



A MAIN STREET ALABAMA INITIATIVE



ABOUT AL SPARK

AL SPARK, a Main Street Alabama initiative, was created to energize emerging and growing businesses in Designated Main Street Alabama Districts across the state and is supported by funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration. AL SPARK has three components Live Wire (Education), Illuminate (Marketing), and Bright Ideas - A Pitch competition for existing businesses looking to expand and grow.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Main Street Alabama understands that most small businesses have limited time and resources to attend education workshops during business hours, so it was important to make it available all hours of the day (and night). Through the AL SPARK initiative, MSA purchased a training platform with on demand education with videos from expert consultants followed by a testing component, making it easier for business owners to learn and work at their own pace.

Testimonials

“The training module on marketing was so immensely helpful. It had me thinking about marketing my business in a way that I haven't thought about before.

Michelle Crawford, Driftwood Dragonfly, Athens



BUSINESS MARKETING GRANTS

Upon completion of a four-part Marketing Course, existing businesses in Designated Main Street districts were eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Illuminate grant for marketing purposes. Eligible expenses included advertising, marketing materials, business signage, and branded merchandise. As a result, 210 businesses received this funding.

“We want to express our gratitude for the grants that Rep. Mike Rogers helped make available for businesses like ours. The grants helped us purchase a new POS system & new signage that helps us be more visible to passersby. We truly appreciate the opportunity to advance our business!

Adam Morris & Karen Grammer
The Main Olive, Oxford



BUSINESS PITCH COMPETITION

Bright Ideas Pitch competitions were held in Designated Main Street districts. Business owners' pitched ways they could grow with additional funding. Winners at the local level won up to \$10K and then moved to the regional level. Three winners plus two wild cards were then selected to compete at the final competition on Friday, August 22 in Jasper for a \$25K prize. Eligible expenses included inventory, equipment, marketing, computers, and software grades.

“Hairvana is in an exciting season of rapid growth and transformation, and I am truly grateful for the impact the Bright Ideas Grant has had on my business, my clients, and my community. This opportunity has been nothing short of a game-changer.

Nikki Helton, Hairvana, Monroeville



In April 2025, Main Street Alabama hosted a session on AL Spark at the Main Street Now conference in Philadelphia.

💡 SPARK TANK *Finals*

Spark Tank is the final Bright Ideas Pitch Competition and will be held on Friday, August 22 in Jasper. Read what the finalist did with their prior winnings and their plans if they win the additional \$25K:

Coffee Corner – Enterprise

Used prior Bright Ideas funds to add an open kitchen, expand seating, hire staff, and start a bakery with catering and a popular supper club. Sales jumped 95% within two months, boosting foot traffic for the whole block. Plans for \$25K include a larger oven, more staff, new signage, and an alleyway makeover with seating, lighting, and landscaping to position the café as a destination restaurant and trusted caterer.

Creations Galore and Moore – Calera

Invested earlier funding in an on-site urban garden, water reclamation system, mobile kitchen, ice cream cart, inclusive Cake Lab, and marketing upgrades—resulting in a 297% rise in foot traffic and 185% sales growth. Plans for \$25K include converting a courtyard into a multi-use space with a greenhouse, adding a trailer for mobile units, buying a flour mill, publishing a baking curriculum, and enhancing branding and marketing to expand educational and farm-to-table experiences.

Good Company Café – South Huntsville

Upgraded seating, patio amenities, kitchen flow, and equipment, boosting July sales by 16% over last year. Participation inspired a growth-focused mindset and confidence to pursue a second location. Plans for \$25K include new tech for management, upgraded POS and accounting systems, a rapid cook oven, marketing campaigns, and trademarking signature menu items to scale catering and customer reach.

Trolley on Main – Jasper

Used earlier grants to secure ADA retrofit services, make key repairs, and expand programming, including literacy-themed rides for children and enhanced event promotion. Aims to become an “experience-first” community brand. Plans for \$25K include installing air conditioning, creating a “5 o’clock” social area on the trolley, and boosting marketing for year-round events to expand partnerships and economic impact.

Ulti-Mutt Bakery – Oxford

Earlier funds removed production bottlenecks with new equipment, doubling capacity and nearly doubling average order value. Now better able to serve wholesale and retail customers. Plans for \$25K include professional marketing/SEO, packaging redesign, a freezer, more inventory, and equipment upgrades to grow into a nationally recognized brand while driving more traffic to the Main Street location.

Quick facts

**87 Businesses Pitched
Bright Ideas**

**28 Businesses Won Local
Contests and Competed
Regionally**

4 Ignitors Selected

**5 Three regional and two
wild cards compete for
state SPARK TANK**