

Governor Pritzker Announces \$10 Million OE3 Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program

Press Release - Thursday, January 23, 2025

Grant program supports businesses owned by historically underrepresented populations and small businesses with fewer than 10 employees

CHICAGO - Today, Governor JB Pritzker joined the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to announce \$10 million in funding for the Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment (OE3) Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program to help small businesses achieve sustainable growth, improve efficiency, and create and retain jobs. This grant funding will help small businesses improve infrastructure, acquire essential equipment, or purchase new property. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

"Creating economic opportunity for diverse and small businesses demonstrates our commitment to investing in all of our people and growing the economy," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "In communities across Illinois, small businesses are sustaining quality jobs, anchoring downtowns and commercial districts, providing vital goods and services, playing an integral role in supply chains, and anchoring the overall strength and diversity of our economy."

"Supporting a small business doesn't just support a local economy, it contributes to the health and success of our shared communities," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. "DCEO's OE3 Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program will further support their development and build a stronger, more inclusive economy."

"Through DCEO's Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment, the State of Illinois continues to prioritize providing equitable access to resources and opportunities to communities and businesses in every corner of the state," **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards**. "The OE3 Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program will support small businesses that need it most and bolster economic development throughout Illinois."

Capital resources can be used for eligible projects including planning, land and building acquisition, buildings, additions, or structures, site improvements, rolling stock, and durable equipment. The Governor announced this grant opportunity at The Will Group, who received DCEO grant funds from an earlier iteration of this program to expand their manufacturing presence on Chicago's West Side.

Governor Pritzker's administration has made investing in small businesses a priority, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Back to Business (B2B) and Business Interruption (BIG) grant

programs through DCEO provided more than \$705 million in grant funding to small businesses in hard-hit industries. Governor Pritzker also revitalized Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), defunded under previous administrations, to expand access to community navigators and other resources designed to help aspiring small business owners.

"Small businesses are the heart and soul of our communities," **said Senator Celina Villanueva (D - Chicago)**. "I encourage qualified entities to apply for critical funding through this capital and infrastructure grant program so they receive critical support that will help them grow and succeed for many years to come."

Qualified entities include businesses owned by Socially Economically Disadvantaged Individuals (SEDI) with a maximum of 25 full-time permanent employees and Very Small Businesses (VSBs) with less than 10 employees. Priority will be given to businesses located in [Community Development Financial Institution \(CDFI\) Investment Areas](#), especially those with project proposals that focus on job creation, economic revitalization, or increased community engagement in these areas.

"DCEO's OE3 Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program was designed to ensure small businesses aren't left behind in their economic development journey," **said Senator Elgie Sims, Jr. (D - Chicago)**. "I look forward to supporting the businesses in my community and beyond as they continue to grow and thrive."

Through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) qualified entities can apply for grants from \$10,000 to \$245,000. Applications will be accepted until April 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. To view and apply for the grant, please visit the DCEO [website](#). Interested parties are encouraged to reach out to CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov for application assistance. To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will be holding a [technical assistance webinar](#) at 11 a.m. on February 4. Answers to frequently asked questions in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) are available on the DCEO website.

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