



State of Illinois
JB Pritzker, Governor



Illinois Capital Development Board
Jim Underwood, Executive Director

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Illinois Capital Development Board Announces a \$10 Million Grant from Discovery Partners Institute Initiative Towards Peoria's Illinois Innovation Network Hub

Innovation Hub to Receive \$10 Million in Funding Through Governor Pritzker's Bi-partisan Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan

PEORIA – The Illinois Capital Development Board today announced a \$10 million grant from the Discovery Partners Institute initiative to launch Distillery Labs, the Peoria hub of the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN). Distillery Labs will provide entrepreneurial and business-building tools to grow the region's economy.

Through Governor Pritzker's bipartisan capital plan, the first in nearly a decade, \$10 million was appropriated to CDB for this project. This project will include the purchase and renovation of the Thomas Building in downtown Peoria, as Distillery Labs plans to include space for a physical prototyping lab, a digital makerspace, a data informatics lab, co-working facilities, small offices for new businesses, classrooms, and conference space, and a commercial kitchen. The Hub will be dedicated to improving the wellness of underserved populations, and advancing systems related to food, farming, and transportation.

"The Illinois Innovation Network represents a nexus of partnerships, innovation hubs, public and private universities, and national laboratories that will fuel the next generation of economic vitality for communities across the state," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "Through the Rebuild Illinois capital plan, the Network will receive \$10 million in funding to develop a Peoria-based hub to support local entrepreneurs and innovators. As a leader in technology and innovation and worldclass colleges and universities, there's no better place than Illinois to launch a business."

"The Capital Development Board is excited to partner with Illinois Innovation Network to get this 67,000 square foot facility underway," **said CDB Executive Director Jim Underwood**. "The project will include replacing the roof, windows, and upgrading the façade."

This marks the second release of funding from the \$500 million in state capital funds for the launch of the IIN and Discovery Partners Institute. IIN is a group of 15 university-based hubs across the state working to boost Illinois' economy through entrepreneurship, research, and workforce development.

"We are excited to be working with the CDB and the other IIN hubs on this incredible opportunity to accelerate the entrepreneurial and innovation work already growing in Greater Peoria," **said Distillery**

Labs Executive Director Paul Leamon. “We’re a diverse community with a strong builder mentality and rich history of innovation. Our vision is to leverage this foundation by bringing together the Peoria community to design, build and launch a growing number of new businesses.”

Distillery Labs will be a tech, innovation, and incubation community designed to foster opportunities throughout the Greater Peoria region. It will be focused on creating a sustainable and connected entrepreneurial ecosystem through its workshops, public-private partnerships, experiential learning opportunities, and access to resources and tools for launching and accelerating new concepts. While Distillery Labs will support businesses across all industries, clusters of particular focus built upon deep regional strengths will include health and wellness, food and farming systems, and smart city/smart mobility innovations.

“The continued support of the IIN from Governor Pritzker and CDB is very encouraging,” **said University of Illinois Interim Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation Jay Walsh**, whose office coordinates IIN operations. “While the idea of the IIN was formed before the COVID-19 pandemic, Distillery Labs’ focus on entrepreneurship and launching businesses will accelerate Illinois’ economic recovery and benefit all of its residents.”

Distillery Labs is a 501(c)3 nonprofit led by Leamon, who was hired in January, and a board of directors.

The historic Rebuild Illinois capital plan passed with bipartisan super-majorities and will invest \$45 billion in roads, bridges, railways, universities, early childhood centers, and state facilities like the new crime lab and veterans’ homes, creating and supporting an estimated 540,000 jobs over the life of the six-year plan and revitalizing local economies across the state.

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