

## OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CURRENT



## Choose the Electric Cooperative Advantages for Your Next Site

Electric cooperatives are structured to serve their members and community, not profit-driven shareholders. In addition, Ohio's electric cooperatives are guided by seven core principles that form the basis of the cooperative business model.

Two of the core principles: **Concern for Community** and **Autonomy and Independence**, are exemplified by local cooperatives' participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. The REDLG program is exclusively available to nonprofit rural electric or telecommunications utilities.

Five of Ohio's 24 electric cooperatives have active REDLG grant and revolving loan programs. Here's a snapshot of how the programs are benefiting the cooperatives' local communities.

### About the REDLG program:

- The USDA REDLG program is only open to nonprofit rural development electric or telecommunications utilities eligible under the Rural Electrification Act.
- REDLG funds can only be used for projects in rural areas or towns with populations under 50,000.
- The initial REDLG grants and subsequent loans support vital community infrastructure and local businesses, helping spur economic development that sustains rural communities.
- The local electric cooperative serves as the intermediary, first applying for the \$300,000 REDLG grant, adding the cooperative's 20 percent match, then lending those funds at zero percent interest to the initial borrower.
- As the initial borrower repays the loan to the cooperative, those dollars are used to establish a revolving loan fund to support projects that help create or retain rural jobs.
- The USDA conducts four competitive grant application cycles per year.

## Midwest Electric's resourcefulness generates sizeable economic impact for community and local businesses.

Midwest Electric received its most recent REDLG grant in 2023, bringing the total of the cooperative's five USDA REDLG grants since 2005 to \$1,604,010.

Midwest Electric has leveraged this into \$3.4 million in low-interest loans. In addition to the five initial loans from the REDLG grants, there have been 18 secondary revolving loans from the repayment funds, which have helped create, retain, or attract 656 area jobs.

To date, 12 loans have been paid off, and the 11 outstanding loans are all current.

The most recent \$300,000 USDA grant was paired with the cooperative's required 20% match, and \$360,000 was loaned to the Village of New Knoxville at zero interest to purchase a new fire truck. As the village repays the loan, the money goes into Midwest Electric's revolving loan fund, which provides low-interest loans to small businesses in the community.



*(L to R) Midwest Electric Business Development Coordinator Joel Johns, New Knoxville Fire Department Fire Chief Jerry Merges, and Midwest Electric CEO Matt Berry.*



During 2025, Midwest Electric approved two revolving loans:

### ■ Fort Equipment, Fort Recovery, Ohio

Midwest Electric provided a loan to Fort Equipment to help convert a former poultry building into a weld shop. Fort Equipment primarily manufactures liquid manure equipment and has six dealers throughout the US and one in Canada. The facility expansion enabled in-house fabrication and welding, reducing outsourcing costs. When western Ohio was hit hard by bird flu and the chicken barn had to be closed, the revolving loan helped the owner pivot and expand his welding fabrication shop into the vacant space.

### ■ Kard Welding, Minster, Ohio

Kard Welding provides fabricated columns and beams to the building industry and supplies many states with highway and bridge products, including rolled beam bridges, plate girders, expansion joints, bridge rail, scuppers, downspouts, handrails, breakaways, frames, grates, and sign structures. Midwest Electric's revolving loan supported the construction of an addition on the Kard Bridge Products facility and the purchase of a piece of equipment to handle large beams.



“Most people don’t think about an electric cooperative as a resource for a revolving loan, but Midwest has funds available to lend right now,” says Joel Johns, Midwest Electric’s Business Development Coordinator. “Often, the loan is just the little bit a small business needs to get over the hump to get a project done. While 12 of our previous loans were made to cooperative members, recipients do not have to be members for a loan.”

Midwest Electric serves 11,000 homes, farms, and businesses in seven west-central Ohio counties. Midwest Electric, Inc. CEO Matt Berry says, “The REDLG program has helped grow Midwest Electric’s commercial load from 15% to about 35% of sales over 20 years. Spreading the infrastructure investment over more users helps keep costs down for everyone.”

## North Central Electric Cooperative stepped up with REDLG funding to speed up construction timeline.

When Seneca County, Ohio’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were first organized in 1978, the system relied entirely on volunteer EMTs and paramedics who were recruited and staffed at the village and township level, while the County handled administration, training, equipment, and operational support.

By the 2010s, however, those communities were facing significant volunteer staffing shortages.

Seneca County and local jurisdictions collaboratively established the goal of providing countywide EMS response times under 10 minutes for their 17,000+ rural residents and developed a plan that included four modern EMS facilities staffed primarily by full-time personnel 24/7.

During the early 2020s, almost every Seneca County township or village passed a levy to pay for full time EMS staffing. But the existing EMS stations weren’t designed for 24-hour living, so different facilities were needed for the on-duty staff.

The first of four planned Seneca County EMS stations opened in Bloomville, Ohio, in 2024. The second station is located in New Riegel, Ohio. Both facilities are served by North Central Electric Cooperative (NCE), but NCE provided much more than electricity for the New Riegel EMS station.

The electric cooperative collaborated with the Seneca County Commissioners to secure zero-interest USDA REDLG funding for much of the \$1,032,475 project cost.

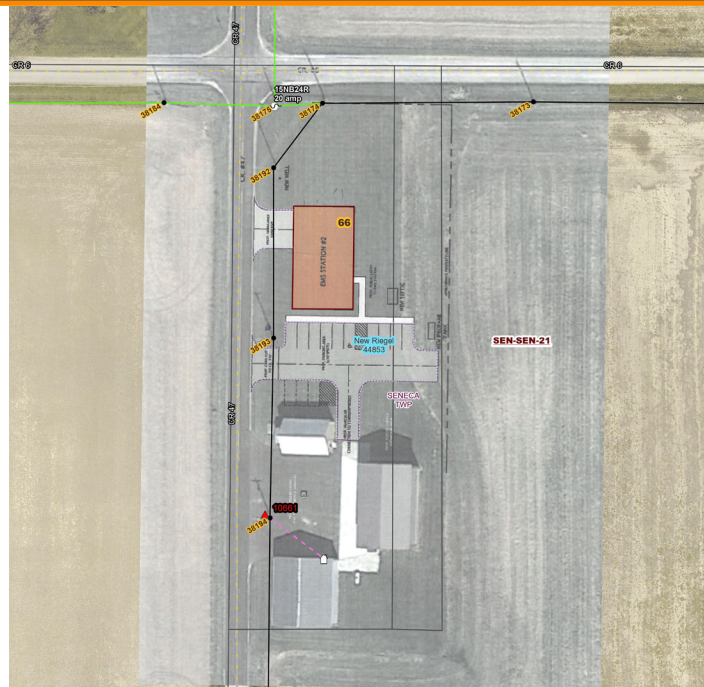


*New Riegel, Ohio, EMS facility was dedicated in 2025. The EMS station includes living quarters for on-duty staff.*

The funding components include:

- \$537,980 USDA zero-interest RED Loan (Seneca County pays this back to USDA)
- \$300,000 USDA RED Grant (Seneca County pays this back to the cooperative; funds are used to seed the revolving loan fund)
- \$60,000 required REDLG matching funds provided by NCE (Seneca County pays this back to NCE’s revolving loan fund)
- \$134,495 Seneca County contribution

The revolving loan fund is focused on spurring economic development that creates or retains jobs. Revolving loan applications are to be processed at the local cooperative level.



*The New Riegel EMS project will create or retain 13 FTE jobs. The facility has an ambulance bay, meeting space, and living quarters for when the medics and EMTs are between emergency calls.*

The NCE revolving loan fund is expected to begin issuing loans as early as 2026 as initial repayments are received. Applications are open to business ventures, government bodies, or non-profits that promote job creation or provide a community service in the rural areas of Crawford, Seneca, Sandusky, Hancock, Richland, Wood, Wyandot, and Huron counties. Preference is given to projects that create or retain jobs.

## Paulding Putnam's first REDLG loan helps Ottoville industrial park add new shovel-ready sites.

Paulding Putnam received its first REDLG grant in 2022. The electric cooperative and nonprofit fiber internet provider used the \$300,000 grant and Paulding Putnam's 20% matching funds to provide a \$360,000 zero interest loan to the Village of Ottoville to expand infrastructure at its industrial park.

Ottoville industrial park is already home to more than 350 local jobs primarily in metal fabrication, prototyping, die stamping, and robotic welding.







Today, 30 additional acres are fully developed and shovel-ready, with completed water and sewage systems and a new access road leading into the park. The project enhanced Ottoville's ability to attract and retain businesses

in the village, helping boost local job creation and economic growth across the region.

Renee Hull, Paulding Putnam Chief Financial Officer, said the co-op's participation in the REDLG program aligns with its mission of supporting the community.



"At Paulding Putnam, we're more than just your local electric and fiber internet cooperative, we're a partner in community growth," Hull says.

"Programs like REDLG give us the opportunity to help our members and local leaders turn big ideas into real results."

The Village of Ottoville's loan repayments provide seed funding for Paulding Putnam's new revolving loan fund. Paulding Putnam CEO Randy Price expects the cooperative to issue its first revolving loans in 2026. "Borrowers can be for-profit or nonprofit entities, as long as they benefit the communities we serve by attracting or retaining local businesses and employment or enhance quality of life."

## Paulding Putnam celebrates connection of first fiber subscribers.

Making reliable high-speed internet service available to rural businesses and residents is another important way that Paulding Putnam is boosting economic growth, opportunity, and quality of life.

"The goal is to provide service to unserved or underserved member communities, including non-member territories, when feasible, based on need and cost throughout Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert, and Allen counties in Ohio and Allen and Adams counties in Indiana," says Paulding Putnam CEO Randy Price. "This isn't corporate internet. This is your member-owned, not-for-profit co-op delivering fast, dependable connectivity with the same local control, fair pricing, and people-first values we've upheld since 1935."



*Paulding Putnam held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the first rural high-speed fiber subscribers.*

## Operation Round Up donations take “Concern for Community” core value to new level.

Paulding Putnam is among the three-quarters of Ohio’s electric cooperatives that administers an Operation Round Up fund. Cooperative members are invited to round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar amount. That spare change is collected, then a board of fellow co-op members distribute funds to a variety of causes. In 2025, Ohio co-ops granted about \$1.8 million to numerous community groups and individuals.

Each year, Paulding Putnam distributes more than \$52,000 from its local Operation Round Up program. Funds have helped support training for a school therapy dog, a nature center renovation project, addiction course materials, weekend meals for needy families, fire department equipment, county economic development and safety programs, Dolly Parton Imagination Library books, and much more.

Eighty percent of members round up their electric bill and donate to this fund. Paulding Putnam has provided more than \$778,819 to northwest Ohio and northeast Indiana communities since 2010.



*Paulding Putnam proudly donated \$1,000 through the Operation Round Up to the Vantage Career Center Toss a Toy program to help fund Christmas toys and gifts for local kids in need.*

## Consolidated Cooperative’s REDLG ripple effects are still resoundingly strong.



Businesses in Consolidated Cooperative’s service territory continue to reap benefits from the REDLG revolving loan fund established over 20 years ago.

The initial \$330,000 REDLG grant to Southern Morrow County (SoMoCo) Sewer District was an important part of the total \$2,494,600 cost to build a new sewage treatment plant.



Recent projects supported by Consolidated's REDLG revolving fund include:

- The purchase of new equipment for Midway Market's total store renovation which helped them double in size, add a car wash, and expand their made-to-order food service, convenience store, and vehicle fuel pumps. The project increased employment at this Ostrander, Ohio, community institution to 36 staff.
- DK Architects financed the purchase of office equipment for their new space in an historic building in the heart of Delaware, Ohio.
- Henmick Farm & Brewery, a local brewery with a spacious reception area and a full-service taproom in a historic 1860s barn at Kilbourne in Delaware County, Ohio, used a REDLG loan to purchase additional brewing equipment.

"As an electric cooperative, we have an opportunity with the REDLG program that not every entity can access," says Brad Ebersole, Economic Development Executive at Consolidated Cooperative. "The revolving loans help bridge funding gaps for local businesses. We are able to help them grow, increase employment, and be successful."



*Midway Market in Ostrander, Ohio, doubled the size of their store and added several new services with help from Consolidated's REDLG revolving loan fund.*



## Doing the right thing for Hancock Wood members benefits entire community.



"We always have the cooperative members' best interest in consideration when policies are put in place and projects need done," says Bruce Warnecke, CKAE, Hancock Wood Energy Services/Key Accounts. "It's not just a financial decision. If there's a win for our entire membership, then we move forward."

In 2022, Hancock Wood secured a \$300,000 REDLG grant, provided the required 20% match, and loaned \$360,000 to Northwest Hancock Joint Fire District at zero interest toward the purchase of a new fire truck. "Without this loan, the fire district would have had to look for a used truck instead of a new vehicle built to their specifications," Warnecke says.

As the fire district repaid the loan, Hancock Wood Electric Cooperative was establishing the revolving loan fund, securing USDA approval, and developing the internal processes for revolving loan applications and administration.

“The **Autonomy** and **Independence** core principle is baked into the revolving loan procedures,” says Warnecke. “When someone gives us a loan application, we will make the decision locally.”

Hancock Wood plans to actively market the loan program in 2026, by reaching out to about 40 villages and municipalities within the 10 counties in the cooperative’s service territory.



Municipalities will be the conduits for connecting with local businesses trying to expand or retain jobs.

REDLG is a program that’s only open to electric and other eligible cooperatives, but a business doesn’t need to be a member of the cooperative to participate in the REDLG program.

“While Hancock Wood isn’t the primary lender on business expansion projects, we can be the gap funding that makes a project pencil out and helps a company expand and hire new folks,” says Warnecke.

When searching for a site to grow or relocate your business, consider choosing a location served by Ohio’s electric cooperatives, so you can reap the benefits of having a service provider that is structured solely to serve its members and community.

## OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives 

**Ohio's Electric Cooperatives**  
6677 Busch Blvd  
Columbus, OH 43229  
[www.ohioec.org/ed](http://www.ohioec.org/ed)

Contact Us:  
**Dennis Mingyar**  
[dmingyar@ohioec.org](mailto:dmingyar@ohioec.org)  
614-430-7876