

Rural Growth & Commercialization Loan

Financing for innovative products with rural roots in Essex County and Chatham-Kent.
Built for helping rural-made products reach beyond local borders.

Overview

We know innovation knows no boundaries. Rural companies in Essex County and Chatham-Kent solve problems in practical, hands-on ways. They build tools when the right ones don't exist. They modify equipment to meet the demands of the job. They develop their own systems to stay efficient. They test ideas in real conditions and keep refining them until the solution holds up. Products shaped through this kind of work carry the weight of real experience and a clear sense of what people in their communities need.

The Rural Growth and Commercialization Loan supports companies that are ready to bring these kinds of products to a wider market, serving two stages of business growth equally.

- New startups developing innovative products based on real demand.
- Established businesses turning internal innovative solutions into new revenue that builds on years of lived expertise.

Both stages of business have already moved beyond ideas. They have something that works, customers who want it, and an understanding of where it fits. What they often lack is the financing required to take that next step: building early inventory, refining production, preparing for customers, or entering markets that sit just outside their reach.

This loan is designed to close that gap. It helps rural-made products move toward wider adoption while staying rooted in the places where they were created

Loan Summary

Term	Details
Loan Range	\$30,000 to \$200,000 and above
Repayment Term	Flexible based on individual approval
Interest Rate	Prime plus 2 percent (determined by lender)
Regions Served	Essex County and Chatham-Kent
Eligible Businesses	New startups and established companies with a market-ready product / service
Loan Partner	Community Futures Essex County & Community Futures CK
Business Support Partner	WEtech Alliance for readiness and commercialization support

Who This Loan Supports

1. Established companies creating new revenue through innovation

Some companies have built a solution out of necessity. A tool. A system. A product. A process. Something that has proven itself inside their four walls and now has the potential to help others in their sector. These businesses

want to package that solution and turn it into a commercial offering that adds a new line of revenue and builds on what they already do well.

2. New startups with innovative products ready for market

Other companies are bringing a new innovative, scalable idea forward for the first time. They have done the early legwork. They have spoken with potential customers. They have built a working version of the product. They understand the need it solves and who it is for.

The loan is built for companies that have validated demand, demonstrated that the product works, and reached the moment where financing becomes the next barrier to growth.

Eligible Use of Funds

This loan supports activities that move a rural-made product toward commercial launch and early sales into new markets.

Product development and refinement

- Final prototyping
- Design work
- Engineering adjustments
- Safety or compliance improvements
- Converting an internal solution into something ready for customers

Production and inventory

- Small-batch production
- Materials, components, and packaging
- Tools or equipment that help produce or assemble the product
- Initial inventory for early sales

Launch and market development

- Branding and packaging design
- Website and e-commerce setup
- Marketing materials and outreach
- Trade show participation
- Demonstrations and pilot activities
- Travel for buyer meetings or sector outreach

Professional services

- Legal support for commercialization
- Accounting services tied to the launch
- Industrial design or engineering support
- Export and fulfillment related expertise
- Testing, certifications, and compliance requirements

Intellectual property

- Patent searches

- Patent filings
- Trademarks
- Licensing work
- Access to IP-Ontario & Elevate IP support when appropriate

Operational readiness

- Technology systems that support production or sales
- Early automation
- Software related to order capture, invoicing, or distribution
- AI Implementation

Ineligible Use of Funds

This loan is not intended for general business expansion or day-to-day operating needs. To maintain focus and reduce risk, the following expenses cannot be supported:

- Rent, utilities, or general operating costs not tied to the new product
- Payroll that is unrelated to product launch or production
- Refinancing existing debt
- Business acquisitions or real estate purchases unless directly tied to commercialization
- Marketing for existing product lines that are unrelated to the new product
- Early-stage R&D that has not yet resulted in a working prototype
- Concept-only ideas without evidence of customer validation
- Projects without a clear path to revenue

Important to Note

Before beginning the application process, companies should be aware of the following:

1. Loans under this specific program are subject to meeting all eligibility criteria, including restrictions on how funds may be used. If a company requires financing for items that are not eligible under this program, they are still encouraged to apply to Community Futures, as the request may be considered under an alternative loan product, which may include more comprehensive borrowing limits.
2. Engagement with WEtech Alliance under the Rural Growth & Commercialization Loan Program is intended to support readiness, clarity, and informed decision-making. Such engagement:
 - Does not guarantee loan approval, financing terms, or access to capital through Community Futures Essex County or Community Futures CK.
 - Does not influence or override the independent underwriting, approval, or lending decisions of either Community Futures organization.
 - The decision to pursue debt financing, including whether to apply for a loan under this Program, rests solely with the applicant company. Companies are responsible for assessing the appropriateness of debt capital in relation to their business model, risk tolerance, and financial position.

WEtech Alliance:

- Does not provide financial advice.

- Does not make lending decisions.
 - Retains no liability for a company's decision to seek, accept, or service debt financing under this Program.
-

The Process

Step 1: Readiness Support

Innovators interested in the Rural Growth & Commercialization Loan have three ways to begin the conversation:

- Existing WEtech Alliance clients can connect directly with their WEtech Advisor.
- Companies can connect directly with their local Community Futures office in Essex County or Chatham-Kent, who may refer them to WEtech for commercialization support where appropriate.
- Companies can apply for WEtech services through the WEtech client application and indicate that they are interested in learning more about the Rural Growth & Commercialization Loan.

Participation in WEtech Alliance readiness support is available and encouraged, but is not a prerequisite to applying for financing through Community Futures Essex County or Community Futures CK.

What is a WEtech Client?

An ideal WEtech client is an entrepreneur or business at any stage that leverages new ideas and technology to create innovative products with the potential to transform their industry. They are driven to grow, expand their reach to customers beyond their starting market, and strive to become leaders and changemakers in their field.

This means:

- You are creating or refining an innovative product.
- You have, or have the potential for, protectable intellectual property.
- You possess a clear differentiator.
- You are scalable.
- You are coachable and open to growth.

We support a variety of sectors, including Advanced Manufacturing, Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT), Digital Media, Agritech, Fintech, Cleantech, Medtech, Edtech, and more.

Our programs, resources, and advisory services are tailored to match your business stage, ensuring you receive the right support at the right time. As you progress, you'll gain access to more services, helping you:

- Acquire entrepreneurial skills and insights.
- Connect with experts.
- Build valuable networks.
- Gain exposure.
- Find talent.

Preparing for a Strong Application

Eligible WEtech Alliance clients may choose to work with their WEtech Advisor to strengthen their readiness for financing. For the purposes of this program, eligibility means that a company has engaged with WEtech through an intake or advisor conversation related to commercialization support.

This engagement may include:

- reviewing their product roadmap
- confirming customer validation
- identifying gaps
- strengthening their commercialization plan
- understanding the requirements of the loan application

This preparation helps reduce friction and ensures both Community Futures offices receive strong, investment-ready applications.

Step 2: Loan Application

Companies apply directly through the appropriate Community Futures office based on their location:

- [Community Futures Essex County](#)
- [Community Futures CK](#)

Both lenders will follow their standard underwriting and approval processes.

Step 3: Post-Financing Support

After the loan is approved, WEtech remains available, free of cost, to support launch and growth. This can include sector- or subject-matter-specific growth coaching, customer introductions, partnership connections, funding navigation, and support with market development. Community Futures may continue to provide business counselling in accordance with its existing services.

Eligible Communities

Essex County

Excludes the City of Windsor. Served by [Community Futures Essex County](#).

Municipalities and Communities:

- Amherstburg
- Essex
- Harrow
- Colchester
- McGregor
- Kingsville
- Cottam
- Ruthven
- Leamington
- Lakeshore
- Belle River
- Stoney Point
- Comber
- Emeryville
- LaSalle
- Tecumseh
- Pelee Island

Chatham-Kent (Eligible Communities)

Served by [Community Futures CK](#)

Municipalities, Towns, Villages, and Communities:

- Blenheim
- Bothwell
- Camden
- Chatham
- Dover
- Dresden
- Erie Beach
- Eriean
- Harwich
- Highgate
- Howard
- Mitchell's Bay
- Orford
- Pain Court
- Raleigh
- Ridgetown
- Romney
- Shrewsbury
- South Buxton
- Thamesville
- Tilbury
- Tilbury East
- Tupperville
- Wallaceburg
- Wheatley