

# Connecting HER to Illinois Business Resources

## Resources for Illinois Women-Owned Businesses, Future Women Business Owners, and Aspiring Female Entrepreneurs as of April 2024

Powered by the [Office of Minority Economic Empowerment \(OMEE\)](#) at the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity \(DCEO\)](#)

The resources and organizations listed below in this guide are not a complete list of all the available business resources and organizations who provide support in Illinois. Additionally, the resources and organizations listed below are not an endorsement of the views, opinions, products, or services of any the entities below. Please note that website addresses/URLs are subject to change as part of organizations' website updates.

- **Conectando a Ella con recursos de negocios en Illinois | [link](#)**  
*the Spanish translation of this guide, the Connecting HER to Illinois Business Resources Guide*
- **State of Illinois Government's Business Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)**  
*includes DCEO & different state agencies & offices*
- **U.S. Federal & Illinois Local Governments' Business Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)**  
*includes the largest cities and counties in Illinois, along with contractor & vendor opportunities and regional non-government business resources*
- **Financial Capital Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)**  
*includes grant resources, loan programs, crowdfunding platforms, connecting tools, etc.*
- **Illinois Organizations Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)**  
*includes an extensive list of organizations throughout Illinois providing support to women entrepreneurs*
- **Social Capital Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)**  
*mentees, mentors, and networking opportunities, which also includes accelerator and cohort programs*
- **OMEE Business Resource Library | [link](#)**  
*includes the following videos: Should I Certify As A Minority/Woman Owned Business? \* What Is a Business Plan, and Why Do I Need One? \* 5 Keys to Formalizing Your Business \* Marketing Basics: Getting Customers and Keeping Them \* Filing Taxes, Including Sales Tax \* Be Prepared for Grant Opportunities – IL GATA Pre-Qualifications \* Pop-Up Shop and Farmers Market Vendor Basics \* Creating Your Own Flyers and Marketing Materials*

- **Women’s Entrepreneurship Hub** | [link](#)  
statewide platform with a focus on women who have an idea, women who need help setting up their businesses, and women managing their business, which is powered by the Illinois-based national non-profit, [Women Employed](#)
  - [upcoming events](#)
- **ChiBizHub** | [link](#)  
regional business resource platform for the Chicago region, which is powered by [Allies for Community Business](#) (A4CB)
  - For additional regional business resources throughout Illinois, please refer to the above U.S. Federal & Illinois Local Governments’ Business Resources Guide or click [here](#).
- **Chicago Entrepreneurial Guide** | [link](#)  
tailored for Chicago area tech entrepreneurs, The Chicago Entrepreneurial Guide is powered by [GET Cities Chicago- Tech Equity Working Group \(TEWG\)](#)
- **Founders Resource Hub** | [link](#)  
Chicago regional hub with a focus on underrepresented tech founders, which is powered by the Chicago-based non-profit, [P33-Techrise](#)
  - [upcoming events](#)
- **The ISTC Services & Resources Directory** | [link](#)  
statewide with a focus on entrepreneurs and innovators with its last updates in 2017, which was powered by the [Illinois Science & Technology Coalition “ISTC”](#)
- **Asian American Business Directory of Illinois** | [link](#)  
This centralize platform features a wealth of resources for Illinois Asian Americans, especially for entrepreneurs. Listings include chambers of commerce organizations, business technical assistance, professional trade associations, and much more. The Asian American Business Directory of Illinois is powered by the [Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois](#) (AACCIL).

## Business and Entrepreneurial News

### Illinois

- [Chicago Business Journal](#)
- [Chicago Sun-Times’ business section](#)
- [Chicago Tribune’s business section](#)
- [Crain’s Chicago Business](#)
- [Crain’s Chicago Business & Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#)
- [Illinois Business Journal](#) (covers southwestern Illinois)
- [Springfield Business Journal](#)
- [The Voice](#) (covers the business community of greater Rockford)

## U.S.

- [Bloomberg](#)
- [CNBC](#)
- [Entrepreneur](#)
- [Forbes](#)
- [Inc.](#)
- [Wall Street Journal](#)
- [Wired](#)

## International *(includes articles about U.S. entrepreneurs and startups)*

- [BBC](#)
- [Financial Times](#)

## Certification Programs

- **Business Enterprise Program (BEP) | [link](#)**

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) which is administered by the State of Illinois Commission on Equity & Inclusion, assists businesses owned by minorities, women and people with disabilities gain access to the State of Illinois procurement process. The BEP certification with the State of Illinois can also open the door to opportunities with other public and private entities which are looking for diverse suppliers. The FastTrack certification process allows reciprocity with City of Chicago and Cook County to provide a pathway to BEP certification in 7 days or less. The BEP also has a [Mentor Protégé Program](#) to foster the development and mentoring of minority, women, and persons with disabilities-owned businesses and enables experienced firms to provide various types of support to create more equitable access for economic growth while meeting the State's BEP contracting goals.

- **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) | [link](#)**

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program which is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), provides minorities, women, and other eligible small businesses an opportunity to participate in transportation contracts that utilize federal funds.

- **Veteran Business Program (VBP) | [link](#)**

The Veteran Business Program (VBP) which is administered by the State of Illinois Commission on Equity & Inclusion, assists businesses owned by qualified service disabled and veteran-owned business gain access to State of Illinois contracting opportunities and participation in the competitive procurement process.

- **Smart Business Illinois-Overview of the State of Illinois Certification Process | [link](#)**

presented by the Office of the Illinois State Comptroller Susana A. Mendoza

- **Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) | [link](#)**

The Midwest non-profit with headquarters in Chicago, the WBDC, offers a Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) certification program and workshops. They also offer a full-range of programs and services for women-owned businesses. The WBDC is a regional partner organization of the national [Women's Business Enterprise National](#)

[Council](#) (WBENC).

- **Allies for Community Business (A4CB) | [link](#)**

The Chicago-based non-profit helps minority- or women-owned business get certifications with the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the State of Illinois. They also offer many programs and services for women-owned businesses.

- **Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council | [link](#)**

The Chicago non-profit which is an affiliate of the national organization the National Minority Supplier Development Council, helps minority-owned businesses secure minority-owned business enterprise (MBE) certification and offers additional services.

## Contractor, Supplier, and Vendor Opportunities

- **State of Illinois Government's Business Resources Guide | [link](#)**

*includes the [Illinois APEX Accelerator](#), [Illinois Bid Buy](#), etc.*

- **U.S. Federal & Illinois Local Governments' Business Resources Guide | [link](#)**

*includes the largest cities and counties in Illinois along with their contractor/vendor opportunities and regional non-government business resources*

- **Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) | [link](#)**

The Midwest non-profit with headquarters in Chicago, helps small businesses grow through guidance securing local, state, and federal government contracts through their government contracting programs.

- **Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council | [link](#)**

The Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council, Inc. (ChicagoMSDC) is a premier organization for increasing business opportunities between major buying organizations and minority-owned businesses.

- **Allies for Community Business (A4CB) | [link](#)**

The Chicago-based non-profit A4CB helps businesses prepare to bid contracts successfully. If your business succeeds, they can then provide ongoing coaching on managing these relationships and your cash.

- **Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) | [link](#)**

As a global leader in both human and animal nutrition, the company's headquarters are in Chicago.

- **mHUB HardTech Development Contractor | [link](#)**

Are you an entrepreneurial engineer, industrial designer, or product developer? Are you looking for extra cash while you launch your own idea? If yes, join mHUB and gain a pipeline of contract work. If you're looking for contract-based product development jobs, engineering jobs, or industrial design jobs, consider contracting through the [mHUB HardTech Development Services team](#).

- **Mondelēz International | [link](#)**

As one of the largest snack companies in the world, the global company is headquartered in Chicago.

- **Naturally Chicago's Locally Made Program** | [link](#)  
The groundbreaking initiative is designed to connect Illinois retailers with the Chicago region's emerging and top-performing brands. The Locally Made program is open to all [Naturally Chicago](#) brand partners with a particular focus on early-stage BIPOC-owned and women-owned companies.
- **Obama Foundation** | [link](#)  
The Obama Foundation is committed to diversity and encourages diverse vendors to register their business and interest. Click [HERE](#) for more information.
- **RangeME** | [link](#)  
The online platform RangeME allows retail buyers to learn about innovative and emerging products while enabling suppliers, entrepreneurs like you, to grow their brands. Illinois-based retail buyers on RangeME include [ULTA Beauty](#) and [Walgreens](#).
- **The Kraft Heinz Company** | [link](#)  
As one of the top food and beverage companies in the world, the company is co-headquartered in Chicago.

## Human Capital Resources

*for your staffing needs, including finding a co-founder and posting opportunities for job openings*

- **Illinois Biz Hub (statewide)** | [link](#)  
The hub powered by the [Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#) (DCEO), includes hiring, recruiting, and training resources.
- **Energy Workforce Equity Portal** | [link](#)  
The Equity Portal which is powered by the [Illinois Power Agency](#) (IPA), connects clean energy companies with Equity Eligible Persons looking to work in the clean energy sector in Illinois. The portal is designed to support both employers and job candidates.
- **1871 (Chicago area)** | [link](#)  
As the portal connects talent to tech companies, job candidates can submit their resumes to be shared with 1871's network of hiring companies.
- **Built In (national, which includes [Built In Chicago](#))** | [link](#)  
As an online community for national startups and tech companies which includes job opportunities, tech news, and upcoming events, Built In was founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Maria Christopoulos Katris.
- **Founder Institute Chicago** | [link](#)  
features information regarding co-founders
- **NextGroup (Evanston & surrounding areas)** | [link](#)  
NextGroup empowers Evanston area women shifting careers or re-entering the workplace to reimagine their professional lives while they provide employers with access to hard-to-reach and valuable talent for their

business needs. NextGroup was co-founded by four Illinois women entrepreneurs for women.

- **The Mom Project** (*national*) | [link](#)

As a digital talent marketplace and community that connects professionally accomplished women with world-class companies, The Mom Project is powering the future of work, one mom at a time.

The Mom Project was founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Allison Robinson for moms.

- **The Research Park at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign** | [link](#)

The Research Park at the University of Illinois is a leading innovation hub for technology commercialization with a unique environment that cultivates startups and increases capabilities for established companies. In addition to job opportunities including internships, Research Park offers a full range of programs and services.

- **Y Combinator** (*national*) | [link](#)

- [includes co-founder matching & job postings](#)

## Legal Clinics & Resources

- **Chicago-Kent Patent Hub** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

The Chicago-Kent Patent Hub, a pro bono program for Illinois inventors, offers under-resourced inventors to receive services and counsel from licensed patent attorneys. For more information including eligibility, visit the above link.

- **Community Enterprise & Solidarity Economy Clinic** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

represents worker-owned cooperative business, non-profit, or small business that operate for the benefit of an underserved community, presented by the University of Illinois at Chicago Law School

- **Innovation Clinic** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

*presented by the University of Chicago Law School*

- **IP Patent Clinic** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

*presented by the University of Illinois at Chicago Law School*

- **IP Trademark Clinic** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

*presented by the University of Illinois at Chicago Law School*

- **Legal Resources** | [link](#)

*presented by the [Innovation and New Ventures Office at Northwestern University](#)*

- **Legal Aid Chicago** (*Chicago area*) | [link](#)

- [small business management & copyrights, patents or other intellectual property resources](#)

- **The Donald Pritzker Entrepreneurship Law Center's Legal Services** | [link](#)

*for Illinois start-up companies and social entrepreneurs, presented by Donald Pritzker Entrepreneurship Law*

## University Consulting Services

In addition to the [Illinois Small Business Development Centers \(IL SBDC\)](#) network which includes IL SBDCs at universities throughout Illinois who offer year-round, at no-cost, confidential, and one-on-one business advising for business owners, below are additional university consulting groups and services.

- **DePaul Marketing Consulting Club | [link](#)**  
*consulting for companies*  
Lead our undergraduate students to success by providing a learning experience consulting with one another and professional companies to gain knowledge in the field of marketing and continue to apply their abilities in the business world.
- **Kellogg Impact Consulting Club (KICC) | [link](#)**  
*pro bono consulting for Chicago area socially responsible entrepreneurs*  
Each year, the Kellogg Impact Consulting Club (KICC) at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, partners with 15+ organizations including socially responsible entrepreneurs in the Chicago area to provide their 8-week-long pro-bono consulting projects to work on strategic planning, market entry, fundraising strategy, growth strategy, operation, organization, and brand awareness.
- **Magelli Office of Experiential Learning at the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | [link](#)**  
*consulting for startups businesses*
- **Pareto Solutions | [link](#)**  
*pro-bono consulting for Chicago non-profits and small businesses*  
As a consulting group at the University of Chicago which is driving change for Chicago businesses and non-profits globally, the [pro bono consultants](#) help clients solve some of their most challenging and fundamental business problems. For more information and to view past clients', visit the webpage. Interested Chicago businesses and non-profits can apply [here](#).
- **UIC Entrepreneurial Support Program | [link](#)**  
*consulting for Chicago area entrepreneurs and future business owners*  
The UIC Entrepreneurial Support Program helps new and established business owners in the Chicago area start, scale and succeed in business.

## Supporting Women-Owned Businesses Throughout Illinois

Support and utilize Illinois women-owned businesses in your local communities and during your travels in Illinois! Below are a variety of business directories and articles which list Illinois women-owned businesses. Check with your local chambers of commerce organizations, economic development corporations, etc. for additional business directories, too.

- [2023 Illinois Made Holiday Gift Guide](#)
- [Biggest Women-Owned Businesses](#) *(in the Chicago region)*
- [Champaign County Chamber of Commerce's Woman Owned Business List](#)
- [City of Peoria's Minority and Women Business Enterprise \(M/WBE\) Directory](#)
- [City of Rockford's List of Certified Woman Business Enterprises \(WBEs\)](#)
- [Federation of Women Contractors](#)
- [Illinois Made](#)
- [Illinois Office of Tourism](#)
- [Let's Talk Womxn Chicago](#) *(collaboration of women restaurateurs)*
- [Marketplace](#) *(featuring Chicago area businesses)*
- [National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms](#)
- [Refine Collective](#)
- [Small Business Majority 2023 Holiday Guide](#)
- [State of Illinois BEP and VEP Certification Directory](#)
  - Step 1: Click on BEP and/or VBP Certified Directory.
  - Step 2: In the "Search by Certification Type" area, click on Women Business Enterprise (WBE) and/or Women/Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE).
  - Step 3: In the "Search by Reference" area, navigate to the Gender section and select Female.
  - Step 4: To look for a woman-owned business in a particular industry, go to the "Search by Commodity Code" area and select "Click to Lookup Commodity Codes" then click "Browse Codes".
- [Women Entrepreneurs Central Illinois Directory](#)
- [YWCA Shop Chicago](#)
  - The online store managed by the [YWCA Metropolitan Chicago](#), offers a curated selection of goods and services, where a portion of each purchase goes to benefit the YWCA and the communities that they support.
- [YWCA Shop for Good in Evanston & Wilmette](#)
  - 100% of profits help support the [YWCA Evanston/North Shore's](#) domestic violence and economic advancement programs that serve women across northeastern Cook County

## Tax Assistance Program (TAP) for Lower Income City of Chicago Residents

- TAP presented by the City of Chicago and its non-profit partner, Ladder Up | [link](#)  
For residents who own their own business, please read the full list complete [ineligibility list](#).



## Regulatory & Permits

*tools & resources regarding federal and state regulations and laws*

- **First Stop Business Information Center | [link](#)**

First Stop is a single statewide resource in Illinois for entrepreneurs and businesses to obtain comprehensive regulatory and permitting information. Business specialists provide professional guidance to entrepreneurs by helping them identify and navigate regulatory requirements for their business and link them to state and local resources. Business specialists can be reached in English and Spanish at 1-800-252-2923 or [ceo.firststop@illinois.gov](mailto:ceo.firststop@illinois.gov).

- **Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) | [link](#)**

The Small Business Environmental Assistance Program is a non-regulatory program which provides free, confidential assistance to Illinois small businesses to help them succeed. Services include a toll-free helpline 1-800-252-3998 for free and confidential regulatory questions, help in understanding how state and federal environmental regulations apply to your business, fact sheets summarizing various environmental rules, environmental recordkeeping tools, and resources for navigating environmental regulations.

- **Illinois Chamber of Commerce's Business Resource Center | [link](#)**

Information and tools you need to keep your business in compliance with the many federal and state regulations and laws is presented in the one-stop resource developed by the statewide Illinois Chamber of Commerce. With the help of certified experts, the statewide chamber also developed the Wage and Hour Institute, the HR Audit Center, and Workers' Compensation Central.

- **Beneficial Ownership Information Reporting (*NEW federal law as of January 1, 2024*) | [link](#)**

Beginning this year 2024, many Illinois businesses must report their beneficial owner(s) – individuals who own or control the business – to the U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) as part of the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA). Below are additional resource links regarding the new law and reporting requirement.

- Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) Reporting as presented by Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias's Office | [link](#)
- Quick reference regarding BOI, presented by the U.S. Treasury's FinCEN | [link](#)
- Small Entity Compliance Guide, presented by the U.S. Treasury's FinCEN | [link](#)
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding BOI, presented by the U.S. Treasury's FinCEN | [link](#)

## Parental Leave Policies

*guides to help entrepreneurs and parents*

- **The Startup Founders' Guide to Creating and Using a Parental Leave Policy | [link](#)**

Overview guide presented [AllRaise](#) and Spring Bank, with support from [Pivotal Ventures](#).

- **Facts About the Family and Medical Leave Act | [link](#)**

Overview presented by the Illinois-based national non-profit, [Women Employed](#).

## Mom Communities

*for entrepreneurial accelerators-cohorts-mentoring programs and networking opportunities for mompreneurs, click [here](#) to be directed to the Social Capital Resources Guide*

- **Chicago Latina Moms** | [link](#)  
Chicago Latina Moms provides an encouraging community, resources, family programming, networking, and opportunities for professional and personal development.
- **Hustle Mommies** | [link](#)  
The Chicago-based non-profit amplifies the voices of urban, inner-city moms by providing them with resources including for mompreneurs, to advocate for their families and their communities. Programs include Hustle Mommies is founded by former teen mom, creative consultant and urban family activist, Chicagoan Ariel DeNey.
- **MOMLogics** | [link](#)  
The Illinois-based, national platform MOMLogics exists to empower Black moms with the best parenting strategies so we can enjoy better relationships with their children, spouses, and families. Curated programs include MOM-centered programming and coaching through its MOMLogics University which includes an entrepreneurship pillar. MOMLogics was founded by Lavelle Smith Hall, Founder & Chief MOM of MOMLogics.

## Additional Resources for Women-Owned Businesses

### Health & Wellness Hubs & Platforms

- **Blue Door Neighborhood Center** | [link](#)  
The Blue Door Neighborhood Center<sup>SM</sup> is a space to learn, connect and focus on your health. With three Chicago locations, the Blue Door Neighborhood Center is not a medical clinic; however they do offer free education services, free virtual class offerings including meditation, yoga, diabetes workshops, and much more. Presented by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL), they want to help Chicagoans improve their physical, mental and social well-being.
- **Togetherall** | [link](#)  
*for farmers, ranchers, and farm families*  
The free, confidential online mental health and well-being services platform for individuals 16 years and older.

## Child Care Assistance and Education Support

*resources to help moms find childcare providers and teachers*

- **Illinois Department of Human Services' (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** | [link](#)
- **Abundance Setting (Chicago)** | [link](#)  
With serving mothers in the culinary & hospitality industry, Abundance Setting was co-founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Chef Beverly Kim & her husband Chef Johnny Clark. Site includes resources for working mothers.
- **Sittercity (national)** | [link](#)  
As one of the largest online sources for child care, pet care, senior care, housesitting, housekeeping and tutoring, Sittercity was founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Genevieve Thiers.
- **TeacherCare (national)** | [link](#)  
As a nationwide agency providing world-class education and childcare that helps families and organizations find highly qualified teachers and nannies, TeacherCare was founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Terri Brax who also co-founded [Women Tech Founders](#).
- **YWCA Metropolitan Chicago Child Care Assistance Program**  
(for residents who live in DuPage, Kane, and Lake counties) | [link](#)  
Helps income-eligible parents in the counties of DuPage, Kane, & Lake pay for child care while they work or go to school
- **YWCA Northwestern Illinois Child Care Assistance Program**  
(for residents who live in Boone, Winnebago, Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties) | [link](#)  
Helps income-eligible parents in the counties of Boone, Winnebago, Stephenson and Jo Daviess pay for child care while they work or go to school

## Senior Care Assistance and Support Tools

*resources to support women taking care of their parents, relatives, and/or in-laws*

- **Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Home Services Agency Directory** | [link](#)
  - [information about home health agencies](#)
- **AARP Illinois** | [link](#)
  - includes [tools and tips](#) for taking care of aging parents and older adults
- **BrightStar Care (national)** | [link](#)  
Providing a wide range of care and services to families and businesses across the country, BrightStar Care was co-founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Shelly Sun.

- **Connect CareHero** | [link](#)

The [digital platform](#) offers access to a world of classes, connections and entertainment for older adults at no cost which tackles social isolation & loneliness at scale. Connect CareHero was co-founded by Chicagoan Osvaldo Montelongo.

- **Illinois Association of Community Care Program Homecare Providers** | [link](#)

- **Illinois Homecare & Hospice Council's Directory** | [link](#)

- **Papa** | [link](#)

a curated platform of companionship and support for older adults and their families

## **Fundraising for Individuals and Organizations / Philanthropy**

### **GoFundMe** | [link](#)

As a community-powered fundraising platform to fundraise for what individuals care about, the GiveForward fundraising platform is also part of the GoFundMe platform. GiveForward which was co- founded by Illinois woman entrepreneur Desiree Vargas Wrigley, was the world's first crowdfunding website dedicated to fundraising for medical expenses.

Please contact us anytime if you're looking for a different business resource.  
We're here to support-connect-advance Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs throughout the state!

**[Michelle Lura White](#)**: Women's Business Development Manager

*(state of Illinois' liaison to women-owned businesses and future women entrepreneurs)*

Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)

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



**Matthew Simpson**  
 African American  
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 Manager  
  
*Also supports  
 Veteran owned  
 businesses*



**Edwin Tumlos**  
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 Pacific Islander (AAPI)  
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 Manager  
  
*Also supports LGBTQIA+,  
 Persons with Disabilities  
 owned businesses*



**Diana Alfaro**  
 Latinx Business  
 Development Manager  
  
*Also supports American  
 Indian (Native  
 American), Arab/MENA  
 owned businesses*



**Michelle Lura White**  
 Women's Business  
 Development Manager

**Office of Minority  
Economic Empowerment  
(OMEE)**

*Serving marginalized  
communities including  
minority, women, persons  
with disabilities, and  
veteran owned  
businesses.*

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## **Team OMEE from the [Office of Minority Economic Empowerment \(OMEE\)](#) at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)**

The Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) is committed to providing minority-, women-, persons with disabilities and veteran-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs 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 connect with Team OMEE.
- To view upcoming events hosted by Team OMEE, click [here](#).

## **Team RED from the [Regional Economic Development \(RED\)](#) at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)**

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.

- As Team RED is located throughout Illinois, [click here](#) to connect with Team RED.
- To view upcoming events hosted by Team RED, click [here](#).

## **Team EIT from the Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology (EIT)**

The [Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology \(EIT\)](#) supports entrepreneurs, innovators, and small businesses in Illinois by providing concierge services, information, and technical support. Programs and services provided through EIT include:

- [The Illinois Small Business Development Centers \(SBDC\)](#) offers at no cost one-on-one business advising. The 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 business owners & entrepreneurs and those who have an idea. Click [here](#) to find the nearest IL SBDC by address or zip code. For upcoming IL SBDC events & webinars, click [here](#).
- The [Illinois APEX Accelerator](#) (formerly known as the Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Centers "PTAC") are a portal for small businesses looking to enter the world of government contracting. The centers provide one-on-one counseling, technical information, marketing assistance and training to existing businesses interested in selling their goods and services to local, state, and/or federal government agencies. The primary mission of the Illinois APEX Accelerator is to serve as the axis for existing and new business to enter and strengthen the Government Industrial Base (GIB) and Defense Industrial Base (DIB), by accelerating innovation, fostering ingenuity, and establishing resilient and diverse supply chains. Click [here](#) to find the nearest IL APEX Accelerator by address or zip code. For upcoming IL APEX Accelerator events & webinars, click [here](#).
- [The First Stop Business Information Center](#) is a single statewide resource for entrepreneurs and businesses to obtain comprehensive regulatory and permitting information. Business specialists provide professional guidance to entrepreneurs by helping them identify and navigate regulatory requirements for their business and link them to state and local resources.
- [The Illinois International Trade Centers](#) provide assistance with international trade and exporting. The centers offer information, counseling and training to existing and new-to-export companies interested in pursuing international trade opportunities.
- The [Small Business Environmental Assistance Program \(SBEAP\)](#) provides free confidential information and services to help small businesses understand and comply with their environmental obligations.

## **Team OTI from the Office of Trade & Investment (OTI) at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)**

The Office of Trade & Investment (OTI) at DCEO provides export assistance to companies interested in growing their global footprint. Through a network of trade specialist located in Chicago and in established regional foreign offices, OTI provides businesses with lead generation support and connects companies to foreign governments, chambers of commerce and other strategic partners around the world. Our expert team also leads trade missions, curated overseas tradeshow, and outreach events and seminars.

- As Team OTI is located both in Illinois and abroad, click [here](#) to connect with a team member from the Office of Trade and Investment (OTI).
- To attend upcoming events presented by the Office of Trade and Investment at DCEO, click [here](#).

## **Community Navigators**

Community Navigators support small businesses in Illinois who are identified as underserved including minority, rural, veteran, and women-owned businesses.

- Click [here](#) to find a Community Navigator near you.

**Scan below** to access Connecting HER to Business Resources Guide for Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs on your phone, watch, and/or tablet. You can also find the guide on the OMEE Business Resources Library [webpage](#),  
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/omee/businessresourcelibrary.html>



**Scan below** to access different resource guides for Illinois women-owned businesses, future women business owners, and aspiring female entrepreneurs on your phone, watch, and/or tablet. The guides can also be found on the very bottom of the OMEE Business Resource Library [webpage](#),  
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/omee/businessresourcelibrary.html>

- State of Illinois Government's Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)  
*includes different state agencies and offices who provide programs and services for businesses*
- U.S. Federal & Illinois Local Governments' Resources for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)  
*includes the largest counties and cities in Illinois, as well as contractor and vendor opportunities*
- Financial Capital Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)  
*includes grant directories, loan programs, crowdfunding platforms, etc.*
- Connecting HER Business to Illinois Organizations Guide | [link](#)  
*includes an extensive list of organizations throughout Illinois who support women entrepreneurs*
- Social Capital Resources Guide for HER Illinois Business | [link](#)  
*includes accelerator/cohort/mentoring programs & networking opportunities*

