



Meet the MSA Funding Team

Find more funds. Do more with them.





Who We Are

MSA's funding team has a genuine passion for helping clients transform their visions into reality.

We've been providing funding services for 40+ years and know how much communities can struggle with getting projects off the ground. Our team thrives on helping you succeed. And our diverse set of knowledge allows us to pursue and bundle the right funding sources to meet each unique need.

How We Help

We're an in-house team of funding experts that manage critical timelines and take care of all the details so that you can continue to focus on what's important: dreaming big and making your community shine. We actively maintain a database of hundreds of funding sources and programs to support all kinds of projects: public works, roadways, trails, land development, remediation and blight elimination, parks and recreation, housing, and many more. Need assistance with Tax Increment Districts or securing private funding? We can help with that, too. We're proud to have helped clients secure over \$500 million in grants and low-interest loans to help offset the cost of infrastructure projects.

Join us in getting to know the faces behind our funding strategies...

Riverfront Park, Sauk City, WI
Total Grant Funding: \$1.3 million



“Helping others has always been at the core of my personal philosophy and working to improve communities has the potential to positively impact the lives of many people. Community development provides an opportunity for me to use my talents and skills to actualize that principle.”

- Brandon Melton, MSA Community Development Specialist



Ben Andrews

Community Development Specialist

B.S., Public Administration/Political Science, University of Wisconsin–Green Bay
Certificate in Non-Profit Management



GET TO KNOW BEN

...or click to email Ben directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

Grant administration can be a complicated business. I help communities with their funding needs during the grant administration process by streamlining some of the processes to avoid any unnecessary duplications, which saves time and expenses for the community.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I was attracted to a career in funding because it provided the opportunity to work with many different communities, each with its unique problems and solutions.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now as it pertains to your line of work?

For many, community growth has slowed, and costs have increased. The full financial impact of the pandemic has been delayed for local governments, with the impact being felt in the 2022 budget and beyond. For many communities whose budgets are primarily composed of property taxes, there are limited options available to make up for increased costs. This leaves municipalities in the difficult position of cutting services to stay within their levy limits. Because of these reasons, it is critically important for communities to be well-informed about the different funding opportunities available.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

BIL was signed into law on Nov. 15, 2021. The funds are expected to be distributed over the next five years, beginning in FY2022. What is exciting about BIL is the diversity of funding programs available through the funding source. Some of those programs are as follows: Surface Transportation Program (STP), Local Bridge, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ). For additional information, visit the WDOT BIL webpage.

What drives you in the day to day?

The good and bad part about working in funding is that there are always deadlines. Once a major milestone is met, it seems like another one appears to take its place. Thankfully, deadlines, targets, and goals are strong drivers for completing projects effectively and efficiently.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

I would tell communities to consider investing in their long-range planning initiatives to obtain a better understanding of their community needs and to better formulate potential projects. When assisting communities, it is extremely helpful to have a defined vision for what the community would like to accomplish in the coming years. The products of long-term planning can be extremely helpful for identifying potential funding sources as well.



Art Bahr

Community Development Specialist

A.S., Leadership Development; A.S., Power Engineering, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
NIULPE Licensed Power Engineer 2nd Class
Municipal Administrator and Utility Manager – 10 years
Village of Gresham Trustee – 14 years (presently serving)
US Navy Veteran



GET TO KNOW ART

...or click to email Art directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

My experience as an elected official and village administrator makes it a natural occurrence for me to explain and assist our clients through almost any project, be that: Capital Improvement Planning, Creating Comprehensive Plans or Outdoor Recreation Plans, Zoning, Ordinances, Funding Applications and Administration, Utility Operations, Municipal Administrative Processes, PSC Planning and Reporting, etc. I've been in their shoes and I've more than likely experienced what they are going through in their own municipalities or utilities.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

Improving the quality of life for the residents of any community has always been a passion of mine. As a prior village administrator and utility manager, I know the issues created by attempting to fund a project and see it through to its successful completion.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Knowing the process required to move an idea or improvement concept into estimating, budgeting, and funding — and finally through construction.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

I see numerous funding opportunities that will be a one-time offering, involving very short timelines. These funding opportunities may rarely happen again. If we don't know our clients' dreams and plans, we may miss opportunities for them to apply. Beyond the application phase, I see additional and complicated reporting during the grant administration process — dotting our i's and crossing our t's, as they say, so our client complies with all the granting agency's requirements and minimizes the risk of not being reimbursed as they expect.

What drives you in the day to day?

Caring for our clients and finding ways to assist them with their operations, budgeting, funding and projects. It's a pleasure to work for some great clients, who have all become my friends. This is accomplished by having an awesome team working with me and by working for a company that takes pride in how we are viewed by our clients.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Plan!!! Even if it is just a dream that seems far from possible. Put it in writing, in a plan, a Comprehensive Plan, an Outdoor Recreation Plan, a Capital Improvement Plan ... put it someplace because someday a grant opportunity or funding opportunity may come up and if you haven't put it in a plan and created a simple budget or estimate for it, you will not get the money for it. Also, get to know your MSA consultants. Ask them to come to a meeting and introduce themselves. You may be surprised at the conversations that will follow!



Nicole Kruschel

Community Development Specialist

6+ years working with Wisconsin DNR Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water, Community Development Block Grant, FEMA, and USDA Rural Development



GET TO KNOW NICOLE

...or click to email Nicole directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

Each funding agency has their own regulations and requirements to follow. If you aren't familiar with them, they can be very overwhelming and challenging. Due to the volume of projects that we assist with, we have a strong system in place to guide and support communities through the process. We also have strong working relationships with the various funding agencies.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I liked the idea of helping communities obtain funding for projects that they wouldn't normally be able to complete.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Staffing and workload. Administrators, clerks, and other municipal employees are being asked to do more and more. I am here to be a resource/expert for communities. Since funding is not something that many communities have experience with, it is nice that I am able to take that responsibility off their shoulders.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

Money, money, money. There has been and will continue to be a large influx of funds coming through existing programs such as State Revolving Loan Funds (Safe Drinking Water/Clean Water Fund). There will also likely be additional requirements tied with this funding such as Build America Buy America, so it will be important to ensure those requirements are being met.

What drives you in the day to day?

Seeing a project transition from a thought or need into a finished product that serves a benefit to a community and its residents and knowing that I played a part in making it happen.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Although funding comes with some additional work, it is worth it. Also, it is ok to ask for help!



Kianna Lindh

Community Development Specialist

B.S., Public Administration, University of La Crosse-Wisconsin



GET TO KNOW KIANNA

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How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

When we look at funding a project for a community, we try to put multiple sources of funding on that one project to get as much of the project paid for in grant dollars as we can. Being able to show a client that there is a possibility for several different funding options to make a project happen gives them hope to see that project through!

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I grew up in a small town of roughly 2,500 people, very similar to many of the clients we work with every day. What drew me in was being able to assist these small villages and cities in finding funding for projects that will help meet the growing needs of their community.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

We are seeing an influx of funding come in through the SRF monies with the release of the BIL. For instance, the Wisconsin DNR SDWLP (Safe Drinking Water Loan Program) increased their principal forgiveness (PF) cap from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million. In addition to this, there is now a new methodology to calculate PF.

What drives you in the day to day?

Interacting with and helping clients drives me in the day to day. All the clients we work with are public servants doing their best to better their community for generations to come; being able to be a part of that is extremely rewarding.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

There is money to make your project happen! There is an influx of money coming through the state and federal government right now. If you have a project in mind, reach out to the MSA funding team and we will assist you with looking at all your funding options!



Brandon Melton, AICP

Community Development Specialist

M.A., Community and Economic Development, Western Illinois University, IL
B.S., Geology; Minor in Scandinavian Studies, Augustana College, Rock Island, IL
11+ years of experience with regional and local government, working on transportation, environmental, economic development, hazard mitigation and community planning



GET TO KNOW BRANDON

...or click to email Brandon directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

I've had the opportunity to gain a wide variety of experience over the course of my career. This gives me the ability to address a broad range of issues facing a community and connect them with the right funding opportunity.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

Helping others has always been at the core of my personal philosophy and working to improve communities has the potential to positively impact the lives of many people. Community development provides an opportunity for me to use my talents and skills to actualize that principle.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

The current market makes it difficult for communities to attract and retain professional staff. This creates gaps in training and institutional knowledge that challenge communities to meet day-to-day operations and leaves little time to innovate and grow.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

National and international markets and supply chains are still in flux responding to global sociopolitical implications of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. This will be a present number of challenges for meeting BABA. The BIL is an unprecedented infusion of federal money in public infrastructure. Communities need to be ready to seize this opportunity or will be left behind.

What drives you in the day to day?

Making a positive difference in the lives of others.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Take time to plan for the future and establish a shared vision for your community. Develop a strategic plan aimed at realizing that vision.



Brittney Mitchell

Funding Team Leader

B.S., Business Administration; B.A., Marketing, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater



GET TO KNOW BRITTNEY

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How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

With many MSA communities, if they don't have funding, they cannot afford to do the projects that are needed. With the help of our Funding team and all of MSA's services, we can help them get their project done from start to finish.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I was raised in a village with a population of around 700 people, which is similar in size to many of MSA's clients. I love to come to work and be able to help communities like the one I grew up in thrive and grow.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Communities have failing infrastructure, but not enough money to fix everything. Our MSA Funding team is here to help find funding solutions.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

A lot of the BIL funding is being pushed through the Safe Drinking Water (SDW) and Clean Water Fund programs. These programs are changing their Principal Forgiveness eligibility and maximum grant amounts. For example, the SDW principal forgiveness maximum used to be \$500,000 per community. With BIL, it is now a maximum of \$1.5 million!

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

There is a record amount of funding coming down right now with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, but it is for a limited time. Prioritize your projects and contact MSA to help you get them done and take advantage of the money out there.



Britta Moline

Community Development Specialist

B.S., Business Administration and Supply Chain Management,
University of Wisconsin-Stout



GET TO KNOW BRITTA

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How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

Putting together applications and doing administration for funding sources can be a lot of additional work to undertake for a community. I enjoy taking that burden off communities' plates and getting those processes completed from start to finish.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I was hired prior to there being a funding team at MSA. I was greatly involved in helping with applications and administration prior to being asked to be a part of something new, and I was excited for that next step. I wanted to move into funding because of the client contact and helping them pursue and complete projects they otherwise couldn't.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Right now, communities are struggling to match up all of the new, old, and revamped funding sources with what they are needing to construct or purchase.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

When administering projects, keeping a project eligible for the funding source is my top priority, so by adding other requirements, there may be challenges we can't foresee. Trying to stay on top of the funding world can be difficult, but MSA has specific staff members keeping up on the day-to-day updates that are being released.

What drives you in the day to day?

I like helping clients match up funding with a project, and then helping them navigate through all of the paperwork, rules, and regulations from planning to construction completion.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Hang in there! Communicate with MSA what you are needing help to fund and let us brainstorm within MSA to see what we can do to help. If there isn't something out there right now, we'll keep our eyes open for when there is!



Jennifer Trader

Community Development Specialist

B.S., Industrial Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Wisconsin CDBG Administration Training
Iowa CDBG Certified Grant Administrator



GET TO KNOW JENNIFER

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How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

I am responsible for fully administering CDBG grants from the time the grant is awarded until the project is complete and the grant is closed out. Therefore, I take on all the administrative duties and there is no time burden on the communities at all.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I enjoy working with people, organization, attention to detail, problem solving and finding solutions. This career combines all those facets.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Communities are struggling with old infrastructure and not enough money to fix all their concerns. That's where we come in. MSA can assist throughout the entire process and funding is the starting point.

What drives you in the day to day?

I enjoy the relationships I have with our communities and it is rewarding to see their initiatives become realities due to the funding we can assist them in obtaining and administering.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

It doesn't hurt to apply for grants. You will miss out on 100% of the grants you don't apply for. We're here to help and we're happy to!



Mary Wagner, PE

Community Development Professional

B.S., Civil Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Platteville
26+ years with MSA



GET TO KNOW MARY

...or click to email Mary directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

The folks involved with municipal operations are already busy, and they work with the programs and regulations infrequently. We can partner with them to locate possible funding, work through the requirements and timing, file application and administrative information on their behalf through the state and federal systems, and help the process move as smoothly as possible.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I have worked with many small communities to address their infrastructure needs. Helping them find money to pay for the projects and keep the work as affordable as possible has been critical to helping these communities thrive or even just survive. Mitigating the impact of rate changes on small businesses, the elderly and others on limited incomes has been especially needed.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Biggest struggles for Communities: 1. Regulations and a constantly changing set of requirements to maintain eligibility and project compliance. 2. Time! Everyone is having to do more than ever. 3. Affordability of needed projects.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

A lot of money (with big strings) is attempting to be pushed through existing and new programs. The requirement for true 100% American-made products across the whole construction spectrum will create shortages and challenges but the funding should be a great help to the communities with their infrastructure. How the 'strings' are managed will make all the difference.

What drives you in the day to day?

Helping communities manage the things they need to do and the available funds to do it.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Funding is more available now than ever before, for a limited time. Work with your engineers and their teams, including funding partners, to prioritize needs, work through the regulations, and access the funds to help, but don't go it alone.



Tara Walters

Community Development Specialist

M.S., Urban and Regional Planning, University of Iowa

B.A., Anthropology, Augustana College

Iowa CDBG Certified Grant Administrator

Illinois DCEO Experienced Grant Administrator



GET TO KNOW TARA

...or click to email Tara directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

I enjoy helping the community understand the intricacies of state and federal funding programs. Smaller communities are often overwhelmed by funding requirements. I love framing the programs in a way that is easily understood, manageable, and able to achieve the community's goals.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

Watching my small, hometown struggle to provide adequate public services to its residents.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Finding the perfect grant! It doesn't exist. Funding programs will always have a caveat that doesn't exactly align with what a community wants or needs. Flexibility and compromise are important components to developing a project proposal for a competitive grant/loan application.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

More money! The BIL funding provides a diverse array of new opportunities and supplemental funding to existing federal programs. The bill has increased funding for a lot of foundational programs our community clients rely on for infrastructure improvements. Of course, more money often means more problems as far as federal funding goes. Our team is monitoring the rollout of these funding requirements in hopes to alleviate the growing pains as the funds trickle down to the local level.

What drives you in the day to day?

Knowing that I am a resource for communities and colleagues to come to. Funding is just a piece of the community development puzzle. I truly enjoy being a part of an effort that improves the quality of life for residents and ultimately increases community sustainability.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Nothing about grant and loan programs is fast, but they are worth it. And free money isn't ever "free"! There are always some hoops to jump through. Let us help you navigate the hoops! We are weird and enjoy it.



Diane Wessel, AICP, MPA, AICP, ICMA-CM

Community Development Specialist

B.S., Forest Management, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

M.A., Public Administration, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Professional formal training: GIS, facilitation, disaster management

Professional experience: 25 years in Wisconsin local government (county and village)

International City/County Manager Association – Credentialed Manager (ICMA-CM)



GET TO KNOW DIANE

...or click to email Diane directly →

How do you feel you best help communities with their funding needs?

Being frank and honest about the competitiveness of their project for funding and finding funding that they weren't aware of.

What first attracted you to a career in funding and/or community development?

I entered local government as a career thinking that being employed by government was the only way to help communities. I now feel that I am better able to help communities by working for MSA because we have so many areas of expertise that we can tap into.

What are the biggest struggles for communities right now, as it pertains to your line of work?

Staffing levels, increasing cost of service provision, unfunded mandates, competing interests, levy limits, and static revenues. These issues are making it harder for local governments to meet the increasing expectations and demands of residents and businesses. Municipal staff wear multiple hats and must be hyper-responsive to their governing bodies, their customers, and other regulatory agencies.

What big changes are you seeing, or do you anticipate seeing, with the release of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding or Buy America, Build America (BABA) requirements?

Lots of opportunity but also lots of missed opportunity. There are so many programs that it's hard for communities to keep track of all that's coming out and what is available to them.

What drives you in the day to day?

Variety and making a difference.

If you could tell communities one thing, right now, that would help them the most, what would it be?

Have a must-have list. Have a wish list. Have a high-hopes list. Articulate them all in your capital improvement plan, your comprehensive plan, your comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. Make sure all these plans are up to date and adopted by the governing body. When new funding programs are released or an influx of funding is pumped into existing programs, you'll be at the ready.

Still have questions?

Fill out a
Funding Consultation
Request Form!



Let's start a conversation.

www.msa-ps.com | (800) 362-4505

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