



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

February 21, 2025

Governor JB Pritzker
Members of the General Assembly
Illinois State Capital Building
401 S. 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Governor and Members of the General Assembly:

The following report fulfills the statutory directive that the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) provide the Governor and Members of the General Assembly with an annual report on the activities of the Office of Business Permits and Regulatory Assistance, more commonly known as the Business Information Center (First Stop). The Business Assistance and Regulatory Reform Act (20 ILCS 608) authorizes the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (Department) to create the Office that shall consolidate information about existing programs throughout State government, provide assistance to businesses with fewer than 500 employees in meeting requirements, and perform other functions specified in the Act in order to improve the State's business climate by making it easier for small and mid-sized businesses to navigate State requirements. This goal is achieved by providing timely and accurate information regarding business requirements.

Please feel free to contact the Department with any questions about this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin A. Richards".

Kristin A. Richards

Director

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

2024

Annual Report to the General Assembly



Business Information Center (First Stop)

(Office of Business Permits and Regulatory Assistance)

[Business Assistance & Regulatory Reform Act \(P.A. 88-0404\)](#)



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2024 Annual Report

Business Information Center

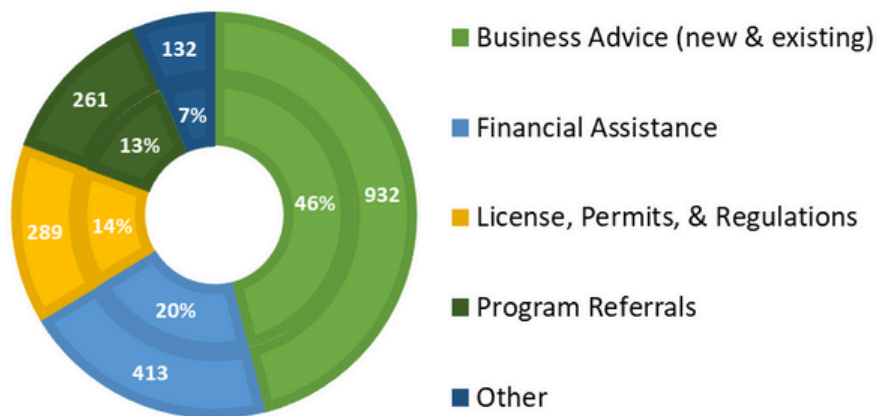
The Business Information Center (First Stop) was established under the Business Assistance and Regulatory Reform Act (20 ILCS 608) as the Office of Business Permits and Regulatory Assistance. It offers entrepreneurs, existing small businesses, and startups detailed information about business licenses, permits, and government regulations. Business specialists guide entrepreneurs by helping them understand and navigate regulatory requirements, while also connecting them to state and local resources.

Department Activity

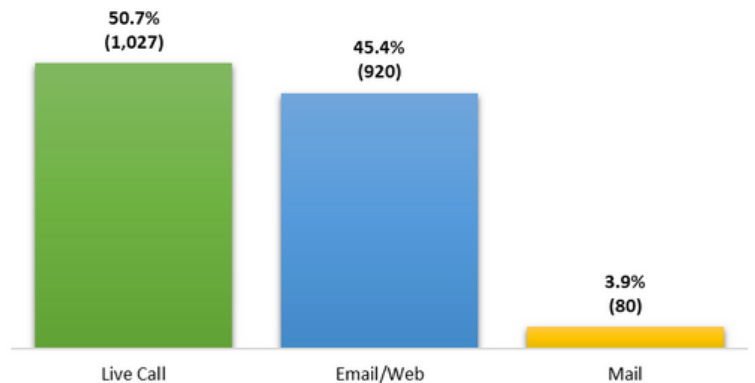
In 2024, the Business Information Center (First Stop) offered information and technical support through phone, email, and mail, assisting both new and established businesses with inquiries about starting a business in Illinois, as well as licenses, permits, regulations, programs, resources, incentives, and more.

The office offered entrepreneurs and small business owners no cost startup kits, access to an online searchable knowledgebase for license and regulatory information, and clear guides on various business topics. In collaboration with other state agencies, they ensured the information was accurate, regularly updated, and expanded within the self-service knowledgebase. Additionally, the office referred businesses to other state resources and shared opportunities they might qualify for to further support their growth.

CY24 REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE BY CATEGORY



CY24 BUSINESS ASSISTANCE BY TYPE



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2024 Annual Report

Business Information Center

Core Services of the Business Information Center

Business Specialists

The Business Information Center team assists new and established business owners with Illinois regulatory processes, connecting them with resources from federal, state, and local governments to support the launch and growth of their businesses. The experts at the Business Information Center facilitate communication between business clients and state agencies, helping to resolve any confusion or challenges with the state regulatory process.

The office is led by Manager Jenny Malloy, who joined in 2024, and has two full-time business specialists on staff. For assistance, the team can be reached through the Business Information Center Helpline at 800-252-2923 or by email at BIC@Illinois.gov

Services for Diverse Communities

Committed to ensuring equitable assistance and opportunities for success across Illinois' diverse communities, the Business Information Center has offered a bilingual business specialist for Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs. It continues to provide its most popular publications, including the "Starting Your Business in Illinois" handbook in Spanish.

Online Knowledgebase of Business Resources & Requirement

The Business Information Center utilizes Oracle Service Cloud to host its knowledgebase system, a comprehensive database containing over 500 business-related questions and answers to better serve clients. Self-service information is easily accessible on the [Business Information Center website](#).

In 2024, the knowledgebase saw over 276,000 visits, with self-service usage increasing by 309% year over year. This substantial growth was driven by the Business Information Center (BIC), which worked closely with various agencies to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. Through intentional collaboration, the BIC helped agencies confirm the reliability and precision of the answers in the knowledgebase, fostering a more seamless and effective self-service experience for users.

Business Start-up Assistance

The program's business startup package centers around the "Starting Your Business in Illinois" handbook, available in both English and Spanish, with links provided on the [Business Information Center website](#). This comprehensive guide addresses frequently asked questions and common challenges faced by new businesses. It also includes valuable resources such as a list of key government agencies, a business plan outline, a feasibility checklist, and other essential information to support entrepreneurs in launching their ventures.



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