

Loans Available to St. Croix County Businesses

New or existing businesses in St. Croix County, Wisconsin may access money from a regional loan fund to help finance new capital investment activities, according to William Rubin, executive director of St. Croix EDC.

The funds, available through the Regional Business Fund, Inc. (RBF), help expanding businesses access a portion of their financing at a four percent (4%) interest rate. Proceeds from RBF can be used in a variety of ways — to finance the purchase of machinery and equipment, inventory, real estate purchases, renovations, build-outs, and working capital.



Chickadee Doo-da, a small home decor and garden store in New Richmond, was one of the first businesses in the region to receive a low-interest loan for a building façade upgrade.

“RBF was launched just over four years ago,” said Rubin. “It started as pilot program that was encouraged by the former Department of Commerce in Madison. Many of the communities in west central Wisconsin helped capitalize the fund. In short, the communities gave up the administration of their own loan fund, and the end product was a more flexible program.”

In St. Croix County, the cities of Hudson and New Richmond, villages of Hammond, Somerset, and Woodville, town of Hudson, and St. Croix County all transferred their funds into the consolidated fund. “Getting all of these units of government to say ‘Yes’ to the consolidation was akin to a civic miracle,” added Rubin. “The same support was realized in the other six counties that are participating in the regional fund.”

RBF was created by the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission several years before communities transferred their loan funds. It was used to administer an Economic Development Administration (EDA) loan the planning commission received from the federal government. The additional

loan funds from communities in west central Wisconsin further capitalized the EDA fund.

Expanding businesses have an option for loan funds under four distinct categories:

- (1) Revolving Loan Fund: loan requests greater than \$25,000;
- (2) Downtown Facade Loan Fund: loan requests from \$5,000 to \$30,000 to encourage property owners to revitalize downtown commercial buildings;
- (3) Micro Loan Fund: loans from \$5,000 to \$25,000 for start-ups, newly-established, or growing businesses that traditionally have difficulty in access financing; and
- (4) Technology Enterprise Fund (TEF): “quasi-equity” or patient debt financing for scientific and technology-based businesses

Interested businesses can learn more about the Regional Business Fund at www.rbfinc.org or call (715) 836-2918 for the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.