



Idle Sites Redevelopment Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2027
Lead Division: Business and Community Development
☐ New ☒ Revised 7/1/2026
☒ Grant ☐ Loan ☐ Tax Credit ☐ Technical Assistance

Introduction

Background Information: The Idle Sites Redevelopment (ISR) program offers grants to Wisconsin communities for the redevelopment of sites that have been idle, abandoned, or underused for at least two years. Blighted properties may be perceived as eyesores that can lead to decreased property tax revenue for a community. The Idle Sites Redevelopment Program provides incentives to help rejuvenate abandoned blighted sites, in turn elevating local economies. Approved projects can use funds for demolition, environmental remediation, infrastructure, and/or site-specific improvements to advance the site to shovel ready status or enhance the site's market attractiveness.

Program's Purpose: The program offers grants to Wisconsin communities for the redevelopment of sites that have been idle, abandoned, or underused for at least two years, elevating local economies. Blighted properties may be perceived as eyesores that can lead to decreased property tax revenue for a community. Approved projects can use funds for demolition, environmental remediation, infrastructure or site-specific improvements to advance the site to shovel ready status or enhance the site's market attractiveness.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Idle Sites Redevelopment applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a city, village, town, county, government entity, or Tribal entity.
- If a private developer is participating in the project, provide a draft of a development agreement that describes the project and its goals, anticipated outcomes, project timeline, actions, obligations, and investments to be made by each party that must be executed prior to the first draw of ISR funds.
- If the project does not have a private developer, provide an officially approved resolution that describes the project and its goals, anticipated outcomes, project timeline, and actions, obligations and investments necessary to achieve redevelopment.
- Provide a signed resolution by the governing elected body authorizing the submittal of an application to the ISR program.
- Demonstrate ownership of the targeted site or demonstrate the legal ability to access the property and perform the work proposed in the application.
- Propose a project site which is one of the following:



- one or more contiguous industrial parcels that exceed four acres and had long term (over 25 years) industrial usage; or
- one or more contiguous commercial parcels that exceed four acres – or that exceed two acres for projects in an Economically Distressed community or Opportunity Zone – and had long term (over 25 years) commercial usage; or
- one or more contiguous institutional parcels that exceed four acres – or exceed two acres for projects within a commercial corridor – and had long term (over 25 years) institutional usage.

Eligible Use of Funds: Idle Sites Redevelopment grants and matching funds can fund the following activities. Costs are only eligible to be applied to grant and matching fund expenses after WEDC approval.

- Demolition.
- Environmental remediation.
- Rehabilitation and/or infrastructure improvements.

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

- In-kind contributions.
- Costs of new construction.
- Indirect construction costs (a.k.a. “soft” costs).
- Environmental work occurring on properties in which the current owner is also a causer who possessed or controlled the contaminant(s) on the site.
- Acquisition costs (except that acquisition costs may be allowable for matching funds expenses).

Matching: The applicant must provide matching funds at a rate of 3:1 of the Idle Sites Redevelopment Grant; or a rate of 1:1 of the Idle Sites Redevelopment Grant if the project is located in an Economically Distressed Community.

Available Incentives

FY27: \$2,000,000

Award Sizes: The maximum Idle Sites Redevelopment grant is \$250,000.

Awards per Applicant: Applicants may receive one award per fiscal year.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist 8 communities and achieve a 16:1 leverage of other investment.

Impact: Improvement of the economic health and tax base of communities by returning larger vacant sites to development-ready status.



Metrics: As a community development program focused on real estate development, project performance reporting metrics for ISR are focused around measuring eligible site work costs. ISR 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

Application Guideline

Timeline: The Idle Site Redevelopment program has a continuous application process.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering an Idle Site Redevelopment award:

- The potential of the project to promote economic and community development in the area.
- A written financial commitment demonstrating the ability to meet project costs enabling the project to reach fruition.
- The adequacy and completeness of the site investigation and remediation effort.
- The extent to which estimated costs are provided by qualified parties.
- The size and location of the property and the site's relationship to economic center.
- The potential of the project to increase taxable property values.
- The potential of the project to reduce urban sprawl.
- Use of existing infrastructure.
- Reduction of environmental risks.
- Creation of full-time jobs.
- Location of the project in an Economically Distressed community.
- Demonstrated involvement of diverse businesses, including women and veteran-owned contractors, in eligible project costs.
- Feasibility and readiness of the proposed project.
- Capital investment.
- Alignment with Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) / Economic Development District (EDD) plan for the region.

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.



WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records must be maintained by the Recipient for 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.

Revision History

Program Inception – Fiscal Year 2014

- 7/1/2017: Changed to an ongoing application process. Added requirement for signed resolution of support from local government unit submitting application. Added limitation for one award per fiscal year per community.
- 7/1/2018: Clarified the terms development agreement and redevelopment plan, Expanded types of eligible sites and reduced acreage requirements in a Designated Rural County.
- 7/1/2019: Clarified eligible costs; reduced acreage requirements for projects in an Opportunity Zone; clarified performance reporting requirements.
- 7/1/2021: Clarified eligibility requirements; replaced Designated Rural County with Economically Distressed; added consideration for diverse businesses; reduced maximum grant.
- 07/1/2022: Clarifies that obligations and investments made by each party must be executed prior to the first draw of funds; Reduces acreage requirements for certain projects in commercial corridors; Provides reduced match for projects located in an Economically Distressed County.
- 7/1/2023: Reduces time required for site to be vacant; Reduces acreage requirement for certain projects.



- 7/1/2024: Reduces acreage requirement for certain commercial projects and those in an Economically Distressed community or Opportunity Zone.
- 7/1/2026: Clarified acreage on contiguous institutional parcels must exceed two acres for projects in commercial corridors.