WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Investment Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2027
Lead Division: Business and Community Development
☐ **New** ☒ **Revised** 11/17/2026
☒**Grant** ☐ **Loan** ☐**Tax Credit** ☐**Technical Assistance**

Introduction

Background Information: The Community Development Investment (CDI) program will support urban, small city and rural community redevelopment efforts by providing financial incentives for catalytic, shovel-ready projects, emphasizing commercial corridor driven efforts. Funded activities should lead to measurable benefits in job opportunities, property values and/or leveraged investment by local and private partners.

Program's Purpose: The program will support urban, small city, and rural community redevelopment efforts by providing financial incentives for catalytic, shovel-ready projects, emphasizing commercial corridor driven efforts.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Community Development Investment grant applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a municipality (including counties, cities, villages, and towns), Tribal entity, other governmental authority, or a private developer designated by a municipality to apply on its behalf
- Provide a signed resolution by the elected governing body authorizing the submittal of the application(s) to the CDI Grant Program.
- Propose a project that does one or more of the following:
    - Develops significant destination attractions.
    - ○ Rehabilitates and reuses underutilized or landmark buildings.
    - ○ Infill development.
    - Historic preservation.
    - Infrastructure efforts, including disaster prevention measures, providing substantial benefits to downtown residents or property owners.
    - Mixed-use development (not exclusively residential).

Vibrant Spaces: The Vibrant Spaces funds are awarded to communities for investment in public projects that will enhance the community as an attractive place to live. The project must demonstrate a measurable quality of life enhancement to the community in a proactive, collaborative, community-driven effort.

Eligible applicants must:

- Be a municipality (including counties, cities, villages, and towns), Tribal entity, other governmental authority, Community Development Corporation, community

organization focused on economic or community development, or nonprofit focused on economic or community development.
- Provide a signed resolution by the elected governing body of the community the project is located in authorizing the submittal of the application(s) to the CDI-VS Grant Program.

Eligible Use of Funds: Development CDIs can fund the following activities:

- Building renovation
- Historic preservation
- Demolition
- New construction
- Infrastructure investment
- Building Relocation of CDI project property

An applicant that was impacted by an event that has resulted in a State or Federal Disaster Declaration within the 24 months prior to applying may receive funds for mitigation or preparedness planning and will receive additional considerations including the following:

- WEDC may reduce or waive the match requirements
- Applicants must demonstrate that other funding mechanisms (CDBG, WI Disaster Fund, FEMA, etc.) have been evaluated and fully utilized before applying for WEDC CDI Grant funding.

Vibrant Spaces: Vibrant Spaces grants can fund site-specific improvements that foster commercial corridor activation such as the following activities:

- Public Space Enhancements (including, but not limited to alleys, programmable plazas and park spaces). Enhancements can include landscaping, lighting, art, water features, and other fixtures.
- Public Signage within the space (e.g. wayfinding, interpretative signage, kiosks)
- Seasonal equipment with the intent to be used annually (such as tables, chairs, benches, bike racks, etc.)
- Parklets, parking lot conversions, or parking space conversions
- New public infrastructure projects (including site preparation and build-out of performance areas, programmable spaces and public restrooms to serve public spaces, and electrical)

Ineligible Use of Funds: Activities ineligible for program assistance or match include, but are not limited to:

- Event, staffing, and programming
- Buildings including demolition and new buildings (except for restrooms)
- Private spaces that are not open to the public
- Single-use spaces or sporting courts/facilities
- Activities that are otherwise eligible to be funded through other programs offered by WEDC
- Past costs
- In-kind contributions
- Indirect expenses (a.k.a. "soft costs")
- Ongoing maintenance costs

Matching: The applicant must provide matching funds in an amount of 3:1 of the CDI Grant being requested. In any of the following circumstances, the matching funds requirement is reduced to 1:1:

- The project is located in an Economically Distressed or Rural Community.
- The project is located in an Opportunity Zone.
- A key component of a secured/defined development is to provide childcare services or expand housing availability.
- For applicants where the project is in the designated district of a WEDC Main Street Community.

No more than 50% of eligible project costs may consist of other state and/or federal grant sources.

Vibrant Spaces: The applicant must provide matching funds in the amount of 1:1 of the Vibrant Spaces grant being requested. Economically distressed communities (see definition below) or communities with populations of under 5,000 must provide a match of 25% of the grant being requested.

Available Incentives

FY27: $ 6,250,000

Development CDI: $5,250,000

Vibrant Spaces: $ 1,000,000

Award Sizes: The maximum Development CDI grant may not exceed $250,000.
Vibrant Spaces grants will be between $25,000 and $50,000.

Awards per Applicant: No more than one grant per fiscal year shall be located within the boundary of a municipality, unless the applicant is in an economically distressed community or opportunity zone; in which case applicants can apply for up to two CDI grants per fiscal year.

Vibrant Spaces: Applicants may receive one Vibrant Spaces Grant every two fiscal years. In each fiscal year, applicants can only receive one Vibrant Spaces award per community/municipal boundary, except for communities and organizations in communities with populations over 50,000, which annually may apply for and receive a Vibrant Space award for one or more commercial corridors. Receiving a Vibrant Spaces grant does not preclude a community from applying for general CDI grants.

WEDC anticipates 20% of Vibrant Spaces to be awarded to communities under 5,000 in population.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist 21 communities and achieve a 5:1 leverage of other investment.

Vibrant Spaces: Assist communities in creating a community space for public use in their commercial corridor and achieve a 1:1 leverage of other investment.

Impact: Funded activities should lead to measurable benefits in property values and/or leveraged investment by local and private partners.

Vibrant Spaces: Funded activities should lead to an increase in site usage and overall visitor traffic to the corridor, adding to the commerce potential for local businesses.

Metrics: As a community development program focused on real estate development, performance reporting metrics for CDI are focused around measuring eligible site work cost. CDI program metrics include the following list, and each project will include one or more of these metrics in its reporting requirements depending on the project's specified use of funds.

- Capital Investment
- Site Work
- Leverage – Total

Vibrant Spaces:

- Capital Investment
- Site Work
- Leverage – Total

Application Guideline

Timeline: The CDI and CDI-Vibrant Spaces programs have continuous application processes.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering a CDI award:

- Impact on the community.
- Located in an Economically Distressed community.
- Financial justification.
- Previous planning efforts.
- Alignment with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)/Economic Development District (EDD) plan for the region.
- Readiness to proceed demonstrated by financial commitments in place.
- Involvement of public-private partnerships and public/community support and collaboration.
- Demonstrates involvement of economically disadvantaged businesses in eligible project costs.
- Primary building occupant is a economically disadvantaged business(es).
- Primary building purpose serves the economically disadvantaged communities or low- and moderate-income individuals.
- Clean energy technology investments included in the project (ex. solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations, use of state energy audit and/or energy rebate programs, etc.).
- Quality Urban Design: balancing preservation of existing heritage structures and streetscapes with new development.
- Other factors determined by WEDC.

Vibrant Spaces: WEDC may take the following into account when considering a Vibrant Spaces award:

- Demonstrated community support and partnerships.
- Impact on community, district, and businesses.
- Space attracts multiple user groups/activities.
- Visible pedestrian-oriented public space.
- Project readiness to proceed demonstrated by financial commitments in place.
- Alignment with destination creation strategies, including four-season use, and day and night activation potential.

How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC Account Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: The completed application will be assigned to an underwriter and go through the award review process.

Performance Reporting: Recipients must annually submit a performance report documenting capital investment, assessed taxable property values, and any other contract deliverable. Vibrant Spaces recipients will submit one performance report at the project's completion.

WEDC annually selects awards over $100,000 on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records are required to be maintained by the Recipient for a period of at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.

Helpful Information

Definitions:

"Economically Distressed" - a county or municipality so designated by WEDC by considering the most current area and state data available for the following indicators:

- Unemployment rate
- Percentage of families with incomes below the poverty line
- Median family income
- Median per capita income
- Average annual wage
- Manufacturing assessment values by county
- Other significant or irregular indicators of economic distress – such as a natural disaster, or plant closings and layoffs

"Opportunity Zone" - a designated qualified opportunity zone in the State of Wisconsin under Internal Revenue Code § 1400Z-1.

"Rural Community" - a city, village, or town with a population less than 5,000.

Revision History

Program Inception – Fiscal Year 2013

- 7/1/2017: Consideration of multiple applications per community per fiscal year when funding is available, removes limitation of one CDI or BF grant per project, Added project or site development planning as eligible activity
- 7/1/2018: Allow applicants in a Designated Rural County to receive more than one grant per fiscal year, Reserve 50 percent of program funding for projects in a Designated Rural County
- 7/1/ 2019: Allow applicants in an Opportunity Zone to receive more than one grant per fiscal year; allow recipients to submit performance reports annually; clarify performance reporting requirements
- 7/1/2020: Expanded eligibility and funding for COVID-19 recovery initiative.
- 7/1/2021: Eliminated temporary CARES Act provisions; removed eligibility for planning projects; replaced Designated Rural County with Economically Distressed; added consideration for diverse businesses
- 7/1/2022: Expands considerations to determine making a CDI Grant; Adds Vibrant Spaces Pilot
- 7/1/2023: Defines Rural Community; reduces match requirement for rural communities and projects with key components of providing childcare our expanding housing availability; allows for developers to be the applicant/recipient entity.
- 7/1/2024: Expands eligible use of funds; updated review considerations to include clean energy investments; funds Vibrant Spaces
- 7/1/2025: Updates Vibrant Spaces to non-competitive; reduced Vibrant Spaces match requirement for projects in Economically Distressed Communities or communities under 5,000 in population; restricts number of applications per community
- 7/1/2026: Updates related to emphasizing commercial corridors; expanding eligibility for Vibrant Spaces.
- 11/17/2026: Updated consideration for economically disadvantaged businesses.