

S.E.A.M. Seeks to Fund Entrepreneurs

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Supporting Economic Alternatives in the Mountains (S.E.A.M.) is now accepting proposals from emerging High Country entrepreneurs until March 21st. Funding of up to \$1000 will be allocated to projects at the second S.E.A.M. community investment dinner on May 4. These participatory events seek to strengthen our region's communities by bringing together good ideas and community investments in Ashe, Avery, and Watauga counties. Any project idea may be submitted, from infrastructure improvements to conferences, which will help applicants develop and grow. A panel of small business leaders will evaluate and select three proposals based on the creativity, feasibility, readiness, and sustainability of the projects. These three proposals will be presented at the locally-sourced S.E.A.M. dinner on May 4. Following the presentations, dinner attendees will vote to fund the projects at varying levels (60%, 30%, and 10%), distributed the funds raised from dinner ticket sales.

This process cultivates relationships between community members and local entrepreneurs and challenges the traditional funding model. At the inaugural S.E.A.M. dinner over 50 people gathered at CoBo Sushi Bar & Bistro to support Boone Barr, High Country CSA, and Homestead Mushrooms, Inc. Rusty Kuhfeld and Matt Webb of Homestead Mushrooms received funding for the purchase of a large HEPA filter.

About the event, Kuhfeld and Webb said, "We look at ourselves and both realize the monetary benefit is not by any means the greatest reward we received from this SEAM organized event. The experience from marketing ourselves and witnessing the positive reception of our ideas by fellow community members has been priceless."

Proposals should include a 500 word essay about your idea, how it will impact your work, and your budget goal. Email submissions will be accepted until March 21st at 5 p.m. To submit an idea, email seamnc@gmail.com. To learn more about S.E.A.M. visit seamnc.org.