.D.

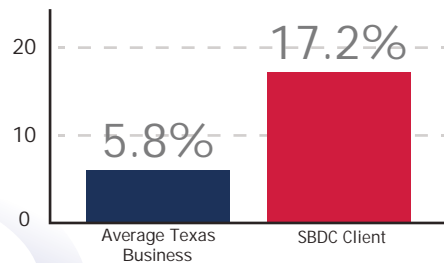
Return on Investment = Increased Jobs, Sales, Financing & Tax Revenues

For every \$1.00 invested in Texas SBDCs, a return of \$6.42 is generated.

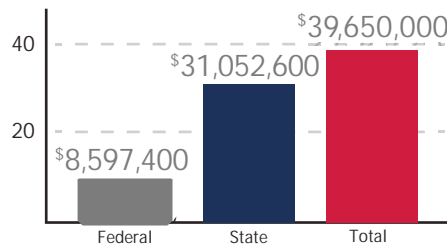
SALES GROWTH



EMPLOYMENT GROWTH



NEW TAXES GENERATED



COST PER JOB



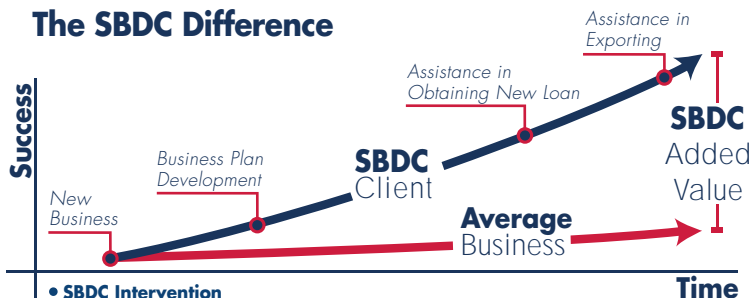
\$1,849

TEXAS EMPLOYEE

2023 INDEPENDENT STUDY RESULTS

SBDC ASSISTANCE PRODUCES GREATER SUCCESS THAN THE AVERAGE TEXAS BUSINESS

The SBDC Difference



SERVICE RESULTS

32,244
TOTAL BUSINESSES
SERVED

25,238
TRAINING
PARTICIPANTS

7,006
CONSULTING CASES

1,486
TRAININGS / SEMINARS
& COURSES

IMPACT RESULTS

3,564
JOBS CREATED

5,459
JOBS SAVED

545
NEW BUSINESS STARTS

\$39,650,000
NEW TAX REVENUE
GENERATED

\$694,094,855
NEW SALES/ CONTRACTS
& EXPORTS

\$207,304,214
NEW FINANCING /
INVESTMENTS



MRS. RIOS CORN PRODUCTS, LLC

Food Manufacturing Mastery: A Texan Tale of Corn and Success

In the heart of San Angelo, a culinary legacy was ready to transition after 40 years as the original owners sought to retire until Anita G. Dominguez, a disabled retired veteran, stepped in to buy the business. Mrs. Rios Corn Products, a once-thriving tortilla manufacturing plant, faced uncertain times before Anita's intervention. This intervention and her journey with the UTSA SBDC, alongside her dedicated Business Advisor Lisha García, became the catalyst for an inspiring resurgence.

Anita, a seasoned SBDC client with previous business ventures, seized the opportunity to acquire Mrs. Rios Corn Products in the fall of 2021. Anita's vision stretched across Texas, with business interests in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley, aligning perfectly with her ambitious plans for the San Angelo-based plant.

The initial challenges were formidable: the company's finances were in disarray and a conventional bank loan wasn't feasible. Undeterred, Anita navigated the complexities of a private sale, diligently immersing herself in the factory's operations months before the purchase. The acquisition involved both real estate and business, setting the stage for a remarkable turnaround.



Anita's strategic moves were swift and decisive. New accountants and a revamped chart of accounts brought financial clarity, while divesting the distribution component streamlined operations. Uncovering regulatory concerns, Anita worked tirelessly to rectify compliance issues with USDA, IRS, and state inspectors. Her commitment to quality and compliance paid off, with the company increasing production and expanding its product line to include corn and flour tortillas, chips, tostadas and taco shells.

The impact of Anita's partnership with the SBDC has been nothing short of extraordinary. Within 18 months, she was able to double annual sales. She generated a business start which created 22 jobs. She was able to achieve owner financing of \$2,160,000 with an initial owner's investment of \$340,000 which served as building blocks for her continued success. A subsequent expansion in August 2023, with an investment of \$65,000 for machine repairs, retained 21 jobs and reinforced Anita's commitment to excellence.

Anita's resilience as a disabled veteran, coupled with the distinction of being a 100% woman-owned business, brings a unique vibrancy to Mrs. Rios Corn Products. As she refines human resource manuals and contemplates further equipment acquisitions, Anita's journey stands as a testament to the transformative power of vision, determination, and strategic collaboration with the SBDC. Mrs. Rios Corn Products not only thrives as a business but also embodies the spirit of revitalization in San Angelo, San Antonio, and across Texas.

<https://mrsrioscornproducts.com/>



IMPACT

- ★ Business Start
- ★ \$2,160,000 Owner Financing
- ★ \$340,000 Initial Owner Investment
- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ 22 Jobs Created and 21 Jobs Retained
- ★ \$65,000 Additional Owner Investment

"Thank you a million times over...couldn't have done it without your expertise."

—Anita Dominguez



GALLEGOS PAVING

Paving Success, Rooted in Tradition

Sheldon Gallegos, a proud Laredoan with deep ties to the community, founded Gallegos Paving LLC in 2012. With 115 employees, he and his company proudly serve the South Texas area.

Sheldon's vision is shaped by both academic excellence and family legacy. Graduating from Texas A&M University in College Station with a degree in agriculture, Sheldon's successes were guided by decades of family expertise in the construction industry.

The Gallegos family laid the cornerstone of their construction legacy in the 1970s, setting the stage for Sheldon's entrepreneurial journey. With such a rich heritage and love for their community, Sheldon's entrepreneurial spirit was inevitable.

To shape his aspirations into reality, Sheldon turned to the Texas A&M International University SBDC for guidance. He completed the TAMIU SBDC Small Business Management Program in 2011 and the next year he officially founded Gallegos Paving.

With the help of TAMIU SBDC advisor Tina Rodriguez, Sheldon successfully obtained critical business certifications for Gallegos Paving including the Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certifications from the State Comptroller of Public Accounts and the Texas Department of Transportation, respectively. These certifications opened doors for Gallegos Paving to bid on state and local government contracts.

The fruits of these efforts are evident through Sheldon earning prime and sub-contracts for significant projects, including the Mission Produce Cold Storage facility, and Pinnacle Industry Center, each large industrial developments in Webb County.

Sheldon's commitment to growth doesn't end there. He continues to seek guidance from TAMIU SBDC for future business ventures and expansion. Gallegos Paving stands as a testament to Sheldon's dedication, family values, and the invaluable support provided by TAMIU SBDC in paving the way for local and regional success.

<https://www.gallegospaving.com>

"TAMIU SBDC is absolutely necessary for all businesses. Without the help of the TAMIU SBDC, it would have taken me longer to reach my goals on my own."

—Sheldon Gallegos



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ \$12,000,000 Increase in Annual Sales with \$10,000,000 in subcontracts
- ★ \$100,000 Owner's Investment
- ★ 112 Jobs Retained and 18 Jobs Created



INTELLIVEGA

Prospecting Prosperity: Elevating Businesses through Data Mining

Robert Boyett and Jonathan Johnson had a big idea: to bring big business data solutions to small businesses in the San Angelo economy. Robert and Jonathan, called JJ by everyone who knows him, visited the Angelo State SBDC for assistance in preparation to participate in the City of San Angelo Development Corporation Business Plan Competition.

Robert is an alumnus of Angelo State University and JJ is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt. With a combined 40 years of experience assisting large corporations through process improvement projects, the two decided to join together and form their own business intelligence company that seeks to help small and large businesses realize higher returns on investment through the utilization of information either already collected by the business or information readily available on the internet. Guided by this vision, Intellivega opened its doors. Intellivega is a software solutions provider with a focus in data analysis solutions. They provide unique business intelligence solutions to a variety of industries in the global market.

At the ASU SBDC, they were paired with James Leavelle, a perfect fit for this dynamic data duo. James worked with Robert and JJ on their business plan which prepared them for the competition and led to an expansion in their clientele and increases in annual sales.

Intellivega implemented their updated business plan which led to large scale business growth. As a result of assistance provided by James and the ASU SBDC, the Intellivega team was able to realize growth in annual sales of \$100,000 and increased the size of their staff by hiring two additional employees to help them meet their clients' needs.

Robert and JJ look to continue, with the assistance of James and the ASU SBDC, in their pursuit of bringing big business data solutions to small businesses in San Angelo and beyond.

<https://intellivega.com>



IMPACT

- ★ \$100,000 increase in annual sales
- ★ 6 Jobs Created and 2 Jobs Retained

“SBDC is a highly trusted partner who provides us with actionable insights and recommendations that ensure we chart our course in the right direction as we grow and evolve.”

—Robert Boyett



HABIBI GOURMET, LLC

A Tasty Triumph

Habibi Gourmet, LLC, and owner Pilar Gonzalez are a beacon of success in food manufacturing. Specializing in 100-percent natural, yogurt-based dips, the company in Mission, Texas, has carved a niche for itself in the industry.

Twelve years ago, Pilar approached the UTRGV SBDC for guidance with her business idea. Under the expert guidance of SBDC business advisors Adriana Rincon, and subsequently Aaron Gonzalez and Cristina Cantu, Pilar navigated the intricacies of business planning, financial projections, and market research. The support from UTRGV SBDC proved instrumental for Pilar to secure funding, start the business, and execute subsequent expansions.

Pilar's journey to success is filled with accolades. A two-time winner of the Mission Economic Development Corporation's "Ruby Red Ventures – Build Mission Fund", she also secured a second grand-prize at H-E-B's prestigious "Quest for Texas Best" contest in 2017 and another grant from Mission EDC. In 2019, competing with her dips, Pilar was a finalist at the Stacy's Rise Project from PepsiCo contest where her company was selected from thousands of applicants nationwide. In January 2022, Pilar's products were featured in the short film "RISE" produced by Hello Sunshine, which screened at the Stacy's Roots to Rise Market at the Sundance Film Festival.

The company's star product, "Dip It by Pilar," has become a staple for discerning consumers and can now be found in over 200 H-E-B grocery stores. With a continued commitment to growth, Summer 2022 marked a new chapter for Pilar, as she unveiled three exciting flavors under a new brand available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods.

Pilar has also added business consulting services in food commercialization and offers co-packing services. Additionally, she liaises in business consulting with HEB in South Texas for new products such as sauces, chamoyes, and butter.

Today, she continues to leverage the expertise of the UTRGV SBDC through business advisor Marcela Arredondo, ensuring that the flavorful journey of Habibi Gourmet is one of enduring success and innovation.



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ Exponential Increase in Annual Sales
- ★ \$150,000 Mission EDC Grant
- ★ 5 Jobs Created and 2 Jobs Retained

"The UTRGV SBDC has been a tremendous help throughout my entrepreneurial journey."

—Pilar Gonzalez



AIR ZONE AC & HEATING, LLC

Borderland Coolness: HVAC Expansion in Texas

In the Texas border city of Eagle Pass, Armando Zertuche, owner of Air Zone AC & Heating, LLC, found a supportive ally in the Sul Ross State University - Rio Grande College SBDC. Since 2020, Armando has been on a transformative journey with the assistance of Maricela Brown, his dedicated business advisor.

Armando's vision to establish his HVAC business quickly gained momentum under the guidance of the SRSU-RGC SBDC. Armando's business flourished after, with the help of Maricela, it obtained the essential service licenses and permits. Beginning with local house calls, and then expanding its offerings, Air Zone began to grow. The SBDC played a pivotal role in this expansion, offering expertise on legal structures, HR processes, and even navigating automated labor compliance systems.

The real turning point came when Air Zone successfully bid on substantial USDA projects in Eagle Pass and Austin. This accomplishment necessitated further growth and Armando strategically hired additional employees. The exceptional quality of their work didn't go unnoticed, leading to new projects with private companies such as White Stone Construction Group, LLC, in Boerne and Bandera.

As Armando and Air Zone look to the future, they have set their sights on an 8A certification, aiming to secure bids for upcoming hotel projects. Additionally, plans are in motion for an SBA loan to purchase land and construct a sizable warehouse.

The economic impact to date speaks volumes – an \$898,000 owner investment, business expansion, and the creation of six jobs. As Armando enthusiastically returns for more assistance from his advisor at the SRSU-RGC SBDC, it is clear that the collaborative journey has empowered him to navigate the complexities of business growth successfully. This success is a testament to Air Zone's excellence in service and positions them as a key player in the regional HVAC landscape, with even more promising ventures on the horizon.



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ \$898,000 Owner's Investment
- ★ USDA Contracts Awarded
- ★ 6 Jobs Created

"The SBDC has been extremely helpful with any questions or concerns I have had from starting to expanding my business. They have helped us in the form of establishing our company into an LLC, applying for the companies EIN with IRS, obtaining the resale tax certificate, setting up the certified payroll for our contracts, and looking at various loan options for future projects. I would like to personally thank my business advisor, Maricela Brown for helping my company achieve the accomplishments I have met, as we continue to grow and strive for our future goals."

—Armando Zertuche



THE MAURITZ HARDWARE COMPANY

Forged in Tradition, Built for Tomorrow: Bridging Heritage with Digital Evolution



In Ganado, Texas, Mauritz Hardware stands as both a testament to history and a beacon of modernization. Founded as The Ganado Hardware Company in 1902, the store has weathered changes in ownership and adversity, emerging stronger each time. Today, Mauritz Hardware continues to be a cornerstone in the community.

Originally established by the Shutt Brothers in 1902, the store passed through various hands until the Mauritz Brothers took charge in 1933. A devastating fire in 1947 led to the construction of a new building, solidifying Mauritz Hardware's presence in this rural community. Over the years, the Mauritz family and Selby family descendants have carried the torch, offering a diverse range of products, from hardware goods to appliances, lumber, and more.

In 2022, the Mauritz Hardware team engaged with University of Houston – Victoria SBDC business advisors Ty Zeller and Mark A. Martinez to propel the company into the future. The advisors, recognizing the store's deep reliance on traditional pen-and-paper operations, initiated the business's journey toward digital transformation. The UHV SBDC advisors focused on marketing strategies, new product introductions, branding, and advertising. However, they soon realized the need for a fundamental shift in operations. Mauritz Hardware, accustomed to manual record-keeping, required a modern update.



The move to modernize involved harnessing the full potential of QuickBooks. Mark assisted the team in transitioning from paper files to digital, streamlining processes and reducing reliance on manual paperwork. As Mauritz Hardware adapted through the digital transformation, the focus shifted toward a comprehensive point-of-sale (POS) and inventory control system. After careful consideration, Square Retail POS emerged as the ideal choice for its user-friendly interface and adaptability. The SBDC advising duo embarked on the setup process, inventory conversion, and extensive training to implement these systems alongside company leadership. Today, Mauritz Hardware operates efficiently in the digital realm, a far cry from its pen-and-paper origins.

The positive impact of the digital evolution on the small business is tangible. Mauritz Hardware, once reliant on manual processes, now boasts streamlined operations, a modern POS system, and dynamic inventory control. The store has not only retained seven positions, but has also expanded its workforce, creating 12 new jobs. These 19 employees contribute to Mauritz Hardware's continued success, bolstered by a \$53,000 owner infusion which funded the company's modern update.

The Mauritz Hardware story is a testament to the harmonious coexistence of heritage and modernization. This team, supported by SBDC advisors, has not only preserved the legacy of the company, but has propelled it into a new era of prosperity, demonstrating that with the right guidance, even the most traditional businesses can thrive in today's modern business environment.



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ 12 Jobs Created and 7 Jobs Retained
- ★ \$53,000 Owner's Investment

"The SBDC has been an invaluable resource for us! Being a small business in a small town, we didn't know where to go for the kind of information we were looking for. Ty Zeller and Mark Martinez are very knowledgeable and have been able to offer suggestions/advice on everything from a new point of sale system to marketing strategies that fit our situation and clientele. We've also reached out many times with questions about QuickBooks and always get a quick response. We're so grateful for their time and expertise."

—Ann Boxwell



URESTI SENIOR ASSISTANCE

Golden Years by the Gulf: Senior Assistance in Corpus Christi Shines

In the rural Coastal Bend, E & O Home Health Care, Inc., doing business as Uresti Senior Assistance, stands as a beacon of compassionate healthcare. Led by Gilberto Uresti, this minority-owned rural business has been a positive, unwavering influence in home health care services since its inception in 1998.

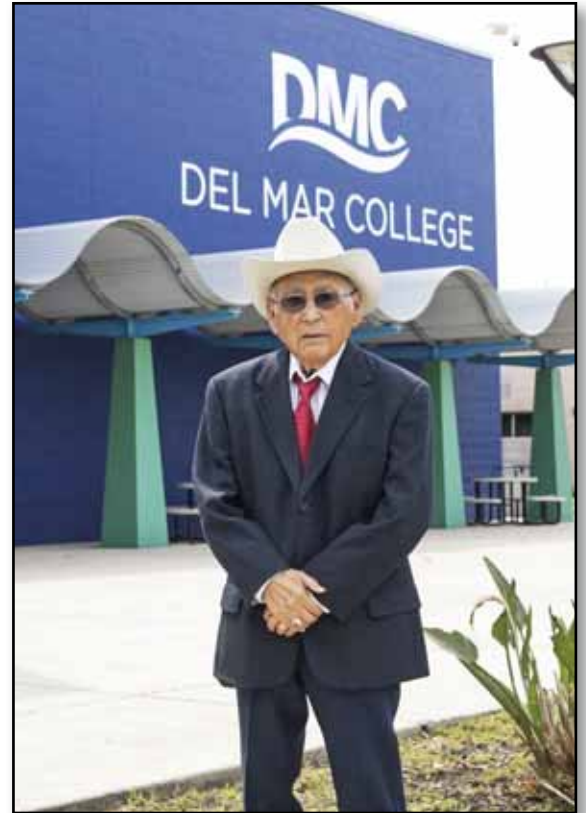
Mr. Uresti, a pharmacist since 1958 and a former Duval County Judge for 15 years, embodies professionalism, dedication, and leadership. His legacy extends beyond the medical field and serves as a testament to his commitment to rural communities. While serving as Duval County Judge, he pioneered community development, establishing centers, parks, nutritional services for the elderly, housing rehabilitation programs, and a Youth Conservation Corps.

In 1998, driven by a deep commitment to the well-being of seniors, Gilberto Uresti and his wife, Olga Uresti, a registered nurse, ventured into the home health care business. Despite the challenges of rural service delivery across 13 counties, their team, consisting initially of one registered nurse and one nurse aide, successfully brought healthcare to the Coastal Bend's senior citizens.

Despite significant financial constraints as they emerged from the recent pandemic, Uresti Senior Assistance, with the assistance of their Del Mar College SBDC Advisor Celia Garza, kept their doors opened and focused their 476 employees on continuous care for their elderly patients.

Uresti Senior Assistance was able to achieve success thanks to strategic support provided by the DMC SBDC. As a result, this business was able to secure two grants totaling \$231,011, including a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services HRSA grant. These grants allowed them to realize annual sales of over \$6 million.

The DMC SBDC played a pivotal role in Uresti Senior Assistance's success story, providing vital assistance during challenging times. Gilberto Uresti's resilience, combined with the SBDC's support, showcases a remarkable journey of triumph over adversity, ensuring that Uresti Senior Assistance remains a beacon of healthcare excellence in rural Texas.



IMPACT

- ★ Saved Business
- ★ \$6,433,556 in Annual Sales
- ★ \$153,771 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Grant
- ★ \$77,240 COVID Grant
- ★ 467 Jobs Retained

"We are very pleased to have joined the SBDC. We were having problems with navigating the federal bureaucracy and with assistance of the SBDC we were able to finish the process. We are very grateful to the SBDC for providing us the guidance needed."

—Gilberto Uresti



UNICORN ICY TREATS

Sweet Success in Rural Texas

In the West Texas town of Marathon, a dream took flight with the help of the SBDC. Imelda Hernandez, inspired by her daughter's passion, embarked on a journey to create something special for her family and community.

Imelda and her husband, both of whom work full-time, approached SBDC through a referral and began their small business journey with the assistance of advisor Micella Salcido. Their dream was to create a family-owned snow cone shop that served their community, brought families together, and promised delectable treats. Additionally, their aim was to use this experience to instill the values of hard work and determination in their daughter.

Micella played a pivotal role in guiding Imelda through the intricacies of business establishment, from licensing to permits. As a result, Unicorn Icy Treats officially opened its doors in April 2023, bringing sweet treats to the community.

Unicorn Icy Treats stands out as more than just a haven for sweets; it is a cherished family endeavor. The Hernandez family envisioned a shared business where family members could work together, creating lasting memories and fostering unity. Beyond the delicious treats, Unicorn Icy Treats is about building stronger familial bonds and serving their rural community.

Situated in the rural town of Marathon, located in the Texas Big Bend, Unicorn Icy Treats addresses a void in the community. This family-owned gem caters to a small town where options were limited, offering a delightful array of goodies that bring joy to the residents.

Unicorn Icy Treats, LLC is more than a business; it demonstrates that dreams can come true with hard work and the support of SBDC. Imelda Hernandez and her family have not only created a successful venture, but also a warm and magical space where their community can savor the sweetness of life.



IMPACT

- ★ Business Start
- ★ \$1,200 Owner's Investment
- ★ 2 Jobs Created

“Micella has been amazing from beginning to end. She has made this process extremely easy. Being a first-time business owner, I had no idea what the process consisted of and she has helped me understand every single step. Balancing full-time jobs with our dream of running a business wasn't easy, but passion fuels perseverance, and where there's determination, even the busiest of schedules make room for entrepreneurship.”

—Imelda Hernandez



VIVIFI MEDICAL

Strategic Innovation: SBDC Helps Transform Ideas into Marketable Solutions

In the dynamic landscape of medical technology innovations in Houston, Vivifi Medical has emerged as a trailblazer, reshaping the paradigm of prostate health through its revolutionary robotic and laparoscopic surgical device. This innovative solution can reverse Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH) and early-stage Prostate Cancer while simultaneously enhancing testosterone levels, fertility and sexual function, as well as avoiding the adverse side effects associated with current treatments.

In 2020, Dr. Tushar Sharma, the visionary behind this groundbreaking device and CEO of Vivifi, faced financial constraints common to many innovators. His connection with Bijoy Mathew of the UTSA SBDC Technology Commercialization Center (UTSA TCC) through his connection with Johnson & Johnson's Center for Device Innovation at Texas Medical Center paved the way for a transformative partnership.

Navigating financial challenges, Dr. Sharma discovered, with the assistance of Bijoy, the America's Seed Fund™ (SBIR-STTR) program. This vital program, dedicated to funding startups and small businesses across diverse technology areas, proved to be the linchpin between Tushar's visionary ideas and tangible market impact. Dr. Sharma, with the assistance of Bijoy, developed a highly competitive SBIR application to the National Science Foundation.

Securing SBIR awards—\$256k in Phase I and \$1M in Phase II—was pivotal for Vivifi Medical. The awards, secured on their first attempt, were made possible for Vivifi as a result of the assistance from UTSA TCC. These funds propelled the company through crucial phases of research and development, from creating the Minimum Viability Product (MVP) to demonstrating proof-of-concept and securing intellectual property. The UTSA TCC continued to work with Vivifi leading to the presentation at the BioMedSA 2023 BioFest Invest event in San Antonio. The NSF strategic seed funding not only fueled the success of their MVP but also positioned Vivifi Medical as an attractive prospect for investors. Vivifi is on track to raise \$1M which helps it unlock an additional \$500k from NSF Phase II. Notable investors include TMC Venture Fund, which serves as the venture capital arm of Texas Medical Center Corporation, Elevate Capital, and prominent figures in urology, cardiovascular surgery, and medical devices.

Vivifi Medical in collaboration with the stellar team at the UTSA TCC now stands at the forefront of their innovation's commercialization, poised to embark on clinical studies in 2024. As they prepare to bring innovative solutions to the market, the company's success story stands as an inspiration for aspiring innovators and demonstrates the impact of strategic funding and collaborative partnerships in the realm of medical technology.

<https://vivifimedical.com>



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ \$256,000 Phase I SBIR Grant Award
- ★ \$1,000,000 Phase II SBIR Grant Award
- ★ \$800,000 Venture/Equity Capital Investments

"We might have not been able to secure the critical funding needed for Vivifi's existence if it wasn't for Bijoy and his team."

—Dr. Tushar Sharma

RC4VETS, LLC

Government Contracting Tech Warriors: From Battlefield to Bytes

In the dynamic landscape of government contracting, RC4Vets, LLC has emerged as a shining example of success, thanks to their strategic partnership with the Texas South-West SBDC Network, specifically the Center for Government Contracting (CGC). Since joining forces in 2020, RC4Vets, led by Warren Beck, a disabled veteran, has navigated the complex terrain of certifications and financial support under the expert guidance of advisor Susannah Munro.

Specializing in agile information technology support services, RC4Vets obtained crucial certifications such as the Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) designation and have successfully applied for the SBA 8(a) designation for which this team is excitingly awaiting final approval. This allowed the company to secure several subcontracts with prime contractors and laid the foundation for RC4Vets to make significant strides in the government contracting arena.

The impact of their collaboration with the SBDC was nothing short of transformative. As a certified SDVOSB, RC4Vets clinched a lucrative subcontract with the Veterans Administration, evidence of their commitment to quality and the trust instilled by the SBDC-assisted certifications. This game-changing opportunity, a subcontract exceeding \$1 million, marked a pivotal milestone for RC4Vets.

Warren's commitment to excellence extended beyond certifications. He participated in the CGC's newly formed Procurement Academy, participating in its inaugural cohort. As a Black American and disabled veteran, Beck's journey through the academy not only enhanced his business acumen, and that of his company, but also contributes to the vibrant diversity of the local business landscape.

RC4Vets LLC, with its array of government contracting certifications including Texas Historically Underutilized Business (TX HUB), African American Business Enterprise (AABE), Disabled Individual Business Enterprise (DIBE), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Small Business Enterprise (SBE), and Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE), serves as proof of the SBDC's unwavering commitment to uplifting underserved markets through government contracting.

For those aspiring to follow in RC4Vets' footsteps, the CGC's Procurement Academy beckons as an innovative and transformative opportunity, offering tailored guidance to navigate the intricacies of government contracting. As RC4Vets continues to thrive, cohorts for the Procurement Academy remain open, promising a wealth of possibilities for businesses seeking to emulate this formidable success story.



"I feel that as hard as the business leaders work to build our businesses, I see the CGC team working tirelessly to assist us become successful."

—Warren Beck



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ \$1,000,000 Veteran's Administration Subcontract



NULLIAV, LLC

Planting Investment, Reaping Success

In San Antonio, Joaquin Sanchez and Veronica Llerena, founders of Nulliav, LLC, are revolutionizing the plant-based food industry. Established in Mexico City in 2015, Nulliav swiftly gained acclaim for its powdered almond milk, setting the stage for a journey of business success marked by innovation and determination.

As the company sought expansion into the United States, Joaquin and Veronica turned to the UTSA SBDC International Trade Center, specifically the Texas International Business Accelerator (TIBA) program, becoming clients in April 2023. Carolina Hoyos, Project Manager of the TIBA program, played a pivotal role in steering Nulliav through the intricacies of establishing operations in Texas and formulating a robust expansion strategy.

Carolina's guidance extended beyond those of traditional business plans. She collaborated closely with Joaquin and Veronica, shaping their investment business plan to align with the nuances of the plant-based beverage industry in the U.S. Recognizing the potential in government contracts, Carolina facilitated opportunities to tap into the vast U.S. military consumer base.



To fuel their expansion, Nulliav, needed financial backing. Carolina connected Joaquin and Veronica with a group of visionary investors. This introduction set the stage for Nulliav's pitch to angel investors, which began a successful capital-raising journey.

Additionally, they were able to develop a joint venture agreement with a strong strategic partnership propelling Nulliav toward further growth and presence in the market.

Beyond its innovative products, Nulliav, distinguishes itself with a commitment to high nutritional value, quality, and exquisite flavor. Using Mediterranean almonds and cutting-edge technology, the company's soluble beverage products redefine the standards in the spectrum of plant-based drink offerings.

As Nulliav, expands into B2B channels, supplying industrial, hospitality, and culinary sectors, the company's trajectory is not just a success story—it's a testament to the impact of collaboration and strategic guidance from the UTSA SBDC International Trade Center and the TIBA program. Nulliav's journey is a beacon, shining a light on how the fusion of passion and expertise can transform foreign direct investment into domestic business success.

“Our experience has been extraordinary; the availability of the advisor, the attention and timely delivery of requested information, in addition to the personal support, has been very valuable for our expansion.”

—Joaquín Sanchez



DIRDIE BIRDIE

Par Excellence: Putting Small Business Success on the Map

In the bustling city of Austin, entrepreneurs Vik and Lina Khasat have realized their entrepreneurial aspirations with the establishment of Dirdie Birdie, a family-friendly miniature golf restaurant and bar. Referred to the Texas State University SBDC for assistance by a local bank, the Khasats embarked on an exhaustive search for an ideal venue, envisioning an establishment that seamlessly integrates mini golf, a wet bar, and a restaurant to cater to a diverse clientele spanning from Boomers to Zoomers.

As seasoned entrepreneurs, the Khasats recognized the necessity for meticulous planning and financial support to realize their unique vision. The pivotal facilitator in this journey was the Texas State University SBDC, an ally that provided indispensable guidance in navigating the complexities of strategic planning and played a central role in securing the requisite funding for their innovative business endeavor. Through the strategic collaboration with the SBDC, the Khasats successfully secured a substantial \$2,300,000 SBA 7(a) loan, complemented by a significant \$1,080,000 owner's investment.

Beyond being a business, Dirdie Birdie stands as a family-owned, minority-owned, and woman-owned business, with Vik Khasat proudly representing a minority-owned establishment and Lina Khasat as the driving force of this woman-owned enterprise. The impact of their venture extends beyond capital access as evidenced by the creation of 53 employment opportunities in a vibrant sector of Austin.

The narrative of Dirdie Birdie encapsulates the triumph of entrepreneurial acumen, forged through strategic alliances, and fortified by the unwavering support of institutions such as the Texas State University SBDC. Positioned prominently in Austin, Dirdie Birdie stands as a symbol of small business success, joy, and recreation, offering a distinctive experience to families and singles alike.

<https://www.dirdiebirdieatx.com/>



IMPACT

- ★ Business Start
- ★ \$2,300,000 SBA 7(a) loan
- ★ \$1,080,000 Owner's Investment
- ★ 53 Jobs Created

"We are incredibly grateful for the team that helped us accomplish our vision of The Dirdie Birdie. Through support from SBDC and several others we were able to best prepare ourselves for starting and running our own business."

—Vik Khasat



FULL TURN INTERIOR SOLUTIONS, LLC

Success in Every Stitch: El Paso Upholstery Excellence

Full Turn Interior Solutions, LLC's owner, Yvonne Vasquez, transformed a garage startup into a flourishing enterprise through passion, hard work, and commitment.

After graduating with an interior design degree from El Paso Community College, Yvonne set her sights on several creative, hands-on careers. She wanted to start her own company but knew she first had to gain real-world experience. Yvonne began working with a local furniture upholsterer and applied her academic knowledge to learn the skill of upholstery. She developed an affinity for reviving antique furniture, modernizing outdated pieces, and creating new designs. Noticing her attention to detail in every stitch, the business owner asked Yvonne to work as his sales representative. Knowing the level of craftsmanship involved, Yvonne could sell high-quality upholstered furniture. In 2011, Yvonne decided to launch Full Turn Interior Solutions, LLC. With minimal financial resources, she purchased a vehicle, office furniture and began working out of her garage.



Recognizing the need for financial support, Yvonne began working with EPCC SBDC Business Advisor Hector Espino. They worked on developing a business plan, financial projections, and marketing strategies. Yvonne secured a loan that paved the way for significant expansion. She invested \$330,000 to acquire essential equipment and a warehouse to accommodate a surge in projects and sales. The growth created two new jobs and retained two existing positions. The financial infusion resulted in an impressive \$254,000 increase in annual sales.

Full Turn Interior Solutions, LLC is a woman-owned business that embodies resilience, creativity, and a commitment to quality. The company has expanded to offer furniture installation, reconfiguration, new office furniture, and space planning. Yvonne's thriving small business genuinely showcases the power of entrepreneurship, mentorship, and the invaluable support provided by the EPCC SBDC.

www.ftisep.com



IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ \$330,000 Owner Investment
- ★ Business Loan
- ★ \$254,000 Increase in Annual Sales
- ★ 2 Jobs Created and 2 Jobs Retained

"The SBDC services and training programs have helped me evolve as a business owner and grow my business."

—Yvonne Vasquez

SBDCNet

Small Business, Big Nation: Celebrating 25 Years of Serving Main Street

The SBDC National Information Clearinghouse (SBDCNet) is the official business research and support program for the national SBDC network. For a remarkable 25 years, the SBDCNet has been dedicated to meeting the information and resource needs of America's small business community and working in partnership with SBDCs to ensure their clients' success. In 2023, the center celebrated 25 years of service and continued its record of accomplishment by fulfilling 3,800 custom market research requests for SBDC small business clients. Having completed over 110,000 projects to date, the national center continues to leverage its vast expertise, experience and specialized resources to help SBDC clients succeed in Texas and across the nation.



Utilizing its special library collection, the center provides SBDCs and their clients with powerful information and resources that are often out of reach for most small businesses. "The information provided helps us serve more clients by providing us with specific research a small business needs, allowing my team more time to counsel clients," said Mark Christian of the Missouri SBDC Network.

SBDCNet provides a broad range of customized, timely and invaluable market research reports – all at no cost to America's small businesses. These in-depth reports routinely include industry trends, customer demographics, financial benchmarks, regulatory information, competitor lists, startup costs, sample business plans and much more. With its in-house GIS tools, the center also produces comprehensive, geography-specific studies to assist clients with site selection and local market analyses. The SBDCNet also maintains a public website to provide access to on-demand business research and other business development resources.

Hosted at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), SBDCNet also provides meaningful experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. UTSA students research real-world business challenges and hone their professional skills, which makes them increasingly more marketable to Texas employers upon graduation.

For 25 years, SBDCNet has continually strived to develop new solutions to the changing information needs of millions of small businesses. Learn more about the center at www.sbdnet.org.



IMPACT

- ★ 3,800 custom market research requests
- ★ 110,000 projects completed to date

"The research provided by SBDCNet helps level the playing field between small businesses and large companies, as small business owners are often unaware of the data and information available when starting, purchasing or expanding a business."

—Mark Christian, Missouri SBDC Network



Empowering Economic Growth in Kenya: Sub-Saharan SBDC Success

As a pivotal entity within the UTSA SBDC International Trade Center, the UTSA SBDC Center for Global Development (UTSA CGD) stands as a global authority in facilitating the seamless adoption and adaptation of the SBDC model by countries worldwide. Since its inception in 2003, the UTSA CGD has been at the forefront of the development of SBDC networks internationally, providing comprehensive technical assistance to international SBDC networks and offering solutions that are both straightforward and adaptable to diverse international business climates.

In 2022, a transformative collaboration emerged in Kenya between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Kenya, Strathmore University, and UTSA, marking the initiation of a two-year project. The primary focus of the relationship was to strategically structure, finance, operate, and manage a national SBDC network tailored to Kenya's unique national economic landscape.

The UTSA CGD, in partnership with Strathmore University, diligently explored the technical intricacies of transferring the SBDC model to Kenya. This collaborative effort involved hands-on technical support to ensure the effective implementation of the SBDC methodology which would position the Kenyan SBDC Network for sustainable long-term growth and success.

With the invaluable support provided by the UTSA CGD, Kenya achieved a significant milestone in 2023 - successfully launching six SBDCs in the counties (states) of Isiolo, Kiambu, Kisumu, Makueni, Mombasa, and Nakuru. This not only positions Kenya as the first Sub-Saharan African country to adopt the SBDC model but also signifies a monumental stride toward fostering the development of SBDC networks in other African nations. This success also serves as a compelling testament to the UTSA CGD's unwavering commitment to the global expansion of the SBDC program.



The UTSA CGD eagerly anticipates continued collaboration with the Kenya SBDC Network, providing ongoing support in implementing and certifying these new centers as they chart a course toward future success and international recognition. Together, all stakeholders are actively shaping a landscape of economic empowerment and growth that transcends borders.

"The USAID Strategic Partnership Program's commitment to empowering MSMEs through Kenya SBDC, by the support of UTSA, has not only elevated the entrepreneurial landscape in Kenya but has also become a beacon of hope and progress for countless individuals whose lives have been positively impacted by the transformative power of the model."

—Dr. George Njenga



IMPACT

UTSA Center for Global Development Key Country Metrics:*

- ★ 24 Countries
- ★ 33,134 New Jobs Created
- ★ 263 Operating SBDCs
- ★ \$263 million Increased Sales
- ★ 11,812 New Business Starts
- ★ \$43.1 million Participating Countries Funding Commitment

UTSA Center for Global Development Training Metrics:**

- ★ 304 Training Sessions
- ★ 934 Training Hours
- ★ 5,808 Total SBDC Stakeholders Trained

*2021 data, collected every two years

**2023 data



SBDC STATE STAR: Arturo Gonzalez

Driving Economic Success and Elevating Small Business

Over 40 SBDC Business Advisors from throughout South, Central, and West Texas compete in the annual SBDC State Star competition. Ten field SBDCs nominate their top advisor based on economic development goals such as client-attributed job creation and retention, business start-ups and expansions, capital access, the advisor's productivity, and the number of long-term clients served.

Arturo Gonzalez, a 26-year veteran of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Small Business Development Center (UTRGV SBDC), has earned the 2023 State Star award. He achieved impressive client results in 2022, including: 213 jobs created and retained; 26 total businesses started and grown; and 33 loans and equity transactions, which added over \$2 million to the Rio Grande Valley economy.

Arturo is a well-rounded Senior Business Advisor, a BBA with a major in Finance, and he has earned the highest level in the Certified Business Advisor Program of the Texas South-West SBDC Network. He is a leader among his peers with a reputation for dedicated client service and collaboration with community partners. Arturo specializes in international trade advising, is a trainer for customer service workshops, and a facilitator for the Foodpreneur Roundtable, a discussion forum for the food commercialization industry.



"I am honored to receive this award on behalf of our SBDC team, resource partners, and my hard-working clients. I am truly blessed to be able to do what I do. I get to work with great people with the same vested interest in our community, and it just doesn't get any better than this."

– Arturo Gonzalez, 2023 State Star

"During the pandemic, Arturo worked tirelessly to help his clients access disaster funding. We are proud of Arturo's accomplishment, commitment, and contributions – all of which strengthen the UTRGV SBDC and make it and the Texas South-West SBDC Network more successful."

– Maria Juarez, UTRGV SBDC Center Director

Texas South-West Small Business Development Center Network

Field Centers and Specialty Centers

FIELD CENTERS

Alpine

Sul Ross State University SBDC
432.837.8694 | sbdc.sulross.edu/alpine

Austin

Texas State University SBDC
512.420.9379 | sbdc.mccoy.txstate.edu

Corpus Christi

Del Mar College SBDC
361.698.1021 | delmar.edu/sbdc

Eagle Pass

SRSU Rio Grande College SBDC
830.758.5022 | sbdc.sulross.edu/rgc

Edinburg

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley SBDC
956.665.7535 | utrgv.edu/sbdc

El Paso

El Paso Community College SBDC
915.831.7742 | elpasosbdc.net

Laredo

Texas A&M International University SBDC
956.326.2827 | sbdc.tamui.edu

San Angelo

Angelo State University SBDC
325.942.2098 | sbdc.angelo.edu

San Antonio

The University of Texas at San Antonio SBDC
210.458.2460 | sasbdc.org

Victoria

University of Houston-Victoria SBDC
361.485.4485 | uhv.edu/small-business

SPECIALTY CENTERS

Located in San Antonio but serving the entire 79 county service area

International Trade

UTSA SBDC International Trade Center
210.458.2470 | texastrade.org

Government Contracting

UTSA SBDC Center for Government Contracting
210.458.2458 | cgc.txsbdc.org

Technology Commercialization

UTSA SBDC Technology Commercialization Center
210.458.2731 | tcc.txsbdc.org

Market Research

SBDC National Information Clearinghouse (SBDCNet)
1-800-689-1912 | sbdcnet.org



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