

Dept. of Administration: Ashland Area Development Corporation receives over \$1.8 million to help small businesses

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Ashland, Wis. – Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld today awarded approximately a \$1.89 million grant to the Ashland Area Development Corporation (AADC) through the Diverse Business Grant program to support diverse small businesses in communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. In addition, more than \$3 million has so far been invested to support small businesses in Ashland, as well as more than \$21.6 million investment in Ashland County overall as part of pandemic relief efforts from Governor Tony Evers.

“The Ashland Area Development Corporation has served as a vital hub of resources for existing and aspiring business owners in the area,” Secretary-designee Blumenfeld said. “This grant will help the organization catalyze new businesses, opportunities, and investments in Ashland and reduce barriers to tools, capital, and resources for underrepresented entrepreneurs. These community partnerships show how, working together, we can build a more equitable economy in Wisconsin.”

The Diverse Business Assistance Grant will allow AADC to deliver an array of support services to new and existing businesses throughout the county, particularly entrepreneurs that have historically lacked access to capital and business development supports, and to launch a grant program that will increase entrepreneurs’ ability to access capital by providing a down payment for business loans. Blumenfeld announced the grant award during a visit to AADC’s business incubator with Ashland Mayor Matthew MacKenzie, AADC Executive Director Carver

Harries, local elected officials, and area stakeholders. The event included a tour of the facility and highlighted the ongoing local recovery and impact of Governor Tony Evers' overall [Badger Bounceback](#) effort.

The Diverse Business Assistance Grant will help AADC furnish area businesses with entrepreneur instruction, individualized consulting, a mentoring network, grants for capital, and guidance on how to form professional networks. The [organization operates in Ashland County](#) and includes the Bad River Tribal Reservation. AADC has collaborated with Tribal staff on the development of a new childcare center to be located on Tribal lands and spearheaded a "Ready-Vet-Grow" program to help rural veterans learn how to start their own businesses.

"This grant award will be a catalyst for significant transformation in Ashland County," said Harries, executive director of the AADC. "It will improve the ability of entrepreneurs from historically underserved communities to purchase business property and capital assets, multiplying their opportunities to invest in a region of Wisconsin that is clearly demonstrating potential to make a big leap forward."

Part of a more than \$1 billion investment allocated by Gov. Evers for economic resilience and support for small businesses and impacted industries, the Diverse Business Assistance program was [first announced](#) in October 2021 to support equitable economic recovery statewide. The Diverse Business Assistance Grant program is administered by the DOA and funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The first round of announcements was made in [March 2022](#). A second round of announcements was made in [late August](#). To date, the Diverse Business Assistance program has invested well over \$75 million statewide to assist businesses and entrepreneurs. A complete list of grant awardees and additional information can be found at <https://doa.wi.gov/pages/DiverseBusinessAssistance.aspx>.

Overall, Gov. Evers has invested more than \$100 million in diverse business assistance and investment programs and is investing another [\\$100 million](#) in main street businesses and nonprofits statewide. Visit [BadgerBounceback.wi.gov](#) to view pandemic-related assistance information for you, your business, organization, and community, as well as the latest data and success stories about how COVID-relief investments are making a difference across the state. For updates on other recovery-related grant opportunities, sign up for the [Badger Bounceback update list](#).