



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

Northeast Region Weekly Update January 30, 2023

DCEO Grants & Programs

Route 66 Grant Program – Round 2 – due January 31

DCEO is pleased to release a [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) for round 2 of the Route 66 Grant Program](#). This NOFO will award grants to certified convention and visitors bureaus for the development of tourism, education, preservation, and promotion of the 100th anniversary of Route 66 in 2026. Since 1926, Route 66 defined a remarkable era in our nation's history and it lives today in Illinois' many Route 66 roadside attractions, museums and restaurants. Route 66 is one of the most famous roads in America. Generations of travelers have romanticized this highway as a symbol of unlimited mobility and freedom of the road. Its iconic status is enhanced by the unprecedented volume of music, books, films and other art forms that depict it as the essence of America's highway culture.

This funding opportunity provides the certified convention and visitors bureaus along the route to partner and develop projects which will enhance the Route 66 experience in Illinois. Preference will be given to projects that:

- Develop new or enhance existing attractions that elevate the Route 66 experience in Illinois by adding new Route 66 tourism attractions and visitor services along the Route
- Support improved wayfinding for visitors traveling Route 66
- Strengthen future tourism trends that includes electrified transportation (i.e., electric vehicles)
- Provide statewide marketing efforts by the convention and visitors bureaus working together to promote the entire Illinois portion

Please click [here](#) for more information on the opportunity. **Grant applications under this NOFO are due by 5pm on January 31, 2023.**

Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE)

Online with OMEE – Overview of Financial Resources for Small Businesses

Wednesday | **February 1, 2023** | 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | [Register](#)

Team OMEE will provide you with the latest updates on financial resources, federal and state programs, share information about other opportunities, and answer any questions you may have about your business. We'll take questions in English and Spanish.

Federal Funding to Support Small Businesses

The U.S. Department of the Treasury announced that Illinois will receive up to \$354.6 million to administer four programs as part of the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI). The expanded program offering through SSBCI will enable Illinois to support small businesses across the state - helping them attract more capital investment and expand or launch business operations, while supporting key sectors. All of the new programs will launch in the coming months.

- **Advantage Illinois (AI) Loan Participation Program (Existing Program)**
Advantage Illinois' existing Loan Participation Program provides low-interest loans to small businesses by partnering with local lenders located across the state. In 2022 as of December, 71 percent of AI loans have gone to businesses owned by people of color, women, people with disabilities or veterans.
- **Advantage Illinois (AI) Loan Guarantee Program (New Program)**
Advantage Illinois' new Loan Guarantee Program will support business applicants who are having difficulty gaining access to capital by using funds to guarantee a percentage of loans provided by partner lenders. By guaranteeing a percentage of the loan, it makes loans more attractive to lenders and has the potential to increase the funds received by the businesses.
- **INVENT Venture Capital Program (VCP) (New Program)**
Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT) will operate as a direct equity program with a focus on investing in businesses in key industries such as agriculture, ag tech, information technology, life sciences, manufacturing, quantum, and more.
- **Climate Bank Finance Loan Participation Program (New Program)**
This new program will be overseen by DCEO and administered by the Illinois Finance Authority (IFA), which will partner with local lenders to issue the loans. Climate Bank funds will be available to small businesses in the clean energy sector.

The programs will launch in the near future; interested businesses should fill out [this form](#) to receive additional information and updates when the programs are launched.

Grant Match Program to Spur Innovation in Cutting Edge Technologies

Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced \$5 million in state-funded matching grants for businesses who have received federal funding through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

The federal [SBIR & STTR](#) programs provide grants for research and development (R&D) to small businesses to encourage private sector innovation in emerging technologies. R&D represents a critical business expense that can be costly and presents a potential risk for small businesses that don't have large sums of capital. By providing grants that support R&D, the programs encourage innovation in emerging technologies that could benefit the federal government as well as the commercial marketplace.

The state-funded SBIR/STTR Matching Grant Program is designed to further increase capital for SBIR/STTR recipients in Illinois - stimulating high-tech innovation and commercialization for Illinois small businesses that are conducting cutting-edge research. Illinois currently has more than 100 SBIR/STTR federal recipients who may be eligible for a state matching grant of up to \$50,000 per project.

DCEO is currently accepting applications from businesses who have received a Phase I federal SBIR/STTR grant award. Applicants are eligible to receive up to \$50,000 in matching grants, with the option to re-apply and receive up to five awards for each federal Phase I award received (one per fiscal year). **Awards will be granted on a first-come-first-serve and rolling basis.** Interested companies can learn more [here](#).

Meat & Poultry Supply Chain Capital Grant Program

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced a new \$6 million capital grant program designed to strengthen the meat and poultry supply chain by helping independently owned meat processing companies in Illinois build capacity and create and retain jobs. Through the Meat & Poultry Supply Chain Capital Grant Program, companies are eligible for grants of \$250,000 to \$1.5 million, with a company match of at least four times the amount awarded. The Meat & Poultry Supply Chain Capital Grant Program aims to support communities by helping independently owned companies build capacity, create jobs and ultimately, strengthen our meat processing supply chain in Illinois, thereby making food products more affordable and accessible. Eligibility is restricted to plants that are not operated by the four largest meat processing companies that own most of the nation's meat processing market share. Through the program, companies can receive funding for the construction of a new facility, expanding or renovating existing facilities, and modernizing processing and manufacturing equipment. As part of DCEO's commitment to equity, the application process prioritizes applicants located in underserved and rural areas.

Grants will be issued on a rolling basis; interested parties can find more information on the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) [here](#).

Cannabis Social Equity Loan Program

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced that \$8.75 million in Direct Forgivable Loans fully financed by the State will be made available to all conditionally-approved social equity loan applicants in order to provide immediate access to capital. Pending the completion of a simplified documentation process, forgivable loan amounts between \$50,000-\$500,000 will be released immediately. A total of \$8.75 million will be available through the new Direct Forgivable Loan Program. The following loan amounts are available per participant based on the business type:

- **Craft Growers:** \$500,000
- **Infusers:** \$250,000
- **Transporters:** \$50,000

For more information contact CEO.CannabisLoan@Illinois.gov.

Other State Agency Grants & Programs

Illinois Housing Development Authority Mortgage Assistance Program – due January 31

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) announced it is reopening a mortgage assistance program designed to assist homeowners financially impacted by the pandemic on Tuesday, November 1, 2022. The Illinois Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF) provides up to \$30,000 in mortgage assistance to eligible homeowners — paid directly to the servicer, taxing body or other approved entity — while homeowners work to regain their

financial footing. Whether homeowners have a mortgage, a reverse mortgage, or are mortgage-free, the program can fund past due housing payments and up to three months of prospective mortgage payments.

The program is free and funds do not need to be repaid. Application, program information and updates can be found at illinoishousinghelp.org. Applications will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, **January 31, 2023**.

To qualify for ILHAF assistance, Illinois homeowners must have experienced a financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic after Jan. 21, 2020 (including a hardship that began before Jan. 21, 2020, but continued after that date). They also must currently own and occupy their home in Illinois as their primary residence, be at least 30 days late on their monthly housing payments and have a household income at or below 150% of the area median income.

Potential applicants must demonstrate they have either communicated with their mortgage provider about their inability to pay, or sought counseling with a HUD-approved counseling organization. Interested homeowners are strongly encouraged to attend an information session hosted by IHDA or one of our housing partners. The session schedule is posted online at illinoishousinghelp.org, for those without access to a computer or the internet, please contact the ILHAF hotline at 1-866-IL-HELP (866-454-3571).

Homeowners who received assistance in the previous round of ILHAF can apply for additional assistance this round. Please note, however, the maximum assistance that can be provided in total to applicants across both rounds is \$30,000. For more information and updates on the program, please visit illinoishousinghelp.org.

Illinois EPA County Solid Waste Planning Grant

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) Director John J. Kim today announced a new funding opportunity to assist counties and other units of local government in implementing their solid waste planning obligations under the Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act (SWPRA). A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) has been posted to the [Illinois EPA website](https://www2.illinois.gov/epa).

Under the SWPRA, counties and units of local government are obligated to revisit their Illinois Solid Waste Management Plans every five years and, if necessary, submit plans with significant updates to the Illinois EPA. The Illinois EPA Material Management and Compliance Section is responsible for reviewing any solid waste management plans with significant updates submitted pursuant to the SWPRA. Through this funding opportunity, Illinois EPA intends to provide interested counties, and other units of local government required to develop a county solid waste management plan, financial assistance to help prepare the next plan update.

Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, conducting a local solid waste and materials management needs assessment, surveying local solid waste and materials management stakeholders to determine programmatic expansion viability, internally authoring solid waste management plan updates, or procuring consulting services to prepare solid waste management plan updates. Each county or unit of local government is eligible for up to \$10,000 in funding. All required forms and information can be found at:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/waste-management/materials-management/Pages/County-Solid-Waste-Planning-.aspx>.

Applications for the County Solid Waste Planning Grants will be accepted January 17, 2023 through 5:00 PM (CST) on **March 3, 2023**.

Applicants may not apply for a grant until they are pre-qualified through the [Grant Accountability and Transparency Act \(GATA\) Grantee Portal](#).

"Opening Doors" Homebuyer Assistance Program

Governor JB Pritzker announced the reopening of a homeownership program designed to help working-class families and underrepresented communities of color throughout the state of Illinois. Offered through the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), the **Opening Doors** or **Abriendo Puertas** program is designed to aid lower-income people of color who have historically faced steeper barriers in their path toward homeownership with \$6,000 in forgivable assistance for down payment and/or closing costs. This latest round of assistance is funded through \$8 million in state Rebuild Illinois capital funds and is expected to assist more than 1,300 potential homebuyers.

Originally launched in December 2020, Opening Doors has assisted more than 7,100 first-time and repeat homebuyers with \$43 million in Rebuild Illinois capital funds. The program increases home purchase accessibility by addressing the financial and institutional barriers historically faced by low- and moderate-income homebuyers across Illinois. This includes Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, who pay hundreds of millions in federal, state and local taxes, yet struggle to find mortgage lenders and programs that will work with them.

Under Opening Doors, IHDA will provide a 30-year 1st mortgage with a fixed interest rate and \$6,000 in down payment and/or closing cost assistance. The down payment assistance is forgiven after five years, and no monthly payment is due from the borrower. Borrowers must meet all eligibility requirements established for IHDA's down payment assistance programs, and homebuyer education is required. Critically, Opening Doors is not exclusive to first-time buyers, may be used by buyers in any county in the state, and can be used in conjunction with other down payment assistance programs to increase homebuyer leverage.

In addition to the financial assistance, IHDA supports homebuyer counseling and financial education services to increase the number of low-income renters and households of color that are ready to qualify for a mortgage. The program is also supported by a robust marketing and outreach campaign that engages HUD-approved housing counseling agencies, realtors, mortgage lenders and others who work with historically disinvested communities of color to increase awareness and promote homebuyer education among potential borrowers and industry professionals.

Opening Doors is funded through a portion of the \$200 million appropriation to IHDA in the Rebuild Illinois capital plan ([P.A. 101-0029](#)). IHDA has used funding from the capital bill to develop and implement various programs including reducing barriers to homeownership and revitalizing and stabilizing communities. IHDA expects to launch additional programs to help create and preserve affordable housing in the coming months.

All IHDA mortgage programs offer safe and reliable down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, qualified veterans and non-first-time homebuyers. All mortgage products are subject to income and purchase price limits. Eligibility for each product is based on the borrower's credit profile, household income and the purchase price of the home. In 2022, IHDA's down payment assistance programs helped over 5,200 households purchase a home in Illinois.

Interested homeowners can find additional information and a list of participating lenders at www.ihdamortgage.org

Statewide PACE Program - Clean Energy Renovations and New Construction

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Finance Authority announced the launch of a statewide PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program to spur investment in electric vehicle charging stations, energy efficiency, and water conservation, and to stimulate the growth of renewable energy and resilient building design throughout Illinois. The Illinois Finance Authority PACE program, now available to all Illinois counties and municipalities, is designed to reduce costs, improve service delivery, and create uniformity in Illinois' Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) financing market.

Under Illinois law, counties, cities, villages, and incorporated towns may create PACE areas at the request of for-profit and non-profit owners of commercial, industrial, and multi-family (of 5 or more units) properties. C-PACE financing can be used by owners and developers of commercial properties to finance or refinance eligible clean energy improvements in connection with the renovation of existing buildings and new construction, in each case up to 25% of the value of the property. Counties and municipalities interested in learning more about the Illinois Finance Authority PACE Program are encouraged to visit its website [here](#). Contact Brad Fletcher (bfletcher@il-fa.com) to opt into the Illinois Finance Authority PACE Program for free!

IDOT Building Blocks of Success

The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in January 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.

January workshop dates and topics are:

- January 24, 10 a.m. to noon: Marketing and Networking
- January 31, 10 a.m. to noon: IDOT EPAS System – SOIs

February workshop dates and topics are:

- February 2, 10 a.m. to noon: IDOT EPAS System – Consultant Prequalification
- February 7, 10 a.m. to noon: Bidding on the IDOT Website
- February 9, 10 a.m. to noon: Excel Estimating and Bidding Spreadsheet
- February 21, 10 a.m. to noon: Contractor Sub Agreements
- February 23, 10 a.m. to noon: Job Costing & Work-in-Process
- February 28, 10 a.m. to noon: Contracts

Future topics covered will include Excel estimating and bidding spreadsheet, bidding on the IDOT website, contracts, steps needed to be certified as a DBE firm and more.

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 DBE Resource Center at (312) 939-1100.

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

Helpful Resources

GettingAroundIllinois.com - statewide road conditions this winter

With cold weather settling in, the Illinois Department of Transportation is reminding the public to visit and bookmark GettingAroundIllinois.com for updated information on road conditions. GettingAroundIllinois.com is available on your computer and optimized for smartphones. The site includes the ability to identify and zoom in on a location, travel route or destination on a state map. For more information, visit idot.illinois.gov.

Join DCEO's Team!

DCEO 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.

Postings closing 1/30/23

Executive II (Apprenticeship Initiative Manager) 2 vacancies - Office of Illinois Works – Sangamon County
VCP Investment Coordinator (Industrial & Community Development Representative II) Sangamon County
VCP Platform Coordinator (Industrial & Community Development Representative II) Cook County
Emerging Tech Manager (SPSA Opt. 1) - Cook County

Posting closing 2/03/23

Accountant Advanced - Office of Financial Management – Sangamon County

Posting closing 2/07/23

Venture Capital Program Manager (SPSA, Opt. 1) - Cook County
Human Resources Specialist -Sangamon County
Statistical Research Technician – Office of Employment and Training – Sangamon County
Accountability Program Manager (Senior Public Service Administrator, OPT. 8C)– Office of Accountability– Sangamon County

Posting closing 2/10/23

Public Service Administrator (Asia Trade Specialist) - Office of Trade & Investment – Cook County

DCEO Website – <https://dceo.illinois.gov> <- new website address

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!

DID YOU KNOW? Illinois has a new [EV website!](#) Check it out!

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.

Facebook – facebook.com/IllinoisDCEO

Twitter – twitter.com/IllinoisDCEO

Linked In – linkedin.com/company/IllinoisDCEO