



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

Southwest Region Weekly Update March 8, 2024

Did you know?

Illinois Ranks #2 in Nation for Corporate Expansions and Relocations for Second Year

Site Selection Magazine – an international industry-leading business publication – released its [annual corporate expansion and relocation rankings](#), naming Illinois #2 in the nation for corporate projects and Chicago the Top Metro for the 11th year in a row. The state ranks #2 in the nation for corporate expansions and relocations for the second year in a row, with 552 business expansion or relocation projects in 2023 (up from 487 in 2022). Illinois also placed #2 in projects per capita, up from #4 the previous year.

The magazine also recognized the Chicago metropolitan area as the Top Metro for business expansion and relocations among large metros for the 11th straight year. With growth in key sectors including life sciences, data centers, and technology, companies benefit from Chicago's deep talent pool, diverse economy and robust infrastructure.

Companies that located or expanded throughout Illinois in 2023 include:

- Gotion - \$2 billion electric vehicle battery gigafactory in Manteno, creating 2,600 jobs
- Kraft Heinz - \$400 million distribution center in DeKalb, creating 150 jobs
- Gulfstream - \$285 million investment in Cahokia, creating 200 jobs and retaining 500
- Incobrasa - \$250 million expansion in Gilman, creating 40 jobs and retaining 200
- Prysmian Group - \$64 million facility expansion, creating 80 jobs
- Manner Polymers - \$54 million facility in Mount Vernon, creating 60 jobs

Illinois has seen an upward trajectory, earning nine credit upgrades since June 2021, and making focused investments in economic growth initiatives. The state's modern infrastructure provides easy access to the world via air, road, rail and port and its top-notch higher education system produces the skilled workforce companies need to thrive.

Corporate real estate analysts regard Site Selection's yearly analyses as "the industry scoreboard." To qualify, projects must meet one or more of these criteria: investment of \$1 million or more, creation of 20 or more new jobs or 20,000 square feet or more of new space.



Women's HERstory Month 2024 "Illinois Advancing HER Business"

Please join the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity](#) (DCEO) as we celebrate and honor HER, Illinois women-owned businesses, during national Women's HERstory Month. Throughout March, DCEO is hosting events and elevating resources to advance women-owned businesses throughout the state. We'll also spotlight businesses owned by women in Illinois – learn more about how to get involved and support women-owned businesses throughout Illinois below!

Events

Overview of Mentoring Programs for Women Entrepreneurs

Thursday | March 21, 2024 | 10:00-11:00 AM | Virtual | [Register here](#)

Tailored for women-owned businesses of all stages and industries, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs, with all genders welcome to join.

Looking to join an accelerator/cohort/mentoring program to take your company or business idea to the next level? During Team RED's Office Hours, the entrepreneurial ecosystem will share their tailored programs with you during DCEO's Women's HERstory Month celebrating Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs.

1st Annual Asian Women's Summit

Friday, March 22, 2024 | 8:30 AM-1:00 PM | In-person at the [Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago in Chicago](#) | [Register here](#)

Tailored for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) professional women from all sectors and AAPI university female students, with attendees from all backgrounds (genders/ethnicities/races/etc.) welcome to join.

Get empowered and inspired by Asian women leaders from diverse sectors and industries who will share resources, advice, and stories at the 1st Annual Asian Women's Summit in Chicago. The summit is presented by co-hosts Aurora Austriaco, Mark Hands and Clarita Santos, together with the [Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Chicago \(PACCGC\)](#), [The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago](#), [Health Care Service Corporation \(HCSC\)](#), [Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's \(DCEO\)- Office of Minority Economic Empowerment \(OMEE\)](#), [Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois \(AACCL\)](#), [South Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois](#), and [Valentine Austriaco and Bueschel, P.C.](#)

Additional Events Throughout Illinois' Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

[View additional upcoming events](#) for women-owned businesses happening throughout Illinois during the month of March and year-round.

Resources

[Connecting HER to Illinois Business Resources Guide](#)

As this guide provides a wealth of knowledge for Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business

owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs, it includes business resources offered by entrepreneur supporting organizations (ESOs) and aligned multisector organizations. Resources include financial capital (*grants, loans, tools, etc.*), social capital (*mentoring programs & networking opportunities*), contractor & vendor opportunities, and much more!

Business Spotlights

Throughout the month, DCEO will be highlighting Illinois women-owned businesses across the state.

Twitter: @IllinoisDCEO

Facebook: @illinoisdceo

LinkedIn: Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

Hashtags: #ILWHM2024

Women's HERstory Month 2024 Toolkit

Celebrate Illinois Women-Owned Businesses

The state's Women's HERstory Month activities for Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs are presented by DCEO's [Office of Minority Economic Empowerment \(OMEE\)](#) and [Office of Regional Economic Development \(RED\)](#). Team OMEE plays an important role in providing support to women-owned businesses of all stages, sizes, and industries, including connections to business resources throughout the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Team RED provides incentives to bolster enterprises, and the team also offers confidential services to companies seeking to expand or relocate within Illinois. For more information on Illinois' Women's HERstory Month 2024 events planned for businesses and/or to learn more about ongoing resources and programs for women-owned businesses and future women entrepreneurs, please follow DCEO on social media @IllinoisDCEO.

SBDC at SIU-E "Starting Your Small Business in Illinois" Live Seminar

The Illinois Small Business Development Center at SIU-E will host a "Starting Your Small Business In Illinois" live seminar on **Wednesday, March 20, 2024 from 3pm until 5pm**. This course is highly recommended for anyone developing a new, for-profit business concept in Illinois. In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions about specific business ideas and any steps in their startup process. Training topics include Business Financing, Business Plan, Marketing/Sales, Social Media.

Date: 3/20/2024

Time: 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CDT)

Register here: <https://lnkd.in/gVibBBhJ>

Registration Deadline: **3/20/2024 8:00 AM** (CDT)

Point of Contact: [Marti Wieland](mailto:mawiela@siue.edu) (618) 650-2929 or mawiela@siue.edu

Location: [Collinsville City Hall 125 S. Center St, Collinsville IL 62234](#)

CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is pleased to announce the release of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) for the CEJA Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training Program](#). This program will provide grants to organizations to train people who are incarcerated in the following Illinois Department of Corrections facilities: Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, Decatur Correctional Center, Western Illinois Correctional Center, and Vienna Correctional Center.

Organizations will provide classroom instruction and hands-on learning opportunities to people incarcerated in these facilities, utilizing a standard Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework. Upon release, returning resident participants will be supported in gaining employment in the clean energy industry.

Applicant teams are invited to submit an application for funding **by April 15, 2024 at 5:00pm.**

Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about the program, build your applicant team, and receive one-on-one technical assistance.

- Attend a virtual networking event on **March 13, 2024** at 10am to learn more about the program and build partnerships with other organizations interested in applying for funding.
- [Sign up for a one-on-one technical assistance session](#) with a CEJA program coach.
- Submit questions about the program and the application process via e-mail to ceo.ceja@illinois.gov.
- Additional networking events and information sessions: See [Illinois Returning Residents Clean Jobs Program \(CEJA\) \(Notice of Funding Opportunity 3361-2715\)](#)

Illinois Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Challenge

Let's get the Illinois Broadband Map right! **If you represent one of the following entities, or if you facilitate internet use among vulnerable populations, this information is for you!**

- Schools
- Libraries
- Medical providers
- Public safety entities
- Public housing organizations Non-profits/Community-based organizations
- Local government
- Parks

The problem we are trying to solve; we are working to make sure all homes, small businesses, and community anchor institutions have access to high-speed internet. What do we mean by access? Access = if you want to subscribe to internet service, you can call an internet service provider to get connected within 10 business days. High-speed internet for a home or small business means having access to at least 100 / 20 Mbps service. And for community anchor institutions, it means having access to at least 1 / 1 Gbps service. For all, high-speed service means having latency of 100 milliseconds or less.

How can you help? Illinois has been allocated \$1.04 billion in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funds to bring high-speed internet access to the ~230,000 households, small businesses, and community anchor institutions that can't get access to at least 100 / 20 Mbps or 1 / 1 Gbps service. **We need your help to identify ALL homes, small businesses, and community anchors without high-speed internet access—so we can make sure they get access. Deadline March 18, 2024.**

How can you participate?

- **Individuals:** Encourage residents with access challenges to visit <https://beadchallenge.org/> to take three speed tests over three days.
- **Organizations:** If your organization **cannot** access at least 1 / 1 Gbps service, please confirm that this information is shown in the [IL BEAD Challenge Map](#). If the information in the map is inaccurate: Register [here](#) for the IL BEAD Challenge Process. Review the information on our [website](#) to learn how you can submit a challenge.

To learn more, visit the Illinois Office of Broadband's website at the QR code to the right. Have more questions?
Email us at broadband@illinois.gov.

Local Grocers Equipment Upgrades Grant

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced \$3.5 million in available grant funding for local grocers through the Equipment Upgrades Program as part of the Illinois Grocery Initiative. These grants will provide funding for energy-efficient equipment upgrades for existing grocery stores, with priority given to those located in food insecure communities across the state. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

The Equipment Upgrades Program is the first program rolled out as part of the Illinois Grocery Initiative's multi-pronged efforts to combat food insecurity by supporting local grocers and combatting food deserts. Additional funding opportunities for new municipal and independent grocery stores will be announced to the public soon.

This program is designed to strengthen existing grocery stores and preserve access to fresh food in food insecure communities, in an effort to stop the formation of new food deserts. In order to support businesses most in-need, eligible applicants must be independently owned grocers with fewer than 500 employees and no more than four grocery stores. Grocery stores located in food deserts as defined by the [USDA map](#) are prioritized for this initiative.

With rising energy costs, outdated equipment presents a major expense for small community grocers. Under the Equipment Upgrades Program, eligible grocers may be eligible to receive grants for the following equipment upgrades:

- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment
- Refrigeration units and freezers
- Lighting systems
- Other systems providing significant energy savings

Qualified applicants can apply for grants between \$25,000 to \$250,000, with a 1:3 match required. Applications for this round of grants will be accepted until **March 25, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.** To view the NOFO and apply for the grant, please visit the [DCEO website](#).

Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov for application assistance.

Climate and Equitable Jobs (CEJA) Program Updates

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is pleased to announce the release of a [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) for the Community Solar Sovereignty Grant Program](#). This program will provide grants to organizations to plan, develop, and execute community solar projects throughout Illinois. The program provides upfront capital to support the development of community solar projects and provides seed capital and pre-development funding to support community ownership of renewable energy projects. Information on the program and application materials can be found at the [DCEO Grant Opportunities page](#). Applicant teams that meet program eligibility requirements are invited to submit an application for funding by **July 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM**. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis leading up to the deadline.

Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about the program and receive one-on-one technical support as you prepare your application:

- **Join our webinar on March 14, 2024 at 1:00 PM.** [Register here.](#)
- Submit questions on the program and the application process via e-mail to ceo.ceja@illinois.gov.
- Seek one-on-one technical assistance. [Sign up for technical assistance.](#)

Please see the [CEJA Updates and Program Status page](#) for more CEJA announcements. Questions may be directed to ceo.ceja@illinois.gov.

Office of Accountability

Attention Grantseekers! DCEO's Office of Accountability is hosting virtual training sessions covering various stages in the grant process.

3rd Wednesday of the month 9AM. Learn more: [here](#)

The presentation will discuss important grant-related topics pertaining to grant management. Each month we will discuss a different component, process, or emerging practice that can benefit potential and existing grantees. Future topics offerings include:

- **3/20/24 Grantee Compliance:** This training will introduce the Grantee Compliance Enforcement System and the requirements set forth in the 2 CFR 200, Grant Agreement, and Disclosures.
- **4/17/24 Audit and Monitoring:** This training will introduce grantees to the different Audit types, requirements, and the importance of record retention.

CEJA Equitable Energy Future Grants

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched \$25.5 million in funding for the Equitable Energy Future Grants Program as part of a larger strategy to equitably grow the clean energy workforce in Illinois through the landmark Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). The program supports renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in low-income and historically disadvantaged communities to grow and diversify the clean energy ecosystem across Illinois. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

The goal of the Equitable Energy Future program is to provide seed and pre-development funding opportunities to eligible contractors to support the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects benefitting businesses, community organizations and the workforce in historically disadvantaged communities. The program is designed to help remove barriers to projects, community and business development efforts caused by lack of access to capital.

Grant funding can be used to support a variety of projects to benefit historically disadvantaged communities, including planning and project development, professional services, purchasing and leasing of land, equipment, staff, and more.

Qualified entities include equity eligible contractors and independent contractors, non-profits, co-operatives that are majority-owned by equity eligible persons, and businesses or non-profits with a proposed project that meets equity building criteria. Equity eligible contractors are businesses or non-profits that are majority-owned by equity eligible persons, including participants in CEJA workforce programs, Illinoisans who are in the foster care system

or who were formerly in the foster care system, people who were formerly incarcerated, and Illinoisans who live in an R3 zone or environmental justice community.

Through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), qualified entities can apply for grants, with awards ranging from \$250,000 to \$1 million. **Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted.** To view the NOFO and apply for the grant, please visit the [DCEO website](#). Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov for application assistance.

LIHEAP Program for Energy Bill Assistance

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) are encouraging additional income-eligible families to apply for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to support with utility bill assistance for natural gas, propane, and electricity. Applications expanded November 1 to include income-eligible households that are disconnected or facing imminent disconnection. Eligible families including those that are disconnected or facing imminent disconnection can apply by visiting helpillinoisfamilies.com or by visiting their local agency (a list of partners throughout the State can be found [here](#)). Families can also call 1-833-711-0374 for assistance in 30 languages.

To apply, visit helpillinoisfamilies.com to fill out and submit a request for services form online OR visit your local agency (a list of partners throughout the State can be found [here](#)). **After you submit the form, someone from your local agency will be in touch.** Call 1-833-711-0374 for assistance at any point during the application process. Additional information about eligibility and criteria can be found on the [website](#) along with fact sheets in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

For a complete list of current DCEO grant opportunities, upcoming grant trainings, video resource library and Grant Help Desk assistance, visit [DCEO Grants \(illinois.gov\)](http://DCEO.Grants(illinois.gov))

Other grant opportunities include:

Energy Transition Community Grant Program **Click [here](#) Deadline March 15, 2024**

Apex Accelerators **Click [here](#) Deadline March 28, 2024**

Tourism Incentive Grant **Click [here](#) Deadline May 1, 2024**

SBIR/STTR Match Program **Click [here](#) Deadline June 30, 2024**

Illinois Energy Transition Navigators **Click [here](#) Deadline June 30, 2024**

Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network **Click [here](#) Deadline June 30, 2024**

CDBG Coronavirus Urban Shelter Program **Click [here](#) Deadline July 31, 2024**

Illinois Returning Residents Clean Jobs (CEJA) **Click [here](#) Deadline rolling**

Federal Grant Support Program **Click [here](#) No specific due date**

CDBG Economic Development Program **Click [here](#) Deadline rolling**

Connect Illinois Broadband Grant **Click [here](#) Deadline rolling**

Other Federal and State Agency Grants & Programs

ICJIA Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Grant Program

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) today released a notice of funding opportunity to provide Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) programming in historically underserved Illinois communities. R3 provides 25%

of Cannabis Regulation and Trust Act tax revenues in grants to restore communities impacted by economic disinvestment, violence, and the severe and multilayered harm caused by the war on drugs.

Gov. JB Pritzker's fiscal year 2023 budget included a \$75 million R3 appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to ICJIA for R3 grants and administrative costs. A total of \$30 million is available for organizations as they set out to create safer communities, empower youth, provide legal aid, build business landscapes, and help individuals successfully rejoin communities after a period of incarceration.

Funded programs will offer evidence-based, promising, or innovative practices within at least one of the five R3 Program Priority Areas: civil legal aid, economic development, re-entry from the criminal justice system, violence prevention, and youth development. The negative consequences of the failed war on drugs have been felt far more severely by poor and disadvantaged communities—mostly communities of color. The R3 program seeks to repair this and other systemic disparities by ensuring funds are distributed equitably to high-need communities and provide the needed services in areas that have suffered the most harm.

ICJIA actively recruits community-based application reviewers as they are primary stakeholders in the R3 program. Applications are reviewed, with points given to applicants that demonstrate how their ideas will be equitably implemented. Equity scores increase when program leadership, front line, and staff members are reflective of the proposed program's service area (community), lived experience is incorporated into the program design, and applicants can demonstrate a history of service to the communities they intend to serve.

Areas across Illinois were identified for R3 grant eligibility using community-level data on gun injury, child poverty, unemployment, and state prison commitments and returns, combined with disproportionately impacted areas previously identified by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. As required by statute, the map was updated this year based on new Census data. [View map of R3 zones.](#)

Organizations that serve residents of or are based in designated R3 zones are eligible to apply. Eligible for grants are nonprofit organizations, local units of government, tax-exempt faith-based organizations, businesses, and other community organizations.

Application materials with instructions on how to apply are available here: <https://r3.illinois.gov/>. **Applications must be submitted by April 30, 2024.**

IDOT Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program Workshops

The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in March as part of its continuing Building Blocks of Success series for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise firms interested in strengthening their skills, growing their business and bidding on state projects. New and existing DBEs, as well as firms interested in becoming certified in the program, are invited.

March workshop dates and topics:

- **March 12**, 10 a.m. to noon: The Benefits of Using Accounting Software
- **March 14**, 10 a.m. to noon: QuickBooks - Part 1, 2 and 3 Q&A
- **March 19**, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Construction
- **March 21**, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Professional Services
- **March 26**, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Suppliers
- **March 28**, 10 a.m. to noon: Quickbooks - Industry Specific: Trucking

Building Blocks of Success will continue through April. Workshop information, including dates and times, is available through Eventbrite at bit.ly/DBEworkshops. Advance registration is required. Questions can be directed to IDOT's Bureau of Small Business Enterprises at (217) 785-4611.

Administered by IDOT, the DBE program provides minorities, women and eligible small businesses with opportunities to participate in federally and state funded highway, transit and airport contracts. For more information on becoming a certified DBE and learning more about available IDOT resources, visit www.idot.illinois.gov/dbe.

IDOA Specialty Crop Block Grant

In an effort to expand the availability of fresh, locally-grown produce and strengthen the competitiveness of the state's specialty crop industry, the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) plans to distribute more than \$545,000 over a three-year period thanks to funding allocated in the Specialty Crop Block Grant program in the federal Farm Bill.

Application for grant funding is available on the IDOA website and **must be returned to the Department by 11:59 pm on March 22, 2024**. To be eligible for funding, all projects must begin in calendar year 2025.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local and government entities, trade and commodity associations, public and private colleges/universities. Illinois encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities.

To encourage further expansion of this industry, and to take full advantage of the allocated federal funds, the Department invites the development of projects pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- Enhancing food safety.
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors.
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes.
- Supporting the growth of organic specialty crops.
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops.
- Improving pest and disease control.
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops.
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems.

Projects that benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual are ineligible. Farmers' markets, roadside stands and community-sponsored agriculture programs should consider submitting proposals to the USDA's Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service defines specialty crops as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture)." There are more than 3,200 producers devoting more than 90,000 acres of Illinois farmland to specialty crops production, creating nearly \$500 million in annual sales for

Illinois farmers. Nationally, Illinois ranks first for its pumpkin and horseradish production and in the top 10 for the production of asparagus, cauliflower, fresh-cut herbs, peas, mustard greens and lima beans.

Additional information about the program can be found online at the Department's website or by contacting AGR.ISCBG@illinois.gov. **Applications must be submitted to the Department no later than 11:59 p.m., March 24, 2024.**

IDOT Advance Draft Copy of Notice of Funding Opportunity for the NEVI Formula Grant Program Available

The Illinois Department of Transportation is making an advance draft of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Illinois National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program available ahead of the solicitation. With this information it is the Department's intention to allow potential grant applicants to begin to conceptualize their applications and begin discussions between the eligible entities prior to the solicitation **beginning in Spring 2024.**

The Illinois NEVI Program will invest over \$40 million in grants to eligible applicants to support the deployment of a direct current fast charge electric vehicle charging infrastructure network on Illinois' **designated alternative fuel corridors.**

The advance copy of the NOFO provides details on the program, including:

- Funding Information: The total amount of funding available, anticipated number of awards, and the process for accessing the funds if awarded.
- Program Requirements: Rules that must be followed to use the funds.
- Eligibility Information: Including eligible applicants, eligible project locations, and eligible costs.
- Application Process: The steps that applicants will need to take to apply for funding.
- Application Review Information: How the applications will be prioritized for funding.

Please note that the NOFO is still draft and subject to change. IDOT encourages interested parties to review the advance copy of the NOFO and prepare for the solicitation **to be opened in Spring 2024.**

IMEC Made In Illinois Grant

Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) today launched \$1 million in funding for the Made in Illinois Grant Program. The Made in Illinois program provides up to \$50,000 in matching grant funding to small- and mid-sized Illinois manufacturers to support innovation and strategic advancements in manufacturing.

Applications are open now through March 31, 2024, and manufacturers are encouraged to explore the benefits offered by the Made in Illinois Grant Program by visiting www.imec.org/madeinillinois. The page provides details on eligibility criteria, application procedures, and the improvements achievable through this initiative.

To be eligible to apply for this program, companies must:

- Be an Illinois manufacturer (as designated with a NAICS code starting with 31-33)
- Have between 5-250 employees
- Operated in Illinois for at least 3 years
- Had sales revenue in the last 12 months prior to application date

U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for: Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP), and the Homeless Women Veterans' and Homeless Veterans' with Children Reintegration Grant Program (HWVHVWC) (referred to collectively as HVRP)

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Initial

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: FOA-VETS-24-50

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 17.805

KEY DATES: **The closing date for receipt of applications under this Announcement is 03/11/2024.** Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

ADDRESSES: Submit all applications in response to this solicitation through <https://www.grants.gov>.

For complete application and submission information, including online application instructions, please refer to Section IV. The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), is responsible for the grant award process of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service grant program.

IDOA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) announces \$6.4 million in competitive grant funds will be available for projects designed to help strengthen the state's food supply chain. The program, Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program (RFSI), is a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Applications will be accepted beginning January 22, 2024, from food and farm business and other eligible entities including nonprofits, local government entities, universities, schools and hospitals.

The purpose of the program is to assist in building resilience in the middle of the food supply chain, supporting those activities that happen after harvest and prior to retail sale. Examples include processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distributing locally and regionally produced food. RFSI funds support food system crops and products meant for human consumption, excluding meat and poultry products which are funded through other USDA programs.

Grants are divided into two categories, Infrastructure, which seeks to expand capacity and infrastructure, and Equipment Only, which funds the cost of equipment.

Those interested should apply online at [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program \(illinois.gov\)](#) by March 15, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Applications from smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and underserved communities are encouraged.

For more information, visit the USDA [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure webpage](#).

Illinois EPA Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Energy has announced a second round of grant funding with \$2 million available for the development of local strategic energy plans. Under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG), grant awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000 will assist eligible municipalities or counties in implementing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce total energy use, improve energy efficiency in the transportation sector, and build a clean and equitable energy economy prioritizing disadvantaged communities.

The grant program will invest U.S. Department of Energy (U.S. DOE) Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds in energy planning. Municipalities and counties eligible for direct formula funding through the U.S. DOE are not eligible for funding through this state program. Grant applications will undergo a comprehensive, merit-based review. Scoring factors will include: funding justification, projects located in environmental justice areas of concern, energy burden, energy/electric service, and partnerships between local units of governments or where planning benefits multiple communities. Application materials are available at the [Illinois EPA Office of Energy webpage](#). **The application period closes at 5:00 pm on March 18, 2024.**

The Illinois EPA is investing U.S. DOE IIJA funds in projects across the State that focus on energy efficiency, resiliency, and clean energy technologies specifically in areas of environmental justice concern. For more information about Office of Energy programming, including the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, please visit <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/energy.html> or call 217-785-8841. More information on the U.S. DOE EECBG is available at <https://www.energy.gov/infrastructure/articles/doe-iija-congressional-report>.

Illinois EPA Energy Efficiency Projects Grant

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director John J. Kim announced the Residential Energy Efficiency Trust Fund Grant Program – previously known as the Low-Income Residential Energy Efficiency Program or LIREE - with up to \$5,000,000 in funding available for energy efficiency upgrades at single family or duplex residential properties. The Energy Efficiency Trust Fund Grant Program will benefit residents receiving housing assistance from a state or federal housing assistance program and located in areas of environmental justice concern. A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) has been posted to the [Agency's website](#).

Eligible applicants include public housing authorities, units of local government (municipalities, counties, or townships), or nonprofit organizations. Examples of eligible projects include window replacement, heating and cooling equipment retrofits, and lighting upgrades. Total project costs may range from \$25,000 - \$500,000 with a match requirement subject to total funding request.

Applications for the Energy Efficiency Trust Fund Grant Program NOFO will be accepted on a rolling basis and eligible properties will receive funding on a first come, first serve basis. For eligibility and application information, visit: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/energy/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-trust-fund-grant.html>.

Before applying to the grant program, applicants must be pre-qualified through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://gata.illinois.gov/>.

Illinois Department of Employment Security Workshare Illinois

WorkShare IL is a voluntary program that provides employers facing a decline in business with an alternative to layoffs. The program allows an employer to reduce the number of hours worked in any unit of their business in order to avoid permanent layoffs. Each employee in an affected unit continues to work but experiences a reduction in hours that ranges from 20% to 60%. Employees receive a corresponding percentage of unemployment benefits during the period of temporary reduction to offset the reduction in earnings.

Resources

- If you are an employer and want to apply, please go to the [WorkShare e-Services](#) website or contact the [WorkShare Program](#)
- Illinois statute authorizing WorkShare/Short-time compensation program, [820 ILCS 405/502](#)
- Background information from the [U.S. Department of Labor](#)

Helpful Resources

Grant Help Desk Resources DCEO Office of Accountability

- Office Hours for Grantees – Office of Accountability is hosting a weekly office hour **every Tuesday from 2-3pm** for any questions grantees or potential grantees may have.
 - [Sign up for any of these sessions with this link](#)
- **Email Us:**
 - ceo.granthelp@illinois.gov
 - Or use our Inquiry Form:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/df9d38efa4e241218ced486c54f3c109>
- **Visit Our Website:**
 - <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities.html>
 - Browse our Learning Libraries, Quick Reference Guides, and Instructional Videos

Grant Accountability and Transparency (GATA)

- GATA Grantee Portal: <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>
- GATA Grantee Portal New User Guide:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Documents/Resource%20Library/GATA%20New%20User%20Guide.pdf>
- GATU Resource Site: <https://gata.illinois.gov/>
- Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA): <https://gata.illinois.gov/grants/csfa.html>
- DCEO Current Grant Opportunities: <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/grants.html>

Audit Report Review Process Manual:

<https://gata.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/gata/documents/audit/audit-manual-august-2018-revision.pdf>

DCEO Website – <https://dceo.illinois.gov>

The Illinois DCEO website includes a page dedicated to current state and federal grant opportunities as well as Grantee resources. Click [here](#) to find valuable information!

Do you have questions about ARPA NEU funding?

The NEU Support Team is holding Virtual Office Hours **March 11th at 10 am CST**. We recommend joining to learn more about the updates to the ARPA program, questions on compliance, and issues with reporting. As a reminder, the next report is not open on the US Treasury Portal until **April 2024**.

Please join via Zoom Link:

Meeting URL:

<https://cove.zoom.us/j/91430718361?pwd=UFlnWUwxbk13Rk1CZWFXVjAydTRjdz09&from=addon>

Password: 676528

Mobile one-tap: US: +17193594580,,91430718361#

Meeting ID: 914 3071 8361 **Password:** 676528

To ask a question or request a support call, contact the NEU Support Team at either ILARPA@crowe.com or CEO.CURE@illinois.gov. To ask a question about the U.S Treasury Reporting Portal, please contact covidreliefITsupport@treasury.gov

Illinois Catalog of State Financial Assistance

The Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA) is a single, authoritative, statewide, comprehensive source document of State financial assistance program information. Click [here](#) to browse a list of agencies that have active grant opportunities.

Join DCEO's Team

DCEO's Team is expanding around the state. To apply for these jobs, please go to the Work4Illinois website at <https://illinois.jobs2web.com/> and use the search function to find the positions for our department.

Following DCEO & Connecting with Team RED

If you have upcoming meetings or events and would like DCEO to participate, please reach out to us. Follow us on our social media channels for real time updates.

Twitter: @IllinoisDCEO

Facebook: @illinoisdceo

LinkedIn: Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity