



PLEASE SUPPORT RURAL WISCONSIN CREATIVE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM Senate Bill 428/Assembly Bill 422

To: Honorable Members of the [Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues](#); and Honorable Members of the [Assembly Committee on Rural Development](#)

On behalf of current supporters **Arts Wisconsin, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Destinations Wisconsin, Wisconsin Restaurant Association, Wisconsin Downtown Action Council, and Wisconsin Rural Partners**, we respectfully ask for your support of legislation ([Senate Bill 428/Assembly Bill 422](#)) to establish the **Rural Wisconsin Creative Economy Grant Program**.

Introduced by **Senator Dan Feyen (R-Fond du Lac)** and **Representative Donna Rozar (R-Marshfield)**, the bill would establish an **economic development grant program** targeted at **rural creative and cultural economic development**. As [amended](#), the bill would provide \$500,000 annually in grant awards and designate American Recovery Plan Act dollars as the program's designated funding source. The Wisconsin Arts Board, part of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, would administer the program and produce a report on the effectiveness of the state's investment in this program, making sure our tax dollars are spent wisely and that our rural communities have benefited.

Examples of potential grant applicants is attached.

A copy of the LRB Analysis of the bill is below:

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This [bill](#) creates a grant program administered by the Arts Board in the Department of Tourism. The bill requires the Arts Board to award grants on a competitive basis to businesses, whether operated for profit or not for profit, local governmental agencies, and business development organizations or associations that work to promote creative businesses, products, or services in rural areas in Wisconsin, including by fostering any of the following:

1. Job and business creation and capacity building.
2. Workforce training and development.
3. Community and sector planning, development, and engagement.
4. Products or services with artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic qualities.

Such a grant may not exceed \$40,000 and must be expended solely for the benefit of rural areas. Additionally, the bill prohibits the Arts Board from awarding a grant unless the grant recipient matches the amount of the grant with monies raised from non-state sources.

The [state fiscal estimate](#) has been printed as an appendix to this bill.

Please contact Executive Director Anne Katz, [Arts Wisconsin](#), akatz@artswisconsin.org, 608 255 8316, for more information.

Examples of Creative and Cultural Economic Development in Rural Wisconsin

ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

1. **CREATE Portage County** - *Stevens Point and Rural Portage County*
2. **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission** - *North Central Wisconsin, headquartered in Wausau*
3. **The New North, Inc.** - *Counties in Northeast Wisconsin, headquartered in the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Green Bay*
4. **Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission** - *Rural Southwest Wisconsin, headquartered in Platteville*
5. **Vernon County Economic Development Association (VEDA)** - *Vernon County, headquartered in Viroqua*

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

6. **City of Waupaca and Waupaca Area Arts and Cultural Alliance** - *Waupaca*
7. **St. Croix River Development** - *Hudson, Osceola, & St. Croix Falls*
8. **Municipal Creative Economy Development in North Central Wisconsin** - *Wisconsin Rapids & Medford*

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE/MAIN STREET PROGRAMS

9. **Whitewater Chamber of Commerce** - *Whitewater*

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

10. **Nicolet College and The GRID** - *Serving Rural Northwoods, Located in Rhinelander*
11. **Northland College, Authentic Superior, Chequamegon Bay Arts Council...** - *Serving Rural Chequamegon Bay Area, Superior and Ashland locations.*
12. **University of Wisconsin - Stout** - *Serving Rural Western Wisconsin, Menomonie*

See below for information about each of the examples provided.

1. **Advancing Vibrant and Welcoming Communities:** [CREATE Portage County](#), an Economic, Community and Workforce Organization, serves all of Portage County and is expanding services to rural northcentral Wisconsin. The following projects need funding support: 1) establish shared creative project spaces, 2) carry-out placemaking projects that make creativity more visible, and 3) initiate and support projects that address access to community benefits and support for historically marginalized populations.
2. **Strengthening the Cultural Infrastructure in North Central Wisconsin:** The [North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission](#), an economic, community and workforce organization connected to local arts organizations throughout its service area, which includes Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood counties.
 - [Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum](#), is a renowned centre for visual arts and community located in a historic home in Wausau
 - [New Visions Gallery](#), located in the Marshfield Clinic, maintains and interprets a fine collection of contemporary original art, Japanese prints, fine art posters, Haitian paintings and West African sculptures and masks.
 - [The LuCille Tack Center for the Arts](#) brings an eclectic mix of high-quality cultural events, family entertainment and educational programs.
3. **Advancing the Climate for Entrepreneurship:** [The New North, Inc.](#), a non-profit regional Marketing and economic development corporation, works to make NE Wisconsin *be recognized as nationally and globally competitive for personal and economic growth* includes Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown,

Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee, and Waushara. In March, 2020, The New North formed the [NEW Launch Alliance](#) to focus on advancing the climate for entrepreneurship through a well-connected and capable ecosystem of mentors, investors, providers of space, education, accelerators or other resources.

4. ***Encouraging Entrepreneurship through Action-Oriented Learning and Connections to the Start-up Community:*** The [Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission \(SWWRPC\)](#) serves Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland counties. This economic, community and workforce organization: collaborates with communities and organizations to build capacity within southwestern Wisconsin. In 2021, SWWRPC, along with other partners, created the [Idea Hub Accelerator](#) at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville. The accelerator works with companies and entrepreneurs to develop business models and facilitate connections to an influential community.
5. ***Creativity and Entrepreneurship springing from the Grassroots:*** [Vernon County Economic Development Association, Inc. \(VEDA\)](#) is developing a package of incentives and resources based on quality of life to attract people, organizations, and businesses. Vernon County features spectacular natural beauty, an abundance of arts and cultural activities, education and health alternatives, year-round opportunities for outdoor recreation, and the largest number of organic farms in Wisconsin.
6. ***Continuing to Plan for Creative Community Growth:*** The [City of Waupaca](#), along with the **Waupaca Area Arts and Cultural Alliance**, has led a cultural planning framework since 2017. The first stage of the plan covered the period 2018-21. Through this public/private partnership, considerable progress has been made to grow Waupaca's creative assets and opportunities, and the partners are now embarking on the Cultural Plan 2.0 to expand creative economy development and the creative workforce in and for the community.
7. ***Growing an Authentic Rural Creative Economy along the St. Croix River:*** **Vibrant towns along the St. Croix River exemplify rural creativity and quality of life in Wisconsin** as they seek to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with each other through dining, culture, civic engagement, arts learning, and shared experiences that expand their personal lives and contribute to strengthening the fabric of the community, both socially and economically. Potential projects include: 1) the revitalization of the historic Civic Auditorium in St. Croix Falls, 2) growing a public art program in Osceola, and 3) the development of a cultural district in Hudson, with the Phipps Center and Public Library as anchors.

Partners:

- [St. Croix Valley Community Foundation](#)
- City of Hudson
- City of Osceola
- City of St. Croix Falls

8. ***Developing a 21st Century Identity and Infrastructure:*** **Wisconsin Rapids and Medford** are places that are creatively encouraging new identities and populations to thrive now and into the future. As the local and global economies transition from industrial to creative and experiential, small towns in **North Central Wisconsin** are undergoing profound changes. This project would involve a consortium of municipalities working with the [North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission \(NCWRPC\)](#) to 1) provide new opportunities for business and workforce development, 2) enhance quality of life for all, 3) bring people together through arts and cultural experiences, and 4) strengthen the fabric of the community socially and economically.

Partners:

- City of Wisconsin Rapids
- City of Medford
- North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- Centergy, Inc.

9. ***Supporting the Growth in the Creative Economy:*** The [Whitewater Chamber of Commerce](#), a community organization that supports growth in business and education, is working to develop creative locations and gathering spaces in commercial districts to enhance the space, provide creative outlets for local artisans, and add to the quality of life for the community.

Potential Partners:

- [Downtown Whitewater, Inc.](#)
- [Whitewater Community Development Authority](#)
- Whitewater Arts Alliance, and many other community arts organizations.

10. ***Supporting the Growth of Creative Talent and Enterprise:*** A collaborative effort between [Nicolet College](#), the public community college in Rhinelander, [The Grid](#), an economic, workforce and community development incubator, and [ArtStart Rhinelander](#), a community-based cultural organization, is focused on developing a plan to support the growth of creative talent and enterprise through new pathways for business, entrepreneurial and career development in the creative industries.

Potential outcomes of increased technical support and access to capital include: 1) increased retention and growth of talent in the creative economy, 2) expanded markets for goods produced in the Northwoods, and 3) comprehensive promotion and resources for cultural tourism and quality of life opportunities in the area.

Potential Partners:

- ArtStart
- Grow North Economic Development Corporation
- UW Extension
- Oneida Economic Development Corporation
- Vilas County Economic Development Corporation
- Lac du Flambeau tribe

11. ***Creative Entrepreneurship in the Lake Superior Area:*** [Northland College](#), a private liberal arts college in Ashland, [Authentic Superior](#), a business marketing local products and services; [Chequamegon Bay Arts Council](#), a community-based cultural organization, and other partners are working to encourage small business, cultural tourism, and creative entrepreneurship in the Lake Superior area. The public/private partnership seeks to: 1) Strengthen production and connections, 2) Establish systemic infrastructure and supply chain capacity, 3) Grow local food/arts systems, 4) Connect people throughout the region socially and economically, and 5) Enhance the quality of life for all.

Partners:

- Municipalities in the area
- Arts and local food organizations
- UW Extension
- Ashland and Bayfield Counties Economic Development Corporation
- Red Cliff/Bad River Tribes
- Lake Superior Byway
- Northern Great Lakes Visitors Center

12. ***Imagining Creative Possibilities:*** The **University of Wisconsin – Stout** is bringing together a coalition of leaders from the arts, business, education, government, political and civic worlds to focus on activating **recommendations and actions to grow the creative economy in the Chippewa Valley region, with an emphasis on creative and workforce development.**

Partners:

- University of Wisconsin - Stout
- Pablo Center at the Confluence
- Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts
- Heyde Center for the Arts
- Other community organizations