

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MANITOWOC COUNTY PUBLIC INTEREST SURVEY- PROGRESS LAKESHORE, CENTER ON RURAL INNOVATION, LAND O' LAKES, AND WBD TAKE STEPS TOWARD AN INNOVATION HUB

MANITOWOC, October 18, 2023 — Progress Lakeshore, in collaboration with the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI), Land O' Lakes and WBD, is excited to announce a pivotal development in their mission to transform Manitowoc County into a hub for entrepreneurial activity, business incubation, remote work, and technology and innovation resources. This endeavor, which caters to students, remote workers, tech/innovative entrepreneurs, and businesses, seeks to harness the potential of these groups to drive economic growth and technological progress in the region.

A previous assessment, conducted in partnership with CORI, identified the potential for Manitowoc County to become a hotspot for technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. Recognizing the need for further exploration, Progress Lakeshore has embarked on a Public Interest Survey to gather critical data that will drive the county's economic and technological advancement.

The Manitowoc County Public Interest Survey aims to assess the preferences, needs, and aspirations of community members, entrepreneurs, and businesses in the area. This survey will play a vital role in shaping the development of a central facility, tailor-made to foster innovation and entrepreneurial success in the region.

Key survey objectives include:

1. Determining the number of users interested in utilizing a proposed technology & innovation facility.
2. Identifying the specific types of programs, resources, and amenities required to best support Manitowoc County's unique business ecosystem.
3. Developing a plan for the project that will be used to support funding applications.

The CORI Team will be in Manitowoc County on November 1st and 2nd, 2023, to engage with local stakeholders and conduct focus groups, facilitating an open dialogue on the region's needs and potential. This collaborative effort will ensure that the project aligns with the community's vision and aspirations.

The presentation of survey findings and the final feasibility report is anticipated to take place in December 2023. Progress Lakeshore will leverage these insights to take the next step toward establishing an innovative and entrepreneurial support hub in Manitowoc County.

Jamie Zastrow, Executive Director of Progress Lakeshore, expressed her enthusiasm for this initiative: "We are very excited to participate in this unique process. Capitalizing on our existing

community assets and strong regional partnerships, we look forward to the opportunity to bring more investment and residents into the community, diversifying the economy for the future.”

"Technology is changing how we all live and work. Digital skills are now as important as reading, writing, and math. Working from home or remotely and the advances in technology and innovation companies require good internet, new types of workspaces, and an increasing number of tech-talented people. Naturally, how we invest in our communities is impacted by these changes," says Susan Shaffer, Entrepreneurship Consultant at the Center on Rural Innovation. "The Manitowoc County Public Interest Survey will help us better understand your needs."

For more information about the Manitowoc County Public Interest Survey or to participate in the survey, please visit bit.ly/ManitowocCountyPublicInterestSurvey or contact Jamie Zastrow at jamie@progresslakeshore.org.

About the Center on Rural Innovation

The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) is a national nonprofit committed to advancing economic prosperity in rural America through the creation of inclusive tech economy ecosystems that support scalable entrepreneurship and tech job creation. Established in 2017, CORI is at the heart of a dynamic social enterprise focused on closing the rural opportunity gap. To maximize all possible resources to address this critical problem, the organization partners with a taxable nonprofit, Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. (RISI), and a seed fund, CORI Innovation Fund (CIF), focused on early-stage technology companies located in rural areas. For more information visit www.ruralinnovation.us.

About Progress Lakeshore

Progress Lakeshore is a private-public economic development organization that accelerates business success in Manitowoc County. Progress Lakeshore was founded in 2004 as the Economic Development Corporation of Manitowoc County, bringing together government and business entities to grow and diversify the local economy. They focus on three pillars to influence the local economy: RETAIN businesses and associated workforce, GROW existing and start-up businesses, and the local talent pool, and ATTRACT new businesses and talent to the area. Learn more about Progress Lakeshore at www.progresslakeshore.org.

About Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Land O'Lakes, Inc., one of America's premier agribusiness and food companies, is a member-owned cooperative with industry-leading operations that span the spectrum from agricultural production to consumer foods. With 2022 annual sales of \$19 billion, Land O'Lakes is one of the nation's largest cooperatives, ranking 232 on the Fortune 500. Building on a legacy of more than 100 years of operation, Land O'Lakes today operates some of the most respected brands in agribusiness and food production including Land O'Lakes Dairy Foods, Animal Nutrition, WinField United and Truterra. The company does business in all 50 states and more than 60 countries. Land O'Lakes, Inc. corporate headquarters are located in Arden Hills, Minnesota.

About WBD Inc.

WBD, Inc. helps businesses finance owner occupied commercial real estate utilizing the SBA 504 loan program. WBD partners with local lenders to help provide affordable, fixed-rate, long-term (up to 25 years) with less money down. Serving all of Wisconsin, Minnesota and a portion of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, WBD's portfolio is over \$1 Billion. As a nonprofit organization WBD reinvests in other economic development activities in line with its mission to grow businesses, create jobs and build communities through direct grants to nonprofit organizations. For more information on WBD's lending and mission work visit WBD.org.

Since 1981, WBD has helped fund over 3,500 businesses and created over 76,000 jobs in Wisconsin and Minnesota. WBD is now consistently one of the top ten most active, of the nearly 250, CDC's in the country. WBD participates in hundreds of projects each year with Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan lenders and serves as an integral hub in every project.