

Report to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission

November 2023

This report is submitted to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission (“Commission”) pursuant to ILCS 20 605/605-1045, requiring the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to submit a report no less than every 30 days regarding the status of current and proposed economic revitalization efforts in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The report to the Commission provides a summary of the Restore Illinois plan and a summary of ongoing recovery efforts, including support for impacted businesses, local communities and units of government, and support for local residents for workforce training and rental assistance. In addition to this report, the Department is available to answer questions from members of the General Assembly regarding economic recovery programming.

Restore Illinois

From the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Restore Illinois has relied on core health metrics (COVID test positivity rates, hospital admissions, ICU and other hospital capacity indicators) to identify measures that business owners and residents can take to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Fortunately, we have more and better tools at our disposal to counter the effects of the virus - including life-saving vaccines, therapeutics, and at-home testing - than were available when COVID first struck in early 2020. To date, 95% of Illinois adults age 18+ have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 91.3% have completed their primary series. 24.3% of Illinois adults 18+ have also received their bivalent booster doses. ¹

Economic Recovery Plan

Implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan, funded through federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and appropriated by the General Assembly, is a high priority. Components of the plan support business recovery, workforce development, capital investment, strategic planning, technical support for small businesses, and tourism promotion.

Back to Business Grants for Restaurants, Hotels and Creative Arts Businesses -- DCEO (\$156 million)

In early October, [Governor Pritzker announced](#) \$156 million in additional Back to Business awards to assist small businesses in key sectors hit hardest by COVID-19. These sector-specific programs targeted restaurants (B2B Restaurants), hotels (B2B Hotels), and businesses or organizations in the creative arts sector (B2B Arts) in accordance with state statutes that established the Restaurant Employment and Stabilization Grant Program (20 ILCS 605/605-1100), Hotel Jobs Recovery Grant Program (20 ILCS 605/605-1095), and the Illinois Creative Recovery Grant program (30 ILCS 709/40), respectively. DCEO’s Community Navigator network was mobilized to conduct outreach and assist eligible businesses to participate in the programs.

To better manage a high volume of applications in a timely manner, DCEO enlisted the National Community Reinvestment Coalition Community Development Fund (NCRC CDF) to support with

¹ Illinois Department of Public Health Vaccination data at: <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccine/vaccine-data.html?county=illinois>

application review, provide technical portal support for applicants, manage the development of the application portal, and provide support in processing payments.

- B2B Restaurants
 - B2B Restaurants grants were available to an array of eating and drinking establishments with up to 50 employees, including restaurants, taverns, caterers, food trucks, wineries, breweries, and distilleries.
 - Grants to eligible businesses were determined by revenue declines, as reflected on tax returns for 2020 and 2021, with awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000.
 - Businesses who had already received grants from the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), BIG, prior rounds of B2B grants, Emergency Hospitality Grants, or over \$10,000 from a local grant program were not eligible.
 - DCEO provided awards totaling \$37.9 million to 996 restaurants.
- B2B Arts
 - B2B Arts grants were available to independent live venue operators, performing and presenting arts businesses and organizations, arts education businesses and organizations, theaters, museums, and cultural heritage organizations.
 - Grants to eligible businesses were determined by revenue declines, as reflected on tax returns for 2020 and 2021, with awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$250,000.
 - Grants for businesses that had received prior state relief funding (BIG or B2B) were based solely on 2021 losses.
 - On October 2, DCEO issued award notices totaling \$47.7 million to 2,235 eligible arts businesses and organizations.
- B2B Hotels
 - B2B Hotels grants were available to hotels, motels, inns, and lodging sites.
 - Grant amounts were \$871 per room, minus any previous state and local COVID relief grants provided to the hotel.
 - At least 80% of grant amounts must be used for payroll expenses within a year of receiving the grant.
 - DCEO provided awards totaling \$70.4 million to 720 hotels.

For additional information, refer to the [B2B page on DCEO's web site](#).

Community Navigators -- DCEO (\$14.6 million)

- This program launched in July 2021 and represents a significant expansion of DCEO's original community navigator program from 2020. Community Navigators are under grant agreements with DCEO that has been extended until June 30, 2024, to ensure we have adequate support for upcoming COVID relief business grant programs. Additionally, we are increasing the budgets by approximately \$3,200,000 to fund the activities in 2024. The spokes that will continue through the rest of 2024 have been identified and engaged. There are approximately 85 organizations currently participating in the program.
- A separate notice of funding opportunity was issued for an additional Community Navigator to focus solely on the creative arts sector. Arts Alliance of Illinois has been engaged to work

exclusively in the arts sector and provide assistance to other community navigators as well. Their grant has also been extended through FY24.

- The Community Navigator program meets businesses where they are, providing tools and resources to help them apply for programs and connecting them with access to additional business support services including referrals to Small Business Development Centers. With the launch of Back to Business Restaurants, Back to Business Hotels, and Back to Business Arts in late March and the opening of the application portal on April 5th, the Community Navigator network has been very active with business outreach, program presentations and engagement. At the end of July, the award announcements for Back to Business Restaurants and Back to Business Hotels were made. The announcement for Back to Business Arts was made on October 6th. Through all three of these programs, grants are being awarded to approximately 4000 applicants in over 500 cities, towns and localities in 95 counties across the state. We have begun training on the next Back to Business program, Back to Business New Business, which is anticipated to launch in November.

Additional Business, Community and Workforce Training Support

Federal Child Care Relief Funds – IDHS (\$1.6 billion)

Illinois has been awarded \$1.6 billion in federal relief to support childcare through the latest federal relief packages passed by the US Congress (CRRSA and ARPA). Illinois' economic success relies on the adequacy of our childcare system. The Child Care Restoration Grants began in 2020, using \$290 million in funding from the CARES Act. In this section, we summarize ongoing programming in 2021-2022. The continuation of Child Care Restoration Grants and introduction of other programs is designed to help sustain childcare, which is critically important to supporting working families in Illinois.

Child Care Restoration Grants

- Eligible entities include Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Family Child Care Homes and Group Family Child Care Homes, and License-Exempt Child Care Centers and Out of School Time (OST) Providers. Eligibility criteria and awards vary across facility types. See the IDHS web site or Gateways to Opportunity web site for more information.
- All four quarterly 2021 rounds of funding for the Child Care Restoration Grants have been awarded. A fifth round, the Child Care Restoration Grant Extension, for the grant period of January-June 2022, has also been awarded. Payments for awardees of a sixth round, for the grant period of July-December 2022, has started.
 - In the first round (January-March 2021), \$140.6 million total in CRRSA funds were expended.
 - In the second round (April-June 2021), \$131 million total in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the third round (July-September 2021), \$105 million total in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the fourth round (October-December 2021), \$112 million total in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the fifth round (January-June 2022), \$63 million total in ARPA funds were expended.

- In the sixth round (July-December 2022), \$57 million total in ARPA funds were expended.

Initial Activity Search

- Effective October 2021, parents who are unemployed and actively seeking employment or enrollment in an educational program may be eligible for three months of Child Care Assistance. Parents who become employed or enroll in an education program before the end of the three-month period and meet all other CCAP eligibility requirements will be able to maintain their Child Care Assistance through the full 12-month eligibility period. This pandemic relief opportunity has been extended through June 30, 2024.

Child Care Workforce Bonus Program

- IDHS launched a Child Care Workforce Bonus program in October 2021. Through the program, all staff at licensed and license-exempt childcare centers and homes are eligible to receive up to a \$1,000 bonus, provided they meet all licensing and health and safety requirements. Childcare workers will receive the payment through their employer between October 2021 and May 2022.
- In total, \$60 million in ARPA funds were expended as Child Care Workforce Bonuses.

Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant Program

- IDHS launched the Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant Program in January 2022. Licensed childcare centers and licensed family childcare homes are eligible to receive funds, which are larger in size than the most recent Child Care Restoration Grant awards. Programs must have at least 10% of enrollment supported by CCAP and less than 50% of funding supported by other public funding streams, such as Head Start or Preschool for All. Providers will receive awards in advance of the grant period, investing at least half of each award into workforce development.
- Rounds 1-6 of SGCC application have closed.
 - In the first round (February-April 2022), \$40 million in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the second round (May-July 2022), \$39 million in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the third round (August-October 2022), \$45 million in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the fourth round (November-January 2023), \$44 million in ARPA funds were expended.
 - In the fifth round (February-April 2023), \$48 million in ARPA funds have been expended to date.
 - In the sixth round (May-September 2023), the remaining ARPA funds were expended in the first four rounds (76 million).
 - In the sixth round (May-September 2023), CRRSSA funds were expended for rounds five and six (11 million).
 - There will not be any more rounds of SGCC in FY23. Applications for the Smart Start Transition Grants, formerly SGCC, will open July 7th and the program will formally begin on October 1st. CRRSSA and ARPA discretionary funds will be used for the Smart Start Transition Grants.

USDOL Apprenticeship Expansion – DCEO (\$8 million in federal and state funding)

- As of October 31, 2023, there were 20,189 active apprentices enrolled in 422 registered apprenticeship programs in Illinois. Additionally, 509 new apprentices joined programs. Over the same period 1 new registered apprenticeship program was added.
- Grantee programs are underway; 1,526 clients have been identified, and 1,341 are enrolled in a training program. Of the 1,341 registered, 1,155 are in sectoral job training programs, and 186 are in Barrier Reduction only. Monthly performance and expenditure reports are being sent to the grantees, and desk reviews have started with 34 grantee reviews completed. The reviews have been very beneficial for the organizations. Grant monitoring is tentative scheduled to start in July. More information on workforce recovery programming is available

Job Training and Economic Development Program – DCEO (\$50 million in ARPA funds)

- DCEO is utilizing \$50 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to invest in workforce recovery through the reinvigorated Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED).
- In September 2021, DCEO released \$20 million NOFO for employer-driven training approaches that pair education and occupational training with work-based learning to support regional and local economic development for businesses and individuals most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The JTED program prioritizes services offered in or to individuals that reside in an identified Qualified Census Tract (QCT) or Disproportionality Impacted Area (DIA).
 - Through the JTED program, DCEO has funded 44 organizations for a total of \$20 million to serve unemployed, under-employed, or under-represented individuals, including youth with one or more barriers to further education or employment and employers needing to upskill their workforce, by providing funding for accessible equity-driven services to those in disadvantaged communities. Participants are receiving robust education and training connected to career pathways, job placement, and support services. 43 grantees have a total budget of \$19,500,000. One youth grantee, the Illinois Manufacturing Association (IMA), has a total budget of \$500,000, with 1,491 planned student participants and 1,845 actual student participants to date. The planned enrollment for all JTED grants is 4,067 participants, with 3,447 participants have enrolled to date. The grants were initiated in May 2022 and will run through April 2024. More information on workforce recovery programming is available at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/>.

Housing and Household Assistance

Illinois Renters (IHDA)

Facing the possibility of an unprecedented wave of evictions during the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, the need for emergency rental assistance, eviction prevention measures, and other relief was clear and immediate. The state of Illinois quickly launched a holistic response to those needs, utilizing the massive influx of federal dollars from Congress to launch one of the largest rental assistance programs in the country. Since 2020, the Illinois Housing Development Authority

(IHDA) has administered three rounds of emergency rental assistance that has provided nearly \$1.02 billion in rental assistance to help 137,372 vulnerable households remain housed.

IHDA continues to fund applications through the Court-Based Rental Assistance Program (CBRAP) to Illinois tenants and landlords across the state (outside of Cook County) who have pending cases in eviction court. The program is only available to litigants in eviction court. Applicants may qualify for up to \$25,000 in emergency rental payments that can include up to 15 months of past-due rent and 3 months of future rent payments to prevent eviction. To date, IHDA has approved 5,049 applications providing more than \$38.1 million in aid. Additional CBRAP information can be found [here](#).

The Asylum Seekers Emergency Rental Assistance (ASERAP) rental assistance program is being administered by IDHS, with program operations assistance from IHDA. This program will be in the form of a one-time grant up to \$15,000. This grant may provide up to three months of rental assistance (plus move-in fee when applicable) for eligible participants, with the option of one three-month renewal, not to exceed six months of rental assistance total, as individuals transition from temporary hotel stays into affordable rental housing.

- Total Applications: 2,931
 - Approved: 1,965
 - Denied: 289
 - Remaining are in review, awaiting landlord participation, etc.
 - Disbursed: \$15.49MM total
- Recertifications: 1,233 applications
 - Disbursed: \$5.4MM

Illinois Homeowners (IHDA)

For struggling Illinois homeowners, IHDA has initiated three rounds of emergency mortgage assistance that has provided \$379.8 million to help 25,850 homeowners impacted by the pandemic.

The Illinois Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF) provides up to \$60,000 in mortgage assistance to eligible homeowners — paid directly to the servicer, taxing body or other approved entity. Information on ILHAF can be found [here](#).

The application portal for ILHAF closed at 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 31. Any application submitted prior to closing will be reviewed to determine eligibility and a submitted application is not a guarantee of approval

Rental Assistance Program -- IDHS (U.S. Treasury Department through the [Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#))

The Rental Assistance Program, offered by IDHS through local community agency partners, is intended to keep families stably housed and prevent high incidents of evictions or homelessness due to COVID-19.

- The Intake Process for the program ended on March 31, 2023, except for households in Eviction Courts who could be eligible to apply until June 30, 2023.

- At the end of March 2023, IDHS providers issued \$123.3 million in rental and utility assistance to 21,053 eligible households. Those eligible for Emergency Rental Assistance were provided up to 18 months of rental payments to cover up to 15 months of back-rent owed and 3 months of prospective rent

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The 2024 LIHEAP program year will run from October 2, 2023 through August 15, 2024. The energy assistance program has \$237 million to provide to eligible households in LIHEAP assistance.

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) – DCEO (\$40 million federal funding)

The LIHWAP was a temporary, federally funded program to help residents avoid disruption of their water service. The local agencies began issuing benefits in December 2021 and issued more than \$32 million in benefits by the end of program in September 2023.