

MAKING WAVES IN SUSTAINABLE HYBRID WOMEN'S ATHLETIC WEAR

ABOUT KAHILI ACTIVEWEAR, LLC. Bridget Thorpe never thought she would be in the manufacturing industry, but as an ACE-Certified Fitness Instructor she needed a sports bra that was supportive both on the land and in water. When she began surveying the market for sustainable, hybrid athletic wear for women, however, she found that most products were focused on menswear. Thus the Fortune 500 sustainability advisor and fitness instructor pivoted her life trajectory to include becoming a manufacturer of hybrid, athletic women's wear.

SOL VAE (formerly Kahili Activewear), which can be translated to "Woman of the House" in Swedish, is dedicated to the creation of sustainable, hybrid sports bras that are functional in the water and on land. After a 6-year journey that included learning the mechanics of a cut-and-sew business, sourcing the best sustainable materials, and identifying the right factories for the job, SOL VAE launched its online business on March 18, 2022.

THE CHALLENGE. When Bridget started the company she knew what type of product she wanted to make but did not know the cut-and-sew industry or how to use the equipment. Bridget knew that she needed to be intimately familiar with the machinery and how the products were made to ensure the selection of the best manufacturer for the job. Additionally, Bridget needed help identifying where the best manufacturers for her product were in the U.S. and how to prepare for those meetings to ensure success. That's when she began searching for manufacturing mentors and was introduced to Manufacturer's Edge, part of the MEP National Network™.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Manufacturer's Edge connected Bridget to a mentor whose first course of business was to link Bridget up with the Denver Design Incubator, where she could learn how to use the industrial machines and familiarize herself with the factory processes.

The second course of business was to create a robust support network that could help Bridget succeed. Through the mentoring and network provided by Manufacturer's Edge, Bridget met with many factories across the U.S., developed several prototypes and was shown the various databases her business would need to succeed.

Eventually, the networking and mentorship helped Bridget identify that the best factories that could bring her product to life were in Baltimore, which led to the important introduction to the Maryland MEP. Bridget and SOL VAE are based in Hawaii and work with the Hawaii MEP and her products continue to be manufactured in Baltimore, MD. SOL VAE is a carbon-neutral company and prides itself on not only creating Manufactured in the USA products, but on being a woman-owned organization.

"The networking that Manufacturer's Edge provided me was really powerful. Manufacturer's Edge understood the challenges that entrepreneurs go through and provided fantastic mentors who constantly encouraged me and gave me that gut check that I was on the right path."

-Bridget Thorpe, Founder and CEO, SOL VAE

RESULTS



\$4,000 in cost savings



Complete launch of SOL VAE (formerly Kahili Activewear)

CONTACT US



Manufacturer's Edge
1667 Cole Boulevard, Suite
400
Lakewood, CO 80401



(303)592-4087



www.manufacturersedge.com

