



EXTENSION IMPACT

Supporting Small Businesses & Entrepreneurs

Small businesses are critical to the Wisconsin economy and local communities. Self-employed business owners and entrepreneurs help shape local and regional economic well-being, security, and resiliency by providing a livelihood for owners and creating jobs, generating income, and producing tax revenue for communities. Businesses and entrepreneurs also help alleviate poverty. In Wisconsin, 10,000 new businesses are created annually, adding to its over 130,000 existing businesses with employees. Given this, Wisconsin has no shortage of opportunities to support these critical engines of local economies, livelihoods, and wealth creation.

Business success is linked to gaining access to capital, business planning tools and strategies, and other critical technical assistance resources. Businesses are also more successful when they can connect with a network of knowledgeable organizations and businesses.

Through local Educators and State Specialists, we share critical information and resources, and we deliver technical assistance to those businesses most in need—e.g., minority-owned businesses, female-owned businesses, solopreneurs, and rural and remote businesses. Extension partners with economic and business development organizations to better understand and strengthen the ecosystem that supports businesses and entrepreneurs and to act as a conduit for businesses to access critical economic and business development resources and technical assistance programs.

In 2020, Extension Educators and Specialists delivered educational programming and research to small businesses and entrepreneurs across the state by creating and sharing resources and hosting webinars. A majority of these efforts were related to COVID-19 relief such as grants, loans, reopening guidelines. We also directly supported business in applying for emergency funding, with financial planning, marketing and e-commerce, business expansion and operations. Our Educators and Specialists also delivered educational programming and research related to entrepreneurial ecosystem support and development.

Extension provides businesses and entrepreneurs with the information, research, and technical assistance they need to succeed in all stages of business development, which leads to greater local and regional economic well-being, security, and resiliency.

These efforts focused, for example, on the importance of and opportunities for local entrepreneurship development as well as the coordination and facilitation of supporting organizations (such as banks, lawyers, political leaders, economic development corporations). Our support and service reached a broad array of business sectors (e.g., food, lodging, retail, tourism) and a diversity of marginalized or minoritized communities (e.g., rural and remote and entrepreneurs of color).

in 2020



11,000+
participants



39 counties
receive direct programming



The Community Economic Development program is part of Extension's Community Development Institute. Learn more by visiting foodsystems.extension.wisc.edu.