

HAWAII SBDC SUCCESS STORY - MAUI CENTER



Mitzi Toro is **The Maui Cookie Lady** crafting cookies with distinct flavor, utilizing quality, primarily locally sourced ingredients. She just likes making people happy with food and feels it's a way to connect with people.

As a tribute to her late dad, Mitzi wanted to raise money in appreciation for the team of nurses that tended to him. The fundraising cookie sales were a hit. Never intending her fundraising would turn into a business, a growing list of orders compelled Mitzi to launch her inventive bakery turning out a host of handcrafted cookies, cakes and other items.

Her orders took off, but with no guidance or direction, Mitzi became over-whelmed. Large orders that initially were exciting started to mean a seemingly endless string of all-nighters as she struggled to keep up with production. With no budget and no statistics, she did not even know if she was making a profit.

To make sense of what was happening, Mitzi turned to the Hawai'i Small Business Development Network –Maui Center. Mitzi was advised to work “On” her business rather than just “In” her business enabling her to understand and control where she was going. She was provided a framework for documenting, planning, measuring and analyzing the state of business:

- Referred Mitzi to a local 36-hour course which provided an understanding of business concepts while enabling completion of comprehensive Business Plan,
- Assisted transition of financial records from a “shoebox” system to QuickBooks to both streamline paperwork and implement financial reporting that provided status and guidance to profitability goals,
- Analysis revealed her largest cost was not labor (which had previously been assumed) but production methods which severely limited business growth. This led to acquisition of a bench top dough dropper that increases production capacity by a factor of over 2,000X while maintaining quality.

With the Hawai'i SBDC's counseling, Mitzi now works “On” her business as much as “In” her business and it now makes sense. Experiencing positive results, Mitzi has renewed enthusiasm for her business, instilling enough confidence in her profit projections that she's shedding her “safety net, day job” to conduct her business full-time.