

**State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)  
Summary Information**

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	John O'Conner (CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY25-2 Equipment Upgrade Program (Round 2)
Funding Opportunity Title	Illinois Grocery Initiative
CSFA Number	420-35-3295
CSFA Popular Name	Illinois Grocery Initiative
Anticipated Number of Awards	15
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$2,482,000
Award Range	\$25000 - \$250000
Source of Funding	State
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	Yes
Indirect Costs Allowed	No
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	Yes : The Illinois Grocery Initiative is capital-only. This opportunity is not intended to support operational expenditures.
Posted Date	12/17/2024
Application Date Range	12/17/2024 - 12/15/2025 : 5:00PM
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... <a href="https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3295-2956.html">https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3295-2956.html</a>
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 01/08/2025 : 10:00AM Registration link : <a href="https://illinois.webex.com/webappng/sites/illinois/recording/afa70a4ab007103db7fd22cb5acd6dbf/playback">https://illinois.webex.com/webappng/sites/illinois/recording/afa70a4ab007103db7fd22cb5acd6dbf/playback</a>

# Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

## Illinois Grocery Initiative – Equipment Upgrades Program NOFO ID: 3295-2956

For information about grants please visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/granteeresources.html>.

### A. Program Description

#### Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the “Department” or “DCEO”) is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) to offer grants to qualifying Illinois grocery stores for energy-efficient equipment upgrades.

#### Program Description

The Illinois Grocery Initiative Equipment Upgrades Program, authorized by Public Act 103-0561, will provide grants for new energy-efficient equipment upgrades for existing independently-owned for-profit grocery stores, cooperative grocery stores, or not-for-profit grocery stores.

While the Illinois Grocery Initiative is intended to reduce or eliminate the existence of “food deserts<sup>1</sup>” in Illinois and will prioritize stores located in food deserts, the Equipment Upgrades Program is not limited to establishments located in food deserts. These grants are intended, however, to facilitate energy-efficient equipment investment and sustainability for stores located in food deserts, areas that could become food deserts, and other areas that are underserved to a lesser degree. These grants will reimburse costs for the purchase and installation of new energy-efficient equipment.

Other costs, including investment in solar generation equipment and remodeling, are ineligible for this program.

#### Program History

The Equipment Upgrades program, along with the New Stores in Food Deserts program, is authorized by the Illinois Grocery Initiative through Public Act 103-0561. This is the second round of the Equipment Upgrades program, and the first to be offered on a rolling basis.

#### Performance Goals and Measures

Grantees will be required to submit performance data to the Department on a quarterly basis. Performance reporting will encompass both the implementation of projects supported by the grant and impacts on the community. Performance measures may include but will not necessarily be limited to:

- Project Milestones Completed
- Grocery Store Remains Open 1 year after project completion

#### Other Information

DCEO has contracted with Chicago State University (CSU) and Western Illinois University (WIU) to provide technical assistance services for Illinois Grocery Initiative applicants and grantees. Applicants desiring assistance in preparing applications may contact these institutions directly.

Chicago State University  
Derrick K. Collins  
Dean, College of Business  
O (773) 995-3976  
M (312) 953-1295  
[dcolli25@csu.edu](mailto:dcolli25@csu.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the USDA Food Desert map at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>. The Illinois Grocery Act’s definition of “food desert” corresponds to the USDA map using the ½ mile and 10 mile radii for urban and rural census tracts, respectively.

Western Illinois University  
Sean Park  
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
217-248-0079  
[ms-park@wiu.edu](mailto:ms-park@wiu.edu)

## B. Funding Information

This grant program is utilizing state funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is \$2,482,000. Awards will range from \$25,000 to \$250,000. The Department expects to make 15-20 awards through this NOFO.

Anticipated start date for awards is early calendar year 2025. The period of performance is expected to be mid-2025 through the end of 2026.

The following expenditures will be eligible for reimbursement under this program, insofar the equipment will result in energy efficiency improvements:

- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment
- Refrigeration units and freezers
- Lighting systems

**The release of this NOFO does not obligate the Department to make an award.**

## C. Eligibility Information

An entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/taxpayer-identification-numbers-tin#:~:text=You%20can%20use%20the%20IRS%27s,for%20Individual%20Taxpayer%20Identification%20Number>);
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (<https://sam.gov>), SAM.gov registrations must be marked as “public” to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information;
- Has a valid UEI number (<https://sam.gov>);
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (verified at <https://sam.gov>);
- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable ([https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business\\_services/corp.html](https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/corp.html));
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list (verified once entity is registered in GATA Grantee Portal); and
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx>).

Entities on the Illinois Stop Payment List and/or the Federal Excluded Parties List at time of application submission will not be considered for an award.

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of “qualified” status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State). A federal Debarred and Suspended status cannot be remediated.

Pursuant to the policy of the Illinois Office of the Comptroller, to receive grant funds from the State of Illinois, a grantee must be considered a regarded entity by the IRS for federal income tax purposes. Disregarded entities will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

### 1. Eligible Applicants include:

Eligibility for this program will be constrained by characteristics of prospective store ownership and the intended offerings of the store.

1. Grants will be limited to projects making energy-efficient investments in existing bricks-and-mortar operations in Illinois.
2. This grant opportunity will be limited to independently-owned grocers or cooperatives with fewer than 500 employees and no more than 4 grocery stores.
3. Grocery locations must be consistent with the following to be eligible:
  - o The store is or will be classified as a supermarket or other grocery retailer in the 2022 North American Industry Classification System under code 445110, a meat retailer under code 44524, a fruit and vegetable retailer under code 44523, or a fish and seafood retailer under 44525.
  - o The store cannot derive more than 30% of its revenue from alcohol and tobacco sales.
  - o The store must accept or will accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children benefits.
  - o The store must contribute to diversity of fresh foods available in the community by selling fresh foods such as meats, fruits and vegetables that have not been processed in any manner.

The Department complies with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to: The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.), The Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10/1 et seq.), The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) (42 USC 2000a-and 2000H-6), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq.), and The Age Discrimination Act (42 USC 6101 et seq.).

## **2. Cost Sharing or Matching.**

Cost sharing or Matching is required for this opportunity. Applicants are required to provide 25% of the total project costs, representing a 1:3 match. These matching funds can come from any nonstate sources such as local municipal funds, federal funds, or private investment. Such sources of funds shall be identified and documented in the application.

## **3. Indirect Cost Rate.**

This grant opportunity is limited to capital improvement expenses. The grant will not compensate for indirect costs, overhead or administrative expenses associated with the execution of the project.

## **4. Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information.**

Applications and accompanying materials are subject to disclosure in response to requests received under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.). Information that could be proprietary, privileged, or confidential commercial or financial information should be clearly identified as such in the application materials. The Department will maintain the confidentiality of that information only to the extent permitted by law.

## **5. Other, if applicable.**

Applicants may submit one application per location per round for this opportunity. Applicants receiving an initial denial due to failure to meet Grant Accountability of Transparency Act requirements will have the opportunity to remedy such deficiencies and to be subsequently considered for an award. In addition, applicants receiving a denial due to a low merit review score will have a one-time opportunity to submit additional supporting documentation and receive a second review. See section E.2 for details.

## D. Application and Submission Information

### 1. Address to Request Application Package.

Grant application forms are available at the web link provided in the “Grant Application Link” field of this announcement or by contacting the Program Manager:

John O’Conner  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
607 E Adams  
Springfield, IL 62701  
Tele: 217-782-6022  
Email: [CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov)

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission.

A standard application package must be submitted and reviewed by the Department. Each package should contain the following items:

- 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

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the **submission of the following other programmatic specific items as part of a program application:**

- Program Application
- Letters of Support. Applicants should provide at least two letters of support (LOS) from stakeholders in the community as part of their application. LOS provided under separate cover will not be considered. At least one LOS should come from an elected official (such as a mayor, state legislator, or alderman) serving the area. Additional LOS could come from community organizations, local businesses, local residents, etc.

Please note there is a maximum upload of 10 documents in the web form that you submit the application, so combining files may be necessary.

### 3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM. To establish a SAM registration, go to [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) and/or utilize this instructional link: How to Register in SAM from the [www.grants.illinois.gov](http://www.grants.illinois.gov) Resource Links tab. SAM.gov registrations must be “public.”
- (ii) Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The State awarding agency may not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the State awarding agency is ready to make a

Federal pass-through or State award, the State awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

#### 4. Submission Dates and Times.

Applications will be open through 5:00PM CST on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 or until funds are exhausted and will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ca937297980b4ab1b090b14bf5047899>

The Department is under no obligation to review applications that do not comply with the above requirements. Failure to meet the application deadline may result in the Department returning application without review or may preclude the Department from making the award.

#### 5. Intergovernmental Review, if applicable.

N/A

#### 6. Funding Restrictions.

This opportunity does not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs. Other restrictions can be found in Sections A., B., and C.

#### 7. Other Submission Requirements.

Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.

Applicants may confirm receipt of the application and documents by contacting the program contact listed in this NOFO.

### E. Application Review Information.

#### 1. Criteria.

DCEO will accept and review submissions from all eligible entities who demonstrate the ability to administer grants in line with programmatic needs and applicable federal and state funding requirements.

Grant proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale (or on a percentage scale). The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal: Need, Capacity, and Quality.

Grants will be limited to projects making energy-efficient investments in existing bricks and mortar operations in Illinois.

<b>Need- Identification of stakeholders, facts, and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose (35 points)</b>		
1	Census Tract Poverty Rate (Points will be awarded per sliding scale, with 10 points for poverty rates above 40%, 8 points for 35-40%, 6 points for 30-35%, 4 points for 25-30%, 2 points for 20-25%, and 0 points for less than 20%)	10 pts
2	Distance from the nearest existing store in miles (Points will be awarded per sliding scale, with 6 points awarded for a distance of 2 miles in an urban census tract or 20 miles in a rural tract; 5 points for 1 mile in an urban tract or	6 pts

	10 miles in a rural tract; 3 points for 0.5 miles in an urban tract or 5 miles in a rural tract; 1 point for .25 miles in an urban tracts or 2 miles in a rural tract; 0 points for less)	
3	Project site is located in food desert per USDA map	5 pts
4	Letters of Support (LOS) from elected officials and other community stakeholders. (3 points for at least 1 LOS from an elected official for project location; an additional 1 point apiece for up to 3 additional LOS from stakeholders, including private citizens. 1 point may be deducted if the LOS come from narrow cross-section of community)	6 pts
5	Applicant demonstrates the project is needed for successful operation of establishment	8 pts
<b>Capacity- The ability of the applicant to execute the project according to requirements of the grant program (20 pts)</b>		
1	Applicant has demonstrated ability and has garnered experience of ownership/management team needed to successfully manage grants of a comparable scale and scope.	5 pts
2	Applicant has demonstrated ability/experience of ownership/management team to effectively operate a grocery store and maintain efficient operations.	10 pts
3	Applicant documents a coherent scope of work demonstrating command of steps needed for successful project.	5 pts
<b>Quality- The totality of features and characteristics of the project that indicate its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program (45 pts)</b>		
1	Applicant scope of work is detailed and aligned with purpose of the project.	5 pts
2	Applicant timetable includes appropriate milestones and deliverables	5 pts
3	Budget is detailed and aligned with scope of work	5 pts
4	Budget is reasonable and supported by evidence	5 pts
5	Applicant demonstrates energy efficiency of equipment investment.	15 pts
6	Project will enhance or preserve access to a robust variety of fresh fruits, vegetables & meats	10 pts

## 2. Review and Selection Process.

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and an average of all scores will be the final applicant score. Grants will be awarded to applicants they receive scores of 75 or higher. The Department may depart from this general standard as needed to promote regional balance across the state. For example, the Department may opt to select only the top-scoring project among several applicants in close proximity and may choose to fund a project scoring below 75 if an area of great need would otherwise not receive an award.

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Department within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published. The written appeal

shall include the name and address of the appealing party, the identification of the grant and a statement of reasons for the appeal. To file an appeal, applicants must submit the appeal in writing and in accordance with the Merit-Based Application Review Appeals Process listed on the Grant Opportunities page of the DCEO website:  
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.html>.

As noted in Section C.5, applicants receiving denials due to a low merit review score will have a one-time opportunity to submit additional or revised application materials to earn a higher score. After receiving such a denial, applicants may request feedback on their application by sending an email to [CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GroceryInitiative@illinois.gov). The Department will advise the unsuccessful applicant regarding the criteria for which the applicant scored poorly and invite the applicant to submit additional or revised materials to improve their score. If the Department deems the additional or revised materials to be responsive and substantive, the application will be rescored.

### **3. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates, if applicable.**

After the application period is closed, the Department will conduct a merit based review of eligible applications. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) to initiate the grant agreement phase. During this phase, you will be contacted by a grant manager to develop a grant agreement, which can be a months long process depending on complexity, cooperation, and conformity with all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award, or not to issue any award.

## **F. Award Administration Information**

### **1. State Award Notices.**

The Notice of State Award (NOSA) will specify the funding terms and specific conditions resulting from the pre-award risk assessments and the merit based review process. The NOSA must be accepted in the GATA Portal by an authorized representative of the grantee organization. The NOSA is not an authorization to begin performance or incur costs.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.**

**Subrecipients and Subcontractors:** Agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

**Grant Uniform Requirements:** The Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.*) (and its related administrative rules, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000), was enacted to increase the accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds from whatever source and to reduce administrative burdens on both State agencies and grantees by adopting federal guidance and regulations applicable to those grant funds; specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200).

**Procurement:** Grantees will be required to adhere to methods of procurement per the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317 – 2 CFR 200.327).

**Business Enterprise Program:** For grant awards of \$250,000 or more, grantees will be required to comply with the Business Enterprise Program for Minorities, Females, and Persons with Disabilities Act (30 ILCS 575/0.01 *et seq.*), which establishes a goal for contracting with businesses that have been certified as owned and controlled by persons who are minority, female



or who have disabilities. The Department will work with the grantees to ensure compliance prior to the establishment of the grant agreement as well as through the life of the grant.

**Environmental Review Requirements:** Capital grants will be reviewed to determine environmental review requirements. Based on the scope of the project, the grantees may be required to complete additional environmental approvals before a grant agreement can be initiated.

**Illinois Works Jobs Program Act (30 ILCS 559/20-1 et seq.):** For grants with an estimated total project cost of \$500,000 or more, the grantee will be required to comply with the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative (30 ILCS 559/20-20 to 20-25) and all applicable administrative rules. The “estimated total project cost” is a good faith approximation of the costs of an entire project being paid for in whole or in part by appropriated capital funds to construct a public work. The goal of the Illinois Apprenticeship Initiative is that apprentices will perform either 10% of the total labor hours actually worked in each prevailing wage classification or 10% of the estimated labor hours in each prevailing wage classification, whichever is less. Grantees will be permitted to seek from the Department a waiver or reduction of this goal in certain circumstances pursuant to 30 ILCS 559/20-20(b). The grantee must ensure compliance for the life of the entire project, including during the term of the grant and after the term ends, if applicable, and will be required to report on and certify its compliance.

**Prevailing Wage Act (820 ILCS 130/0.01 et seq.):** Applicants that are awarded grants shall comply with all requirements of the Prevailing Wage Act, including but not limited to, inserting into all contracts for construction a stipulation to the effect that not less than the prevailing rate of wages as applicable to the project shall be paid to all laborers, workers, and mechanics performing work under the award and requiring all bonds of contractors to include a provision as will guarantee the faithful performance of such prevailing wage clause as provided by contract. Grantees will be required to report on Prevailing Wage Act compliance on a monthly basis.

**Employment of Illinois Workers on Public Works Act (30 ILCS 570/0.01 et seq.):** All grantees will be required to comply with the Employment of Illinois Workers on Public Works Act (30 ILCS 570/0.01 et seq.) (the “Act”), which provides that whenever there is a period of excessive unemployment in Illinois (as defined by the Act), if the Grantee is using Grant Funds for (1) constructing or building any public works, or (2) performing the clean-up and on-site disposal of hazardous waste for the State of Illinois or any political subdivision of the State, then the Grantee shall employ at least 90% Illinois laborers on such project. Illinois laborers refers to any person who has resided in Illinois for at least 30 days and intends to become or remain an Illinois resident. Grantees may receive an exception from this requirement by submitting a request and supporting documents certifying that Illinois laborers are either not available, or are incapable of performing the particular type of work involved. The certification must: (a) be submitted to the grant manager within the first quarter of the Award Term; (b) provide sufficient support that demonstrates the exception is met; (c) be signed by an authorized signatory of the Grantee; and (d) be approved by DCEO in consultation with the Illinois Department of Labor. In addition, every contractor on a public works project or improvement or hazardous waste clean-up and on-site disposal project in this State may place on such work no more than 3 (or 6 in the case of a hazardous waste clean-up and on-site disposal project) of the contractor’s regularly employed non-resident executive and technical experts.

### **3. Reporting.**

#### **Periodic Performance Report (PPR) and Periodic Financial Report (PFR)**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are required to submit in the format required by the Grantor, at least on a quarterly basis, the PPR and PFR electronically to their assigned grant manager. The first of such reports shall cover the first three months after the award begins. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.328, Periodic Financial Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.329, Periodic Performance Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the

report. Any additional reporting requirements will be disclosed in the NOSA. Grantees are required within 45 calendar days following the end of the period of performance to submit a final closeout report in the format required by the Grantor (See 2 CFR 200.344).

**Monitoring**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Department in accordance with 2 CFR 200.337. They must have an open-door policy allowing periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with participants and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

**Audit**

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Admin Rules shall apply (See 44 IL Admin Code 7000.90).

**G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)**

Grant Help Desk  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
Email: **CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov**

**H. Other Information, if applicable**

N/A