



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 18, 2022

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### **Gov. Pritzker Announces \$15 Million to Expand Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program**

*Following a successful inaugural program launch, Illinois Works opens a second round application to expand geographic reach while further increasing diversity*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today opened the application for the second round of Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program funding. The \$15 million in funding will increase training opportunities, expand the talent pipeline, and boost diversity in the construction industry and building trades.

Approximately \$8 million in funding will target increased geographic diversity and participation from diverse groups not represented in current programming through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), and approximately \$7 million will be available through a contract extension to current grantees who have excelled at key benchmarks.

“In Illinois, our greatest asset is our people—and we are committed to diversifying our workforce and supporting upward mobility for underrepresented populations,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “The first round of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program saw incredible results, and I couldn’t be more excited to expand this program to ensure that Illinoisans across the state have access to the resources and wraparound support that sets them up for success.”

The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program launched in 2021 with the goal of increasing diversity and access to apprenticeship programs. Comprehensive pre-apprenticeship programs can help participants gain admission to apprenticeship programs, which provide a greater opportunity to obtain employment in the construction trades. During the first program year, Illinois Works awarded nearly \$10 million in funding to 22 organizations, servicing approximately 1,000 participants across the state. While programming for the first year is still in progress through the end of 2022, preliminary enrollment figures show encouraging representation among key target demographics:

	Black	Hispanic/Latinx	Women
Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Enrollment	70 percent	16 percent	22 percent
Percentage of Apprentices in Illinois	9 percent	17 percent	5 percent

“It is important for people of color, women, and others who are underrepresented, to have better access to good paying jobs and other economic opportunities,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** “Our state’s economic empowerment strategy is focused on broadening that access and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship program does just that. It’s exciting to see such amazing results in the first group, and I look forward to more of the same when the geographic reach of the program expands.”

The \$8 million made available through the competitive NOFO process is focused on expanding geographic diversity and further increasing representation. Priority geographic areas include the central, east central, north central, northwest, northeast and southwest regions of the state; and priority groups include veterans and Illinoisans of Asian heritage. The remaining \$7 million will be available to current grantees who have met key program benchmarks following a thorough review.

“A career in the building trades comes with so many benefits: a living wage, a dignified retirement, and opportunities to excel while helping to build our communities,” **said State Senator Cristina Castro (D-Elgin).** “I am proud to support the Illinois Works initiatives as they continue to invest in our skilled workforce and create more opportunities for people of color, women, and veterans.”

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, Illinois Works was specifically designed to help increase access to opportunities in the construction industry, preparing more Illinoisians for not just their next job, but a good paying career,” **said DCEO Director Sylvia I. Garcia.** “This second round of available funding will build on the great work already underway and expand the pre-apprenticeships available to more regions of Illinois, meeting more underrepresented Illinoisans where they are and providing the tools they need to succeed.”

Through the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, DCEO created a statewide network of providers to recruit, prescreen, and provide pre-apprenticeship skills training. More importantly, providers offer structured pathways and manage the program graduates' transition from the pre-apprenticeship program to a full apprenticeship program in construction and building trades. DCEO estimates that pre-apprenticeship training programs supported by the grant funds will serve as many as 1,500 participants during the second program year.

“The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program has been instrumental in helping further our commitment to diversifying the construction industry and level the playing field as it relates to workforce development,” **said Jackie Gomez, Executive Director, HACIA.** “We just celebrated the graduation of our first pre-apprenticeship class and work to continue growing a talent pipeline in communities like

Chicago, Aurora and Elgin, to successfully increase the number of individuals entering the growing and thriving construction and skilled trades.”

"We are not going to diversify the workforce on our state’s capital projects with just one change in law. This is a sustained effort that is going to need buy in from many different partners," **said Rep. Will Davis (D-Homewood)**. "This second round of funding will be vital to continuing our progress and eventually closing the gap, so every community has access to good-paying jobs."

Participants of the program attend tuition-free and receive a stipend and other supportive, barrier reduction services to help enter the construction industry. Upon completion of the program, pre-apprentices receive industry aligned certifications which will prepare and qualify them to continue to a registered apprenticeship program in one of the trades.

Eligible applicants include non-profit, community-based organizations, such as industry associations, chambers of commerce, local workforce areas, community colleges, technical schools, and school districts. Grant awards will range from \$200,000 to \$550,000 per year.

Signed into law in 2019, the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act is designed to promote diversity, inclusion, and use of apprentices in state-funded capital projects. The Act created three major programs: the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program; the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative, and the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program. Together these three programs aim to create a talent pipeline of skilled and diverse candidates to fill new job opportunities created by the Act.

The deadline to apply for the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program NOFO is the 27<sup>th</sup> of September of 2022 at 5:00 pm. Additionally, DCEO will be hosting a series of informational webinars. Additional information and registration links can be found here: [WIOA Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship NOFO 2022 \(illinoisworknet.com\)](https://illinoisworknet.com)

### **Introduction to Illinois Works and Its Programs**

**Date:** August 25, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

### **Bidder's Conference**

**Date:** August 30, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

### **Registration and Application System Training (GATA)**

**Date:** September 1, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

### **Developing Partnerships**

**Date:** September 8, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.