



Innovation & Diversification Grant Program

Program Description

This program will assist businesses in gaining customized consulting assistance and completing innovative projects with the goal of expanding their product lines and/or markets and achieving greater diversification and job growth.

La Crosse County Economic Development Fund, Inc.

Grant Contact Information:

Brian Fukuda, Community Development Specialist

bfukuda@lacrossecounty.org

212 6th Street N, Room 2300

La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone: 608-785-5792

Fax: 608-785-5922

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Small businesses are a vital part of the economy in La Crosse County. Many small businesses recognize that expanding their product offerings and diversifying their market segments are important steps to insure continued growth and economic stability, but struggle to find the resources to take those steps. The importance of innovation and diversification increases as the internet and global markets create new portals for sales and more savvy consumers.

Expanding into new product areas and diversifying a company's market base can be a daunting prospect without the correct guidance and data. La Crosse County saw a need to encourage businesses to take on these projects, and therefore has created this program to help offset the costs of such projects. The program is designed to help area businesses open the doors of new business growth opportunities, and in turn help to stabilize our local economy.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

This program exists to provide financial assistance to help businesses that are poised for growth and encourage them to use the resources of existing non-profit economic development organizations in our community to do one or more of the following:

- New Products (innovation, new products/services, new product uses, etc.) - Expand their product base through research, testing and/or new product development techniques.
- Expand their market base through enhanced planning and direct marketing activities.
- New Markets (private sector, public sector, foreign markets, etc.) - diversify their market base by expanding into new markets.
- New Relationships (joint ventures, strategic relationships, prime/sub relationships, etc.)
- Increase the efficiency of processes with a direct result being increased productivity and new job openings.

The program will give preference to projects that are focused on increasing sales outside of our region and that show minimal adverse affects on other local businesses.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Date(s):	Applications will be considered monthly as applications are submitted and funding is available. Applications received by 12:00 noon on the third Thursday of the month will likely be taken for consideration at the next month's La Crosse County Economic Development Fund meeting Applications should be delivered to the address on the cover page.
	Projects must begin after award and be completed within 9 months.
Company Eligibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located within La Crosse County • 250 employees or less
Grant Funding:	Grant between \$1,000 and \$10,000
	County funding will not be more than 50% of the total project costs. However, to meet the match requirements and to leverage resources, a business and/or participating organization may propose that a third party funding source will fund a portion of match amount to be provided by the business and/or participating non-profit organization.
Company Match:	Minimum 100% cash match of County Grant amount. Applications with at least 50% cash match of County Grant may be considered if other program goals are exceeded.
Non-Profit Participation:	Applicant must demonstrate that they have worked with non-profit resources to prepare for their proposed project if applicable. Applications with a cash or in-kind contribution from a non-profit resource of at least 10% of the County Grant amount will receive preference.
Outcomes:	Must have clearly stated outcomes including, but not limited to one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building • Increased access to capital, bonding • Jobs added and/or retained • Commercialization of technology/innovation • Increased contracts in new market(s) • Added products or services • Diversification of products and/or new uses for existing products • Strategic plan that documents efforts to exploit new market opportunities, including financial planning and market research

GRANT APPLICATION

Please provide the following information in this order, using these headings and subheadings, provided in your own word processing format.

Proposal Summary

	Amount	Cash or “in kind” (describe “in kind”)
Total Project Costs:		
- (Less Company Match)		
- (Less Nonprofit Participation)		
- (Less Third Party Funding)		
Requested Grant Amount		

Please indicate and explain if the Company would proceed with some level of the project if the grant award is lower than requested.

What award amount is the lowest that would make the project feasible? \$ _____

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Business Name:

Business Address:

Primary Contact:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Number of Employees:

Main Products/Services:

NAICS Code*:

Non-Profit (Yes/No):

Additional Business Information: You may use 400 words or less to describe any other features or characteristics of the business that are helpful in understanding the importance of your proposal. If the business has other facilities in Wisconsin, briefly describe those facilities. Information describing the company’s importance to the regional economy, involvement in industry partnerships, and career pathway development belongs here.

* North American Industry Classification System: You may use <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html> or <http://www.naics.com/search.htm> for assistance with NAICS codes. First four digits is sufficient.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION/NON-PROFIT PARTNER INFORMATION if applicable
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Must be an organization that has an established not for profit mission to provide business development and/or industry development assistance to small businesses (as defined by 13 CFR Part 121). More than one organization may be included in the application when collaborative efforts will be used to assist a business.

Non-Profit Name:

Business Address:

Primary Contact:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Non-Profit Description: You may use 400 words or less to describe the organization serving as the non-profit partner organization for this grant. Include any relevant background which establishes the ability of the organization to fulfill the grant as described.

Non-Profit Contribution: You may use 400 words or less to describe how the non-profit partner organization will use the grant to leverage other resources toward completing this project. Contributions can be cash or in-kind. Non-Profit contribution must be at least 10% of the grant amount.

APPLICATION ABSTRACT

Project Summary

Succinctly describe, in 200 words or less:

- the purpose of the proposed project
- a brief description of the problem/opportunity
- a summary of the activities
- a summary of important measureable outcomes

The abstract may be published for various uses. Use your organization's complete name the first time you mention it. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms. Employ direct sentence structures, such as "This project will (action verb)...."

Non-Profit Input to Application

In 100 words or less, describe how the non-profit worked with the business to prepare the application if applicable. Include the names and job titles of representatives involved in planning the grant. Name any employee groups involved.

Current Business Challenges/Opportunities

In 300 words or less, describe the specific issues and opportunities facing the business - e.g., development of new products, increase in production capacity, adoption of new equipment or production processes, inefficiencies in current processes, increased competition, workforce characteristics, etc - that lead to the desire for product or market diversification.

Proposed Solution

In 300 words or less, describe the solution that is being proposed to address the business challenges or take advantage of the business' opportunity. If multiple phases or parts to a solution are to be offered, break it into logical groups. Describe any supporting activities and/or supplies that are included in the budget.

Project Outcomes and Evaluation

This section covers the results that the business expects after the solution has been implemented and how the business will evaluate whether the solution has been effective.

Expected Outcomes

List the business outcomes from the following table that are anticipated after completion of the proposed solution. Add any information that describes specific performance metrics or indicators and goals after the outcome title. You may also add additional outcomes.

Business Outcomes

A. Improved productivity.
B. Cost savings.
C. Improved work environment.
D. Increased sales.
E. (#) new jobs created or (#) existing jobs saved.
F. Improved employee retention.
G. Other (Number G1, G2, etc., if more than one).

Evaluation Process

In 250 words or less, describe how the business will assess whether the proposed project was worthwhile and produced the expected outcomes. Include information about who will be responsible for evaluation activities and the schedule for such activities.

→ Relate evaluation activities to specific outcomes by labeling each evaluation activity with the letter (from the table above) of the outcome that it addresses. An evaluation activity may be linked to more than one outcome. See Below Example.

Example Evaluation Table:

Activity	Evaluation Methodology	Timeline
A. Improved productivity	The business will review key performance indicators. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor as a percentage of sales; • Monthly value of inventory; and • Profit and operating margins. 	Before and after project
B. Cost savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers will review burden rate reports, inventory on-hand and scrap reduction 	Before and after project
D. Increased sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly sales reports will be reviewed 	Before and after project
E. New jobs created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New hirings, if any, will be tracked. 	Quarterly
F. Improved employee retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover rates will be calculated and compared to previous levels. 	After one year

The amount of a grant request should be consistent with the anticipated outcomes of the project.

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

As a recipient of this grant program, if you are successful in achieving the outcomes as described above, would you be willing to help recapitalize the fund by donating back a percentage of the original grant award or a percentage of your increased profits for a period? ***Please answer Yes or No, and if Yes, please explain and indicate a percentage.***

PROJECT BUDGET

Please attach a project budget, indicating specific project expenses, as well as all sources of funds and in-kind contributions. Please also provide a brief explanation of the financial need for the grant and explain why the business is unable to fund this project without the grant.

SELECTION PROCESS

After the application submittal deadline, an impartial evaluation team will review and score all complete applications. Incomplete applications will not be considered unless there is sufficient explanation for any missing information. Applications will be scored based upon the following evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points	Explanation
Proposed Project	60 (25) (25) (10)	<u>Need</u> : How compelling is the challenge and/or opportunity facing the business and how well does it match with the goals of the grant program <u>Solution</u> : How well will the proposed solution address the need and build/stabilize the business and the local economy, without having adverse affects on other local businesses <u>Evaluation</u> : Is the proposed evaluation process adequate to provide relevant data to show the impact of this grant program consistent with the program goals.
Funding	20 (10) (10)	Budget is sufficient to complete the project; company has demonstrated a need for the funding; and all match requirements have been met Additional points are available if more that the minimum match is secured for the project *Applicants with at least 50% match, but less than 100% can earn up to 5 bonus points for meeting a demonstrated community need such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality job creation • Providing a service that will assist other businesses with growth • Etc.
Program Sustainability	20	Additional points are available for businesses that propose to help recapitalize this grant program to help assist other businesses with similar grants in the future

Grant Awards

Once grant applications have been scored, they will be presented to the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Board for award decisions, and all applicants will be contacted. Successful applicants will then receive a grant contract that must be signed and returned to La Crosse County before work on the project begins.

APPLICANT/PARTNER SIGNATURES

By signing below, we certify that all information provided in this application is accurate and correct to the best of our knowledge, and that we have every intention of completing the above described project upon receipt of grant funding.

Signature of Business Applicant

Signature of Non-Profit Partner

Print Name: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

(please print, sign, and attach this page to your application)

Important Note on Confidentiality

This application and other materials submitted to La Crosse County may constitute public records subject to disclosure under Wisconsin’s Public Records Law, § 19.31 et seq. The applicant should mark documents “confidential” where appropriate for financial and other proprietary reasons. These documents, to the extent legally possible, will be kept confidential. La Crosse County will notify the applicant if it receives a public records request for materials marked “confidential” and if La Crosse County intends to release any such materials in response to such a request.