

KITSAP



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



MAKE WAVES.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

As I reflect on a year of growth and collaboration, I find fuel for optimism. In 2019, we launched the Kitsap SBDC with a vision to bring our nationally recognized business advising services to the small business owners and entrepreneurs of Kitsap County. We could not have anticipated that just a few months later, COVID-19 would upend the small business landscape as we knew it—bringing devastation, uncertainty, and an urgent need for community support.

Despite the ongoing challenges and ripple effects of the pandemic, our commitment

to that vision remains steadfast. In the past several years, our team has developed partnerships with local organizations to support emerging entrepreneurs. In 2024, our team helped to organize or host 26 workshops and training events that brought entrepreneurs together with resources and networking opportunities to encourage growth and connection throughout the community.

These partnerships and events helped to increase awareness of our services, resulting in a record number of new clients in 2024. As our center has grown, so have the economic

IN 2024, WWU SBDC ADVISORS HELPED KITSAP CLIENTS SECURE 26 CAPITAL INVESTMENTS TOTALING \$2.1 MILLION – DELIVERING A LOCAL ROI OF \$37 FOR EVERY \$1 IN LOCAL FUNDING.

outcomes of our services. In total, our advisors have assisted with the creation of 66 new businesses in Kitsap County, 20 of which were launched in 2024 alone.

Though we will share our economic impact in this report, the true scope and significance of our work is best reflected through our clients' own words. The client stories showcased here illustrate how we help build the foundation and confidence that fuels sustainable, successful businesses.

Despite economic uncertainty, I am hopeful for our shared future. I see promise and strength in an interconnected small business

community that fosters an environment where entrepreneurs can launch, grow, and find long-term stability.

As always, we remain grateful for the ongoing stakeholder support that empowers us to walk beside our clients along their journey through an ever-evolving landscape. ♦

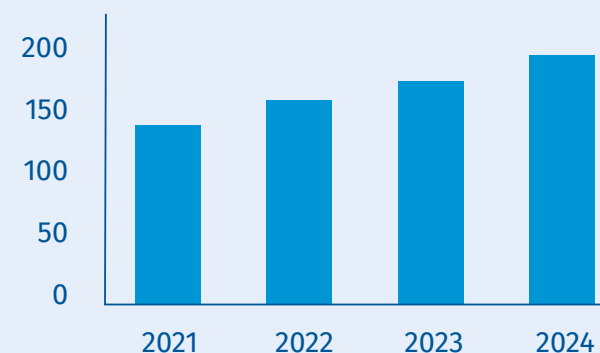
CJ Seitz
Executive Director
WWU SBDC



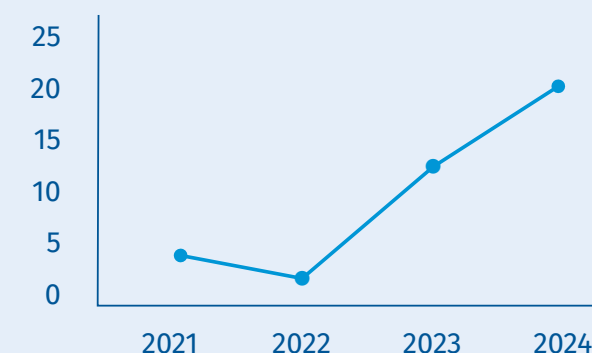
WHO WE ARE

The WWU Small Business Development Center provides tools, training, and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. Our team of Certified Business Advisors brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to bolster a supportive economic environment through no-cost, fully confidential, one-on-one advising. As regional subject matter experts, our team serves the Kitsap business community in a strategic advisory and educational role.

Number of Businesses Advised



Number of Business Starts



PARTNERING TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS EDUCATION & TRAINING

Throughout 2024, we teamed up with local partners to host 26 training and networking events to expand opportunities for small business owners in Kitsap County. These events increased our visibility while fostering connections within the business community. We engaged with

more than 750 attendees and provided business owners with valuable knowledge and practical tools in several areas including tax preparedness, cybersecurity, professional networking, government contracting, and more. ♦

Tax Workshop Series

Certified Business Advisor and Center Director Joyce Oswald hosted eight workshops that focused on educating business owners on important tax resources and requirements. Several of these workshops were organized in partnership with local organizations and some were offered in Spanish.

Oswald also designed two workshops in collaboration with Kitsap Credit Union in Bremerton, one of which featured speakers from the Washington State Department of Revenue. These free in-person workshops focused on business and occupation tax and WA State sales taxes.



“Joyce Oswald [pictured left] of the Kitsap SBDC provided me with prompt, comprehensive, and convivial service. She took the time to listen to and strategically address my unique situation. During our meetings and through subsequent emails, Joyce provided me with information and networking referrals that helped me address critical startup challenges. I am incredibly grateful the SBDC offers free services and that consultants like Joyce are so supportive and inspiring. I will definitely use the SBDC services in the future and I encourage other small business owners to do so as well.”

–Eli Lee, Entrepreneur

Vibe Coworks Lunchtime Lightning Talks

Throughout 2024, the Kitsap SBDC partnered with Vibe Coworks to sponsor five Lunchtime Lightning Talks—a speaker series designed to inspire, educate, and connect Kitsap’s entrepreneurial community. These fast-paced events brought together small business owners and local leaders to exchange insights and spark meaningful discussion around topics such as authentic self-promotion, AI as a business tool, and the importance of taking sabbaticals.

We welcomed 94 attendees across the five events. This partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting the growth and resilience of Kitsap businesses through timely, thought-provoking programming.

“The WWU Small Business Development Center continues to be an invaluable partner in strengthening Kitsap’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. From offering one-on-one advising sessions to experienced and aspiring business owners at Vibe Coworks, to chairing the monthly Entrepreneurship + Innovation Working Group, their team has shown up consistently—not just with expertise, but with heart. Their support in referring entrepreneurs to the Matchstick Lab Micro Business Accelerator, and their sponsorship of our 2024 Lunchtime Lightning Talks, have helped us reach more entrepreneurs with the tools and connections they need to thrive. The impact of their work is deeply felt across our community.”

–Alanna Imbach
Executive Director, Matchstick Lab
Founder, Vibe Coworks



DESIGNING SUCCESS

SCANDIA STUDIO BRINGS BUSINESS TO LIFE

By: Allijah Motika

Leah Thompson didn't set out to start her own small business. She worked in website design and project management, leading her into freelance photography in 2020. After a few years working with small businesses in Kitsap County, she realized that she could offer much more than photography services.

With a clear vision, determination, and collaboration with experts like the WWU Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Scandia Studio was born.

Scandia Studio is a full-service, all-in-one branding and design studio that helps businesses tell their story. "Customers want to connect with the companies they work with, but so many business owners are uncomfortable being front and center," said Thompson.

With this in mind, she began building the foundation for her own business. To make



sure that she was not only a good storyteller, but a skilled businessperson, Thompson turned to two local resources for help: The Matchstick Lab Micro Business Accelerator and the WWU SBDC where she met Joyce Oswald, SBDC Certified Business Advisor.

"Meeting with Joyce felt like having a local wizard to help you complete a quest," said Thompson. "Whenever I didn't know where to go next, she was the person I'd go to, and she'd guide me in the right direction."

Together, they started to discuss one of Thompson's big goals: opening a physical location.

Thompson believes in the power of in-person collaboration: She was sure that once business owners could see examples of her previous work and visualize how Thompson could tell their stories, it would help break down their reluctance to market themselves.

"Before having a space, I'd discuss my services and

pricing and people would say 'OK, let me think about it.' And sometimes they'd follow up and other times they wouldn't," said Thompson, "and I wanted to find a way to change that."

After discussion with her SBDC advisor, Thompson felt confident that opening a physical location would bring in new business and turn prospective clients into current ones. With a clear plan in place, she set her sights on finding a location that she loved – and Scandia Studio celebrated its grand opening in the heart of downtown Poulsbo on Sept. 13, 2024.

"The ribbon cutting was a kind of 'pinch-me' moment. It was amazing to see everything come together," said Thompson. The new studio is fully stocked with everything business owners need to bring a brand to life. Clients regularly come in for photo sessions, design consultations, and image creation.

"The best thing about having the new space is how excited new clients get," Thompson said. "Now prospective clients can see themselves in the space and are enthusiastic to start."

The Matchstick Lab Micro Business Accelerator, hosted by Vibe Coworks in Poulsbo, provides mentorship, workshops, and networking to early-stage small business owners. Participating entrepreneurs like Leah Thompson of Scandia Studio have turned ideas into thriving businesses, built lasting connections, and gained the tools to grow with confidence.

Since the grand opening, business has boomed, and Thompson hopes to use the momentum to continue growing her studio.

"Over the next five years I'd like to expand the team and our services...I want to help other small businesses thrive. Owning a business is very vulnerable and I

want to be different than so many companies that take advantage of small business owners," said Thompson. "That's one of the reasons that I love the SBDC, there's no catch."

Going forward, Scandia Studio plans to keep helping business owners tell their authentic stories. ♦



TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

BUILDING CONFIDENCE FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH

“Melissa helped me narrow my business ideas, focus on what I really want to do, and how to target my specific audience. She’s also helped me build confidence and best business practices. It helps to talk these things through with someone outside of the company so you can really see the big picture.”

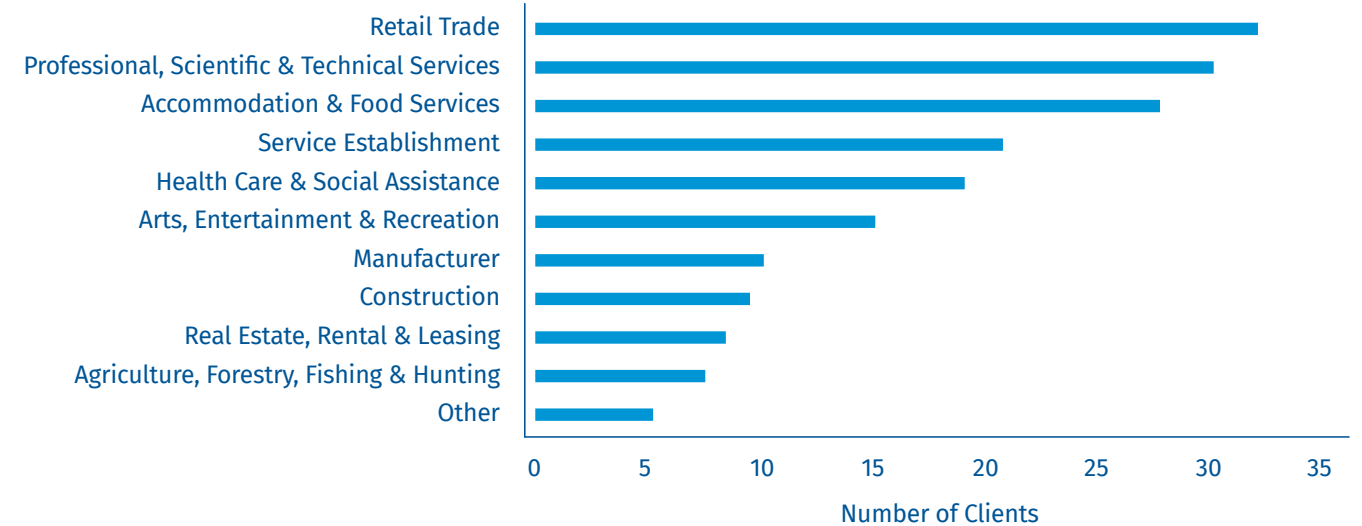
–Ingrid Obee, Owner
Big Invisible



big inv's ble

Industries Served

The Kitsap SBDC assisted small businesses across a wide variety of industries in 2024.



“Melissa’s guidance was incredibly insightful and helped us clarify our business operations in ways we hadn’t considered before. She encouraged us to think strategically about our long-term goals and offered practical tools to prioritize what truly matters for our company’s growth. Having her as an advisor gave us a fresh perspective on the steps we need to take to reach our next milestones, and we now feel more confident about our direction and the methods we can use to keep growing.”

–Kyle Bias, Owner
The Wax Artist

“Words cannot convey how appreciative we are to have Joyce Oswald as our SBDC advisor. The amount of support we have received has played a pivotal role in scaling our business in ways we could not foresee. We are forever grateful to Joyce and the SBDC!”

–Dionne & Greg Showers, Owners
Backflow Assembly Solutions



“This client has been with SBDC since before I was hired two years ago. Knowing how they’ve grown from a startup to their upcoming expansion makes me grateful to be part of a team that partners with businesses through their entire life cycle and beyond. Kyle and Gabriella continue to impress me with their ideas and commitment to growth, whether it’s expanding their product line or diversifying revenue streams. Seeing them achieve financial milestones makes me realize how possible it is for new business owners to achieve success.”

–Melissa Tanno
Business Advisor



“Dionne and Greg have been the most amazing clients - not only did they complete Matchstick Lab, but they also continue to improve their knowledge about running a successful business. They regularly support other business owners and give back to the community. I’m very proud to have worked with them for the past two years and look forward to seeing their continued growth and success.”

–Joyce Oswald
Center Director & Certified Business Advisor

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP & PROGRESS



“Dedicated to fostering the success of small businesses across Whatcom and Kitsap counties, the WWU SBDC provides a vital resource to the communities Western serves. Their efforts to provide individualized, one-on-one business advising to entrepreneurs and business owners continues to reinforce Western’s mission to serve the people of the state of Washington.

In 2024 the WWU SBDC team cultivated long-lasting relationships with complimentary partners to bring together support services in our area. These collaborations have helped to build trust with, and provide resources for, previously underserved communities. This team has demonstrated their capacity for adaptation, driven by their dedication to meeting the

evolving needs of our local small businesses. WWU is proud of our longstanding partnership with the SBDC to build resilience in our community and drive sustainable economic growth in our region.”

–Sabah Randhawa, President
Western Washington University

“Kitsap Bank is a proud supporter of the Kitsap SBDC and of all the important work that they do to support small businesses throughout the Kitsap Peninsula. These small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, making our communities unique and vibrant places to live. The Kitsap SBDC provides invaluable guidance to help these small businesses grow and thrive. As a business that also believes in supporting entrepreneurs, we appreciate the Kitsap SBDC’s shared commitment to ensuring that current and future generations of local entrepreneurs are supported throughout their business journeys.”

–Anthony George, President & COO
Kitsap Bank



“The City of Port Orchard greatly appreciates the resources and expertise that the SBDC provides to the small businesses in our community.”

–Rob Putaansuu, Mayor
City of Port Orchard

Cybersecurity Business Readiness and Resiliency Workshop

In partnership with Western Washington University on the Peninsulas and Kitsap Credit Union, the Kitsap SBDC hosted the Cybersecurity Business Readiness and Resiliency workshop in September 2024. This in-person training equipped sixteen small business owners with the practical information necessary to safeguard their data, systems, and intellectual property from cyberthreats.

Workshop attendees learned about the most common digital risks facing small businesses, key behaviors to strengthen cybersecurity, and essential tips for keeping

devices and sensitive information secure.

In addition to the workshop, Joyce Oswald—Certified Business Advisor and Director of Kitsap SBDC—also met with the Kitsap Emergency Management Cybersecurity Working Group to support coordinated preparedness efforts and identify best practices for protecting the local business community.

By offering practical, actionable, and no-cost trainings, Kitsap SBDC equips small businesses with the critical tools and knowledge necessary to mitigate risk and build long-term business resilience.



“Kitsap’s Small Business Development Center has been absolutely critical to helping area businesses since it came to Kitsap just a few years ago. With their deep knowledge in the details of small business accounting, lending, and more, they’re absolutely critical partners in our small business community.”

–Joe Morrison, Executive Director
Kitsap Economic Development Alliance



THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 FUNDERS



WWU SBDC

By Appointment Only

(360) 650-7232

KitsapSBDC@wwu.edu