

RESULTS: SUPPLIER SCOUTING

MEP SUPPLIER SCOUTING HELPS ENTREPRENEUR SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH

COMPANY PROFILE

"A great product does not always mean a huge company," explains the website of includesign, a tiny Rhode Island design firm whose LapSnap™ basket is a great product that offers accessibility and independence to wheelchair users.

Founder Diana Perkins Kamada created the LapSnap as a capstone project while pursuing her engineering degree. She sewed 10 prototypes for this collapsible carryall on her own "dinky" home sewing machine – no easy feat given the durable, waterproof canvas, multiple layers and pockets, and padded base that distinguish her product.

Feedback and market research inspired Kamada to make LapSnap the includesign flagship product.

SITUATION

While the engineer had interned at manufacturing companies, she had worked with woods and metals. "I was used to making something exactly like it was in the drawing and that's not how soft goods manufacturing works," said Kamada. "There's a lot of back-and-forth in soft goods as you come up with a true spec."

Her ultimate specs addressed not just production requirements but includesign's values: materials must be high-quality, made in the USA by a manufacturer who employs People with Disabilities and paid above minimum wage. Local connections yielded one potential vendor however they didn't have the capacity to take on the LapSnap.

Kamada also felt it important that the manufacturing setup was secure before she pursued funding. Without a firm supplier agreement, the LapSnap could not go to market.

SOLUTION

Venture Café Providence referred Perkins to Polaris MEP, the state's non-profit Manufacturing Extension Partnership Center. Manufacturing advisor Chris Cinieri worked with Perkins to create a synopsis and submit it to the MEP National Network Supplier Scouting system.

Supplier Scouting is a formal program that connects Rhode Island companies to domestic manufacturers to build their supply chain. "I honestly wasn't sure how many matches we could possibly make for includesign," said Cinieri. "Early-stage companies like Diana's are looking at small quantities, and they have slim profit margins."



IMPACTS



**\$16,000 in new sales
(100% of the company's
first sales/funding raised)**



**3 jobs added
2 jobs retained**



\$10,000 in Direct Savings



**\$20,000 Unnecessary
Investments Avoided**

Read the full Success Story at
bit.ly/3OxLo9r



“As a first-time business owner without contacts of my own in the industry, I genuinely don't know if I'd be in business without Polaris MEP's help connecting me to companies that could manufacture the components I'd need.”

Diana Perkins Kamada
CEO



**Ready to elevate
your standards?**

Find out how we can help!

Visit polarismep.org/schedule
or call **401-207-8896**