



Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

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Governor Pritzker and Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI), and in accordance with 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b), I am pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2025 Veterans Business Program (VBP) Report.

To fulfill its statutory obligations and advance its VBP goals, CEI remains committed to strategic prioritization. Through the development of inclusive, fair, and equitable procurement policies and programs, and by providing targeted assistance, training, and mentorship, CEI seeks to enhance supplier diversity and ensure equitable access to contracting opportunities. Despite continued and aggressive national challenges to DEI initiatives, CEI remains steadfast in promoting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive procurement environment in which opportunity is accessible to all.

CEI is dedicated to driving transformational community progress while meeting its statutory responsibilities through active collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. These efforts include coordination with the four Chief Procurement Officers, all State Purchasing Officers, and approximately 108 agencies, boards, commissions, and public institutions of higher education to align strategies with statewide supplier diversity objectives. In FY25, CEI engaged a broad network of stakeholders, including 209 VBP-certified vendors, non-certified businesses eligible for VBP certification, industry organizations, prime vendors, and legislators. This collaborative ecosystem is essential to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion across Illinois' procurement landscape.

This report highlights FY25 progress and documents VBP achievements by State agencies and public institutions of higher education subject to the Illinois Procurement Code. During FY25, the State of Illinois expended \$67,825,444 in eligible contract dollars with VBP-certified vendors.

While encouraged by FY25 growth, CEI remains focused on building on these successes and addressing opportunities for improvement. By leveraging data-driven insights and stakeholder feedback, CEI will continue refining VBP strategies and processes to strengthen supplier diversity, equity, and inclusion across all procurement activities. Through sustained collaboration and a shared commitment to its mission, CEI is confident of its ability to deliver meaningful, lasting impact for all stakeholders within Illinois' procurement framework.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexandria M. Wilson".

Alexandria Wilson
Executive Director



COMMISSION ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION
VETERANS BUSINESS PROGRAM

Fiscal Year 2025

Annual Report

Executive Summary

The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) respectfully submits the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Veterans Business Program (VBP) Annual Report to Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly pursuant to 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b). This report provides a comprehensive review of the State's progress toward its aspirational goal of awarding at least 3% of total contract dollars to certified Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs), and identifies opportunities to strengthen participation and expand impact.

In FY25, the State of Illinois **expended \$67,825,444 in eligible contract dollars with VBP-certified vendors**. While the total number of contracts awarded to VOSBs and SDVOSBs decreased from 318 in FY24 to 267 in FY25, **the overall dollar value increased by more than \$1.1 million**. This growth **raised the average contract value from \$209,635 to \$254,028**, signaling that veteran-owned firms are increasingly participating in larger and more complex procurement opportunities. Notably, increases in capital construction, transportation, and higher education spending contributed significantly to this upward trend in contract value.

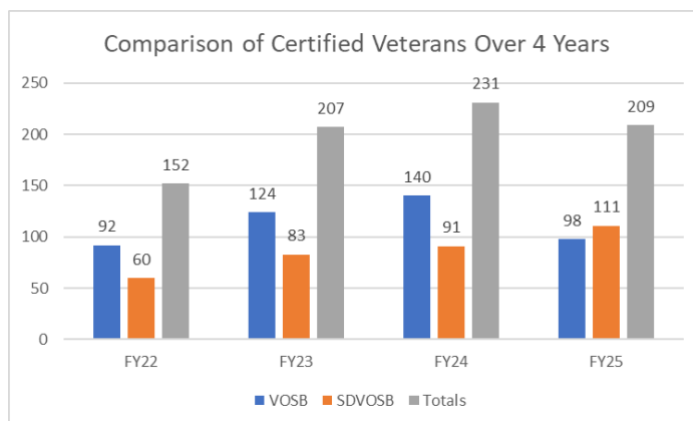
Performance across the chief procurement offices reflects both meaningful progress and structural realities within Illinois' procurement landscape. The Capital Development Board achieved the full 3% participation goal in FY25, demonstrating the impact of sustained outreach, prequalification support, and deliberate goal-setting on construction and construction-related procurements. The Illinois Department of Transportation reported more than \$22.5 million in VBP awards despite federal limitations on applying VBP goals to federally funded projects, illustrating a continued commitment to inclusion even within regulatory constraints. Public institutions of higher education and general services entities reported varying levels of participation, underscoring the importance of expanding the certified vendor pool and aligning outreach with institutional purchasing patterns.

Throughout FY25, CEI prioritized strategic vendor engagement and capacity-building. **CEI participated in 14 veteran-focused outreach and networking events statewide**, strengthened partnerships with veteran service organizations, and advanced the Certify and Thrive initiative to stabilize and grow the VBP vendor pool. These efforts are especially important given the relatively small number of certified veteran-owned firms compared with other diversity programs and the geographic concentration of many certified businesses.

Looking ahead, CEI remains focused on modernizing certification processes, leveraging enhanced data analytics through the Supplier Diversity Management Portal (SDMP), and collaborating with procurement leaders to explore expanded use of tools such as set-asides, targeted goal-setting, and procurement training tailored specifically to veteran entrepreneurs. By pairing data-driven oversight with sustained outreach and policy refinement, CEI is committed to strengthening the VBP as a meaningful economic engine for Illinois' veteran business community.

VBP Analytics Assessment

Pursuant to 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b), CEI is required to review and report on the progress of each chief procurement officer (CPO) in reaching the State’s aspirational 3% goal of contracting with VOSBs and SDVOSBs. CEI is also required to make recommendations to improve the number and value of contracts awarded to VOSBs and SDVOSBs and identify potential barriers. CEI strives to increase the number of VBP-certified vendors engaging in State procurement. The graph below provides a year- by-year comparison of the number of certifications the State has issued to VOSBs and SDVOSBs.



Although the total number of VBP contracts decreased compared to FY24, overall spending with certified veteran-owned businesses increased, and the average contract value rose significantly. This shift indicates that while fewer contracts were awarded, veteran-owned firms are increasingly participating in higher-value procurements. Larger contract awards, particularly within construction and transportation sectors, contributed to this growth and demonstrate expanding capacity among certified vendors.

Performance across procurement portfolios highlights the importance of targeted goal-setting and prequalification alignment. The Capital Development Board achieved the full 3% participation benchmark in construction-related procurements, reflecting the effectiveness of deliberate goal placement and outreach to prequalified veteran-owned firms. The Illinois Department of Transportation reported more than \$22.5 million in awards to veteran-owned firms despite federal restrictions on applying VBP goals to federally funded projects. Meanwhile, the Chief Procurement Office for General Services demonstrated that Small Business Set-Aside Program tools can meaningfully support veteran participation when strategically deployed. Within higher education, participation levels varied by institution, reinforcing the need for expanded vendor engagement and improved alignment between institutional purchasing patterns and certified vendor availability.

Certification trends further contextualize these results. While the VBP vendor pool remains significantly smaller than other diversity programs, CEI’s outreach and capacity-building initiatives aim to reverse stagnation and expand participation statewide. Geographic concentration of certified firms (particularly in the Chicagoland area) continues to affect goal placement in certain regions, particularly in capital construction and specialized services. Additionally, limited vendor prequalification within certain procurement categories constrains participation despite overall certification numbers.

In response to these findings, CEI’s FY26 strategy centers on three priorities: strengthening the certified

vendor pipeline, modernizing certification and reporting systems, and enhancing procurement readiness. Leveraging the SDMP will improve data transparency and enable more precise tracking of vendor participation across NIGP codes and purchasing categories. CEI will also continue collaborating with the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, procurement offices, and veteran-focused organizations to expand outreach, broaden training opportunities, and improve vendor readiness for State contracting.

As reflected in the CPO reports, expanding participation will require both programmatic refinement and potential statutory consideration. Tools such as expanded set-asides, procurement training tailored to veteran-owned businesses, and data-informed goal alignment may provide additional pathways to increase participation while maintaining the integrity of the 3% aspirational goal.

The FY25 data demonstrates steady upward movement in contract value, sustained commitment from procurement leadership, and clear opportunities to enhance participation through targeted reforms. CEI remains committed to translating these insights into measurable, statewide progress in support of Illinois' veteran business community.

CEI Recommendations

- Expand fast-track and reciprocal certification options to reduce barriers and reverse the decline in certified VOSB and SDVOSB vendors.
- Increase targeted outreach and marketing efforts, especially outside Chicagoland, to grow the statewide pool of veteran-owned businesses.
- Simplify and standardize procurement guidance and training to reduce confusion and improve vendor readiness.
- Leverage the new SDMP to improve data tracking, user experience, and certification efficiency.
- Strengthen partnerships with veteran organizations, chambers of commerce, and IDVA to co-host outreach and certification events.
- Use data analytics to align NIGP codes with high concentrations of veteran-owned businesses and create more targeted contracting opportunities.
- Develop and deploy Procurement 101 and advanced training tailored specifically for veteran-owned businesses.
- Review and modernize certification requirements, such as the five-year recertification cycle and in-state location rule, to reduce administrative burden.
- Actively promote mentor-protégé participation to build capacity and competitiveness among emerging veteran-owned firms.

Contracting Barriers

- The mandatory recertification every five years creates an administrative burden and risk of lapses in eligibility for contracting opportunities.
- The Illinois residency requirement for certification limits participation by veteran-owned firms that operate regionally or are headquartered out of state.
- The relatively small pool of certified VOSB and SDVOSB vendors compared to other Illinois supplier diversity programs leads to fewer contracts with VBP goals and reduced access to procurement opportunities.

Chief Procurement Office Data and Recommendations

All Chief Procurement Officer Totals	FY24	FY25
Total VOSB and SDVOSB Contracts	318	267
Total VOSB and SDVOSB Contract Values	\$66,663,748	\$67,825,444
Average VOSB and SDVOSB Contract Amounts	\$209,635	\$254,028

The Chief Procurement Office for the Capital Development Board

Pursuant to 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b), as Chief Procurement Officer for the Capital Development Board (CPO-CDB), I am providing you with the Fiscal Year 2025 report of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SBVOSB) and Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) (collectively Veteran Business Enterprise or VBE) for the Capital Development Board (CDB).

- According to the CEI Veterans Business Program (VBP) report (as of June 2025), CMS has 218 certified VBE businesses.
- Of the 218 Certified VBE Businesses, 58 of the firms are prequalified or registered with CDB. Vendors must be prequalified to participate as a prime contractor for CDB projects; subcontractors must be registered with CDB.
- The scope, location of work, and the number of certified VBE firms in the region impact the ability of CDB to place goals on all projects. CDB set veteran goals on 184 (91%) of 201 contracts that were solicited for construction and construction-related professional services.
- CDB’s contract awards in FY25 totaled \$976,879,393.71 of which \$29,473,400 was awarded to veteran-owned small businesses. CDB achieved an overall 3% goal participation to VBE firms, which is a 0.44% increase from FY-24 achievement (2.56%).

Please note these numbers represent only “construction” and “construction-related” contracts and do not include “supplies and services”.

CDB continues to attend outreach events hosted by other agencies, governmental entities, and industry groups to promote both minority and veteran certification, prequalification, and participation on CDB projects. By increasing the number of prequalified and registered VBE firms, CDB will expand the pool of qualified VBE firms that may bid on CDB projects. In addition to the continued outreach efforts, the following recommendations are being made by my office:

Recommendations

- A high concentration of CMS certified VBE firms are in the Chicagoland area. The CPO-CDB continues to recommend identifying projects in the area that would allow for the establishment of goals that exceed the traditional 3%.
- The CPO-CDB recommends that CDB projects that contain VBE goals be identified and promoted to increase visibility regarding these projects.
- Continue outreach efforts to increase the number of certified VBE firms who are also pre-qualified or registered with CDB.

Thank you for considering these recommendations and for including them in your report to the General Assembly. Please let me know how the CPO-CDB can assist in promoting the Veteran’s Business Program and increasing state construction business opportunities for veteran-owned businesses.

The Chief Procurement Office for General Services

Pursuant to 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b), I provide this report of the participation level of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) and Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) firms in state procurement. Section 45-57(b) requires a report of the total number of SDVOSB and VOSB firms that submitted bids for contracts under this Code, and the total number of SDVOSB and VOSB firms that entered contracts and the total value of those contracts.

I remain steadfast in my commitment to use the Chief Procurement Office resources to promote State contracting with the men and women in Illinois that own small businesses and served our country in military uniform.

In fiscal year 2025, nine agencies awarded contracts to eight SDVOSB and VOSB firms valued at \$5.8 million. This is a significant decrease compared to last year when agencies awarded contracts to 16 veteran-owned small businesses valued at \$39.8 million. This year all eight of the awarded veteran-owned firms are registered in my Small Business Set-Aside Program (SBSP) and each of the awarded contracts were set aside for SBSP competition.

Each year, I review the progress of all State agencies under my jurisdiction in meeting the goal of awarding not less than 3% of the total dollar amount of State contracts, as defined by the Commission on Equity and Inclusion, to SDVOSBs and VOSBs. This review of fiscal year 2025 encompasses more than 42,199 purchase orders transacted in BidBuy valued at more than \$4.05 billion.

Vendor Name	Awarding Agency	Awarded Amount (includes renewals)
All-Wall Coatings LLC	Central Management Services	\$4,919,520.75
CS Dozing	Corrections	\$19,500.00
CS Dozing	Military Affairs	\$18,524.00
CW Financial & Management Group LLC	Criminal Justice Information Authority	\$83,000.00
CW Financial & Management Group LLC	Illinois Racing Board	\$38,675.00
Geo. Bancroft Engineering LLC.	Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum	\$36,750.00
H & N Construction, Inc.	Transportation	\$20,768.80
H & N Construction, Inc.	Military Affairs	\$13,790.95
H & N Construction, Inc.	Transportation	\$11,100.00
H & N Construction, Inc.	Natural Resources	\$6,097.00
H & N Construction, Inc.	Military Affairs	\$5,363.52

KKC GerScot Inc.	Corrections	\$3,600.00
Kuhn & Trello Consulting Engineers, LLC	Military Affairs	\$19,900.00
Kuhn & Trello Consulting Engineers, LLC	Military Affairs	\$5,000.00
Patriot Property Services, LLC	Human Services	\$654,375.00
Patriot Property Services, LLC	Natural Resources	\$5,850.00
		\$5,861,815.02

Recommendations

I believe that the use of set-asides is the most important mechanism for increasing the total dollar value of awards to veteran-owned businesses. In fiscal year 2025, the only contract awards that SDVOSB and VOSB firms received were set aside through my SBSP. Contracts set-asides for veterans will provide a strong incentive for qualified veteran-owned businesses to enroll in VBP and remove the ongoing assertion by State agencies that if there were more businesses in VBP, then there would be more contract opportunities.

To create set-aside contracts for SDVOSB and VOSB, the Procurement Code must be amended, giving the chief procurement officers this authority. Veteran-owned small business set-aside contracts would limit competition for State contracts to only firms certified in VBP.

Additionally, when only one vendor in VBP offers a supply or service not offered by another VBP vendor, any State agency may contract with that unique VBP business if the terms of a contract can be negotiated to the mutual benefit of the State and vendor. This removes the requirement that at least two VBP vendors exist before establishing a veteran subcontracting goal.

In the 104th General Assembly, Senator Mike Porfirio introduced SB 1423 which amends the Procurement Code and provides for chief procurement officers to create set-asides for veteran-owned small businesses. I encourage your support of the bill. The 3% contracting goal continues to remain appropriate.

The Chief Procurement Office for Higher Education

The Chief Procurement Office for Public Institutions of Higher Education (CPO-HE) submits to you the Fiscal Year 2025 Report of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) pursuant to 30 ILCS 500/45-57(b).

It is the goal of the State to promote contracting with qualified veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Not less than 3% of the total dollar amount of State contracts is established as a goal to be awarded to VOSBs and SDVOSBs. Given the low numbers of certified VOSBs and SDVOSBs in general and in the proximity of many of the institutions, progress towards the goal has been limited. However, two institutions did identify spend with certified VOSB and/or SDVOSB prime contractors. Those are reflected in the tables below along with dollar value and the number of VOSB and SDVOSB prime contractors who submitted bids as defined by 30 ILCS 500/1-15.01.

I am pleased to let you know that the CPO-HE has appointed a State Purchasing Officer as the Veterans Specialist. We will be working with the Illinois public institutions of higher education and the Illinois

Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) over the coming year in an attempt to increase participation and to track and report on these contracts.

**Contracts and Spend with Qualified Veteran-Owned
Small Businesses and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses**

Procuring Institution	VOSB Prime Contracts	SDVOSB Prime Contracts	Dollar Value of Contracts to Certified VOSB and SDVOSB Firms	Percentage of Contracts Paid to Certified VOSB and SDVOSB Firms
Chicago State University	0	0	-	0.0000%
Eastern Illinois University	0	0	-	0.0000%
Governors State University	0	0	-	0.0000%
Illinois Mathematics & Science Academy	1	0	\$40,500.00	0.9523%
Illinois State University	0	0	-	0.0000%
Northeastern Illinois University	0	0	-	0.0000%
Northern Illinois University	0	0	\$72,072.11	0.0614%
Southern Illinois University	2	0	\$289,400.00	0.5000%
University of Illinois	1	4	\$9,507,889.98	0.5398%
Western Illinois University	0	0	\$959.90	0.0019%
TOTAL:	4	4	\$9,910,821.99	0.2055%

Contracts with Qualified Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

Procuring Institution	Certified VOSB Prime Contractors Submitting Bids	Certified VOSB Prime Contracts
Chicago State University	0	0
Eastern Illinois University	0	0
Governors State University	0	0
Illinois Math and Science Academy	0	1
Illinois State University	0	0
Northeastern Illinois University	0	0
Northern Illinois University	0	0
Southern Illinois University	2	2
University of Illinois	29	1
Western Illinois University	0	0
TOTAL:	31	4

Contracts with Qualified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

Procuring Institution	Certified SDVOSB Prime Contractors Submitting Bids	Certified SDVOSB Prime Contracts
Chicago State University	0	0
Eastern Illinois University	0	0
Governors State University	0	0
Illinois Math and Science Academy	0	0
Illinois State University	0	0
Northeastern Illinois University	0	0
Northern Illinois University	0	0
Southern Illinois University	0	0
University of Illinois	14	4
Western Illinois University	0	0
TOTAL:	14	4

Each institution has and maintains its own accounting system and methods for collecting this contracting data. The CPO-HE relies on the institutions to provide this information.

The CPO-HE makes the following recommendations regarding the program and for increasing veteran participation in contracting:

Recommendations

In consultation with the Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA):

- Evaluate the number of certified vendors in each NIGP Code and compare to available contracting opportunities within those codes to determine if the 3% goal for contracting with veteran-owned businesses should be retained or revised.
- Evaluate the number of veteran-owned businesses in the State of Illinois as compared to the number of businesses certified in the Veterans Business Program and determine why more businesses are not becoming certified.
- Increase outreach to veteran-owned businesses in coordination with IDVA and CEI, including development of a marketing plan to increase the number of certified veteran-owned businesses. The CPO office would be happy to assist veteran outreach events.
- In collaboration with CEI, develop and provide Procurement 101 Training specifically for veterans.

The Chief Procurement Office for the Illinois Department of Transportation

Pursuant to Public Act 97-260 (30 ILCS 500/45-57(b)), the Chief Procurement Officer for the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) (Highway Construction) is providing you with the Fiscal Year 2025 report of Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSB).

The numbers being reported are achieved without Veterans' goals in place. The department has received guidance from the Federal Highway Administration that Veterans' goals are not permitted to be included alongside, or in lieu of, goals established under the United States Department of Transportation Disadvantaged Business Enterprise regulations.

These numbers are being provided for informational purposes. Currently there are 220 certified businesses in the Veterans Business Program (VBP). Out of those certified, only 40 firms are prequalified and certified with IDOT. Those 40 consist of the following: 11 prequalified prime contractors, 8 prequalified consultants and 21 registered subcontractors.

- IDOT prequalified prime contractors - 592 (11 certified in the VBP)
- IDOT registered subcontractors -1070 (21 certified in the VBP)
- IDOT prequalified consultants - 401(8 certified in the VBP)

Per 30 ILCS 500/45-57 (b), the CPO shall report:

1. Total number of VOSBs that submitted bids for contracts = **10**
2. Total number of VOSBs that entered into contracts = **8 VOSBs for a total of 63 contracts**
3. Total contract awarded amount = **\$22,579,406.85**

Recommendations

The CPO-IDOT continues to work with IDOT executive staff to discuss recommendations on VBP's potential future endeavors. IDOT executive staff has interacted with the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) regarding the use of the VBP on projects that are eligible for federal funding. IDOT has been advised by the USDOT that the use of VBP goals on federally funded projects would be in direct conflict with the federally approved Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program, and therefore IDOT is considering implementing VBP goals on state-funded projects. This is something IDOT continues to work on, but it remains a work in progress. CPO-IDOT continues to recommend vigorous outreach to increase the number of certified firms in the VBP and cites the activity as an important aspect of fostering the viability of VBP.