The Office of Rural Prosperity seeks to foster vibrant, prosperous and resilient rural communities across Wisconsin. The Office provides a one-stop shop to help rural stakeholders navigate programs and resources serving rural communities and businesses.

The Office of Rural Prosperity is housed within the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.
How we accomplish our work

- **Rural Thought Leader** - Assisting WEDC in building rural pipelines to programs, creating awareness of barriers rural and tribal communities face in accessing state and federal resources, and sharing rural perspectives in program design conversations.

- **Projects** - Identifying replicable and scalable projects that address a systemic change within Wisconsin. Serve as convener and in some cases a funder.

- **Convening** – Fostering collaborative partnerships to develop outreach processes and participating in collaborative federal applications that solve for a specific issue or gap.

- **Resource Sharing** - Developing toolkits, promoting grant resources and creating frameworks that advance rural prosperity.

www.RuralWI.com
Observations

• Small business is big business in rural communities. In particular, business that supports outdoor recreation, tourism and placemaking

• Rural communities need more innovative and collaborative approaches to address capacity challenges

• Climate migration will impact rural communities disproportionately
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ATTRACTION

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Community Development

With the goal of improving quality of life across Wisconsin, the following programs support minority business growth, downtown development projects and community revitalization efforts.

- Brownfields Site Assessment & Grant Programs
- Capacity Building Grants
- Fabrication Laboratories Grants
- Idle Sites Redevelopment
- Main Streets & Connect Communities
- Diverse Business Development
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits
The CDI Grant Program will support urban, small city, and rural community (re)development efforts by providing financial incentives for catalytic shovel-ready projects with emphasis on, but not limited to, community-driven commercial corridor efforts. The maximum grant amount is generally $250,000.

Grant recipients must provide a minimum 3:1 matching investment in project costs; projects located in a designated economically distressed community, a Development Opportunity Zone, or a rural community must provide a minimum 1:1 matching investment. Additionally, a project where a key component is to provide childcare services or expand housing availability may also be approved by WEDC to provide 1:1 matching funds.
Business Development & Attraction

WEDC and its partners work to connect business and community leaders with the programs that meet their specific needs. Small business is big business in rural communities.

Capital Catalyst
Entrepreneurship Partnership Grants (EPG)
SizeUp WI
Main Street Bounceback Technical Assistance
Cooperative Development Grants

Grants to support the development of new and existing cooperatives in Wisconsin, with a goal of fostering the success of current and future cooperatives by supporting planning and exploratory research in advance of making a large investment.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?
- An existing cooperative operating in Wisconsin
- Businesses looking to convert to the cooperative business model
- Any group of individuals actively working towards legal cooperative status in Wisconsin

WHAT CAN GRANT FUNDS COVER?
- Applicants may use the funds to cover consulting fees for business planning, feasibility studies, legal services, and accounting services to help new or existing cooperatives become established or further develop.
- Only projects related to development are eligible. Salaries and supplies are NOT eligible costs.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
- A minimum 20% cash match of the grant amount is required.
- Each application must include an active quote from the consultant (or attorney or accountant) with whom you will work.
Cooperative Technical Assistance

Supporting cooperatives through research, education, and outreach.
ORP’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Webpage

- Direct links to Wisconsin state agencies’ BIL webpages
- A downloadable spreadsheet of grant opportunities, updated on a monthly basis and organized by topic, including open/close dates, contacts, and links to more information.
- A downloadable spreadsheet of Wisconsin consultants with expertise in grant writing
- Informational videos on how to apply for and manage federal grants

https://ruralwi.com/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/
For fiscal year 2024, which began Oct. 1, 2023, the Inflation Reduction Act provides:

- $1.65 billion for the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)
- $754 million for the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#)
- $472 million for the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
- $189 million for the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#)

These additional funds will help farmers and ranchers implement expanded conservation practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase storage of carbon in their soil and trees. The conservation funding is in addition to otherwise available program funds, and participation is voluntary, incentive-based and targeted to support climate-smart mitigation activities and other conservation activities that facilitate them.
Inflation Reduction Act: Renewable Energy

Direct Pay: Tax Credit Monetization

Here’s how Inflation Reduction Act’s new direct pay and transfer options allow more organizations to utilize clean energy tax credits for equipment placed in service on or after January 1, 2023 and through December 31, 2032:

• The direct pay option allows certain non-taxable entities to directly monetize certain tax credits for entities such as state, local, and tribal governments, rural electric cooperatives, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and others to directly monetize specific tax credits including many renewable energy credits such as the ITC and the PTC. Applicable entities may elect to treat these tax credits as refundable payments of tax. Such entities are eligible to receive a direct payment from the IRS for any amount paid in excess of their tax liability for credits.

• The Inflation Reduction Act also allows eligible taxpayers that are not tax-exempt entities to transfer all or a portion of certain tax credits, including the ITC and PTC, to an unrelated party.
Rural Entrepreneurship Development

Inaugural Wisconsin CEC Conference

Come to Platteville this spring and explore how local entrepreneurship drives the Driftless Region’s development. Network with fellow community champions from around the state. And gain new technical skills for promoting entrepreneurship in your own small town.

Save the Date

Platteville, WI
May 30–31, 2024

Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic

About the Clinic

The Law & Entrepreneurship (L&E) Clinic (Room 4314) provides free legal services to nascent entrepreneurs and early stage companies through the work of law students supervised by faculty and private sector attorneys.
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
DATCP will be awarding approximately $27 million in grants through USDA Grant programs available (applicants may only apply for one):

- Equipment-Only Grants between $10,000 and $99,999
- Infrastructure Grants between $100,000 and $3 million

Includes construction projects

Middle-of-the-supply-chain activities are eligible (i.e., aggregation, processing, distribution)

Excludes meat, poultry, and wild-caught seafood

For more information: RFSI.WI.GOV
Agritourism Resources

- Diversifies farm revenue
- Connects farmers directly to consumers
- Creates local entertainment and event venues
- Provides lodging opportunities
- Celebrates rural culture and places

About AFSIC

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) provides research-based resources for nontraditional food-production and crop-management practices to support the USDA’s mission of promoting a sustainable future and agricultural economic viability for farmers worldwide.
Red Clover Ranch, Soldiers Grove Wisconsin
Rural Placemaking Toolkit:

USDA Rural Development and the University of Kentucky

Highlights placemaking activities, projects, and success stories from across rural America.
Creative Placemaking

_Wormfarm variation_

Creative Placemaking is an active process that illuminates existing assets and re-enchants the familiar, amplifying what is while building fertile soil for what might be.

With an arts emphasis, diverse partners engage in serious yet playful rediscovery of a place rich with history, idiosyncrasy, and possibility - a place too important to leave alone.
Beth Haskovec, Director
beth.haskovec@wedc.org
Website: RuralWI.com
Newsletter: ruralwi.com/stay-connected