



The Montana District Office (MDO) Monthly Focus is our opportunity to explore and highlight different elements that contribute to Montana’s economy. MDO Monthly Focus is intended to highlight small businesses and our partners to inspire and encourage small business development and growth in different areas of the economy.

For more information about SBA and the Montana District Office Team, please visit: [Montana District Office](#)



Entrepreneurship in Montana

A small business is generally defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as **"a firm employing less than 500 people,"** depending on the industry, and in Montana that would constitute 99.3% of all of businesses. To be an entrepreneur means you are accepting all the risk in starting a small business, making a widget or offering a service, and is often characterized as someone living the American Dream.

According to the SBA Office of Advocacy, there are 32.5 million small businesses in the United States, employing nearly 50% of the private workforce, mostly in the industries of construction, accommodation/ food services, and health care.

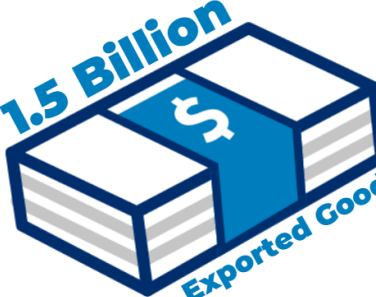
Entrepreneurs employ over 60 million people nationwide, and nearly a quarter of a million Montanans. These numbers fluctuated during the pandemic, but the SBA attempted to stabilize that with the COVID relief program funds, which businesses in all 56 counties tapped into amounting to nearly \$2 billion dollars.

Entrepreneurial Statistics

 **126K**
SMALL
BUSINESSES

250K

JOBS

1.5 Billion

in Exported Goods

Veteran-Owned Businesses

These days, our active duty military has found more ways to serve our country after their tour of duty is completed.

Veteran-owned businesses make up 5.9 percent of all small businesses and employ nearly four million people.

Veteran entrepreneurship is a major contributor to the U.S. economy, with over \$177 billion in annual payroll and over \$947 billion in annual receipts. The largest shares of receipts from veteran-owned firms come from the transportation, utilities, mining and quarrying, and the oil and gas extraction industries.

On average, a veteran-owned firm earned \$2.4 million in annual sales, employed 11 workers, and has been in business longer than non-veteran employer owners. Forty-six percent of veteran owners have been in business 16 years or longer, compared with 29 percent of their non-veteran counterparts, according to the Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs conducted by the Census Bureau.



Business: Mountain Wave Distillery
Location: Great Falls, MT
Website: www.MountainWaveDistilling.com
Owner: Jeff Miser

Description: Considered a work in progress by owner Jeff Miser, Mountain Wave Distilling will be the newest addition to downtown Great Falls. Located on Central Avenue in a building built for a long-gone Canadian retail store almost 100 years ago, retired Air Force pilot Jeff Miser is looking to revive the spirit of the Electric City. Hoping to open in 2022, with the help of Jason Nitschke at Great Falls Small Business Development Center, Jeff has leveraged the resources available, and the people who can help make his dream a reality.

Five Questions with Jeff Miser

1. What does Mountain Wave mean to you?

“I’ve flown helicopter missions all over the world, I’ve seen some beautiful places, but I choose to live right here in Great Falls. To me, Mountain Wave allows me to be my own boss and I get to craft something special from the best grain, wheat, and cereals in the world, that have been grown right here in the Golden Triangle,” said Jeff Miser, owner of Mountain Wave Distilling.

2. What happened in the last 18 months that changed your business?

“The biggest problem we’ve faced is supply chain issues. There are parts and equipment that I have waited months for,” Jeff said. Jason Nitschke with Great Falls Small Business Development Center (SBDC) added, “They are seeing up to a 52 week lead time on some construction projects. The lengthy lead time is causing issues with getting accurate quotes to assist with project costs during a period of challenging supply chains.”

3. How did the SBA impact your business?

“Jason (Nitschke) at the Great Falls SBDC has been a big help. We met at the **Boots to Business** event at Malmstrom Air Force Base here in town, and I’ve been to at least three since then. Jason has helped guide us and apply for funding through SBA’s 7(a) program. The building space that is being leased for the project is an Opportunity Zone project that was partially financed with a SBA 504 loan,” said Miser.

“I get to be my own boss and craft something special.”

Jeff Miser, Owner

4. What does the future hold?

“The goal is start production and open early 2022. Having a product to sell and start generating some revenue has been in the works for a long time. It will be exciting to transition from a building renovation project to actually starting a distilling business,” said Jeff.

5. What piece of wisdom would you give the someone getting ready to start a business?

Miser added, “with things being the way they are with workers to supply chain and how those items impact financing, my piece of wisdom would be to have patience and be prepared to wait. Also, don’t forget there are people around you that can help you, like Jason, and others. These resources are invaluable”!