



HOUSING ENABLES WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Workforce Innovation Grants help solve a key issue for workers



January 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS



OPENING LETTERS



INNOVATION FOUR:

Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe builds infrastructure,
workforce housing capacity

ADDRESSING WORKFORCE CHALLENGES BY BUILDING HOUSING



January 2026

We are proud to support the projects in this report, which are working to solve one of the fundamental workforce issues for communities across Wisconsin: housing.

Readily available affordable housing is essential to revitalize regional economies and solve workforce challenges. Our state continues to face a workforce shortage, driven by an aging population and slowing birth rates, as with other states. Wisconsin has a labor force participation rate that's consistently higher than the national average. These trends taken together means that there aren't enough workers to fill available jobs, and those workers who remain out of the workforce face barriers that prevent them from finding or accepting a new job. Access to affordable housing for working families is one key barrier.

It is essential to help create a variety of housing options to allow workers to move in and out of communities, current residents to downsize or upgrade, and to prevent local economies from stagnating. Creative projects with buy-in from key stakeholders open doors to building quality, affordable housing and increasing capacity for workers who want to take jobs in urban and rural areas. The programs outlined in this report use fresh approaches to provide solutions to this housing challenge by developing sustainable solutions that fill needs for families, communities, and employers.

Governor Tony Evers' groundbreaking \$158 million investment from the American Rescue Plan Act supported these efforts to address the state's ongoing workforce needs. Projects in this report are examples of some of the creative local solutions to regional workforce challenges. The grants have provided workforce training and supportive services to 87,200 Wisconsin residents since they began, and continue to yield results today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Pechacek'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy Pechacek
Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

HOUSING: WHERE COMMUNITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MEET



January 2026

Like many other states, Wisconsin in recent years has faced a workforce shortage driven primarily by an aging population and slowing birthrates. Given our already high labor participation rate—consistently higher than the national average—in Wisconsin we’ve chosen to focus our efforts on helping communities and workers overcome the remaining barriers to full employment.

In 2021, Governor Evers created the Workforce Innovation Grant (WIG) Program to encourage communities to identify local workforce needs and develop and implement solutions that could be replicated elsewhere. Jointly administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the program used funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to award \$128 million to 27 projects across the state.

Workforce housing, especially at a time of scarcity and soaring housing costs, is a vital component of ensuring success for workers, their families, and their employers. The projects described in this report are meeting that need in creative ways, making the most of our human capital and helping to build stronger communities across Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Ridders', written over a white background.

Sam Ridders
Chief Operating Officer
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation



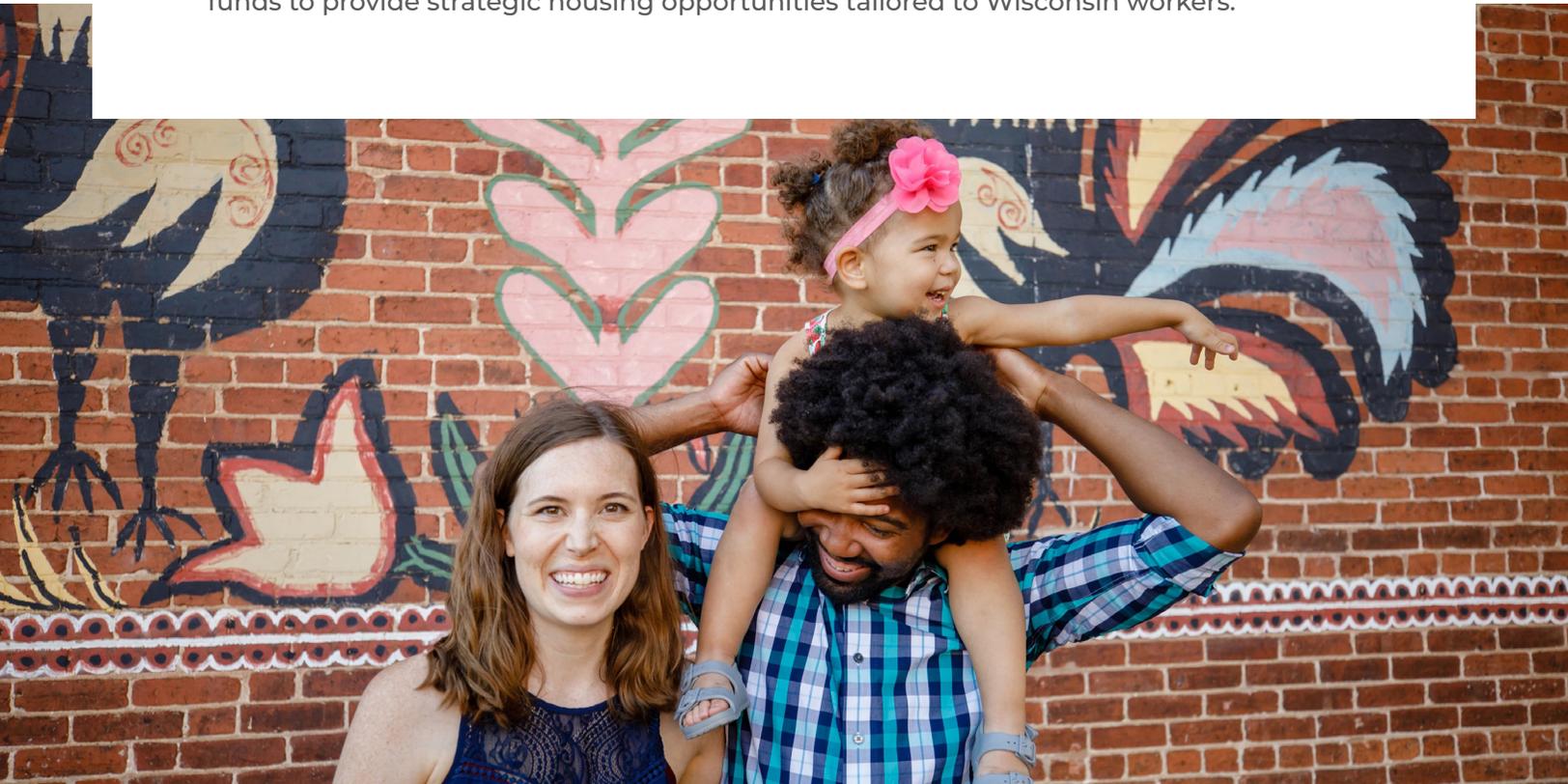
THE CHALLENGE

RISING HOUSING COSTS AFFECT WORKERS

Widespread affordable housing bolsters Wisconsin's workforce and contributes to thriving communities by enabling workers to move into new areas and current residents to consider downsizing or upgrading their homes. With more affordable housing, employers are better able to fill workforce needs. However, in recent years, Wisconsin has struggled with soaring housing and rental costs and unmet housing demand.

A 2024 study by the Wisconsin Policy Forum concluded that "home prices have grown faster than incomes in Wisconsin for several years. While this trend affects all homebuyers to varying degrees, it is particularly concerning for younger aspiring homebuyers who may be denied some or all of the long-term benefits of owning a home, including the opportunity to build equity." High average prices mean two things: first, that the homes that are available are expensive, and second, that there's a lack of affordable homes to bring the average cost down.

The same study found that it will take many years and multiple strategies for the state to improve housing affordability. The innovative programs detailed here are using WIG funds to provide strategic housing opportunities tailored to Wisconsin workers.





THE VISION

AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE HOUSING HELPS SECURE A VALUABLE WORKFORCE

As part of its work to develop an Economy for All, Wisconsin had the vision to tackle targeted workforce needs in a variety of areas, including transportation, education, health care, and housing. A total of \$128 million was awarded to 27 projects through the WIG Program.

The WIG Program harnessed the power of creativity, regional collaboration, and innovative solutions to address chronic local workforce needs. The grants encouraged businesses and institutions to develop leading-edge, long-term solutions to connect people to resources, support the hiring needs of businesses, and help people find family-supporting careers. WEDC and DWD jointly oversaw the program.

The innovative partnerships and programs outlined in this report are helping Wisconsin workers access affordable housing, creating better futures for their families and a more prosperous state economy.





INNOVATION ONE:

NEW HOMES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ON VACANT MILWAUKEE PROPERTIES

Many early childhood education (ECE) workers are being priced out of the Milwaukee housing market, leading to staffing shortages at child care centers. The Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC), in collaboration with the City of Milwaukee and Habitat for Humanity, used a \$5 million WIG award to build affordable houses near child care centers. Designated for purchase only by ECE workers, this housing not only helps to stabilize the local ECE workforce and revitalize the neighborhood but also creates critical child care slots that enable area parents to join the workforce.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Purchased vacant lots around high-quality child care centers from the City of Milwaukee for around \$1 each and worked with multiple local development partners to construct affordable homes on them, with prices at approximately \$105,000
- Provides home-buyer counseling and sells homes only to approved ECE workers who will own and occupy the homes
- Deed restricts properties to 2% appreciation each year and limits a homeowner's mortgage equity, ensuring that when a property is resold, it remains affordable for the next approved owner

THE SITUATION:

In Milwaukee's Harambee neighborhood, the

MEDIAN HOME PRICE IS \$199K,

more than 50% more expensive than recommended housing costs for the average \$34,000 ECE salary

2025 Realtor.com and 2025 SoFi

In Milwaukee,

1/3 OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

closed during the pandemic in 2020

Source: 2020 Wisconsin Policy Forum

Wisconsin faces the

WORST HOUSING CRISIS IN THE MIDWEST

Source: 2025 Wisconsin REALTORS Association

THE EXPERIENCE:

Many ECE workers in Wisconsin face housing challenges. This is a result of the combination of typically low wages, rising housing costs, and heavy demand for affordable homes. In a sector that provides an essential service for other workers, an inability to fill job openings has a ripple effect in the broader economy.

Meanwhile, the City of Milwaukee has taken ownership of hundreds of vacant and abandoned lots that provide no economic benefit to their neighborhoods. The Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) of Milwaukee saw an opportunity to tackle both of those problems with the help of \$5 million in WIG funding. The funding helped LISC, a community development financial institution (CDFI), facilitate the construction of at least 40 single-family homes for ECE teachers on lots in neighborhoods that surround multiple high-quality child care facilities. The homes were constructed with affordability in mind, each with a price tag of about \$105,000.

“Many ECE providers closed in Milwaukee during the pandemic, and centers were saying they had trouble getting their people back. Housing costs and housing instability were big issues for teachers. What we’ve done is work on providing entry-level housing that they can afford.”

—Theo Lipscomb, Executive Director, LISC

LISC partnered with child care providers and Habitat for Humanity, which shared previously developed affordable housing designs, as well as several emerging local developers and local housing-oriented nonprofits, to construct the houses.

The lots were purchased from the city for nominal amounts, typically \$1. The first home was completed and sold in October 2024. By fall 2025, 42 homes were either finished or under construction and nine had been sold, Lipscomb says. In addition, 11 more homes have buyers identified and are going through the closing process. LISC developed a list of about 240 ECE workers who are interested in purchasing the homes.

“We’re always trying to develop the capacity of the developers who are doing the types of projects that we finance,” says Lipscomb. “This is an example of where we’re trying to grow these developers to do more affordable housing.”

THE EXPERIENCE:

BY DECEMBER 2025

47% OF THE HOMES

had been sold or were
in the closing process

LISC has a

200+ WAITING LIST

of interested buyers
for its affordable homes

To purchase one of the homes, a buyer must be an ECE worker, go through home buyer counseling—which may include resolving credit and/or debt issues—and have a pre-qualification letter from a bank. If more than one buyer applies for the same home, a lottery is held.

“Many people can get some down payment assistance through banks or the home buyer counseling agency that they are working with,” Lipscomb says, noting that for some buyers, the cost of the new homes might be at the higher end of what’s considered affordable in terms of percentage of monthly income devoted to housing, but it’s still less than they would pay to rent a home in the same community.

In addition to the WIG-funded initiative, LISC’s project partner, the Community Development Alliance, received a \$500,000 grant from the Herb Kohl Foundation to support another eight non-ECE homes in the Harambee Neighborhood. This was in conjunction with a City of Milwaukee-approved \$770,000 in tax incremental financing (TIF) to support those developments. LISC also plans to construct another two ECE-designated, privately funded homes outside of the scope of the WIG award.



THE EXPERIENCE:

To ensure these homes remain affordable, buyers are deed restricted, limiting the amount of appreciation they can receive when they sell the homes in the future. The restrictions limit the appreciation for the original owners to 2% for every year they own the house, plus their mortgage equity, and there are provisions to account for home improvements made by the owners.

The home is then sold to another qualified buyer, again for an affordable price. Additional funds are not generated because the price is limited, which extends affordability to the next buyer.

“We’re trying to ensure that the benefits don’t accrue to only the initial household, and that the effects will be generations of affordability,” Lipscomb adds.

HOMES WERE PRICED
ABOUT 50% BELOW
market rate for the area

IN JUST
ONE YEAR
interest in the program
grew dramatically



THE RESULTS: 2022–2025



As of fall 2025

**42 AFFORDABLE
HOMES**

were finished or under construction
as part of this project

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Establish a pipeline of potential buyers.

Building sales momentum at the outset of the program was a challenge. “Things started slowly, but it couldn’t have happened fast. It wasn’t until homes were finished that we could work in earnest,” Lipscomb says. “With the next ones, we’re going to notify potential buyers 60 days in advance of a house’s completion—and then 30 days out, we’ll have the lottery and they can arrange for closing. We’ve arrived at the spot where the timing is well aligned.”

2. Expect the unexpected.

Planning for contingencies can allow for flexibility when obstacles arise. In the case of this project, inflation and rising interest rates affected the project’s financials, leading to delays—which, in turn, meant rallying community support to attract investment. Consider what roadblocks you might encounter and plan in advance for how the project could pivot if those possibilities come to pass. “Related to that is having partners and funders who understand that there will likely be changes and that are focused on the end goal, even if some of the method, timeline, or budget need to evolve,” says Lipscomb.





INNOVATION TWO:

BLENDING WORKPLACE TRAINING WITH AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Northwoods employers face a two-pronged challenge: a lack of affordable housing for potential workers and educational resources that are often inaccessible due to distance, making it difficult to keep employee skills up to date. Northwood Technical College (NTC) and Impact Seven CDFI created the Housing Opportunity and Mobile Education Solutions (HOMES) Program to build and upskill the local workforce—and used a \$9.8 million WIG award to do it.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Constructed three affordable, 40-unit townhome rental complexes to provide housing for the Northwoods workforce and make recruiting easier for local employers
- Outfitted the affordable housing units with “workforce accelerator” training rooms where NTC can deliver easily accessible training, both for the residents of the housing development and workers in the broader local community
- Converted box trucks to serve as mobile labs, bringing enhanced, hands-on training for machine tools, mechatronics, and welding to the workforce accelerators

THE SITUATION:

Decreasing the commute
to education

**BY JUST
10 MINUTES**

increases associate degree
completion rates

Source: 2024 EdWorkingPaper No. 24-1055, Brown
University Annenberg Institute

**NEARLY 80%
OF WISCONSIN
MANUFACTURERS**

said it was difficult or very difficult to find
qualified workers for open positions

Source: 2024 The Wisconsin Manufacturing Report,
Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing & Productivity

In northwest Wisconsin,
multi-family housing units were

**11% OF
HOUSING STOCK**

compared to almost 20%
in Wisconsin overall

Source: 2021 Grow North Region Housing Study and
2023 National Association of Home Builders 1-year
American community Survey (ACS)

THE EXPERIENCE:

The affordable housing challenge and the need for a better-trained workforce in Northern Wisconsin fueled a partnership between NTC and Impact Seven to create both housing opportunity and mobile workforce education solutions.

Driven by \$9.8 million in WIG funding, the two entities developed the HOMES Program to help tackle the region's housing and skilled workforce gaps.

Impact Seven—a CDFI experienced in commercial and residential real estate projects—focused on housing development; meanwhile, for the workforce education element, the college enlisted the specialized mobile training units it uses to deliver career training programs remotely across its coverage area for high schools, employers, Tribes, and other groups with a need for training.

Impact Seven developed 120 units of affordable workforce housing in three locations across Northern Wisconsin. These developments include a 40-unit townhome-style apartment complex in St. Croix Falls—which is complete and fully rented—and similar developments in Hayward and Hurley, which were under construction in fall 2025.

Demand was strong, with 90 inquiries and pre-qualifications received for the St. Croix Falls units prior to groundbreaking without any marketing. The number of applications continued to rise through construction.

“Each project will be a great community asset for decades, and in the case of St. Croix Falls it was awesome to see how appreciative the residents are of their new, high-quality homes.”

-John E. Will, President, Northwood Technical College

Northwood Technical College President John E. Will acknowledges the housing component was challenging. “The original project scope was around \$30 million,” he says. “Inflation and rising interest rates made the project increasingly difficult as time passed. It is a credit to Impact Seven for continuing with the same concept even though its cost rose to more than \$46 million.”

THE EXPERIENCE:

Each of the facilities includes an on-site “workforce accelerator,” a training facility that is available to the entire community—not just the residents of the apartment developments. Using a simple model that involves a classroom and a community room that do not contain specialized equipment but can be converted into lab space by rolling in wheeled training units, the accelerators make it easier to access technical education in subjects such as advanced manufacturing and welding. The classroom work is supplemented by hands-on experience in NTC’s mobile labs, which use a special parking pad and power hookup at each workforce accelerator.

BY FALL OF 2025, THE
ST. CROIX FALLS PROJECT HAD

**HUNDREDS OF
INQUIRIES**

for its 40 units

PRIOR TO THIS PROJECT, SOME
NORTHWOODS STUDENTS

**DROVE MORE THAN
AN HOUR**

to reach their classes

“Northwood Tech’s region encompasses more than 10,000 square miles, so some of our students drive well over an hour for education. The accelerators put education where people live,” says Liz Pizzi, the college’s grant and resource development manager. “We want people living there to be able to upskill and have the opportunity to advance their careers.”



THE EXPERIENCE:

Pizzi says area manufacturers often have trouble finding skilled labor to meet current and projected growth needs.

"The housing is key. Employers say that a constant issue is how to recruit people when we don't have the affordable housing to support them. It's an important recruitment and retention issue."

-Liz Pizzi, Grant and Resource Development Manager, Northwood Technical College

The college spent \$3.8 million of the grant for on-campus equipment and the mobile labs—the school has a mobile machine tool lab, a mechatronics lab, and a welding lab funded by WIG, plus a dental assistant lab and meat processing lab funded separately. The remaining \$6 million of the WIG funding went to helping finance the housing developments.



THE RESULTS: 2022–2025



As of fall 2025,

ALL 120 UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

were finished or under construction
as part of the HOMES Program

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Prepare for strong demand.

Impact Seven President and CEO Brett Gerber says, “We learned quickly that there was way more market demand than we thought at the beginning of construction. We knew there was a need for housing reflected in the market study, but Impact Seven received hundreds of inquiries for the first 40 units and pre-leased the property well in advance of the opening.”

2. Community preparation for new housing.

The housing developments encountered a variety of challenges, from wetland delineations to utility extensions to neighborhood opposition, which delayed construction, resulting in higher costs. President Will urges more education of community leaders in clearing the way for housing development. “The economics of these projects are especially challenging for rural communities, and they really should have discussions on how to accommodate a developer before the opportunity arises,” he says. “In addition, it would be wise for them to understand the tools that developers have—particularly tax credits—at their disposal to alleviate any misconceptions that might emerge from residents.”





INNOVATION THREE:

DOOR COUNTY COLLABORATION EASES WORKFORCE HOUSING PRESSURE IN A TOURISM HAVEN

The tourism-intensive Door County region is facing a challenge: ECE workers who support working parents year-round can't afford to live in the community where they work. This creates a shortage of local child care that impacts the local economy. Door County Housing Partnership and United Way of Door County teamed up, and using a \$3.5 million WIG award, constructed affordable homes and created a path to home ownership and generational wealth-building for local ECE teachers.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Community land trust officials obtained undeveloped residential lots owned by the Village of Sister Bay and built homes on them, using largely volunteer construction labor.
- Door County child care representatives identified local ECE teachers interested in home ownership and who want to live the community where they work.
- The housing partnership retains ownership of the land, and homeowners receive 1% of the home's base value for each year they live there, allowing them to create wealth while ensuring the home remains affordable for the next buyer.

THE SITUATION:

In Door County,
**HOUSES COST
 28% MORE**
 than the Wisconsin average

Source: 2025 Redfin

The average ECE teacher makes

**50% LESS
 ANNUALLY**

than the median income
 in Door County

Source: 2025, Zip Recruiter, 2023 Data
 USA/Deloitte/Datawheel

THE EXPERIENCE:

Door County child care and community land trust officials banded together to help increase child care opportunities and solve housing challenges for early childhood educators unable to afford market-rate housing in one of Wisconsin's vacation paradises.

The United Way of Door County received \$3.5 million in WIG funding as part of a multi-pronged approach to improve access to child care in the county. In addition to constructing one child care center in Sturgeon Bay and renovating a second center in Sister Bay, the United Way of Door County also partnered with the Door County Housing Partnership to help underwrite land purchases to create housing opportunities in Sister Bay aimed at helping ECE teachers gain a housing foothold in Door County, where high housing costs often make it difficult for families to find affordable places to live.

The Village of Sister Bay owned 10 unused residential lots and was trying to sell them. The Door County Housing Partnership, which operates on a land-trust model to assure long-term housing affordability, was able to negotiate with the village to obtain those lots for \$10,000 each. WIG funding paid for those land purchases, with the expectation that three of the lots would be fully developed during the term of the grant.

The land trust model calls for the Door County Housing Partnership to own the land in perpetuity while the homeowners—including early childhood education teachers—pay an affordable price determined by a range of factors, including Area Median Income (AMI), property taxes, homeowners' insurance, and various fees. The Door County Housing Partnership uses a scoring method to select the new homeowners from its waitlist. A household that fulfills a grant agency requirement gets a significant number of points over what another household can score, thus ensuring that the houses are sold to child care workers.

"They get to buy their first home and that's such an exciting feeling, that we're actually helping them and that's really amazing."

- Scott Bader, President, Door County Housing Partnership



THE EXPERIENCE:

Mariah Goode, a founding board member of the housing partnership, says the Sister Bay project fills a crucial need in Door County. “We have short-term rental pressure and a large second-home market (because we’re a tourist hub), making the market for workforce housing expensive. We’re hoping to relieve at least some of that pressure,” she says.

Owners of the first home completed in the initiative moved in during December 2024.

“She is a teacher at Northern Door Children’s Center in Sister Bay,” says Kohnle. “So, her home is less than a mile from where she works, and her husband is employed locally as well. They have two young kids. The key to this was that the house was super affordable.”

AS OF LATE 2025

**2 HOMES
WERE SOLD**

and the third had a buyer

THE HOMES WERE

**SOLD FOR
\$150,000**

(half the median home price
in this market)



THE EXPERIENCE:

The second home purchase closed in late 2025, and the third was set to be sold to another ECE worker at a nearby child care center. Two of the three homes were built largely with volunteer labor, and the homes sold for about \$150,000 each.

Under terms of the home sales, the housing partnership retains ownership of the land. When it comes time for the owners to sell, they will receive 1% of the home's base value for every year they have lived in the home, plus any home equity they have accumulated.

That means that after 10 years, the owners could sell the home to a qualified buyer identified by the Door County Housing Partnership for \$165,000. The original buyer's equity would be \$15,000, plus whatever amount of the mortgage principal they have paid off. This allows the home to remain affordable for future buyers while also benefiting the first owners, in a way that's similar to the traditional housing market.



THE RESULTS: 2022–2025



BECAUSE OF THIS PROJECT

ECE TEACHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

can afford to live in the community where they work

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Partnerships pay off.

Goode says continual outreach to other community land trusts in Wisconsin and elsewhere over the years helped plant the seeds for its creative approach to housing issues, and its strong ties to the United Way of Door County helped make the project a success. “The state has been great and flexible, because we got our grant term extended. People need to be persistent in trying to make things work,” she says.

2. Think local.

Kohnle says the housing partnership is yielding great results because officials thought creatively about affordability and serving specific community needs. Part of thinking creatively, Goode says, comes from close collaboration with other housing initiatives in Wisconsin and around the nation to borrow successful ideas and strategies. It also stems from identifying crucial community needs, such as child care workers in a high-priced vacation home market.





INNOVATION FOUR:

LAC COURTE OREILLES TRIBE BUILDS INFRASTRUCTURE, WORKFORCE HOUSING CAPACITY

A lack of available housing was driving members of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (LCO) away from their Tribal land. Having to travel long distances posed a challenge for members trying to maintain consistent employment and complete their education on the reservation. The Tribe used a \$4.6 million WIG award to build water and sewer to support a concurrent workforce project and future construction projects, including a new Tribal clinic, which opened in 2025.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Extended a water and sewer line out to the construction site and ensured it had capacity for current and future building projects and the Tribe's broader economic vision
- Prepared the site for development, facilitating the concurrent construction of a 40-unit apartment building
- Ensured high quality of life by selecting land near Tribal services including K-12 and post-secondary education institutions, health services, vocational training, and more

THE SITUATION:

For every 100 extremely low-income renters, there are only

34 AFFORDABLE UNITS AVAILABLE

in Wisconsin

Source: 2023 Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP)

Native Americans in Wisconsin experience homelessness at rates

6X GREATER

than the Wisconsin average

Source: 2023 National Alliance to End Homelessness

THE EXPERIENCE:

Challenged by a shortage of rental units—with supply falling short of demand by an estimated 300 units—and lacking adequate water and sewer infrastructure to support them, the LCO Tribe found a solution using \$4.6 million in WIG funding.

That solution also unlocked other development potential due to diligent long-range planning efforts.

The Tribe, seeking to enable future community and economic growth, used the funding to extend water and sewer service to the site of the new Miskogiiizhig Apartments, a 40-unit housing construction project paid for with additional federal American Rescue Plan Act funding.

The apartments are located near all Tribal services: the LCO Community Health Center, the K-12 school, LCO Ojibwe University, LCO Vocational Rehabilitation Center, and the Tribal day care center, as well as nearby stores. The complex is located just 1.5 miles from the area's second-largest employer, the Sevenwinds Casino in Lac Courte Oreilles.

“There’s a lack of housing in our region and unless you can afford a million-dollar cabin, there isn’t much available. There’s a lot of overcrowding. A lot of families are living together with partners, friends, cousins, and other family members.”

- McKenna Green, Director, LCO Planning and Grants Department

The water and sewer infrastructure involved installation of four miles of new water pipe, closing a loop and connecting two distribution lines to make the apartment project possible.

The project was sized to ensure that the Tribe had the infrastructure necessary to support its broader economic vision for future growth, including supporting proposed housing developments, redevelopment and expansion of a closed service station site to support increased demand for recreational vehicle and truck fueling, and a business incubator for Tribal entrepreneurs.

“The water and sewer lines are there so that when we have the opportunity again, we can build out there without all of the restrictions of subsidized housing,” Green says.

The infrastructure project was also a catalyst for development of the LCO Community Health Center, which opened in spring 2025.

THE EXPERIENCE:

The Miskogizhig Apartments, opened in November 2023 with a mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments—including two wheelchair-accessible units—were an important step toward providing workforce housing in the tourism, entertainment, and public service fields.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the complex, spiritual Tribal elder Dennis White told the Sawyer County Record about the impact of the apartments on the Tribe. “I’m glad that the people coming here are going to be able to walk through these wonderful doors—but to have our own place, built by our own hands for our own people—that’s a really big step,” White said.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE NEW
UNITS EXCEEDED SUPPLY

**BY MORE
THAN 100**

ON-RESERVATION HOUSING IS

**HELPING TRIBAL
MEMBERS**

access school and employment

Workforce housing demand is strong, shown by the 153 applications filed for the 40-unit building and a projected housing supply shortage of 260 units to meet current community and workforce needs. The need for the project was underscored by residents of the apartments.

“I attend LCO Ojibwe University and living only a few minutes away from work and school helped me a lot,” says one resident.

Another resident was traveling nearly 30 miles round-trip for work on the reservation. “Being able to reside on the reservation with affordable housing has assisted me with maintaining my employment with the Tribe,” the resident says.



THE RESULTS: 2022–2025



THIS PROJECT HAS CREATED

**40 AFFORDABLE
RENTAL UNITS**

on LCO Tribal land

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Prioritize long-term planning.

The project underscored the necessity of long-term planning and partnerships to create a sustainable path to community growth. “You may not see the results immediately, but you can’t wait around for puzzle pieces to fall into place,” says Green. She adds that it is particularly valuable to allow for quick action when funding opportunities arise.

2. Consider the next steps.

Projects like these require strategic vision to ensure one project builds on the last. “Envisioning the phases of development is critical. If you have just subsidized housing, people are stuck with that,” Green says. “People move from subsidized housing to workforce housing, and when they outgrow that, we need to think about what’s next.” She says Tribal officials are already thinking about meeting the need for family housing. “Planning doesn’t stop because we built an apartment building,” she adds. The Tribe has created a housing department separate from the LCO Housing Authority, which uses U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds. The department can help with rental and financial counseling, preparing tenants to pay the first and last month’s rent, transitioning from subsidized housing to workforce housing, and planning the future of housing on the reservation, she says.

THE CONCLUSION:

Using WIG funding, these innovative projects provided the housing and infrastructure needed to help local economies prosper. They created affordable new housing for educators, provided access to vital technical skills training, and helped Northern Wisconsin’s Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe move ahead with essential community-building projects.

Together, WEDC and DWD provided the grant funding that unlocked these leading-edge community partnerships that will pay dividends for many years to come.