

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Florence County Wins Grant to Start Small Business Loan Program**

**Florence, WI...** Florence County Economic Development received a \$99,999 Rural Business Development Grant from USDA – Rural Development to start a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program to help small businesses grow and expand. Florence County is providing \$25,000 of matching funds. Economic Development Director Wendy Gehlhoff explained, “Florence County has over 200+ small businesses who are the backbone of our rural communities providing jobs, tax revenue, payroll, local donations, products and services. Communities need strong small businesses to generate monies that circulate so the local economy can survive and grow.”

The RLF program can fund loans from \$10,000 up to \$50,000 to help new or existing businesses purchase equipment, land, buildings, and inventory or for working capital. The business must be located in Florence County and submit an application, business plan, financials and other supporting documentation. Clients can utilize a free SBDC business counselor if they need help writing the business plan. The loan funds cannot be used for new construction, refinancing other debt or for agriculture production. To qualify, the business must have less than \$1 million of projected gross revenue. The loan committee will decide the loan interest rate on a case-by-case basis. The loan term will vary between 5 and 10 years depending on the purpose of the loan and the type of collateral proposed. There is a \$200 loan application fee. This program can partner with bank financing and owner equity input or with just an owner down payment. The loan approval process requires two meetings. The Loan Committee does the initial review, due diligence and approval. The Florence County Board of Supervisors is the final approval step at their 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday monthly meeting. The loan closing takes place 1-2 weeks later after USDA reviews the final loan package and transfers the grant funds.

To download the application and manual go to <https://www.exploreflorencecounty.com/economic-development/business-resources/>. Please call or email Wendy Gehlhoff, Director of Florence County Economic Development (715-528-3294 or [wgehlhoff@co.florence.wi.us](mailto:wgehlhoff@co.florence.wi.us)), if you have any questions or would like an application mailed to your address. Florence County also offers a small entrepreneur Microloan Program for loans from \$1,000 up to \$10,000.