

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday, April 16, 2019
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Wood County Courthouse, Room 114

1. Call meeting to order.
2. Declaration of quorum.
3. Consent Agenda
 - a. Review/approve minutes from previous committee meetings.
 - b. Review monthly letter of comment.
4. Public Comments (*brief comments/statement regarding committee business*)
5. Review and discussion of Committee's thought on what economic "success" looks like.
6. Discussion on grant opportunity for countywide tourism and marketing.
7. Update on REDI Grant application and discussion of other opportunities to complete a countywide economic development strategy.
8. SolSmart Update.
9. Adjourn

MINUTES
CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2019
WOOD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, ROOM #115, WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI

Members Present: Kennth Curry, Robert Ashbeck, Mark Holbrook, Dave LaFontaine, Bill Leichtnam.

Staff Present:

Planning & Zoning Staff: Jason Grueneberg & Victoria Willson

Others Present: Rick Bakovka (REGI), Adam Fischer (District 5 Supervisor), Jake Hahn (District 8 Supervisor), Scott Larson (Marshfield Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director), Nancy Turyk (UW Extension, Community Development Educator), Kelly Ryan (Incourage, CEO), Mark Speirs (Small Business Development Center, UWSP), Angel Whitehead (HOW-President), Bill Clendenning (District 15 Supervisor), Doug Machon (County Board Chairperson), Donna Rozar (District 2 Supervisor), Sue Kunferman (Wood County Health Department, Director), Dennis Polach (District 14 Supervisor)

Members Excused: Harvey Peterson

1. **Call to Order.** Chairperson Curry called the CEED Meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
2. **Declaration of Quorum.** Chairperson Curry declared a quorum.
3. **Public Comment.** -Kelly Ryan from Incourage presented a letter of request to ask the CEED Committee to explore and consider membership in the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. See attached document. (Attachment #1)

Bob Ashbeck questioned the grant map in the above referenced document from Kelly Ryan. Why are rural areas not being developed? Wisconsin Rapids, Marshfield and Nekoosa are being developed but the rural areas need help too. Rick Bakovka spoke to this question indicating that the rural municipalities don't have the resources to apply for these grants. Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield have taken steps to be investment ready; as they have the resources and tools to do so. Wood County's Economic Development plan needs to be able to have some venue to provide resources to those rural municipalities. Bill Clendenning added towns get their backing from the Wisconsin Towns Association. For towns to increase their economic development, they need education. Towns are not necessarily trained to come to the County and ask for that money. We need to get behind our Towns Association and provide education to them. Jason Grueneberg indicated that the towns are not completely cut off from our staff resources. Staff in the office assists the rural towns on their comprehensive plans whereas the larger cities wouldn't be eligible for such assistance based on the current model in our office.

4. **Discuss Wood County Economic Development Mission, 2019 Budget and current grant funding process.**
 - Jason Grueneberg read the current Wood County Economic Development mission to give people an idea of what is currently in place. He states in order to move forward, we need to know where we are at. Is the mission statement still relevant? Mark Holbrook would like to see certain modifications made. Ken Curry questioned if staff should work on the mission statement or if the committee should have more involvement. Jason feels he would rather go through a process with the committee again if there is a lack of confidence in the current mission. Discussion followed. Chairman Curry asked that the mission statement be added as an agenda item to be re-tooled.

- Jason Grueneberg discussed the 2019 budget and gave a run down on what the Economic Development Budget looks like. \$5000 for ED promotion; \$2325 for mileage and conference; \$151,250 for grant funding. Dave LaFontaine expressed concern that \$5000 for staffing seems inadequate. Jason Grueneberg clarified that the \$5000 is for county promotion of ED. His salary from the ED is \$2325 and the rest of his salary is funded by other budgets. Jason spends about 50% of his time and Nancy Turyk spends about 33% of her time on ED. That being said, ED in the county is getting less than one staff person focused on ED. Chairman Curry states that if the committee goes to the board and asks for more money, they need to have a purpose and reasonable plan, in order to be successful. Bob Ashbeck gives mention to the infrastructure we now have with Highway 10 and how that can be utilized to get people to the area. Bill Leichtnam asks why Wood County isn't growing like the Plover and Wausau areas. He feels the \$151,205 being spent is misappropriated. With our demographics, Wood County is not nearly where it should be. Mark Holbrook said outside of Human Services, everything else the county does should be involved in ED. Scott Larson spoke in detail of the differences between the northern end of the county versus the southern end along with the struggle each has with the workforce. Further discussion followed.
- There has been discussion about the grant funding process. Opinions differ on this process as to whether it should be left as is or if the process needs changes. Currently if someone wants to request funds from the county, they need to fill out the application. The application is not publicized. Jason gave an overview of what the application looks like and then described the funding process. The application was put together by the last CEED committee. Jason feels the application is sufficient at this time but asks for input from others. Mark Holbrook doesn't think the process is very effective or efficient. He would like to know a lot more about what role County Government can participate in that would encourage the kind of economic development that he thinks this county needs. Discussion ensued.

5. Presentation and discussion on Wood County's current role and involvement in economic development.

- Jason Grueneberg presented a power point on what the County is currently doing in terms of ED. See attached power point slides. (Attachment #2) Discussion was had on the Geospatial/Mapping resource the county provides. This is a widely used tool although not necessarily a marketed tool. Many people and businesses are aware of it and use it frequently. Bill Clendenning attested to the fact that he has heard a lot of positive talk on this resource.
- The floor was opened up for questions. Dave LaFontaine made mention that the Highway investment of 5 years & 4 million dollars, was stopped after 3 years and they are no longer doing bonding. Jason will remove that item from the list.
- Mark Holbrook tasked Jason to find 5 other counties in the nation that have taken a leadership role in ED in their communities and have been successful.

6. Consideration of opportunities, resources and process to develop an economic development plan for the County.

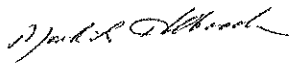
- Nancy Turyk presented information on ED tools that could be useful in creating an ED plan for the county. Nancy handed out materials on Future Regions Initiative (Attachment #3) and Rural Economic Development Innovation (Attachment #4). Wood County could use either of these programs to assist in creating an Economic Development plan. The first of the two would come with a cost. The second is funded by the USDA for use by communities. If Wood County wishes to complete an application for the Rural Economic Development Innovation, it would need to do so quickly as the deadline is April 5th. There would need to be a sub-committee or brainstorming session. Jason agrees that if the County is going to write an Economic Development plan they will definitely need other resources, such as this, to help. Nancy indicated she listened to a

webinar on this and can share the link for others that may want to listen to it. Discussion followed on having a special meeting to discuss these options.

- Sue Kunferman spoke on the importance of Economic Development and how it relates to the overall health of people.
- Sue Kunferman requested that Wood County becoming a member of NCWRPC be added as an agenda item for the next meeting.
- Next schedule meeting is March 19th 2019 at 1:00pm.

7. Adjourn. Motion by Bob Ashbeck. Second by Bill Leichnam. Meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark L. Holbrook, Secretary

Minutes by Victoria Wilson, Planning & Zoning Office

Review for submittal to County Board by Mark L. Holbrook (approved on March 11th, 2019 @9:18a.m.)

MINUTES
CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019
WOOD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, ROOM #114, WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI

Members Present: Kennth Curry, Robert Ashbeck, Mark Holbrook, Dave LaFontaine, Bill Leichtnam.

Staff Present:

Planning & Zoning Staff: Jason Grueneberg & Victoria Wilson

Others Present: Adam Fischer (District 5 Supervisor), Jake Hahn (District 8 Supervisor), Angel Whitehead (HOW-President), Bill Clendenning (District 15 Supervisor), Doug Machon (County Board Chairperson), Dennis Polach (District 14 Supervisor), Timothy Stoflet, Public

Members Excused: Harvey Peterson

1. **Call to Order.** Chairperson Curry called the CEED Meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. **Declaration of Quorum.** Chairperson Curry declared a quorum.

Item #5 on the agenda was moved up prior to item #3.

3. **Discussion and consideration of becoming a member of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.**

- Dave LaFontaine asked what the cost of membership in NCWRPC is. Jason Grueneberg asked if anyone who had signed the letter of request for membership would like to speak on the request. Of the eight people who signed the letter of request, none were present. Jason spoke on behalf of the request. He met with Dennis Lawrence (Executive Director, NCWRPC) and asked a lot of questions about what the benefit of being an RPC member would be. Membership would allow federal and state grant money to flow into the area. Jason gave further details on the overall benefit of being members of the RPC. The cost of membership to Wood County would be \$43,000. The NCWRPC 2017 annual report is included in the packet for this meeting. If Wood County were to become members, all municipalities in the county would have access to regional planning commission benefits. However, there may be costs above and beyond the membership cost related to their projects. Jason recommends that if Wood County were to become members, he does recommend doing so for more than 1 year, possibly for 3 to 5 years. Jason further elaborated on services that are offered to Wood County as non-paying members and services offered to those counties that are paying members. Wood County is one of two counties that are not members of the NCWRPC at this time, the other county being Portage County. Questions from committee members followed. Bill Leichtnam indicated he would like Dennis Lawrence to sit in on one of our meetings to provide more information on Wood County becoming a member. He also suggested having another county that is a member sitting in to tell us what benefits they are getting by being members. Further discussion followed on where the money would come from for membership in 2020. The committee would like Dennis Lawrence and Jerry Nelson be put on the April agenda for questions on this item.

4. **Discussion on the role of counties in economic development.**

- Jason Grueneberg spoke on some references that have been made to what other counties are investing in ED. Some of the references to numbers that have been thrown out there are numbers that include what is being invested to the whole county including a CVB, a chamber, county funding and an EDC. Wood County gives \$151,250 to partner organizations. He is trying to gain a sense of what other county governments are actually investing rather than the

cumulative county. There may be a misconception that Wood County is under-investing, when in reality, we invest on average, more than other counties in the region. The only county that currently doesn't have an EDC (Economic Development Corporation) is Wood County. An EDC would generally have two or three staff people as well as some level of county contribution. Counties "so to speak" cut the check to the EDC and let them function as their ED entity. The range of investment in the region is \$35,000 to \$100,000 with some municipalities kicking in funds. It's something Wood County should look into at some point. Many counties are struggling, as Wood County is, to figure out their role in ED. One unique challenge for Wood County is having two large population centers (Wisc Rapids & Marshfield). This provides opportunities but also presents challenges for Wood County. Bill Leichtnam indicated he wouldn't want to pay staff salaries where we are not seeing any ED come our way. If we are going to invest \$151,000, how can we benefit most and get the biggest ROI? Mark Holbrook indicated we need to develop a vision for our county. We have a huge amount of forest land not being used for recreation and we have many other opportunities for development. He is uncertain that being a member of the NCWRPC is going to get us where we want. We need more information about membership. Bob Ashbeck stated we need to make Wood County desirable to businesses and work with them to get them here. Further discussion ensued.

5. Public Comments.

- None

6. Discussion of USDA REDI grant proposal and what "success" looks like for Wood County.

- Nancy Turyk has taken the lead on applying for this grant. Angel Whitehead from HOW has also been instrumental in helping with the grant. Currently those people working on different parts of the grant are finishing those pieces up. Once they are complete, Nancy will go through them to edit and merge all the pieces. Two questions needing an answer are "What does success look like?" and "What are 4 strengths and 4 challenges?" Committee members were each given a sheet of paper to answer these questions and those will be turned over the Nancy Turyk to compile and submit with the final grant application.

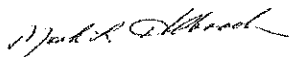
7. Discussion of 2020 economic development grant requests.

- Jason Grueneberg talked about the grant requests for the upcoming year. If we do decide to go with any kind of grant program this year, we need to consider the timeline of the requests. Last year more money was requested. Do we want to keep the same model as in the past or do things differently going forward? This is something being brought up for committee members to give some thought to over the next couple of months. We will need to make a decision by April or May at the latest on what action we will take. The committee directed Jason to send a letter to current stakeholders to let them know there may changes. Discussion followed. Chairman Curry asked if this topic can be added as a future agenda item.
- Next scheduled meeting is April 16th, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

8. Adjourn

- Motion by Dave La Fontaine. Second by Bob Ashbeck. Meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark L. Holbrook, Secretary
Minutes by Victoria Wilson, Planning & Zoning Office

Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee
Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Review for submittal to County Board by Mark L. Holbrook (approved on March 28th, 2019 @ 9:38 a.m.)

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES REPORT-JASON GRUENEGER

Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund – On April 3rd I attended the CWED Executive Committee meeting to review Administrative Service Provider proposals. Interviews will take place on April 15th.

Marshfield Economic Development Board (EDB) – On April 4th I attended the Marshfield EDB meeting. Some of the agenda items included discussion on the feasibility of a business incubator, housing study implementation, approval of a REDI Grant support letter, and Economic Development Plan action items.

Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Grant – On April 5th a REDI grant application was submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture to develop an Economic Development Strategy for Wood County. The application drafting process was a collaborative effort that was completed within a tight timeline. A big thanks to all of the individuals and entities that submitted letters of support, and all of the Economic Development partners in the county that participated in drafting the application. We should know by the end of April if the application was successful.

Efficiency Grants – On April 9th I attended the County Executive Committee meeting to review the final Lean Process Initiative Grant application and the Renewable and Sustainable Grant application. The applications were approved and will be sent out by the County Clerk. All applications will be reviewed at the June Executive Committee meeting. I also presented 2 models for a sustainable and renewable committee as well as draft roles and responsibilities for this committee.

Regional Economic Growth Initiative (REGI) – On April 9th I attended the REGI Board of Directors meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to develop priorities and a work program for 2019.

ATV/UTV Implementation – ATV/UTV trails and routes are scheduled to be opened in mid-May. Work continues on mapping, sign installation and improvements at Dexter Park. A grant application was submitted by Parks and Forestry on April 18th to cover the cost of trail maintenance and a variety of other future projects. I will be working with the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber and Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce to plan a ribbon cutting in May.

Business Expansion – I have been working with a business that is looking to expand into the South Wood County area. An update will be provided at a later date if and when there is news to share.

What Does Success Look Like?

- 1) Hard to define!!
 - a) Increase in county tax base
 - b) Increase in job opportunities in County
 - i) Keep more of our young people in the area with good jobs
 - ii) Provide a greater variety of jobs
 - c) Provide more recreational opportunities within county

Strengths:

- 1) Excellent health care in clinics, hospitals
- 2) Good road system through county
- 3) Excellent educational system; K-12, MSTC, UWSP-M
- 4) Good job opportunities for some of our viable businesses
 - a) Stainless steel
 - b) Trucking
 - c) Others

Challenges:

- 1) Economic Development
- 2) Keeping a good road system
- 3) Providing sufficient employees for certain employers
- 4) Increasing county tax base to support all the challenges

What Does Success Look Like?

- 1) See region's economy stabilize (End to shuttered businesses; level employment)
- 2) Increased housing starts
- 3) Infrastructure developed to encourage growth
- 4) Recreational pursuits/expanded to attract immigration & end out migration of our youth.

Strengths:

- 1) Willingness to define county's part Economic Development
- 2) Large enough population base – 2 large communities on either end of county
- 3) Diversified base between ag, health care, paper industry, cranberry growers, etc.!
- 4) 4 seasons; attractive climate; mid-continent location

Challenges:

- 1) Overcome inertia – get going on a plan
 - 2) ID where help is coming from (Organizational help)
 - 3) Stay within budget
 - 4) Sell our solution to rest of County Board
-

What Does Success Look Like?

- 1) We develop a community that is perceived as a great place to live & raise a family in, because of great job prospects, recreational prospects & educational opportunity.
- 2) We are a community that other economic interests (ie. small business, corporations & business incubators) see as a viable community to do business in.
- 3) We are a community that future generations look at with pride and with the intention of remaining here to raise a family.
- 4) We are a community that recognizes the value of our environment and work proactively to protect it for our prosperity.

Strengths:

- 1) We have good schools (K-16)
- 2) We have a healthy environment
- 3) We have good roadway access
- 4) We have a good healthcare system

Challenges:

- 1) Deteriorating infrastructure in some areas
 - 2) A somewhat disillusioned workforce that will need to be convinced of the need to invest in our own community
 - 3) A legislature that seems business friendly, but not people friendly.
 - 4) A natural environment that is under developed
-

What Does Success Look Like?

- 1) Cooperation between county urban center
- 2) Definite direction – county goals
- 3) Offering an attainable goal to the public

Challenges:

- 1) All entities on the same page with common goals
-

What Does Success Look Like?

- 1) Agriculture
- 2) Education
- 3) Transportation-easy access to the Fox Valley
- 4) Work Force

Successes (related to above 4):

- 1) Agriculture is the biggest market to establish new jobs
- 2) Higher education will bring knowledge to new jobs
- 3) Will bring more opportunities to smaller towns
- 4) Workforce will come with the industries



Rural Economic Development Innovation Rural Community/Regional Application

Application Acceptance Period: February 11, 2019-April 5, 2019. DUE BY APRIL 5, 2019

Letter of Interest Submission Deadline: March 8, 2019. (Please note: A Letter of Interest is not a requirement to submit a complete application)

About REDI

The USDA Rural Development Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Initiative was designed to support regionalized planning to overcome multi-jurisdictional challenges and to better leverage federal, state, local and/or private funding.

In collaboration with the REDI Cooperators, the National Association of Counties, Rural Community Assistance Partnership, McClure Engineering Company, and Purdue University Center for Regional Development and University of Kentucky's Community Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky, the REDI Initiative will support rural communities by providing the opportunity to maximize their access to planning resources. These resources will enable the Cooperators to identify critical needs, create an actionable economic development plan, convene with potential partners, as well as implement project priorities that will ultimately improve economic stability and the quality of life in rural communities.

Purpose

This application is for REDI technical assistance and capacity building, to be provided free of charge, through the REDI Cooperators. Applications will be scored, reviewed and selected on a competitive basis.

Participation in REDI will enable a rural community or region to create an economic development plan that will include: 1) Evidence-based assessment of community assets, challenges and opportunities; 2) Goals that are focused, logical, targeted, and timely with tasks identified and the entities responsible for carrying these actions clearly delineated; 3) Clear planning strategies that are intended to help produce, either directly or indirectly, improvements in the local and regional economy; and 4) Metrics to track implementation and ongoing progress of the economic plan.

Benefits

Community and regional engagement with the REDI Cooperators will support technical assistance outcomes that build capacity within targeted areas of planning. This technical assistance will result in a strong regional economic development plan that identifies projects that may be eligible for other Rural Development programs and/or be a blueprint for leveraging other federal, state, local, or private sector resources.

Through a cooperative agreement with USDA Rural Development, REDI Cooperators will support a community and/or region with tools and technical assistance for economic development planning to create regional economic strategies.

Additional information about each of the Cooperators is provided on the next pages.



National Association of Counties (NACO)

Through its previous success in developing and administering high-quality educational, training, and technical assistance programs for rural county leaders, the National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) has provided tools and resources for many rural communities to take on their own economic and community development projects. NACoRF is partnering with the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) to develop a peer-learning program to teach local and regional leaders in rural areas how to implement multijurisdictional economic development plans and projects.

The program will include workshops, team mentoring, educational webinars, community case studies, and interactive learning opportunities. The goals of this effort are to: 1) inspire rural county and regional leaders to think creatively and regionally about new solutions to local challenges; 2) facilitate collaboration and partnership among neighboring counties within a region; and 3) empower counties to develop and implement economic and community strategies with emphasis on economic diversification; supporting a rural workforce; technological innovation and e-connectivity; regional asset-based development; and local quality of life.

Contact: Cheryl Burnett, Email: CBurnett@naco.org

Website: <http://www.naco.org>



Rural Community Assistance Partnership

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (www.rcap.org) will deliver technical assistance utilizing the WealthWorks model (www.wealthworks.org) focused on helping rural regions and communities identify existing wealth or assets to build upon, recognize market opportunities and connect local assets to real market demand. WealthWorks allows local leaders to focus on what they have—instead of what they lack—to generate multiple forms of wealth that benefit residents today and for generations to come while rooting value in local people, places, and businesses.

WealthWorks offers a systematic approach that engages a wide range of community partners in turning enterprising opportunities into results. This model can complement or incorporate traditional economic development methods, but intentionally focuses on creating more value that becomes rooted locally. WealthWorks' value chain approach is a self-sustaining, distinctive economic development model. Value chains develop from local assets, holistically building relationships and filling gaps to link local small businesses and entrepreneurs with identified market demand.

Six hubs across the country will provide this value-chain development assistance:

- Community Roots (serving Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont)
- Central Appalachian Network (serving Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)
- Communities Unlimited (serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas)
- Region Five Development Commission (serving Minnesota)
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (serving Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming)
- Rural Development Initiatives (serving Idaho, Oregon, and Washington)

Additional support in the Midwest will come online later in the REDI initiative through the Midwest Assistance Program.

Contact: Ashley Zuelke, Email: AZuelke@rcap.org

Website: www.rcap.org / www.wealthworks.org



McClure Engineering Company

McClure provides a full spectrum of engineering, planning, surveying, design, construction administration, placemaking, and funding assistance throughout the nation. The firm continues to expand its services and impact by working alongside communities to develop a people-centered blueprint for sustainable economic and community development.

For the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI), McClure is partnering with CO.STARTERS, a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based firm assisting communities to build entrepreneurial ecosystems through the introduction and use of proven resources and tools. The team will engage with four rural communities across the country. These communities will be guided through a planning process to identify and leverage existing assets to spur economic and community development, strengthen workforce pipelines, and build entrepreneurial ecosystems to capitalize on technological innovation. The outcome will be an economic development plan to improve the quality of life for both current and future residents. Community Visioning/Asset Mapping, Capacity Assessment, Action Plan Development, Local Leader and Small Business Capacity Building, and Implementation Technical Assistance will be undertaken to accomplish the goals of the project.

Contact: Alex Holland, Email: aholland@mecresults.com

Website: <http://mcclureplacemaking.com/>



Purdue University and the University of Kentucky

Purdue University and the University of Kentucky have joined forces to coordinate and implement the REDI Initiative in the North Central and Southern regions of the United States. Combined, the two regions represent 25 of the nation's 50 states and encompass 78 percent of the nation's nonmetropolitan counties (i.e., 1,544 counties). The Purdue team is part of the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) and the Purdue Extension Community Development Program, while the Kentucky team is comprised of individuals connected to the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK). The mission of the PCRD is to pioneer new ideas and strategies that contribute to regional collaboration, innovation and prosperity while the overall purpose of CEDIK is to catalyze positive change to build engaged communities and vibrant economies.

Partnering with national and state colleagues from USDA Rural Development, the Purdue/Kentucky team will work with self-defined regions to realize the following key objectives: (1) Build a strong, inclusive regional team; (2) Study data on the five critical areas associated with the national "Agriculture and Rural Prosperity Task Force Report" and garner public input on these five key topics; (3) Equip the regional REDI team with the tools and strategies needed to build a sound strategic plan; (4) Guide the team in the producing a multi-year plan; (5) Assist the regional team in hosting focus group meetings to gain support for the plan by residents, agencies and organizations in the region; (6) Work with federal, state local and philanthropic organizations to explore funding sources to help put the regional plan into action; and (7) Track short, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the REDI program in the region.

Contact: Lionel J. Beaulieu, Email: ljb@purdue.edu

Website: <https://www.pcrd.purdue.edu/> or <https://cedik.ca.uky.edu/>

If you choose to, please rank the four providers below (1-4) based on your preference for REDI Assistance considering their approach or a pre-existing relationship. Please note: If you are chosen for the REDI Initiative, you will be assigned to your preferred provider wherever possible, but it is not guaranteed.

- ____ National Association of Counties (NACO)
- ____ Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)
- ____ McClure Engineering Company
- ____ Purdue University and the University of Kentucky

A successful application will demonstrate a strong rural focus, the capacity to participate in planning and implementation of economic development strategies, robust and inclusive partnerships, and an understanding of regional issues and assets.

**Rural Economic Development Innovation
Rural Community/Regional Application**

Application Acceptance Period: February 11, 2019-April 5, 2019

Letter of Interest Submission Deadline: March 8, 2019 (Please note: A Letter of Interest is not a requirement to submit a complete application)

Please complete the following information:

Main contact person in your region/community: _____

Email address _____

Telephone _____

Mailing Address _____

Secondary contact person in your region/community: _____

Email address _____

Telephone _____

Mailing Address _____

Please define the make-up of your rural area: (names of counties, community, and or region):

Please provide a the specific name of your community, county, and /or region if applicable:

Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) aims to strengthen the capacity of rural communities (50,000 people or less in the United States plus Tribes and territories) in implementing strategic community and economic development plans as referenced in Section 379H of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act ([7 U.S.C. 2008v](#)).

The term ‘rural area’ means the Rural Business Service’s Rural Area definition as outlined in Section 343(a)(13)(A)(i) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act which states: any area other than: (1) A city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and (2) any urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town.

Community Assessment (key elements in the selection process)

1. Does the entire service area of your application meet the rural definition stated above? Yes____ No____
2. If not, what percentage of the geographic area is urban? _____
How will your effort focus on those areas defined as rural? _____
3. Are there one or more Opportunity Zones designated in the defined area of your application? Yes____ No____ <https://www.cdfifund.gov/pages/opportunity-zones.aspx>
4. Is your community/county, or part of your region, designated as "distressed"? Yes____ No____ <https://eig.org/dci/2018-dci-map-u-s-counties-by-state-map>
5. Are you located in or adjacent to a federally declared disaster area identified within the past five years, of which you are aware? Yes ____ No ____
6. Has your community or any of your counties been engaged in Economic Development Administration (EDA) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) planning effort within the past five years? Yes ____ No ____ If yes when? _____ Please provide a link to the CEDS plan if applicable.

7. Is your county facing challenges with Substance Use Disorder to include alcohol or drugs, both prescribed and illicit? Yes____ No____
8. What is the main economic driver (industry) for your community/region? _____
9. Does your community/region include a federally recognized tribe? Yes____ No____
10. What cooperatives operate in your region (i.e. rural electric, credit unions, agriculture, etc.)?

11. Please list the names of your local committee members and their affiliations. Please ensure that the committee is diverse and broad-based in terms of reflecting the mix of local stakeholders. Members can include (but not limited to) the following groups:

(You may add additional pages if needed)

Demographic Mix of Residents _____
Health _____
Local Government _____
Education _____
Faith Based _____
Nonprofit Organizations _____
Community leaders _____

Business and Industry Representation _____

Workforce Development _____

Other _____

12. Please provide letters of commitment and support for your region/community as representation of the broad-based stakeholders. This can include but is not limited to:

Industry Representation

Business Owners

Local Government

Residents

Education

Community leaders

Community Champion.

Community/Regional Issues:

Please provide your assessment of the quality of the following in your community or region. Place an 'X' under the response that best represents your view on each item.

Item	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Broadband services of 10/1 Mbps				
Broadband services of 25/3 Mbps				
Quality healthcare				
Mental health support services				
Item	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Healthy locally or regional-sourced fresh food?				
Housing stock that meets the needs of residents				
Skilled workforce to fill local/regional jobs				
Workforce training programs for youth & adults				
Quality childcare resources				
Programs/services that focus on local youth				

Has your community or any of the counties been awarded federal, state, and/or philanthropic support for local or regional economic development efforts? Yes ____ No ____

If yes when and by whom? _____

Please check the box of any of the FIVE major themes listed below that are of critical importance to your community/region. For any theme(s) selected, place an “X” in front of the topics which are of highest priority.

Theme 1: e-Connectivity of Rural America

- ☐ Developing High Speed Connectivity
- ☐ Broadband education to promote adoption
- ☐ Funding strategies to expand broadband access
- ☐ Broadband applications (telehealth, civic engagement, public safety, public schools)
- ☐ Data on broadband presence/gaps
- ☐ Other: _____

Theme 2: Improving Quality of Life

- ☐ Health care providers
- ☐ Mental health/crisis services
- ☐ Availability of fresh, healthy foods
- ☐ Childcare services
- ☐ Sound public safety
- ☐ Public Transportation
- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Disaster preparedness
- ☐ Arts/Culture/Tourism
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Affordable housing for local workforce
- ☐ Downtown revitalization efforts
- ☐ Safe activities for youth
- ☐ Other: _____

Theme 3: Support Rural Workforce

- ☐ Workforce development
- ☐ Apprenticeship programs
- ☐ Small Business Succession Planning
- ☐ Telework strategies
- ☐ Other: _____

Theme 4: Technological Innovation

- ☐ Harnessing technology to increase efficiency and safety
- ☐ Access to educational opportunities through technology
- ☐ Access to healthcare opportunities through technology
- ☐ Online strategies for small local businesses
- ☐ Other: _____

Theme 5: Economic Development

- ☐ Small Business Assistance
- ☐ Entrepreneur support
- ☐ Co-working facilities/support
- ☐ Identifying and developing a strong industry/economic sector(s)
- ☐ Expanding and improving livelihoods and opportunities
- ☐ Connecting your community/region to a larger regional system
- ☐ Infrastructure, please specify _____
- ☐ Other: _____

From the list on page 7-8, of the topics that you have indicated under the major themes, what would you identify as the top TWO priorities in your community or region? Please indicate why you selected these TWO items (limit 300 words).



Please highlight an example where your community/region worked together as a collaborative team (with other communities or partners) to achieve an important local/regional goal. (limit 250 words)



Given the goals of the REDI Initiative, what might success look like in your community/region? What are some of the key strengths it will build on and what challenges will it help overcome?



Please provide any additional supportive information that you would like to highlight regarding your community/region (limit 300 words).

Thank you for your interest in the REDI initiative. REDI technical assistance and capacity building support will be offered on a competitive basis; your application does not guarantee that you will receive assistance. REDI Cooperators and USDA Rural Development will determine the selection of participants.

By signing this document our community/region is committing to: (Please initial)

_____ Conducting outreach to community and business stakeholders during plan development and implementation.

_____ Working with the REDI technical assistance team to organize and attend meetings, such as site visits and phone interviews.

_____ Collecting and sharing any information that has already been developed, such as other regional community and economic development plans, local comprehensive plans, market research or feasibility studies, community visioning, or other analysis done of the community context or economic development strategies.

_____ Being willing to assign responsibility to partners for strategies and projects.

_____ Completing a Strong Regional and Local Economic Development Plan

_____ Implementing strategies of the Strong Regional Economic Development Plan

Community Representative (Please Print)

Community Representative Signature

Community Representative Title

Date

Secondary Community Rep (Please Print)

Secondary Community Representative Signature

Community Representative Title

Date

One Page Letters of Interest can be emailed to USDA Rural Development Innovation Center RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov by March 8, 2019. (Please note: A Letter of Interest is not a requirement to submit a complete application)

To submit this application and letters of support, please email one complete file to the USDA Rural Development Innovation Center with subject line “REDI Application” via RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov By **April 5, 2019**.

For questions:

McClure Engineering



Alex Holland

Email: aholland@mecresults.com

National Association of Counties (NACo):



Cheryl Burnett,

Email: CBurnett@naco.org

Rural Community Assistance Partnership



Ashley Zuelke,

Email: AZuelke@rcap.org

Purdue University and the University of Kentucky



Lionel J. Beaulieu

Email: ljb@purdue.edu



USDA Rural Development Innovation Center:

Christine Sorensen,

Email: Christine.Sorensen@wdc.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Wood County Wisconsin USDA REDI Program Application
Supplemental Information
April 3, 2019

Local Committee Members and Affiliations

Health: Sue Kunferman, Wood County Health Dept.; Melissa Breen, Marshfield Clinic Health System

Local Government: Josh Miller, City of Marshfield; Adam Tegen, City of Wisconsin Rapids; James Webster, Ho-Chunk Nation

County Board Supervisors: Chair Doug Machon, Wisconsin Rapids Area; Bob Ashbeck, Towns of Arpin, Auburndale, Milladore, Sherry, and Sigel; Ken Curry, Wisconsin Rapids Area; Adam Fischer, Marshfield Area; Jake Hahn, Pittsville Area; Mark Holbrook, Wisconsin Rapids Area; Dave LaFontaine, Marshfield Area; Bill Leichtnam, Town of Saratoga; Denis Polach, Wisconsin Rapids Area

Education: Terry Whitmore, Nekoosa School Superintendent; Nancy Turyk, University of Wisconsin Division of Extension-Wood County; Michelle Boernke, Campus Executive at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point-Marshfield; Jenny Resch, Director of the Office of Economic and Community Development at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

Faith Based: Andy Kvernén, Pastor at Cornerstone Church in Marshfield

Nonprofit Organizations: Kelly Ryan, Incourage Community Foundation

Workforce Development: Bobbi Damrow, Mid-State Technical College (Workforce Development)

Other: Angel Whitehead and Krista Coon, Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce; Karen Olson and Scott Larson, Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Meredith Kleker, Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention and Visitors Bureau; Rick Bakovka, Regional Economic Growth Initiative; Mark Speirs, Small Business Development Center

Define the make-up of your rural area

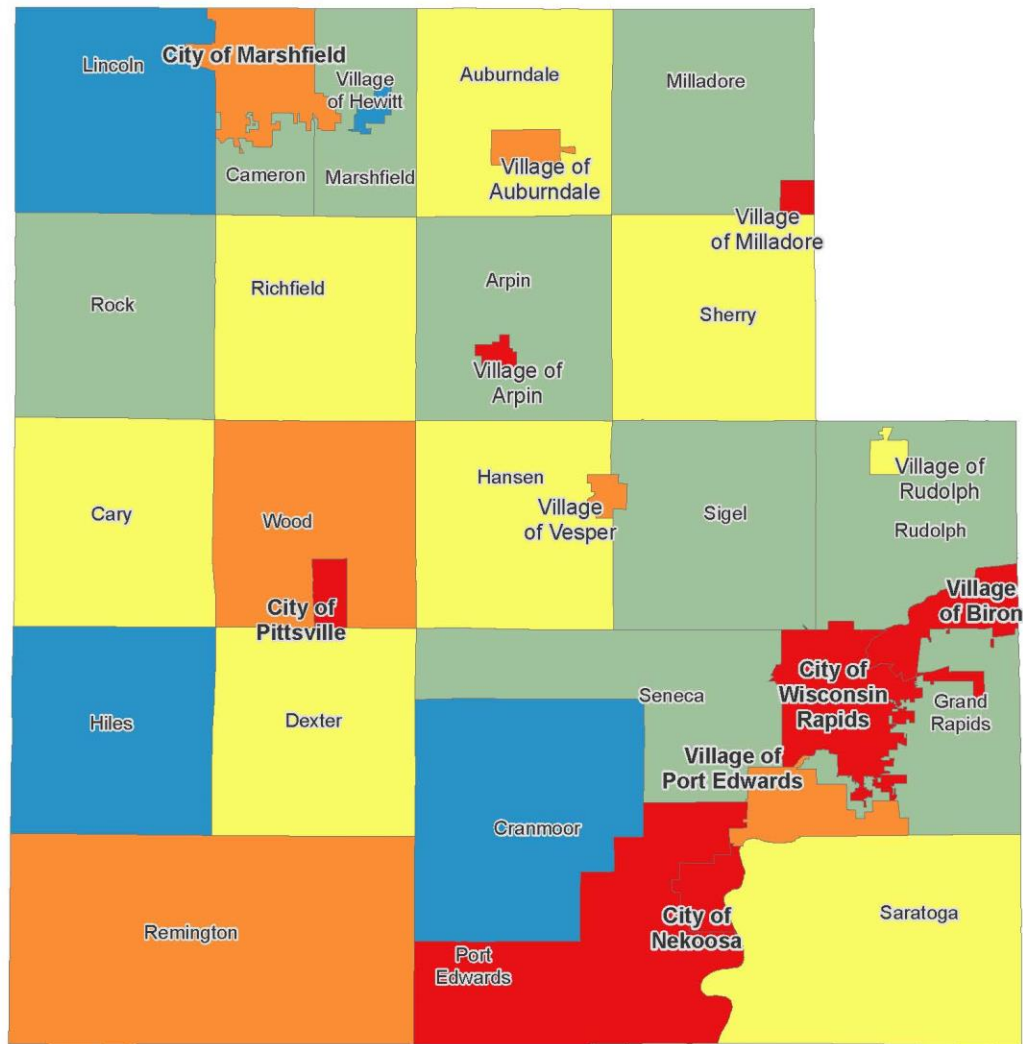
Wood County, Wisconsin is located in the geographic center of the State of Wisconsin. The 793 square-mile county is comprised of four cities, eight villages, 22 townships, and 17 unincorporated communities. Somewhat unique to counties in Wisconsin, Wood County has two distinct and unique population centers at opposite corners of the county; the City of Marshfield in the northwest has a population of 18,400 and Wisconsin Rapids in the southeast has a population of 17,800. Historically, development in the county has generally occurred at higher rates around those two population centers, as well as in the other smaller Cities of Pittsville and Nekoosa, and the eight villages. The county is located near major state highways and Interstate 39.

The 2018 population of Wood County was 72,904 and expected to decrease by 563 in the next five years. The projected population decline is concerning and relatively unique considering that many of the surrounding counties are projected to experience some level of population growth. The average age continues to rise due to migration of youth, a decrease in birth rates and increased life expectancy. With an aging and decreasing population, the county faces the challenge of having an adequate workforce available to meet future demand which will also affect quality of life.

Compared with Wisconsin, Wood County has a greater percentage of veterans and disabled persons. The per capita income in Wood County is slightly less than average per capita income for Wisconsin. Between 2013 and 2018, the rate of unemployment declined from 7.3% to 2.8% in Wood County. However, in 2016, 24% of households in Wood County were below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold for a livable income and an additional 10% were below the Federal Poverty Level. ALICE households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. To better understand the distribution of ALICE households in Wood County, a map displaying the percent of ALICE households by municipality can be found below.

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

WOOD COUNTY, WISCONSIN



% of ALICE & Poverty Households



<https://www.unitedforalice.org/wisconsin>

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Av., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I am pleased to support Wood County's application for Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. REDI funding helps address multi-jurisdictional challenges by providing regionalized planning and support.

Located in central Wisconsin, Wood County has a rich economic history built upon the agriculture and the paper industries. However, in recent years the economic landscape of Wood County has changed, with the paper industry becoming less robust and the consolidation of many farms. In addition, the County's population growth is projected to decline in the future.

With this change in county dynamics, Wood County is interested in identifying ways to diversify its economic base, create opportunities to retain youth in its communities, and attract new residents to the County. It is my understanding that approved REDI funding will help Wood County obtain needed assistance to identify quantifiable and realistic strategies and build capacity to achieve their strategic economic development plan. Development of this strategy will also continue efforts to strengthen relationships with other economic-related partners including local municipalities, Chambers and Visitor Convention Bureaus, businesses, not for profits, and regional and state associations.

I strongly support efforts aimed at revitalizing rural communities and spurring new economic growth and development in Wisconsin. For this reason, I respectfully request that full and fair consideration be given to the Wood County's application. Please keep Jessica Sielaff in my Madison office updated on the progress of this application and contact her should you have further questions or concerns. She may be reached at 30 West Mifflin Street, Suite 700, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, by phone at 608-264-5338, or by email at projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 29, 2019

United States Department of Agriculture
USDA Rural Development Economic Development Innovation
USDA Rural Development Innovation Center
Rural Economic Development Innovation Grant Review Board

Dear Rural Economic Development Innovation Grant Review Board:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of strong support on behalf of the Rural Economic Development Innovation Grant application submitted by Wood County, WI. It is my sincere hope that you consider and look favorably upon this grant proposal.

As the U. S. Representative for Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, and as a member of the House Committee on Ways and Means, I have a keen interest in supporting innovative and effective projects that address the economic development needs of underserved communities in rural Wisconsin. Wood County aims to create a strategic plan(s) to find solutions to the economic and quality of life challenges faced by a rural county. Additionally, Wood County's economic vibrancy has seen years of decline due many changes in the paper and agricultural industries, as well as the face-paced changes in technology in the medical and manufacturing sectors. All this combined with changing demographics and challenges in recruitment of workers and residents.

I am confident that Wood County will work effectively and collaboratively to create and implement strong solutions that could serve as an exemplary model of what could be achieved nation-wide to help address the problems of other underserved and rural communities. I am happy to lend this grant proposal my strong support. Given its merit and potential benefits, I sincerely believe this proposal deserves your support as well.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if I may be able to provide further assistance in support of this grant application.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress

RJK/asv



April 4, 2019

Dear Member of USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative,

I am pleased to express my support of the Wood County proposal to the REDI grant to fund strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

Incorporate strongly supports this grant application and its focus on economic development and quality of life among Wood County residents. Locally, Incorporate has led efforts over the past decade to convene individuals, organizations, and businesses to address issues and identify opportunities, with a focus on economic and community development. A key project for our organization is the [Tribune](#), which will be an economic and community hub offering: business and entrepreneur support; alternative career pathways and models for ownership; access to financing; and informal collaboration among partners. This will create a robust ecosystem of co-creation grounded in regional intellectual capital. While the building has not yet been realized, our work in these areas has already begun. We are committed to partnering with Wood County to continue improving access to, and availability of, social, economic and environmental opportunities.

We acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and a better quality of life. This grant is an excellent opportunity to give Wood County direction and an intentional path for economic achievement by identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics.

With the support of this grant, we are prepared to play a key role in co-creating economic development plans for, and with, our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kelly Ryan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Kelly' and last name 'Ryan' clearly distinguishable.

Kelly Ryan
CEO



Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MACCI) in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide Wood County officials with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

MACCI strongly supports this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As an organization that facilitates talent and economic development, small business education and counseling, and community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, MACCI acknowledges the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and ideas for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement while identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, MACCI would expect our role to include participating in the sharing of our insight and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Larson".

Scott Larson
Executive Director
Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

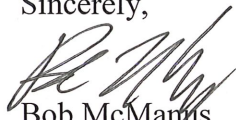
I write on behalf of the City of Marshfield in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As the largest city in Wood County, we value talent development training, small business education, and community engagement events, and we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participate in sharing our insight and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,



Bob McManus
Mayor
City of Marshfield



OFFICE
OF THE
MAYOR

Dear USDA rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the City of Wisconsin Rapids in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As the County seat, we value partnering with Wood County and other municipalities to aid in these areas. We are stronger together than we are as an individual community.

With this letter we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints that will lead to a better quality of life for all, visitors and residents alike. This opportunity will allow Wood County to develop a direction and move forward down a clear path of economic success and achievement. Diversifying the economy, retaining our local talent, and the attraction of new talent, are all part of changing the existing dynamics within Wood County.

With a successful award, the City would look to partner and participate in the process and provide our perspective and knowledge in the development of the economic vision for our community and Wood County. We greatly appreciate this opportunity and look forward to working with you to strengthen and grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Zachary Vruwink

Mayor

City of Wisconsin Rapids

Zachary J. Vruwink, Mayor

444 West Grand Avenue / Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-2780

Phone: (715) 421-8202 Fax: (715) 421-8278 Email: zvruwink@wirapids.org

www.wirapids.org

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Aspirus Riverview Hospital & Clinics in support of the Wood County grant application to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program. We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County.

As Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Clinics continues to expand, we will need the ability to attract young and talented professionals to this region. The development of a plan to create an attractive and vibrant community will be the first step in meeting this need.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement by identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include sharing our insight and perspectives while helping to develop economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,



Todd Burch
President
Aspirus Riverview Hospital & Clinics

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Economic Development Board for the City of Marshfield, in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As a board that is charged with directing, overseeing, and coordinating economic development activities within the City of Marshfield to adopt plans and strategies designed to foster business growth and development, and to ensure that the City and its partners work in a cooperative manner to promote coordinated economic development in the community, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participating in sharing our insight and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Ron Dickrell
Vice-Chairperson
City of Marshfield Economic Development Board



Unified School District of Marshfield

Grant Elementary
425 W. Upham Street
Marshfield, WI 54449

Lincoln Elementary
1621 S. Felker Avenue
Marshfield, WI 54449

Madison Elementary
510 N. Palmetto Avenue
Marshfield, WI 54449

Nasonville Elementary
11044 US Hwy 10
Marshfield, WI 54449

Washington Elementary
1112 W. 11th Street
Marshfield, WI 54449

Marshfield Middle School
900 E. Fourth Street
Marshfield, WI 54449

Marshfield High School
1401 E. Becker Road
Marshfield, WI 54449

Alternative High School
410 W. McMillan St.
Marshfield, WI 54449

March 22, 2019

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I am writing on behalf of the School District of Marshfield in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program. The opportunity for this grant will provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application with the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As an organization that fosters talent development training, small business education, and community engagement activities, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue growing in these areas.

We acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for a better quality of life. The support through this grant would provide an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic growth. It would also help to identify how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, and attract new residents to our area as we prepare for the changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we recognize our role may be to share our insight and perspectives while supporting economic development in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Saucerman
Director of Business Services
School District of Marshfield



1900 East 24th Street 800-301-3254 (phone)
P.O. Box 253 715-502-3700 (local)
Marshfield, WI 54449 715-486-8159 (fax)
www.gotocompletefiltration.com

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of Complete Filtration Resources, Inc., in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.


We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As a business that facilitates talent development training, small business education, and is involved in community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participate in sharing our insight and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

John Park
President
Complete Filtration Resources, Inc.



Heart of Wisconsin

Chamber of Commerce

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As an organization that facilitates talent development training, small business education, and community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participating in sharing our insight and perspectives while helping to develop economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,



Angel Whitehead
President
Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce



TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS
WOOD COUNTY, WISCONSIN

March 22, 2019

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Town of Grand Rapids in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As a town that is primarily residential with a large amount of small businesses, education, and community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participating in sharing our insight and perspectives while helping to develop economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Arne Nystrom

Chairman

Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

This letter of support on behalf of Mid-State Technical College confirms our commitment of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide the community with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application as a Wood County partner. Mid-State focus on providing workforce education supports economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As a local education partner in Wood County, Mid-State will support the identification of measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

Mid-State will participate in sharing insights and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community if the proposal is selected for funding. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,



Dr. Shelly Mondeik
President
Mid-State Technical College



Verso Corporation
Wisconsin Rapids Mill
600 4th Avenue North
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Phil Hartley
Communications Manager

T 715-422-4023
E Phil.Hartley@versoco.com
W versoco.com

March 22, 2019

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I write on behalf of the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As an organization that facilitates talent development training, small business education, and community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include participation in sharing our insight and perspectives while helping to developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Phil Hartley
Communications/Public Affairs Manager
Verso Wisconsin Rapids



100 72nd Avenue
Suite 204
Wausau, WI 54401

*Serving Marathon, Portage,
Wood, Adams & Lincoln
counties
Counties*

March 21, 2019

Dear USDA,

The Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative program, that will aid in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life, is important to families in communities throughout the Wood County.

Centergy strongly supports this application and its focus on economic development and quality of life. Centergy, Inc. is a 501(c)4 nonprofit regional marketing and economic development organization. Our purpose is to foster collaboration among private and public-sector leaders throughout the five counties of central Wisconsin including Wood County.

The need to identify measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors in Wood County is manifest. The assistance afforded with this grant will be an excellent opportunity to identify direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement, especially how best to diversify the economic base, retain youth and strengthen families, attract new residents, and prepare for shifting community dynamics.

Centergy is committed to teaming with Wood County. We would expect our role to include helping as is most appropriate in economic development plans in Wood County.

Sincerely,

Gordon F. Crow, IOM
Executive Director



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEKOOSA

Empowering all students to succeed in a global community

www.nekoosasd.net

Terry Whitmore
terry_whitmore@nekoosa.k12.wi.us

Telephone (715) 886-8000
Fax (715) 886-8012

March 21, 2019

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers:

I write on behalf of the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide us with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.


We strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As an organization that facilitates talent development training, small business education, and community engagement events, we believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we would expect our role to include sharing our insight and perspectives while developing economic development plans in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Terry Whitmore
District Administrator
Nekoosa Public Schools



Heart of Wisconsin

Chamber of Commerce

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I am writing in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program to provide Wood County with assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life.

I strongly support this grant application and the focus on economic development and quality of life among the residents of Wood County. As a community leader, I am involved in small business, non-profits, and community development. I believe in partnering with Wood County to continue to grow in these areas.

Through this letter, I acknowledge the need for identifying measurable and realistic strategies for economic development and blueprints for better quality of life for residents and visitors. This assistance will be an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic achievement with identifying how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, attract new residents and prepare for these changing dynamics in Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, I would expect my role to include participating in sharing my insight and perspectives while helping develop economic development plans in our community. I look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to grow Wood County.

Sincerely,

Heather Gygi
Community Leader



Small Business Development Center
At the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

2100 Main Street, Rm 302, Stevens Point, WI 54481
715-346-3838 uwspce-bus@uwsp.edu
www.uwsp.edu/sbdc

March 26, 2019

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

We are writing on behalf of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UW Stevens Point in support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's Rural Economic Development Grant Initiative (REDI) program. This grant will provide Wood County with the assistance it needs to promote economic development and support quality of life in Wood County.

The SBDC at UW Stevens Point strongly supports this grant application. As an organization that provides small business consulting, training, support, and educational opportunities in Wood County, grant assistance will be extremely helpful in supporting business and community development for years to come.

We recognize the need for determining measurable and realistic objectives and strategies for economic and community development for a better quality of life in Wood County. The support through this grant would provide an excellent opportunity to obtain direction and develop an intentional path for economic growth. It would also help to identify how to diversify the economic base, retain youth, and attract new residents to our area as we prepare for a changing Wood County.

In the event this proposal is funded, we recognize our role may be to share our insight and perspectives while supporting economic development in our community. We look forward to working with you in the future and toward the continued growth of Wood County.

Sincerely,

Melissa Meschke
Director of the Small Business Development
Center at UW-Stevens Point

Mark Speirs
SBDC Business Consultant at
UW-Stevens Point



April 4, 2019

US Department of Agriculture

1400 Independence Ave, SW

Washington DC 20250

Dear USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Reviewers,

I am writing today on behalf of the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REGI) to support of the Wood County proposal to the USDA's REDI program. This program will provide needed assistance in the development of a strategic direction for economic development and quality of life in Wood County.

As a life long resident of Central Wisconsin, my family and I watched as a strong paper industry here in Wood County collapsed. Thousands of jobs were lost, talent retention and acquisition disappeared. The corporate headquarters that provided the economic leadership for our County and the region left, and left us without a decisive direction for economic growth.

Economic development is critical to this area. We need to identify and measure realistic strategies for growth and development. Wood County has an historical reputation for work ethic and achievement. We have education partners, collaborative regional entities and the resolution to succeed. This assistance will help develop a path for that success, to diversify the economic base, retain our talent, attract new residents and business, to provide a strategy for change.

REGI's role in the event this proposal is funded is to continue its partnership with Wood County as a regional collaborator, identifying strategies for local communities and marketing the strengths of our area as appropriate to national and regional developers.

Sincerely,

Rick Bakovka

President, Regional Economic Development Initiative