



## Fourth Quarter Results!

In the fourth quarter, Advantage Illinois provided credit support on 57 projects, with a total project amount reaching \$55,909,210. It is estimated that these projects will create or retain 800 jobs in Illinois over the next 2 years. As of December 2025, we now have 121 approved lenders across Illinois!

# ADVANTAGE ILLINOIS

OCTOBER 1, 2025 - DECEMBER 31, 2025

## Building a Stronger Illinois: 2025 Impact Highlights

2025 was a year of growth, impact, and opportunity for Advantage Illinois! Through our programs, we fueled 175 projects statewide, delivering over \$121 million in loans and driving \$156 million in total project value. With nearly \$56 million in credit support, we helped businesses thrive—creating 910 new jobs, retaining 2,236 positions, and total 3,146 current jobs.

Our commitment to equity and inclusion shined with 157 SEDI projects, alongside 78 Very Small Business projects (VSB) and 70 rural projects, ensuring that communities of all sizes benefit from economic progress.

### Key Wins at a Glance

- \$121M in total loan support
- \$156M in project value statewide
- 910 new jobs created and 2,236 jobs retained
- 157 SEDI projects, 78 VSB initiatives, and 70 rural projects
- In 2025, we welcomed 17 new lenders to our program.

## COMPANY HIGHLIGHT

North End Auto & Tire is a local one-stop shop for auto repair, maintenance, and tire sales—from small utility tires to large farm tractor tires and powersports like ATVs and UTVs. When the previous owners retired after 29 years, we purchased the business to keep this vital service in the community.

**Lender: Sauk Valley Bank**



## MEET OUR TEAM



George Letavish



John Taflan



Sharon Polk



Robert J. Owens



Anton Aduwa-Emovon



Duane Walker



Mark Schultz



Amber Salefski



Marta Perez Tapia



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



**Sharon Polk** joined the Advantage Illinois Team in 2023. Sharon is responsible for ensuring submitted loan projects are compliant and complete before they are presented at the Committee Meetings. In addition to her internal review role, she has actively engaged in community outreach, representing the AI Team at workshops and business expos in the Chicagoland area to connect entrepreneurs and small business owners with access to capital opportunities.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- [Everything Local Conference - 1/28-1/29, BOS Center, Springfield IL](#)
- [Lender Webinar 2/3/2026](#)
- [Business Webinar 2/17/2026](#)
- [Rural Affairs Conference - 2/25-2/26, Abraham Lincoln Hotel & Conference Center, Springfield, IL](#)

If you would like to schedule a webinar or Q&A session virtually or in person, please contact Robert Owens at [Robert.Owens2@illinois.gov](mailto:Robert.Owens2@illinois.gov)

## WELCOME NEW LENDERS:

- THE FARMERS AND MERCHANTS NATIONAL BANK OF NASHVILLE
- RSF SOCIAL FINANCE, INC.

## Internal Updates:

### Introducing John Taflan as Loan Program Manager

We're excited to announce that John has joined our team as the new Loan Program Manager. In this role, John will oversee the Advantage Illinois program, ensuring continued support for Illinois businesses and lenders. Please join us in welcoming him!

### Direct Deposit and ePay Information

A lender can move to electronic payments with the State of Illinois by signing up for Direct Deposit and ePay.

- Signing up for [ePay](#) enables lenders to make payments to DCEO. This includes sending principal and interest payments from the Participation Loan Program (PLP) and Loan Guarantee Program (LGP) fees.
- By enrolling in [Direct Deposit](#), lenders can receive payments from DCEO more quickly compared to receiving payments by check. This method significantly reduces the time it takes for lenders to get paid.

### Springfield Staff Phone Numbers

Similar to our previous update for Chicago staff, we want to let you know that most Springfield staff now have new phone numbers. Please update your records accordingly.

### Upcoming SPF Survey

We'll soon be sending out a survey on Subsequent Private Financing (SPF). This is required for our annual State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) report to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Lenders will need to report any additional private credit extended to borrowers who received SSBCI credit support in calendar year 2025. Your participation is essential—thank you in advance!

### Annual Advantage Illinois Survey

We also invite you to complete our [Annual AI Survey](#). This survey helps us update lender contact information for AI staff and the general public and gather feedback on the Advantage Illinois program.



Questions?  
Please contact us



[Advantage Illinois](#)



[CEO.SSBCI@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.SSBCI@illinois.gov)

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. If you have any questions, please reach out to our team.



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Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity

