



Third Quarter Results!

In the third quarter, Advantage Illinois provided credit support on 46 projects, with a total project amount reaching \$28,087,638. It is estimated that these projects will create or retain 667 jobs in Illinois over the next 2 years. As of September 2025, we now have 120 approved lenders across Illinois!

ADVANTAGE ILLINOIS

JULY 1, 2025 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Supporting Small Businesses with the Advantage IL Loan Program – A Perspective from Rob Pickerell

I have been using the Advantage IL Loan participation program for the past seven years. The program itself, accompanied by a great support team to administer the program has allowed me to help many businesses that I would have otherwise not been able to. The loan participation program and loan guarantee program allow me to fill in gaps that some small businesses have. The programs can do this without putting undue stress on a company through high fees or higher than typical interest rates that other programs require. When considering the number of environmental stresses all businesses must work through, it is great to have a tool that can help in many ways without adding to the business owner's stress. I will always be a supporter of this program if it is available to support our business community.

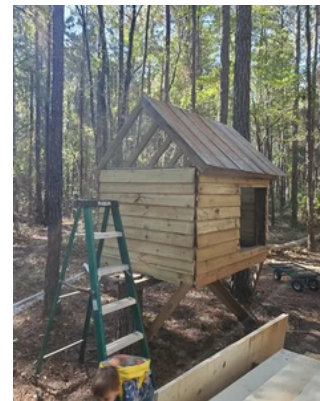
-Rob Pickerell, VP Commercial Lending Officer, First National Bank of Waterloo



COMPANY HIGHLIGHT

Tall Timber Farms, LLC supplies firewood to retail chains such as Dollar General, Casey's General Stores, and most recently, Moto Mart. The business has shown steady growth over the past year and has strong potential for further expansion.

Lender: Buena Vista National Bank



MEET OUR TEAM



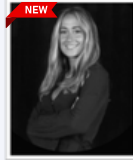
George Letavish



Sharon Polk



Robert Owens



Marta Perez Tapia



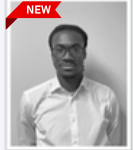
Duane Walker



Mark Schultz



Amber Salefski



Anton Aduwa-Emovon



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Mark Schultz, Mark has been a dedicated member of the Advantage Illinois team for five years, playing an instrumental role in the program's remarkable growth and operational excellence. When he first joined, Advantage Illinois had approved just 16 projects that year; since then, under his leadership and support, the program has expanded to nearly 150 projects annually.

As Loan Operations Manager, Mark oversees the full lifecycle of the program's loan portfolio. His responsibilities include ensuring federal reporting requirements are met with precision and timeliness, coordinating with the Illinois Comptroller's Office and internal accounting teams to ensure lender payments are processed accurately and efficiently, and maintaining the integrity of program data across multiple funding tranches. Mark's commitment to operational consistency and compliance has been critical to the continued success and credibility of the Advantage Illinois program.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Lender Webinar - Updates and Q&A 11/4 10-11am Register here: [Lender Registration](#)
- Business Owner Webinar - How to effectively approach your lender. 11/4 1-2pm. Register here: [Business Owner Registration](#)
- 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

WELCOME NEW LENDERS:

- FORESIGHT BANK
- CONSUMERS CREDIT UNION
- FIRST FINANCIAL BANK
- FIRST ROBINSON SAVINGS BANK
- NUMARK CREDIT UNION
- THE FARMERS STATE BANK AND TRUST

Outreach Update:



In Q3, Robert Owens actively promoted Advantage Illinois through a mix of in-person outreach and virtual education.

He hosted Lender Forums in Champaign, Carbondale, and Rockford in collaboration with SomerCor (SBA 504) and local SBDCs, and ran parallel forums for business owners and entrepreneurs to broaden program awareness. He also delivered a September webinar series tailored to both lenders and small businesses, plus a dedicated session for CDFI lenders addressing their specific needs.

If you'd like to have Bob speak to your lenders or groups, please feel most welcome to reach out to him at robert.owens2@illinois.gov.

Internal Updates:

New Advantage Illinois Employees

We're excited to welcome two new additions to the Advantage Illinois team:

- Marta Perez Tapia, our new Loan Program Specialist
- Anton Aduwa-Emovon, our new GPSI Intern from the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS)

Marta brings valuable experience and enthusiasm to support our loan programs, and Anton joins us through the Graduate Public Service Internship program, ready to contribute fresh ideas and energy. Welcome to the team, Marta and Anton!

Compliance

Please note that if you have an outstanding compliance issue pending resolution, we will not be able to process any new application from your institution until the compliance issue is resolved. You have been contacted previously if there is a compliance issue. An Advantage Illinois staff member will be following up with you and your institution again to discuss any outstanding compliance issues. Please address compliance issues as soon as possible to prevent processing delays.

Project Submission Update

Exhibit D's should be included in the project submission forms.



Questions?
Please contact us



[Advantage Illinois](#)



CEO.SSBCI@illinois.gov

Thank you for your participation in the Advantage Illinois Program!



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

