WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

GUIDE TO STARTING, GROWING, AND SUSTAINING A SMALL DOWNTOWN BUSINESS

INTRODUCTION

Running a small business means juggling a lot of priorities. Whether you're exploring a new idea, opening a storefront, making improvements, or planning your next phase of growth, it helps to know where to turn for support.

This guide brings together programs, organizations, and tools that can help you along the way. Take a look around, explore what fits your needs, and connect with the people and programs that can help you take the next step.

- **Funding and financing** — loans, grants, tax credits, and other capital opportunities
- **Business support** — technical assistance, mentoring, and professional guidance
- **Training and education** — workshops, courses, and business development programs
- **Growth and improvement tools** — resources to strengthen operations, improve storefronts, expand markets, and plan for the future

Please note: This guide is intended as a starting point and is not a comprehensive list of available resources. Additional support may be available through local chambers of commerce, downtown organizations, economic development partners, financial institutions, and other community-based organizations.

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IDEATION PHASE

Ideation phase, not yet formally operating

Consider logistics

Explore available locations

Locate In Wisconsin

Certified Sites

"It was shovel-ready. It was streamlined. It made it so much simpler and easier for me."

Certified Sites User

Explore market data on competitors, suppliers, and customers

SizeUp WI

Downtown planning support

Downtown Small Business Startup Guide

BizStarts

SCORE

Small Business Development Center

Start in Wisconsin

Legally forming your business

Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic

Funding options

Kiva Loans

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp Loans

Small Business Administration Loans

Wisconsin Business Development

Wisconsin Lender List

Credit Union Locator

"Kiva loans can help you with supplies, your marketing, your logo, the little things you need to polish your business—especially if you're in a downtown area."

Kiva loan recipient

Open for Business

Learn More and Grow

Training, courses, videos, and consulting

Main Street Bounceback Technical Assistance

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp

Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council

Events

Small Business Academy

Small Business Clinics

"[The] financial support and advising you provide is key."

Small Business Academy attendee

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GROWTH PHASE

Ready to Grow

Deeper learning

- Main Street Bounceback Technical Assistance
- Small Business Development Center
- Small Business Administration
- Main Street America
- Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp
- Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council

Accounting, financial, legal

- State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) Technical Assistance
- UW-Madison Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic
- Marquette Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic

Workforce

- WI Department of Workforce Development

E-commerce and marketing

- Digital Marketing Clinic

"If you're an early-stage founder who has proven your concept and is ready to scale responsibly, these services understand what you need to become capital-ready and how to connect you with funding sources that actually work for your timeline and goals."

SSBCI participant

"After spending the last few weeks implementing the website and social media recommendations that the intern shared in her presentation, we feel so much better about our marketing plan moving forward."

Digital Marketing Clinic client

Expand Revenue Opportunities

Exporting

- International Market Access Grant

Government Contracts

- Wisconsin Procurement Institute
- MARKETPLACE Conference
- WI Supplier Diversity Program

Growth Capital

- Wisconsin Investment Fund
- SCORE (technical assistance)

"It allowed us to get international exposure for our equipment, and also to get into the European market...It eased the burden of the cost to make more sense for us."

IMAG recipient

"[SCORE] helped us to direct our limited marketing budget in the most influential way. Helping my business to be more successful will help us do more to preserve and protect this important environment."

SCORE client

GROWTH PHASE CONTINUED

Help with Physical Storefronts

Follow all zoning/design regulations

Connect with your local government

Zoning Districts and Regulations

Tax credits

Historic Preservation Tax Credit

(also known as the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit)

Historic Tax Credit Toolkit

Building improvements

Focus on Energy

Accessibility Toolkit

Community Development Investment Grant

"This is not only good for our bottom line, but energy efficiency also enhances quality of life for our team members. When we transitioned our Plastics Department to this facility, we decided to invest in energy-efficient, electric presses. Focus on Energy and Manitowoc Public Utilities were great partners in that decision, providing us with valuable information and incentives."

Focus on Energy Incentive recipient

Looking to the Future

Mentorship

Mentor-Protégé Program

SCORE

Succession planning

Small Business Development Center - Consulting

UW Center for Cooperatives (UWCC)

"The Mentor-Protégé Program was an amazing experience. It helped us increase the quality of our brand and triple our monthly revenue. It was great working with a team of business owners and academics to take our company to the next level. The huddle meetings were priceless."

Mentor-Protégé participant

"I love working with UWCC. Creating a mutualistic infrastructure is extremely challenging... I value this organization so much for helping to keep sustainability and community and the cooperative ethos at the heart of what we do."

UWCC client

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

SUPPORT AT A GLANCE

Resource	For Businesses Not Yet Open	For Operating Businesses	Provides Funding	Provides Technical Assistance/Support	Research Tool	Event
Locate In Wisconsin	X	X			X	
Certified Sites	X	X			X	
SizeUp WI	X	X			X	
Downtown Small Business Startup Guide	X	X			X	
BizStarts	X			X		
SCORE	X	X		X		
Small Business Development Center	X	X		X		
Start in Wisconsin	X	X			X	
Kiva Loans	X	X	X			
Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp	X	X	X	X		
Small Business Administration	X	X	X	X		
Wisconsin Business Development		X	X			
Wisconsin Lender List	X	X			X	
Credit Union Locator	X	X			X	
Main Street Bounceback Technical Assistance		X		X		
Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council	X	X		X		
Small Business Academy	X	X		X		X
Small Business Clinics	X	X		X		X
Main Street America	X	X		X	X	

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SUPPORT AT A GLANCE, CONTINUED

Resource	For Businesses Not Yet Open	For Operating Businesses	Provides Funding	Provides Technical Assistance/Support	Research Tool	Event
State Small Business Credit Initiative Technical Assistance	X	X		X		
UW-Madison Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic	X	X		X		
Marquette Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic	X	X		X		
WI Department of Workforce Development	X	X	X	X		
Digital Marketing Clinic		X		X		
International Market Access Grant		X	X			
Wisconsin Procurement Institute		X		X		
MARKETPLACE Conference		X		X		X
WI Supplier Diversity Program		X		X		
Wisconsin Investment Fund		X	X			
Zoning Districts and Regulations	X	X			X	
Historic Preservation Tax Credit		X	X			
Historic Tax Credit Toolkit	X	X			X	
Focus on Energy		X	X	X		
Accessibility Toolkit	X	X			X	
Community Development Investment Grant		X	X			
Mentor-Protégé Program		X		X		
UW Center for Cooperatives	X	X		X	X	