



SNOW HILL, NC

WWW.LIVEGLEAN.COM

Glean is creating innovative, clean label and allergen-free foods with a mission to reduce farm waste and fight hunger; one fruit and vegetable at a time.

- 2018 NC IDEA SEED GRANT RECIPIENT
- 2018 NC IDEA LEAD COMPANY



My entire leap of faith into entrepreneurship came from working in agriculture and seeing the issues farmers were facing. Forty percent of their crops are considered waste or 'ugly produce', misshapen or odd-sized crops that are still perfectly healthy and edible. Additionally, consumer demands made it difficult for farmers to make a profitable income.

Determined to solve this problem, we saw an opportunity to take this perfectly good but ugly produce and start experimenting with ways to make something people would want. We eventually figured out how to turn this ugly produce into flours and powders—and Glean was formed as a way to bring once wasted product to

market. Turning Glean into a reality required a lot of hard work and a lot of relationship building.

Our support system expanded when we met NC IDEA. I was involved in a program at East Carolina University that hosted NC IDEA for an info session about their NC IDEA SEED grant program. After the session, I remember thinking how amazing it was that North Carolina had a resource like NC IDEA committed to fostering an ecosystem of people like us.

I was also really inspired by the many entrepreneurs in our state and that this one organization was committed to navigating

“For me, entrepreneurship is an adventure. It’s a journey where you step into a new space and create something that hasn’t existed before. This journey involves learning from every failure and every success and applying those lessons to build a stronger business.”

—LAURA HEARN, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER

the journey and adventure of entrepreneurship with many of us by providing valuable resources, relationships and connections.

In 2018, we applied for an NC IDEA SEED grant. The application process was fairly extensive, but it helped us put some things on paper that we needed to reassess as a business. NC IDEA seriously vets companies and challenges them to think about areas that could be potential problems and encourages them in areas of opportunity. The application process provides a holistic view of your business and it helps you to strategically think about your direction as a company. We knew NC IDEA was focused on expanding its geographic footprint and the types of businesses in their portfolio. Coming from the agricultural space, we represent a business that could provide a lot of economic growth and thought we would be a unique fit.



We won the grant, but NC IDEA has supported us well beyond the funding. As a female entrepreneur, I was also able to personally participate in NC IDEA SOAR. That network has allowed me to find and connect with female entrepreneurs in a similar place. I have also benefitted from participating in several NC IDEA SOAR events, which has helped me to understand who I am as a leader both personally and professionally, giving me the opportunity to directly apply it to Glean.

In a less structured form, NC IDEA has introduced us to mentors and others with very specific experiences that are directly applicable to some of the things we’re working through as a young company. These introductions to people who can look at our business from a neutral perspective have been critical.

The folks at NC IDEA are insanely intelligent people. There’s inspiration in knowing that everyone on the team is passionate about what they do. They live out the mission of the organization and what it stands for. They take a personalized approach with the businesses they work with, and are very hands-on. Not only are they really good at what they do, they have grit and will get down and dirty with you. They know how to do that best.

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