

# Dept. of Agriculture: USDA invests \$6 million to expand market opportunities for rural businesses and entrepreneurs in Wisconsin

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U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director for Wisconsin Julie Lassa today announced that the Department is investing \$6 million to help create new and better market opportunities and expand essential services for rural people, businesses, and entrepreneurs in Wisconsin.

“Rural Wisconsin plays an important role in our state and national economy,” said Lassa. “Today’s investments recognize that importance and are designed to create new economic opportunities and better markets for individuals and businesses in our rural communities.” [[Audio: MP3, 326KB, 13 seconds](#)]

The funding will help keep resources and wealth made by rural people right at home through affordable financing and technical assistance. It will help rural Americans start businesses and allow small business owners to grow. It will also open the door to new economic opportunities for communities and people who historically have lacked access to critical resources and financing.

For example:

- The University of Wisconsin Board of Regents will use a \$199,952 [Rural Cooperative Development Grant](#) to provide technical assistance to start-up and established cooperatives, in the areas of retail grocery, manufacturing, green energy, forestry, agriculture, and veterinary services. This project will help reach more than 75 groups and cooperatives.

- Cooperative Development Services Inc. will use a \$200,000 [Rural Cooperative Development Grant](#) to provide technical assistance to cooperatives to foster economic development in rural areas of the upper Midwest. Technical assistance topics will include developing profitable, sustainable, cooperatively owned businesses; developing the infrastructure to support co-op development activities in the region; and fostering the transfer of successful strategies from and to other regions of the country. This project will help reach more than 70 groups seeking assistance with cooperative development.
- Advocap Inc. will use a \$11,664 [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#) grant to provide technical assistance and training to rural microentrepreneurs and microenterprises. Advocap Inc., has been providing business assistance to small, rural businesses for over 25 years. Their mission is to create opportunities for people and communities to reduce poverty and increase self-sufficiency. They focus on helping low-income entrepreneurs with start-up business assistance, as well as ongoing assistance.
- Cap Services Inc. will use a \$83,556 [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#) grant to provide technical assistance and training to rural microentrepreneurs and microenterprises. The applicant is a private non-profit corporation whose mission is to mobilize resources needed to bring about a permanent increase in the ability of low-income people to become economically and emotionally self-sufficient.
- Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation will use a \$56,843 [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#) grant to provide technical assistance and training to rural microentrepreneurs and microenterprises. Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation is one of the state's largest microenterprise agencies and microlenders, with more than 23 years of experience serving low-income individuals, women, and minorities throughout the entire state of Wisconsin.
- In Waunakee, Octopi Brewing LLC will use a \$1,750,000 [Business and Industry Loan](#) to purchase a variety of packaging and manufacturing equipment. Project funds will help expand the potential long-term diversification and viability of their business. This project is expected to save 155 jobs.
- In Tomah, THD LLC, will use a \$4,600,000 [Business and Industry Loan](#) to purchase and operate the Tomah Best Western. This investment in rural Wisconsin will save 15 jobs and provide economic impact to the community.

## **Background:**

USDA is making [242 awards](#) through eight programs specifically designed to create economic opportunities for people and businesses in rural areas. These programs are the [Biofuel Producer Relief Payments Program](#), [Business and Industry \(B&I\) Loan Guarantees](#), [Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program](#), [Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program](#), the [Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program](#), [Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grants](#) program, the [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#) and the [Water and Waste Disposal Loan Guarantees](#).

Awards were also announced in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean-energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit <https://www.usda.gov/>.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety, and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit <https://www.rd.usda.gov/wi>.

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