

HELPING WISCONSIN'S RURAL COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE

Thrive Rural Wisconsin, a new initiative of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Office of Rural Prosperity, is a way for rural and tribal communities to bring together local leadership, set common goals in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. Provided at no cost to communities, the Thrive Rural Wisconsin program brings project management, financial support, and technical assistance to advance housing, community economic development, community facilities, and sustainable energy projects and connects them to the resources they need to be successful.

Eligibility

County economic development organizations, nonprofits, and tribal organizations that are based in **communities of 10,000 people or fewer** are eligible to apply for the Thrive Rural Wisconsin initiative, so long as they are **not located in a county that contains a Metropolitan Statistical Area** (i.e., an urban area of 50,000 or more inhabitants). The selection process will give priority to communities and organizations located in a county that appears on the [FY24 Wisconsin Distressed Counties List](#).

Communities must propose a project that advances at least one of the Thrive Rural Wisconsin focus areas:

- Community-based economic development
- Small business development
- Rural housing
- Community facilities
- Sustainable energy projects
- Organizational and financial management

Communities should identify a specific individual to be the point of contact for this project; this person should be supported by a leadership team and should be prepared to seek and manage significant amounts of funding (e.g., from \$50,000 up to \$1 million). Communities must demonstrate readiness and community buy-in, and should document that a project leverages applicable resources. They must be willing to develop and execute a work plan that moves proposed projects forward within a two-year timespan (January 2024-December 2025).

Benefits and support

The benefits program participants will receive include:

- A community assessment
- Work plan development for priority projects
- Project management support
- Fundraising mapping and funding identification
- Grant writing consulting (process guidance, review, etc.)
- Creation of customized toolkits and resources to build capacity in grant writing, grant compliance, or Thrive Rural focus areas



**Thrive Rural Wisconsin
will provide the opportunity to
apply for grants totaling up to**

\$25,000

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- Referrals to consultants, state agencies, and federal programs that help advance the projects identified in the work plan
- Exclusive invitation to apply for predevelopment grants (of up to \$25,000 per year for up to two years) to advance a project and prepare for state and federal grant applications (with possible uses including feasibility studies, architectural renderings, engineering studies, mapping, business plans, curriculum design, and more)*

* WEDC will award these predevelopment grants to up to 10 eligible partners of Thrive Rural Wisconsin. Grant applications will only be accepted from eligible partners that are invited to apply. No applicant is guaranteed to receive a grant.

How to apply

Communities need to prepare the following documents to be considered for this opportunity:

- Planning documents (strategic plan, local or regional plans that address Thrive Rural focus areas)
- Overview of leadership team members with bios and roles (the leadership team should reflect the communities engaged in the process and technical partners and expertise that fit the program focus areas)
- Letters of support from participating local municipalities and/or other partners

Thrive Rural Wisconsin is intended to complement and support the assistance provided by Wisconsin's regional economic development organizations and regional planning commissions, UW-Extension, and the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council. As part of the application process, you will be asked to specify how you currently work with any of these partners.

For more information, please contact:

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Visit ruralwi.com/thrive-rural-wisconsin to submit a community interest form.
The deadline to apply is January 16th at 11:59pm.



Thrive Rural Wisconsin supports communities of

10,000

or fewer people in counties that do not contain a Metropolitan Statistical Area



Thrive Rural Wisconsin will select

10 communities

for technical and financial assistance

LOOK FORWARD ➤