

Report to the Restore Illinois Collaborative Commission

March 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 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. 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, 88% of Illinois adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 80% are fully vaccinated. Of Illinois’ total population over 5 years of age, 75% are fully vaccinated. In addition, 5.3 million boosters have been administered.¹

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.

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 December 31, 2023 to ensure we have adequate support for upcoming COVID relief business grant programs. Additionally, we are increasing the budgets by approximately \$2,500,000 to fund the activities in 2023. The spokes that will continue through the rest of 2023 have been identified and engaged. There are approximately 110 organizations 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. A grantee has been identified and will be incorporated into the network for the upcoming COVID relief business grant program.
- 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

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

business support services including referrals to Small Business Development Centers. While new programs are in development, Community Navigators have continued working on business support services and preparing for the new programs by identifying strategies to conduct outreach to the targeted communities for B2B Restaurants, Hotels and Creative Arts programs. We are currently training on these new Back to Business programs.

Tourism Attractions & Festivals Grant -- DCEO (\$25 million)

- The Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grants 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.
- For the first round, announced in July 2022, grant amounts ranged from \$10,000 to \$562,500 and required a local match. Applications were accepted on a rolling basis. The number of applications received greatly exceeded the funds available. The Department announced the full list of 41 round one grantees for a total of \$10 million in late July. These projects leveraged \$16 million in matching funds for a total of \$26 million in investment in the hard-hit tourism industry.
- Due to the popularity of the program and the great need that exists, the Governor also announced the availability of a second round of \$15 million in funding for tourism attractions and festivals. This round will allocate \$5 million minimum specifically for festivals and at least \$4.5 million for grantees outside the Northeast region. The second round also prioritizes funding for areas that are still experiencing a decline in hotel tax revenues. Grant amounts will range from \$15,000 to \$500,000 and require a local match.
- Applications for the second round were due September 23rd. DCEO is reviewing submissions and will make awards in 2023.

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). Illinois' economic success 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, 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. Child care 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 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.
- Round 1-5 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.

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.
- As of January 25, 2022, 2,593 active registered apprenticeship programs exist. Currently, there are 7,469 new apprentices enrolled in a program. There are 18,836 active apprentices in construction, healthcare, manufacturing, culinary arts, logistics, and information technology programs. For FY22, there was a 10% growth in apprenticeships and a 94% growth since 2013. Fifty-eight percent of apprentices are between the ages of 25-54, and 41% are 24 and under. One percent is 55 or older.

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

- DCEO is utilizing \$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. The JTED program prioritizes services offered in or to

individuals that reside in an identified Qualified Census Tract (QCT) or Disproportionality Impacted Area (DIA).

- On May 18, 2022, [the Governor announced](#) 44 grants totaling \$20 Million to serve approximately 2,500 unemployed, under-employed, or under-represented individuals, including youth with one or more barriers to employment. Each grantee had to develop an Equity and Employment plan that demonstrates how the organization addresses systemic barriers to equitable workforce training and quality employment. 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 grants have been obligated and will run from May 2022 through April 2024.
- Grantee programs are underway; 962 clients have been identified, and 854 are enrolled in a training program. Of the 854 registered, 739 are in sectoral job training programs, and 115 are in Barrier Reduction only. Bi-weekly technical assistance will continue in 2023, and monthly performance and expenditure reports will be sent to the grantees. Desk reviews and grant monitoring will also be performed in 2023. To date, 23 technical assistance sessions have been held. More information on workforce recovery programming is available at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com>

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, 2021, 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. 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.

ILRPP Round 2 Results:

- 64,442 Applications completed by landlord and tenant
- 17,687 Applications completed by tenant only (eligible for direct payment)
- 27,279 Applications Approved
- \$203.5 million disbursed to 27,279 approved applicants (\$7,462 average assistance per household)
- 81 percent were extremely low-income (earning less than 30 percent of the Area Median Income)
- 54% stated the person had been unemployed for greater than 90 days prior to the date of their application

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 2 of ILRPP can be found in a fact and information report [here](#).

The fact and information report for Round 1 can be found [here](#).

Illinois is a leader in delivering rental assistance according to the US Department of the Treasury. Since 2020, the Pritzker Administration provided \$1.02 billion in emergency rental assistance to help more than 137,300 vulnerable households receive the time and support needed to hopefully overcome the financial hardships they were experiencing due to the pandemic.

2022 Illinois Emergency Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF) Program Round 1 – (\$309 million)

Launched on Monday, Apr. 11, 2022, ILHAF provides 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.

The application portal closed on Tuesday, May 31, 2022.

The status of ILHAF as of Feb. 26, 2023:

- 14,465 completed applications
- 3,968 approved applications
- \$69.6 million disbursed to 3,908 approved applicants.
- Average grant: \$17,870

2022 Illinois Emergency Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF) Program Round 2

Launched on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2022, IHDA reopened the application portal for eligible homeowners to apply for assistance through ILHAF. The only major change is allowing for condo association fees without a mortgage, otherwise eligibility requirements remains the same as Round 1.

Applications are being accepted until funds are exhausted or closed for future improvements which will be announced at a later time.

The status of ILHAF 2.0 as of Feb. 26, 2023:

- 13,382 submitted applications
- 2,144 applications approved
- \$26.6 million disbursed to 1,907 applicants.
- Average grant: \$13,933

ILHAF program updates can be found online at illinoishousinghelp.org.

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.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=134895>, 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 2023, IDHS providers issued \$109.2 million in rental and utility assistance to 19,491 eligible households.
- Funding is currently available through March 31, 2023; except for households in Eviction Courts who could be eligible to apply until June 30, 2023.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The 2023 LIHEAP program year began on September 1 with \$300 million available to low-income households in Illinois by visiting the local agency in their county.

- More than 282,500 households applied for LIHEAP during the first six months of the LIHEAP program year which is 30 percent more than the number of applications at this point in the last program year. For more information, contact your local agency or see information regarding the Help Illinois Families program at the [DCEO website](#).

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 2021 and have issued more than \$24.2 million in benefits as of the end of February 2023.
- For more information or to apply, go to:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies/Pages/helpIllinoisFamilies.aspx>.