**Section 2650.130 Application Evaluation**

The Department shall screen all applications to determine that all requirements of the application package have been addressed. Complete applications will be reviewed and evaluated pursuant to a merit review by Department staff following the requirements of the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act ("GATA") (44 Ill. Adm. Code 7000.350). This review and evaluation process will be completed within 75 days after receipt of all required information. Those applications determined eligible for funding based on the evaluation process described in subsections (a) and (b), according to the following criteria:

a) Need: Identification of stakeholders, facts and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program's purpose. The following criteria will be evaluated:

1) Located in a State-designated enterprise zone, underserved area, energy transition area, or opportunity zone;

2) County unemployment rate; and

3) Applicant is adversely affected by foreign competition or training would provide company an advantage in competing in a global market (e.g., project relates to advance technology, quality and/or productivity improvements or export oriented, job retention or improving business competitiveness);

b) Capacity: The ability of an entity to execute the grant project according to project requirements; and

1) Project readiness (e.g., time schedule for project initiation);

2) Illinois-based company; and

3) Participation within other DCEO programs including, but not limited to, EDGE, REV, MICRO, Data Centers, HIB;

c) Quality: The totality of features and characteristics of a service, project, or product that indicates its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program.

1) Average wage rate of trainees;

2) New capital investment (e.g., training directly relates to jobs) and capital investment per trainee;

3) Applicant has identified specific and measurable training objectives;

4) Quality and consistency of the proposed training program;

5) Level of value-added for the specific industry and/or region within Illinois; and

d) Technical Evaluation Component – Each application will be reviewed to assure compliance with technical program requirements as detailed in Sections 2650.30 and 2650.120.

(Source: Amended at 48 Ill. Reg. 17516, effective November 25, 2024)