Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic Entrepreneur Resource Guide

This entrepreneur resource guide is intended to support individuals seeking to open a business in Illinois or grow their business in Illinois with a focus on Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic entrepreneurs.

About This Guide:

This statewide entrepreneur resource guide connects current and aspiring Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic entrepreneurs in Illinois with free or low-cost business resources, ranging from technical assistance & legal support to funding opportunities & equity-based programs. Whether you're launching your first venture or scaling an existing business, these tools can support growth at any stage. While this is not a comprehensive list of all services available in Illinois, it highlights organizations across sectors that provide valuable support. Additionally, inclusion does not imply endorsement of any views, products, or services. Descriptions of each entity were mostly derived from each entity's website. Though many resources are tailored to the unique needs of Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic entrepreneurs, most are open to all communities. This is Illinois' most in-depth cross-sector business resource guide for Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic entrepreneurs and will be updated quarterly; please note that website URLs may change over time.

Resources marked with an asterisk **(*)** offer services in **Spanish** (Español) or have bilingual staff support.

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State Entities

Below is a list of the most common state entities that interact with businesses, not an exhaustive list.

Illinois BidBuy | **link**
"BidBuy is the eProcurement system and procurement bulletin for procurements under the jurisdiction of the Chief Procurement Officer for General Services." BidBuy lets you browse for open bid opportunities, educates individuals on the State's procurement process, and makes it easier to do business with the state.

Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB) | * | link
"CDB oversees the construction of new state facilities, such as prisons, state parks, mental health institutions, and college and university projects." "CDB actively promotes the economic development of minorities, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities businesses in the construction field as participants on CDB projects."

Illinois Commission on Equity & Inclusion | * | link
"The Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) will assist minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans in building their American dream by providing fair access to job and contracting opportunities with the State." This is the entity that overs the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and Veterans Business Program (VBP).

Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) | * | link
This department's "vision is to promote and regulate agriculture in a manner which encourages farming and agribusiness while protecting Illinois' consumers and our natural resources." IDOA has an Illinois Food Directory where you can find local source food products. You can find IDOA grant opportunities here.

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) | * | link
"The mission of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is to create equitable economic opportunities across the State of Illinois." "...DCEO works to fortify Illinois' reputation as a global economic powerhouse while ensuring Illinois is the best state to live, work and do business." DCEO works with all sizes of businesses. You can find DCEO grant opportunities here.

Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) | * | link
"Protecting consumers and promoting trust and reliability in professional and financial services in Illinois through effective regulation and licensing." IDFPR provides licenses to professionals across more than 100 various professions, see their brochure for more information.

Illinois Department of Human Services – Office of Strategy, Equity, and Transformation | link
BEP is a certification opportunity for businesses owned by minorities, women, and people with disabilities that helps prepare them to apply for contracts with the State of Illinois. "The IDHS-BEP team manages all BEP-related matters for IDHS including tracking and monitoring dollars spent with BEP vendors."

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) | * | link
This agency's mission is to "provide safe, cost-effective transportation for Illinois in ways that enhance quality of life, promote economic prosperity and demonstrate respect for our environment." They offer grants and funding to support transportation projects such as improving public roads, construction and non-construction procurement opportunities, and they have a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification.

Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) | link
The IFA provides low-cost capital to public and private institutions with the goal of growing economic development in the state. They provide private activity bonds for 501(c)(3) organizations and farmers, commercial PACE bonds, Clean Water Initiative SRF bonds, and climate bank programs. As the official Illinois Climate Bank, it "provides

financing and programs to help residents, businesses, and communities implement equitable clean energy solutions."

Illinois Procurement Bulletin for Public Institutions of Higher Education | link
This bulletin is a place "where Illinois public universities and other Illinois institutions post solicitations for a wide variety of vendor services that vendors can then bid on." You can also learn about state laws and regulations around procurement, bid limits, and view award notices.

Illinois Secretary of State | * | link
Businesses normally go to the Secretary of State - Business Services division to incorporate and register their business (e.g. Corporations, Limited Liability Companies, Limited Partnerships, etc.), purchase a Certificate of Good Standing, check their business status, Trademark/Servicemark Search, and etc.

Illinois State Comptroller Office | * | link
"The Comptroller is the chief fiscal control officer for Illinois government, charged by the Constitution with maintaining the state's central fiscal accounts and ordering payments into and out of the appropriate funds." They oversee the Smart Business program which educates entrepreneurs about the Illinois certification and procurement process.

Illinois State Treasurer | * | link
The Treasurer is the "state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer" and is responsible for investing money for the state and providing financial education to individuals in Illinois. Businesses can connect with the Treasurer and apply for procurement opportunities and learn more about programs such as the Illinois Growth and Innovation Fund, Business Loan Guarantee, AG Invest, Business Invest, Community Invest, and etc.

Illinois Tollway | * | link
The Illinois Tollway is responsible for the state's highway toll system, and they also manage programs including I-PASS, Move Illinois, and H.E.L.P trucks. Businesses can bid and contract with them on projects ranging from building new roads and bridges, supplying non-construction supplies, towing services, and more.

Helpful Tools, Documents & Handbooks

The essential guides, templates, and bilingual tools below are designed to help Latino/a/e/x & Hispanic entrepreneurs launch, manage, and grow their businesses.

Business Information Center at Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

Starting Your Business in Illinois Handbook | * | link
A handbook by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) that includes information about business registration, planning, licensing, hiring, intellectual property, and more. The handbook is available in English and Spanish.

Step by Step Guide | link
"This guide will inform you of various legal requirements and direct you to additional resources."

Chicago Entrepreneurial Guide | link
"Tailored for Chicago area tech entrepreneurs." Although this is not a full list, it provides recommendations of organizations, programs, and more for tech entrepreneurs interested in growing and networking in Chicago.

Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center's Workbooks & Tools | link
Each of the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center's workbooks offer a collection of best practices, tools, advice from other entrepreneurs, and practical exercises for you to gain immediate knowledge, clarity and prioritize your next set of actions for growing your business.

SCORE Business Plan Template | link
SCORE step-by-step template to help craft a compelling business plan. "A free SCORE mentor can review your business plan."

Small Business Exit Planning Toolkit | link
Presented by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, developed three different exit planning toolkits: for business owners, agricultural operators, and business development directors.

Tools to Protect Your Business: Be Prepared in Case of Deportation | * | link
"In collaboration with the General Consulate of Mexico in Chicago and other community organizations, the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (IHCC) has launched Tools to Protect Your Business: Be Prepared in Case of Deportation," a list that provides small business owners and their employees with the resources they need to make sure their business can continue operating in the midst of deportation. You can find Spanish resources as well.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): Resource Guide | link
The SBA National Resource Guide is the agency's digital handbook that lists resources for small businesses including tools such as how to do business with government, what business structure is right for you, disaster recovery, and more.

Technical Assistance – At No Cost

The list of entities below provides no cost technical assistance, each with a different focus.

Government:

Business Information Center | * | link
Provides comprehensive information and technical support to businesses with questions and concerns about mitigations, government regulations and business assistance programs. Business Information Center can be reached at 1-800-252-2923 or BIC@illinois.gov. They also have a Step by Step Guide to assist business owners.

City of Chicago - Chicago Business Center (CBC) Program | * | link
The City of Chicago's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection funds local CBCs service providers to "provide detailed business licensing and public way use permitting application support, diverse funding opportunities, and specialized professional services." You can find the nearest CBC in the flyer here. **Some CBCs have Spanish speaking capacity.*

City of Chicago - Neighborhood Business Development Centers (NBDCs) | * | link
The City of Chicago's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection funds local NBDC service providers to "provide general business licensing and public way use permitting guidance" and "confidential 1-on-1 business advising, technical assistance, professional development workshops, access to capital, B2B networking, employment and workforce development assistance and more." **Some NBDCs have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Cook County Small Business Resource | * | link
"The Source's business advising program provides no-cost, one-on-one business advising facilitated by trusted advisors from our network of Business Support Organizations (BSOs) located throughout Cook County. The Source matches business owners with an advisor who provides the expertise needed to help advance small business owners to the next level." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Illinois APEX Accelerator | * | link
There are several APEX Accelerators throughout the State. The Illinois Apex Accelerator Program advises business owners and provides guidance on how to apply for government contracts and do business with local, state, and federal government agencies. You can find your local APEX by visiting this page. **Some APEX have* Spanish-speaking *capacity.*

Illinois Economic Empowerment Centers (EEC) | * | link
EECs "provide training in all aspects of business development and small business management, including Business Advice/Technical Assistance, Education and Cohort Training, and other Mandatory Client Services." EECs "create an inclusive business ecosystem for marginalized communities that have traditionally faced systemic barriers to entry and growth through dynamic partnerships, targeted outreach, and customized training programs and initiatives." You can find your local EEC by visiting the link above. Programming will begin in November 2026.

Illinois' Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) | * | link
Guiding Illinoisans through no cost, one-on-one business advising, the Illinois Small Business Development Centers (IL SBDCs) are centers located across the state which provide confidential business coaching to individuals who have a business idea to individuals who are starting businesses to those with existing businesses. **Some SBDCs have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Illinois Small Business Credit Initiative Technical Assistance (SSBCI TA) | * | link
SSBCI TA providers help "small businesses, especially Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals (SEDI) and Very Small Businesses (VSBs) to overcome systemic barriers to capital access by offering targeted technical assistance." Providers "offer FREE Legal, Accounting, and Financial Advisory services to help entrepreneurs become fully prepared to access capital, specifically federal loan programs" including "business formation support, licensing and registration aid, financial planning and documentation, legal contract preparation, and assistance with federal and state program applications."

Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program | * | link
The Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program is "designed to prepare emerging and established transportation-related construction and professional engineering services firms, including small, diverse and veteran-owned businesses to participate on highway and vertical construction contracts."

Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) | * | link
Non-regulatory program which provides free, confidential assistance to Illinois small businesses to help them succeed and comply with their environmental obligations. Services include a toll-free helpline 1-800-252-3998 for confidential regulatory questions. Not sure if your business has environmental obligations, give SBEAP a call.

Community Organizations:

36Squared Business Incubator | * | link
Providing free business development assistance to entrepreneurs of all abilities in Illinois. "Offering onsite training, classes, and one to one counseling to help Chicagoland entrepreneurs of all abilities grow their businesses."

36Squared hosts the Illinois SBDC, Cook County Source BSO, and City of Chicago NBDC programs.

Adelante Center for Entrepreneurship | * | link
"We engage small businesses at all stages of growth, but our expertise is in working with businesses experiencing hardship, loss or stagnant growth and helping them explore new opportunities to create diverse and sustainable revenue streams." "We focus exclusively on developing programs and projects that benefit Lake County and the surrounding areas."

Allies for Community Business | * | link
- 1:1 Coaching - "…Provides free 1:1 coaching to anyone who wants to start or grow their business."
- Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab – "The Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab is a three-month program that provides community business owners with project advisors, project strategists, community partners, and corporate partners who provide intensive support to help execute a growth initiative for each business."

A4CB hosts the City of Chicago NBDC and Cook County Small Business Source programs.

Aurora Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"The ARHCC operates and conducts its activities with the above in mind while we continue to provide increased services to our membership, increased visibility of our Chamber, networking opportunities, guest speakers and a strengthened pride for participants in our Latino Marketplace."

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council | * | link
"BYNC's Neighborhood Business Development Center (NBDC) can provide resources of your business to help you succeed regardless of your level of experience or industry. We are able to provide support to retail and industrial businesses, we can help you make better decisions and get the resources you need to grow your business."

Berwyn Development Corporation (BDC) | * | link
"The BDC is a public-private partnership with the City of Berwyn that provides chamber services and economic development to all segments of the Berwyn community. The BDC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization that serves business and individual members. The BDC focuses its efforts on those activities that will improve the overall climate for local businesses and residents, in addition to encouraging the development of new commercial venues and employment opportunities."
BDC hosts the Cook County Small Business Source program.

Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce | link
In Belvidere, this organization promotes "the advantages and assets of our community" and "the growth and success of our membership while fostering positive relationships and opportunities within our community."

Binational Institute of Human Development | * | link
They're "a nonprofit organization rooted in advocacy, service, and community power. From Chicago to Mexico City, we provide legal, financial, and business development services to immigrants, refugees, and working families. Whether you are seeking asylum, starting a business, or defending your rights in two countries…"
Binational hosts the Illinois Economic Empowerment Center (EEC) program.

Center for Changing Lives | * | link
"We work with entrepreneurs and small business owners from throughout Chicago with a focus near our main office in Logan Square/Humboldt Park and near our South Chicago co-location office." "Additionally, we offer Small Business Support & Coaching to connect you to the resources you need."
CCL hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Centro de Trabajadores Unidos (CTU) - Southeast Worker Cooperative Incubator | * | link
"CTU's Southeast Cooperative Institute is a high-touch incubator focused on recruiting, training and supporting workers with the purpose of establishing successful cooperative businesses on the southeast side [of Chicago and south suburbs]."

Champaign Public Library – Business Services | link
"Our Launch at the Library business services provide comprehensive support for entrepreneurs, small business owners, and nonprofit leaders. We offer free workshops, powerful online research tools, and one-on-one consultations designed to help you start, manage, and grow your venture with confidence."

Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council | * | link
"Through this partnership, we offer no-cost virtual advising sessions to help small businesses build sustainable growth strategies and strengthen their foundations."
Chicago MSDC hosts the Cook County Business Source program.

DeKalb Chamber of Commerce | link
"We connect our members and the community with the goal of making the DeKalb area a successful place to live and create business." They also contain a list of business resources for entrepreneurs.

DishRoulette Kitchen | * | link
"DRK's work is designed to reduce barriers to entry, strengthen small business operations, and support long-term economic stability in historically under-resourced communities." "Our programs prioritize entrepreneurs on Chicago's South and West Sides and align with broader economic development goals including business retention, job creation, and corridor activation."

DuPage Latino Chamber of Commerce - Immigrant Solidarity DuPage | * | link
"Our mission is to educate, advance with integrity, and build unity and leadership among Latino business owners in DuPage County to fight for our interests and rights and achieve individual and collective success." They "Empower DuPage Latino small businesses through networking, educational workshops, leadership and advocacy training, and resource seeking."

East Side Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"Organized in 1925, the East Side Chamber of Commerce exists to strengthen and promote businesses, provide resources for community enrichment, and encourage the expansion of existing industries while assisting new businesses on Chicago's South East Side."

Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"The Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce is the largest business network in the Elgin Area. We provide services, resources, and tools for businesses in Elgin, South Elgin, and throughout the northwest Chicago suburbs. Our work supports successful businesses, promotes opportunities, makes connections, and strengthens our business community."

Fempreneur Poder Hub | * | link
"Fempreneur Poder Hub is a vibrant community dedicated to empowering women entrepreneurs through education, mentorship, networking, and collaboration. Whether you're launching a new venture or growing an established business, you'll find the resources, connections, and support needed to thrive with confidence and purpose."

Foundation of Little Village | * | link
"Through entrepreneurial education, the Foundation of Little Village is working to build community wealth in Little Village. Given the tools and resources, this community of small businesses can move past barriers with ease and see their business thrive."
Foundation of Little Village hosts the Illinois Economic Empowerment Center (EEC) program.

Greater QUAD Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"Our purpose is to cultivate business and organizational prosperity for the benefit of the multicultural identity, collaboration and success in and around the Quad Cities region."

Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC) | * | link
In Chicago's Southwest Side, "GSDC provides guidance and support to business owners and entrepreneurs to start, grow, or transition their business. We are uniquely positioned to help our community through a variety of development services that includes access to capital, business and marketing plan assistance, international trade, procurement, certification, and licensing."
GSDC hosts the Cook County Small Business Source and City of Chicago NBDC programs.

Greater Waukegan Development Coalition | * | link
"The GWDC Business Support & Technical Assistance Program provides free one-on-one support to help Lake County entrepreneurs start, grow, and strengthen their businesses."

Growth Dimensions Economic Development for Belvidere-Boone County | * | link
"Established in 1979, Growth Dimensions is the Economic Development Organization (EDO) for Belvidere and Boone County, Illinois. Its mission is to foster economic opportunity, strengthen community assets, and stimulate investment through business retention, expansion, and attraction."

Harvard Chamber of Commerce & Industry | * | link
"The Harvard Chamber of Commerce & Industry serves as a pivotal business organization in McHenry County." "We advocate as the collective voice for local businesses in Harvard, striving to enhance economic conditions and elevate the quality of life within our community."

Hermosa Belmont Cragin Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"The Hermosa Belmont Cragin Chamber of Commerce is a vibrant community organization committed to bolstering local businesses and entrepreneurs in Hermosa and Belmont Cragin."

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis | * | link
"Your HCCSTL advocates for your growing business. Whether it is connections to companies looking for vendor contracts, certifications, legal referrals, business services support, we make the connections you need." They also assist businesses in the Metro East that are on the Illinois side.

Hispanic Chamber of Lake County | * | link
"The mission of the Hispanic Chamber of Lake County is to identify and serve the needs of Hispanic businesses, and to function as an economic, educational and information catalyst. This will empower the Hispanic business community so it may provide the quality services necessary for the socio-economic improvement of Lake County."

Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"We are committed to helping entrepreneurs grow by equipping them with the tools and resources they need to be competitive in today's economy. We do this through our community advocacy, specialized one-on-one training, networking, and our Center for Hispanic Entrepreneurship."

IHCC hosts the Illinois SBDC, Cook County Small Business Source and APEX Accelerator programs.

Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) | * | link
"The experienced hands-on team at IMEC works closely with its clients to plan critical business improvements in all areas of their organization from: Leading their Company, Planning for Success, Growing their Business, Improving their Operations, Focusing on their People, and Deciding with Data."

Incubator at Southern Illinois University - Carbondale | * | link
This incubator supports start-ups and businesses looking to expand with free services ranging from start-up coaching, business planning, networking, and business advisors.

Hosts the Illinois Economic Empowerment Center (EEC), Illinois SBDC, and Apex Accelerator programs.

Joliet Latino Economic Development Association (LEDA) | * | link
"LEDA is offering assistance at no cost to small businesses located in Joliet**.** The goal of the program is to provide assistance to small businesses to resolve immediate, day-to-day challenges and to offer guidance to businesses that are committed to continued growth."

Joliet Junior College's Entrepreneur & Business Center | link
"… no-cost hub for small-business and clean-energy expertise. From initial concept and launch to expansion, succession, or acquisition, our advisors provide personalized, one-on-one support every step of the way."

Latino Progresando (LP) - La Cermak Corridor | * | link
"The Cermak commercial corridor is the heartbeat of Marshall Square. We partner with the many family-owned businesses to meet the needs of community residents and organizations, while also driving business to the

neighborhood. LP provides marketing and technical assistance, shares funding opportunities and supports safety and walkability."

Little Village Chamber of Commerce | * | link
In Chicago the, "mission of the Little Village Chamber of Commerce is to support, promote, and protect business owners with programs and services that foster opportunities to drive sustainable growth and celebrate the vibrant cultural identity of Little Village ('La Villita')."

Logan Square Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"The Logan Square Chamber of Commerce is an association of local businesses that range from restaurants and retailers, to doctors and realtors. We are a delegate not-for-profit agency of the City of Chicago and our mission is to help existing business owners achieve success; advocate for community improvements and to encourage new businesses to become part of our thriving community."
Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Melrose Park Chamber of Commerce & Community Development | * | link
"The Chamber works with and supports businesses and local organizations to support further development of the overall Economic, Civic, Social and Educational Development of Melrose Park."

Mercado on Fifth | * | link
"Mercado on Fifth advances its mission through weekly open-air markets, seasonal cultural festivals, and year-round business development programming that celebrate Latinx heritage and stimulate economic mobility in the Quad Cities." "Beyond the marketplace, Mercado empowers first-generation business owners through bilingual workshops, technical assistance, and microgrants."

New Life Centers – Abundant Life | * | link
"Abundant Life is New Life Centers' program designed to help local entrepreneurs launch, grow, and scale sustainable businesses. Built on a proven global framework and customized for our communities in Little Village and Humboldt Park, the program provides step-by-step support throughout the entire entrepreneurial journey."

North River Commission (NRC) & Albany Park Chamber of Commerce | * | link
The mission of the chamber "is to support, advocate, and promote our members and local businesses in the Albany Park, Irving Park, Mayfair, and North Park business districts."
NRC hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Northern Kane County Chamber of Commerce | link
"The Northern Kane County Chamber of Commerce (NKCCC) is an advocate for commerce, industry and development in the northern Fox Valley villages of Carpentersville, East Dundee, Gilberts, Sleepy Hollow and West Dundee." It's mission is "identifying and fulfilling the needs of the business community through leadership, education, support and promotion."

Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | * | link
The chamber is a "catalyst for economic growth, innovation, and empowerment throughout Chicago's Northwest suburbs." "Through practical workshops, intentional networking, and dedicated advocacy, we have created opportunities for growth, connection, and long-term success."

Northwest Side Community Development Corporation | * | link
"We provide technical assistance and support services to small businesses, renters, and landlords." Additionally, "we advocate for the best interests of the Belmont Cragin community and direct new investments into our neighborhood." "We provide our services free of charge through partnerships with the City of Chicago

programs for Neighborhood Business Development Centers (NBDC) and Technical Assistance Community Housing (TACOM)."

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center and Turner Center for Entrepreneurship | link
"The Peoria NEXT Innovation Center is an integral part of Bradley University's Turner Center for Entrepreneurship, within the Foster College of Business. The Turner Center assists people who want to own their own businesses through a variety of programs for students and community members. Counseling, technical assistance and educational opportunities are available for anyone interested in startups, as well as owners of established companies looking to expand their businesses."

Pilsen Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"Pilsen Chamber of Commerce has been dedicated to nurturing and supporting local businesses that make Pilsen a special place to live, work, and visit. Our mission is to promote economic growth, provide networking opportunities, and champion the endeavors of our community."

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) | * | link
"The PRCC's Economic Development Initiatives support small business growth and encourage entrepreneurship by providing bilingual (English and Spanish) business advising, training, licensing, and necessary support at no cost. Located in Humboldt Park, on the West side of Chicago, and we serve entrepreneurs and small business owners, in any geographical area."

PRCC hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Rogers Park Business Alliance (RPBA) | * | link
"Offer no-cost, bilingual business and entrepreneurial support and training through webinars, workshops, consulting, events, and more." "Rogers Park Business Alliance strives to support and empower small businesses in Rogers Park and Chicagoland."

RPBA hosts the Illinois Economic Empowerment Center, Illinois SBDC, Cook County Small Business Source, and the City of Chicago NBDC programs.

Polsky Exchange Incubator | * | link
"The Polsky Center supports innovators across the University [of Chicago] and beyond, helping students, faculty, alumni, researchers, community entrepreneurs, and founders turn ideas into ventures, partnerships, and real-world impact."

Hosts the Illinois SBDC program.

Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce - Hispanic Business Leaders | * | link
"The Hispanic Business Leaders Committee's goal is to build relationships and promote the economic quality of life in the Sauk Valley area. Our mission is to provide leadership, education, networking, and marketing opportunities for Hispanic businesses, leaders, and students of our community."

SCORE | * | link
SCORE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides free and confidential business mentoring services to prospective and established small business owners. SCORE connects individuals to mentors and training resources. You can find your local SCORE network by visiting this page. **Some SCORE locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Six Corners Association | link
"Six Corners Association provides one-on-one individualized services to community-minded businesses and is a City of Chicago Neighborhood Business Development Center. We engage businesses and residents in Portage Park, Jefferson Park, Old Irving Park, Dunning, and Belmont/Cragin in cultivating a thriving commercial district on Chicago's northwest side."

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Southland Development Authority | * | link
"The Southland Development Authority drives transformative, inclusive, equitable economic growth in Chicago's south suburbs." The "SDA Business Growth Services (BGS) provides a range of services designed to help your business flourish."

Hosts the Cook County Small Business Source program.

Southwest Collective | * | link
In Chicago, "We provide an open forum for southwest side residents to voice their concerns; hear new perspectives from their neighbors; learn about existing public resources; and launch economic, educational, and recreational initiatives that bring our siloed communities together." "We are now designated by City of Chicago as a Neighborhood Business Development Center (NBDC) for Archer Heights, West Elsdon, Gage Park, Garfield Ridge, Clearing and West Lawn."

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC program.

Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) | * | link
"The Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) offers a wide portfolio of programs and services designed to accelerate business growth, expand economic opportunity, and strengthen the impact of business enterprises across the Midwest. Our offerings span entrepreneurial training and business growth acceleration, certification and contracting support, access to capital, and large-scale business, all grounded in our mission to help business owners compete and succeed."

Hosts the City of Chicago NBDC, Cook County Small Business Source, Illinois SBDC, APEX Accelerator, and SBDC International Trade Center programs.

Funding – Access to Capital

The list of entities below provide access to capital through loans, incentives, and funding programs tailored for small businesses and underrepresented entrepreneurs.

Government

Advantage Illinois | link
"Advantage Illinois supports small businesses by enhancing access to capital." "Illinois has developed two different programs under Advantage Illinois to offset the risks involved in lending to businesses."

- Advantage Illinois (AI) Participation Loan Program
  "Advantage Illinois' existing Participation Loan Program (PLP) provides low-interest loans to small businesses by partnering with local lenders located across the state."

- Advantage Illinois (AI) Loan Guarantee Program
  "Advantage Illinois' new Loan Guarantee Program (LGP) will support business applicants who are having difficulty obtaining access to capital by using funds to guarantee a percentage of loans provided by partner lenders"

Climate Bank Finance (CFB) Participation Loan Program | link
"CBF's Loan Participation Program lowers interest rates (2% max, or 1% for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals & Very Small Businesses) and reduces lender risk, helping businesses expand, create jobs, and support Illinois' clean energy transition." This loan program supports businesses involved with clean energy projects.

Illinois Innovation Venture Fund | link
"The Illinois Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT) is dedicated to ensuring that it supports investments in very small businesses; Capital Disadvantaged Business (CDB) owners and businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI); and businesses in industries aligned with the state's key sectors in our economic development plan."

Illinois Incentives & Tax Assistance | * | link
"Illinois offers a competitive range of incentives for locating and expanding your business, including tax credits and exemptions that encourage business growth and job creation. Additional grant programs and access to loans can assist your business with working capital, machinery and equipment, land acquisition, building construction and public infrastructure improvements."

U.S Small Business Administration Funding Programs | * | link
SBA offers a range of funding programs—including microloans, 7(a) loans, and CDC/504 loans—to help small businesses start, grow, and recover. These programs connect entrepreneurs with approved lenders and often feature flexible terms and lower down payments.

Community Organizations or Private Sector that provide commercial loans

Allies for Community Business (A4CB) | * | link
A4CB "provide the capital, coaching, and connections entrepreneurs need to grow great businesses that create jobs and wealth in their communities." Provide loans up to $500K and grants as available.

Associated Bank | * | link
Offers small business bank loans and financing such as lines of credit up to $250,000, "up to $500,000 for vehicle and equipment loans, as well as working capital," and "up to $1,000,000 for owner occupied real estate." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Bank of America | * | link
Offers Small Business Loans, for businesses "with up to $1 million in revenue," and Midsize Businesses, for "businesses with $1 million to $50 million in annual revenue". They have a Center for Business Empowerment to assist business owners with educational information and resources. **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

BMO | * | link
Provides business loans. Through BMO Zero Barriers to Business, "…committed to helping business owners gain access to capital, educational resources, and partnerships." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Byline Bank | * | link
"Our Business Banking team offers financing options from $25,000 to $3 million. With a dedicated, local team, we're here to provide financial solutions designed to spark your small business growth."

Capital One | * | link
"Qualifying Capital One business customers can take advantage of special business financing, including business loans and lines of credit."

Chicago Community Loan Fund | * | link
"The mission of the Chicago Community Loan Fund is to provide flexible, affordable and responsible financing and technical assistance for community stabilization and development efforts and initiatives that benefit low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, families and individuals throughout metropolitan Chicago."

Citi | * | link
"Whether you want to expand operations, buy commercial real estate or fund expenses like payroll, Citi has the flexible loan choices you're looking for." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Fifth Third | * | link
"From financing equipment to covering daily expenses, different business needs require different types of lending. Fifth Third can help you determine the best form of financing for your unique business needs."

Founders First Capital Partners CDC | * | link
Their "mission is to solve the economic equity gaps that impact growth in small, employer-based businesses by providing training, funding, and resources to support their growth in their communities."

FCB Banks | * | link
Provides business services and loans to businesses. They also offer Positive Pay, "a fraud detection tool that helps identify unauthorized transactions to your account before final payment is made." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Greenwood Archer Capital | * | link
Greenwood Archer Capital (GAC) is a nonprofit to deploy small business loans catalyzing entrepreneurs and nonprofits throughout Statewide Illinois and northern Indiana with "…loans ranging from $10,000 to $500,000."

Heartland Bank & Trust | * | link
Provides business services and loans. Heartland also provides agricultural loans and services. **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Huntington Bank | * | link
Provides business loans. Huntington's Lift Local Business program supports minority-, woman-, and veteran-owned small businesses throughout the business life cycle — from start-up to expansion. Through our SBA team, the program offers loans, business planning support, free financial entrepreneurial courses delivered through Operation HOPE, and other services to help small business owners achieve their goals. **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

J.P. Morgan Chase | * | link
J.P Morgan Chase offers business services and loans. They offer the Coaching for Impact program which supports established business owners by providing 1:1 consulting and coaching. **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) | * | link
"Providing direct grants and loans to business owners, and also by supporting "high-touch," support systems that can help entrepreneurs access capital, upgrade marketing and accounting systems, troubleshoot problems, or find affordable commercial space, and provide the technical assistance business owners, organizations and players in a small business 'ecosystem' need to succeed."

Old National Bank | * | link
Provides business loans. "Old National Bank has established the Empowerment Small Business Loan Program to provide access to capital for small businesses that may not normally qualify for credit under traditional underwriting guidelines." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Marquette Bank | * | link
Provide commercial loans, commercial mortgages, commercial lines of credit, and construction loans.

PNC | * | link
Provides business products and services to small business owners. They offer secured and unsecured small business loans and more. **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Pursuit | * | link
Pursuit is a CDFI that offers lending products to small businesses in Illinois including the programs SmartLoan, FlexLoan, and small business loans for veterans, and business advisory services.

Self-Help Federal Credit Union | * | link
Provides bilingual small business accounts, low-interest loans, and education to immigrant and low-income entrepreneurs.

SOMERCOR | * | link
"SomerCor provides SBA 504 Loans, SBA 504 Refinancing, SBA Community Advantage Loans, and administers the City of Chicago Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) and Neighborhood Opportunity Fund (NOF) grant programs."

U.S. Bank | * | link
"Business term loans provide capital to finance business growth and expansion needs with long-term repayment options." **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.*

Waterman Bank | * | link
“Whether you are starting a new business or expanding a current one, Waterman Bank will assist you along the way.”

Wells Fargo | * | link
Offers business line of credit, prime line of credit, SBA loans, and more. They have a Resource Center to assist businesses. *Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity.

Wintrust | * | link
“We are a family of locally run community banks.” “We also know that no two businesses are the same. Each has a unique journey, a unique mission, a unique set of needs.” **Some locations have Spanish speaking capacity*.

Women Business Development Center (WBDC) | * | link
“WBDC Direct Loans are available for aspiring and established childcare entrepreneurs to assist with the costs of supplies, inventory, and working capital.”

Resource Hubs, Websites, Accelerators, & Trainings

The programs, platforms, and websites below provide resources, training, mentorship, information on certifications, or accelerator opportunities.

American Business Immigration Coalition | * | link
"Business leaders coming together to push for bipartisan, common-sense immigration reform…" They advocate for immigrants including immigrant entrepreneurs.

Berwyn Shops: A Homegrown Project | link
This organization is a "retail incubator for the City of Berwyn designed to support emerging entrepreneurs, artisans, and makers who are committed to taking their businesses to the next level." This project contains twelve 12'x15' cottage-style shops which open seasonally.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP) | * | link
"The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion's (CEI) Business Enterprise Program (BEP) certification process underscores Illinois' unwavering dedication to fostering opportunities and inclusion for businesses owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities." Veteran businesses can get certified as a veteran owned business.

Centro Community Partners CEO Platform | * | link
Centro Community Partners is a nonprofit that offers their CEO platform which is "a FREE, AI-powered tool designed to support low-to-moderate income entrepreneurs by removing common barriers to starting and growing a business." This platform is offered in English and Spanish, and it helps entrepreneurs create an actionable business plan.

ChiBizHub | * | link
ChiBizHub helps Chicago entrepreneurs find what they need to start and grow their businesses powered by Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business. They can help connect you with local resource providers.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) - Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program | link
The CTA designed the SBE program to "give certified small businesses an opportunity to bid as primes on CTA contracts under $5 million with sufficient Small Business availability. Under the program, selected contracts will be set aside for small businesses to bid on as prime contractors."

CORAMA - Contract Radar Maximizer | link
CORMA from Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce – "From finding the right contracts to automating winning proposals. Contract Radar Maximizer revolutionizes government contracting streamlining processes, boosting efficiency, and giving you a competitive edge."

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program | link
This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation but is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This program provides "minorities, women, and other eligible small businesses opportunities to participate in federally and state-funded transportation contracts."

Entrepreneurial Development and Leadership Institute (EDLI) | link
"EDLI is a 501(C)3 nonprofit corporation designed to help build a future of inclusive entrepreneurship by providing a community exclusively for Black, Latino and women entrepreneurs." They offer a space to connect with entrepreneurs and local service providers, and access to resources.

Founders Resource Hub | link
Powered by P33's TechRise, it is a "go-to resource hub for capital, networks, and knowledge to thrive in Chicago's tech ecosystem."

Greater Peoria Hispanic Chamber of Commerce | * | link
"Locally grown Hispanic businesses connecting to each other and to the greater community of Peoria, Illinois." They work on supporting and advocating for Hispanic businesses in the area.

Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) - CTA Building Small Businesses (BSB) Program | * | link
The BSB Program "is an advanced, financial capacity-building program designed to elevate small, diverse construction firms in equity financing and resources. BSB offers opportunities at no cost for established diverse and small construction firms."

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of the Lakes | * | link
"The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of the Lakes mission is to support[,] strengthen, and raise awareness of all of the business community by focusing on Advocacy, Business Education and Community Development."

Hello Alice | link
National platform offering a list of grants, personalized business planning tools, certifications, and learning paths specifically for minority-owned businesses. It also offers a small business resource library with advice on how to scale and grow.

Illinois Immigration Information Hub | * | link
"A comprehensive guide for Illinois' immigrant communities to know your rights and access essential resources." "Learn how to prepare yourself and your employees for immigration enforcement activity at the workplace."

Illinois Innovation Network | * | link
"The Illinois Innovation Network drives inclusive and integrated research, innovation and economic development across Illinois." Browse their offerings and programs across 15 hubs in Illinois.

Illinois Migrant Council | * | link
"The Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) is a community-based non-profit organization with the primary mission of promoting employment, education, health, housing, crisis intervention and other opportunities for migrant/seasonal farm workers (MSFW), immigrants, refugees/asylum seekers and their families, and other low-income rural communities in Illinois." They also connect rural business owners with support.

Illinois WorkNet - Biz Hub | * | link
Statewide tool in which "Illinois' WIOA Partners provide businesses with sustainable, no-cost and low-cost strategies to recruit, hire, train, and retain the skilled workforce needed to thrive," which is powered by the Illinois workNet who is supported by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

IRS Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center | * | link
Tax information, tools, and resources for businesses and self-employed.

Joliet City Center Partnership | * | link
"The Joliet City Center Partnership is a 501(c)(6) organization, created by businesses for businesses, and serves as the voice of the downtown business community." "As the Special Service Area (SSA) for Downtown Joliet—including the Collins, Cass, and South Chicago corridors The City Center Partnership provides grant programs, Beautification services, and events that support local businesses, enhance public spaces, and bring the community together."

LISC Bridging the Capital Access Gap | link
Five-part chapter series that does "an in-depth look at the small business financing industry and ways that business owners can use this knowledge to gain access to additional avenues of capital." It goes over the lending landscape, underwriting basics, and more.

LTNtech Founders | * | link
"The LTNtech Founders Incubator is a first-of-its-kind partnership between IHCC and 1871. The mission of the incubator is to create pathways for Latinx and underrepresented entrepreneurs to break into and contribute to the tech and innovation economy while scaling their businesses." "The LTNtech program comes at no cost to first-time and current 1871 members!" Participating business have access to workshops, network of business advisors, and coaching.

National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) | * | link
"NMSDC's work extends beyond supply chain development. We connect minority-owned businesses and corporate partners to support growth, innovation, and participation in the American free-market economy."

National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) | link
"At the NAWBO Institute, we're committed to supporting women entrepreneurs like you at every stage of your journey. As a 501(c)3 non-profit educational foundation, we provide world-class resources, expert insights and vibrant communities—online 24/7 and tailored to help your business thrive at every stage."

PODER | * | link
"PODER prepare Spanish-speaking adults to seize opportunities in Chicago through comprehensive and tuition-free English (ESL), civic education and job training programs." "PODER's Bilingual Insurance Licensing (BIL) training prepares students to pass the Illinois Property & Casualty insurance license exam."

Sunshine Enterprises | * | link
"We help rising entrepreneurs throughout Chicagoland, start or grow businesses by training coaching and connecting them." Sunshine offers their Community Business Academy program to help entrepreneurs launch or grow their business, and afterwards they support their "entrepreneurs beyond just a business plan towards sustainable growth."

Hosts the Illinois Economic Empowerment Center and City of Chicago NBDC programs.

The Hatchery | link
"The Hatchery Chicago is a non-profit food and beverage incubator dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs build & grow successful businesses." They have commercial kitchens, entrepreneurship classes, and on-site business planning and support.

The Resurrection Project - Immigrant Justice | * | link
"Working toward a future where all immigrants are liberated with equal opportunities to thrive, experience joy, and be celebrated in their full humanity." They provide training for business owners and workers on Know Your Rights, etc.

Venturize | * | link
"Venturize.org is a free bilingual resource hub for small business owners like you that need help accessing tools and information to sustain and grow your business. Venturize offers unbiased education and resources to help bolster businesses and empower you to make informed business decisions."

University of Illinois - Diverse Supplier Development Program | link
At no cost consulting for minority, woman, person with disabilities and/or veteran-owned small businesses. This free, nine-month Diverse Supplier Development Program was created by the University of Illinois to connect small businesses with students to help enhance their business plan and overcome their business issues.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): Certifications | link
A one-stop destination for SBA's small business certifications including HUBZone, 8(a) business development, Veteran-owned, and Women-owned.

Women's Entrepreneurship Hub | * | link
Statewide platform that provides a curated resource with a focus on individuals "working out your idea, just getting started or looking for ways to manage your existing business". The hub is powered by Illinois-based non-profit, Women Employed.

Woodstock Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry – Hispanic Connections | * | link
"Bringing people together through meaningful relationships, cultural understanding, and a shared commitment to the Hispanic community of Woodstock and McHenry County."

Legal Aid & Clinics – At No Cost or Low Cost

The organizations listed below provide free or low-cost legal aid and assistance. Each organization specializes in different areas of law and serves different legal needs.

Chicago-Kent Patent Hub *(Chicago area)* | link
"The Chicago-Kent Patent Hub is a pro bono program for Illinois inventors that allows under-resourced inventors to receive services and counsel from licensed patent attorneys."

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights | * | link
This organization offers general free legal assistance to nonprofits and small businesses including assistance with contracts, bylaws, employment, real estate leases, and more. They also manage a library of resources for nonprofits and small businesses, and the Economic Justice Program.

DePaul Business Legal Clinic (Chicago) | link
DePaul University College of Law's Legal Clinics pairs students with clients to provide free legal services to small and mid-sized businesses including drafting legal documents, copyright counseling, trademarks, employment, commercial leases, non-compete agreements, and more.

IJ Clinic on Entrepreneurship (Chicago) | link
"The IJ Clinic on Entrepreneurship provides free legal assistance, support and advocacy for low-income entrepreneurs in Chicago." "Empowers Chicago's entrepreneurs in four ways: legal service, education, outreach and advocacy."

Legal Aid Chicago Clinic *(Chicago area)* | * | link
"Legal Aid Chicago partners with volunteer attorneys and community organizations to offer free community-based legal clinics throughout Chicago." You must meet their federal poverty level threshold to qualify for their services.

Loyola Business Law Clinic (Chicago) | link
Loyola University Chicago School of Law offers legal clinics that provide free legal assistance to individuals, nonprofits, and small businesses while giving law students hands-on experience under attorney supervision.

Northern Illinois University - Business Law Innovation Clinic (DeKalb area) | link
The clinic "works with underrepresented entrepreneurs, small business owners and not-for-profit organizations." They work with clients from "DeKalb County and the surrounding areas, as well as throughout the state…". Some of the legal services they provide include business formation, Business Enterprise Program certification, contract review, obtaining 501(c)(3) status, and more.

Northwestern Donald Pritzker Entrepreneurship Law Center | link
They provide "legal services to start-up companies and social entrepreneurs in Illinois and California. Under the supervision of clinical faculty and staff, law students represent clients in a range of transactional matters, including entity selection, protection of intellectual property, and operational contracts including customer contracts, drafting website terms and conditions, licensing matters, and worker contracts."

University of Chicago - Innovation Clinic *(Chicago area)* | link
Presented by the University of Chicago Law school they provide pro bono "transactional and regulatory legal assistance to startups and venture capital firms both within and outside of the University of Chicago ecosystem and across the country."

University of Illinois Chicago - Community Enterprise & Solidarity Economy Clinic *(Chicago area)* | * | link
Community Enterprise & Solidarity Economy Clinic offers free legal services and represents "worker-owned cooperative business, non-profit, or small business that operate for the benefit of an underserved community."

University of Illinois Chicago - IP Trademark Clinic *(Chicago area)* | * | link
University of Illinois at Chicago Law School works with students to search, clear and prosecute "trademark applications in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) on behalf of individuals and small businesses who could not otherwise afford to protect their trademarks. The only costs the mark holder has to pay is the filing fees charged by the USPTO."

4th Annual Latin@ Economic Summit One-Pager Resources

The 4th Annual Latin@ Economic Summit was held on Thursday, July 23, 2026. The planning group created one-page resource guides for each workshop. The bilingual (English/Spanish) one-pagers are available below to offer additional educational resources for entrepreneurs and future business owners.

- **AI for Beginners: The Business Owner's Guide to AI**
- **Succession Planning: Built to Last Beyond You**
- **Business Best Practices in an Uncertain Economy**
- **Contracts 101: Know What You Sign & Legal Resources for Business Owners**
- **Creative Strategies to Drive Foot Traffic and Boost Revenue**
- **From Newcomer to Business Owner: Entrepreneurship & Rights for Immigrants**
- **Fund it Differently – Alternative Lending Solutions**
- **How to Build Powerful Business Credit and Protect Your Personal Finances**