



Business • Rural Business Development Grant

Coolers for Rural Grocery Increase Options for Community

Rural communities deserve access to the high-quality food found throughout groceries in large cities. Unfortunately, with the sparse population across southwestern North Dakota, it can be economically challenging to operate a full-service grocery in the area. In the small town of Mott, a resident took a risk and purchased the local store a couple years ago. Now that she has made some significant upgrades, the Oien Grocery is the talk of the town.

Mott is located in rural North Dakota, and Oien Grocery services a 50-mile radius. The old coolers and freezers were installed before 1965 and were not cost effective to run. The wooden produce cooler in the storage area was not energy efficient. Freezers frosted and were regularly thawed, and employees would run a fan in the front to make the products visible through the doors.

Replacing the old equipment was critical to keeping products fresh and esthetically pleasing to consumers. To help provide services to this community and maintain jobs, USDA Rural Development issued a Rural Business Development Grant to assist with purchasing new freezers and coolers.

With the new equipment, the store has been able to increase the number of products they sell. A fresh meat department employs a full-time butcher, and they are able to stock more meat without worrying about spoilage. Oien Grocery is planning to open a bakery and deli department and will be hiring one full-time and at least one part-time employee. It also brings people into town who can run errands at other local businesses, generating local economic activity.

The freezers and coolers were subjected to an unexpected test in July when a tornado knocked the power out for hours. The grocery did not lose any food, but the owner suspects if she had not made the upgrades, almost everything frozen and refrigerated could have been lost. This efficient equipment has the potential to result in significant savings for the grocery in utility bills, along with providing big city options to members of this rural community.



The new coolers in Oien Grocery improve energy efficiency and increase options for residents of the surrounding communities

Obligation Amount: \$99,000 grant

Date of Obligation: July 25, 2018

Congressional District: Representative Kelly Armstrong (At-large); Senators John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer

Partners: Hettinger County Job Development Authority; Mott Opportunity and Today Fund

Demographics: This is a rural area of southwestern North Dakota

Impact: This investment in North Dakota helped provide new equipment and increase the amount of services a grocery can provide to their surrounding communities