



## OE3 SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL & INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM FAQs

### OE3 CAPITAL GRANT ELIGIBILITY

*Q: Who can apply for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?*

A: Eligible applicants include:

- Businesses owned by Socially Economically Disadvantaged Individuals (SEDI) with a maximum of 25 full-time permanent employees.
- Very Small Businesses (VSBs), businesses with less than 10 employees, including independent contractors and sole proprietors.

*Q: Are food trucks eligible to apply?*

A: Yes.

*Q: If I filed for bankruptcy will that disqualify my application?*

A: Personal bankruptcy will not disqualify an applicant.

*Q: Is my credit score checked for this grant?*

A: Applying for the OE3 Capital Grant Program does not require a credit check.

*Q: Will certain applications be given priority for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?*

A: Yes, DCEO will prioritize applications submitted by businesses located in [Community Development Financial Institution \(CDFI\) Investment Areas](#).

### APPLYING FOR THE OE3 CAPITAL GRANT

*Q: What constitutes a Very Small Business (VSB)?*

A: Very Small Business is defined as a business with fewer than 10 employees and may include independent contractors and sole proprietors.

*Q: What constitutes a Socially Economically Disadvantaged Individual (SEDI) Business?*

A: If **privately** owned, 51% is owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

If **publicly** owned, 51% of the stock is owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

*Q: Do Socially Economically Disadvantaged Individual (SEDI) Businesses need certification in order to be counted as SEDI?*

A: Yes. If you choose to self-certify as a SEDI-owned business, you must complete the *SEDI-Certification* document found at the bottom of the [NOFO webpage](#).

*Q: Who is considered a socially and economically disadvantaged individual?*

A: **Socially disadvantaged individuals** are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities. **Economically disadvantaged**

**individuals** are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same business area who are not socially disadvantaged.

***Q: What is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Investment Area?***

A: The population in CDFI Investment Areas serves as a proxy for the needs of SEDI-owned businesses because these areas are generally low-income, high-poverty geographies that receive neither sufficient access to capital nor support for the needs of small businesses, including minority-owned businesses. A CDFI must have a primary mission of promoting community development. In determining whether an entity has such a primary mission, the CDFI Fund will consider whether the activities of the entity are purposefully directed toward improving the social and/or economic conditions of underserved people (which may include Low-Income persons or persons who lack adequate access to capital and/or Financial Services) and/or residents of economically distressed communities (which may include Investment Areas).

***Q: How do I apply for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?***

A: Visit the Grant Application Link [here](#) or contact OE3 via email at [CEO.OE3Grant@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.OE3Grant@illinois.gov) for application materials.

***Q: What do I need to include in my application package?***

A: As part of the application, the following documents must be submitted **within the [Smartsheet Application Form](#)**:

- Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned, and submitted with application.
- Uniform Budget utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project. The entire budget with all worksheets included, even if the worksheets are not relevant to the grant opportunity, must be submitted with the application materials. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned, and submitted with application.
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- Mandatory Disclosures
- Program Application
- If applicable, SEDI-Certification
- If applicable, Demographic Disclosure Survey
- Any other supplemental documentation

**\*NOTE:** Be sure to refer to the [online NOFO](#) to ensure all required parts of the application package are submitted electronically, otherwise your application will not be considered.

***Q: Should the Uniform Budget reflect one or both years of the grant term?***

A: The Uniform Budget submitted should be reflective of the anticipated two-year grant period.

***Q: How do you decide who will be awarded OE3 Capital Grant Program dollars?***

A: DCEO will designate an evaluation committee to review the OE3 Capital Grant Program applications. Applications will be reviewed on a competitive basis and graded on a 100-point scale based on need, capacity, and quality. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and the average of all scores will be the applicant's final score. Grants will be awarded from highest score to lowest scores until funding is exhausted.

## **OE3 CAPITAL GRANT DOLLAR SPECIFICS**

***Q: How much money is available? How many grants do you plan to award?***

A: Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is up to \$10 million. Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$245,000. The Department expects to make no more than 40 awards through this NOFO.

*Q: Is the award range of up to \$245,000 for one year or both years?*

A: The grant amount awarded will be reflective of the two-year grant period.

*Q: What can OE3 Capital Grant Program dollars be used for?*

A: The OE3 Small Business Capital and Infrastructure Grant Program will adhere to the bondable requirements outlined in 30 ILCS 420 for funding eligible projects. A bondable capital project includes expenditures that are generally aligned with the following purposes:

- **Architectural Planning and Engineering Design:** Costs related to planning, schematics, and detailed engineering for new construction or improvements.
- **Site Selection and Land Acquisition:** Expenses for identifying, evaluating, and acquiring land or buildings.
- **Building Acquisition:** Purchasing existing properties to support business operations or expansion.
- **Demolition:** Clearing land or structures in preparation for additional construction or improvements.
- **Site Preparation and Improvements:** Grading, paving, landscaping, or installing utilities to ready a site for construction.
- **Utility Work:** Installation, upgrades, or relocation of utilities to support the project.
- **New Construction of Buildings and Structures:** Costs associated with constructing new facilities or structures.
- **Reconstruction or Improvement of Existing Buildings or Structures:** Renovation, modernization, or expansion of current facilities to enhance functionality or extend useful life.
- **Original Furnishings and Durable Equipment:** Purchase of new equipment or fixtures essential for the facility's operation. An exception within this category allows for the inclusion of durable movable equipment for rolling stock when it serves as the business's point-of-sale operation. This exception also applies to original furnishings and durable equipment purchases that are essential to the operation of the rolling stock as point-of-sale operations.
- **Asset Replacement:** Replacing existing assets with higher-quality or more efficient alternatives.
- **Expansion of Existing Buildings or Facilities:** Increasing the size or capacity of current facilities to accommodate growth.

*Q: Are indirect costs allowed under this program?*

A: No, the grant will not compensate for indirect costs, overhead, or administrative expenses associated with the execution of the program. This grant opportunity is limited to capital improvement expenses.

*Q: Is there a cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity?*

A: No, cost sharing or matching is not required for this opportunity.

## **TIMELINE FOR THE OE3 CAPITAL GRANT**

*Q: When is the deadline to apply for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?*

A: The deadline to apply for the OE3 Capital Grant Program is Monday, April 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time. Late applications will not be reviewed or accepted. Submit your applications early to avoid any submission issues.

*Q: When will I be notified if I was selected for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?*

A: DCEO anticipates sending Notice of State Awards (NOSAs) at minimum, 12 weeks after the application closes. This time frame may be extended depending on the volume of applications received. The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award or not to issue any award.

## **OE3 CAPITAL GRANT DISBURSEMENT/POST-DISBURSEMENT**

*Q: What would be expected of me as an OE3 Capital Grant Program recipient?*

A: Expectations of an OE3 Capital Grant Program recipient include:

- Successful Project Execution: Complete the approved scope of work, meet performance goals, and achieve established measures.
- Timely Reporting: Submit accurate Quarterly Periodic Performance Reports (PPRs) and Quarterly Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs) in accordance with program requirements.
- Monitoring Compliance: Participate in fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits conducted by the Department, as required by 2 CFR 200.337.
- Audit Requirements: Comply with Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements.

**\*NOTE:** This is not the entire list of Grantee Expectations. For exact details on Grantee expectations, please refer to the [online NOFO](#).

*Q: If I am an OE3 Capital Grant Program recipient, when can I expect to receive my grant dollars?*

A: A cash request for a variable advance of 25% of the approved grant amount will be processed upon execution of the uniform grant agreement. The timeframe for when grant funds will actually be direct deposited, or a paper check issued, is determined by the Illinois Office of the Comptroller.

*Q: What is the performance period for the OE3 Capital Grant Program?*

A: The anticipated start date for awards is 08/01/2025, and the performance period is expected to be 08/01/2025 through 07/31/2027.

*Q: If awarded, can costs incurred from the date of the Notice of State Award (NOSA) through the period of performance start date be charged to the grant?*

A: Yes.

## **OTHER**

*Q: Does the OE3 Capital Grant Program Application have any page limits?*

A: Yes. Sections 1 through 5 of the OE3 Capital Grant Program Application must not exceed a total of 15 pages. Section 6: Supporting Document Checklist and Section 7: Applicant Certification are not included in this page limit. Any pages exceeding the 15-page limit for Sections 1 through 5 will not be reviewed or considered.

*Q: How do I submit the supplemental documentation?*

A: Documents are submitted via the File Upload Option in the [Smartsheet form](#). Please note that there is a 10-file maximum when submitting documentation. Make sure that your documents are clearly named. Refer to the **File Formatting and Uploading Instructions** section of the **Application Instructions** Word document for detailed instructions on how to properly name and combine your documents. This document can be found at the bottom of the [NOFO webpage](#). The guidance set forth in this document should be carefully reviewed and followed.

*Q: Will the OE3 Capital Grant Program NOFO be posted online in other languages?*

A: Yes, the NOFO will be posted in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

*Q: Will rejection notices be sent at the same time as a Notice of State Award (NOSA)?*

A: Applicants will be notified of their approval or denial via email. All applicants will be notified of their approval or denial during the same window.