

Rural Business Service • Rural Business Development Grant, Strategic Economic and Community Development

From Artisanal Hobbyist to Successful Business Owner: Rural Entrepreneur Contributes to Job Creation and Local Economy

Creating one-of-a-kind bags and accessories from locally sourced materials, like Pendleton® Wool, started as a hobby for Lindsey Phillips. Gradually, she began selling her products through third-party sites. Then she created her own website and sold wholesale to local boutiques. Her handcrafted products were popular, but Phillips still had a day job to pay her bills.

When the [Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network](#) (RAIN) offered a 12-week bootcamp training program for entrepreneurs in her home town of Florence on the Oregon coast, Phillips was invited to attend. At first, she discounted the idea, but the more she thought about it, the more she realized she wanted to make her hobby into a full-time business.

The RAIN Pre-Accelerator Program was supported by a \$40,000 grant from USDA’s [Rural Business Development Grant Program](#), and included \$13,000 in [Strategic Economic and Community Development \(SECD\)](#) funding, which gives priority to projects that promote regional economic development plans. The course provided an intensive learning environment. In three months, Phillips gained new expertise in marketing, financial management, business models, and other essential tools. She received homework assignments, completed research projects, and delivered presentations, but her favorite element was the networking. “I found a community of like-minded people,” she said. “I found people with the same challenges as me, people who have been where I am now.”

After showcasing her business in front of 120 people at her graduation, Phillips took the next step to grow her startup, a step that had seemed an impossibility just months earlier. She quit her job. “Without RAIN, I would never have had the confidence to make the leap and take my business full-time,” said Phillips.

Over the next quarter, [Meant Manufacturing](#) saw more sales than in all of the prior year. In fact, her business was so successful, Phillips found herself unable to keep up with demand. She hired her first employee just two months later, and now has the equivalent of three full-time positions during the holiday season.

Phillips is still in touch with her mentors from the Pre-Accelerator, and plans to volunteer her time helping the next set of local entrepreneurs innovate, create jobs, and further strengthen the economy in her rural community, while continuing to grow her own business.



Meant Manufacturing, a woman-owned, startup business in Florence, Oregon, is creating jobs and improving the local economy.

Obligation Amount:	\$40,000 grant (including \$13,000 through SECD)
Date of Obligation:	July 2017
Congressional District:	Representative DeFazio, District 4; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Demographics:	Lane and Lincoln Counties, Oregon; population 409,933
Impact:	Through innovative programs, seminars, one-on-one mentoring, and partnership events, the nonprofit Oregon RAIN has helped more than 100 entrepreneurs launch or scale their businesses, creating jobs and furthering economic development in these rural communities.
