



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



ADVOCACY



WDATCP Offers \$27 Million in Food Infrastructure Grants

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is accepting applications now until 5:00 p.m. (CT) Wednesday, March 6 for the [Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure \(RFSI\) Program](#).

The program aims to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally- and regionally-produced foods, including dairy products. Funding for the grants is provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. WCMA has engaged in planning discussions for the program.

A total of \$27 million will be awarded through a competitive grant process. The RFSI Program has two grant tracks: the Infrastructure Grant and the Equipment-Only Grant. Applicants may only apply for one track.

Infrastructure Grants will range from \$100,000 to \$3 million. This grant can fund:

- Capital investments such as construction, equipment (e.g. delivery vehicles, frozen or refrigerated storage, value-added food processing equipment, or other equipment for middle-of-the food supply chain activities);
- Building renovations;
- Facility design or engineering;
- Staff time;
- Modernizing systems (e.g. tracking, storage, information technology, etc.);
- Plan development (e.g. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan); and

- Market development.

A match is required for Infrastructure Grants and starts at 50% of the total project cost. However, if the main applicant qualifies as underserved, the match requirement will be reduced to 25% of the total project cost.

Equipment-Only Grants will range from \$10,000 to \$99,999. This grant can only fund equipment, per the examples provided above. Equipment may be new, used, or refurbished. No match is required for Equipment-Only Grants.

An informational webinar about the RFSI program will be held at 11:00 a.m. (CT) on Friday, January 9. **Registration is required.** Questions about the program can be emailed to RFSI@wisconsin.gov.

[VIEW GRANT DETAILS](#)



WCMA Advocates for Wisconsin Food Bank Bill

WCMA last week [joined Wisconsin agricultural groups](#) in supporting [Assembly Bill 645](#) as it received a hearing in the Assembly Committee on Local Government. The bill provides counties with the power to redirect funding to address food insecurity - a concern for 7.2 percent of Wisconsinites, including 12.6 percent of all children in the state.

WCMA supports its members' efforts to address hunger both in Wisconsin and across the country. Watch this e-newsletter for updates and ways to advocate for state-level proposals and Farm Bill initiatives related to food insecurity, or contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with questions.



U.S. Treasury Approves \$140 Million for Wisconsin Broadband Improvements

Federal officials have approved plans to utilize \$140 million of federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to improve Wisconsin broadband access, Governor Tony Evers and U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin [announced last week](#).

The funding will be used to support two new grant programs, the Flexible Facilities Program and the Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program, to support high-quality multi-purpose community facilities and help address high-speed internet access, affordability, and adoption in the state.

WCMA members operating in Wisconsin can see current broadband speeds in their area using the [Public Service Commission's interactive broadband map](#).

WCMA has made broadband expansion one of its key policy priorities at the state and federal levels. To get involved as a member of WCMA's active Policy Committee, please contact [Rebekah Sweeney](#).

USDA Pauses FMMO Hearing Until January 16

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recessed its ongoing hearing on federal milk marketing order (FMMO) reform, with plans to resume on Tuesday, January 16. The hearing first began on August 23 and recessed from October 11-November 27.

In early October, WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer joined members, stakeholders, and USDA staff in-person at the hearing in Indiana to [advocate for adjusted make allowances](#) and [against proposals](#) to add 640-pound Cheddar blocks and mozzarella to the protein price formula.

WCMA will keep members apprised of FMMO developments and decisions via this e-newsletter. Questions may be directed to [John Umhoefer](#).



House Passes Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act

WCMA applauds the latest advancement of the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act](#), approved by the House Wednesday by a vote of 330-99. The proposal, which has strong bipartisan support, would allow whole and reduced-fat milk to again be served in the School Meals Program for the first time since these options were removed from the program more than a decade ago. In June, in concert with the International Dairy Foods Association, WCMA submitted [a letter to support the bill](#).

The bill is led by House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson (R-PA) and Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA). It now moves to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry. The Senate has until January of 2025 to consider and pass the proposal.

INDUSTRY UPDATES

USDA Awards Cheddar Contracts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [awarded nearly \\$305,000 in contracts](#) to procure Cheddar cheese from WCMA member Cedar Valley Cheese, the agency announced last week.

All open USDA dairy product solicitations are [available online](#), along with information about how to [become an approved vendor](#).

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *WXOW-TV*: [Wisconsin's 76th Alice in Dairyland highlights butter ahead of the holidays](#) (Featuring WCMA member Carr Valley Cheese)
- *Daily Meal*: [For a top of the line cheese board, look no further than Wisconsin](#)
- *WFTS-TV*: [These cheese recipes will make it easy to "share the joy" this holiday season](#) (Featuring WCMA members Marieke Gouda and Emmi Roth USA)

National/International

- *Reuters*: [European Commission clears Novozymes, Chr. Hansen merger](#) (Featuring WCMA member Chr. Hansen)
 - *Dairy Foods*: [Dairy Farmers of America is Dairy Foods 2023 Processor of the Year](#) (Featuring WCMA member Dairy Farmers of America)
 - *Dairy Processing*: [Agropur names new president](#) (Featuring WCMA member Agropur)
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Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Protect Valued Employees with WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Ensure your valued team members have the knowledge and skills needed to stay safe on the job! Register them now for WCMA's new [Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors](#). This interactive, industry-specific class is for everyone from the newcomer to the veteran, and can be taken for onboarding purposes or as a refresher.

Designed with input from WCMA's Health & Safety Group, this new course concentrates on safety strategies related to machine guarding, lockout/tag out, prevention of slips, trips, and falls, chemical controls, and control of hazardous energy - the key focus areas of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's ongoing Local Emphasis Program for food processors. Participants will come away not only with new knowledge, but also with a packet of training materials and a certificate of completion from Chippewa Valley Technical College and WCMA, which can be retained as a record of quality instruction.

Here's a look at all six sessions offered in 2024:

- February 20: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(Virtual\)](#)
- April 9: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(In-Person\)](#)
- May 14: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(Virtual\)](#)
- June 4: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(In-Person\)](#)
- September 24: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(Virtual\)](#)
- October 15: [WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors \(In-Person\)](#)

In-person classes cost \$179, including lunch and snacks. Virtual sessions are offered at just \$149. These classes are capped at 24 attendees, so don't wait! Have questions? Please contact [WCMA's Rebekah Sweeney](#).

REGISTER NOW



Join Industry Safety Leaders in WCMA Train the Safety Trainer Course

Ready to go beyond the basics and build your skills as a safety trainer? Join WCMA's new [Train the Safety Trainer](#) program, developed with member feedback through the WCMA Health & Safety Group!

This course is designed to equip the dairy processing industry's safety trainers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively communicate safety expectations and protocols for maximum compliance. Along with a wealth of new skills, participants will also come away with a packet of training materials and a certificate of completion from Chippewa Valley Technical College and WCMA, that they and their employer can retain as a record of instruction.

This class will be next offered [virtually on January 30](#) for just \$219 per person. Have questions? Please contact [Rebekah Sweeney](#).

REGISTER NOW



Built Better Leaders with WCMA Front-Line Leadership Courses

Looking for opportunities to help your valued front-line team members enhance their skills in communication and team-building? Join over 1,000 WCMA member employees who have become better leaders and expanded their networks through WCMA's popular [Front-Line Leadership Trainings!](#)

Each class is a one-day offering, running from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (CT). All Front-Line Leadership classes are offered a la carte and may be taken in any order. Here's a look at our virtual offerings for winter/spring 2024:

- [January 23](#): Part A - Essential Leadership Skills - **Two seats left!**
- [February 26](#): Part B - Boosting Staff Performance
- [April 2](#): Part C - Cultivating a Team - **Three seats left!**

- [January 24](#): Part A - Essential Leadership Skills
- [February 29](#): Part B - Boosting Staff Performance
- [April 3](#): Part C - Cultivating a Team

Questions? Please contact [WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt](#).

[SIGN UP ONLINE](#)



WCMA Webinar

Research Recap: Identifying Dairy Export Barriers

Gain Export Insights in Free WCMA Webinar January 9

Sign up today to join [WCMA's next free, members-only webinar](#) on Tuesday, January 9 at 1:00 p.m. (CT)! Gain insights on the latest research on barriers to dairy exporting, and how WCMA can help members maximize sales overseas.

This session will feature **Dr. Chuck Nicholson, Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin - Madison**, detailing his recent research and findings on the obstacles dairy processors face in their export efforts. We'll also share information on the support available to WCMA members as they seek to launch and grow their export endeavors.

Danica Nilsestuen, WCMA Grants & Business Programs Director, will also share export resources available to Association members.

Presenters will reserve time to field audience questions during the webinar. To share a question in advance, please email [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#) by Monday, January 8 at 12:00 p.m. (CT).



Dr. Chuck Nicholson
UW-Madison



Danica Nilsestuen
WCMA

[REGISTER NOW](#)

This offering is the latest in [WCMA's monthly webinar series](#), open to all WCMA members. Webinar topics are driven by member feedback and cover a range of themes such as business development, communication strategies, and industry resources. Have an idea for a future webinar offering? [Let us know!](#)



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CHEESE MAKERS
ASSOCIATION

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**Continued Education for
Dairy Processors**

December 12, 2023

Watch WCMA December Webinar Focused on Industry Education

WCMA thanks members for their participation in last week's webinar, focused on educational offerings for the dairy processing industry in 2024. Special thanks go to our guest speakers Andrea Miller of the Center for Dairy Research, Adam Brock of Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, Rueben Nilsson of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and Rebekah Sweeney and Sara Schmidt of WCMA.

A recording of the webinar is [now available online](#), along with contact information for our presenters and resources that were shared during the webinar:

- Center for Dairy Research:
 - [Complete course list](#)
 - [UW-Madison and UW-River Falls Farm & Industry Short Course](#)
- Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin:
 - [Complete course list \(coming soon!\)](#)
- UW-River Falls:
 - [Complete course list \(coming soon!\)](#)
- Presenters:
 - [Andrea Miller, Center for Dairy Research](#)
 - [Adam Brock, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin](#)
 - [Rueben Nilsson, UW-River Falls](#) for Pilot Plant questions or dpt@uwrf.edu for short course questions
 - [Rebekah Sweeney, WCMA](#)
 - [Sara Schmidt, WCMA](#)

Additional Industry Educational Opportunities

WCMA is pleased to share opportunities for industry training and enrichment. Here's a look at upcoming offerings from WCMA partners:

- On-Demand:
 - [Introduction to Food Safety Principles \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell

- University
- [Online Dairy Science and Sanitation \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell University
 - [Artisan Dairy Food Safety Coaching](#) - Cornell University
 - [Online HACCP Training](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Good Manufacturing Practices in Food Safety](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Environmental Monitoring in the Dairy Industry](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Preventive Controls for Dairy Processors](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Food Safety Basics For Artisan Cheesemakers](#) - North Carolina State University
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MEMBERSHIP



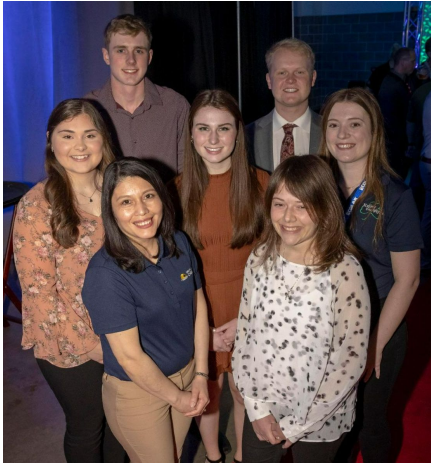
Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Please note that **WCMA offices will be closed on Monday, December 25 in observance of Christmas.** We wish you and yours happy and safe holidays, and we thank you for your engagement and support throughout the year!



WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

Apply by Feb. 9 for WCMA Student Scholarships



Know a student coming home for the holidays? Share the news on WCMA's [annual student scholarships](#) - now accepting applications! High school, technical, undergraduate, and graduate students may apply by February 9, 2024 for these awards, totaling \$19,000. Seven winners will be selected in March and invited to attend a special awards presentation on April 17 at CheeseExpo in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Seven awards are available across WCMA's three scholarships: the WCMA Myron P. "Mike" Dean Cheese Industry Student Scholarship, the WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship, and the Brian Eggebrecht Student Scholarship Supporting Skilled Trades in the Dairy Industry. Complete details on all awards are [available online](#).

Applicants for all WCMA scholarships must supply school transcripts, a letter of recommendation, and a completed application form. All applicants will be notified of their application status in March. Please contact [WCMA's Grace Atherton](#) with questions.

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