

DOING BUSINESS IN LEWISTON

Guide to Local, State, and Federal Incentives

Programs Unique to Lewiston

Revolving Economic Development Loan Fund

The Economic Development Authority (EDA) and City of Lewiston have made available a revolving loan fund to eligible applicants for the purpose of providing low interest gap financing. The primary objective to be considered in administering the Fund is the creation and retention of jobs within the city. In pursuing the primary objective, industrial, commercial, retail, service, and agri-business uses may qualify.

Any project located within the City of Lewiston that meets the eligibility requirements may apply for a loan from the Economic Development Authority. Loans can be made up to \$25,000 for eligible expenses. Some restrictions apply.

Microenterprise Revolving Loan Fund

The Microenterprise Revolving Loan Fund was designed for start-up, newly established, or growing businesses. Administered by Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, this loan is available to qualified entrepreneurs in amounts up to \$35,000 and can be used for seed capital, working capital, inventory, equipment, real estate, building renovation, and expansion. Based on the items financed, loan terms generally do not exceed 6 years and the interest rates are up to 6%.

Ineligible uses of loan proceeds include, debt refinancing, routine maintenance, any business that derives the majority of their income from restaurant or liquor sales, among others.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, is a method of financing real estate development costs to assist with the construction of buildings or other private improvements, as well as other types of development.

TIF uses the additional property taxes paid as a result of development and increased property value to pay for portion of the development costs.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement is the process by which a portion of property taxes are rebated back to the property owner, who then uses it to help offset development or redevelopment costs. Tax abatement is simpler and less restrictive than tax increment financing and is quite useful for smaller projects.

State Programs

Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ)

The JOBZ initiative provides local and state tax exemptions to qualified companies that start up or expand in targeted areas of Greater Minnesota. Your company could qualify for the following the tax exemptions by expanding or locating within one of the Job Opportunity Building Zones:

- Corporate franchise tax
- Income tax for operators or investors, including capital gains tax
- Sales tax on goods and services used in the zone if the goods and services were purchased during the duration of the zone
- Property tax on commercial and industrial improvements but not on land
- Wind energy production tax
- Employment tax credit for high paying jobs

Actual benefits are determined by the exact nature of your business expansion, as well as its effective date. JOBZ benefits accrue from the date that your business qualifies and continue until December 31, 2015, when the JOBZ program is scheduled to expire.

Research and Development Tax Credit

Minnesota's new-and-improved research and development tax credit doubles the size of the credit and also expands the credit to include more business entities.

The tax credit for R&D expenditures is 10 percent, up to the first \$2 million in eligible expenses. The credit is 2.5 percent for eligible expenses above \$2 million.

Beginning with tax year 2010, individuals involved in partnerships, S-corporations and limited liability companies are allowed to claim the credit against their individual income taxes. This opens up the tax credit to more small and medium-sized businesses.

Minnesota's R&D credits are refundable, which means if the tax credits exceed the tax liability, the state will issue a refund payment. Businesses do not need income tax liability or revenue to claim the credit, as long as they have qualified research and development expenditures (as defined in Section 41(d) of the Federal Internal Revenue Code).

Angel Tax Credit

Minnesota's Angel Tax Credit provides incentives to investors or investment funds that put money into startup and emerging companies focused on high technology or new proprietary technology. The Angel Tax Credit:

- Provides a 25-percent individual income tax credit for qualified investors
- Is refundable. Non-Minnesota residents including residents of foreign countries are eligible for the credit.
- Allows a maximum credit of \$125,000 per year per individual
- Allows a maximum credit of \$250,000 for those married and filing jointly

More than \$12 million in tax credits is available for 2011. Funding for the years 2012-2014 is set at \$12 million per year.

Minnesota Investment Fund (MIF)

The Minnesota Investment Fund provides grants to help add new workers and retain high-quality jobs on a statewide basis.

The focus is on industrial, manufacturing, and technology-related industries to increase the local and state tax base and improve the economic vitality for all Minnesota citizens.

At least 50 percent of total project costs must be privately financed through owner equity and other lending sources (most applications selected for funding have at least 70 percent private financing).

Small Business Development Loan Program

This program provides a maximum of \$5 million to any single business and generally requires that 20 percent of project costs be privately financed. Eligible companies include manufacturing and industrial businesses located or intending to locate in Minnesota, as defined by Small Business Administration size and eligibility standards (generally, those with 500 employees or fewer).

Loan funds are raised through the issuance of industrial development bonds. Interest rates are the market rate for similar securities at the time bonds are sold. Rates are fixed for the term of the loan. Real estate loans are for a maximum of 20 years. Equipment loans are for a maximum of 10 years. Collateral requirements include the first mortgage on real property or equipment financed under the program and personal guarantees of owners. In some cases, additional security in the form of other liens or guarantees may be required. Bond issuance costs of 4 percent are capitalized with the loan principal, and 10 percent of bond issue must be escrowed.

These loans are made by the Minnesota Agricultural and Economic Development Board. Applications are accepted year-round but must be received by the first of each month to be considered at that month's MAEDB meeting.

Greater Minnesota Public Infrastructure Program / Innovative Business Development Program / Bioscience Business Development Program

Each of these programs was designed to help stimulate new economic development and operate in a similar manner to create new jobs and retain existing jobs through investments in public infrastructure.

Each program can provide grants to cities of up to 50 percent of the capital costs of the public infrastructure necessary to expand or retain jobs in the area, increase the tax base, or expand or create new economic development.

Transportation Economic Development Program

The Transportation Economic Development Program (TED) makes \$39 million available to communities for highway improvement and public infrastructure projects that create jobs and support economic development. The program is a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Funding is available as follows:

- \$30 million for building highway interchanges that promote economic development and improve traffic congestion and safety
- \$5 million for trunk highway improvements
- \$4 million for public infrastructure projects, including \$3 million for projects in Greater Minnesota and \$1 million for projects that support innovative business developments throughout Minnesota, including the Twin Cities

The program may provide up to 70 percent of the costs for trunk highway interchanges and other improvements and up to 50 percent of the costs for public infrastructure projects necessary for non-trunk highway improvements. All DEED awards must comply with criteria outlined in the Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure Program or the Innovative Business Development Public Infrastructure Program.

Federal Programs

USDA Rural Development

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office, has an extensive list of programs to assist new and existing businesses with construction, equipment purchases, renewable energy production, and energy efficiency upgrades.

Rural Development has over 15 programs, ranging from competitive grants to guaranteed loans, designed specifically for small businesses and agri-business in rural America.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Banks and other lending institutions offer a number of SBA guaranteed loan programs to assist small businesses. While the SBA itself does not make loans, it does guarantee loans made to small businesses by private and other institutions.

Below is an overview of SBA's guaranteed loan programs:

7(a) Loan Program:

This is SBA's primary and most flexible loan program, with financing guaranteed for a variety of general business purposes. It is designed for start-up and existing small businesses, and is delivered through commercial lending institutions.

The major types of 7(a) loans are:

- Express Programs (SBAExpress, Community Express, & Patriot Express)
- Export Loan Programs
- Rural Lender Advantage Program
- Special Purpose Loans Program

CDC/504 Loan Program:

This program provides long-term, fixed-rate financing to acquire fixed assets (such as real estate or equipment) for expansion or modernization. It is designed for small businesses requiring “brick and mortar” financing, and is delivered by CDCs (Certified Development Companies)—private, non-profit corporations set up to contribute to the economic development of their communities.

Microloan Program:

This program provides small (up to \$35,000) short-term loans for working capital or the purchase of inventory, supplies, furniture, fixtures, machinery and/or equipment. It is designed for small businesses and not-for-profit child-care centers needing small-scale financing and technical assistance for start-up or expansion, and is delivered through specially designated intermediary lenders (nonprofit organizations with experience in lending and technical assistance).

Disaster Assistance Loan Program:

This program provides low-interest loans to homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes and most private non-profit organizations to repair or replace real estate, personal property, machinery and equipment, inventory and business assets that have been damaged or destroyed in a declared disaster.

Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

The Office of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) provides management assistance to current and prospective small business owners. SBDCs offer free, one-stop assistance to individuals and small businesses by providing a wide variety of information and guidance in central and easily accessible branch locations. The program is a cooperative effort of the private sector, the educational community and federal, state and local governments and is an integral component of Entrepreneurial Development's network of training and counseling services.

If you would like help with the development of your business plan, marketing techniques, or if you would like assistance with financial/loan packaging, contact the Lewiston Economic Development Authority. All assistance through the Small Business Development Center is free of charge and strictly confidential.