



CONNECTING SMALL BUSINESSES WITH THE CAPITAL THEY NEED TO GROW

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has created a new program that aims to support small businesses in the state of Wisconsin by encouraging initiatives that offer these businesses increased access to capital. The **Small Business Development Grant (SBDG) Program** will offer financial incentives for communities and organizations to develop innovative programs that directly support small businesses and small business creation.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Local and regional economic development organizations
- Municipalities
- Tribal governments
- Counties

What can grant funds cover?

- Eligible uses of funds include, but are not limited to, matching grant programs (such as startup, façade, expansion) and small business financing for firms with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees.
- Grant funds may not be used to cover past costs.

What else do I need to know?

- WEDC has allocated \$2 million for fiscal year 2025, with individual grant amounts ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000.
- Membership-based organizations such as chambers of commerce are not eligible to apply for this program.
- WEDC will not require matching funds for this program; however, applications that provide for matching funds will receive extra points in the scoring process.
- The scoring process will also take into account whether the project is in a rural or distressed area and whether it will assist small businesses that are diversely owned, among other criteria.

How do I apply?

- Visit wedc.org/regional to identify the regional economic development director (REDD) for your area. Reach out to that person, who can help you determine if your proposed project meets the criteria to apply. If you are eligible to apply, you will receive an invitation to submit an application through the Network Wisconsin portal.
- Please keep in mind that if your project is selected, you will need to submit project reports with specific deliverables at predetermined intervals during and after the grant period. The REDD for your area can provide more details about the reporting requirements during the initial conversation so you can determine if you wish to proceed.



Evaluation criteria

The application scoring rubric will factor in the following criteria:

- The extent to which the proposed effort provides a model to maintain grant funding for long-term use in the applicant's service territory
- The extent to which the applicant's program provides customized business advising and technical assistance follow-up to small businesses in the applicant's service territory in conjunction with business financing
- The extent to which the applicant's program will address a local economic challenge (e.g. number of localities served, geography, businesses served, etc.)
- The extent to which the problem has been approached through regional collaboration with other economic development groups and other local jurisdictions
- The extent to which the applicant demonstrates community demand/support/need for program.
- The extent to which the applicant demonstrates the critical need for WEDC financial support
- The extent to which the program as proposed will support local, small business growth
- The extent to which the project will provide an impact to economically distressed communities or rural areas of Wisconsin
- The extent to which the project will impact historically underserved populations
- The extent to which the proposed effort can be replicated throughout Wisconsin
- The extent to which the applicant budget is complete and displays how funds will support small businesses
 - Funds cannot be used to cover administrative costs or the provision of technical assistance.
- The extent to which the applicant has secured match funds (a match is not required)
- The extent to which the applicant has demonstrated experience administering loan/grant funds
 - If a Revolving Loan Fund is proposed then objectives, financing strategy (terms, eligibility, use of funds), Operational procedures (application process, underwriting, disbursement, loan monitoring, marketing plans), a full summary of the applicant's organizational capacity to run an RLF must be provided.
- The extent to which the applicant has a plan to disburse grant funds within the first 18 months of the project window