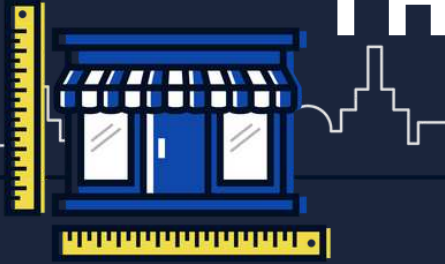


# THE BUSINESS LEAD



SPRING 2025



## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

### CROWD FUNDING-ALTERNATIVE FUNDING FOR START-UP BUSINESSES

The Crowdfunding concept allows you to collect small contributions from many individuals (the crowd). With the internet and various social media platforms, crowdfunding can grow exponentially on a global scale, allowing businesses to gain more access to needed capital.

In fact, the the Small Business Administration (SBA) found that crowdfunding also acts as a way to communicate to investors that your business is feasible and marketable which may increase funding even more.

Crowdfunding is no sure thing however, and many small business start-ups fail to reach their goal using this method so do your research and read more about crowdfunding on page 2.

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# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT CROWDFUNDING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The crowdfunding concept has been around for hundreds of years. It was used in 1884 when the American Committee for the Statue of Liberty ran out of funds for the Statue's pedestal. Over one hundred thousand Americans donated, with most donations coming in at one dollar or less. Wow, who would have thought it? There are literally hundreds of crowdfunding sites in the U.S. and abroad, so getting started is easy but, just how easy is it? See below for more information.

## There are two main types of crowdfunding:

\*The **donation model** is what most people think of when crowdfunding is mentioned. Funders donate money to a cause in exchange for products, special pricing on items, or rewards. Beyond the perks, donation funders don't have the opportunity to get anything in return for their money. Kickstarter and Indiegogo are both examples of donation crowdfunding.

\*A more recent model is **investment crowdfunding**. Businesses sell ownership stakes in the form of equity or debt so funders (more accurately, investors) become shareholders in a sense, and they have the potential for financial return.

## Benefits of crowdfunding:

\*Setting up crowdfunding is an effective way to start gaining seed money without having to apply for a major loan and you don't have to pay back money earned from crowdfunding unless you choose a debt-based strategy, provided you give each backer any promised rewards for their donation level.

\*Successful crowdfunding campaigns help your company gain popularity and build brand recognition. When a backer invests a small amount in your company and shares the opportunity with friends, they start building a network of early adopters who are interested in your product.

\*With crowdfunding, you can pitch the concept of your business and ask individual buyers for investments in advance of actually producing your product. Once you have enough pledges, you can use that startup capital to build your company's infrastructure, create a website and manufacture products.

## Tips for crowdfunding success:

**Goals**—It's important to have an accurate estimate of how much it will cost to send all promised rewards to donors, especially if you're relying on donations to produce your next line of products. Consider how much capital you'll need to keep your business running after the initial launch, and factor this into your goal amount.

**Benchmark**—Research what crowdfunding campaigns are most successful and what elements they have in common. Look at other campaigns in your industry for examples of perks that investors want to receive in exchange for their investment.

**Marketing**—A short video summarizing why people should invest and what they would get in return can help drive donations while also marketing your business. Your video can educate your target audience and convert them to customers who believe in your vision.

source: indeed.com and thehartford.com



## UNIQUE RESTAURANT IDEAS FOR INSPIRATION

A combination of factors make for a thriving restaurant including a great location, a delicious menu, good marketing, and a willingness to put in the work to make it all happen. Below are a few creative ideas to attract customers and keep them coming back time and time again.

**Farm to Table:** While a farm-to-table concept may not be new, it is important. If you want to give your restaurant an edge, consider working with local farms and dairies as you build your menu. Using locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products is a great marketing tool.

**Go Back in Time:** If you've acquired a building with a rich history, it's worth looking into that history to promote your business. If your establishment housed different businesses over the years, selecting an era and honing in on that time period can make your restaurant unique. Themed décor including furnishings, art, and lighting can set the tone. Select menu items that include dishes from that time and bring back nostalgic recipes that were once popular to attract loyal locals.

**Make it Entertaining:** One of the best ways to get people into your restaurant is by making it fun. You can do this in any number of ways, from hiring musicians to play in the evenings, putting on a dinner theater show, or even having your wait staff break into song and dance in the middle of service.

**Consider Plant Based:** The vegetarian and vegan diets have seen explosive growth over the last few years. Providing a menu that is 100% plant-based is something that would be considered unique and because this type of menu can accommodate many different diet restrictions, they are often perceived to be healthier.

**Be Eco-Friendly:** Most people are concerned about the environment. One way to capitalize on this fact, and do your part, is to make your restaurant as eco-friendly as possible. There are a number of ways to incorporate "green" features in your restaurant. Some simple ideas include using paper straws, eliminating plastic cutlery, using cloth napkins instead of paper, buying kitchen and bar mats made from 100% recycled materials, recycling wood boxes, glass bottles, and cardboard and exchanging styrofoam materials for reusable cups and recyclable containers.

**Make it Pet Friendly:** With so many food safety rules and regulations, bringing animals into your restaurant might not appeal to most owners. At the same time, people are very attached to their four-legged friends and may be more likely to patronize a pet-friendly restaurant. Most often, this can be accomplished by offering outdoor seating with a space for pets. There are also a growing number of establishments that have animals right on the premises. While the idea of having a cup of coffee in a room with a bunch of (adoptable) cats may not be for everyone, it is a concept that has proven to be incredibly popular with pet lovers.

source: budgetbranders.com



### BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Good Times Restaurant and Bar located at 118 Bissen Street has been offering good food, good friends and good times since 1978.

Managed by Sarah Glasrud, the restaurant is known for their homemade dressings and special TJ wing sauce.

In addition to homemade pizza, steaks, burgers, salads, and wraps, guests can enjoy their famous Wild Turkey Capital sandwich consisting of pulled turkey, fried onion, and swiss cheese on grilled wild rice cranberry bread.

Enjoy a daily lunch or dinner special in the spacious bar, inviting dining room, or outdoor patio space.

Homemade comfort food is the foundation for their catering service and staff can custom create menus sure to please any crowd.

#### Fun Restaurant Event Ideas:

Below are some unique ways to bring in a crowd and promote your restaurant business:

**Guest Chefs:** Bring in a guest chef for a special event by pooling from local celebrities (sports figures, musicians, authors, etc.) Advertise the featured chef and draw in new customers who are excited to taste a dish created by a popular figure.

**Tastings:** There are a number of ways that you can do tastings, such as offering flights of wine or locally brewed beer. You can also offer special food tastings. By combining food or drink with education from your staff, you will be offering an unforgettable experience to your customers.

**Cooking Class:** Offering cooking classes gives customers the ability to interact in a different way. Have your chefs teach guests how to make some of the most popular menu items or new seasonal items. Classes may bring in more potential restaurant customers who find your restaurant through the classes offered.

**Girls Night/Guys Night:** Plan an occasional girl or guy night and cater specifically to the group. Girls' night could include a pasta bar and selection of desserts. Invite a guest speaker or product demonstrator to draw an even bigger crowd. For the guys, plan some hearty nacho plate combinations and host various card games.

Looking for some ways to save some cash? Minnesota Energy Resources offer <sup>®</sup> several ways for business to save. Below is a list of some of the many ways to reduce costs through rebates and specific programs:

### REBATES:

**Water heating**-New high-efficiency water heating systems and drain water heat recovery devices.

**Food service equipment**-New high-efficiency food service equipment.

**Insulation**-Increased attic, roof and wall insulation levels for businesses using natural gas heating.

**Steam trap**-Steam trap replacement or significant repair.

**Grain dryers**-Efficiency upgrades.

**Grocery and commercial laundry**-Equipment upgrades.

### Limited Time Rebates (check website for details)

- Furnace heating systems and components-New high-efficiency forced-air heating systems, low-intensity infrared heating systems, condensing furnaces, and electronic programmable setback, Wi-Fi enabled and advanced thermostats.
- Boiler heating systems and components-New high-efficiency boiler systems, related components, and electronic programmable setback, Wi-Fi enabled and Advanced thermostats.
- Furnace tuneup-\$35 for a professional service tuneup to your heating system.
- Boiler tuneup-Boiler tuneup completed by a professional heating service technician.

To learn more visit: <https://www.minnesotaenergyresources.com/savings/business/rebates>

## Old Buildings Renewed

The building located at 219 S. Kingston Street adjoins the Union Hall Building at 215 S. Kingston. In 1903 Walter Goergen put an addition onto the south side of his Union Hall building. He was planning to open a bowling alley and pool hall but it soon became evident that would not be successful. Instead, the addition became a movie theatre with living quarters and a lobby/cloakroom upstairs. The lobby/cloakroom had openings in the wall that allowed the public to observe the dance floor on the second floor of the Union Hall building.

The theatre name and managers started with the Lyric Electric Theatre in 1909 with Mr. J. C. Evans. By 1919 the name was the Gem Theatre advertising "A Fight for Millions," which was a "thrilling" fifteen-episode series. In 1929 it was called the State Theatre under the management of Elmer Deters. An advertisement from that period notes "on April 28th 1929 the Vitaphone Talking Pictures present the first All-talking Picture in Houston County."

The last theatre name used was the Enterprise Theatre. Managers of the theatre included Ed Stehr, Lester West, and Joe Rostvold. Later owners of the building included Don Hellickson (1950) and Cyril and Lloyd Becker. In 1961 the buildings were purchased by Leland "Red" Johnson. The Jaycees ran the theatre until it was closed in 1975. In the upstairs space, the VFW sold liquor and beer from 1955 until 1962 when it was converted to apartments. Eventually the main floor theatre space housed a fitness center, Nelson's Appliance, and then a video rental store. In 2018 the Union Hall complex, which includes the theatre building, was purchased from Lonnie and Carol (Johnson) Kimler by All Seasons Property Management (Kristina Hauser). The theatre section is now Studio M which is a venue for a variety of events including yoga.



Studio M 2025

Unfortunately, photos are not available for the timeframe in which the building served as a theatre.

## Upcoming Events

**Caledonia Chamber of Commerce Lunch & Learn: Wednesday, April 15 12:00-1:00pm 113 E. Grove Street (formally The Crooked Quarter) Come learn more about Explore La Crosse. Members Free, Non-members \$5.00. Registration required.**

**Caledonia Forward After Hours Event: Tuesday, April 22 5:00-7:00pm Sno Pac Foods 521 Enterprise Drive. Who should attend? Business Owners and Entrepreneurs interested in expanding or starting a business in Caledonia. Refreshments served.**

**Buff Country Collaborative Career Fair and Hiring Event: Wednesday, April 23 (rescheduled from March 5) 9:00am-12:00pm La Crescent Event Center 595 Veteran's Parkway. Wish to register? Contact Allison Wagner at [EDA@co.houston.mn.us](mailto:EDA@co.houston.mn.us)**

**City of Caledonia Community Coffee Break: 2025 quarterly community coffee break schedule: June 10, September 9, December 9. Elsie's Restaurant from 9:00-10:00am.**

**Music in the Park: Save the dates! June 24, July 8, July 22. 6:00-7:00pm. Gazebo Park. Popcorn and root beer floats available for purchase.**

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Caledonia Forward Entrepreneur Navigator: The REV Caledonia Forward Core Team recently welcomed David Carlson as the team's new eNavigator. Dave comes to the group with a solid background in economic development and tourism, public relations, and project management. Dave will be reaching out to our business community over the next year to learn more about entrepreneurship in Caledonia and to assist with growing our businesses.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) Funding Opportunities: Below is a list of funding resources through SMIF. If you wish to learn more, please contact the City of Caledonia for more information at 507-725-3450.

\*Business Loans: Up to \$200,000 targeting manufacturing, technology, local foods, value-added agriculture and health care.

\*Emerging Entrepreneur Loans: Up to \$15,000 to support entrepreneurs who identify as BIPOC, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities. In partnership with MN DEED.

\*Grow a Farmer Fund: Up to 15,000 for small-scale sustainable farmers to assist with improving operations, increase the bottom line, or start a business.

\*Small Enterprise Loans: Up to \$35,000 to support small business owners or start up entrepreneurs. In partnership with SBA.