



Women-Owned Businesses (WOBs) In Illinois



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF ECONOMIC EQUITY & EMPOWERMENT
JB Pritzker, Governor

Types of Women-Owned Businesses in Illinois¹

Sole-proprietors/Solopreneurs/
Non-employer firms

Employer firms,
with employees

Non-employer firms with no employees,
co-owned by both women & men

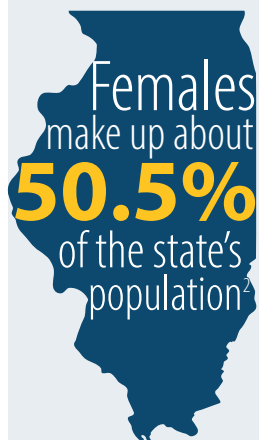
Employer firms with employees,
co-owned by both women & men

465,000

52,100

22,000

21,900



Women-owned businesses employ more than **661,000 workers**, accounting for nearly **\$30.6 Billion** in annual payroll²

¹**43%**
About
of Illinois Small Businesses
Are Owned by Women
NEARLY 517K BUSINESSES

Total WOBs close to **561K** when counting firms co-owned by women & men



Top Women-owned Industries in IL²

(by total sales, shipment value, or revenue)



Retail



Manufacturing



Professional, scientific, or technical services

The Chicago region was rated #3 among metro regions in the U.S. for best places for women entrepreneurs in 2024.³

Illinois was rated #6 among U.S. states for best places for women entrepreneurs in 2024.³

Illinois is one of the seven Equity Innovation Leaders in the U.S.⁴

Illinois ranks 5th for total number of female-owned businesses that exceed \$1M in revenue.³

Illinois is one of the 35 global 2024 Startup Ecosystem Star Awardees.⁵

¹ 2025 Illinois Small Business Profile

² U.S. Census Bureau 2022 statistics for employer & nonemployer firms

³ Best Places in the U.S. for Women Entrepreneurs in 2024

⁴ Venture Equity Project 2024

⁵ Illinois.gov

Illinois Support for Women-Owned Businesses (WOBs)

DCEO Recovery Grant Programs⁶

Since 2020, DCEO has provided more than \$199M in awards to over 7,800 women-owned businesses

Additional DCEO Financial Capital Support⁶

Illinois women-owned businesses accessed \$48M with DCEO-EIT assistance, which includes programs like the Advantage Illinois loan program and Illinois Angel Investment Tax Credit Program

Business & Government Contract Advising⁶

- 56% of businesses advised by the Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) were women-owned businesses in CY 2024
- 60% of businesses started with SBDC assistance were women-owned in CY 2024
- 44% of government contracts secured with IL APEX Accelerator assistance were by women-owned businesses — resulting in \$85.8M in government contracts
- 60% of all export sales secured with the IL International Trade Centers (ITC) assistance were by women-owned businesses – resulting in \$39M in export sales

Business Enterprise Program Certification⁷

Close to 2,600 Illinois WOBs became certified firms through the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion's Business Enterprise Program

Find out how DCEO can help your business:

DCEO.Illinois.gov

Sign up for our statewide e-news for Illinois women-owned businesses & future entrepreneurs.

⁶ DCEO

⁷ Fiscal Year 2024 BEP Annual Report