



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 6, 2020

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STATE OF ILLINOIS JOINS COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS TO URGE APPLYING FOR BIG GRANTS

State's historic BIG program guided by equity framework to ensure businesses hit hardest can seize \$175 million in remaining funds

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today joined the Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, The Resurrection Project and members of the community to call on more minority-owned small businesses to apply for the Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program. Since its launch, the historic BIG program has deployed over 4,000 small business grants. With \$175 million in remaining funds, the state and its partner organizations are aiming to get the word out to more Latinx and minority owned businesses facing losses due to COVID-19.

“All across Illinois, the small business community is facing tough choices due to the ongoing pandemic – which is why my administration worked quickly to stand up the historic \$636 million BIG program to provide relief the business owners need to reopen and operate safely,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “To date, more than 4,000 grants have gone out, with nearly half of the grants going to minority owned businesses which reflect the diversity and vibrancy of Illinois’ communities. Still, we know more must be done to help additional businesses struggling in the face of the ongoing pandemic. That is why we are working to ensure that business owners from every community, regardless of their immigration status, have access to BIG funding that will help them to continue making payroll, purchase PPE protecting for employees and staff and maintain other operational costs as Illinois works to get to the other side of this crisis.”

Guided by an equity framework to ensure businesses from across the state can benefit, the BIG program has yielded an equitable distribution of funding so far – with over 4,000 grants totaling \$95 million provided to 469 communities across the state. The program prioritizes hard hit industries – with over \$46.5 million in funding allocated for restaurants and taverns. Nearly half of the grants have been extended to disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs) – those areas suffering higher cases counts and experiencing underlying economic distress.

“Since the time this crisis first hit, the State of Illinois has acted swiftly to implement emergency relief programs to help offset losses to help our small business community—essential to our economy—to weather the storm,” **said DCEO Director Erin B. Guthrie.** “Among the \$1 billion in funding opportunities launched by DCEO since March, BIG is perhaps our most central and powerful tool for getting funding to businesses quickly so that they can protect their staff and focus on a safe reopening. We are committed to working shoulder to shoulder with our BIG community navigators and members of all of our minority communities to ensure that our hardest hit business owners can get the relief they need from this program.”

Moreover, nearly half of all grants have been provided to minority business owners – including 10 percent for Latinx owned businesses alone. However, with a second wave of the crisis now upon us, the State and its community navigators are moving swiftly to ensure businesses owners have the tools and information needed to take advantage of remaining funds.

The BIG program ensures that every community, regardless of their status, has access to critical funds to help during these challenging times. The grants range from \$5,000-\$150,000 per business and the funding may be used to help businesses with working capital expenses, including payroll costs; rent; utilities; and other operational costs. The second round of funds focuses on:

- Heavily Impacted Industries
- Disproportionately Impacted Areas
- Downstate Communities
- Priority Businesses
- and Agriculture

“The Illinois Business Interruption Grant (BIG) has been a lifeline for us. It has been instrumental in allowing us to reopen our Pilsen location, which has been closed since March due to the pandemic,” **said Christian Medrano, co-owner of the Brew Brew Coffee and Tea.** “As a result of this grant, we will soon reopen our Pilsen store and we are bringing back baristas that we had to lay off when COVID-19 began to surge. We are so excited to reopen our doors and serve the Pilsen community once again for pick up & delivery and look forward to fully reopening when it is safe to do so.”

In an effort to reach small minority-owned businesses the BIG program has partnered with four lead organizations to conduct outreach and technical assistance through a community navigator model. The four lead organizations are:

- The Resurrection Project
- Illinois Business Immigration Coalition.
- Chicago Urban League
- Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation

“The State of Illinois’ BIG program is essential for small and minority-owned businesses that historically lack access to the same level of funding and opportunities as other business owners and continue to suffer due to lack of resources throughout the pandemic,” **said Raul Raymundo, CEO. & Co-Founder of The Resurrection Project.** “These businesses are the backbone of our communities and we cannot leave them

behind. We urge all small businesses to apply for this grant as soon as possible. The funds are distributed on a rolling basis.”

“IBIC is proud to partner with Governor JB Pritzker and DCEO to provide capacity building for our community-based nonprofits to provide technical assistance through a community navigator model to assist minority owned businesses,” **said Rebecca Shi, Executive Director, IBIC.** “Black and Brown businesses, independent contractors have been shut out of federal relief programs while continuing to bear the brunt of COVID-19. A robust, state-wide technical assistance program levels the playing field and ensures that entrepreneurs of color not only survive but thrive through this global pandemic.”

The Business Interruption Grant (BIG) Program is a \$636 million program developed by Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly supporting thousands of small businesses who have suffered losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The BIG program includes ITIN and represents the largest state-run economic support program in response to the economic hardship caused by coronavirus.

"The BIG program has been a vital lifeline for Brew Brew and dozens of other minority-owned businesses in my community," **said State Rep. Will Guzzardi (D-39).** "I want to thank the Pritzker administration for its commitment to equity, ensuring that nearly half of all grants thus far have gone to minority owned businesses in our state. With \$175 million still available, I'm committed to working with them to help more business owners in our neighborhood to take advantage of emergency relief that can help them make ends meet."

“The pandemic continues to cause financial stress for small business owners and employees in communities of color throughout our state,” **said Sen. Iris Y. Martinez (D-Chicago).** “Fortunately for small businesses and their employees, we are making state assistance available through the Business Interruption Grant program created by Governor Pritzker and the state legislature. With \$175 million on the table, this funding will help with payroll and other operational costs. I strongly encourage economically distressed businesses to apply.”

The Business Interruption Grant Application can be found at:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/SmallBizAssistance/Pages/C19DisadvantagedBusGrants.aspx>

For assistance filling out the application please contact our technical assistance line at (312) 880-1882.

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