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Community Development & Rural Prosperity
COMMERCE

Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant Program Informational Webinar for 2025 Applicants

Special guest Ellen Huber, Rural Development Director,
North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives

May 28, 2025

Commerce.ND.gov



TODAY'S WEBINAR

01

Background;
Overview of Grant Guidelines
and Timeline

Led by Anya Hondel

02

Grocery Store Solutions,
Best Practices,
and Resources

Led by Ellen Huber

03

15-Minute Q&A

Purpose:

The purpose of the **Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant** program is to support the sustainability of *rural grocery service, access to food, and/or development and expansion of food co-ops in rural areas*. This grant program aims to address specific challenges faced by rural communities related to food access, economic development, and sustainability.



Objectives:

- ❑ Strengthen local and regional food systems by facilitating the efficient movement of healthy, quality foods within rural areas.
- ❑ Encourage partnerships and collaboration between local organizations, businesses, and government entities.
- ❑ Support innovative approaches to address unique challenges faced by rural areas in sustainable food supply and delivery.
- ❑ Foster community development and revitalization efforts in rural regions.
- ❑ Provide collaboration between food supply and community entities such as restaurants, schools, or other entities which purchase grocery products and provide positive economic impacts for the community/region.



This grant awards dollars to support the transition, creation or expansion of projects or initiatives that aim to maintain or increase food accessibility and sustainability *for entities that have developed profit/loss statements and backup materials to show how the project or initiative will be sustainable.*



Funding:

- **Up to \$150,000 per applicant.***
- **A 20% non-state funded match is required.**
 - In-kind donations will be accepted.

*Depending on the number of successful applicants, we may have the funding to open a second round in 2025.

Unsuccessful applicants would be encouraged to apply again, after reviewing scores and feedback.

Who is eligible to apply?

Political subdivisions, regional councils, and tribal entities.

"Encourage partnerships and collaboration between local organizations, businesses, and government entities."

Rural: Population of 4,500 or fewer.

Timeline:

- The application window **OPENS** Wednesday, July 2, 2025, at 3 PM CDT. (Commerce.nd.gov)
- The application **DEADLINE** is Wednesday, August 27, at 5 PM CDT.
- Awards and declinations made by Wednesday, September 10.
- Awarded applicants must complete projects within 18 months of award notification.



What can I do to prepare?

- ☐ Identify local grocery and food accessibility needs in your area.
- ☐ Determine who will make the application.
- ☐ Outline a clear and concise description of the proposed project.
 - ☐ Describe the need.
 - ☐ Consider the outcomes.
 - ☐ Will this project be viable? How will it be sustained?
 - ☐ How will this positively affect the community?
- ☐ Determine a budget and timeline for the project.
- ☐ Provide studies, business plans, and profit/loss statements.
- ☐ Consider obtaining letters of support from local organizations.



Contact Us:

The Office of Community Development & Rural Prosperity's mission is to empower North Dakota communities through efficient development, economic growth, and an enhanced quality of life.

The office aims to foster collaboration to address unique rural challenges, promote innovation, and leverage resources to build resilient, thriving communities.



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NDARECs

RURAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Check Out the Future: Models for Innovation & Collaboration
Rural Grocery Webinar • May 28, 2025



Selected for Cooperative Hall of Fame

**Lori Capouch, retired July 2024
from NDAREC as long-time Rural
Development Director**

In 2014, Lori received a call from a rural grocery store inquiring about grants available to cover operating losses. There weren't any such grants.

"We'd never had a call from a grocery store before, and then we got about 10 calls that year. So, we thought, OK, there's a problem here."

Self-Serve Technology

- Evansville, MN
 - Alex Ostenson
 - www.ruralgrocerysolutions.com
- Munich Grocery
 - Population 190
 - Funded with AARP Community Challenge grant
 - Annual membership
 - Open 24/7 access for members; 2 days a week for non-members
 - Steve Zimmer, szimmer@intelliplanz.com



Self-Serve Example

- Farm & Family Center, Hurdsfield
 - Population 60
- Phone app & door receiver panel thru Guardian Lock, Bismarck
 - Approx cost: \$10K
- Clover system for POS & check-out during business hours & after
 - Cost varies depending on type of monthly subscription
 - \$1.9K + \$15-\$85/mo
- Contact: Tessa Weckerly, Tessa@weckerlyfarms.com



Climate-Controlled Lockers

- Ambient, refrigerated, frozen
- Jim's Super Valu, Park River & Wells Drinking Well, Fordville
 - Piloting this spring
 - Customers order online
 - Staff fill order & place in locker
 - Customer picks up when convenient
 - Plan for education/demonstrations
- Buche Foods, Marty, SD



Climate-Controlled Lockers

- T4 Solutions
 - www.t4.solutions/retail-grocery
 - Costs
 - ✓ \$42.3K – 16-door unit (8 refrigerated & 8 frozen)
 - ✓ \$57.8K – 16-door unit (refrigerated & frozen + 8 ambient)
- Other manufacturers/providers
- Online ordering
 - eGrowcery
 - www.egrowcery.com



Online ordering



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Order online
now at your
favorite store

Shop Online



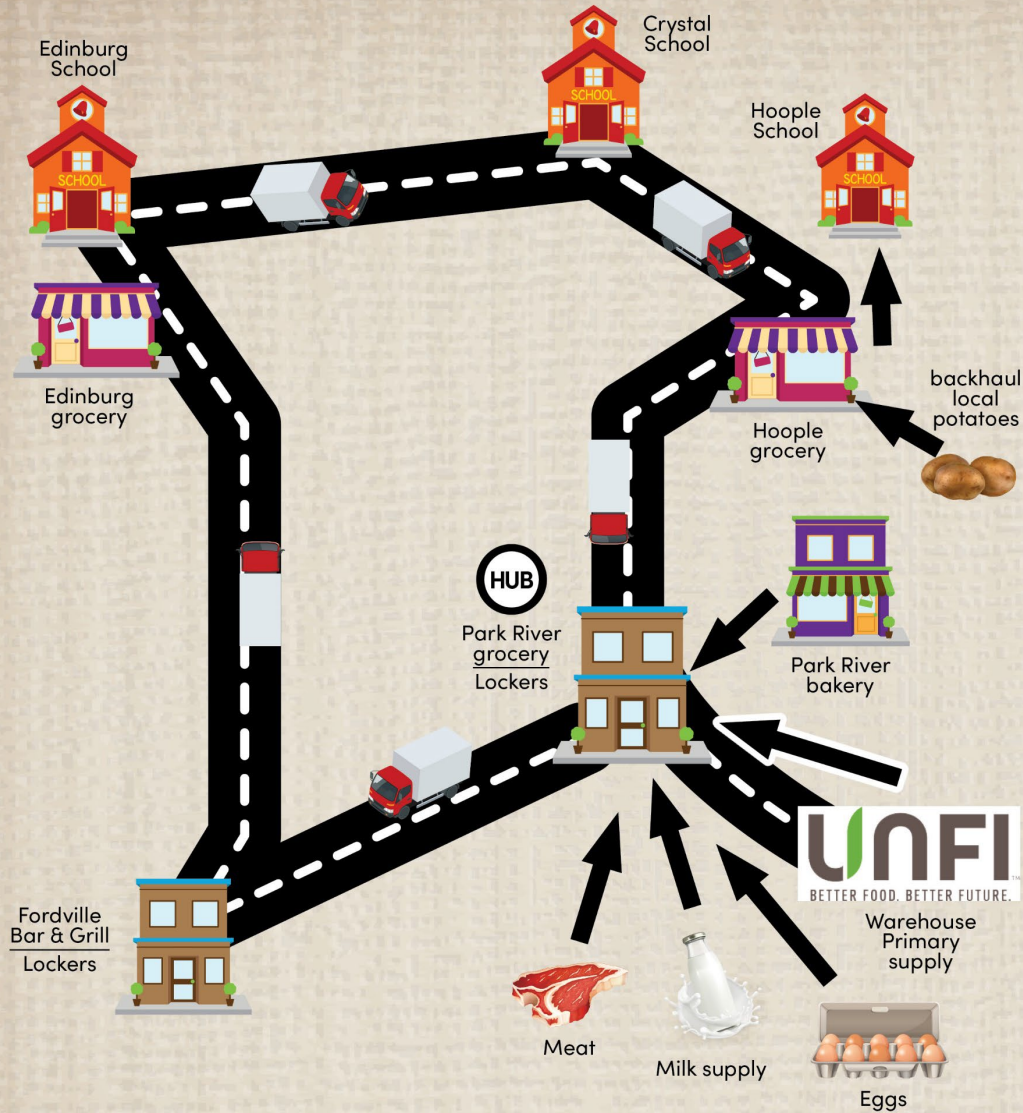
- South Dakota
 - www.buchefoods.com

Other Strategies & Best Practices

- Social media
 - Hinrich's Super Valu, Harvey
- Pairing with other needed/wanted products & services
 - Hardware
 - Off-sale: wine & beer or full liquor license
- Differentiation
 - Customer service
 - Local foods
- Different business models & ownership structures
 - Non-profit
 - Community-owned
 - Cooperative
 - Collaborations



DELIVERY MAP

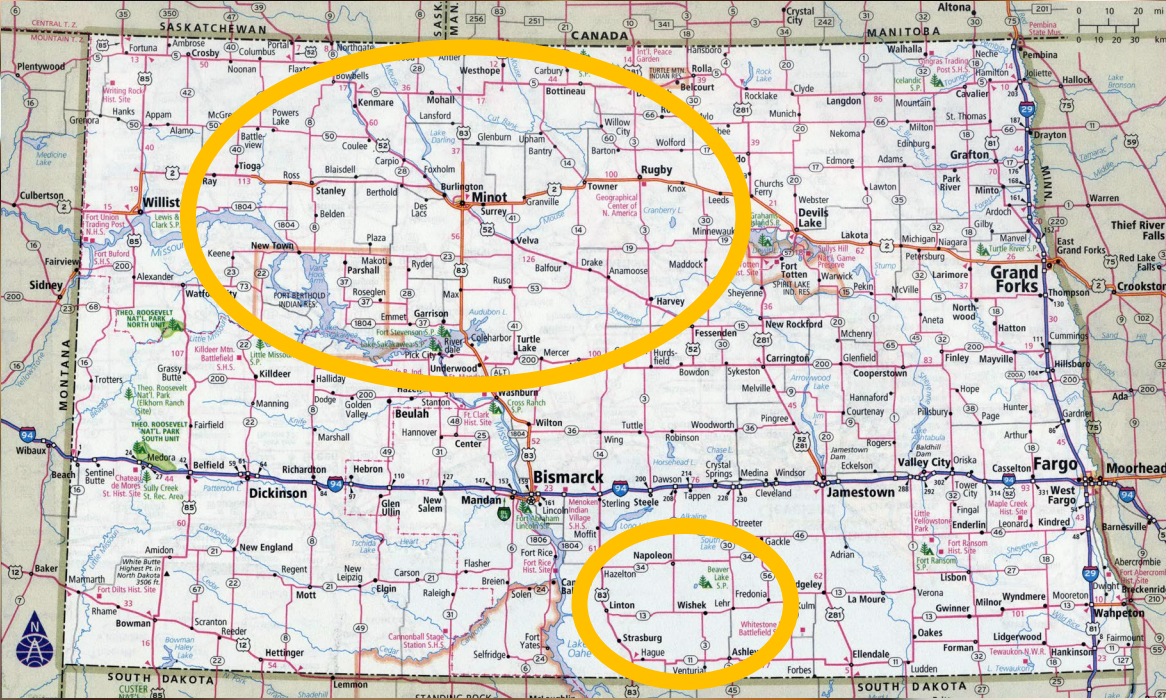


1. Cooperative purchasing for larger volume = better price, better variety and better quality
2. Aggregating conventional and locally produced products
3. Distributing — multi-suppliers on one truck from hub to smaller communities

Rural Access Distribution (RAD) Cooperative



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USDA Local Foods Promotion Program

Exploring a local food hub

Other re-distribution initiatives



North Dakota Rural Electric Cooperatives
Foundation

Resources

- N.D. Grocers Association
 - John "Jiggs" Dyste, Executive Director
- Membership dues - based on sales volume
 - \$135/yr - under \$250K
 - \$180/yr - \$250-\$499K
- Convention: Oct. 27-29, Fargo



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ABOUT NDGA

NDGA provides essential services, including **coupon redemption processing, industry seminars, business advisory support, and educational scholarships for students.** Our annual convention brings together retailers, suppliers, and industry experts, offering networking opportunities and insights into the latest grocery trends and innovations.

By fostering collaboration between retailers and suppliers, NDGA helps strengthen the grocery industry in North Dakota and beyond. Whether you're a small-town grocer or a large supermarket chain, our association is here to **support, advocate, and drive success for grocery businesses throughout the Midwest.**



Free Webinars

- June 4: Show me the Money! Rural Grocery Grants - Jenny Lezer, MDA Good Food Access Program
- July 9: Startup to Transition: Resources for Rural Grocers at any Stage - Rial Carver, K-State Research and Extension
- Aug. 6: Purchasing and Selling Healthy and Local Foods for your Community - Ryan Pesch, Extension Educator
- Sept. 3: Grocery Marketing Basics - Independent Natural Food and Retail Association
- Oct. 1: Exploring Food Co-ops, and Co-ownership Models - Jon Steinman, Author of A Grocery Story
- www.extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/shelf-life



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Shelf Life: Rural grocery webinar series

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Small-town grocery stores are the heart of rural communities, yet many struggle with competition from larger chain stores, a shrinking customer base, and changing customer



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Other Grant & Loan Programs

“

*I **believe** in less dependence on begging and more power in bargaining ... in less need for charity and more of it when needed.*

”

- Federal
 - USDA programs
- State
 - Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant Program
 - Rural Catalyst Grant Program
 - State Energy Program (for publicly-owned buildings)
 - ND Development Fund, Inc.
- Regional
- Local
- Rural electric & broadband cooperatives
 - Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC)
 - 15 other revolving loan pools

Friends & Funds

- Community picnics or dinners
- Go Fund Me campaigns





**Powering grassroots efforts
with experience & resources**



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Community Development Chats

Today's slide deck and more information on the Office of Community Development and Rural Prosperity and future webinars available at:

NDgov.link/CDRP



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