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Governor Pritzker Announces $10 Million for Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Eligible Community-Based Organizations Can Now Apply for Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Funding

CHICAGO – Today, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched $10 million in funding for the third round of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program provides training opportunities, expands the talent pipeline, and boosts diversity in the construction industry and building trades. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

“Since we first launched the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program two years ago, hundreds of underrepresented Illinoisans have learned new skills and advanced their careers—further strengthening our world-class workforce that is as diverse as our great state,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “As we continue to Rebuild Illinois—from roads and bridges to airports and transit systems—my administration is committed to ensuring that every resident, no matter their background, has the opportunity to take part in our bustling trades and construction industries. This $10 million in additional funding for the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program achieves exactly that—all while centering equity at every turn.”

The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program launched in 2021 with the goal of increasing diversity and access to apprenticeship programs. Comprehensive pre-apprenticeship programs can help participants gain admission to apprenticeship programs, which provide a greater opportunity to obtain employment in the construction trades.

“The opportunities provided by the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program are paramount to ensuring students are given the tools they need to thrive in the workforce,” said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. “We’ve seen a great amount of success from previous rounds of Illinois Works and look forward to assisting pre-apprentices in every corner of Illinois while encouraging participation from historically underrepresented communities through this latest round of funding.”

The latest round of funding will focus on awarding grants in geographic areas without pre-apprenticeship programs, while increasing the representation of underrepresented groups that are not served or are
underserved by existing programs, including Asian Americans, veterans, and women. The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program will fund approximately 45 programs throughout the state including new and existing grantees, serving more than 1,800 residents.

“Illinois has the best workforce in the world – but we need to make sure that people from all backgrounds and all regions have access to the great careers that are in-demand right now,” said State Sen. Cristina Castro (D-Elgin). “When we invest in an equitable workforce, we close social and economic gaps that have existed for decades.”

Through Illinois Works, DCEO is expanding its statewide network of providers to recruit, prescreen, and provide pre-apprenticeship skills training. The program providers offer structured pathways and manage the program graduates’ transition from the pre-apprenticeship program to a full apprenticeship program in construction and building trades.

“An additional $10 million for new pre-apprenticeship programs is an unprecedented investment in getting Black men and women working on state capital projects,” said State Rep. Will Davis (D-Homewood). “I want to thank Gov. Pritzker and DCEO for not just talking about expanding the building trades, but actually putting their money where their mouth is.”

Participants of the program attend tuition-free and receive a stipend and other supportive, barrier reduction services to help enter the construction industry. Upon completion of the program, pre-apprentices receive industry aligned certifications which will prepare and qualify them to continue to a registered apprenticeship program in one of the trades.

“Between historic state capital investments and a thriving private sector, we are building non-stop in Southern Illinois. The only problem is that we need the skilled workforce to do it,” said State Sen. Dale Fowler (R-Harrisburg). “I am proud to be a champion for the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program so that more people can have access to a great career in the building trades. I strongly encourage organizations in Southern Illinois to apply for this opportunity and bring this training to our region.”

Applications are open to all Economic Development Regions, with a focus on expanding capacity in the following areas:

- Central Region (Region 1) – Sangamon County
- North Central Region (Region 3) – Peoria County, McLean County
- Northeast Region (Region 4) – DeKalb County, DuPage County, Kane County, Kankakee County, Kendall County, McHenry County, Suburban Cook County, Will County
- Northwest Region (Region 6) – LaSalle County, Rock Island County, Whiteside County
- Southeast Region (Region 7) – Marion County, Lawrence County
- Southern Region (Region 8) – Jackson County

Eligible applicants include non-profit, community-based organizations, such as industry associations, chambers of commerce, local workforce areas, community colleges, technical schools, and school districts. Experienced and new providers are encouraged to apply, along with existing Illinois Works grantees who propose to serve a different geographic area or Economic Development Region than they were originally contracted to serve. Applicants serving priority Economic Development Regions and
underrepresented populations as outlined in the NOFO will be granted extra points during the merit review process.

Qualified entities can apply for grants between $55,000 to $550,000. Applications will be accepted until August 30, 2023, 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.

To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will also be providing technical assistance in the form of webinars, regional meetings, and FAQ. More information will be posted on the DCEO website.

Signed into law in 2019, the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act is designed to promote diversity, inclusion, and use of apprentices in state-funded capital projects. The Act created three major programs: the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative, and the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program. Together these three programs aim to create a talent pipeline of skilled and diverse candidates to fill new job opportunities created by the $45 billion Rebuild Illinois capital plan.

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