

Open for Business

Illinois' 2024 Economic Growth Plan - 2025 Progress



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor



Executive Summary

Illinois is a better place to live, work and do business than ever before. The future for Illinois is bright and in the [2024 Five-Year Economic Growth Plan](#), Illinois outlines a roadmap to attract record-level investments, create jobs and support communities in the near future while laying the foundation for economic growth for generations to come. This includes:

- A clear set of economic development goals;
- An account of Illinois' foundational advantages;
- A comprehensive business development strategy;
- Six high-growth industries to focus on; and
- A roadmap to invest in Illinois communities.

The Economic Growth Plan was released in 2024 as a five-year roadmap to strengthen competitiveness, expand opportunity, and guide strategic public and private investment. The plan identifies 48 initiatives across key sectors and policy areas, providing a framework for annual updates to measure progress, refine strategies, and ensure accountability. This document serves as the first annual update to the 2024 plan.

Illinois: Open for Business

Illinois continues to solidify its position as a national and global leader in innovation, industry, and inclusive economic growth. Surpassing \$1.1 trillion in annual gross domestic product, Illinois is the fifth-largest economy in the United States powered by sectors such as manufacturing, technology, agriculture, energy, transportation, and life sciences. In a [recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), Illinois' GDP increased by more than 4% from Q2 2024 to Q2 2025. This continued growth is backed by the State's steadfast commitment to creating the ideal conditions for business success through strategic investments in infrastructure, a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and ongoing support for employers of all sizes.

In 2024, Illinois delivered a record-setting year across multiple economic indicators. Exports topped \$81 billion, representing a 2.5% increase over 2023, highlighting the strength of Illinois' position in the global marketplace. Private investment in the state more than doubled year-over-year, jumping from \$6.3 billion in 2023 to \$12.5 billion in 2024, while retained jobs quadrupled, demonstrating that the business community recognizes Illinois as a smart, stable, and strategic place to grow. The state also saw clean energy investments double from \$2 billion to \$4 billion, reflecting Illinois' continued leadership in building a sustainable economy.

Illinois' momentum is further validated by various industry recognitions that underscore the State's success in driving investment and innovation. In June 2025, Illinois earned the ["Silver Shovel" award](#), marking the second consecutive year the State has been honored for its success in attracting large-scale capital projects, fostering job creation, and supporting growing industries. The State was also honored on the global stage when it received the [Startup Ecosystem Star Award](#) in both 2024 and 2025 – an international recognition of Illinois' leadership in cultivating an innovation ecosystem.

Illinois has continued to advance its role as the nation's premier hub for quantum innovation. Home to four of the 10 federally funded quantum research centers and institutes, Illinois has received two out of every five federal dollars invested in quantum technologies, which is more than any other state.



In September 2025, Governor JB Pritzker joined academic, research, business, and government leaders to break ground on PsiQuantum’s facility at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) on Chicago’s South Side. Once complete, this campus will be home to the first utility-scale, error-corrected quantum computer and the largest concentration of quantum activity in North America. The IQMP is projected to drive billions of dollars in economic impact and create thousands of jobs, cementing Illinois’ global leadership in the quantum economy.

The tourism industry also reached record numbers in 2024, welcoming over 113 million domestic and international visitors who generated a record \$48.5 billion in spending, which is an increase of \$1.3 billion over the previous year. This surge fueled all-time highs in hotel tax revenue, bringing in \$367 million in FY25, up 14% from FY24. These achievements underscore the vitality of Illinois’ tourism economy and its vital role in job creation and business growth across the state.

Governor JB Pritzker’s economic leadership has been central to this momentum. Through a modernized suite of business attraction tools and a first-of-its-kind \$500 million site readiness program, Illinois is intentionally supporting growth across key focus areas with continued and equity-focused investment in workforce development, innovation, and infrastructure. From historic investments to headline-making successes, the State marks the first year of implementation for the Illinois Economic Growth Plan with results that speak for themselves: Illinois is the best place to live, work and do business.

Stakeholder Outreach

In June 2025, DCEO surveyed stakeholders to gather feedback on the status of the Economic Growth Plan, with the goal of identifying improvements that better align its strategies with the needs of Illinois communities, businesses, and regional partners. Participants included public and private-sector organizations from all 10 economic development regions and each of the key sectors identified in the plan.

Overall, stakeholders expressed positive sentiment toward the direction of, and progress toward, Illinois’ Economic Growth Plan priorities. They appreciated DCEO’s focused effort, technical assistance, grant support, and stakeholder inclusion. When asked about the highest priorities in the Economic Growth Plan, stakeholders emphasized four established initiatives: continue investing in site readiness; continue Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant support for work-based learning and apprenticeships; establish a grant program to revitalize vacant properties; and continue coordination with Illinois Economic Development Corporation (Illinois EDC), formerly Intersect Illinois, and regional partners. Stakeholders expressed that they particularly value rural and low-income communities, traditional manufacturing, small businesses, workforce development, tax reform, tourism, and other economic drivers such as health care, education, transportation, housing, and childcare/caregiving, and would like to see even greater attention given to these areas.

Looking ahead, stakeholders advised DCEO to address current challenges to Illinois’ economic growth, including shrinking federal funding, rising energy demand, rising construction material costs, and delayed sector investments driven by global uncertainty.



The FY26 budget includes \$500 million in state resources to invest in making sites ready for business attraction and economic development.

Economic Growth Plan Updates

Business Attraction and Development Strategies

1. Implement the Illinois Regional Site Readiness Strategy (RSRS)

Update: The Illinois Regional Site Readiness Strategy initiative launched in 2024 and has been expanded. Twenty-four awards announced in early 2025 are helping prepare sites for economic development by supporting due diligence and infrastructure improvements. The FY26 budget also includes \$500 million to support additional site readiness activities, including readying former State facilities for economic development, and providing additional resources to invest in infrastructure, including reducing timelines to makes sites energy ready. As federal funding for site readiness remains uncertain, the program plays a critical role in attracting private investment and job creation. In October 2025, Governor Pritzker launched another round of the Regional Site Readiness Program, releasing \$31.5 million to help entities begin planning and prepare unused or unsuitable sites.

2. Add more Manufacturing Training Academies and apply consistent branding

Update: DCEO has launched four Manufacturing Training Academies (MTAs) at Southwestern Illinois College, Heartland Community College, Richland Community College and Kankakee Community College. These Manufacturing Training Academies foster development of priority

industries, greater opportunities in high-wage careers, increased sector specialization, and increased industry support and collaboration with growing employers. The investments made in the four academies will support clean energy manufacturing and production, and advanced manufacturing, and are connected to regional employers to support their workforce pipeline. In January 2026, Governor Pritzker launched another round of funding to establish six, new MTAs at community colleges in the state's downstate regions. DCEO will continue to create consistent branding for all MTAs.

3. Continue WIOA grant support for work-based learning and apprenticeships

Update: DCEO was awarded a \$5 million competitive Apprenticeship Expansion Program grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) in June 2025. These funds will be used to support employers to recruit and place more than 750 registered apprentices over the next two and a half years. Additionally, DCEO is investing more than \$1.6 million in USDOL Apprenticeship Expansion Program funds annually to build statewide, work-based learning capacity through funding local grants for apprenticeship specialists to support employers and partners in developing and expanding apprenticeship programs. In FY25, this program supported the creation or expansion of 65 Registered Apprenticeship Programs and five Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. Finally,



In addition to adding staff capacity in all Economic Development Regions, DCEO's Team RED conducted trainings on state incentives throughout the state.

the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's (IWIB) Apprenticeship Committee was restructured to become the IWIB's Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (WBLA) Committee to better reflect its work and goal of expanding work-based learning.

4. Extend and reform the apprenticeship tax credit

Update: This initiative is in design, having been reviewed by key stakeholders. Goals for the coming year include implementing enhanced marketing and outreach and securing General Assembly approval for an extension of this program beyond 2026. During the Fall 2025 legislative session, the Apprenticeship Tax Credit was extended by one-year to January 1, 2027.

5. Increase resources and centralize coordination for the Fast Track program

Update: The FY25 and FY26 budgets included additional Fast Track program funds as authorized by the Governor and the General Assembly. DCEO has worked with local workforce professionals to deploy Fast Track resources to support Illinois' employers and their talent pipeline management.

6. Formalize coordination with Illinois EDC and regional partners

Update: DCEO has better defined Illinois EDC's (formerly Intersect Illinois) scope of services they provide to the State of Illinois to support business attraction, including site selection, marketing and evaluation, business attraction marketing, and

data analysis and research. Illinois EDC also leads lead-generation activities, including proactive outreach to companies globally, and supports international trade missions through the formation of delegations of Illinois' business, civic and academic leaders.

DCEO serves as an ex-officio member of the Illinois Economic Development Association's Board of Directors, and assisted with planning the annual 2025 IEDA summit, which drew record-breaking attendance from economic development professionals.

7. Provide resources to build regional business development capacity

Update: Each Economic Development Region created a 2025 strategy aligned with the Five-Year Economic Growth Plan, including business retention visits, regular office hours (virtual and in-person), and county-level convenings with key stakeholders. DCEO will continue its proactive outreach to local, regional and statewide economic development organizations to ensure they have the latest updates on State incentives and how to leverage them to attract investment. Fall 2025 activities included a DCEO business development incentive roadshow, when DCEO incentive experts hosted seminars in all ten economic development regions.

8. Double staff of DCEO Regional Economic Development Team (Team RED)

Update: Since August 2024, five new positions have been added to strengthen the Regional Economic



The Advancing Innovative Manufacturing (AIM) for Illinois Tax Credit Act was successfully passed by the Illinois General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Pritzker.

Development team's capacity.

9. Implement technological solutions to track engagement across business development partners

Update: A customer relationship management system has been implemented across DCEO's business development and community engagement teams to track engagement, initiatives, and project development.

10. Assess opportunities to consolidate and streamline tax credit applications

Update: DCEO has streamlined the Blue-Collar Jobs Act application for each prerequisite program — Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE), High Impact Business (HIB), Enterprise Zone (EZ) and River Edge Redevelopment Zone (RERZ) — into one common application. DCEO also consolidated applications for the Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) Illinois and Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity (MICRO) programs by combining the applications for income tax withholding credits, Investment Tax Credits (ITC), Building Materials Exemption Certificates (BMEC), Utility Excise Tax and Construction Credits.

11. Establish an Advanced Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit

Update: The Advancing Innovative Manufacturing (AIM) for Illinois Tax Credit Act was successfully passed by the Illinois General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Pritzker.

12. Provide RDAs with authority to establish noncontiguous Enterprise Zones

Update: The initiative to provide Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) with authority to establish noncontiguous Enterprise Zones did not pass both Chambers in the Spring 2025 legislative session. DCEO will continue to pursue this initiative.

13. Extend the R&D Tax Credit to 2037 and allow start-ups to benefit

Update: DCEO will continue to pursue this initiative in future legislation.

14. Build targeted marketing programs around each growth industry

Update: Illinois EDC, the statewide economic development organization that leads business attraction marketing on behalf of the State of Illinois, has launched marketing materials specific to key sectors.

Guided by industry feedback, DCEO created Make It In Illinois, a marketing campaign that positions advanced manufacturing as an exciting and well-paying career path for young people entering the workforce and incumbent workers alike. Since its launch, the campaign has recorded over 90 million digital impressions and engaged with more than 30,000 individuals through grassroots efforts led by the program's consortium of 10 community colleges.



15. Pursue international MOUs with key partners overseas

Update: Illinois advanced international partnerships through key agreements.



Globally, Illinois maintains a first-mover advantage in the quantum sector.

The Governor signed an MOU with the Province of Ontario in June 2024 to enhance its Sister State Agreement and signed an addendum to the Mexico Sister State Agreement in March 2025 in Mexico City, reaffirming the subnational commitment to working together to foster trade and collaboration. In April 2025, Illinois also hosted the signing of an MOU with the United Kingdom in Springfield, following Governor Pritzker's successful 2023 trade mission to the UK.

16. Embark on up to two international trade missions annually

Update: DCEO supported the Governor's 2024 trade missions to Canada and Japan and the March 2025 mission to Mexico. Through Illinois' State Trade and Export Promotion (ISTEP) export assistance program, DCEO led 22 trade missions between 2024 and 2025, connecting Illinois companies with international markets. In 2025, missions have included Dubai (Arab Health), Mexico (Expo Manufactura), Barcelona (Mobile World Congress) Canada (SIAL Canada), Miami (FIME), Paris (Paris Airshow), Singapore/Indonesia/Malaysia (Multisector Trade Mission to Southeast Asia), Dusseldorf (MEDICA), and Saudi Arabia/UAE (Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers Mission).

17. Deploy capital grants for shared research facilities, including Quantum Campus

Update: The State supported the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Hub (iFAB) and the consortium's bid for a U.S. EDA Tech

Hub designation and funding, which were both awarded. iFAB is the only lab-to-line ecosystem of its type in the Western Hemisphere – amplifying why Illinois is at the center of new technologies making use of feedstocks like corn and soy. To date, the State has committed more than \$31 million in resources to iFAB, which has allowed the consortium to unlock and leverage millions in additional private source capital to support their mission.

The Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) was announced for the former U.S. Steel South Works site, and a groundbreaking was held in 2025. A \$500 million state capital investment in the IQMP – \$180 million of which has been awarded as of Fall 2025 – has helped to secure commitments from companies like PsiQuantum, who will build their first full-scale, fault tolerant computer at the IQMP, and IBM, which helped launch the National Algorithm Center (NQAC). Announcements have also been made by French-company Pasqal, who will establish their North American headquarters and quantum computer at the IQMP; and Infleqtion, who will build a utility-scale computer at the IQMP and collaborate with the NQAC. State capital also secured a partnership with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and the IQMP will serve as a proving-ground for DARPA's quantum initiative. A State Tech Incubator Enhancement Grant is supporting an IQMP on-ramp through partners at Chicago-based mHUB. Globally, Illinois maintains a first-mover advantage in the quantum sector.



The state's Federal Grant Support program has invested \$19 million in projects that have won federal awards, returning \$214 million on the state's investment.

Growth Industries

The State's current growth industries are Life Sciences; Quantum, AI and Microelectronics; Clean Energy Production and Manufacturing; Advanced Manufacturing, Next Gen Agriculture, Ag Tech and Food Processing; and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics.

18. Hire Sector Specialists for each growth industry

Update: DCEO recently on-boarded a technical expert to support the Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity (MICRO) program, along with a technical expert to support the Quantum Enterprise Zone program. Both hires will work with niche industries consistent with the Five-Year Plan. DCEO's statewide partner has also added sector specialization to support business attraction: Illinois EDC has onboarded sector experts in quantum and advanced computing, life sciences, data centers and AI, clean energy, and other industries. iFAB has staff dedicated to business attraction and development related to fermentation and agriculture biomanufacturing.

19. Develop job training programs and curricula for occupations in each growth industry

Update: In clean energy, four major programs (Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship, Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs, Returning Residents, and Energy Transition Navigators) are operational. Enrollment demand is high, with more than 500 people waitlisted for Clean Energy Jobs Training and 260 for Climate Works.

20. Prioritize grant support for businesses in growth industries

Update: Since the release of the Five-Year Economic Growth Plan, DCEO has delivered grants supporting energy capacity growth, infrastructure development, equipment and material purchases, and construction, all of which are critical to Illinois' competitiveness as a destination for businesses to locate and expand.

In September 2024, the State launched the second round of the Federal Grant Support Program, which provides cost-share support to Illinois-based proposals competing for federal funding. This matching grant program encourages more Illinois-based applicants to apply for federal grant opportunities, provides critical assistance to meet the minimum match eligibility requirements, increases the competitiveness of applications, and provides the State of Illinois with an opportunity to make a firm commitment and demonstration of support. The program has leveraged \$19 million in state awards to support successful federal proposals, resulting in \$214 million in federal and private funds being co-invested in projects that align with the State's economic development objectives.



Build Resilient and Growing Communities

21. Implement the Education for Careers Initiative

Update: This initiative is under design.

22. Provide capital grants to update existing Area Career Centers and establish new ones

Update: This initiative is under design.

23. Hire a Chief Workforce Officer

Update: The State is in the process of hiring a designated Chief Workforce Officer, who will support workforce professionals and programs statewide, and further focus State efforts on equitably supporting jobseekers and employers.

24. Establish the Department of Early Childhood

Update: In June 2024, Governor Pritzker signed Senate Bill 1 to establish Illinois' new Department of Early Childhood and in December 2024, he named its first Director, Dr. Teresa Ramos. She and her team are working to launch the agency by July 1, 2026. The Department will consolidate programs currently spread across three State agencies to focus exclusively on early childhood programs and services for young children, improving equity and accessibility for families and caregivers.

25. Support and expand on the Illinois Grocery Initiative

Update: DCEO has executed two rounds of the competitive New Stores in Food Deserts program, resulting in eight awards to establish new grocery

stores in qualifying census tracts. One round of the Equipment Upgrades program has been completed, with a second funding round still available. The program has produced 11 awards for energy-efficient investments in existing stores. Expanded in FY25 by \$10 million, with an additional \$5 million added for FY26, the initiative will support a third round of New Stores in Food Deserts and the relaunch of Equipment Upgrades in 2026.

26. Establish the Illinois Office of Rural Development

Update: DCEO created a senior leadership role within the Department that will support economic development in rural communities through coordination and cooperation with rural economic development, workforce development, and community development organizations and agencies.

27. Codify the Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment (OE3)

Update: As of January 1, 2025, OE3 has been officially codified. OE3 has already gained national recognition, including a feature in the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center's report and a partnership to bring the Milestone Circles program for women entrepreneurs to Illinois. Key accomplishments include hosting the third Latinx Economic Summit, launching the Economic Empowerment Center program across 10 locations, and disbursing \$4.3 million in forgivable loans to 18 cannabis dispensaries.

Formalized on January 1, 2025, OE3 has already gained national recognition for several key accomplishments.



Thousands of stakeholders have been connected to CEJA opportunities through outreach events statewide.

28. Establish grant program to revitalize vacant properties

Update: This initiative is under design.

29. Identify and address factors driving up the cost of middle-income housing

Update: In response to the missing middle housing crisis – the lack of affordable housing options for individuals and families earning between 80% and 140% of the area median income who are often priced out of market rate housing but do not qualify for subsidized programs – the Governor’s Office convened an Ad Hoc Missing Middle Housing Solutions Advisory Committee. This committee published a report with a framework of solutions to overcome various barriers, attract builders, and advance a multi-year effort to spark a building boom in Illinois that benefits households of all incomes and is aligned with the state’s unprecedented economic growth. Solutions include unlocking financing, reducing regulatory barriers, attracting private investment, and supporting regional housing and economic planning. The Governor’s Office has named a Director of Housing to oversee implementation of the report’s recommendations.

30. Provide new technical assistance and planning services to eligible CEJA communities

Update: DCEO has advanced clean energy goals through community engagement and technical assistance. More than 20 events have connected thousands of stakeholders to CEJA opportunities, and technical assistance

services that have expanded through updated agreements are available. Key milestones include launching the CEJA Capacity Building Program with Northern Illinois University, initiating the AEG Challenge to support grid modernization, and progressing on multiple initiatives like Clean Energy/Ameren’s decision tree tool to map out resources for contractors and others. In addition, DCEO will also implement the workforce training, plus residential and commercial building navigation components of two federal awards to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) through the Climate and Pollution Reduction Grant and Clean Ports grant.

31. Expand high-speed internet and digital literacy through BEAD

Update: Illinois advanced broadband infrastructure and digital equity in FY25, and now more than 11,000 households have been connected through State-funded Connect Illinois Rounds 1-3. Federal BEAD deployment, known as Connect Illinois Round 4, is on-track following some disruption created by a June policy notice – issued by federal partners - that required Illinois to rescind preliminary awards. Illinois now expects to issue Connect Illinois Round 4 awards – connecting 167,000 locations -in CY2026 with construction beginning in the spring. To prepare the Illinois workforce for Connect Illinois Round 4, Illinois launched the Illinois Broadband Jobs Board. The Illinois Broadband Jobs Board aggregates Illinois broadband jobs and training opportunities into an easy-to-use webpage for jobseekers. Illinois initially



Since 2020, Advantage Illinois has grown its lender network to more than 100 participating lenders.

received \$23.7 million to implement its State Digital Equity Plan and launched the Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program (IDEC) with over 1,250 applications. However, federal termination of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant in May 2025 paused this important work.

32. Prioritize low-income areas for capital grants and incentivized investment

Update: Many of DCEO's existing programs already prioritize low- and moderate-income areas. Continued efforts will focus on standardizing processes and proactively designing programs to further facilitate applications from, and awards in, these communities, supporting equitable access to funding and investment.

33. Continue expansion of the SBDC Network

Update: The Illinois SBDC Network achieved significant progress in FY25, including opening the first satellite center in a correctional facility and expanding geographic coverage.

34. Continue expanding Advantage Illinois loans through more partners

Update: Advantage Illinois saw continued growth in 2024 and into 2025. As of 2025 year-to-date, the program has committed \$44.5 million in credit support across 139 projects, leveraging \$126.8 million in total project funding and supporting nearly 2,700 projected jobs. Notably, over 91% of funding has been directed to socially and economically disadvantaged businesses, with 50% of loans going to very small businesses – those with

fewer than 10 employees. Since 2020, credit support has increased by more than 1,000%, due to the increase to over 100 participating lenders. Overall, Advantage Illinois has deployed more than \$100 million in State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) funding.

35. Focus on investment in SEDI-owned companies through INVENT

Update: The Illinois Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT) aims to foster economic growth by offering venture capital to small businesses that have historically faced barriers to accessing startup funding. INVENT launched its first investments in 2024. As of December 31, 2025, the program has invested in 65 companies, with 78% of investment dollars going to SEDI-certified businesses. INVENT has reviewed 357 submissions and connected with every application to provide guidance or referrals to other resources. An additional 22 companies have been approved and are awaiting signed agreements. The program aims to make approximately 35 investments annually.

36. Create a fund within INVENT for sectors aligned with the federal CHIPS and Science Act

Update: INVENT has begun making investments in critical technology sectors aligned with the CHIPS and Science Act. The program is actively tracking relevant companies and aims to allocate at least \$20 million of its fund to these sectors. To ensure long-term impact and potential return on investment, INVENT is pacing its



The Made in Illinois grant program has awarded grants to 69 manufacturers.

capital deployment strategically.

37. Establish a new SSBCI Technical Assistance program for Advantage Illinois/INVENT applicants

Update: Providers in five regions of the state have been granted awards to provide technical assistance to very small businesses (VSB) and business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI-owned businesses) that are applying for, preparing to apply for, or have previously applied for a SSBCI capital program or other small business programs. This assistance includes legal, accounting, and financial advisory services.

38. Expand the Made in Illinois Grant Program

Update: The Made in Illinois Grant Program, administered by the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) with funding from DCEO, provides matching grants of up to \$50,000 to small and mid-sized manufacturers to invest in their strategic projects that fuel innovation, increase productivity, and enhance competitiveness. Additional funding rounds were announced in 2025 and a total of \$3.08 million has been awarded to 69 Illinois-based manufacturers employing more than 4,580 employees.

39. Host an Illinois Tech Innovators Challenge

Update: This initiative is under design.

40. Build a new web-based Illinois Small Business One-Stop Portal

Update: DCEO has completed the groundwork for the One-Stop Portal, including small business surveying, research on similar platforms, and documentation of over 800 local and state licenses and permits. The portal is scheduled to launch in 2026.

41. Provide capital grants to support incubators for startups in tech and manufacturing

Update: The Tech Incubator Enhancement Grant program launched in 2025, and awards were announced in July.

42. Launch a second round of Small Business Capital Grants

Update: In November 2025, Governor Pritzker announced nearly \$10 million in funding for 47 small businesses through the second round of the Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program.

43. Support entrepreneurship and local government investment in arts and culture

Update: This initiative is under design.

44. Measure and evaluate progress on quality jobs

Update: This initiative is under design to support the Quality Jobs Pilot Program Roadmap.

45. Expand the Quality Jobs Pilot Program

Update: State leadership and university partners developed a phased approach for the Quality Jobs Pilot Program, outlining goals, evaluation strategies, and curriculum design. A survey led by Northern Illinois



In Fiscal Year 2025, the DCEO Grant Help Desk answered more than 2,100 inquiries from potential grantees seeking assistance.

University assessed employer understanding of quality jobs. A curriculum framework called the Quality Jobs Pilot Program Roadmap was approved with seven tailored modules informed by case studies and employer showcase meetings. The final roadmap will be released in 2026.

46. Effectively focus enforcement resources on sectors with high instances of labor violations

Update: In the past year, the Illinois Department of Labor partnered with the University of Illinois School of Labor and Employment Relations to conduct a data analysis of pay trends and disparities to inform enforcement efforts. In 2025, the Department also launched an Informal Resolution and Mediation Unit.

47. Implement the Illinois Grant Access Initiative

Update: The implementation of the Illinois Grant Access Initiative is in design and focuses on improving grant processes to enhance accessibility and equity. In FY25, the DCEO Grant Help Desk closed out more than 2,100 inquiries from grantees seeking grant administration support. DCEO has continued to develop a suite of in-person and webinar-based trainings for grantees. The agency offers office hours for grantees to meet with DCEO grant staff and technical assistance to support everything from grant pre-qualification to audit readiness.

48. Invest in carbon neutrality for State buildings

Update: This initiative is under design.

Appendix. List of Action Items

Business Attraction and Development Strategy

- 1. Implement the Illinois Regional Site Readiness Strategy
- 2. Add more Manufacturing Training Academies and apply consistent branding
- 3. Continue WIOA grant support for work-based learning and apprenticeships
- 4. Extend and reform the apprenticeship tax credit
- 5. Increase resources and centralize coordination for the Fast Track program
- 6. Formalize coordination with Illinois EDC and regional partners
- 7. Provide resources to build regional business development capacity
- 8. Double staff of DCEO Regional Economic Development Team (Team RED)
- 9. Implement technological solutions to track engagement across business development partners
- 10. Assess opportunities to consolidate and streamline tax credit applications
- 11. Establish an Advanced Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit
- 12. Provide RDAs with authority to establish noncontiguous Enterprise Zones
- 13. Extend the R&D Tax Credit to 2037 and allow start-ups to benefit
- 14. Build targeted marketing programs around each growth industry
- 15. Pursue international MOUs with key partners overseas
- 16. Embark on up to two international trade missions annually
- 17. Deploy capital grants for shared research facilities, including Quantum Campus

Growth Industries

- 18. Hire Sector Specialists for each growth industry
- 19. Develop job training programs and curricula for occupations in each growth industry
- 20. Prioritize grant support for businesses in growth industries

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- 23. Hire a Chief Workforce Officer
- 24. Establish the Department of Early Childhood
- 25. Support and expand on the Illinois Grocery Initiative
- 26. Establish the Illinois Office of Rural Development
- 27. Codify the Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment (OE3)
- 28. Establish grant program to revitalize vacant properties
- 29. Identify and address factors driving up the cost of middle-income housing
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- 36. Create a fund within INVENT for sectors aligned with the federal CHIPS and Science Act
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- 43. Support entrepreneurship and local government investment in arts and culture
- 44. Measure and evaluate progress on quality jobs
- 45. Expand the Quality Jobs Pilot Program
- 46. Effectively focus enforcement resources on sectors with high instances of labor violations
- 47. Implement the Illinois Grant Access Initiative
- 48. Invest in carbon neutrality for State buildings