

Report to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission

May 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

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 and therapeutics, than were available when COVID first struck in early 2020.

Vaccination remains key to ultimately ending the pandemic. 87% of Illinois adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 78% are fully vaccinated. Of Illinois’ total population over 5 years of age, 73% are fully vaccinated.¹ In addition, 4.4 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>.

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)

- On May 4th, the Governor announced that all \$250 million in Back to Business (B2B) funds have been released. This program provided nearly 6,500 grants to small businesses in more than 475 cities and more than 90 counties across the state.

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

- B2B, a successor to the Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program, deployed grants to promote recovery for small businesses hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding helped small businesses rehire staff, cover operating costs, afford additional customer safety precautions, and cover other expenses needed to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grants were awarded to applicants on a rolling basis with dollar amounts ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$150,000, based on a percentage of losses each business experienced during the pandemic.
- 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.
- B2B maintained a strong emphasis on equity, with 96% of awards delivered to businesses in DIAs or in hardest-hit industries. More than half of awards went to businesses owned by people of color and nearly two-thirds went to businesses located in low-income areas most impacted by COVID-19.
- The \$250 million released includes approximately \$7 million that is reserved for ongoing appeals. The final list of recipients and figures may change if a business does not claim the funds, or if an appeal is granted. Any remaining funds from appeals or unclaimed by businesses will be distributed to applicants. DCEO will continue to proactively maintain an up-to-date list of recipients and stats on the B2B webpage, which can be found [here](#).

Community Navigators -- DCEO (\$10 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 program launched in July 2021 and represents a significant expansion of DCEO's original community navigator program from 2020. 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. This model has created a diverse network, providing services in more than 30 languages. Community Navigators conduct direct outreach to businesses, including webinars, canvassing, door knocking, and leveraging existing events. To date, Community Navigators have engaged over 165,000 unique businesses.
- The 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.
- In the first quarter of calendar year 2022, DCEO provided grant extensions and some additional funds to continue outreach and technical assistance through December 31, 2022. 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 their economic recovery. Over the next few months, DCEO will be launching a new \$50 million grant program for start-ups navigating the impact of the pandemic. Community Navigators will continue to conduct targeted outreach so that businesses may apply to this program.
- 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 summer.

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 window was closed. The Department is prioritizing projects most closely aligned to eligibility criteria and plans to announce the complete list of awardees soon.

RISE Local and Regional Planning Grant Program – DCEO (\$3.5 million in CURE funding)

- Funds from Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (RISE) program will be awarded to local governments and regional economic development organizations to create or update regional plans to accelerate economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Effective local and regional economic development plans generated through this program will help communities better compete for future capital grant opportunities.
- Individual awards will range from \$10,000 to \$150,000.
- Local and regional plans may vary in scale and scope but must be primarily focused on promoting recovery from the pandemic to be eligible.
- Applications were due May 9th. DCEO expects to make awards this summer.

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, for the grant period of January-June 2022, has also been awarded.
 - 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), \$62 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 May 2022.
- To date, \$55 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 and second rounds of SGCC application have closed. To date, \$39 million in ARPA funds have been expended in Round 1 of the SGCC grant program, and \$38 million in ARPA funds have been expended in Round 2.

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, DCEO has awarded funding to 5 Apprenticeship Navigators and 17 Apprenticeship Intermediary projects for a total of \$4.7 million. It is anticipated that the Apprenticeship Navigators will work with more than 650 businesses, and the Apprenticeship Intermediary projects will serve more than 800 registered apprentices.
- 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 will be announcing the grant recipients in the coming weeks. Once grants have been established information on the programs offered will be available at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/>.

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; these communities finished their formal work with the program on May 3.

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.
- Upon closure of the program on March 31, 2022, \$238.3 million was paid to 1,090 participating local units of government.
- **Close-out Notes:**
 - Since the launch of Local CURE in July of 2020, DCEO in partnership with Crowe LLP conducted outreach to over 1,000 units of government, making personal contact with more than 3,000 individuals, hosting over 20 webinars, answering almost 6,000 emails, and solving roughly 1,600 helpdesk tickets.

- In total, 1,090 local governmental units submitted more than 25,700 invoices for reimbursement. The Local CURE program reviewed 100% of the invoice back-up to assure compliance with federal rules and released more than \$219.7M in reimbursements.
- Additionally, through the Local CURE economic support program hundreds of businesses received a portion of more than \$18.5M which was disbursed through 60 local government grantees statewide.
- See [the Local CURE detailed vouchering report](#) for details on what each local government was reimbursed for or visit the [Local CURE webpage](#) for more details.

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 Round 2 – 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 May 4, 2022, is:

- 53,179 Applications completed by landlord and tenant
- 22,490 Applications completed by tenant only (eligible for direct payment)

- 11,409 Applications Approved
 - \$75.8 million disbursed to 9,919 approved applicants (\$7,646 average assistance per household)

Notable outcomes from ILRPP 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

Additional information regarding Round 1 can be found a fact book created by IHDA [here](#).

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) – (\$309 million)

Launched on Monday, April 11, 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 ~15,000 homeowners with \$309 million in funding.
- ILHAF program updates will be posted to illinoishousinghelp.org.

Applications will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, May 31, 2022.

The status of ILHAF as of May 4, 2022, is:

- 6,477 completed applications
- More than \$109.6 million in emergency housing assistance requested

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 March 2022, IDHS providers issued \$59.9 million in rental and utility assistance to 12,287 eligible households.
- Funding is currently available.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – DCEO (\$372 million across all funding sources)

ARPA funding and the repayment in early 2022 of \$142 million to the State Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund allowed the State of Illinois to increase overall LIHEAP assistance to \$372 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 regular LIHEAP payment expected to grow from \$750 on average last fiscal year to \$1,025 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 \$268 million of the \$372 million in assistance has been provided to date.
- In April and May of 2022, the Utility Disconnection Avoidance Program (a special LIHEAP program), will pay off more than \$44 million in arrearages, preventing more than 50,000 utility accounts from being disconnected.
- 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 \$3.6 million in benefits as of the end of April.
- For more information or to apply, go to:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies/Pages/helpIllinoisFamilies.aspx>