



**MONTANA
CHAMBER
FOUNDATION**

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MONTANA CHAMBER FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2025 PROSPECTS AWARD WINNERS
Statewide Youth Entrepreneurship Competition Awards \$40,000 in Cash and Scholarships to Montana Students

Helena, MT – The Montana Chamber Foundation proudly announced the [2025 winners](#) of *The Prospects* youth entrepreneurship competition during a virtual awards ceremony on April 24. Now in its fifth year, this premier statewide initiative received 259 entries and awarded \$40,000 in cash prizes and scholarships to students and schools across Montana, celebrating bold ideas and real-world ventures from middle and high school students.

Top winners in the high school categories—*New Business*, *Existing Business*, and *President’s Hustle*—will advance to the final round of competition for the coveted Grand Champion title and additional prizes: \$5,000 for first place and \$2,500 for second place. The final pitch competition will take place in person on May 19 at Montana State University’s Jake Jabs College of Business and Entrepreneurship in Bozeman.

“Each year, *The Prospects* shines a light on the exceptional creativity, resilience, and entrepreneurial energy of Montana’s youth,” said Todd O’Hair, Executive Director of the Montana Chamber Foundation. “It’s clear that the next generation of Montana entrepreneurs is ready to lead. Their fresh ideas and commitment to solving real-world problems make us incredibly proud.”

O’Hair added during the ceremony, “Montana businesses tell us all the time—they’re not just looking for the smartest person in the room; they want people who hustle. This competition proves that entrepreneurial spirit is alive and thriving in our state.”

This year’s competition featured a variety of categories:

- **New Business Idea:** Encouraged bold, original concepts with big potential.
- **Existing Business:** Showcased student-run ventures and their growth strategies.
- **Hack My State: Childcare:** Tasked students with addressing one of Montana’s most pressing challenges—childcare access.
- **School Enterprise:** Highlighted student-led businesses run by classrooms, clubs, or schools.

The competition also expanded to include K–6 students with the **Design Challenge**, where participants created “the next big thing” by combining elements from three images. Middle schoolers competed in three categories:

- **Vacant Lot:** Revitalization concepts for underused spaces in their communities.
- **Hack My School:** Practical improvements to benefit their schools.
- **Existing Business:** Showcasing real businesses led by 6th–8th graders.

“The level of engagement and ingenuity this year was outstanding,” said Paul Hopfauf, Chair of the Montana Chamber Foundation. “These students are thinking critically, acting boldly, and proving they’re ready to shape Montana’s future economy.”

Hopfauf added, “Every year, this competition is the highlight of my work. The passion and commitment these students show is truly inspiring.”

“Every year I look forward to this, this is the highlight of my year. I’m always so impressed with all of the passion and commitment that goes into these ideas”. Paul Hopfauf, Board President of the Montana Chamber Foundation.

The Prospects is made possible thanks to Lead Sponsors, Stockman Bank and Two Bear Capital, along with Foundational Sponsors Empowered, BlueCross BlueShield of Montana, and RDO Equipment Co. Additional support for the awards program was provided by the MSU Jake Jabs College of Business.

“Montana small businesses are the backbone of our communities,” said Bill Coffee, CEO of Stockman Bank. “We are honored to be a part of the 2025 Prospect Awards, recognizing and celebrating the future business dreams of our Montana students.”

The Montana Chamber Foundation remains committed to cultivating the state’s future business leaders through programs like *The Prospects*, ensuring Montana remains one of the nation’s top states for entrepreneurship.

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About the Montana Chamber Foundation

The [Montana Chamber Foundation](https://www.montanachamber.com/montana-chamber-foundation/) is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established by the Montana Chamber of Commerce to fund business education and encourage entrepreneurship among Montana K–12 and undergraduate students, participate in research projects, host events that promote economic development opportunities, and administer funds that support workforce readiness and entrepreneurship programs in the Treasure State.

The Foundation maintains direct relationships with members of the Montana University System, Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), individual teachers and public school districts, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CSTO), and other nonprofits supporting student education.

For more information, visit: www.montanachamber.com/montana-chamber-foundation/