



MAIN STREET BOUNCEBACK GRANTS PROGRAM REFERENCE GUIDE



IT'S TIME FOR WISCONSIN TO BOUNCE BACK

The damage the pandemic has wrought in Wisconsin, and on the economy overall, is undeniable. According to Yelp, 60% of the 160,000 business closures registered in the platform in 2020 were permanent.¹ The types of businesses that were hit hardest were those that anchor many main streets and commercial corridors: retail, bars and restaurants, salons, spas and fitness centers.

Those of us in economic development already know how vacant commercial properties can negatively impact our communities, from reduced tax bases to increased vandalism. Fewer stores and services mean less foot traffic for the businesses that remain, increasing their risk of closure as well. The longer properties remain vacant, the worse the impact can be, and the pandemic only exacerbated these impacts.

Wisconsin is in a better position than many states to bounce back from the pandemic and buck this trend. Yelp's economic data for Wisconsin shows that 1,594 new businesses opened in the second quarter of 2021, nearly as many as opened in the state in the second quarter of 2019, pre-pandemic. In contrast, many states have seen 12 to 15% decreases in new business openings.²

With the Main Street Bounceback Grants Program, our goal is get more of those new businesses into empty storefronts. And to prompt home-based entrepreneurs to expand as well as provide an incentive for existing businesses to open a second or third location.

Thank you for working to make an impact in your communities and on the businesses they depend on. We've put together this guide to help you make that impact as big as possible. It will get you up to speed on the details of the program and give you some tools to market it. We want this program to reach every corner of the state, because our economy won't work well if it doesn't work for all of us.

We can, and we will, bounce back even stronger than before.



Missy Hughes
Secretary and Chief Executive Officer
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation



¹Yelp Local Economic Impact Report, September 2020
²Yelp Economic Average report, Q2 2021

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHAT IS IT?

The goal of the Main Street Bounceback Grants Program is to spur economic well-being in communities throughout Wisconsin by providing \$10,000 to help new or existing businesses move into and revitalize vacant commercial properties. This financial support helps to create a foundation for long-term success for themselves and their communities.

HOW WILL IT HELP MY REGION?

Without a healthy commercial base, communities suffer. Today, much of what we need can be bought online or in big-box stores. But far-away ecommerce sites cannot replace the jobs and wealth built through local and regional businesses, or the sense of community fostered by downtown farmers markets, local festival sponsorships and quirky only-in-my-town establishments. This is especially true for our rural economies, which are increasingly relying on small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Small businesses account for over 95% percent of all retail spaces. But launching a successful Main Street business takes substantial resources. Main Street Bounceback Grants will help businesses defray those costs, while also adding to the local tax base, creating new jobs and boosting traffic to other nearby businesses.

HOW DO BUSINESSES APPLY?

In our marketing for the program, we are asking interested businesses to visit the program's detail page on WEDC.org. When a business in your region fills out the contact form on the page, their information will automatically be emailed to you. We also want you to reach out to your local business and community networks to publicize the program and encourage potential applicants to contact you directly.

Upon receiving an interested business's contact information, we ask that you reach out to them within one week to answer questions and provide the full program guidelines and application form.

Along with their application, businesses also have to submit proof of business, of their occupancy of the building and that the property had previously been vacant. More detail about these requirements is in the next section.

On the 400 block of State Street in Madison, the city is collaborating with a local developer and several local chambers of commerce to host a series of pop-up shops owned by entrepreneurs of color.

“Pop-up shops bring in new foot traffic and can help current brick-and-mortar retail in the area as well. It’s a model that benefits the business, the landlord and the community. We are excited to collaborate to provide retail opportunities and to create a diverse and vibrant downtown.”

–SARAN OUK, OFFICE OF BUSINESS RESOURCES, CITY OF MADISON

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME AS A GRANT ADMINISTRATOR?

Along with this reference guide, we have also provided other collateral, including a suggested email template and guidance on how to best use social media to do outreach for the grants, along with pre-sized graphics for LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

A link to these resources is below, along with links to the [Main Street Bounceback Grants Program](#) detail and [Economic Well-Being pages](#) on WEDC.org.

If you have any questions, your contact at WEDC is Tim Weber, Senior Economic Development Director (tim.weber@wedc.org, 1-608-210-6772).

LINKS YOU'LL WANT TO KNOW

Grants Program Detail Page

wedc.org/programs-and-resources/Main-Street-bounceback-grants/

This is where potential applicants can read the full program details and fill out a contact form to be connected with the administering organization in their region.

Economic Well-Being Landing Page

wedc.org/wisconsin-economic-well-being/

Includes a link to download the Wisconsin Tomorrow: An Economy for All report

Register Your Business

wedc.org/economic-well-being/register-your-business

Whether or not they apply for the grants, we are always encouraging businesses to register with WEDC to stay up to date on the programs, resources and support we offer.

Resources Toolkit

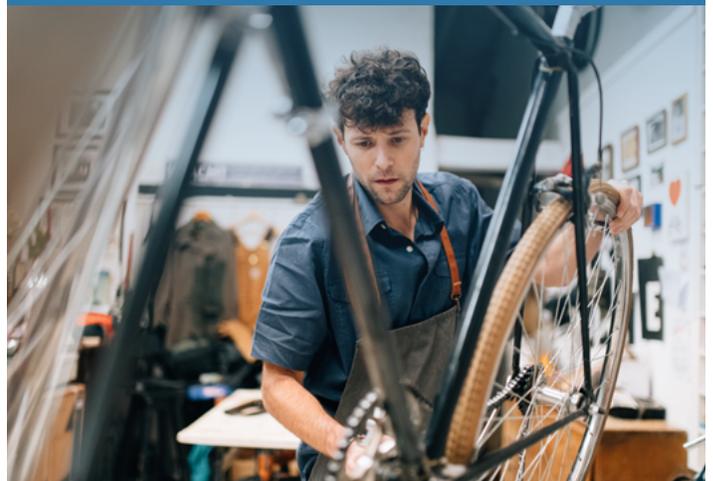
wedc.org/mainstreet-bounceback-toolkit

Where you can access the marketing tools mentioned in this guide, including an email template, sample social media post copy and graphics.

WEDC support has helped turn a 20-acre blighted former railyard in Manitowoc into a vibrant multi-use development now known as the River Point District.

“The opportunity to have over 20 acres of riverfront property to support the community and downtown is practically unheard of. We are pleased to be able to share that along with investments from WEDC and the city, the district has been able to welcome nearly \$20 million in private investment already.”

–JUSTIN M. NICKELS, MAYOR,
CITY OF MANITOWOC



PROGRAM DETAILS

The goal of the Main Street Bounceback Grants Program is to provide financial support to businesses that move into existing vacant commercial properties, helping to create a foundation for long-term success for themselves and their communities. Businesses must apply through the partner organization for the region in which they are located.

These are \$10,000 one-time grants available to businesses and non-profit organizations moving into a vacant commercial space as of January 1, 2021 and through June 30, 2022. Grant funds are available as part of the American Recovery Plan Act.

“Opening my boutique in downtown Racine with all its historic charm was very important to me. Downtown represents a community of togetherness where all are welcome no matter who you are.”

-YOLANDA WEST, OWNER, PLUSH CLOTHING

AUDIENCE

Our audience is mainly small and medium-sized business owners in Wisconsin who are either looking to open a commercial location, expand an existing location or add another location. Almost any type of business is eligible—retail stores, service providers, bars and restaurants, offices and light manufacturing—as are non-profit organizations. National or regional chains are not eligible unless the business applying is a fully independently owned and operated franchise.

Two secondary audiences are economic development organizations and businesses that can help spread the word and refer potential grant applicants to the program. We encourage you to reach out to local chambers of commerce, business improvement districts and other regional business associations. Businesses with an interest in promoting the grants include property owners, property management companies and commercial realty firms with vacant properties available, as well as professional services providers (accountants, financial advisors, attorneys, etc.) who may have clients that could qualify for the grants.

ELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

Grants are available to for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations meeting the following criteria:

- The business is located within the region administered by the regional partner organization to which it applied.
- The business either is moving into a vacant commercial space or has signed a minimum 12-month lease or purchased a vacant commercial space as of January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.
- The business can certify that it has not or will not vacate a commercial space in Wisconsin to become eligible to claim this grant.
- Renewals of existing leases will not qualify; applicants must sign a new lease, contract for deed or sale contract for the commercial space.

Businesses are ineligible to apply for the grants if they:

- Intend to use the space for storage or residential purposes.
- Are part of a national or regional chain, unless the business is an independently owned and operated franchise.
- Are a landlord of residential units excepted where the landlord is occupying the vacant space to support the business.
- Are real estate investment firms that intend to hold the property for investment purposes only.
- Are engaged in any illegal activity under federal, state or local laws.
- Have vacated an existing commercial space in Wisconsin to become eligible.

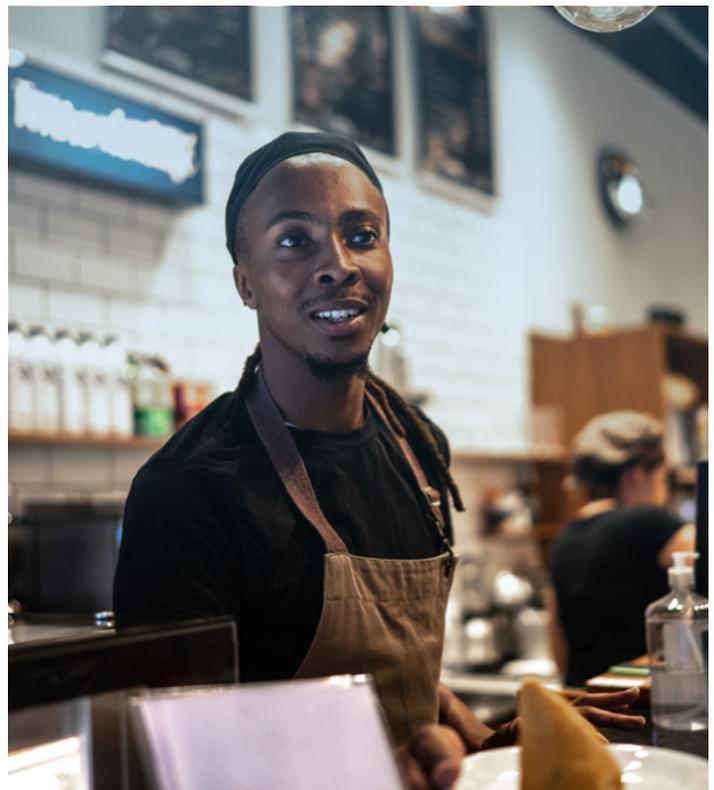
Applicants must also certify in the application that they have not or will not vacate a commercial space to become eligible to claim this grant.

ELIGIBLE USES

Grant funds can be used for, but are not limited to, paying lease or mortgage payments, business operating expenses, building repair and tenant improvements.

ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

Eligible properties are those vacant commercial spaces that are then leased or purchased by an active business operation between January 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022. Underutilized spaces—for example, a building being used only for storage—are also considered eligible properties. Short-term rental units are also eligible as long as they are in commercially zoned properties.



ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Regional administrators are responsible for following their organization's application intake and processing methods. Additional documentation that must be submitted along with a grant application includes:

- **Proof of Business** such as incorporation documents, government registration, permits, Doing Business As (or Fictitious Business Name, or Assumed Business Name), or business tax returns. The proof provided needs to include the name of the business, the name(s) of the business owner(s) and the business address. Tax IDs/EINs for sole proprietorships are not acceptable as proof of business for sole proprietorships.
- **Letter of Acknowledgement** from an economic development organization (such as a regional economic development agency, local municipality, chamber of commerce, business improvement district, Main Street or Connect Community organization) stating that the business occupant represents a new tenant to the commercial space or a physical expansion of an existing tenant/owner into additional commercial space, with lease or purchase occurring on or after January 1, 2021.
- **Fully Executed Lease or Contract** reflecting their lease or purchase beginning on or after January 1, 2021 and not later than June 30, 2022. Must be for a minimum of 12 months and include proof of the physical location for the property.
- **IRS Form W-9:** You can download a 2021 W-9 form from the [IRS website](#).

ADMINISTRATION & REPORTING

As the regional partner, you will receive \$10,000 flat fee up front, 2.5% of each award made taken from the base award amount, and up to \$10,000 actual audit costs reimbursed.

Regional partners shall have a certified annual audit and will be required to provide reporting and other information as required by the U.S. Treasury Department, Wisconsin Department of Administration or WEDC.



MARKETING THE PROGRAM

In addition to the media alert and promotional tour, WEDC is leveraging our sponsorship relationships to help publicize the program. We are also reaching out to other organizations relevant to potential grant applicants and our referral audiences. These include state and regional commercial realty and property management associations like the Commercial Association of Realtors – Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Bankers Association and the state chapter of NAIOP, the commercial real estate development association.

But we know the most effective way to spread the word about the Main Street Bounceback Grants program to every corner of the state is to help you leverage local knowledge and professional networks. To help you do that, we've included several marketing resources with this reference guide:

- **Social Media Toolkit:** The toolkit walks you through how to effectively use social media to do outreach for the program. Please use the graphics and suggested post copy included to promote the grants program on your organization's LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- **Regional Grant-At-A-Glance:** This short overview of the program includes your contact info. It can be used as a printed hand-out, emailed to potential grant applicants or distributed through your regional networks.
- **Email Template:** To help you keep messaging consistent across the program, we've designed an email template and included suggested copy to use when promoting the grants and when communicating with grant applicants.



