



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

August 1, 2025

Program Report on the Evaluation of the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative and Preapprenticeship– Submitted on behalf of the Illinois Works Review Panel

The Illinois Works Jobs Program Act (the “Act”), 30 ILCS 559/20-1 *et al.*, was created to ensure that all Illinois residents have access to State capital projects and careers in the construction industry and building trades, including those who have been historically underrepresented in those trades. To ensure those interests are met, the General Assembly created the Illinois Works Preapprenticeship Program (the “Preapprenticeship Program”) and the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative (the “Apprenticeship Initiative”). The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (“DCEO”) is responsible for administering these programs.

The Act also created the Illinois Works Review Panel (the “Review Panel”), which is comprised of 25 members that serve 3-year terms. The Review Panel is required to meet at least quarterly, and last met on July 23, 2025. The Review Panel is required to report to the General Assembly on August 1st of each year on its evaluation of the Apprenticeship Initiative and the Preapprenticeship Program, including any recommended modifications.

Program Overview and Updates

1. Apprenticeship Initiative

The Apprenticeship Initiative provides that for public works projects estimated to cost \$500,000 or more, apprentices will perform either 10% of the total labor hours actually worked in each prevailing wage classification, or 10% of the estimated labor hours, whichever is less. Additionally, pursuant to Public Act 103-305, at least 50% of the labor hours of each prevailing wage classification performed by apprentices shall be performed by graduates of the Illinois Works Preapprenticeship Program, the Illinois Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program, or the Highway Construction Careers Training Program.

To track compliance with the apprenticeship initiative, grantees and contractors must complete a Budget Supplement that identifies, in part, the total cost of the project and the estimated hours for each prevailing wage classification. This form must be completed within 90 days after entering into the grant or contract with the State agency. Grantees and contractors are also required to provide quarterly updates on their compliance with the apprenticeship goal. DCEO uses this data as part of its Illinois Works “proactive compliance approach.” State agencies are required to

intervene and work with grantees and contractors that are not satisfactorily progressing towards meeting the 10% apprentice goal.

As of June 30, 2025, there are 967 active projects, with a contract/grant/loan obligation amount of \$6.36 billion, that have Apprenticeship Initiative goals.¹ The following chart identifies which agencies are responsible for those projects:

Agency	Number of Projects	Specific Contract, Grant or Loan Obligation Amount
IDOT	328	\$2,674,069,079.58
IEPA	110	\$1,345,517,233.63
CDB	206	\$1,110,877,297.53
DCEO	292	\$954,003,370.52
IBHE	19	\$165,311,147.73
IDNR	5	\$64,300,000.00
SOS	3	\$36,588,934.00
IL ARTS COUNCIL	2	\$6,750,000.00
ISBE	2	\$2,909,393.00
TOTAL	967	\$6,360,326,455.99

Based on the April 1, 2025, report from the Illinois Department of Labor, it appears that the Apprenticeship Initiative is creating more opportunities for apprentices on public works projects. The Act requires IDOL to report on certain information on work performed by apprentices on public works projects. IDOL’s report, which tracked certified payrolls submitted to IDOL between March 2024 and February 2025, the number of apprentices used on these projects exceeded the 10% goal set in statute, reaching a new high of 17%. The total percentage of minority apprentices performing work on Illinois Works projects was 30.9% from about 25.5% in 2022. The number of women apprentices increased slightly from 2022, going from 5.5% to 5.7%. The number of Hispanic/Latino Apprentices increased from 12.0% to 15.9%, and Black/African American apprentices also increased from 6.3% to 8.0% from 2022 to 2025 while, in the same period, veterans increased from 2.4% to 2.7%.

2. Preapprenticeship Program

The Preapprenticeship Program is designed to create a network of community-based organizations throughout the State that recruit, prescreen, and provide preapprenticeship skills training for which participants may attend free of charge and receive a stipend. One of the primary

¹ These numbers include only projects that were reported and are active (those that are still in execution) to the Office of Illinois Works up to the publishing of this report.

goals of the program is to create a qualified, diverse pipeline of workers who are prepared for careers in the construction and building trades. Upon completing the program, graduates will be skilled and work-ready to enter apprenticeship programs registered by the U.S. Department of Labor (“USDOL”).

On July 26, 2024, DCEO released the fourth Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) for the program. To attract a wide range of applicants, DCEO performed significant outreach to minority and women-owned construction business associations, community colleges, community-based organizations, labor organizations, and the community at-large. The purpose of this outreach was to inform diverse stakeholders of the components and goals of the Preapprenticeship Program, to begin forming partnerships to expand the Preapprenticeship Program’s reach throughout the state, and to receive input that could strengthen the Program.

As a result of the NOFO, DCEO issued 27 new grants to several organizations. DCEO also renewed the grants for several existing organizations, bringing the total number of funded program providers to 37. These organizations are located throughout the State and provide coverage to all geographic areas with large concentrations of underserved populations (women, minorities, and veterans) and where significant numbers of capital projects are being funded by state agencies. From January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, DCEO estimates that these organizations will enroll and train a total of 1,800 residents. After six months of operations of the 2025 program year, these organizations enrolled 569 residents and have already started to graduate and transition their program participants into USDOL-registered apprenticeship programs.

The following charts break down the 2024 participants in the Preapprenticeship Program by race/ethnicity, gender, veteran status and criminal background:

Race/Ethnicity										
	Applicant		Enrolled		Complete		Primary Transition		Secondary Transition	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	12	1%	12	1%	8	1%	8	1%	0	0%
Asian	9	1%	9	1%	7	1%	4	1%	0	0%
Black/African American	889	51%	880	51%	665	52%	421	55%	36	52%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	5	0%	5	0%	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Hispanic	410	24%	408	24%	305	24%	183	24%	20	29%
White	304	17%	304	18%	195	15%	89	12%	8	12%
2 or More Responses	93	5%	93	5%	76	6%	45	6%	4	6%
Prefer Not to Answer	17	1%	17	1%	16	1%	10	1%	1	1%
Total	1739	100%	1728	100%	1273	100%	761	100%	69	100%

Gender										
	Applicant		Enrolled		Complete		Total Primary Transition		Secondary Transition	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	417	24%	416	24%	328	26%	216	28%	18	26%
Male	1314	76%	1304	75%	939	74%	540	71%	51	74%
Non-Binary	4	0%	4	0%	2	0%	2	0%	0	0%
Prefer Not to Answer	4	0%	4	0%	4	0%	3	0%	0	0%
Total	1739	100%	1728	100%	1273	100%	761	100%	69	100%

Veteran Status										
	Applicant		Enrolled		Complete		Total Primary Transition		Secondary Transition	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Veteran	17	1%	17	1%	14	1%	8	1%	0	0%
Active Military	11	1%	11	1%	9	1%	4	1%	0	0%
None	1711	98%	1700	98%	1250	98%	749	98%	69	100%
Total	1739	100%	1728	100%	1273	100%	761	100%	69	100%

Criminal Background										
	Applicant		Enrolled		Complete		Total Primary Transition		Secondary Transition	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Criminal Background	305	18%	300	17%	220	17%	124	16%	11	16%
None	1434	82%	1428	83%	1053	83%	637	84%	58	84%
Total	1739	100%	1728	100%	1273	100%	761	100%	69	100%

For FY26, DCEO secured an additional \$25 million for programming; in fact, the NOFO was released in July of 2025. The focus of this NOFO is to extend program coverage to geographic areas that require more coverage, and to increase services to underrepresented groups in need of better representation. DCEO’s goal is to increase capacity to 2,000 enrollees and from 40 to 45 grantees for the program year starting in January 2026 which will be the maximum capacity the program will sustain in the future. DCEO will again provide intensive and focused outreach to potential applicants as well as technical assistance.

Potential Program Improvements

As pointed out in previous Annual Reports, the Preapprenticeship Program is designed to transition graduates into USDOL-registered apprenticeship programs, which will ultimately result

in careers in the construction industry and building trades. If apprenticeship programs do not accept the graduates, or only accept a limited amount, then the goals of the Act will be severely hindered. Several panel members pointed out that this is not an unlikely scenario, particularly for union-run apprenticeship programs, given that their admission criteria for these programs can be difficult to determine and they may only accept apprentices at limited times on a limited basis.

DCEO should continue to work with USDOL-registered apprenticeship programs to accept graduates of the Preapprenticeship Program. DCEO should focus on improving communication and coordination with labor unions to reduce waiting periods and streamline the transition from preapprenticeship programs to registered apprenticeships. This includes establishing clear timelines, providing guidance on application procedures, and facilitating connections between trainees and potential employers.

At the same time, DCEO should continue to work with grantee to improve the delivery of transition services ensuring that most if not all graduates receive construction sector and trades career information, have updated resumes, are prepared to take trades' entrance exams, fill out trades' applications forms, and are connected to alumni networks and mentoring opportunities. DCEO should provide more oversight to ensure that grantees provide the necessary transition services to program graduates. This may include providing additional training and resources to grantee transition coordinators to develop relationships with registered apprenticeship programs and contractors.

The Review Panel believes that the Apprenticeship Initiative and Preapprenticeship Program will ultimately result in individuals from underrepresented populations pursuing careers in the construction industry and building trades. The Review Panel will continue to evaluate these programs throughout FY26 during the quarterly meetings.