

# Report to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission

## December 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. <sup>1</sup>

### 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 NewBiz -- DCEO (\$25 million)

On November 16<sup>th</sup>, [the Governor announced](#) the launch of the Back to Business (B2B) NewBiz Grant Program. This \$25 million program will support small business startups that were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible businesses can receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000, depending on when they launched and whether they are brick-and-mortar or home-based.

To be eligible, these new businesses must meet the following criteria:

- Launched between January 2020 and December 2021
- Engaged in an industry that was particularly hard hit by the pandemic (see list of eligible industries [here](#)) OR started by one or more people who became unemployed during the pandemic prior to starting the business.

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

- The funds can be used for various purposes such as payroll costs, rent or mortgage payments, utilities, and other operational expenses.

Applications for B2B New Biz opened on November 30<sup>th</sup> and will close January 11<sup>th</sup>. Applicants are encouraged to visit [www.b2bnewbiz.com](http://www.b2bnewbiz.com) to learn more and apply.

### **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 \$3.2 million to fund the activities in Fiscal Year 2024. The spokes that will continue through the rest of Fiscal Year 2024 have been identified and engaged. Approximately 85 organizations are 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 conclusion of the recent Back to Business Restaurants, Back to Business Hotels, and Back to Business Arts, grants are being awarded to approximately 4000 applicants in over 500 cities, towns and localities in 95 counties across the state. We have begun outreach on the next Back to Business program, Back to Business New Business. Applications are being accepted under this program from 11/30/23 through 1/11/24. The full community navigator network has been engaged to support this program.

## **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 7<sup>th</sup> and the program will formally begin on October 1<sup>st</sup>. 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
- Illinois has 20,634 registered apprentices earning an average wage of \$21.90. There are 16 remaining grantees from the 2021 Apprenticeship Expansion grants. There are 11 grantees who received funding from the 2023 USDOL State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) funds. The grantees with 2023 funds are embedding Apprenticeship Specialists within their integrated business services teams, providing a one-stop concierge service to help businesses build an apprenticeship or work-based learning program from start to finish at no cost.

**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/>.
- On November 30th, DCEO released \$13 million for a second round of JTED funding. This NOFO addresses the pandemic's continued impact on the demand for skilled employees and the capacity for individuals to access family-sustaining employment and advance in a career pathway. A focus for this funding opportunity will be prioritizing services to immigrants and refugees, justice-involved individuals, and rural residents. Additionally, the NOFO offers flexible funding through Barrier Reduction services, supporting accumulated emergency costs for basic needs. It is anticipated that this NOFO will serve up to 1,000 individuals from the target populations. If feasible, the hope is to award funding to organizations in each of the Economic Development Regions (EDRs). Applications are due 1/10/24.

## 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 5,613 applications providing more than \$42.5 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: 4,190
  - Approved: 2,966
  - Denied: 342
  - Remaining are in review, awaiting landlord participation, etc.
  - Disbursed: \$21.21M
- Recertifications: 1,386 applications

### **Illinois Homeowners (IHDA)**

For struggling Illinois homeowners, IHDA has initiated three rounds of emergency mortgage assistance that has provided \$394.4MM to help 26,653 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 October 31st. 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, with \$237 million available for eligible households. Through November there have been 143,000 applications taken with approximately \$90 million of energy assistance issued.