

BIG ISLAND COFFEE ROASTERS - MANA UP PROGRAM

ABOUT MAKANA GARDENS LLC. In 2010 two entrepreneurs, Kelleigh Stewart and Brandon von Damitz, relocated from Portland, Oregon, to the Big Island of Hawaii and purchased a small, dilapidated, coffee farm on the east side of the island; at this time the Big Island Coffee company was born.

THE CHALLENGE. At the beginning of 2018 management began looking into business accelerators and exploring the idea of raising capital in order to continue growing and expanding the business. The overwhelming positive response to their product had shown that the coffee aficionado customer base was there and growing, and to meet demand, future business expansion was on the horizon. In their research, they found the Mana Up accelerator and applied for the second cohort. The company was accepted into the Mana Up cohort in 2018. Innovate Hawaii, part of the MEP National Network™, has been a partner of Mana Up since its inception.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The vision for Mana Up is to fuel an economic growth for Hawaii that can generate success for the local economy, support the high cost of living in Hawaii, and create well-paying, interesting jobs for locals. The overarching goal is to create Hawaii's next 100 product companies earning over \$10 million in annual revenue and based in Hawaii. The Mana Up cohort provided Big Island Coffee Roasters management with a community of like-minded, local entrepreneurs. The cohort gave them the chance to talk with other small businesses and discuss industry related issues, company challenges, and business opportunities with them.

Mana Up was pivotal at introducing them to buyers and providing high-level information and guidance. The Pitch Competition was especially helpful because the knowledge gained while honing their pitch for Mana Up allowed them to win a HI Plan pitch competition in which they were awarded \$25,000. It was an excellent opportunity to put their new skills to the test. Mana Up really allowed management to gain traction and make progressive progress in the business.

"I highly recommend Mana Up and the Innovate Hawaii team. The business guidance, resources, and network they provide are invaluable for businesses like us. The networking opportunities have been pivotal along with the continued mentorship from local business leaders."

-Kelleigh Stewart, Co-Owner

RESULTS



60% year-over-year growth since 2016



Won a HI Plan pitch competition (\$25,000 prize)

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