

Chapter 6 – Economic Development Resources

The following is a brief listing of Federal, State, regional and local resources, and programs to assist economic development efforts in the Region. This list is only a summary of some of the programs available and provides the most current program information. The reader should seek current information on any of the programs listed.

Federal Resources

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The EDA is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce focusing on providing financial assistance to meet the economic development needs of distressed communities. EDA works with states, regions, and communities to assist in the creation of wealth and minimize poverty using capacity building and planning techniques as well as research grants and strategic initiatives. All EDA investments must be targeted in areas that demonstrate need or economic distress and, out of those qualifying communities; assistance is directed toward those projects that will generate long-term economic growth.

EDA's programs include:

1. Public Works Program – EDA's Public Works program helps distressed communities revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure. This program enables communities to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, generate local investment, and create or retain long-term jobs through land acquisition, development, and infrastructure improvement projects that establish or expand industrial or commercial enterprises.
2. Economic Adjustment Program – assists state and local interests in the design and implementation of strategies to adjust or bring about a change in economy due to industrial or corporate restructuring, natural disaster, reduction in defense expenditures, depletion of natural resources, or new federal laws or requirements.
3. Technical Assistance Program – often supports feasibility studies on potential economic development projects to help fill the knowledge and information gaps that may prevent local leaders in distressed areas from making optimal decisions on economic development issues. Often these studies involve evaluations of proposals for industrial parks or business incubators. Sometimes, however, these funds may be used to sponsor conferences, develop revitalization plans, or to establish Geographic Information Systems for local planning and development purposes.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

The SBA provides financial, technical, and management assistance to help citizens start, run, and grow their businesses. The SBA has many programs focused primarily on making business loans and providing counseling and training programs for small businesses. Funding programs offered by the SBA are listed below:

- 7(a) Loans – SBA's primary business loan program for providing financial assistance to small businesses.
- 504 Loans – Long-term, fixed rate financing of up to \$5 million for major fixed assets that promote business growth and job creation.
- Microloans – Provide loans of up to \$50,000 to help small businesses start up and expand.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)

USDA Rural Development provides a wide range of programs to assist in community and economic development in farm and rural areas across the US. While the USDA's housing, empowerment, and utility programs are beneficial to the stability of communities, it is their business and cooperative programs that are the most directly applied to economic development. USDA-RD programs include:

- Business and Industry Loan Guarantees (B&I)
- Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG)
- Rural Business Investment Program (RBIP)
- Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG)
- Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)
- Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program
- Community Facilities Direct Loans & Grants
- Rural Community Development Initiative Grants
- Intermediary Relending Program (IRP)

State Resources

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is the State's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their mission is to strategically invest in Wisconsin to enhance the economic well-being of people and their businesses and communities.

Programs offered by WEDC include:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Sites Redevelopment Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program
- Wisconsin Investment Fund
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Technology Development Loan Program

Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)

The Wisconsin DOA administers the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in Wisconsin. The CDBG program is a federal-allocated grant program under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The DOA's Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) administers the State's CDBG program and provides funding to units of general local government that do not receive an annual allocation directly from HUD. The primary purpose of the CDBG program is the development of viable communities through the provision of decent affordable housing, a suitable living environment, and the expansion of economic opportunities, principally for the benefit of persons of low and moderate income. There are multiple programs offered in Wisconsin under the CDBG program, which are listed below:

- Economic Development Program (CBDG-ED)
- Public Facilities Program (CBDG-PF)
- Planning Program (CBDG-PLNG)
- Emergency Assistance Program (CBDG-EAP)
- Public Facilities Economic Development Program (CBDG-PFED)
- Housing Regions and Small Cities Revolving Loan Program (CBDG-HSG)

Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA)

WEDA is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to expanding Wisconsin's economy. WEDA represents the economic development interests of both the private and public sectors through leadership on statewide initiatives to advance economic development in Wisconsin. WEDA's mission is to enhance economic development in Wisconsin through professional development, networking, and advocacy.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

WHEDA is responsible for a number of housing and economic development functions. WHEDA works with local and state economic development professionals, businesses, and lending institutions to help an individual expand or modernize a farm or business. Loan Guarantees, direct loans, New Market Tax Credits, and interest rate subsidies are utilized within a financial package to help ensure that the project has the best chance for long term success.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR offers several programs related to economic development. One such program is the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund, which provides funding to expand opportunities for outdoor recreation among other things. DNR also provides programming for environmental cleanup and brownfields through the Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment, which oversees the investigation and cleanup of environmental contamination and the redevelopment of contaminated properties (e.g. brownfield sites, hazardous waste cleanups, spill response, state-funded cleanups). Assistance is also provided to businesses seeking to clean up and re-use existing brownfield sites for commercial, public, or green space uses. The DNR also inventories brownfield sites through their tracking system (BRRTS) and GIS registry. These databases connect to statewide information about contaminated sites, spills, cleanups, and other data. The DNR administers two financial programs for the investigation and cleanup of brownfields: the Wisconsin Assessment Monies (WAM) program and the Ready for Reuse Loan and Grant program.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)

DWD offers programs in vocational rehabilitation, employee training, childcare establishment, and adult apprenticeship programs in construction, services, and industrial/manufacturing activities, among others. Two prominent programs administered by the DWD include the Workforce Innovations Grants program and the Wisconsin Fast Forward program.

The DWD's Workforce Innovations Grants program is a collaboration between DWD and the WEDC to provide funding to regional organizations to design and implement innovative plans to tackle regional workforce challenges such as workforce training and improving access to childcare, housing, and transportation.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) program provides innovative talent development solutions driven by employers to train and retain highly skilled workers. The WFF standard grant program awards funds to Wisconsin businesses to reimburse costs associated with occupational training that will, in turn, qualify workers for full-time employment, higher level employment, or increased wages. These grants cover training costs for current employees, as well as new workers who are unemployed or underemployed. The WFF expanded grant program reimburses school districts for the cost of technical education equipment used in vocational training for advanced manufacturing fields. The grant program helps students transition from high school into the workforce.

Other State Resources

Other organizations and programs offered statewide are listed below:

- Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Wisconsin Small Cities Program
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)
- Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity
- Wisconsin Innovation Service Center
- Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce
- Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC)

Regional Resources

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the Commission maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and income. The NCWRPC provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity and works with local units of government to both apply for and maintain eligibility for certain grants. The NCWRPC also provides a number of resources such as the North Central Wisconsin Entrepreneurship Portal, an inventory of the Region's industrial and business parks, biannual economic profiles for each county within the Region, and quarterly economic reports from Lightcast (formerly EMSI) for each county.

Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund (CWED)

The Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund (CWED) Revolving Loan Program works with entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area. CWED loans usually have low interest rates, reduced collateral requirements, and flexible terms. CWED does not seek to compete with banks for projects, but rather complement them and other programs in a total financial structure.

Each county within the North Central Wisconsin Region participates in CWED. CWED funding objectives are to:

- Encourage business development that supports job creation
- Raise personal incomes by providing opportunities for employee growth
- Promote creation, retention, and expansion of existing businesses
- Leverage private investment throughout the region

Centergy

Centergy serves a five-county region comprising of Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties. Centergy envisions itself as the Collective Voice for advancing prosperity and vibrancy in its five-county region. The organization's mission is to serve as the engine for regional growth and economic development through collaboration with local partners. To drive the mission, Centergy has identified four pillars of focus: Talent Growth, Regional Advocacy, Business Development, and Partner Engagement. These pillars provide a strategic framework to lead economic development and prosperity in Central Wisconsin into the future. Centergy aims to collaborate with businesses and partners to retain and attract in-demand talent throughout its five-county region.

Grow North

Grow North serves an eight-county region including Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. Grow North helps connect local economies in Northern Wisconsin to resources that might not be available to any one smaller region. Grow North follows four main strategies to accomplish their mission and has developed actions to move the organization forward in development of the economy of the region.

- Strengthen relationships and two-way communication so as to understand economic development issues and be able to act on those issues. Leverage, collaborate and coordinate efforts for the region on Federal, State, and Local levels.
- Monitor issues that impact economic development in the region, and be a voice to advocate for change.
- Market the economic strengths and natural assets of the region to those within and beyond the region.
- Continue consistent presence and dialogue with Federal and State Agencies and Officials.

North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (NCWWDB)

NCWWDB is a public/private partnership between government and business that plans, administers, and coordinates Workforce Investment Act (WIA) employment and training programs in the nine counties of Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood. This region is known as Workforce Development Area 6. The NCWWDB purpose is to provide policy, planning, oversight and funding for local workforce development programs and address workforce issues as they emerge within their region.

Local Resources

There are various local economic development organizations located throughout the Region that assist local economic development activities. Types of economic assistance provided by these organizations include business support services (training, development, financial assistance), leading local initiatives such as broadband and childcare expansion, supporting infrastructure projects, providing workforce development programs, promoting tourism, and providing marketing assistance.

Nine of the ten counties within the Region have full-time economic development organizations, while Wood County has an economic development committee that oversees economic activity throughout the County. Many individual communities throughout the Region have their own development groups; some are associated with chambers of commerce, while others are local development or redevelopment corporations/authorities. Additionally, several municipalities throughout the Region have their own economic/community development departments and committees.

The county-level economic development organizations for each county are listed below:

- Adams County Economic Development (ACED)
- Forest County Economic Development Partnership
- Juneau County Economic Development Corporation
- Langlade County Economic Development Corporation
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
- MCDEVCO (Marathon County)
- Oneida County Economic Development Corporation
- Portage County Business Council
- Vilas County Economic Development Corporation
- Wood County Economic Development Committee