



RESOLUTION # 38-1/26

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM # 1-20

BOARD ACTION

Adopted:
For: 26
Against: 0
Abstain: 0
Abs/Excd: 4
Vote Req: -
Other Action: -

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

Adopted:
For: 9
Against: 0
Abstain: 0
Abs/Excd: 0

RE: APPROVING 2026 PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WHEREAS, pursuant to §1.251 of La Crosse County Code, the Executive Committee must review and recommend to the Board for approval the guidelines for programs under the purview of the Economic Development Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, Economic Development Advisory Committee will oversee the following grant programs: Acquisition and Demolition Grant Program; Innovation and Diversification Grant; Start-up Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Grant and Arts and Culture Grant; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee reviews the grant amount that the Economic Development Advisory Committee is authorized to approve without additional approval by the Executive Committee or full Board ("maximum award size"); and

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee also reviews the program guidelines which are attached and incorporated;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors approves the following maximum award size for each grant:

Acquisition and Demolition Grant (A&D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Family Project - \$50,000 • Multi-Family Project - \$100,000 • Publicly-owned - \$10,000
Innovation and Diversification Grant (I&D)	\$10,000
Start-up Enterprise and Entrepreneur Development Grant (SEED)	\$20,000
Arts and Culture Grant (A&C)	\$5,000

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the attached program guidelines for the following grant programs are approved for the calendar year of 2026: Acquisition and Demolition Grant Program; Innovation and Diversification Grant; Start-up Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Grant and Arts and Culture Grant.

FISCAL NOTE: Dollars for these grant programs were included in the 2026 budget and are tracked under division 100.130.1180 within the County financial system.

Date: 1/7/26

Clinton Z. Joffe
COMMITTEE CHAIR

ST.K
RECORDING CLERK

	Reviewed Only	Recommended	Not Recommended	
Co. Admin.	<u> </u>	<u>OK</u>	<u> </u>	Requested By: County Administrator Date Requested: December 1, 2025 Drafted By: Corporation Counsel
Fin. Director	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
Corp. Counsel	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
Board Chair	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	

Adopted by the La Crosse County Board this 15 Day of January, 2026

STATE OF WISCONSIN
COUNTY OF LA CROSSE
I, Ginny Dankmeyer, County Clerk of La Crosse County do hereby certify that this document is a true and correct copy of the original resolution required by law to be in my custody and which the County Board of Supervisors of La Crosse County adopted at a meeting held on the 15th day of January 2026.

Ginny Dankmeyer
Ginny Dankmeyer, La Crosse County Clerk

A. Introduction

La Crosse County has a vested interest in neighborhood revitalization and expansion of existing neighborhoods that are experiencing issues with deteriorating housing stock and/or lack of additional development. Deteriorating housing stocks impede reinvestment in traditionally dense neighborhoods, increasing the less dense development outside of the County's traditional municipalities, thus increasing the demand for transportation infrastructure and making delivery of governmental services less efficient. Investment in less populated or underdeveloped areas may also experience barriers to development associated with connection to utilities and other required public services.

The County recognizes the gap between what it costs to redevelop within existing neighborhoods and what it costs to build a new house on a vacant lot that is already served by public infrastructure. This gap is preventing significant private investment in these neighborhoods, so the **Acquisition and Demolition Grant Program** will help to reduce this cost gap and encourage neighborhood revitalization and expansion.

B. Program Goals

- **Increase tax base:** Promote and support the development of lowly assessed and/or challenging properties that will lead to greater value and tax base on the project site and surrounding properties.
- **Increase residential opportunities:** Increase the number of residential units throughout La Crosse County.
- **Smart Planning:** Increase the number of residential opportunities in existing neighborhoods that are already served by public services.
- **Owner Occupancy:** Alleviate up-front costs and challenges associated with improving existing housing stock for owner-occupied home buyers.

C. Eligible Applicants

Anyone who is proposing to acquire, clear, and redevelop low-valued properties, or acquire properties experiencing barriers to development and is committed to constructing higher-valued residential development within the guidelines of this program is welcomed to apply. Applications may be submitted by:

- Individuals/Families
- Developers/Builders
- Non-Profit Organizations
- For-Profit Businesses

D. Eligible Projects

Projects must meet the following qualifications to be considered eligible for the program. If you have questions, please reach out to the contact listed in Section F.

- Properties must be located within La Crosse County.
- Properties must have proper zoning at the time of application



- Properties must be controlled by the grant applicant at the time of application. Site control may be demonstrated by ownership or an accepted offer to purchase.
- Non-profit organizations may apply for grant funding "reservation" up to six (6) months prior to obtaining site control.
- Projects must not be within the floodplain, unless the proposed project will result in a letter of map revision to remove the property from floodplain designation.
- Priority Projects - while not required to apply, projects located within priority neighborhoods will receive additional points in the "Location" category of the scoring table illustrated in Section E. To view a map of Priority Neighborhoods through La Crosse County, please follow this [LINK](#).

E. Eligible Use of Funds

Projects must accomplish one or both of the following criteria:

- A. Acquire and demolish existing deteriorated improvements and construct new residential facilities that increase the property's assessed value
- B. Acquire and alleviate existing site constraints and construct new residential facilities that increase the property's assessed value
 - a. Site constraints may include but are not limited to connecting to or upgrading utilities, alleviating flood-plain status, and site contamination mitigation.

Maximum award amounts:

- Single-family project: up to \$50,000 award
- Single-family project on vacant lot purchased from local municipality: up to \$10,000 award
- Multi-family project: up to \$100,000 award

Funds may be used for activities to prepare property for residential development or redevelopment. Examples of acceptable uses include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase of property
- Payoff of a loan used to purchase property (within 6 months of purchase)
- Demolition and clearing of property
- Utility connection work to serve the property
- Survey work to reconfigure lots
- Other site preparation work including environmental mitigation, flood-plain mitigation, site grading, etc.

The product of the redevelopment work must be taxable housing units with a minimum value of \$250,000 per unit for single-family or \$100,000 per unit for multi-family.

Funding from this grant program is allowed to be used in conjunction with other local government funding programs.



F. Solid Waste Disposal Fee Waiver

Applicants are also eligible to be granted a waiver up to 100 tons for fee's associated with disposal of project materials at the La Crosse County Landfill. Awards will be based on funding availability at the time of application review.

G. Application Process

The grant application process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Application Rounds:** The following is a list of application rounds. There will be four (4) application rounds throughout the calendar year. Applications are due by 5 PM on the last business day of each round. No preference will be given based upon the order in which applications are received. Only fully completed applications will be accepted. If incomplete applications are submitted, staff will reach out specifying which elements are not complete and will ask the applicant to resubmit.
 - a) Application round 1: Opens January 2; closes March 31
 - b) Application round 2: Opens April 1; closes June 30
 - c) Application round 3: Opens July 1; closes September 30
 - d) Application round 4: Opens October 1; closes December 31
2. **Application Submission:** Applications can be submitted online – please follow this [LINK](#) to fill out an online application. Physical applications may also be submitted – to obtain a physical application, please reach out to Sam Bachmeier at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
3. **Application Review:** The La Crosse County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) will evaluate applications based on the criteria outlined in Section G. The meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of April, August, October, and January at 8 AM at the La Crosse County Administrative Center (212 6th Street North, La Crosse, WI). Applicants are encouraged to attend. Virtual options may be considered. Please reach out to Sam Bachmeier to inquire about virtual options at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
4. **Competitive Grant:** Funding is allocated on an annual basis. Applications will be accepted while grant funding is available. The La Crosse County EDC will review all applications submitted during the given round at once, and will determine, based on the criteria outlined in Section G, which application(s) will receive funding. The La Crosse County EDC reserves the right to partially fund applications.
5. **Grand Award Notification:** Successful applicants will be notified in writing and will receive a grant agreement and other relevant documents within five (5) business days of the award being made. The recipient will have seven (7) business days to accept the award and return all required documents before the award will be forfeited.

H. Evaluation Criteria

The EDC will score the applications and make grant awards based upon available funding at the time.

Scoring will be based upon the following table of available points:

Scoring Criteria	Description	Points
Tax Base Increase	Projects with higher projected growth in tax base upon completion will score higher.	35
Location	Projects located in priority neighborhoods within La Crosse County.	30
Award Impact	Projects that demonstrate the grant's critical role in enabling their completion will be prioritized during evaluation.	15
Neighborhood	Proposals in more visible and/or depressed areas of the neighborhoods will score higher.	10
Applicant Capabilities and Performance	Applicants who have experience working in the target neighborhoods, on similar projects, and/or have demonstrated a solid project plan will score higher.	10

- Establishing more single-family, owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood is a priority. To that end, we will strive to maintain up to 50% of the funding for that type of project.
- Applicants that do not receive funding are welcomed to apply for future funding cycles.

The County will issue a 1099 as required by the IRS for grant amounts and it is up to each grantee to determine the taxability as it relates to their project.

I. Program Administration

- **Administering Entity:** The grant program will be administered by the La Crosse County Community Development staff with oversight provided by the La Crosse County EDC.
- **Review Committee:** The La Crosse County EDC, a committee comprised of representatives from the local business community, education institutions, and the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors will provide final a review and determination.
- **Performance Period:** Grantees will generally have six months from the date of the award letter to complete property acquisition and begin demolition on existing structures (if applicable). Grantees will then have 15 months from the date of the award letter to complete construction of a new residential development on the property. Grant recipients may request an extension to their performance period via a written letter that the EDC may consider.
- **Mentorship and Support:** Grant recipients will be encouraged to access mentorship, workshops, and other resources to support their project's development. If the recipient is unfamiliar with what resources are available, La Crosse County staff will provide guidance.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grant recipients will be required to provide a final report no later than four (weeks) after the project has been completed.
- **Reimbursement Grant:** This grant is a reimbursement grant, meaning the grantee must submit invoices, receipts, or purchase orders to be reimbursed up to the amount awarded.
- **Pre-application Expenses:** Under no circumstances will the grant reimburse expenses that were incurred by the grantee prior to the official approval date of the application. Reimbursable expenses must be incurred after official approval has been made by the La Crosse County EDC.
- The County will issue a 1099 as required by the IRS for grant amounts and it is up to each grantee to determine the taxability as it relates to their project.

J. Funding Sources

The grant program will be funded through a combination of sources, which may include:

- La Crosse County government funds
- Other local government funds
- State of Wisconsin programs
- Private sector sponsorships/grants
- Federal grants

K. Marketing and Outreach

The grant program will be promoted through various channels, including:

- Local media outlets
- Online platforms and social media
- Partnerships with local organizations (e.g., universities, incubators, co-working spaces)
- Community events and workshops

L. Evaluation and Reporting

It is the responsibility of the grantee to notify County staff when each step of the redevelopment process is complete. Grantees must complete the Project Outcome Report within four weeks of completing construction.

Reporting will be based on the following program goals:

- # of net new units built
- # of net new owner-occupied units built
- \$ value of net new tax base
- \$ value of private funding leveraged
- Location of project
- Timeliness (project completed within established performance period)

A. Introduction

The La Crosse County Arts and Culture Grant Program (A&C), is designed to provide financial assistance and support to individuals and entities investing in arts and/or cultural projects. This initiative aims to foster new art/cultural installations, festivals, programs, and other related projects.

B. Program Goals

- **Beautification:** Promote and support the creation/installation of arts within La Crosse County (murals, sculptures, monuments/memorials, music, theatre, etc.)
- **Enhance Cultural Representation:** Promote and support projects that highlight ALL cultures throughout La Crosse County.
- **Place-making:** Promote and support projects that create welcoming environments in places where people gather and socialize. *E.g. - downtowns, parks, community centers, arts districts, etc.*
- **Local Representation:** Promote and support projects that involve local artists, organizations, and businesses as much as possible.

C. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding under this initiative, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Organizations:** The organization must be a legally recognized entity;
- OR
- Individual:** The individual must have the ability to file state/federal income tax.
- **Permissions:** The applicant must provide legal documentation permitting the installation, festival, or other initiative. Permission comes in a variety of forms including letters from the property owner and local permits.
 - **Design/Plan:** The applicant must provide designs, sketches, and/or descriptions of the proposed project, including information on the artist and/or event's purpose at the time of application submission.
 - **Use of Funds:** Applicants must clearly demonstrate how the grant funds will be used to complete the project as presented. Questions about eligible uses of funds can be directed to the La Crosse County Community Development Specialist, sbachmeier@la-crossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.

D. Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

- **Grant Range:** Individual grant awards will range from \$500 to \$5,000, depending on the project's need and potential impact.
- **Matching Requirement:** There is NO matching requirement for this program, but applicants who bring outside funding to the project will score higher.

E. Application Process

The grant application process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Application Rounds:** The following is a list of application rounds. There will be four (4) application rounds throughout the calendar year. Applications are due by 5 PM on the last business day of each round. No preference will be given based upon the order in which applications are received. Only fully completed applications will be accepted. If incomplete applications are submitted, staff will reach out specifying which elements are not complete and will ask the applicant to resubmit.
 - a) Application Round 1: Opens January 2; closes February 27
 - b) Application Round 2: Opens March 1; closes May 29
 - c) Application Round 3: Opens June 1; closes August 31
 - d) Application Round 4: Opens September 1; closes November 30
2. **Application:** Applications can be submitted online – please follow this [LINK](#) to fill out an online application. Physical applications may also be submitted – to obtain a physical application, please reach out to Sam Bachmeier at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
3. **Application Review:** The La Crosse County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) will evaluate applications based on the criteria outlined in **Section F**. The meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of March, June, September, and December at 8 AM at the La Crosse County Administrative Center (212 6th Street North, La Crosse, WI). Applicants are encouraged but not required to attend. Virtual options may be considered. Please reach out to Sam Bachmeier to inquire about virtual options at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
4. **Competitive Grant:** Funding is allocated on an annual basis. Applications will be accepted while grant funding is available. The La Crosse County EDC will review all applications submitted during the given round at once, and will determine, based on the criteria outlined in **Section F (Evaluation Criteria)**, which application(s) will receive funding. The La Crosse County EDC reserves the right to partially fund applications.
5. **Grant Award Notification:** Successful applicants will be notified in writing and will receive a grant agreement and other relevant documents within five (5) business days of the award being made. The recipient will have seven (7) business days to accept the award and return all required documents before the award will be forfeited.



F. Evaluation Criteria

The EDC will score the applications and make grant awards based upon available funding at the time.

Scoring will be based upon the following table of available points:

Scoring Criteria	Description	Points
Project Summary and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant provides a complete sketch, design, or summary of the proposed project. Applicant identifies and provides necessary permissions to complete the project. Applicant provides a timeline and summary of work that instills confidence the project will be completed on time and on budget 	30
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant addresses why this project will have a positive impact on the surrounding community Applicant addresses the specific communities/cultures the project is intended to positively impact The proposed project will NOT negatively impact any populations or cultures. 	30
Source of Funding and Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant clearly outlines all the funds needed and secured to complete the project Applicant provides a detailed summary of how the grant funds and outside funds will be used to complete the project. <i>Eg. - \$500 for supplies, \$1,000 for artist, \$200 for permit, etc.</i> 	20
Local Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant is using local artist or organization to complete the project (as much as possible). Applicant is purchasing supplies locally (as much as possible). Applicant is highlighting local populations, cultures, or other influences. 	15
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project highlights a cause or program supported by the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors. 	5

G. Program Administration

- Administering Entity:** The grant program will be administered by the La Crosse County Community Development staff with oversight provided by the La Crosse County EDC.
- Review Committee:** The La Crosse County EDC, a committee comprised of representatives from the local business community, education institutions, and the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors will provide final a review and determination.

- **Performance Period:** Grant recipients will be given 12 months from date of approval to complete their project. Grant recipients may request an extension to their performance period via a written letter that the EDC may consider.
- **Reporting Requirements:** Grant recipients will be required to provide a final report no later than four (weeks) after the project has been completed.
- **Reimbursement Grant:** This grant is a reimbursement grant, meaning the grantee must submit invoices, receipts, or purchase orders to be reimbursed up to the amount awarded.
- **Pre-application Expenses:** Under no circumstances will the grant reimburse expenses that were incurred by the grantee prior to the official approval date of the application. Reimbursable expenses must be incurred after official approval has been made by the La Crosse County EDC.

H. Funding Sources

The grant program will be funded through a combination of sources, which may include:

- La Crosse County government funds
- State of Wisconsin programs
- Private sector sponsorships/grants
- Federal grants

I. Marketing and Outreach

The grant program will be promoted through various channels, including:

- Local media outlets
- Online platforms and social media
- Partnerships with local organizations (e.g., universities, incubators, co-working spaces)
- Community events and workshops

J. Evaluation and Reporting

The program's effectiveness will be evaluated, and a report will be created, including:

- # of completed applications received
- # of grants awarded
- \$ value of grant amounts
- Location of projects – dispersed throughout La Crosse County
- Community impact (positive impact to community gathering spaces)
- # of local artists/organizations benefitting from projects
- Location of project
- Timeliness (project completed within established performance period)



A. Introduction

The La Crosse County Innovation & Diversification Grant (I&D) is designed to provide financial resources to existing small businesses that are poised for growth and encourage said businesses to be innovative in the development of new products and services and the establishment of new markets. **"Small business" is defined as businesses employing a total of 25 or fewer employees.** Examples of activities that may be supported by this grant include, but are not limited to:

- Businesses expanding their product/service base through research, testing, and/or new product/service development
- Businesses expanding their market base through enhanced planning and marketing activities
- Businesses diversifying their market base by expanding into new markets

B. Program Goals

- **Economic Sustainability:** Promote and support existing small businesses who are actively pursuing new opportunities with the goal of increasing revenues.
- **Stimulate Innovation:** Foster the development of new products, services, business models, and business markets.
- **Leverage Private Funding:** Provide gap funding for projects that require capital beyond what can be raised privately.
- **Enhance the Local Economy:** Support core industry sectors within La Crosse County, further strengthening and diversifying the products and services offered locally and creating jobs.

C. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding under this initiative, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Business Location:** The business must be physically located and operate primarily within La Crosse County, Wisconsin.
- **Business Size:** The business must currently employ 25 or fewer total employees.
- **Business Stage:** The business must be registered in good standing with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions for a minimum of five (5) years.
- **Financial Forecast:** The applicant must provide a financial forecast that indicates how the investment expects to result in increased revenues.
- **Legal Structure:** The business must be a legally recognized entity (e.g., sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, corporation).
- **Use of Funds:** Applicants must clearly demonstrate how the grant funds will be used to support business development activities. Grant funds cannot be used for ongoing payroll, employee benefits, or contract employment fees. Questions about eligible uses of funds can be directed to the La Crosse County Community Development Specialist, sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.



D. Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

- **Grant Range:** Individual grant awards will range from \$1,000 to \$10,000, depending on the business's needs and the project's potential impact.
- **Matching Requirement:** A 1:1 matching contribution (cash or financing) is required. Eg: A business applying for a \$10,000 grant must provide an additional \$10,000 to support the project from outside sources, including, but not limited to: personal funds, loan(s), or other grants. Proof of funding is required to complete the application.

E. Application Process

The grant application process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Application Rounds:** The following is a list of application rounds. There will be four (4) application rounds throughout the calendar year. Applications are due by 5 PM on the last business day of each round. No preference will be given based upon the order in which applications are received. Only fully completed applications will be accepted. If incomplete applications are submitted, staff will reach out specifying which elements are not complete and will ask the applicant to resubmit.
 - a) Application Round 1: Opens January 2; closes February 27
 - b) Application Round 2: Opens March 1; closes May 29
 - c) Application Round 3: Opens June 1; closes August 31
 - d) Application Round 4: Opens September 1; closes November 30
2. **Application and Business Plan Submission:** Applications can be submitted online – please follow this [LINK](#) to fill out an online application. Physical applications may also be submitted – to obtain a physical application, please reach out to Sam Bachmeier at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
3. **Application Review:** The La Crosse County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) will evaluate applications based on the criteria outlined in **Section F**. The meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of March, June, September, and December at 8 AM at the La Crosse County Administrative Center (212 6th Street North, La Crosse, WI). Applicants are encouraged but not required to attend. Virtual options may be considered. Please reach out to Sam Bachmeier to inquire about virtual options at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
4. **Competitive Grant:** Funding is allocated on an annual basis. Applications will be accepted while grant funding is available. The La Crosse County EDC will review all applications submitted during the given round at once, and will determine, based on the criteria outlined in **Section G (Evaluation Criteria)**, which application(s) will receive funding. The La Crosse County EDC reserves the right to partially fund applications.
5. **Grant Award Notification:** Successful applicants will be notified in writing and will receive a grant agreement and other relevant documents within five (5) business days of the award being made. The recipient will have seven (7) business days to accept the award and return all required documents before the award will be forfeited.



F. Evaluation Criteria

The EDC will score the applications and make grant awards based upon available funding at the time.

Scoring will be based upon the following table of available points:

Scoring Criteria	Description	Points
Issue/Opportunity	Applicant clearly identifies the issue and/or opportunity the business is facing	30
Solution	Applicant clearly identifies a solution/project that leads to increased revenue for their business. Applicant demonstrates a clear mechanism to track the success of their investment. <i>E.g. - goal to increase revenues by 30% within one year.</i>	30
Viability	Applicant clearly identifies the total funding needed to complete the proposed project. Applicant also identifies a clear plan to bring the project to fruition.	30
Financial Investment	A 1:1 match is required to be considered eligible for this grant. Businesses providing a match beyond the 1:1 requirement will receive a higher score. (1:1 match will result in 5/10 points, 2:1 match will result in 6/10 points, etc.)	10

G. Program Administration

- **Administering Entity:** The grant program will be administered by the La Crosse County Community Development staff with oversight provided by the La Crosse County EDC.
- **Review Committee:** The La Crosse County EDC, a committee comprised of representatives from the local business community, education institutions, and the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors will provide final a review and determination.
- **Performance Period:** Grant recipients will be given 12 months from date of approval to complete their project. Grant recipients may request an extension to their performance period via a written letter that the EDC may consider.
- **Mentorship and Support:** Grant applicants will be encouraged to access mentorship, workshops, and other resources to support their business development. If the recipient is unfamiliar with what resources are available, La Crosse County staff will provide guidance.
- **Reporting Requirements:** Grant recipients will be required to provide a final report no later than four (weeks) after the project has been completed.

- **Reimbursement Grant:** This grant is a reimbursement grant, meaning the grantee must submit invoices, receipts, or purchase orders to be reimbursed up to the amount awarded.
- **Pre-application Expenses:** Under no circumstances will the grant reimburse expenses that were incurred by the grantee prior to the official approval date of the application. Reimbursable expenses must be incurred after official approval has been made by the La Crosse County EDC.

H. Funding Sources

The grant program will be funded through a combination of sources, which may include:

- La Crosse County government funds
- State of Wisconsin programs
- Private sector sponsorships/grants
- Federal grants

I. Marketing and Outreach

The grant program will be promoted through various channels, including:

- Local media outlets
- Online platforms and social media
- Partnerships with local organizations (e.g., universities, incubators, co-working spaces)
- Community events and workshops

J. Evaluation and Reporting

- The program's effectiveness will be evaluated, and a report will be created, including:
 - # of completed applications received
 - # of grants awarded
 - \$ amount of grants awarded
 - \$ amount of private funds leveraged
 - Jobs created
 - Additional revenues generated
 - Economic impact
 - Location of project
 - Timeliness (project completed within established performance period)



A. Introduction

The La Crosse County SEED Grant (Start-up Enterprise & Entrepreneur Development), is designed to provide financial assistance and support to new businesses in La Crosse County, Wisconsin. This initiative aims to foster entrepreneurship, stimulate innovation, and enhance the local economy by helping startups overcome the initial challenges of launching and growing a business.

B. Program Goals

- **Encourage Entrepreneurship:** Promote and support the creation of new businesses in La Crosse County.
- **Stimulate Innovation:** Foster the development of new products, services, and business models.
- **High-Growth Potential:** Businesses with the demonstrated capacity for significant growth and scalability.
- **Create Livable Wage Jobs:** Support startups that have the potential to create new employment opportunities in the community that offer at minimum \$50,000/year in compensation. ***Note*** - it is NOT a requirement to provide jobs at \$50,000/year during the initial start-up phase but should be included in your business plan and financial projections.
- **Enhance the Local Economy:** Support core industry sectors within La Crosse County, further strengthening and diversifying the products and services offered locally.
- **Enhance Startup Success:** Provide resources to leverage private financing and improve the likelihood of startup survival and growth.
- **Enhance Cultural Representation:** Ensure underrepresented communities are supported in La Crosse County.

C. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding under this initiative, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Business Location:** The business must be physically located and operate primarily within La Crosse County, Wisconsin.
- **Business Stage:** The business must be in the startup phase, defined as:
 - Having been in operation for less than two (2) years;
 - OR, not yet in operation but with a detailed plan to launch within six (6) months of the application date;
 - OR, Existing businesses starting a new entity.



- **Business Plan:** The applicant must have a comprehensive business plan that demonstrates the viability and growth potential of the startup. Applicants are encouraged but not required to work with local organizations who specialize in business planning. Such organizations can be found here: [Innovation & Startups | La Crosse County Community Development](#)
- **Legal Structure:** The business must be a legally recognized entity (e.g., sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, corporation).
- **Use of Funds:** Applicants must clearly demonstrate how the grant funds will be used to support startup activities. Grant funds cannot be used for ongoing payroll, employee benefits, or contract employment fees. Questions about eligible uses of funds can be directed to the La Crosse County Community Development Specialist, sbachmeier@la-crossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.

D. Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

- **Grant Range:** Individual grant awards will range from \$2,500 to \$20,000, depending on the startup's needs and the project's potential impact.
- **Matching Requirement:** A 1:2 matching contribution (cash or in-kind) is required. Eg: A business applying for a \$20,000 grant must provide an additional \$40,000 to support the project from outside sources, including, but not limited to: personal funds, loan(s), or other grants. Proof of funding is required to complete the application.

E. Application Process

The grant application process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Application Rounds:** The following is a list of application rounds. There will be two (2) application rounds throughout the calendar year. Applications are due by 5 PM on the last business day of each round. No preference will be given based upon the order in which applications are received. Only fully completed applications will be accepted. If incomplete applications are submitted, staff will reach out specifying which elements are not complete and will ask the applicant to resubmit.
 - a) Application Round 1: Opens January 2; closes April 30
 - b) Application Round 2: Opens June 1; closes October 30
2. **Application and Business Plan Submission:** Applications can be submitted online – please follow this [LINK](#) to fill out an online application. Physical applications may also be submitted – to obtain a physical application, please reach out to Sam Bachmeier at sbachmeier@la-crossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.



3. **Application Review:** The La Crosse County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) will evaluate applications based on the criteria outlined in **Section F**. The meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of May and November at 8 AM at the La Crosse County Administrative Center (212 6th Street North, La Crosse, WI). Applicants are encouraged but not required to attend. Virtual options may be considered. Please reach out to Sam Bachmeier to inquire about virtual options at sbachmeier@lacrossecounty.org or (608) 785-5792.
4. **Competitive Grant:** Funding is allocated on an annual basis. Applications will be accepted while grant funding is available. The La Crosse County EDC will review all applications submitted during the given round at once, and will determine, based on the criteria outlined in **Section F (Evaluation Criteria)**, which application(s) will receive funding. The La Crosse County EDC reserves the right to partially fund applications.
5. **Grant Award Notification:** Successful applicants will be notified in writing and will receive a grant agreement and other relevant documents within five (5) business days of the award being made. The recipient will have seven (7) business days to accept the award and return all required documents before the award will be forfeited.

F. Evaluation Criteria

The EDC will score the applications and make grant awards based upon available funding at the time.

Scoring will be based upon the following table of available points:

Scoring Criteria	Description	Points
Business Plan Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and completeness of plan • Market analysis and competitive landscape • Marketing and sales strategy • Management team experience • Financial projections and funding request justification 	40
Innovation and Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novelty of the product, service, or business model • Potential for growth and scalability • Competitive advantage 	30
Community Need and Economic Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community need • Potential to create jobs offering \$50,000+/year in compensation • Contribution to the local economy 	15
Feasibility and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic timelines and milestones • Operational plan and resource allocation • Financial sustainability 	10
Underrepresented Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Startups founded by women, minorities, veterans, and individuals with disabilities 	5



G. Program Administration

- **Administering Entity:** The grant program will be administered by the La Crosse County Community Development staff with oversight provided by the La Crosse County EDC.
- **Review Committee:** The La Crosse County EDC, a committee comprised of representatives from the local business community, education institutions, and the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors will provide final a review and determination.
- **Performance Period:** Grant recipients will be given 12 months from date of approval to complete their project. Grant recipients may request an extension to their performance period via a written letter that the EDC may consider.
- **Mentorship and Support:** Grant recipients will be encouraged to access mentorship, workshops, and other resources to support their startup's development. If the recipient is unfamiliar with what resources are available, La Crosse County staff will provide guidance.
- **Reporting Requirements:** Grant recipients will be required to provide a final report no later than four (weeks) after the project has been completed.
- **Reimbursement Grant:** This grant is a reimbursement grant, meaning the grantee must submit invoices, receipts, or purchase orders to be reimbursed up to the amount awarded.
- **Pre-application Expenses:** Under no circumstances will the grant reimburse expenses that were incurred by the grantee prior to the official approval date of the application. Reimbursable expenses must be incurred after official approval has been made by the La Crosse County EDC.

H. Funding Sources

The grant program will be funded through a combination of sources, which may include:

- La Crosse County government funds
- State of Wisconsin programs
- Private sector sponsorships
- Foundation grants
- Federal grants

I. Marketing and Outreach

The grant program will be promoted through various channels, including:

- Local media outlets
- Online platforms and social media
- Partnerships with local organizations (e.g., universities, incubators, co-working spaces)
- Community events and workshops



J. Evaluation and Reporting

The program's effectiveness will be evaluated, and a report will be created, including:

- # of completed applications received
- # of grants awarded
- \$ value of grant amounts
- # of jobs created
- # of livable wage jobs created and associated wages
- Startup success rates – evaluated over the course of multiple years
- Location of project
- Timeliness (project completed within established performance period)

