



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2023

DCEO Contact:

DCEO.media@illinois.gov

DCEO Celebrates Women's HERstory Month

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched its annual Women's HERstory Month campaign — developed to celebrate and support women-owned businesses and future female founders throughout Illinois. As part of the month-long celebration, DCEO is hosting events, launching a social media campaign, and sharing new [resources](#) to elevate and promote Illinois' entrepreneurial women.

“DCEO is committed to uplifting communities who have historically faced barriers to business ownership, and we're proud to spotlight and support women-owned businesses across our great state during Women's History Month and beyond,” **said Acting DCEO Director Kristin A. Richards.** “In order to ensure Illinois remains the best place to live, work and do business, we continue to focus on supporting women as they continue to make progress and break glass ceilings.”

Although 42.2% of Illinois businesses are women-owned businesses, women business owners and entrepreneurs, especially women of color, have historically experienced barriers in accessing financial and social capital and other key business resources. DCEO prioritizes creating an equitable business environment through targeted initiatives and resources designed for women-owned businesses.

“Illinois women business owners and entrepreneurs have continued to show how strong and resilient they are regardless of the economic climate and the inequity challenges they endured for too long,” **said Women's Business Development Manager Michelle Lura White.** “With over 450,000 women-owned businesses in the state generating more than \$74 billion to Illinois' economy each year, we're honored to celebrate their successes while continuing to elevate support and offer new resources to help women-owned businesses and future female founders start, grow and thrive in Illinois.”

DCEO's Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) works to create an inclusive business environment for communities that have faced systemic challenges to growth, including women business owners and entrepreneurs, as well as businesses owned by people of color. OMEE hosts dozens of events and provides year-round support to women-owned businesses, including connection with grants, technical assistance, and incentives to bolster women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises.

Women's HERstory Month Events

March events provide participants with critical knowledge to build financial capital, manage funds and certify as a women-owned business to expand opportunities. All events are virtual and free to attend; additional information and registration can be found on [the DCEO website](#):

Stay Positive! Survival Tactics to Manage Your Cash Flow

Wednesday, March 15 | 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. | Virtual

Learn to successfully manage your cash flow during any economic climate and in an ever-changing global business setting. Alternative financial capital options exist! Presented by the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) and hosted by OMEE and the Illinois Small Business Development Center (IL SBDC), the March virtual event is part of the monthly webinar series, Advancing the Development of Minority Entrepreneurship (ADME), which features a different topic and presenter each month. Also joining us in March are our colleagues from the Office of Regional Economic Development (RED).

Expanding HER Opportunities - Certify Your Business as Women-Owned

Thursday, March 16 | 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. | Virtual

Learn how certifying as a women-owned business can expand opportunities including government contracting, connecting with buyers looking to meet their federal subcontracting goals, accessing leads for bids and proposals and marketing opportunities exclusive to those who have certifications. Presented during Team RED's monthly webinar series, attendees will also learn about no-cost resources to assist along the way no matter what stage her business is in.

###