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WEDC awards nine grants to support entrepreneurship programs throughout Wisconsin

\$500,000 in grants to help local, regional initiatives for startups

MADISON, WI. Feb. 13, 2019 – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) announced today that nine organizations have been awarded a total of \$500,000 in grants to help develop or expand innovative programs aimed at advancing the climate for entrepreneurship throughout the state.

The grants are being awarded as part of WEDC’s Entrepreneurship Support Program, which is now in its third year. The grants will help fund activities that promote entrepreneurship or deliver education, training and other resources to assist new and aspiring business owners. More than 400 entrepreneurs are expected to receive services through a wide variety of initiatives.

“These grants will enable organizations throughout the state to provide more resources to support their local entrepreneurial communities,” said Mark R. Hogan, Secretary and CEO of WEDC, the state’s lead economic development organization. “Through this program, we are supporting local and regional organizations that understand the unique needs of their communities and can provide key resources to foster a statewide culture that celebrates and encourages entrepreneurs to build successful businesses.”

The grant recipients are:

- **BrightStar Wisconsin Foundation of Milwaukee (\$55,000)** will organize and host three iterations of the successful HATCH entrepreneurial pitch program in three regions of Wisconsin, for a total of nine events.
- **Oconto County Economic Development Corporation of Oconto (\$40,000)** will promote and assist in new business formation and accelerate business growth in Oconto County.
- **Green County Development Corporation of Monroe (\$80,000)** will promote and assist in new business formation and accelerate business growth in Green and surrounding counties. The program is projected to engage more than 900 individuals and create 15 to 17 new businesses.
- **Coulecap Inc. of Westby (\$70,000)** will support its multi-agency plan to provide and expand entrepreneurship services in the region creating up to 35 new businesses.
- **Indianhead Community Action Agency Inc. of Ladysmith (\$41,000)** will provide technical assistance resources to entrepreneurs in 12 rural northwest Wisconsin counties.

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- **Concordia University of Mequon (\$59,000)** will provide an innovative cohort-based education program to low-wealth communities in Milwaukee with the partnership of BizStarts.
- **Janesville Innovation Inc. of Janesville (\$40,000)** will build and expand the Rock County Entrepreneurial Business Development Program, which provides customized technical assistance to startups and scaling growth companies in Rock County.
- **UW Health Innovation Hub of Madison (\$75,000)** will create a “hub” to gather innovative ideas and solutions directly related to patient and health system challenges, and to enable those ideas to advance by providing resources in product development, legal and accounting services.
- **Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council Inc. of Eau Claire (\$40,000)** will provide business development services to underserved and disenfranchised populations in western Wisconsin.

WEDC received 22 applications for the program, which provides matching grants to nonprofit organizations and communities. The Entrepreneurship Support Program is part of WEDC’s suite of entrepreneurship resources, which also include support for startup accelerators, seed capital funds, investment tax credits and technology development loans. In addition, WEDC supports and engages an existing statewide network of partners that offers business training, mentorship and financing to aspiring entrepreneurs.

While WEDC already had a variety of programs to support the formation, development, growth and financing of technology-based and growth-oriented startup and early-stage businesses, the Entrepreneurship Support Program was added to provide funds for organizations and communities whose efforts may not meet the eligibility criteria for the other programs. Entrepreneurship Support Grants are awarded on a competitive basis, and grant funds must be matched by the applicant. Projects supported by the new round of grant funding must take place in 2019.

Launched in 2016, the grant program has provided a total of \$1.5 million in grants to 26 organizations statewide to help fund activities such as prototyping assistance, legal services and outreach to underserved entrepreneurs.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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