



Cannabis Social Equity Program Newsletter

Happy Spring!

Thank you again for participating in Round 3 of the Cannabis Social Equity Direct Forgivable Loan (DFL) Program. We are pleased to share an exciting update as we move into the final stages of this historic funding round.

It's been a few months since our [January newsletter](#), and we know you are wondering: When will decisions be made? When can I expect to hear back from you with a decision?

We've outlined the latest updates and timelines below.

Warm regards,

Cannabis Loan & Grants Team
Office of Economic Equity & Empowerment

Cannabis Social Equity Program DFL Round 3 Spring Update – March 2026

Where We Are Now?

Since the application window closed on September 25, 2025, our team at the Office of Economic Equity & Empowerment (OE3) has been hard at work completing a multi-step review process. As of March 2026:

1. Program Intake and Deficiency Review: **Completed** ✓
2. Legal Review: **Completed** ✓
3. Financial Review: **Completed** ✓

We appreciate your responsiveness throughout the entire process, this helped to ensure timely progression through each stage of the review.

What's Next??

We are currently in the *final evaluation* phase and coordinating next steps for loan determinations.

While we previously anticipated notifications beginning in March, additional coordination required for final review and approvals has shifted our anticipated timeline slightly. **Loan award notifications are now expected to begin in April 2026.**

Applicants will be notified of approval or denial via email, with formal award announcements to follow via Department press release.

Please continue to monitor your inbox (including spam/junk folders) for updates.

As a reminder, if your application did not receive a deficiency notice or request for additional information, it was deemed complete and advanced to Legal and Financial Review. However, advancement through these stages does not guarantee selection for award.

Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to all applicants who submitted responses to the post-application survey. Your feedback is critical to helping us identify key gaps and areas for improvement as we continue to refine the program for future rounds.

Round 3 Timeline at a Glance

Phase	Timeline
Application Window	August 11 – September 25, 2025
Intake & Deficiency Review	September – October 2025
Legal & Financial Review	November 2025 – March 2026
Loan Award Notifications	April 2026

Questions?

Contact us via email: CEO.CannabisLoan@illinois.gov

We appreciate your continued patience as we complete this final leg of the process!

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