

**ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU AWARDS \$120,000
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS TO LOCAL PROJECTS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2026

In an effort to elevate rural communities, Illinois Farm Bureau partnered with county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) to award 30 Rural Development Grants totaling \$120,000 to support local efforts across the state, including projects in Montgomery County.

Of the grants awarded, nine are addressing rural emergency services' needs, and 21 are projects focused on supporting community and economic development or enhancing quality of life.

The Rural Development Grant Program provides resources and support to help local communities and counties successfully implement projects and overcome challenges inherent in rural development projects, such as lack of funding and volunteers or complicated grant applications. In selecting grants, IFB searches for projects that will meet a need in a community, county or rural area, get residents excited about what is happening in their community and benefit farm families.

For the 2026 grant program, IFB and COUNTRY Financial invested \$100,000 and \$20,000, respectively.

Grant recipients this year include:

- Raymond Community Fire Protection District, through Montgomery CFB, received a grant to replace outdated handheld radios, enabling better communication between first responders when they are in route to a call.
- Newkomis, through Montgomery CFB, received a grant to support the last stage of the recently opened Nokomis New Sprouts Daycare Center, which is the installation of a playground. In 2024, Nokomis participated in the MAPPING process with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. One of the most ambitious goals resulting from this process was to develop a childcare facility, a vital need that the community has lacked.
- City of Mattoon, through Coles CFB, received a grant to purchase automated external defibrillators (AEDs) for the Mattoon Police Department's patrol vehicles and rural firearms training range. The department responds to 25,000 calls each year, including many in rural and outlying areas. Access to AEDs in patrol units is essential to improve survival rates during cardiac emergencies, particularly when medical response times and distance are a factor.
- Somonauk Fire Department, through DeKalb CFB, received a grant to purchase battery powered tools to be used in the event of an agricultural emergency.

- Malta Fire Protection District, through DeKalb CFB, received a grant to purchase battery powered rescue equipment such as a Sawzall, grinder and cutoff saw to be used in the event of an agricultural entrapment or entanglement scenario.
- West Salem Volunteer Fire Department, through Edwards CFB, received a grant to purchase and install emergency medical equipment, including an AED and a Stop Bleed kit, at the main community facility in the Village of West Salem. The facility hosts the annual countywide multi-day Freedom Festival, grade school baseball games, around 80 summer league softball and baseball games, and other community gatherings.
- Rio Fire Protection District, through Knox CFB, received a grant to replace mobile truck radios. The new radios will enable the district to communicate with neighboring fire districts on mutual aid scenes as well as with local farmers who provide equipment to assist with wildfires.
- Maquon Fire Protection District, through Knox CFB, received a grant for a STARCOM communication project that will enhance the district's interoperability with the Knox County Sheriff's office and neighboring counties that use the system, including Peoria County. It will enable reliable, real-time coordination during field operations, fire incidents and other agricultural emergencies as well as support more efficient emergency response efforts and promote greater safety throughout rural communities.
- B.Y.E. Ambulance Service Inc., through Peoria CFB, received a grant to support a radio project to improve communication between the ambulance medics and the dispatch, the fire command and the other first responders at an emergency scene.
- Central Warren County Fire Protection District, through Warren-Henderson FB, received a grant to upgrade mobile radios in fire apparatus and the installation of vehicle-mounted repeaters. These improvements will address poor signal strength issues and critical coverages gaps, ensuring that firefighters can safely and reliably communicate using their portable radios while operating on emergency scenes.
- Clay County Food Pantry, through Clay CFB, received a grant to purchase and install a refrigerated box on the food pantry's delivery truck. By updating to a refrigerated box, the truck will be more versatile and can be used for items beyond dry goods.
- Fit-2-Serve, through Coles CFB, received a grant to develop a regenerative garden, expanding the availability of nutrient-dense produce for residents of Coles County - particularly those most affected by poverty. This project addresses a critical local need for fresh, affordable produce. The garden will grow vegetables using sustainable, regenerative practices and supply food to local restaurants, the Aramark food service for Mattoon schools and area farmers' markets. It will also donate significant quantities (estimated 3,000 lbs.) to the Mattoon Community Food Center and The Haven homeless shelter.
- Farm to City Harvest Store Inc., through DeWitt CFB, received a grant to support development of the Farm to City Harvest Store, a grocery cooperative that will help supply the grocery needs of a rural community that has not had a grocery store in nearly a decade. The emphasis will be placed on supplying the store with locally produced meats and

produce whenever possible. This will provide local producers with a local outlet for their products and will allow residents access to farm-fresh, locally grown products.

- Gibson City Restoration Association, through Ford-Iroquois CFB, received a grant to support the restoration of the historic Burwell Building in Gibson City. The building was purchased by the Gibson City Restoration Association in 2021 and is in the center of the business district. The building will be used for community meetings and pop-up stores.
- Franklin County Senior Services, through Franklin CFB, received a grant for a new modern and energy efficient walk-in freezer and cooler, replacing 40-year-old equipment that is structurally compromised and at risk for catastrophic failure. The equipment is essential for safely storing food used to prepare daily meals for nutrition programs that serve around 1,500 meals weekly to older adults throughout Franklin County.
- City of Cuba, through Fulton CFB, received a grant to support a partnership between OSF hospital and the City of Cuba that will allow for a mobile health care RV staffed by OSF to be housed in Cuba and to provide medical services throughout all of Fulton County, which has a population of 30,000 with 17,000 in small towns and rural areas. The grant will assist the city with providing the necessary facility for the mobile health care RV and storage of other medical materials.
- On Point Revival, through Hancock CFB, received a grant to support the roof replacement and restoration of the historic Saenger Halle Building in Warsaw. A group of residents created On Point Revival, a non-profit, and purchased the building with the intention of restoring and preserving it for future community use, including farmers markets, local vendors to sell goods, meeting space, small banquet hall, educational opportunities, local art displays, etc.
- Grand Tower Food Pantry, through Jackson CFB, received a grant that will support the ability of the food pantry to provide fresh food for meals.
- NewMed Diagnostics, through Jefferson CFB, received a grant to support LabReach, a mobile diagnostics initiative by NewMed Diagnostics designed to expand access to essential lab testing and preventive health services across rural Southern and Central Illinois. Through mobile phlebotomy and diagnostic services (including EKGs, CardioChek systems, etc.), they will reduce transportation barriers for patients, improve continuity of care and promote safe medication disposal.
- Woodlawn High School FFA, through Jefferson CFB, received a grant to support construction of a greenhouse at Woodlawn High School to enhance agricultural education and expand access to fresh foods in the community. The project will provide hands-on learning opportunities for students interested in agriculture, horticulture and agribusiness while supplying locally grown produce to the Woodlawn Food Pantry.
- LaSalle-Peru Township High School Foundation for Educational Enrichment, through LaSalle CFB, received a grant for equipment and supplies for classes and programs for the school's new agricultural education program. The program at LaSalle-Peru Township High School was reestablished in 2025 with administrative action, alumni drive and community support. The

momentum has led to the building of a new 15,000 square feet agricultural education center at LPHS that is designed to maximize student and community engagement.

- Macoupin County Fair and Agricultural Association, through Macoupin County, received a grant to support renovations and expansion to an existing building, enabling it to be used as a year-round facility. The building will be used to offer educational opportunities, such as rural health, family farms, small garden production, food preservation, safety and more.
- Massac County Youth Fair and Community Center, through Massac CFB, received a grant to support renovations to the Massac County Community Center kitchen, including necessary repairs to make it functional and safe. The community center is a key hub used year-round by the Massac County Farm Bureau, sheriff's department, fire department, county government, Extension, local schools, organizations/clubs and local families.
- City of Monticello, through Piatt CFB, received a grant to support implementation of a downtown wireless system in Monticello to provide reliable connectivity. The downtown wireless system will provide reliable connectivity for the outdoor vendor events, most importantly the Monticello Farmer's Market, which is held weekly six months out of the year.
- Arrowleaf, through Pope-Hardin FB, received a grant that will support the launch of a retail merchandise assembly line at Arrowleaf's Developmental Services in Golconda. The project, Crafting Change, will provide meaningful, hands-on work opportunities for adults with disabilities residing in Pope and Hardin Counties who face barriers to traditional employment.
- Central Illinois FarmFED Co-operative, through Sangamon CFB, received a grant to support fundamental office equipment and software that will facilitate the co-ops next steps of conducting additional processing pilots, creating additional related food-processing safety protocols and monitoring inventory.
- Schuyler County Economic Development Commission, through Schuyler CFB, received a grant to support renovations to a building that will house office space for economic development staff and provide space for local agricultural and non-agricultural businesses to hold meetings and training.
- Greater Freeport Partnership, through Stephenson CFB, received a grant to support the Business Academy for Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs (BASE) Camp's classes and activities. The goal of the educational series is to provide a resource and network of support for entrepreneurs, small business owners, and those looking to grow or expand their products or services to build a successful and thriving business.
- Wolf Lake Community Center, through Union CFB, received a grant to replace siding on the Wolf Lake Community Center. The current siding, which is rotting and leaking, is the original from when volunteers constructed the building 49 years ago. The community center is the hub of Wolf Lake, serving as a meeting place for businesses and youth organizations, and community events such as the local farmers' market and elections.
- Village of Roanoke, through Woodford CFB, received a grant to support development of a vacant lot into a "pocket park." The green space will ultimately feature accessible

community garden plots, gathering areas, food truck and vendor spots, and host farmers' markets and art fairs.

About Illinois Farm Bureau

Founded in 1916, Illinois Farm Bureau – originally known as the Illinois Agricultural Association – is a nonprofit, grassroots membership organization. Illinois Farm Bureau and a statewide network of county Farm Bureaus give members an advantage through impactful advocacy, trusted information, and meaningful development to support their careers and Illinois farm families.

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