



ANNUAL REPORT

FY2025



KEY FACTS



WHO WE ARE

At the WBDC, we believe every entrepreneur can achieve their business dreams with the right guidance, resources, and community behind them. Our founders believed that business ownership was a critical path for economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. Since our founding in 1986, our mission has been simple but powerful: to support and accelerate business development and growth. While we target women, we proudly serve all business owners—because an inclusive economy is a stronger economy.

The WBDC helps entrepreneurs build thriving and sustainable businesses through education, access to capital, and connection to contract opportunities. Our programs and services work together to help business owners turn potential into progress. Together—with our clients, funders, and government and community partners—we're igniting business growth across the Midwest and beyond.

WHAT WE DO

COACHING/CURRICULA

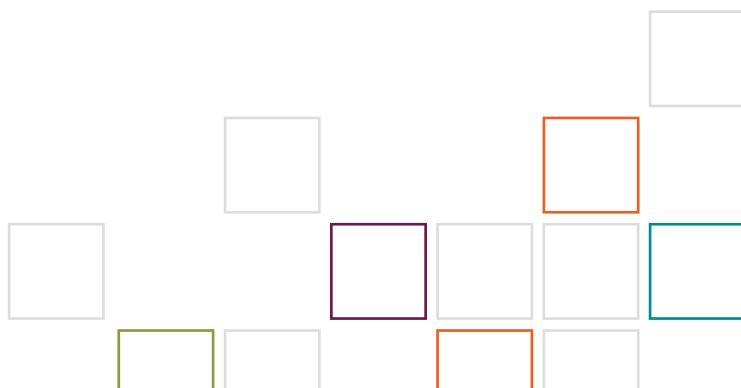
- Strategic one-on-one and group business advising
- Specialized cohort-based curricula and workshops
- Digital learning

CONTRACTS

- Private sector procurement opportunities
- Public sector contracting assistance
- WBE and WOSB certification

CAPITAL

- Financial education
- Debt and equity placement
- Direct lending
- Kiva microlending



ECONOMIC IMPACT

4,936 

Clients served

7,753 

Hours of business advising delivered

586 

Jobs created / retained

2,586 

Businesses WBE-certified

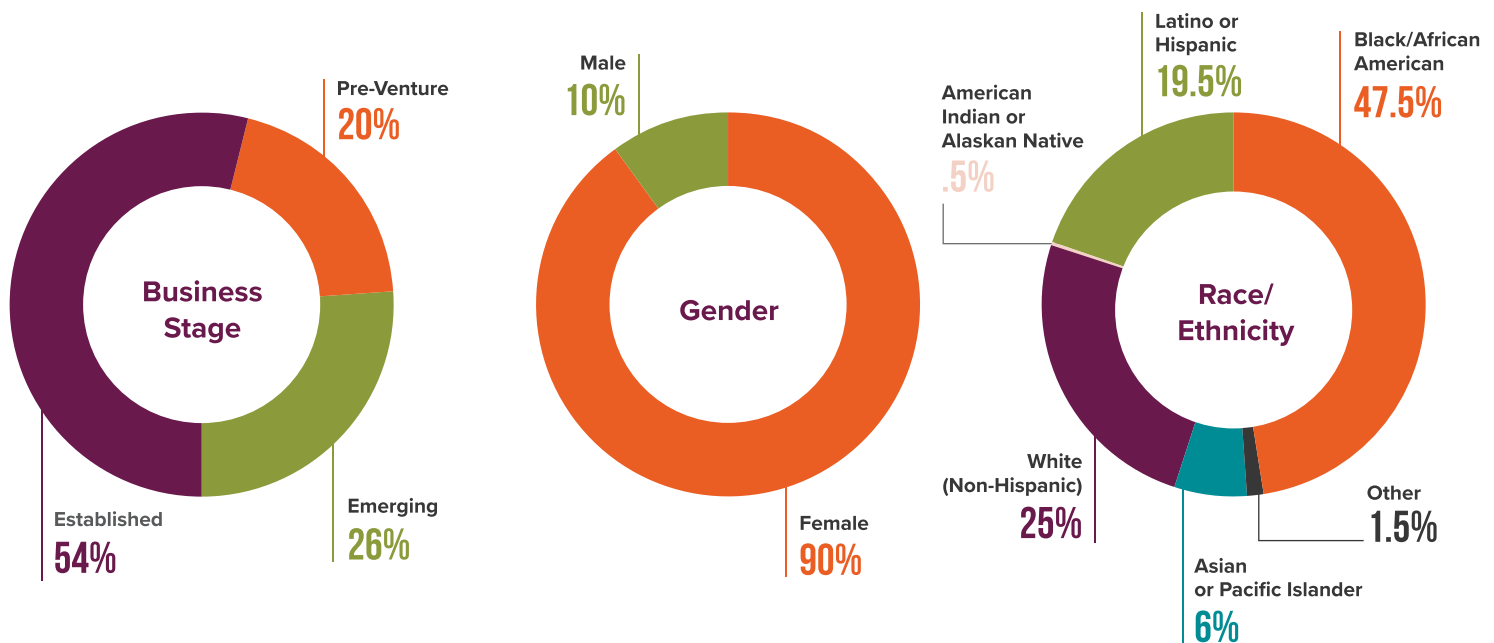
\$37,115,849 

Public and private sector contracts awarded

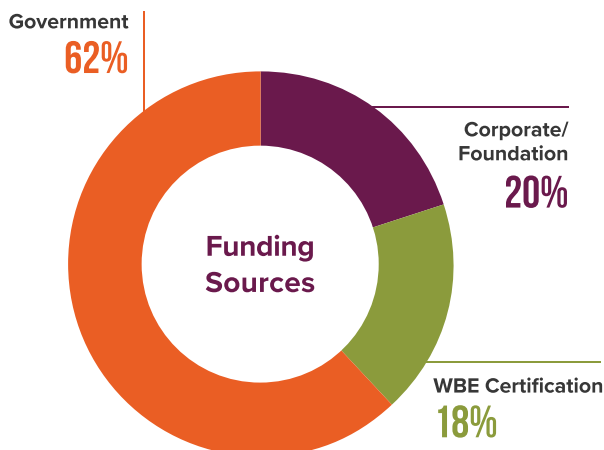
\$7,404,613 

Debt and equity placed

CLIENTS ADVISED



FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Revenues

\$10,835,334

Expenditures

\$9,886,119 
Programs and Services

\$1,654,504 
Management and General

\$355,957 
Fundraising

Ending Net Assets

\$7,200,536

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Sandra Rand

Board Chair

Retired Director of Supplier Diversity
United Airlines, Inc.

Debra Jennings-Johnson

Board Temporary Ex-Officio
President/CEO
CMSDC

Eva Brown

Board 1st Vice Chair
Head of Community Reinvestment
and Strategic Partnership
BMO U.S.

Michelle Blaise

Board 2nd Vice Chair
Sr. Vice President, Global Grid
Modernization Leader
AECOM

Alison Chung

Board Secretary
President
TeamWerks

Cassandra Sanford

Board Assistant Secretary
Chief Executive Officer
KellyMitchell Group, Inc.

Beth Kieffer Leonard, CPA

Audit Committee Chair
Partner in Charge
Eisner Advisory Group LLC

Rona Fourt 

Audit Committee Vice Chair
Vice President, Global Supplier Diversity
CBRE
(7/1/24 - 9/24)
Sr. Director, S2P Policy, ESG, SLM Global
Lead
Pfizer
(9/24 - 6/30/25)

Risa R. Davis

Board Treasurer
Former Vice President,
Corporate Development
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago

Mary Houpt

Board Assistant Treasurer
Former Manager, Community Partnerships
Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas/
WEC Energy

Members

Arabel Alva Rosales

President
AAR & Associates

Laurel G. Bellows

Managing Principal
The Bellows Law Group, P.C.

Linda Boasmond

President
Cedar Concepts Corporation

Emilia DiMenco (7/1/24 – 4/7/25)

President and Chief Executive Officer
Women’s Business Development Center

S. Carol Dougal

Co-Founder and Co-President Emerita
Women’s Business Development Center

Patty Greene

Retired Manager
Community Affairs and Grassroots
Southwest Airlines

Linda Chaplik Harris

Senior Counsel
Dentons US LLP

Michelle F. Kantor

Member
McDonald Hopkins

Erica Kuhlmann (4/7/25 – 6/30/25)

President and Chief Executive Officer
Women’s Business Development Center

Hedy M. Ratner

Co-Founder and Co-President Emerita
Women’s Business Development Center

Jennifer Rouzan

Owner, Verbena Soap and Apothecary
Former Managing Director - Professional
Development Commercial North America
BMO

Amy Yuhn

U.S. Chief Marketing Officer and Head
of Communications
CIBC
(7/1/24 - 11/24)
Executive Vice President, Brand,
Engagement and Impact
Wintrust Financial Corporation
(2/25 - 6/30/25)

STAFF

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Aisha Ahrens
Ashlee Kingery
Blanca Berthier
Bri O'Reilly
Bridget Foster
Cheyenne Duy
Clark McCain
Cynthia Johnson
Denea Beale
Donna Beasley
Elizabeth Paredes
Ellenie Girma

Emilia DiMenco
Emma Westfall
Erica Kuhlmann
Erin White
Eva Pawlik
Georgia Marsh
Grace Toll
Griselda Llerenas
Izel Michel
Jen Lauer
Joshua Gutstein
Juanita Smith
Karen Goldner
Kayla Scanlan

Kelly Gumbiner
Kim Duncan
Kinga Kosmala
Kristin Clowes
LaMonica Scott
Laurie Underwood
Lindsay Mueller
Maura Downs
Maura Mitchell
Regina Williams
Roxanne Ward
Soraya Hernandez
Yvonne Villalpando
Zabdiel Ek

Aurora

Kristen Gehrig
Minerva Calatayud

South Suburbs

Felicitas Cortez

Peoria

Gayle Ballard

REGIONAL MARKETS

Twin Cities, Minnesota

Lynn Herbert
Rebekah Rechtzigel
Sarah Bruch

St. Louis, Missouri

Britney Moehlenkamp
Delilah Papke
Shawni Jackson
Venus Martz

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Alicia McCoverly
Jessie Leonard

Kansas City, Kansas

Jennifer Brungardt

CONTRIBUTORS

GOVERNMENT

Federal/State



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity



WBC-Chicago WBC-Aurora WBC-Peoria



U.S. Small Business Administration



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity



County



COOK COUNTY
BUREAU OF
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



Cook County
Cannabis
Development Grant

City



Neighborhood Business Development
Center Capital Access Specialist

CORPORATE, FOUNDATION, AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Abbott Laboratories, Inc.
Action Packaging
Allele
Allina Health
Allstate Insurance Company
Amazon
Ameren
American Family Insurance
AAR Technology Ltd.
Art Institute of Chicago
Associated Bank
ATT
Bayer
Becker Warehouse & Reload, Inc.
Best Buy
Eisner Advisory Group, LLC
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois
BMO US
Border States
Boundless Futures Foundation
BP America Inc
Brennan Investment Group
Caesars Entertainment

Cardinal Health
KellyMitchell Group, LLC
Chicago Community Trust
Chicago Transit Authority
CIBC USA Bank
Cigna Healthcare
Coleman Foundation
Comcast Foundation
ComEd
Constellation Energy
Discover Financial Services
Dunham Foundation
Dynamic Utility Solutions
Ecolab
Edelman
Erica T. Kuhlmann
Evergy
Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago
Ferrara Candy Company
Fifth Third Bank Foundation
Gerald Sendra
Global Capital, Ltd.
Hallmark
Hawthorne Strategy Group
Hear Us Roar Family Fund
Hess Corporation

Huntington Foundation
Illinois American Water
Jack Henry
JP Morgan Chase Foundation
Kellanova
Kowalski's Markets
Cedar Concepts Corporation
McDonald Hopkins
Meridian Health
Metropolitan Community College
Michels Corporation
Minnesota State University
National Co+op Grocers
New World Van Lines, Inc.
Nicor
Northwestern Mutual
Northwestern University
NPL Construction Company
Old National Bank
Origami Works Foundation
Outworx Group
Pace Suburban Bus
Patty Greene
Peoples Gas
Polk Bros. Foundation
Prompt Praxis Laboratories LLC

Robert Kyts and Jadwiga Roguska-Kyts Charitable Foundation
Saris and Things, Inc.
Securian
Starbucks
Sterling Engineering
Sugar Bliss
Suntory Global Spirits
T-Mobile
Target Corporation
TruStage
United Airlines
United Scrap Metal Inc.
UnitedHealth Group
University of Minnesota
US Bank Foundation
US Cellular
US Drilling, Inc.
US Foods
Vantive
Vistra Corporation
Walgreens
Wintrust Community Banks
Zurn Elkay Water Solutions

IN-KIND

Dialogue Consulting
Guy Viti Insurance Agency Inc.

SAVVY Consulting & Communications, LLC
Serna Legal Services

Swain Therapy
Victoria Rock & Associates

Whiskey Tango

Turning Vision into Growth: Real Stories, Lasting Impact

From early-stage ideas to nationally recognized brands, WBDC clients are building businesses that create jobs, strengthen communities, and drive economic growth. These stories reflect the power of access, guidance, and resilience, and what's possible with the right support.



MAKING SAILING ACCESSIBLE: ERICA TREJO BUILDS GREAT LAKES SAILING

GREAT LAKES SAILING

Owner: Erica Trejo

Erica Trejo founded Great Lakes Sailing with a simple but powerful belief: sailing should be accessible to everyone. As a passionate sailor herself, Erica wanted to create a welcoming environment where people, especially women, could confidently learn the sport without intimidation.

Since launching her business in 2023, Erica has differentiated herself through her calm, safety-first teaching approach and her commitment to creating inclusive learning spaces. Her women-focused sailing classes have helped foster a supportive community where women can build confidence and skills on the water.

To strengthen her business foundation, Erica connected with WBC Chicago, participating in one-on-one advising with Kinga Kosmala as well as financial planning workshops. Through advising, Erica gained valuable guidance on refining her business model, expanding her audience, and making sailing more affordable and approachable for beginners.

With continued support from WBC Chicago, Erica is growing Great Lakes Sailing while introducing more people to the joy and freedom of sailing. Her journey reflects how passion, mentorship, and accessibility can come together to create meaningful opportunities for others.



FROM SOIL TO SHELF: HOW MAGGIE SADOWSKY BUILT A PURPOSE-DRIVEN BRAND WITH WBDC

8 TRACK FOODS

Founder: Maggie Sadowsky

As a food scientist and plant protein expert, Maggie Sadowsky set out to do more than create a product, she wanted to redefine how we think about food. Inspired by the simplicity and sustainability of beans, she launched 8 Track Foods in 2020 with a mission to deliver high-quality, locally sourced organic products while supporting U.S. farmers and healthier ecosystems.

What began as a passion rooted in nutrition and sustainability quickly evolved into a growing business with strong momentum. Today, 8 Track Foods can be found in more than 1,500 grocery stores, including Meijer and Whole Foods Market, establishing a strong presence across the Midwest.

To scale her vision, Maggie turned to the Women's Business Development Center. Through the Top Shelf cohort program and ongoing advising with the ILSBDC@WBDC, she gained the structure, strategy, and confidence needed to grow. The program challenged her to think beyond product development, focusing on positioning, pitching, and preparing for large-scale retail opportunities.

"The greatest resource was the confidence to write a pitch and present it," Maggie shared. "It was helpful to have a team, get feedback, and not be so singularly focused." With continued support from WBDC, Maggie has been able to evolve her business from a small startup into a scalable brand. More importantly, she gained the confidence to tell her story and pursue larger opportunities.

OFFICES

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✉ wbdc@wbdc.org

HEADQUARTERS

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SATELLITE OFFICES

WBDC - Aurora

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WBDC – South Suburbs

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Olympia Fields, IL 60461

WBDC – Peoria

201 SW Adams Street,
Peoria, IL 61602

WBDC - Kansas City

6405 Metcalf Avenue, Suite 318
Overland Park, KS 66202

WBDC – Milwaukee

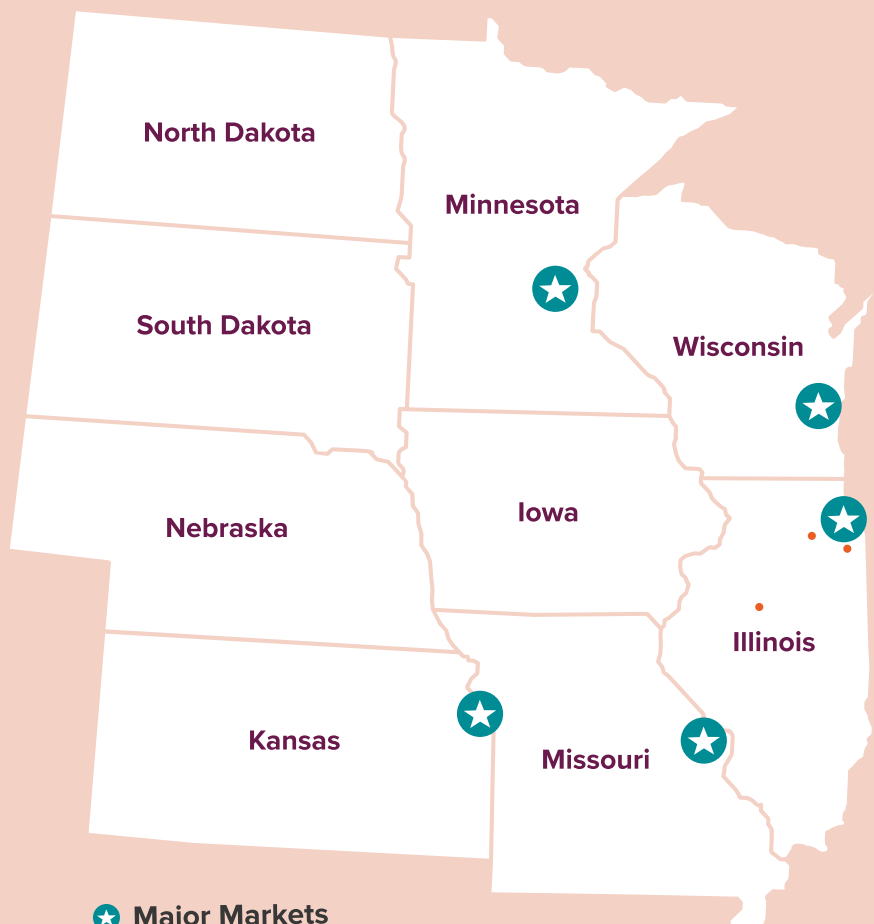
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Milwaukee, WI 53212

WBDC - St. Louis

20 South Sarah Street
St. Louis, MO 63108

WBDC - Twin Cities

375 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55102



★ Major Markets

● Offices

WBDC 
IGNITES BUSINESS GROWTH

Help Entrepreneurs Thrive

**YOUR
GIFT,
THEIR
GROWTH.**



Give to the WBDC Today!



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Women's Business Development Center



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