

Report to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission

March 2022

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 not 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.

DCEO last appeared before the Commission in mid-December to answer questions about Back to Business and local government support. The Department remains available to answer questions from all members of the General Assembly regarding economic recovery programming.

Restore Illinois

Ultimately, the best way to restore the economy is to control the virus. 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, than were available when COVID first struck in early 2020.

With statewide COVID-19 hospitalization rates declining rapidly, the administration lifted the state indoor mask requirement in most settings on February 28th as anticipated. Applicable Federal and local mask requirements, such as those on public transit and other high-risk settings, will continue to apply.

Vaccination remains key to ultimately ending the pandemic. 86% of Illinois adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 77% are fully vaccinated. Of Illinois’ total population over 5 years of age, 72% are fully vaccinated.¹ In addition, 4.2 million boosters have been administered.

Children aged 5 and over can receive vaccine at any site that has Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine available. Find the nearest vaccination site at: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/vaccines/vaccination-locations.html>. Information on vaccination for children can be found at: <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccine/vaccination-for-young-people-faqs.html>.

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

Economic Recovery Plan

Implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan, funded through federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and appropriated by the General Assembly, will be a high priority during Fiscal Year 2022. 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 -- DCEO (\$250 million)

- The Back to Business (B2B) program is deploying grants to promote recovery for small businesses hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. B2B is a successor to the Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program.
- To be eligible, businesses must have had revenues below \$20 million in 2019 (below \$35 million for hotels) and a reduction in revenue in 2020 due to COVID-19. Priority will be given to businesses in the hardest-hit sectors, business located in Disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIAs), and businesses that have not yet received COVID-related state or federal assistance.
- B2B will maintain a strong emphasis on equity, with at least \$100 million (40%) of the funds going to DIAs, low-income areas disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Also targeted with set-aside funding are businesses in the arts, restaurants & bars, hotels, and businesses that applied for but did not receive a BIG grant due to exhaustion of funds.
- Applications were open from August 18th to October 13th.
- As of March 8th, DCEO had awarded \$180 million in B2B grants to 4,897 businesses. Applications are still under review and awards will continue to roll out until funds are exhausted.
- The list of awardees and other information on the program is available at the [Back to Business](#) page of the DCEO web site.

Community Navigators -- DCEO (\$9 million)

- The Community Navigator program uses a Hub and Spoke outreach model that leverages 100+ community partners to help small businesses connect with emergency resources during the pandemic by investing in grassroots, community-based organizations that are trusted voices in the communities they are assisting.
- This new investment announced in July represents a significant expansion of DCEO's original community navigator program from last year. The program has increased the number of Hubs from 4 to 13 who work in tandem with over 100 Spokes and the DCEO team to provide coverage in hard to reach communities across the state.
- Assistance will continue to foster efforts to help businesses most in need benefit from ongoing federal relief efforts and future business relief programs to aid in the economic recovery.
- The program meets businesses where they are, providing tools and resources to help them apply for programs and assisting them to access to additional business support services (via CPAs, referrals to SBDCs, etc.)
- Community Navigators offer a diverse network, providing services in more than 30 languages.

- Community Navigators conduct direct outreach to businesses, including webinars, canvassing, door knocking, leveraging existing events, etc. To date, Community Navigators have engaged over 160,000 unique businesses.
- More information, as well as a search tool to find a community navigator near you, is available at the [DCEO website](#).

Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets Capital Grants – DCEO (\$50 million)

- Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets (RDMS) will provide capital grants to support economic recovery in commercial corridors and downtowns that have experienced disinvestment, particularly in communities hardest-hit by COVID-19.
- Private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local units of government are eligible, with Individual awards ranging from \$250,000 to \$3 million. A minimum cash match of 50% of the project cost is required, though this will be waived for local government entities.
- RDMS will be supported by both state capital and ARPA funding. The funding mix will depend on the final projects selected and the consistency of associated expenditures with ARPA guidelines.
- Applications closed on January 10th. DCEO is now reviewing applications and expects to notify prospective awardees this Spring.

Tourism Attractions & Festivals Grant -- DCEO (\$10 million)

- The Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grant program will help develop new or enhance existing tourism attractions located across the state – including but not limited to museums, events, performances, and festivals. The goal is to attract additional visitors and overnight stays that will bring foot traffic back in communities across Illinois.
- Eligible applicants included units of local government and not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. Funds may be utilized for capital projects, equipment, training, transportation, housing, receptions, entertainment, photography, and interpretive programs.
- Grant amounts range from \$10,000 to \$1 million and require a local match.
- Applications were accepted on a rolling basis. The number of applications received greatly exceeded the funds available, so the application was recently closed. The Department is prioritizing projects most closely aligned to eligibility criteria and 17 Notices of State Grant Awards have been signed to date. Out of those 17 approved grants, 7 have executed grant agreements.

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 child care through the latest federal relief packages passed by the US Congress (CRRSA and ARPA). Maintaining and extending our state’s economic recovery relies on the adequacy of our child care 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 child care as the economy continues to recover.

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, closed on February 25, 2022 for the grant period of January-June 2022. This is the final Child Care Restoration Grant period available.
 - 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 have been expended to date.

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 will remain available through June 30, 2022.

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. Child care workers will receive the payment through their employer between October 2021 and March 2022.
- To date, \$45 million in ARPA funds have been 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 child care centers and licensed family child care 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.

- The first round of SGCC awards (for February-April 2022) is in process, and the second round (for May-July 2022) will open in the first week of March. To date, \$35 million in APRA funds have been expended in Round 1 of the SGCC grant program.

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

- The State of Illinois has been awarded more than \$8 million in funding from the US Department of Labor over the past 3 years under the Apprenticeship Expansion Program. By leveraging a portion of the WIOA statewide activities funds, it is anticipated that DCEO will award a total of \$10 million in grants to expand registered apprenticeships throughout Illinois.
- Under the 2019-20 Apprenticeship Expansion Program, the state awarded approximately \$5 million to 25 grantees acting as Navigators and Intermediaries with a goal of serving 800 new registered apprentices and developing 30 new registered apprenticeship programs
 - The year to date results include serving more than 654 registered apprentices and pre-apprentices, the establishment of more than 50 new registered apprenticeship programs, and the engagement of nearly 1,400 businesses.
 - DCEO used \$2 million in USDOL Apprenticeship Expansion funds and \$3 million from the WIOA Statewide Activities funds to support the 2019-20 grants.
- Under the 2021 Apprenticeship Expansion Program, it is anticipated that the state will award approximately \$5 million to grantees with a goal of serving 750-800 new registered apprentices and 40 new registered apprenticeship programs.
 - DCEO will use \$5 million from the USDOL Apprenticeship Expansion Award to target in-demand industries and ramp up efforts to recruit diverse apprentice candidates. This program will continue to expand and diversify registered apprenticeships assisting in developing a talent pipeline meeting Illinois’ workforce’s needs.
 - The grants will support efforts to reach industries heavily impacted by COVID-19. Programming will prioritize low-income individuals, older workers, women, returning citizens, persons with disabilities, veterans, and youth while ensuring programmatic design, recruitment, and retention efforts reflect overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.

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

- DCEO will utilize \$50 million in funds 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.
- Through the JTED program, eligible entities will connect 1,200-1,500 unemployed, underemployed, and underrepresented individuals (adults and youth) with employers in need of a skilled workforce or for upskilling their existing workers. Participants will receive robust education and training connecting to career pathways, job placement, and support services including barrier reduction funding to address the challenges that prevent them from returning to work.

- The JTED Funding opportunity closed on October 31st, 2021, concluding with 95 applications received from across the state. The Office of Employment and Training completed the merit review process and recommended funding 44 proposals for a total of \$20,000,000 under JTED. It is anticipated that the applications funded under this NOFO will serve more than 2,500 individuals including the unemployed, under-employed, or under-represented individuals including youth who have one or more barriers to employment.
- DCEO expects to announce the awards soon. More information is available at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/>

Rebuild Distressed Communities – DCEO

Rebuild Distressed Communities is an economic recovery program that has awarded \$9.2 million from the Rebuild Illinois capital plan to support businesses and Illinois commercial corridors that sustained property damage during civil unrest that occurred last year.

- The program awarded 84 grants, totaling \$1.8 million, to help impacted small businesses repair damages and rebuild from property damage experienced during civil unrest. Funding helps businesses repair storefronts and entrances, improving electrical systems and restoring exterior work. Applications for this part of the program have closed and funds are being disbursed.
- RDC awarded \$7.5 million in corridor improvement projects for seven community projects focused on boosting economic vitality in commercial corridors across the state. Projects included funding for corridor enhancements, streetscaping, fiber optic cable enhancement. Projects had to demonstrate that property damage would occur within the same block that experienced property damage, or on contiguous blocks if required for project continuity.
- For more information, see the DCEO web site at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/SmallBizAssistance/Pages/C19DisadvantagedBusGrants-DistressedCapital.aspx>.

Accelerate Illinois Broadband Planning – DCEO (no state funding)

In late February, the Governor and DCEO [announced](#) the first six-member cohort of the Accelerate Illinois Broadband Infrastructure Planning Program. The 14-week intensive training program will help leaders from participating communities develop broadband plans responsive to their unique local needs and better position them to leverage additional state and federal broadband infrastructure funding as it becomes available.

- This public/private effort is hosted by the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society and University of Illinois Extension, with financial support through Heartland Forward, a Midwest “think and do tank.”
- This programming will complement the Rebuild Illinois capital plan, which dedicated \$420 million to broadband expansion, as well as funds made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).
- The six inaugural participants are the City of Springfield, Jackson County, Knox County, Mercer County, Whiteside County, and the Village of Elsah; six additional participants will be announced this spring.

Local Government Support

Local CURE – DCEO (\$250 million)

Through the Local CURE program, the Department has the authority to cover costs incurred by local governments for emergency COVID-19 related expenses. Initially designed to cover eligible expenses from March 2020 through December 2020, the program was subsequently extended to encompass expenditures through December 31, 2021. All units of local government (as defined by the Illinois Constitution) outside of Cook, Lake, Will, Kane, & DuPage counties are eligible to apply.

- Local CURE can reimburse units of local government for necessary expenditures attributable to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Examples of eligible costs include PPE, COVID-19 related administrative staff time and other public health expenses.
- As of March 7, 2022, \$236.5 million had been paid or is in process to be paid to 1,059 local units of government.
- To see a [list of all communities](#) and their claiming status visit the [Local CURE webpage](#).

Housing and Household Assistance

The moratorium on evictions during the COVID-19 health crisis, established and extended by the Governor through a series of Executive Orders, expired on Oct. 3, 2021. The moratorium was enacted and extended to limit the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on housing security and to minimize the spread of the virus.

Eligible Illinoisans are encouraged to apply for rental payment assistance as needed to stay current on their rent and to stay in their homes. In addition, more Illinois residents will be eligible for assistance in paying energy bills, which will also serve to enhance housing stability for low-income residents affected by the pandemic.

The Illinois Rental Payment Program – IHDA (~\$300 million)

On Monday, Dec. 6, the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) launched a new round of assistance through the Illinois Rental Payment Program (ILRPP). The program provides eligible renters up to \$25,000 paid directly to their housing provider. Assistance will be matched to the tenant's specific need and will cover up to 18 months of emergency rental assistance encompassing up to 15 months of missed rent payments and three months of future rent payments. The coverage period is June 2020 through April 2022. IHDA expects to assist more than 30,000 renters and housing providers with \$297 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Program parameters are as follows:

- Household must have experienced a financial hardship, directly or indirectly, due to the pandemic.
- Household income was below 80% of the Area Median Income, adjusted for household size.
- Household is behind on rent and/ or is at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Proof of citizenship is not required. Rental assistance is not a “public charge” benefit.
- Tenants residing in state- or federally-subsidized housing are eligible to apply.
- The portal closed to new applications on Jan. 9, 2022.

- 85,086 applications had been started by either the landlord or tenant.
- There is still time to complete applications, but no new applications can be initiated.
- 33,935 have been fully completed by both parties.

The status of ILRPP Round 2, as of Mar. 2, 2022, is as follows:

- 52,465 Applications completed by landlord and tenant
- 22,797 Applications completed by tenant only (eligible for direct payment)
- 1,960 Applications Approved
- \$17.6 million disbursed to approved applications (\$8,977 average assistance per household)

ILRPP Round 1 is now closed for new applications until further notice. All joint applications completed by both the tenant and the landlord are being evaluated for funding and IHDA will contact all applicants upon completion of the review. Notable outcomes from Round 1 include:

- 63,964 Applications approved
- More than \$584 million disbursed (from Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 and ARPA)
- Average Assistance = \$9,134 per household
- 56% of Approved Applicants unemployed >90 days
- 64% of Approved Applicants <30% Area Median Income; 87% <50% Area Median Income

Illinois is a leader in delivering rental assistance according to the US Department of the Treasury. Since 2020, the Pritzker Administration has provided over \$800 million in emergency rental assistance to help keep more than 108,500 Illinois seniors, families and others safely housed.

2021 Illinois Emergency Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF) Program (IHDA) – (\$250 million)

Launching in April 2022, ILHAF will provide funds to eliminate or reduce past due payments and other delinquent amounts, including payments under a forbearance plan, on forward mortgages, reverse mortgages and loans secured by manufactured homes. ILHAF, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, will provide:

- Up to \$30,000 in assistance to homeowners covering a range of expenses.
- Approved payments will be made directly to mortgage lender/servicer, county treasurer or local taxing authority, condominium/co-op/homeowners' association, etc.
- ILHAF is expected to assist 12,000 homeowners with \$250 million in funding.
- ILHAF program updates will be posted to illinoishousinghelp.org.

Interested homeowners are strongly encouraged to attend a webinar hosted by IHDA in advance of the application portal opening. These sessions will provide a road map for you to follow to make the application process more efficient. There will be live sessions or they can watch a recording on the ILHAF website. Visit illinoishousinghelp.org for details.

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 due to COVID-19.

- Illinois renters may be eligible for assistance if the tenant has experienced financial hardship due to the pandemic, is behind on rent and/or is at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, and qualifies as [low income](#). Proof of citizenship is not required to apply.
- If approved, the applicant may be eligible for up to 15 months of rental payments to cover up to 12 months of back-rent owed and 3 months of prospective rent.
- To apply, residents can visit <https://www.illinoisrentalassistance.org/providers>, find a provider nearby, and contact them. The provider will help residents determine eligibility and will help to submit an application.
- By the end of January 2022, IDHS providers issued \$43.8 million in rental and utility assistance to 9,239 eligible households.
- Funding is currently available.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – DCEO (\$295 million across all funding sources)

ARPA funding allowed the State of Illinois to increase overall LIHEAP assistance to \$295 million, with funds available from September 1st, 2021, through May 31st, 2022. LIHEAP will enhance the safety net to households facing the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. Benefits will be delivered through local social service agencies.

- DCEO increased the benefit amount per household with average payment expected to grow from \$750 on average last fiscal year to \$1,000 on average this year.
- DCEO will implement new permanent requirements put in place via SB0265 to increase the income threshold and to broaden eligibility for households regardless of immigration status.
- DCEO is promoting the program now and will gear up for a later statewide marketing campaign to maintain steady uptake throughout the program so all funds can be exhausted.
- Approximately \$194 million of the \$295 million assistance has been provided to date.
- For more info or to apply, go to:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies/Pages/helpIllinoisFamilies.aspx>

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

The LIHWAP is a temporary, federally funded \$40 million program to help residents avoid disruption of their water service. The funds will be available until exhausted. LIHWAP will be administered by the same local agencies as LIHEAP.

- LIHWAP is a crisis response program that will prioritize benefits to residents who are disconnected -- or in imminent threat of being disconnected -- from water and wastewater service.
- The local agencies began issuing benefits in December and have issued \$1.4 million in benefits as of the end of February.
- For more information or to apply, go to:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies/Pages/helpIllinoisFamilies.aspx>