



Fiscal Year 2025
WORKFORCE EQUITY INITIATIVE

Application Due Date/Time: Tuesday, June 18, 2024; 11:59 p.m. CST

Submit Application to: iccb.submitrfp@illinois.gov

Bidder's Webinar: Tuesday, May 14, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m0e654bf5b056a4adfd2421b98e583336>

The webinar will be recorded and posted to the website.

See details listed on page 8.

**UNIFORM NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
SUMMARY INFORMATION**

1.	Awarding Agency Name:	<i>Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)</i>
2.	Agency Contact:	<i>Jennifer K. Foster Deputy Executive Director, Jennifer.Foster@illinois.gov</i>
3.	Announcement Type:	<i>Initial announcement</i>
4.	Type of Assistance Instrument:	<i>Grant</i>
5.	Funding Opportunity Number:	
6.	Funding Opportunity Title:	<i>FY2025 Workforce Equity Initiative</i>
7.	CSFA Number:	
8.	CSFA Popular Name:	
9.	CFDA Number(s):	<i>N/A</i>
10.	Grant Period	<i>July 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025</i>
11.	Anticipated Number of Awards:	<i>Up to 20</i>
12.	Estimated Total Program Funding:	<i>\$18,700,000</i>
13.	Award Range	<i>Up to \$1,200,000</i>
14.	Source of Funding:	<i>State</i>
15.	Cost Sharing/Matching Requirement:	<i>No</i>
16.	Indirect Costs Allowed	<i>Yes</i>
	Restrictions on Indirect Costs	<i>No</i>
17.	Posted Date:	<i>May 9, 2024</i>
18.	Closing Date for Applications:	<i>Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 11:59 PM CT</i>
19.	Technical Assistance:	<i>A Bidder's Conference webinar will be held on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. Webinar link is provided on page 8 of this NOFO. Additional technical assistance will be provided throughout the grant period to grant recipients.</i>

A. Background

Public Act 101-0637 provides \$18.7 million dollars to respond to the increasing need to ensure workforce equity for African Americans in Illinois.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is inviting the 48 Illinois community colleges to apply for the Workforce Equity Initiative. The FY25 grant opportunity will begin July 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025, with a focus on ensuring students receive short-term certifications delivered in a year or less that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.

B. Project Purpose and Goals

The Workforce Equity Initiative provides individuals with the opportunity to attain a college credential in a high demand sector/industry to access jobs that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.. The purpose of this grant is to create, support, or expand short-term (one year or less) workforce (credit and/or noncredit) training opportunities in high-need communities focused on specific sectors with identified workforce gaps. Short-term credentials of one year or less can be a college certificate and/or an industry recognized credential.

The major goals of the project:

- Accelerate the time for the targeted population to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs that lead to employment in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.
- Of the population to be served under this grant, a minimum of 60% must be African American.

C. Eligible Applicants

The ICCB invites all 48 Illinois community colleges to submit proposals under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

D. Target Population

The targeted population is adults aged 18 years and above, and 60 percent of the population proposed to be served through this grant must be African American. The intended population are those individuals who want to upgrade their skills in order to access higher wages and that **are not** currently enrolled in a program notwithstanding existing WEI students.

Targeted Area within the Community College District

The targeted area of this grant should be from “Disproportionately Impacted Areas” meaning a census tract or comparable geographic area that satisfies the following criteria as determined by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity:

a. meets at least one of the following criteria:

- i. the area has a poverty rate of at least 20 percent according to the latest federal decennial census ([U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Illinois](#)); or
- ii. 75 percent or more of the children in the area participate in the federal free lunch program according to reported statistics from the State Board of Education ([Child Nutrition Data Analytics and Mapping Tools \(isbe.net\)](#)); or
- iii. at least 20 percent of the households in the area receive assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; or [Census Bureau Profiles Results](#)
- iv. the area has an average unemployment rate, as determined by the Illinois Department of Employment Security, which is more than 120 percent of the national unemployment average, as determined by the United States Department of Labor. ([Current Monthly Unemployment Rates \(illinois.gov\)](#)); or
- v. has high rates of arrest, conviction, incarceration, ex-offenders, gun violence, and low rates of home ownership. [Illinois profile | Prison Policy Initiative](#)

E. Grant Objectives

The objectives of this grant are intended to increase access to sustainable wage employment in high demand occupations. Each grant proposal must address how the grantee will implement each objective.

Objective 1: All proposed programs must be one year or less and be part of an educational career pathway. Programs are expected to maintain quality instruction and enhance the participant's eligibility for employment in the identified sectors. The pathway must allow participants to obtain:

- an industry recognized credential and/or a
- community college certificate (credit or noncredit)

Objective 2: All applicants must demonstrate how they will serve the minimum 60% African American population.

Objective 3: Proposed programs/industries must be in high demand, must pay 30% above the regional living wage, or must be on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.

Objective 4: All applicants must demonstrate how they will meet the employment rate goal of 70% of those who complete the program.

Objective 5: All applicants must include an essential skill components which includes, at a minimum, the elements included as a part of the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework (<https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/illinois-essential-employability-skills-framework>). This framework is designed to provide students with the important skills necessary to obtain and keep employment.

Objective 6: All applicants must engage in partnerships that will enhance the WEI program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage in the following partnerships, including Local Workforce Boards, Community-based organizations, local chambers of commerce, urban leagues, and internal partnerships may include career centers, college counselors, DEI Officers, Disability and Career and Technical Education Coordinators.

F. Allowable Activities

The proposed activities should align with statewide priorities around [career pathway](#) opportunities and activities that **promote equity and diversity**. Grantees should utilize existing frameworks and resources, where applicable. Wrap around and student support is allowable and encouraged, however, the coordination of services with external partners is also encouraged. The additional allowable activities below are also encouraged but are not limited to those listed. Colleges are encouraged to submit proposals that incorporate any combination of instructional strategies listed:

- Accelerated programs that help students to achieve credentials of one year or less, may include competency-based education, Integrated Education and Training, Bridge Programs, etc.
- Creating non-credit, short-term training programs that support minority or other students' transition into high demand occupations that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.
- Stackable credentials that support student completion and transition into employment.
- Industry recognized credentials that are marketable and can be used to obtain employment.
- Pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship programs that provide the opportunity to apply what is learned through training.
- Bridge programs that are contextualized basic skills to introduce a specific sector/industry to the student.
- Competency-based education programs that allow the student to focus on areas of need and acknowledges the students' mastery of what is already known.
- Integrated education and training programs combine contextualized basic skills and the actual training that will yield a credential.
- Life skills (soft/essential skills) training programs that will enhance program offerings to ensure students have the tools needed to get employment and stay employed.
- Modularized training programs that accelerate learning through the student's demonstration of mastery.
- Work-based learning strategies that will create awareness of a pathway.
- Other career pathway programs that lead to in-demand employment

G. Grant Deliverables

1. Carry out deliverables of the proposed scope of work.
2. Submit required programmatic and fiscal reports on a quarterly basis per the schedule below to iccb.grantpayments@illinois.gov.

FY2025 Reporting Schedule for the WEI Grant		
Quarter	Period	Date Due
1	July 1 – September 30, 2024	October 30, 2024
2	October 1 – December 31, 2024	January 30, 2025
3	January 1 – March 31, 2025	April 30, 2025
4	April 1 – June 30, 2025	July 30, 2025
5	July 1 – September 30, 2025	October 30, 2025

(Reporting templates and other instructions will be made available to grant recipients at a later date.)
Code of Federal Regulations / Title 2 – Grants and Agreements / Vol. 1 / 2014-01-01194

3. Participate in all required Meetings.

H. Application Package and Proposal Outline

THIS IS A COMPETITIVE PROCESS. All parts of the application package must be completed as instructed below and received by the deadline to be considered. Applicants will not be contacted if items are missing from their application package or not completed in their entirety; these applications will be considered incomplete and will not be read. All application materials are located on the ICCB website: <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/>

Applicants must complete each of the following required application components:

a. Uniform Application

Applicants must complete each section of the [Grant Application \(GATA-exempt\)](#). If a question is not applicable, please enter NA.

b. Cover Page

The cover page must include the institution’s name, address, telephone number, website, as well as the contact information including email address, telephone number and extension, and fax number of the President/CEO, Chief Financial Officer, and Project Coordinator/Administrator.

The cover page must also provide a statement that stipulates:

“This application is being submitted on behalf of the <institution’s name>; and, if awarded, the applicant agrees to abide by the provisions and guidelines set forth in the application and by the ICCB. Furthermore, the individuals listed in the application are authorized to act on behalf of the institution.”

This statement must be signed and dated by the President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

c. Abstract

The two-paragraph abstract describing the project must include:

- Proposed communities to be served based upon the analysis of the disproportionately impacted communities listed above the target population to include primarily African American (60 percent of participants) (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, educational/workforce levels)
- projected number of individuals to be enrolled in the program.
- a summary of measurable goals (refer to Attachment B)
- proposed in demand industry/employment sectors that will yield 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.
- proposed project activities and services

d. Application Narrative

The eligible applicant must submit a narrative **in the order as specified below** and include all of the information under each of the categories. The narrative must be no more than ten pages, double spaced, and 12-point type. Charts and graphs do not need to be double-spaced and 12-point type but must be readable. Narratives must be concise and include the following information:

I. Statement of Need and Targeted Population

- Provide a description of the need for the proposed services/programs related to the industries/sectors. This must include an analysis of the need vs. demand for the workers and include documentation of the source.
- Provide data demonstrating the equity gaps that the college is attempting to close. This data should include but is not limited to data and/or data pertinent to the proposed programs to be offered as part of this project and other factors demonstrating the need for services for the area. Data should also include target populations including African American students.
- Provide the targeted population to be served including a breakdown ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, educational levels, workforce status, etc.
- Provide a description of at least one of the targeted areas, located in section E of this NOFO, from “Disproportionately Impacted Areas” meaning a census tract or comparable geographic area. Also include the documented data used.

II. High Demand Training Programs and Occupations

- Provide a description of the proposed high demand training industry/educational programs for the proposed that will be offered, why the reason for offering these, and provide the citation. (e.g., local workforce data, local chamber data, Lightcast data, etc.) The training program must yield 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage. <https://livingwage.mit.edu>
- Complete Attachment A providing industry/college certification and employment information.
- Provide a description of how the **70% employment rate** of those who

complete the program will be attained. (e.g., procedures, processes, internal and external partnerships, etc.)

III. Measurable Goals

- Complete Attachment B on proposed High Demand Training Programs you may use any combination of data (e.g. Lightcast, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, local workforce data, local chamber, etc.).

IV. Activities and Timelines to Meet Measurable Goal Outcomes

- Describe the major activities and timelines that will support your goals. Include a summary of how the applicant will achieve each of the goals as it relates to the success of the program. This must include marketing efforts, presentations to business, student retention activities, meetings with local organizations, etc.

V. Partnerships and Employer Engagement

- Describe the partnerships with local workforce boards and human services organization, including the role they will play in the project and the coordination of services to maximize resources.
- Describe other partnerships and the role of each partner in the project. Include the internal and external partners, elected officials, and community-based organizations.
 - Example: Community Health Service, funds to provide counseling services to students enrolled.
- Describe anticipated employer engagement activities, such as:
 - strategies the college uses to connect students exiting with the employment industry in which they receive training.
 - identify the potential employers with which the college will engage.

VI. Academic, Supportive Services, and Employability Skills

- List academic and non-academic supportive services/wrap around services to be provided including but not limited to transportation, addressing financial barriers, uniforms, books, materials, childcare services, stipends, counseling services/employment, etc.
 - Example: Counseling services, Community Health Services, Mental Health Services
 - Example: Stipends: Stipends will be provided to students for....
- Describe the essential employability skills framework and instruction that will be used for **all** students, understanding that some students may require more assistance than others.
 - Example: 100% of the WEI students will be provided with essential

employability skills either via classroom instruction, small group, web-based, online, or individually.

- Example: 70% will receive employability instruction and 30% individualized support based on student assessment of needs.
- Describe the selection criteria to be used for students enrolled in the program.
- Describe the follow-up activities at three months, six months, and one year after completion.

VII. Capacity, Experience, and Equity Lens

- Description of the applicant's capacity to execute the project, including a description of previous experience in implementing successful instructional programs and related activities such as wrap-around supportive services for the target population.
- Description of the applicant's experience and capacity in applying a racial equity lens in programming for the targeted population which includes the applicant's involvement in diversity, equity, and inclusion activities.

Additional information and charts may be included but will count as part of the page limitation.

e. Uniform Budget

All applicants must submit a budget on the State of Illinois [Uniform Grant Budget Template](#). Applicants should submit budgets based upon the total estimated costs for the project. As needed, the applicant organization may refer to 2 CFR 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards" cited within the template's instructions.

Be detailed and specific in completing the budget. Budget items must follow the guidelines set forth in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act.

f. Application Submission Information and Bidder's Webinar

Each grant application package must be submitted no later than Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 11:59 p.m. CST to iccb.submitrfp@illinois.gov. Grant application and materials may be found on the ICCB website at: <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/>

A Bidder's Conference webinar will be held on **Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.** The bidder's conference is not mandatory. A link to the webinar is listed below:

- **Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**
<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m0e654bf5b056a4adfd2421b98e583336>

Submit all questions electronically to iccb.submitrfp@illinois.gov. Phone calls will not be accepted. Include in the subject line: [Institution's Name] Workforce Equity Initiative. All questions will be posted in a FAQ on the ICCB website.

Paper copies are not permitted. Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of the email containing the attachments. It is up to the applicant to ensure that all items in the package are attached and sent in the email.

All applicants, funded or not funded, will be notified by no later than June 30, 2024.

I. Funding Information

Interested institutions may apply for a grant but will not be eligible for a grant award until the institution has pre-qualified through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal located at: <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>.

Eligible Applicants

ICCB invites all 48 Illinois Community Colleges to submit a proposal.

Grant Period

The grant period is from July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025.

Funding Availability

The total \$18,700,000 will provide resources for an estimated 20 community colleges. The maximum grant award available is up to \$1.2 million. Colleges may apply for less, as appropriate. Consortia of colleges may apply for up to \$1.2 million per participating institution.

Funding Deadlines

- Grant funds must be obligated by September 30, 2025.
- Goods/products must be obligated by September 30, 2025.
- Services must be rendered by September 30, 2025.
- Grant funds must be expended by November 30, 2025.

Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost sharing or matching is required.

Indirect Cost Rate

In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRA's.

- Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. ICCB will accept the federally negotiated rate.
- State Negotiated Rate. The organization must negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated

Rate or elect to use the De Minimis Rate. The indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted to the State of Illinois within 90 days of the notice of award.

- De Minimis Rate. An organization that has never received a Federally Negotiated Rate may elect a De Minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the De Minimis rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDS annually in order to accept the De Minimis rate.

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Allowable costs are those costs that are reasonable and necessary for the implementation of the Workforce Equity Initiative grant.

In addition to instructional models, funds may be used to support any of the following activities:

- business and industry engagement and onboarding activities
- curriculum development and/or alignment with regional curricular gaps
- competency based education
- employment follow up and data tracking
- follow-up activities
- equipment upgrades or purchases
- faculty stipends consistent with local board of trustees' policies
- marketing and outreach for programs
- One Stop connections and referrals
- staff hiring for activities such as trainer, program director, job developer, recruiter, navigators, etc.
- student stipends and tuition assistance, [Guidance for Student Stipends within Grant Programs.pdf \(iccb.org\)](#).
- student support services including, but not limited to, transportation, childcare, food vouchers, tutoring, etc.
- professional development, equity and cultural awareness training, skill enhancement, and/or industry credentialing of faculty
- transition services including, but not limited to, individuals with disabilities.
- tuition payments for instruction
- other activities of statewide significance that expand career pathways and are aligned with labor market information as identified by local or regional needs.
- limited building modifications and renovations with prior approval.

J. Review Criteria and Selection Process

ICCB staff will use the criteria listed in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to review the applications and will award points accordingly. **Total points awarded under this NOFO is 100 points.** Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of

this NOFO and the grant proposal.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the Application Narrative submitted under this NOFO. Part of the criteria involves the organization, readability, and clarity of the narrative.

- **Project Need (20)**

- The applicant provides at a minimum one targeted area of this grant from “Disproportionately Impacted Areas” meaning a census tract or comparable geographic area.
- The applicant provides supporting data and documentation to support the need.
- The applicant identifies college equity gaps in serving African American students.
- The applicant includes a description of the target population of students to be served including a breakdown of ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, educational levels, workforce status, etc.) At least 60 percent must be African American.
- The applicant identifies college equity gaps in serving African American students and other low-income populations which may include college data and/or data pertinent to the proposed industry to be offered as a part of this project and other factors demonstrating the need for services for the area.
- The applicant identifies the high demand sectors/industries that will be targeted as a part of the program (sources are cited).

- **Project Development and Activities (45)**

- The applicant activities as outlined in the proposal are thoroughly described, supported by evidence and/or data, including specific tasks and timelines and how they relate to the objectives.
- The applicant identifies the individuals to be served and how they will be selected.
- The applicant proposes high demand training programs that can be accomplished by the student in one year or less.
- The applicant clearly defines the supportive services to be provided including transportation, childcare services, stipends, counseling services/employment, etc., and how students will be identified who need the services.
- The applicant describes follow-up activities at three months, six months, and one-year after completion.
- The applicant has a selection criterion to identify those who will enter the program.
- The applicant describes the collaboration efforts with key partners, internal and external, and details of each partner’s role is clearly detailed.
- The applicant describes how they will engage employers as a part of

the project.

- The applicant clearly describes how they will meet the 70% employment rate of those who complete the program.
- The applicant provides a description of the essential employability skills framework that will be used.

- **Project Impact (20)**

- The applicant proposes high demand training programs that will lead to employment in high skill, high wage, and in-demand occupations earning 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.
- The applicant's expected outcomes/goals are well-defined, measurable, reasonable, and relate to the identified activities and objectives.
- The applicant includes a timeline of activities including how the activities will help to achieve the grant's project goals, including presentations to special groups, marketing activities, retention activities, etc.
- The applicant states measurable goals as required on Attachment B.

- **Project Capacity (10)**

- The applicant has described the institution's experience in providing services to the targeted population, in implementing successful instructional programs, and related activities, and demonstrates that it has the institutional capacity to implement the project.
- The applicant has described their experience and capacity in applying a racial equity lens in programming for the targeted population, including the applicant's involvement in diversity, equity, and inclusion activities.

- **Completion and Submission of all Required Documents (5)**

- Uniform Application
- Cover Page
 - Includes: Statement Signed by the President/CEO
- Abstract (max. 2 paragraphs)
- Narrative (max. 10 pages)
- Uniform Budget
 - The applicant demonstrates both programmatic and financial need for the grant.

K. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Jennifer K. Foster

FY 2025 Workforce Equity Initiative

Deputy Executive Director
Illinois Community College Board
401 E. Capitol Avenue Springfield, IL 62701

Telephone: 217-785-0171

Fax: 217-558-6700

Email: Jennifer.Foster@illinois.gov