

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Announces \$28 million investment to create Institute for Rural Partnerships

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Rural Development, is announcing that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing [\\$28 million to establish the Institute for Rural Partnerships](#) to address the unique challenges facing rural communities through research, outreach activities, and partnership development. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, one of only three institutions to be awarded funding, is [receiving \\$9.3 million](#) to create the Wisconsin Rural Partnership to advance the land-grant mission of the University, support community-based projects, and create new partnerships to better meet the needs of rural communities. The funding for this initiative comes from the Senator Baldwin-led fiscal year 2022 [Agriculture Appropriations bill](#), which was then included in the bipartisan fiscal year 2022 [omnibus](#) legislation.

“People in rural America face unique challenges to creating economic prosperity and it is important that we provide them the tools and resources they need to thrive in a changing environment and economy,” **said Senator Tammy Baldwin.** “I am proud to have worked to deliver this federal funding to create the Institute for Rural Partnerships and invest in the future prosperity of our rural communities. These resources will help support local innovative projects, forge new partnerships, and ensure our farmers and producers have the information they need to make the best decisions for their future. I appreciate President Biden’s commitment to supporting Wisconsin’s agriculture industry and rural communities.”

“We are excited to be a part of this initiative and to be selected as an Institute for Rural Partnership,” **said Steve Ackerman, Vice Chancellor for Research and**

Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “One partnership we have already identified to receive this funding is the Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet, which is also supported by \$1 million from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. UW-Madison plans to purchase scientific equipment and develop a comprehensive statewide network of 90 environmental (weather and soil) monitoring stations across Wisconsin called the Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet. This equipment, along with the support from the USDA will enable the development of infrastructure that can support solutions to a variety of challenges currently facing rural Wisconsin. This is the Wisconsin Idea in action.”

The Institute for Rural Partnerships, housed at the University of Wisconsin, Auburn University, and the University of Vermont, will promote equitable, resilient, and prosperous food and agricultural systems, a fair marketplace for producers, and expanded opportunities for economic development in rural communities. The Partnership will also collaborate with community-based initiatives and local research, educational institutions, and subject matter experts.

The University of Wisconsin has already identified a partnership that will receive funding to create the Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet, an initiative to develop a comprehensive statewide network of weather and soil monitoring stations to support decision-making in food and agricultural systems, and climate data recordkeeping. The Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet will provide data, research, and education for the agriculture community to help them boost harvests and yields, protect crops and resources, and increase overall economic benefits.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).