



Fiscal Year 2026

Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI)

WEI Continuation Plan

Application Due Date: June 11, 2025:11:59 p.m. CST

Submit Continuation Plan to: iccb.submitrfp@illinois.gov

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>Continuation Plan Initial</i>
4.	Type of Assistance Instrument:	<i>Grant</i>
5.	Funding Opportunity Number:	
6.	Funding Opportunity Title:	<i>FY2026 Workforce Empowerment Initiative</i>
7.	CSFA Number:	
8.	CSFA Popular Name:	
9.	CFDA Number(s):	<i>N/A</i>
10.	Grant Period	<i>July 1, 2025 - September 30, 2026</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 7, 2025</i>
18.	Closing Date for Applications:	<i>Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 11:59 PM CT</i>
19.	Technical Assistance:	<i>A Bidder's Conference webinar will be held on Thursday, May 15, 2025. Webinar link is provided on page 8 of this Continuation plan.</i> <i>Additional technical assistance will be provided throughout the grant period to grant recipients.</i>

The Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI) Continuation Plan is designed for current WEI grantees who are seeking continued funding for FY2026. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will review each application and will fund colleges based on the proposed activities as listed in the Continuation Plan instructions. In addition, the ICCB does not guarantee the same funding amount as received in the previous fiscal year. Funding is contingent on a sufficient appropriation of resources.

A. Purpose of the Continuation Plan

The ICCB is accepting **Continuation Plans for FY2026 WEI funding** from currently funded WEI grantees. This opportunity supports the continuation of existing programming under the WEI to serve disproportionately impacted communities, with a targeted focus on underrepresented communities and individuals.

The WEI aims to expand access for learners who have traditionally been excluded from workforce opportunities, faced limited pathways to postsecondary education or career advancement, and have been systematically underrepresented in high demand and high wage industries.

Funding will support programs operating from **July 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026**. This continuation effort seeks to **sustain and expand progress** made in creating short-term credential programs in high-demand sectors that lead to employment at or above 30% of the regional living wage or on an educational pathway to 30% above the regional living wage.

B. Continuation Eligibility

Only **current FY2025 WEI grant recipients** are eligible to submit a Continuation Plan. Eligible institutions must be in **good standing with ICCB reporting requirements** and demonstrate capacity to continue delivering services aligned with the initiative's objectives.

C. FY2026 WEI Continuation Objectives

Institutions must demonstrate how continuation funding will support the following objectives:

1. Provide high-quality short-term training (one year or less) that leads to a credential aligned with a career pathway.

2. Maintain or increase enrollment of underrepresented students as describe in section
3. Target high-demand industry sectors that provide employment paying 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway to 30% above the regional living wage.
4. Achieve an employment placement rate of at least 70% for program completers.
5. Integrate employability/life skills instruction aligned with the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework.
6. Continue or expand partnerships with employers, workforce boards, and community organizations to support wraparound services and job placement.

D. Target Population

Continuing institutions must maintain focus on:

- Adults aged 18 and over.
- Individuals residing in **Disproportionately Impacted Areas** (as defined in the FY2025 NOFO), including
 - Historically underserved communities
 - Residents of communities disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, or limited access to resources
 - Individuals from under-resourced or high-need areas
 - Individuals from communities with persistent opportunity gaps
 - Individuals from neighborhoods impacted by long-term disinvestment
 - Individuals from marginalized backgrounds
 - Individuals from communities that have experienced generational economic and educational disadvantages
 - Populations facing systemic barriers to education and employment
 - Populations underrepresented in high-wage, high-skill sectors
- Individuals not currently enrolled in other WEI programs unless re-enrollment is justified by training pathway continuation.

E. Allowable Activities Under the FY2026 Continuation Plan

Continuation plans may include the following:

- Stackable credential programs (credit or non-credit)

- Bridge or IET (Integrated Education and Training) models
- Pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship partnerships
- Work-based learning experiences
- Expanded wraparound services (e.g., childcare, transportation, counseling)
- Instructional materials, curriculum updates, or equipment upgrades
- Faculty and staff support, including stipends and professional development
- Outreach, marketing, and student recruitment
- Employment placement and follow-up services
- Other services as approved by the ICCB. Click the link to see other allowable activities under this grant.

F. Deliverables and Reporting

Continuation awardees must:

1. Maintain all previously approved deliverables and services.
2. Submit quarterly reports according to ICCB's FY2026 reporting schedule.
3. Attend all mandatory meetings and technical assistance sessions.
4. Provide data updates on participant outcomes, credential attainment, and employment.

G. Submission Requirements

All continuation plans must include:

1. **Cover Page**
Signed by the President/CEO stating intent to continue the WEI program under the same terms and conditions.
2. **Complete the Uniform Application**
[Uniform Grant Application](#)
3. **Continuation Abstract (Max 2 paragraphs)**
Brief summary of progress to date, proposed goals for FY2026, targeted

communities, number of students served, the population to be served, and high demand/high wage sectors.

4. **Continuation Narrative (Max 5 pages)**

The Continuation Plan responses should reflect the new activities, expansions, special emphasis, enhancements, and new strategies for FY2026. The narrative should be organized as follows:

- **Progress Summary:** Describe achievements and outcomes from FY2025 and will targets be achieved by the end of the grant period. If not, what are the strategies that will help to ensure outcomes are met.
- **Need and Justification for Continuation:** Describe any additional needs in the targeted communities, new communities to be served, program variation from FY2025, and new populations to be served.
- **Training Programs and Pathways:** Describe any new proposed training and employment pathways for FY2026 and provide the necessary justification. Complete attachment A.
- **Measurable Goals and Timeline:** Describe any specific enrollment strategies, credentialing, and essential employability skills, what will be different than last year. Also include targets with updated timelines. Complete attachment B.
- **Partnerships:** Confirm ongoing relationships with external and internal partners. Describe any new employer engagement activities.
- **Student Services:** Describe any new support services that will be offered and any expansions or improvements. Also, describe how the needs of the underrepresented population will be assessed.
- **Capacity to serve Underrepresented populations as describe above:** Demonstrate how the institution will identify the underrepresented populations to be served.

5. **Uniform Budget**

Submit a budget on the State of Illinois Uniform Grant Budget Template reflecting FY2026 program costs.

- 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.

6. Attachments

- Attachment A: High Demand Training Programs
- Attachment B: Measurable Goals

H. Submission Instructions

Deadline: Tuesday, June 11, 2025, 11:59 PM CST

Email to: iccb.submitrfp@illinois.gov

Subject Line: [Institution Name] FY2026 WEI Continuation Plan

All documents must be submitted electronically as attachments. Paper submissions will not be accepted. Applicants will receive a confirmation of receipt.

I. Review and Notification

Continuation plans will be reviewed by ICCB staff for:

- Alignment with WEI goals and objectives
- Any new or expanded proposed services
- Current performance, to-date, in FY2025.
- Proposed services and outcomes for FY2026. See the FY2025 NOFO for guidance. re https://www.iccb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/FY2025_Workforce_Equity_Initiative_NOFO.pdf
- Clarity, completeness, and fiscal responsibility
- Commitment to serving underrepresented populations as described in **Section D. Target Population.**

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions.

J. Key Dates

- **Bidder's Webinar:** Thursday, May 15, 2025, 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Meeting link:

<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m1c3f5598a4c327cbe5eba8f55dc876dd>

Meeting number:

2861 908 0858

Meeting password:

s6Z4ZvSu4tp

- **Application Due:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025 by 11:59 PM CT
- **Program Period:** July 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026

K. Contact Information

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