



Community Development Authority

Meeting Date: September 17, 2026

Agenda Item: USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program

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BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what when, where, why)

The Open Doors Wisconsin initiative is designed to support the development and expansion of small and emerging private businesses throughout the rural communities of Fort Atkinson, Whitewater, and Edgerton, WI. This is a project in collaboration with the Fort Atkinson Chamber of Commerce, City of Whitewater Chamber of Commerce, City of Whitewater, Enactus/UW-Whitewater and Edgerton Chamber of Commerce.

Grant funds will be utilized to run 10 workshops (3 per community and 1 that combines all communities) that address reducing barriers preventing entrepreneurs and small businesses from launching, expanding, and occupying available commercial spaces. Project activities will include entrepreneur recruitment, business planning assistance, technical assistance, mentorship, and business launch support. The project will assist entrepreneurs seeking to establish new businesses, existing businesses seeking expansion opportunities, and property owners willing to make commercial spaces available for business occupancy.

By combining technological assistance like website design and social media marketing support, entrepreneurial support services like market feasibility guidance and financial projections, and strategic activation of underutilized commercial properties, the project will create new opportunities for business development while strengthening downtown economies throughout the region. These activities are expected to result in 5-9 new businesses launching or expanding, 2-4 commercial spaces being activated and 15-22 jobs being created within three years.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

None

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

Total award amount is \$49,347

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

None

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)

- USDA Rural Business Development Grant Application