



Social Capital for Illinois Women-Owned Businesses & Future Female Founders

*powered by the Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
as of March 2023*

The [Office of Minority Economic Empowerment \(OMEE\)](#) at the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity \(DCEO\)](#), is committed to providing minority-, women-, persons with disabilities and veteran-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs, overall marginalized owned businesses, across the state with equitable access to opportunities and resources. Through dynamic partnerships, targeted outreach, and tailored programs and initiatives, OMEE aims to create an inclusive business ecosystem for communities that have traditionally faced systemic barriers to entry and growth. This investment spurs local economic development in underserved areas resulting in a revitalized and thriving Illinois economy. Click [here](#) to get connected with Team OMEE.

Sign-up for e-updates from the Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) at DCEO by visiting <https://bit.ly/3Iphbpi> to receive updates for your business. Contact Women's Business Development Manager Michelle Lura White at Michelle.White@illinois.gov with any questions.

The [Office of Regional Economic Development \(Team RED\)](#) at the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity \(DCEO\)](#), lives and works in the communities they serve and are charged with facilitating economic development efforts in their regions, in addition to providing communities with front-line access to state programs and services. Team RED serves as an Economic Development Concierge for the State of Illinois. To help provide localized assistance, the State of Illinois is divided into 10 economic development regions. Download a copy of the Illinois Economic Development Regional [map](#) and [contacts](#).

Sign up for an e-newsletter from the Office of Regional Economic Development (RED) at DCEO by visiting <https://bit.ly/41s1erV> or contact Office of Regional Economic Development team member Kala Lambert at Kala.Lambert@illinois.gov with any questions.

What is Social Capital?

Social capital is the networks and relationships within and between individuals, groups, and organizations, which can lead to building trust and creating efficiencies. As social capital is a very significant form of capital like financial capital, building and leveraging your social capital as a woman-owned business or future female founder can lead to:

- being introduced to new clients or customers
- finding a co-founder and/or team members to hire
- learning about other businesses you can collaborate and/or share resources with
- connecting with financial institutions
- being introduced to potential investors
- acquiring new skills and knowledge
- meeting potential new mentors and advisors
- much more!

As many women-owned businesses and future female founders lack networks and mentors, we developed a social capital resource guide to help Illinois women-owned businesses and future female founders including minority women business owners & entrepreneurs, build their social capital to expand HER opportunities.

Below is not a complete list of all the social capital resources (*mentoring/networking/etc.*) available to Illinois women-owned businesses and future female founders. The list below is also not an endorsement of the views, opinions, products, or services of any the below entities.

Please contact us anytime if you're looking for a different social capital resource. We're here to support you!

Women-owned Businesses & Future Female Founders

❖ [The Illinois Small Business Development Centers \(SBDC\)](#)

mentoring women-owned businesses and future female founders

Offering at no cost one-on-one business advising, the Illinois Small Business Development Centers (IL SBDCs) are centers located across the state which offer assistance with business, management, and marketing plans; financial assessment and guidance; in-depth business training and more. The IL SBDCs also provides specialized services in technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial development. Business consultation is available to businesses of all stages/sizes/industries/etc. as well as for future owners & founders. Click [here](#) to find the nearest IL SBDC by address or zip code. For upcoming events & webinars, click [here](#).

❖ [AWARE \(Accelerating Women And underRepresented Entrepreneurs\)](#)

Urbana & Champaign area-networking & mentoring for women technology entrepreneurs

AWARE (Accelerating Women And underRepresented Entrepreneurs) which is programmed through the EnterpriseWorks incubator at the University of Illinois Research Park, provides targeted mentorship such as business consulting, strategy assistance, marketing and communication help, investor preparedness, or other startup consultation needed through the Research Park [Entrepreneur-in-Residence \(EIR\)](#) program. AWARE also offers networking opportunities through its [events](#) and trainings.

❖ [Centralia Business & Professional Women](#)

Centralia area-networking for women-owned businesses and professionals

The Centralia Business and Professional Women in southern Illinois is dedicated to improving the professional, personal, economic, and educational outlook of women.

❖ [Ellevate Network](#)

networking for women+ at work

As the largest community for women+ at work with a [Chicago chapter](#), the Ellevate Network helps women build meaningful local in-person and digital relationships that can offer insights and open doors to opportunities. Members show up for each other, helping each woman — no matter their background or aspirations — building careers that they love. In addition to [events](#), one of their signature programs is their [Ellevate Squads](#), which are small, diverse, and trusted groups of peers. Resources to advance women through the forms of [videos/podcasts/articles](#) can also be found on their website.

❖ [Federation of Women Contractors](#)

networking for women contractors in the construction industry

The Illinois-based Federation of Women Contractors (FWC) is a dedicated group of women contractors who work tirelessly to promote opportunities for one another. In addition to [networking opportunities](#) for FWC members, FWC has a [membership directory](#) featuring Illinois women contractors.

❖ [Founding Females](#)

Peoria area-mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses and future female founders

As a fellowship network for empowering and uplifting female entrepreneurs to launch businesses, Founding Females which is based in central Illinois, also offers resources and programs such as their [Founding Females Mastermind mentoring program](#), [Start Your Business Bootcamp](#), and more.

❖ [Illinois Women in Cannabis](#)

networking for women-owned businesses and future female founders in the cannabis industry

The statewide membership organization empowers women of all ages and backgrounds to build strong relationships, networks, and careers in the cannabis industry. Resources include their [networking opportunities](#).

❖ [National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms \(NAMWOLF\)](#)

networking for women & minority-owned law firms

As a national nonprofit trade association comprised of minority and women owned law firms and stakeholders throughout the U.S., the National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF) which is led by its Chicago CEO, promotes diversity in the legal profession by fostering relationships among distinguished minority and women owned law firms and private/public entities.

❖ **[National Association of Women Business Owners \(NAWBO\)](#)**

networking for women-owned businesses in Chicagoland and central Illinois

The national non-profit is the only dues-based organization in the U.S. representing the interests of all women entrepreneurs across all industries. As the unified voice of over 11.6 million women-owned businesses in the United States representing the fastest growing segment of the economy, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), has a Chicagoland chapter ([NAWBO Chicago](#)) and a central Illinois chapter, [NAWBO Central Illinois](#). In addition to networking opportunities, they have a [Resource Center](#) and a [NAWBO Institute for Entrepreneurial Development](#).

❖ **[NextUp](#)**

mentoring & networking for women+ at work

As the Illinois-based national non-profit NextUp is the largest non-profit of its type, with over 15,000 members representing over 900 organizations, 21 regions, and over 300 national and regional corporate partners, NextUp's focus is advancing all women, growing businesses, and transforming our workplaces through the power of community. Through their [events/forums/summit](#), their [membership programs](#) such as leadership development & assessments, inspiring [Advancing All Women](#) and [rEvolution](#) podcasts, and other programs & initiatives, NextUp is contributing to the women's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

❖ **[Polish Women in Business](#)**

networking for Polish women business owners & entrepreneurs

The Illinois-based Polish Women in Business represents the interests of Polish-American entrepreneurs across all industries.

❖ **[Rockford Women's Small Business Networking Group](#)**

Rockford area-networking for women small business owners

The Rockford Women's Small Business Networking Group was created for women entrepreneurs who own small businesses in and around the Rockford, IL area to have a place to market their small business and build and expand their professional network.

❖ **[The Founding Moms](#)**

for mom entrepreneurs & future mom founders

Led by its Illinois-based founder, The Founding Moms is the world's #1 & first collective of offline masterminds and online resources where mom entrepreneurs can build better businesses. In addition to mentoring & networking opportunities for members, the founder Jill Salzman also hosts a podcast ["Why Are We Shouting?"](#) that addresses mom entrepreneurs' questions in operating a business.

❖ [Women's Business Enterprise National Council \(WBENC\)](#)

mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses

The national non-profit, Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) is the largest third-party [certifier](#) of businesses owned, controlled, and operated by women in the U.S. and a leading advocate for women-owned businesses in corporate and government supply chains in addition to [programs](#) & [resources](#), they also have specialty [networking programs](#).

❖ [Women's Business Development Center \(WBDC\)](#)

mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses, including childcare business owners

As the Illinois-based Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) is a force in business development services, serving a 9-state region in the Midwest, the nationally recognized non-profit which is part of the SBA's national network of Women's Business Centers, provides many at no-cost and low-cost programs and services for women-owned businesses throughout Illinois. Mentoring is available through its programs such as [Plan for Profit](#) and [Digital Strategy & eCommerce](#) co-horts and co-horts for childcare business owners such as [RiseUp and Elevate](#). The WBDC's year-round [events](#) offer networking opportunities.

❖ [Women's Mentoring Co-Op](#)

mentoring for Chicagoland women founders

Presented by Chicago Innovation, the mentoring program is where women founders can connect, innovate, and grow.

❖ [Women Tech Founders](#)

mentoring & networking for women tech founders & future female tech founders

Women Tech Founders (WTF) is an Illinois-based grassroots organization that connects, inspires, and advances women in technology by providing them with the resources and support network to thrive, innovate, and ultimately change the world. In addition to providing mentoring & [networking](#) opportunities, WTF also offers inspirational capital through its [Stories That Inspire](#) feature.

❖ [YWCA Evanston/North Shore](#)

Evanston/North Shore area- mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses and future female founders

Mentoring opportunities are available such as through their [YW Tech Lab](#) which provides education in digital skills to traditionally underrepresented or vulnerable populations, such as women of color, survivors of domestic violence, and low-wage workers and their [Basic Money Management program](#) which is designed to strengthen money management skills by providing tools to help with budgeting, credit and debt issue. YWCA Evanston/North Shore [events](#) offer networking opportunities.

❖ **[YWCA Metropolitan Chicago](#)**

Chicago- mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses & future female founders

Throughout the year, the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago is dedicated to empowering women and eliminating racism by providing support to all women along various stages of their journeys. Mentoring opportunities are available through their programs such as through their [Illinois Small Business Development Center at YWCA Metropolitan Chicago](#) which provides confidential at no-cost advising, [Breedlove Entrepreneurship Center](#) which ensures that women of color business owners realize success and prosperity, and through their [YWCA Innovation & Technology Institute \(ITI\)](#) which boasts state-of-the-art technology facilities designed to help you expand and strengthen your business and personal computer skills. As YWCA Metropolitan Chicago [events](#) offer networking opportunities, they provide a wealth of programs and services year-round.

❖ **[YWCA Northwestern Illinois](#)**

Rockford area- mentoring & networking for women-owned businesses & future female founders

Programs such as their [Diving Deeper: A Guided Business Plan](#) which is designed to help women of color overcome barriers to starting, growing and sustaining businesses while providing them with educational tools to increase their knowledge and confidence as entrepreneurs, offering mentoring to Rockford area women. Year-round [events](#) offering networking opportunities.

Women of Color-owned Businesses and Future Women of Color Founders

❖ **[Black Girl Ventures Foundation \(BGV\)](#)**

mentoring & networking for Black/Brown women-owned businesses

Through a variety of programs and initiatives such as the [BGV Pitch Program](#), the national non-profit Black Girl Ventures Foundation (BGV) addresses the unique challenges Black/Brown women face in accessing social and financial capital to grow their businesses. Their signature social capital program is the [BGV Connect Incubator](#), which they believe is the key to unlocking financial capital. Their website also features [blogs](#) which includes financial empowerment and additional topics for Black/Brown women-owned businesses.

❖ **[BOSS Network \(“Bringing Out Successful Sisters”\)](#)**

mentoring & networking for professional and entrepreneurial women of color

As an Illinois-based national online community of professional and entrepreneurial women who support each other through digital content, programs and event-based networking, the BOSS Network (“Bringing Out Successful Sisters”) also offers mentoring opportunities through its [BOSS Business University](#), which is a digital platform that provides mentorship programming through industry business experts, inspirational capital through [success stories and spotlights](#), and financial capital through its partnership with Sage which closed its [2nd annual BOSS Impact Fund](#). Sign-up for the BOSS Network e-news to be alerted when the [3rd annual BOSS Impact Fund](#) application opens. The BOSS Network is founded by Dr. Cameka Smith, who was listed in *Ebony Magazine* as a 40 under 40 Entrepreneur.

❖ **IC U/Latinas**

mentoring & networking for Latina professionals, business owners, & entrepreneurs

Through the social enterprise program IC U/Latinas, the program offers small business cohorts which have disruptive proven modules of first-hand discussions & experiences for committed & driven Latinas to build their empires & dreams. IC U/Latinas is managed by Velez Global Enterprises, which was founded and led by CEO Letty Velez, a Latina serial entrepreneur, multi-million-dollar annual producer & ultimate community navigator who's a passionate connector.

❖ **Latinas Executives and Entrepreneurs Network ("LEEN")**

networking for Latina executives & entrepreneurs of all ages, industries, and professions

As an Illinois-based networking group, the Latinas Executives and Entrepreneurs Network ("LEEN") was co-founded by two highly respected Latinas in Chicagoland, entrepreneurs Paola Meinzer and Martha Tovias. LEEN provides Latinas a place that helps them move up in their professional world and build their versions of success, while at the same time celebrating the customs, values, and traditions of Latina women. As members of the [Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce \(IHCC\)](#), they provide a connection between member corporations and the group of women entrepreneurs. Click [here](#) for additional details and contact info.

❖ **The Ladder**

mentoring for Chicagoland Black & Latino founders

Mentorship for Black & Latino founders, presented by Chicago Innovation

❖ **YWCA Metropolitan Chicago**

Chicago- mentoring & networking for women of color business owners and future women of color founders

Throughout the year, the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago is dedicated to empowering women and eliminating racism by providing support to all women along various stages of their journeys. Mentoring opportunities are available through their programs such as through their [Illinois Small Business Development Center at YWCA Metropolitan Chicago](#) which provides confidential at no-cost advising, [Breedlove Entrepreneurship Center](#) which ensures that women of color business owners realize success and prosperity, and through their [YWCA Innovation & Technology Institute \(ITI\)](#) which boasts state-of-the-art technology facilities designed to help you expand and strengthen your business and personal computer skills. As YWCA Metropolitan Chicago [events](#) offer networking opportunities, they provide a wealth of programs and services year-round.

Veteran-owned Businesses & Their Families & Future Veteran Founders

❖ [Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs](#)

mentoring & networking for veteran-owned businesses

Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs in partnership with the Illinois Department of Central Management Services provides training and outreach to aspiring, emerging and established entrepreneurs by connecting them to government agencies, educational institutions, trade associations and business sector experts to educate them on resources and opportunities available to veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned business.

❖ [Bunker Labs](#)

mentoring & networking for veteran-owned businesses & their spouses

As an Illinois-based national non-profit, Bunker Labs provides community, programs, and courses to help military veterans and military spouses start and grow successful businesses and startups. With a few signature entrepreneurial programs such as their [Veterans in Residence](#) mentoring program for early-stage startups and growth-oriented small businesses, Bunker Labs also features [Chicago Ambassadors](#) for veteran-owned businesses and future founders to network with, in addition to events.

❖ [Office of Veterans Business Development \(OVBD\) at the U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#)

mentoring for veteran-owned businesses & their families

Devoted exclusively to promoting veteran entrepreneurship, the OVBD facilitates the use of all U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs by veterans, service-disabled veterans, reservists, active-duty service members, transitioning service members, and their dependents or survivors.

LGBTQ+ owned Businesses & Future LGBTQ+ Founders

❖ [StartOut](#)

mentoring & networking for LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs

The national membership organization with [Chicago StartOut Programming Board members](#), provides mentoring and networking opportunities in addition to resources such as their Founders Program.

Returning Citizens-Future Founders

❖ [Pathway to Enterprise for Returning Citizens \(PERC\)](#)

mentoring & networking for returning citizens who are interested in becoming future business owners & entrepreneurs

As a first of its kind program in Illinois developed by Greenwood Archer Capital, Pathway to Enterprise for Returning Citizens (PERC) is a multi-collaborative of community partners committed to addressing recidivism through entrepreneurship. The PERC track is designed for those entrepreneurially minded individuals that have already transitioned back to their communities yet continue to be plagued with economic barriers that impede on the ability to live a meaningful life.

Family-owned Businesses

- ❖ [Entrepreneur and Family Business Council \(EFBC\) at DePaul University Driehaus College of Business](#)
mentoring & networking for family-owned businesses
The Entrepreneur and Family Business Council exists to educate and empower the people of family and entrepreneurial businesses through impactful programs and a unique community of peer support. With programs such as the [Forum](#) offering mentoring and networking opportunities, EFBC also offers [events](#), and much more.
- ❖ [John L. Ward Center for Family Enterprises at Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management](#)
networking for family-owned businesses
With the Ward Center's mission being a leader in family enterprise education and research, they offer networking opportunities through [events](#).

Rural business owners & entrepreneurs

- ❖ [AgTech Innovation Summit | March 7, 2023 | Champaign](#)
networking for rural business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders
This free interactive conference on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 in Champaign, offers participants the opportunity to learn and share knowledge about the current state of agtech and looking into the future through dynamic panels, inspiring keynote presentations, and networking opportunities.
- ❖ [Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs](#)
mentoring & networking for rural business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders
The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs offers mentoring through its programs such as the [Illinois Value Added Sustainable Development Center \(IVASDC\)](#) which provides guidance for new community-owned stores, networking opportunities through its [conferences & trainings](#), and much more.
- ❖ [The Illinois Small Business Development Centers \(SBDC\)](#)
mentoring for rural business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders
Offering at no cost one-on-one business advising, the Illinois Small Business Development Centers (IL SBDCs) are centers located across the state which offer assistance with business, management, and marketing plans; financial assessment and guidance; in-depth business training and more. The IL SBDCs also provides specialized services in technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial development. Business consultation is available to businesses of all stages/sizes/industries/etc. as well as for future owners & founders. Click [here](#) to find the nearest IL SBDC by address or zip code. For upcoming events & webinars, click [here](#).
- ❖ [SCORE for Rural Entrepreneurs](#)
mentoring for rural business owners & entrepreneurs & future founders
SCORE business mentors can help you start, grow, or transition your business.

Future Youth & Young Adult Innovators & Entrepreneurs

❖ [Female Strong](#)

mentoring for future Chicagoland middle and high school girl entrepreneurs

Presented by the Illinois-based non-profit, Female Strong, their [Entrepreneurial Girls Program](#) 6-month cohort covers idea generation to pitching their businesses for startup investment funds and everything in between. Financial assistance is available for selected students with proven financial need.

❖ [Chicago Student Invention Convention](#)

mentoring for Chicago's future innovators & entrepreneurs

Presented by Chicago Innovation, Chicago's future innovators and entrepreneurs are provided mentoring opportunities through the Chicago Student Invention Convention.

❖ [Future Founders](#)

mentoring for future youth & young adult innovators & entrepreneurs

The Illinois-based Future Founders is building the nation's largest inclusive community of intentional young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial-minded leaders through its programs and initiatives.

Additional Mentoring & Networking Opportunities

❖ [1871](#)

mentoring for women entrepreneurs and networking for women-owned businesses & future female founders

As the Illinois-based innovation hub is an expansive community of founders, leaders, innovators, and supporters that is advancing the world forward and shaping a brighter future, 1871 offers [year-round events](#) which provide networking opportunities. As 1871 has been [ranked](#) in the past as the World's No. 1 Private Incubator and the Most Promising Incubator for Women Founders, their robust mentoring programs include [WMNtech Founders](#), [WMNtech Leaders](#), [WMNfintech](#), [WMNtech Pitch Competition](#), [BLKtech Founders](#) and [LTNtech Founders](#). 1871 also hosts pitch competitions for [women](#), Black, and Latinx tech founders to help them get the funding and support they need to drive their businesses forward.

❖ [Ageless Innovators](#)

mentoring for Chicagoland entrepreneurs

Through the intergenerational co-mentoring program, Chicago Innovation bridges generations through reciprocal mentoring to share experience & perspectives.

❖ [Brewing the American Dream](#)

speed coaching for food & beverage entrepreneurs

Speed coaching is among business resources for food & beverage entrepreneurs through the Brewing the American Dream program presented by [Accion Opportunity Fund](#) and [Samuel Adams Brewing](#).

❖ [Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce](#)

mentoring & networking for Chicago business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders

As a private, non-profit business assistance and economic development organization dedicated to helping area businesses grow as well as promoting the economic development of the region, mentoring and networking opportunities are available through programs such as the [Emerging Leaders](#) which engages and develops the next generation of Chicagoland business leader and through the [Illinois SBDC at the Chicagoland Chamber](#) which has already helped over 600 small business owners and entrepreneurs with their confidential, at no-cost 1:1 business advising.

❖ [Coleman Mentorship Program](#)

mentoring for Chicago entrepreneurs in DePaul University's community

Presented by Illinois-based Coleman Entrepreneurship Center at [DePaul University's Driehaus College of Business](#), the Coleman Mentorship Program offers more than 50 mentors who can help take your business to the next level.

❖ [Elevate CCIC, Inc.](#)

Mattoon area- mentoring & networking for business owners & future founders

As a Mattoon-based non-profit, Elevate is a business incubation center that provides mentoring for its [Elevate's Six-Step Program members](#) in the southern region. It also provides a regional [economic toolbox](#) of organizations supporting business owners & entrepreneurs and more.

❖ [EnRich Minority Mentor Protégé Program](#)

Decatur and Macon County- mentoring & networking for low-income and minority adults who are interested in entrepreneurship/future founders

Presented by Richland Community College, the EnRich Minority Mentor Protégé Entrepreneurship Program is a curriculum-driven program that builds a cohort and a supportive network for low-income or minority community residents, often first generation, entrepreneurs in this community. The program builds soft and hard-skills, addresses the importance of financial literacy and attaches mentors to each business concept.

❖ [Illinois Chamber of Commerce](#)

networking for business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders

As the state's leading business advocacy organization, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce offers year-round networking events including their [6th Annual Women in Business Conference](#) on June 21, 2023 in Naperville and a [Business Resource Center](#) which provides information and tools you need to keep your business in compliance with the many federal and state regulations and laws.

❖ [Illinois University Incubator Network](#)

mentoring & networking for business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders, with a primary focus on serving communities south of Chicagoland

The Illinois University Incubator Network (IUIIN) supports advancement of entrepreneurship through linking university incubators to resource sharing, technical assistance, and the collection of best practices. In addition to IUIIN's [programs and initiatives](#), IUIIN partners with the Illinois FAST Center to support technology-based entrepreneurs (TBE) and startups seeking SBIR/STTR funding for small business innovation research. Additional resources include networking opportunities through [events](#) and a wealth of [resources](#).

❖ [Innovate Springfield](#)

Springfield area- mentoring & networking for business owners & entrepreneurs and future founders

As Springfield's university-led incubator, Innovate Springfield is a catalyst for creating a collaborative community where ideas ignite, businesses incubate, and creators and social changemakers innovate. Innovate Springfield offers mentoring opportunities through its [CO.STARTERS program](#), networking opportunities through its events, and much more.

❖ [MATTER](#)

Chicagoland- mentoring & networking for healthcare innovators

The Illinois-based non-profit MATTER is a global healthcare startup incubator, community nexus, and corporate innovation center. The MATTER community is a neutral platform where healthcare entrepreneurs can come together with industry leaders, scientists, and clinicians from across the world to collaborate on developing next-generation healthcare and life sciences technologies. In addition to [mentoring opportunities](#) for incubator members, MATTER also offers year-round events which provide [networking opportunities](#).

❖ [Mercado on Fifth](#)

Quad Cities- mentoring & networking for English and Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs

As a Moline-based non-profit organization that hosts vibrant outdoor markets every Friday during the summer on 5th Avenue in Moline, Mercado on Fifth is dedicated to serving as a resource and catalyst for minority entrepreneurs, inspiring Hispanic cultural pride and providing access to bilingual enrichment and educational opportunities for a more empowered and engaged community. Mercado on Fifth and its partners have helped [create and/or provide a platform](#) for new minority-owned businesses and much more.

❖ [Pilot Project Brewing](#)

Chicagoland- mentoring & networking for brewery owners

Co-based in Illinois, the brewery incubator, Pilot Project Brewing, serves as a launch pad for start-up breweries, offering assistance with fine-tuning recipes, production scaling, business development, marketing, distribution and more. In addition to mentoring opportunities, Pilot Project Brewing [events](#) provide networking opportunities.

- ❖ **[Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation at the University of Chicago](#)**
Chicago South & West side neighborhoods- mentoring for business owners & entrepreneurs
The Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Chicago has 100+ mentors who are ready to meet with community members on the South and West sides of Chicago virtually or in person and assist businesses in navigating their business challenges and to plan for growth and scale. Click [here](#) for additional information and to book your mentor appointment.

- ❖ **[The Quincy Business & Technology Center \(QBTC\)](#)**
Quincy area- mentoring & networking for business owners & future founders
The Quincy Business & Technology Center (QBTC) enhances economic development by combining the entrepreneurial drive of emerging businesses with the services and resources needed for success and sustained growth. [Mentoring and networking opportunities](#) and additional services & features are offered by the QBTC.

- ❖ **[SBAC Empower's Mentoring Program](#)**
mentoring for Chicago small businesses
Presented by the Illinois-based [Small Business Advocacy Council \(SBAC\)](#), a full-service advocacy organization which empowers their members, their SBAC Empower's Mentoring Program provides an opportunity for mentors to discuss business strategies, help generate ideas for growth, and to provide advice with any issues or problems that have arisen for Chicago small business owners.

- ❖ **[SCORE](#)**
statewide-mentoring for small businesses
As a national non-profit with mentors throughout Illinois, SCORE is the nation's largest network of small business mentors helping small businesses plan, launch, manage and grow. SCORE mentors offer area-specific advice at no cost (financing, human resources, business planning) via email, telephone, and video. SCORE is powered by the [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#).

- ❖ **[The Hatchery](#)**
Chicagoland-mentoring & networking for food entrepreneurs
The Hatchery is an Illinois-based non-profit food and beverage incubator dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs build & grow successful businesses. As it provides mentoring opportunities through its [Sprouts Incubation Program](#), it also provides year-round [networking opportunities](#), [discounted consulting](#) for members, and more.

- ❖ **[The Incubator at SIU](#)**
Carbondale-mentoring & networking for business owners & future founders
The Incubator at SIU provides start-up coaching, business planning, peer-to-peer connections, and expert advisors to flexible co-working memberships.

Illinois-based Hubs & Organizations Supporting Women-Owned Businesses & Future Female Founders

Below is not a complete list (*above resources are not included below*) of all the supporting organizations and platforms in Illinois supporting women-owned businesses, future female founders & the women ecosystem.

BizHub | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

Women's Entrepreneurship (WE) Hub | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

Founders Resource Hub | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

ChiBizHub | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship at Illinois Technology | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

First Women's Bank | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

GET Cities Chicago | [link](#)

Innovation & New Ventures Office (INVO) at Northwestern University | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

The Illinois Minority Business Development Agency (IL MBDA) Business Center | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Great Lakes Region | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

WomenEmployed (WE) | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

World Business Chicago | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

YWCA Quincy | [link](#)

year-round events | [link](#)

- 2112 (*music, film/video & creative industry-focused technologies incubator*) | [link](#)
- Adelante Center for Entrepreneurship | [link](#)
- African American Business Association (AABA) | [link](#)
- Alianza Hispanoamericana NFP, Inc. | [link](#)
- Allies for Community Business | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- American Arab Chamber of Commerce of Illinois | [link](#)
- American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC) | [link](#)
- AMIGOS DE LENS | [link](#)
- Arab American Business & Professional Association | [link](#)
- Artfully Gifted Foundation | [link](#)
- Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois (AACCIL) | [link](#)
- Aurora Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (ARHCC) | [link](#)
- Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council | [link](#)
- Belvidere Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Berwyn Development Corporation | [link](#)
- Binational Institute of Human Development | [link](#)
- Black Business Alliance Peoria (BBAPeoria) Chapter | [link](#)
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County (BCCLC) | [link](#)
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Southern Illinois | [link](#)
- Breakthrough | [link](#)
- Built In Chicago | [link](#)
- Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research | [link](#)
- Center for Changing Lives (CCL) | [link](#)
- Center for Entrepreneurship and Social Impact at Northern Illinois University | [link](#)
- Centro de Trabajadores Unidos: United Workers' Center | [link](#)
- Champaign County Black Chamber of Commerce (CCBCC) | [link](#)
- Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Chicago Latina Moms | [link](#)
- Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council, Inc. (ChicagoMSDC) | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Chicago Southland Business Incubator's 4343 Ascending House | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Chicago United | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Chicago Urban League | [link](#)
- Chicago Veterans | [link](#)
- Chicagoland Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Chicagoland Food & Beverage Network | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community's Small Business Development Program | [link](#)
- Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Dress for Success Chicago | [link](#)
- Economic Strategies Development Corporation (ESDC) | [link](#)

- EIGERlab Innovation Network | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Elgin Area Chamber | [link](#)
- Elgin Hispanic Network (EHN) | [link](#)
- Evanston Latinx Business Alliance | [link](#)
- Foundation of Little Village (*formerly known as Little Village Foundation*) | [link](#)
- Founders First | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Fox Valley SCORE | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Gender Equality in Tech (GET) Cities Chicago | [link](#)
- Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Chicago | [link](#)
- Greater Decatur Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Greater Kankakee Black Chamber of Commerce (G.K.B.C.C.) | [link](#)
- Greater Peoria Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Greater Quad Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Greater Southwest Development Corporation | [link](#)
- Growth Dimensions - Economic Development Belvidere & Boone County | [link](#)
- GWDC (*formerly known as Greater Waukegan Development Coalition*) | [link](#)
- High Road Restaurants | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Highwood Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) | [link](#)
- Hispanic Business Leaders Committee- Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Hispanic Business Network – Chicago | [link](#)
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis | [link](#)
- Hispanic Chamber of Lake County | [link](#)
- Hispanic Connections Networking Group-Woodstock Chamber of Commerce & Industry | [link](#)
- Hispanic/Latino Resource Center at SIU | [link](#)
- Hispanic Leaders Group of Greater St. Louis | [link](#)
- Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) | [link](#)
- Illinois Minority Business Development Agency (IL MBDA) Business Center | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Illinois Re-Entry Resources | [link](#)
- Illinois Restaurant Association | [link](#)
- Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA) | [link](#)
- Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce (ILBCC) | [link](#)
- Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago | [link](#)
- Joliet City Center Partnership | [link](#)
- Joliet LEDA – Latino Economic Development Association | [link](#)
- Latino Business Group-DeKalb Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Latino Round Table of Southwestern Illinois | [link](#)

- Latinos Progresando | [link](#)
- LGBT Chamber of Commerce Illinois | [link](#)
- Little Village Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago | [link](#)
- Melrose Park Chamber of Commerce and Community Development | [link](#)
- Mexico Americanos Saliendo Adelante (MASA) | [link](#)
- Midwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Minority Business Development Center-Peoria | [link](#)
- Mondelēz SnackFutures' CoLab | [link](#)
- Mujeres Artesanas con Carrillo | [link](#)
- Mujeres Latinas en Acción | [link](#)
- Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois | [link](#)
- New American Welcome Center at the University YMCA-University of Illinois Champaign Urbana | [link](#)
- Next Street | [link](#)
- North River Commission | [link](#)
- Northern Kane County Chamber of Commerce (NKCCC) | [link](#)
- Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Northwest Side Community Development Corporation | [link](#)
- Peoria Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Chicago | [link](#)
- Pilsen Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- PODER | [link](#)
- Puerto Rican Cultural Center | [link](#)
- Quad County African American Chamber of Commerce (QCAACC) | [link](#)
- Rockford Black Chamber of Commerce | [link](#)
- Rockford Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (RRHCC) | [link](#)
- Rogers Park Business Alliance's GROW/PROGRESANDO | [link](#)
- Self-Help Federal Credit Union | [link](#)
- Six Corners Association | [link](#)
- South Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois | [link](#)
- Southland Black Chamber of Commerce & Industry | [link](#)
- Southwest Collective | [link](#)
- Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project | [link](#)
- Springfield Black Chamber of Commerce (SBCC) | [link](#)
- Street Vendors Association of Chicago (SVAC) | [link](#)
- Sunshine Enterprises | [link](#)
- Supply Chain Innovation Center and Business Incubator (SCICBI) at Governors State University | [link](#)
- Taiwanese American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Chicago | [link](#)

- Techrise by P33 | [link](#)
- Telpochcalli Community Education Project (TCEP) | [link](#)
- The Bronzeville Incubator | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- The Chicago Network | [link](#)
- The Mom Project | [link](#)
- The Resurrection Project | [link](#)
- The United States Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation - Midwest Region | [link](#)
- The USDOT Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC) for the Great Lakes Region at the Illinois Chamber of Commerce (IHCC) | [link](#)
- UIC Entrepreneurial Support Program | [link](#)
- Ulta's MUSE Accelerator | [link](#)
- Universidad Popular | [link](#)
- University of Illinois Research Park | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Grainger College of Engineering Technology Entrepreneur Center (TEC) | [link](#) | [upcoming events](#)
- Walgreens Vendor Program | [link](#)
- Women in Entrepreneurship (WIE Connect) at the Origin Ventures Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership at the University of Illinois' Gies College of Business | [link](#)
- YWCA of the University of Illinois (UIUC) | [link](#)

Volunteer Opportunities for Mentoring Small-Medium Businesses & Future Founders

❖ [BU Turner School Mentor program](#)

Peoria area-mentoring Bradley University's Turner School of Entrepreneurship & Innovation students

Every academic year, the Turner School of Entrepreneurship & Innovation invites successful entrepreneurs to connect with the Bradley University students through the BU Turner School Mentor program. The program enables students to learn through ongoing personal interaction with experienced entrepreneurs, investors, consultants, innovators and executives.

❖ [Chicago Student Invention Convention](#)

mentoring Chicago's future innovators & entrepreneurs

Chicago Innovation welcomes both [mentors](#) and [volunteers](#) to join them in supporting the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs.

❖ [Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship at Illinois Tech](#)

coaching Chicago college students

They're always interested in recruiting industry professionals to coach their student startup & innovation teams each semester. Click [here](#) for additional info and contact info.

❖ [Female Strong](#)

mentoring future Chicagoland middle and high school girl entrepreneurs

The Illinois-based non-profit Female Strong, welcomes Chicagoland professional women and in select cases men, who have a comfortable understanding of business functions and who have a passion for working with young women, exposing them to all the possibilities that lay ahead for them. Click [here](#) for additional volunteer information.

❖ [Future Founders](#)

volunteer opportunities to help future youth & young adult innovators & entrepreneurs

Volunteer opportunities are available to support the Illinois-based Future Founders in helping them build the nation's largest inclusive community of intentional young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial-minded leaders through its programs and initiatives.

❖ [Illinois Women in Cannabis](#)

volunteer opportunities to support women-owned businesses and future female founders in the cannabis industry

Volunteering at Illinois Women in Cannabis (IWC) events provides the opportunity to get involved and network with IWC members and fellow industry leaders.

❖ [mHUB Mentors](#)

mentoring hardtech & manufacturing entrepreneurs

As an Illinois-based hardtech and manufacturing innovation center, [mHUB](#) is the nation's leader convening the entrepreneurial ecosystem around hardtech innovation to ensure the manufacturing industry continues to accelerate, grow, and thrive. With the non-profit offering year-round [events](#), a wealth of programs such as its [mHUB mPOWER](#) programs for women & people of color, and much more, mHUB offers industry leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to offer guidance and leverage their networks in support of mHUB members.

❖ [SBAC Empower's Mentoring Program](#)

mentoring Chicago small business owners

Presented by the Illinois-based [Small Business Advocacy Council \(SBAC\)](#), their SBAC Empower's Mentoring Program welcomes veterans of the Chicago business world.

❖ [StartOut](#)

mentoring LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs

The national membership organization with [Chicago StartOut Programming Board members](#), offers mentoring to its members.