**Section 691.40 Qualified Partners**

a) The Department may enter into grant agreements, contracts, or intermediary agreements with Qualified Partners to implement the Program. The Department may award grants to Qualified Partners to provide financial assistance to Qualifying Businesses or contract with Qualified Partners to secure services to implement the Program. The nature of the services provided by a Qualified Partner shall determine whether the arrangement is a grant, procurement, or other relationship.

b) A Qualified Partner shall operate as a non-profit organization registered to conduct business in the State of Illinois or a financial institution that has demonstrated experience providing financing or services to businesses or residents located in Disproportionately Impacted Areas.

c) An agreement with a Qualified Partner shall specify the Qualified Partner's responsibility, if any, for determining Qualified Business' eligibility for financial assistance and monitoring Program Participants for compliance with Program requirements.

d) In accordance with 20 ILCS 605/605-1050(h), nothing in this Part shall restrict the Department from securing services from entities other than Qualified Partners to assist in implementing the Program.