

# Dept. of Administration: Columbia County Economic Development Corporation receives nearly \$335,000 to help small businesses

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**Portage, Wis.** - Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld today announced an approximately \$335,000 grant has been awarded to the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) to support diverse small businesses in communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. More than \$1.6 million has so far been invested to support small businesses in Portage, as well as more than \$40 million investment in Columbia County overall as part of pandemic relief efforts from Governor Tony Evers.

During a visit with community and business leaders from Portage and Columbia County, Secretary-designee Blumenfeld detailed how this [Diverse Business Assistance grant](#) will enable CCEDC to increase its outreach to diverse entrepreneurs in the area and to connect new and existing businesses with resources that can help with financing, business plan development, financial education, mentorship, and more. Blumenfeld met with Portage Mayor Mitchell Craig, CCEDC Executive Director Cheryl Fahrner, and stakeholders from City of Portage and the Portage area business community to highlight the ongoing local recovery and impact of Governor Tony Evers' overall Badger Bounceback effort. The visit culminated in a tour of the Portage Enterprise Center, a local business incubator site serving Columbia County.

“Organizations like the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation are on the front lines of assisting small businesses in our state, particularly in areas that have historically lacked access to capital and other resources,” Secretary-designee

Blumenfeld said. “Investing in these community partnerships ensures an equitable recovery from the pandemic and empowers a new generation of entrepreneurs. That is why Governor Evers has prioritized assistance for small businesses and championed initiatives like the Diverse Business Assistance Grant program.”

Established in 1992, [CCEDC is a nonprofit that coordinates and promotes economic development](#) throughout the county. For individuals who would like to start or grow a business, CCEDC can help them answer key questions, provide guidance, and direct them to resources.

“The Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) Board of Directors and CCEDC Executive Director Cheryl Fahrner truly appreciate the State’s recognition of the great work CCEDC does for economic development across the county,” the CCEDC said. “CCEDC is thankful to Governor Evers and the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration for the Diverse Business Assistance Program Grant Award to CCEDC of \$334,935.00. This grant award will allow CCEDC to continue its work with entrepreneurs, small businesses, collaborative partners, and communities across Columbia County. We will be able to expand our outreach and work with diverse entrepreneurs and businesses in the area.”

Part of a more than \$1 billion investment allocated by the Governor 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>

Visit [BadgerBounceback.wi.gov](https://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](#).