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WEDC receives federal funds to aid downtown businesses *\$79,000 will reach communities through the Main Street and Connect Communities programs*

MADISON, WI. AUG. 18, 2020 – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will receive \$79,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide technical assistance to small businesses in rural Wisconsin, WEDC officials announced today.

The federal money will help fund WEDC’s Main Street and Connect Communities programs, which assist local communities with downtown development and redevelopment. Assistance made possible by the funding will include workshops, webinars and roundtable discussions, as well as one-on-one consulting assistance on topics identified as a top priority by local businesses including marketing, space design, financial recovery and transition planning.

“We are thrilled to be able to expand our educational offerings to more of our communities this year,” said WEDC Downtown Development Program Manager Errin Welty. “Now more than ever, the ability to help businesses adapt and thrive is key to sustaining the vibrancy of our downtown districts.”

The grant to WEDC is part of \$866,000 the USDA is providing to 13 organizations in Wisconsin to help rural businesses create jobs and increase economic opportunities, USDA Wisconsin State Director Frank Frassetto said.

“These grants will strengthen the economic fabric of our rural small towns and communities by providing capital to small and emerging businesses,” he said. The grants are provided through the USDA’s Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program.

WEDC previously received \$58,000 through the program in 2017, when a similar rollout of programming provided assistance and training to 312 businesses and 87 community development partners in 77 communities.

Businesses that were assisted by WEDC in 2017 included Gysber’s Jewelry in Waupun, which went on to renovate their historic property and inspire several adjacent property owners to complete projects; the Ellsworth Creamery in Ellsworth, which underwent a subsequent renovation and expansion of its retail facility; Mill Creek Gardens in Marshfield, which has upgraded its marketing capabilities and added a fully functional e-commerce site; startup business Poppy Popcorn in Rice Lake; and Open Door Coffeehouse in Mayville, which is in the midst of a relocation and expansion. The program also spurred several entrepreneur-friendly pop-up shop programs, including shops in Monroe and Two Rivers.

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Other projects funded by the USDA grant include: \$48,000 to the University of Wisconsin System, which will provide technical assistance to small and emerging businesses in the City of Whitewater to complement its entrepreneurship program and technology park infrastructure; \$99,000 to Wisconsin Community Action Program Association Inc. to assist small businesses in 28 counties with feasibility studies, business planning, financial analysis and loan searches; and \$32,000 to Easter Seals of Wisconsin to assist rural entrepreneurs with disabilities in 16 counties.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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