

USDA: Invests \$37.4 million to support local businesses, create good-paying jobs and strengthen the economy in rural Wisconsin

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STEVENS POINT, Wisc., Feb. 3, 2022 — United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director for Wisconsin Julie Lassa today announced [the Department is investing \\$37.4 million to help rural Wisconsin through job creation, business expansion and technical assistance.](#)

“USDA’s business programs are meant to assist rural ag producers, small businesses and entrepreneurs with start-up and expansion in order to help create good jobs and grow economic opportunity in rural communities across the state,” Lassa said. “Today’s investments will help support economic growth in rural Wisconsin that will benefit residents and help communities build back better and stronger.” [[radio actuality 5.65 KB 19seconds](#)]

Lassa highlighted 19 investments that will help rural companies hire more workers and reach new customers. They will open the door to new economic opportunities for communities and people who historically have lacked access to critical resources and financing. The investments will help entrepreneurs, business cooperatives and farmers create jobs, grow businesses, and find new and better markets for the items they produce.

For example:

- Wisconsin Hop Exchange will use a \$250,000 **Value-Added Producer Grant** to increase processing, marketing and delivery of raw hops into T-90

pellets. This investment will help to increase the customer base by 1,200 people and annual revenue by nearly \$300,000.

- Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation will use a \$70,068 **Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance** grant to provide technical assistance and training to low-income individuals, women, and minorities throughout the entire state.
- The Board of Regents at the University of Wisconsin will use a \$196,980 **Rural Cooperative Development Grant** to provide technical assistance to help 25 cooperatives and more than 25 other groups and businesses throughout rural Wisconsin.
- Five rural businesses in Wisconsin received \$31.4 million in loan guarantees to help create over 80 jobs and save over 720 jobs through the Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program.

Background:

Today's investments are part of a larger nationwide announcement made by [U.S. Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack who highlighted 751 investments totaling \\$1.4 billion](#). USDA is funding these investments through eight programs specifically designed to create economic opportunities for people and businesses in rural areas. These programs include [Business and Industry \(B&I\) Loan Guarantees](#), which provided [record-breaking investments](#) in fiscal year 2021, and the [B&I CARES Act Program](#), which has helped create thousands of jobs with funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Programs also include [Rural Innovation Stronger Economy \(RISE\) Grants](#), [Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program](#), [Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program](#), [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#), [Intermediary Relending Program](#) and [Value-Added Producer Grants](#).

These programs are part of a suite of business and cooperative services that are projected to help create or save more than 50,000 jobs in rural America through investments made in fiscal year 2021.

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 www.rd.usda.gov/wi. USDA Rural Development is prioritizing projects that will support key priorities under the Biden-Harris Administration to help rural America build back better and stronger. Key priorities include combatting the COVID-19 pandemic; addressing the impacts of climate change; and advancing equity in rural America. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points. If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).