

Gov. Evers: Under Gov. Evers, Wisconsin top state for ARPA investments into economic development and business assistance

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 16, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Gov. Tony Evers today highlighted a [recent analysis](#) of state allocations of federal aid under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The analysis showed that, as a share of federal aid received by states and directed by Gov. Evers, Wisconsin is the top state in the country for aid directed to overall economic development and the top state in the country in aid directed to assist businesses.

Among investments directed by Gov. Evers to support Wisconsin businesses and economic development includes his popular [Main Street Bounceback Grant Program](#), one of the successful small business assistance programs created by the Evers Administration to support Wisconsin's economic recovery and help fill empty storefronts in all 72 of Wisconsin's counties. Gov. Evers today announced that nearly 7,200 small businesses and nonprofits have been approved for \$10,000 grants to fill empty storefronts through the Main Street Bounceback Grant Program.

"We've worked to make smart investments to get more support into the hands of Wisconsin families, farmers, industries, and small businesses who've been the lifeblood of our economic recovery by hiring locally, buying locally, and giving back to our communities," said Gov. Evers. "With new businesses opening on Main Streets in every county of Wisconsin, unemployment at historic lows, and our state in the best fiscal position in state history, it's clear our investments have paid off. I'm darn proud that we're a national leader in our focus on supporting small

businesses and long-term investments to build an economy that works for everyone.”

Since 2020, Gov. Evers has invested more than \$1 billion of Wisconsin’s federal coronavirus relief funds in economic resilience and supporting small businesses, including through the Main Street Bounceback Grant Program, which provides \$10,000 grants to help small businesses and nonprofits move into previously vacant commercial spaces throughout the state. First announced in [April 2021](#), Gov. Evers [announced](#) an additional \$25 million investment to support the program in May due to greater-than-expected demand, and in September, the governor again [announced](#) an additional \$25 million investment in the program, bringing his total investment to \$100 million to help a total of 10,000 small businesses and nonprofits. The program is administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and grants are available on a first-come, first-served basis through Dec. 31, 2022.

“Communities around the state are continuing to show a sense of excitement and optimism as new businesses open their doors,” said WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes. “In every corner of the state, there’s a feeling that Wisconsin is offering small business owners a chance to make their dreams a reality. These investments are good for the whole community because when one new business opens, it’s a chance for other local businesses to benefit from increased foot traffic and supply chain relationships. It’s really a win for everyone.”

The demand for Main Street Bounceback grants is just one indication of the strength of Wisconsin’s economy. The state’s unemployment rate continues to stay below the national average, while Wisconsin’s labor participation rate—the share of working-age adults currently employed—is one of the highest in the nation for all ages of workers.

The state has also seen rapid growth in business start-ups. Based on records provided by the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions to [WisBusiness.com](#), the number of new business formations in Wisconsin rose 42 percent between 2019 and 2021, from more than 50,000 to over 71,000. By comparison, the year-over-year increases going back to 2011-2012 ranged from 3.2 percent to 8.4 percent.

Funds for the Main Street Bounceback Grant Program are provided by ARPA, and WEDC is working with nine regional economic development organizations to

quickly disburse grant funding to eligible businesses and nonprofit organizations. More information about the Main Street Bounceback Grant Program and how to apply is available on the WEDC website [here](#).