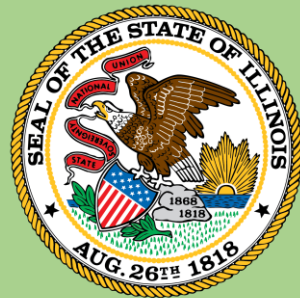




# Illinois Grocery Initiative

## New Stores in Food Deserts Round 2



**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity

*October 2024*

# The Illinois Grocery Initiative

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](#) combats food insecurity and fosters entrepreneurship in distressed communities by offering competitive grants to support the establishment of new grocery stores in food deserts
- The Equipment Upgrades program offers competitive grants for energy-efficient equipment upgrades to foster sustainability of existing stores



## Funding and Awards

- Total Funding Available: \$11 million for this round
- Awards can range from \$150,000 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**
- **Store will be best classified as a supermarket or other grocery retailer**
- **Less than 30% of revenue from alcohol and tobacco sales**
- **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)

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- 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 December 2 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 undergo merit review
- Grants will (generally) be awarded in the first round to applicants in descending order by score.



## Merit Criteria (Need)

- Census Tract Poverty Rate
- Distance from the nearest existing grocery 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.



# Changes from Round 1

## Substantive changes

- Poverty Rate scoring scale
- Ownership type diversity consideration
- Minimum award level

## Clarifications/Additions

- Availability of TA services from WIU/CSU
- Delivery service investments excluded
- Noting SNAP/WIC requirements





# Important Dates

Application deadline: December 2nd @ 5:00 p.m.

Anticipated Award Start Date: Q1CY25

Anticipated Award End Date: Q4CY26




# Resources and Assistance


- DCEO has contracted with Western Illinois University (WIU) and Chicago State University (CSU) to provide technical assistance services for Illinois Grocery Initiative applicants and grantees
  - CSU – Derrick Collins [dcolli25@csu.edu](mailto:dcolli25@csu.edu)
  - WIU – Sean Park [ms-park@wiu.edu](mailto:ms-park@wiu.edu)
- [New Stores in Food Deserts Grant Opportunity page](#)
- Registration/grant expertise – [CEO.granthelp@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.granthelp@illinois.gov)
- Program staff – [CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov)



# Resources and Assistance

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

# General Advice on Submitting Successful Applications

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- Review NOFO Supplement carefully.
  - Consider tapping into assistance/partnerships
  - Be aware grants are reimbursement-based
  - Deadlines are firm
  - Address all scoring criteria as completely as possible.
    - Reviewers will reward applications that are complete, coherent, and well-supported by evidence.
    - Reviewers less interested in flowery prose and nifty graphics.

# Questions?

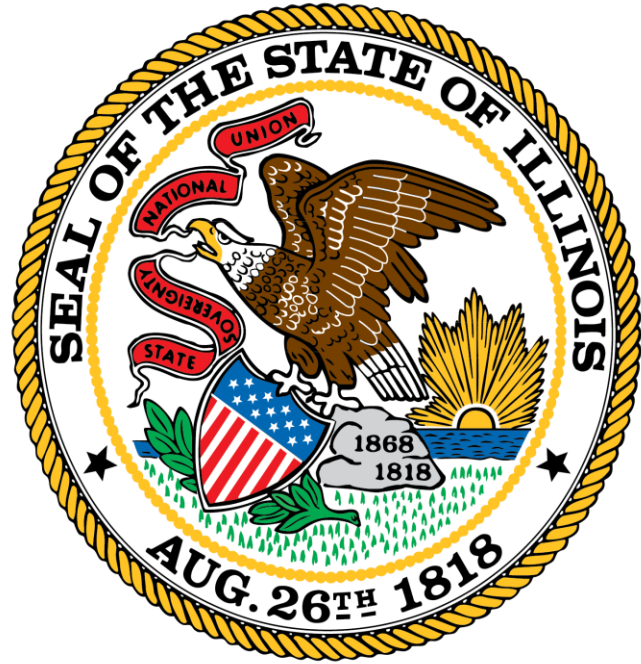
# Thank You!

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**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor



# Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity