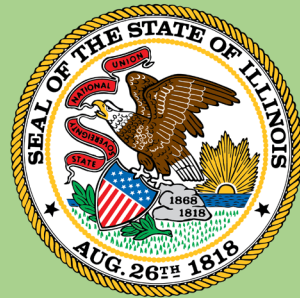




Illinois Grocery Initiative

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New Stores in Food Deserts




Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

April 2024

The Illinois Grocery Initiative – New Stores in Food Deserts

Background



The Illinois Grocery Initiative New Stores in Food Deserts Program is one of two grant programs authorized by [Public Act 103-0561](#).

- [New Stores in Food Deserts](#) will combat food insecurity by offering competitive grants to support the establishment of new grocery stores in food deserts
- The Equipment Upgrades program will provide grants for energy-efficient equipment upgrades

Purpose of IGI New Stores in Food Deserts Program

- Improve access to fresh foods in economically distressed communities
- Support local entrepreneurs and communities



Funding and Awards

- Total Funding Available: \$14 million
- Awards will be offered in rounds
 - First round will offer up to \$3 Million and will end May 24
 - Second, larger round will be open approximately June 1 – August 31.
- Awards can range from \$160,000 to \$2.4 Million
- Match Requirement: 1:3 (Applicant pays 25% of project cost)



Eligibility by Entity

The following entities will be eligible:

- Small businesses with fewer than 500 employees and no more than 4 grocery stores
- Local units of government



Eligibility by Location

Grocery locations must be consistent with the following;

- Must be located in a food desert
- Less than 30% of revenue from alcohol and tobacco sales
- Store will be best classified as a supermarket or other grocery retailer
- Store will accept SNAP and WIC
- Store must contribute to diversity of fresh foods available in the community



Food Deserts (USDA Food Access Research Atlas)

- Map link: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>
- Qualification depends on meeting both low income AND low access thresholds.
- Access is evaluated differently for urban vs. rural census tracts. (Select “LI and LA at 1/2 and 10 miles” on the map.)



Allowable Expenditures

The following expenditures will be eligible for reimbursement

- Land acquisition and related
- Site development
- New construction/renovations
- Equipment
- Working capital for certain first-year operating expenses (e.g, wages, utility costs, initial food inventory)
- Other operating expenses necessary for provision of fresh foods.

Expenditures on items unrelated to provision of fresh foods will be excluded (e.g., Video poker machines, non-food inventory)



Submitting Applications

- **The deadline for the first round is May 24 at 5:00 p.m.**
- Applicants must be properly registered in GATA portal and SAM.gov prior to application deadline.
- Applicants may submit one application per location each round for this opportunity.
- Application documents must be submitted to the Department electronically (Link be found in Section D4 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity Supplement)
- Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.



Required Application Documents

- Uniform Application
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- Mandatory Disclosures
- **Budget Template**
- **Program Application**
- Letters of Support



Selected Program Application Requirements

- Project summary
- Financial Plan
 - Ownership, assets & debt
 - Projected Costs & Revenues
- Business Plan
 - Staffing
 - Supply Chain
 - Market potential
- Experience/Expertise



Application Grading and Awards

DCEO will accept and review submissions received by the deadline

- Grant proposals will be reviewed for eligibility
- Eligible applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process
- Grants will (generally) be awarded in the first round to applicants with scores of 75 or higher



Merit Criteria (Need)

- Census Tract Poverty Rate
- Distance from the nearest existing store
- Letters of Support



Merit Criteria (Capacity)

- Demonstrated ability of ownership/management team needed to successfully manage grants of a comparable scale and scope.
- Demonstrated ability to effectively launch and operate a grocery store and maintain efficient operations.
- Demonstrated ability to tailor grocery services and offerings operations to community needs.



Merit Criteria (Quality)

- Business plan is clear and robust
- Scope of work for project is clear, coherent & aligned with the business plan
- Budget is detailed and aligned with scope of work
- Budget is reasonable and supported by evidence
- Applicant provides convincing demonstration that store would alleviate lack of access to a variety of fresh foods for local residents.



Important Dates


Application deadline: May 24 @ 5:00 p.m.

Anticipated Award Start Date: Q3CY24

Anticipated Award End Date: Q4CY26



Resources and Assistance

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- DCEO Grant Opportunities Main Page
 - Technical Assistance – Program and Project expertise (coming soon)
 - Technical Assistance – Registration and grant expertise (CEO.granthelp@illinois.gov)
 - Program Manager (John O’Conner) – CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov

General Advice on Submitting Successful Applications

- Review NOFO Supplement carefully.
- Address eligibility criteria explicitly
- Deadlines are firm
- Address all scoring criteria as completely as possible
- Be aware grants are reimbursement-based



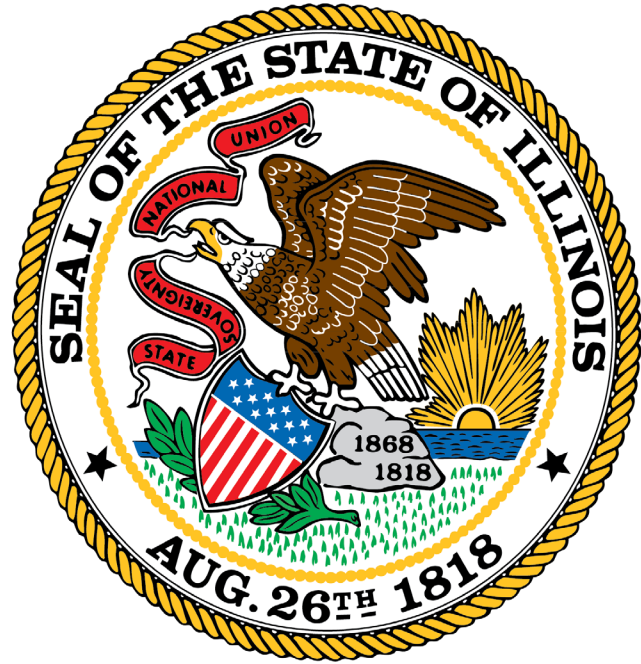
Questions?

Thank You!

Office of Policy Development, Planning & Research
500 East Monroe
Springfield, IL 62701
Email: CE0.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
JB Pritzker, Governor



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity