



## Project Profile

### **Blue Smoke Inc.**

**Location:**  
Ansted, WV

**County:**  
Fayette

**Description:**  
Equipment Acquisition and  
Business  
Expansion

**Total Project Cost:**  
\$110,000



### **People:**

Robin G. Hildebrand started Blue Smoke as a part-time enterprise in a FDA-approved kitchen in her basement in 1993 making salsa for her friends and coworkers at Allegheny Power. Blue Smoke never formally advertised its product, but word-of-mouth soon enabled Robin to become a part-time employee at Allegheny Power and to eventually devote herself full-time to the business. The ten original product outlets soon spread to twenty-five. Blue Smoke Salsa is now sold in over four hundred and sixty locations in fifteen states.

In 1995 Robin Hildebrand formed Blue Smoke, Inc., moved into a larger building in Ansted and added a retail outlet. She slowly began to grow the business, receiving numerous awards in the process. In the fall of 2002, due to increasing product demand and the need for additional production and retail space, Blue Smoke purchased and converted an old office in downtown Ansted into a commercial food processing facility. However, in order to take advantage of the additional production space and cover her debt service, Blue Smoke needed additional financing.

### **Role of NCIF:**

In 2003, the Natural Capital Investment Fund and representatives of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center met with Robin Hildebrand to discuss her company's financial needs and to help her put together a plan to raise additional capital. With a completed business plan, Robin was able to raise an additional \$50,000 in financing from the Four County Economic Development Authority. NCIF also raised grant funds to retain an outside consulting firm to assist the company with the development of a cost accounting system and marketing material targeting the wholesale market.

### **Impact:**

Funding from NCIF and the Four-County Economic Development Authority provided working capital and allowed Blue Smoke Inc. to buy automated jar filling equipment that was needed to increase production capacity more than 300% and enter the wholesale market.