



The GROW Fund FAQ

Generating Resources and Opportunity in Waukesha County

What: The Generating Resources and Opportunity in Waukesha County (GROW) Fund, created by the Waukesha County Center for Growth, is designed to help meet community credit needs for the economic development and prosperity of Waukesha County.

The GROW Fund will serve as a community development loan fund (CDLF), administered by the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation, a certified community development financial institution (CDFI) loan fund.

Mission: The mission of the GROW Fund is to serve as a mechanism to retain, expand and attract businesses, and increase workforce housing in Waukesha County.

Contributions: The initial \$2 million investment in the GROW Fund was contributed by Waukesha County and three founding bank partners: Town Bank, First Bank Financial Centre, and Johnson Financial Group.

The Waukesha County Center for Growth is seeking additional contributions and loans from businesses, foundations, financial institutions, municipalities and individuals to achieve the objectives of the GROW Fund and sustain the Center for Growth as the central point of contact for businesses looking for workforce, financial and site selection assistance.

Fund growth strategy: In order to facilitate growth of the GROW fund, banks will be repaid at a lower interest rate than qualified borrowers will pay back loans to help the fund's reserves increase over time.

Contributor benefits: Participation in the GROW Fund can help banks further their business and civic goals through satisfaction of their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) strategies by helping communities safely meet their credit needs. The CRA value comes from actions like:

- Contributing to a Community Development Loan Fund
- Projects that generate or retain low and moderate income jobs
- Funds being used to implement community development strategies (ie. revitalizing old Tax Incremental Finance areas or energy and sustainability investment)
- Projects that create affordable housing
- Tax benefits of contributing to a not-for-profit organization

Applicants: The GROW Fund targets two types of eligible applicants essential to the economic development of the County:

- Manufacturing, service and other commercial establishments located in Waukesha County looking to expand operations, or which will locate in Waukesha County.



- Developers with projects to make available housing stock, including those for low and moderate income housing, to meet existing and projected workforce growth and talent attraction in Waukesha County.

Administration: The GROW Fund is a loan program of the Waukesha County Center for Growth, a business-led, not-for-profit economic development organization. The loan fund will be administered by the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

Loan decisions are guided by a collaborative loan fund committee made up of individuals representing stakeholder interests and who have special expertise and knowledge of commercial lending, economic development processes and workforce housing development lending.

Background: The GROW Fund is the fourth and final outcome to be completed as part of the 2016 – 2018 Business Growth Strategy for Waukesha County. The Strategy was focused around the core objectives of developing a central point of contact for businesses looking for workforce, financial and site selection assistance, and developing an organized strategy to connect businesses with organizations that have the resources to provide the assistance.

With the help of 40 stakeholders and partners, four strategic outcomes were created to serve as the foundation of the strategy:

1. A central point of contact for businesses looking to expand in or relocate to Waukesha County
2. A business outreach strategy to identify the needs of businesses seeking to expand in or relocate to Waukesha County
3. A strategy to identify Waukesha County business workforce needs and connect to available workforce development resources
4. A strategy to develop a collaborative fund to increase financial tools to businesses in Waukesha County and sustain the Economic Development Organization

As a result of the Business Growth Strategy, the Waukesha County Center for Growth was created in 2016 in partnership with the Waukesha County, City of Waukesha, Waukesha County Business Alliance, the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center and local municipalities, with the mission to connect businesses with the resources they need to grow in Waukesha County. Over the last three years, the organization has established a 16-member board of directors to strengthen partnerships which have a significant impact on advancing businesses and growing Waukesha County.