



JUNE 2023



60+

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP
PARTICIPANTS**

Support Wisconsin Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship brings many benefits to Wisconsin communities, including job and income growth and overall economic stability. Additionally, it supports the development of a community identity and improves residents' quality of life. However, the success of entrepreneurs is hindered by a lack of business development assistance and weakened entrepreneurial ecosystems. UW-Madison Extension's Community Economic Development Program aims to address these issues and support entrepreneurs across Wisconsin.



Photo by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison

Extension supports entrepreneurs and economic development practitioners in several ways, including via direct education, curriculum development, partnerships, and research. These efforts aim to benefit underserved entrepreneurs and subsequently strengthen regional entrepreneurial ecosystems.

One example of direct education is the Entrepreneurship in Training Partnership (EITP), which provides free training to currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. Participants learn how to grow a thriving business, connecting them with coaches from the local business community. Thirteen participants have completed the program, and 48 more participants are in progress. Additionally, Extension provides technical assistance and educational resources to Hmong entrepreneurs and farm-based businesses.

Extension develops curricula that supports entrepreneurs, including Homegrown: Entrepreneurship in Your Community and the newly updated Downtown Toolbox, a market analysis tool that helps communities identify business and real estate development opportunities in downtown districts.

Extension's efforts to support entrepreneurs include building partnerships. In 2022, Extension facilitated discussions with the Small Business Development Center, supported monthly networking events for entrepreneurs of color in northeastern Wisconsin, and helped host a resource fair for businesses and nonprofits, which was attended by more than 100 people. Additionally, EITP graduates can participate in an alumni association to continue to network with their peers and coaches.

Extension completed research around entrepreneurship, which includes reports about entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 pandemic, the recovery of hotel businesses, and rural innovation. Additionally, colleagues gave presentations on various topics related to entrepreneurship.

Outcomes and Benefits

As a result of Extension programming, entrepreneurs and economic development practitioners possess a better understanding of strategies to support business development assistance and stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems. Extension has secured additional funding for economic development initiatives, particularly around rural entrepreneurship. Additionally, Extension has partnered with media outlets to broaden the reach of business development resources and strengthened partnerships with regional and statewide organizations.

Entrepreneurs thrive when they have the resources they need to support strong entrepreneurial ecosystems, which Extension provides via multiple approaches – direct education, curriculum development, partnerships, and research. Extension addresses the complex challenges facing entrepreneurs and ensures that entrepreneurs can thrive and bring the benefits of entrepreneurship to their communities.



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