



Gov. Pritzker Announces New Investments Expanding Illinois Apprenticeship Program to Support More Than 17,000 Apprentices in 2020

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CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced a \$4.7 million investment that will expand the Illinois Apprenticeship Program to serve an additional 568 residents in training programs over the next two years. To help more Illinoisans take part in apprenticeship training programs aligned with high-demand career fields, the administration is awarding grants to 25 organizations across the state to expand training programs and employer partnerships, with an emphasis on growth in underserved communities. With additional grant funding to sustain and expand the program, the Illinois Apprenticeship Program will see a record level of investment of \$20 million and will serve a record 17,000 participants in 2020.

“Amidst one of the most difficult job markets in a generation, Illinois is expanding our state Apprenticeship Program to bolster training opportunities and employer partnerships through today’s \$4.7 million investment. These investments are a down payment on the future of Illinois and will help many more of our residents who haven’t previously had access to on the job training the ability to do so,” said Governor Pritzker. “While COVID-19 has placed an enormous economic burden on many of our communities, we want job seekers to know they aren’t alone in navigating this crisis. That is why our apprenticeship programs involve Illinois employers, community colleges, local workforce partners, and so many others working together to expand job training programs and to do it in a way that is equitable.”

DCEO is awarding grants to 25 partner organizations through a new \$4.7 million investment, made possible by a \$2.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor awarded to DCEO as well as \$1.9 million in discretionary workforce funds invested by

the state. These investments will pave the way for training in new industries, while also helping more residents in underserved communities to unlock jobs in high-demand and highly paid career fields. Investments announced today to increase capacity, along with a \$5 million investment in the Apprenticeship Tax Credit and \$10 million for the historic Illinois works initiative bring the total investment to a record \$20 million for 2020.

“While Illinois weathers record unemployment and economic instability due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, we know that apprenticeships can be a powerful gateway into highly skilled, highly paid careers,” said Michael Negron, Acting Director of DCEO. “To expand opportunities for all Illinois residents, Governor Pritzker continues to make investments in growing partnerships with community colleges, community-based organizations and corporations with an interest and a commitment to helping more Illinois residents reach the next step in their career.”

New apprenticeship partners were selected through a competitive review process geared toward helping the State expand programming to underrepresented communities. Through the expansion, apprenticeship intermediaries will begin to operate for the first time in DeKalb, Sterling, Rock Island, Moline, Rockford, and Springfield. These investments will also provide existing programs serving underserved communities with additional capacity. DCEO partners currently offer programming in East St. Louis, Southern Cook County and Southern Illinois.

“National Able Network has taken a leading role in IT apprenticeships because we know it’s a proven way to help people transition from low paying jobs into growing and sustainable careers that lead to stability for families and flourishing communities,” said Bridget Altenburg, CEO of National Able Network. “We applaud Governor Pritzker and DCEO for their continued work to expand quality apprenticeship opportunities for those who have previously lacked access. This will result not only in more apprentices earning globally recognized certifications but will in turn help more employers build their talent pipeline.”

The grants will fund 17 organizations that serve as apprenticeship intermediaries and develop and deliver industry aligned curriculum to train participants; intermediaries include community colleges, local governments, and community-based organizations. The investment will also fund a total of 8 navigator organizations that work with company-based apprenticeship programs to match them with participants in high-needs areas. A full list of new apprenticeship partner organizations is available on DCEO’s website.

Program participants will have access to apprenticeship training opportunities spanning a wide range of industry professions, with program availability dependent upon region.

New programs focused on in-demand industry areas such as IT and medical assistance offer apprentices access to new certifications and high paying jobs.

New investments to expand the State's apprenticeship programs adopt an equity centric approach following a dual review of the Illinois Apprenticeship Programs earlier this year. In the first review, DCEO [conducted a statewide analysis of apprenticeships and work-based learning](#) programs that revealed disparities in apprenticeship program participation – with the vast majority of participants, 85 percent, not including women, people of color or other underserved populations. In a complementary report, partner workforce organizations, Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) and Young Invincibles (YI), [developed a roadmap for ensuring apprenticeships are diverse and accessible to all people](#).

“With the economy in disarray and workers facing an uncertain job market, ensuring apprenticeship opportunities are available to everyone is more important than ever,” said Angela Morrison, Policy Associate for Chicago Jobs Council. “The State of Illinois’ plans to bring new apprenticeships to communities and residents that have been historically underserved is a step in the right direction to improving access for residents to earn and learn.”

The reports concluded that apprenticeship intermediaries and navigators are an important strategy for increasing the number of diverse participants and increasing engagement from underserved communities. DCEO has seen an uptick in statewide participation in recent years, with programs serving an additional 900 participants since 2019.

“We’ve seen firsthand that apprenticeships can give young people the skills they need to secure stable, good-paying jobs that can help them build a financially secure future for themselves and their families,” said Morgan Diamond, Midwest Program Manager at Young Invincibles. “But if we’re going to continue growing Illinois’ economy and ensuring the next generation of Illinoisans can flourish, expanding these job opportunities must be done in a way that’s equitable. Using new reports as a guide for addressing racial and gender gaps in access to apprentices, we are eager to partner with the State of Illinois to build a roadmap to equity in apprenticeships for generations to come.”

Since taking office, Governor Pritzker has made expanding apprenticeship training programs a priority, creating the Apprenticeship Tax Credit to incentivize employers to increase high-quality career training opportunities in Illinois. Additionally, the Illinois Works program which is funded by the Governor’s historic Rebuild Illinois capital plan will oversee efforts to increase diversity and participation in state-funded pre-apprenticeship opportunities in the building trades.

"We are excited and appreciative to be awarded the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant from DCEO as we work with other area colleges and industry partners to provide workforce training and educational opportunities through apprenticeships," said Terry Wilkerson President of Rend Lake College. "Apprenticeships offer the unique opportunity to provide high quality education with practical experience - while allowing the participant to become a working professional."

"Apprenticeships are a proven tool for workforce development and provide new workers an opportunity for a long-term career path," said State Senator Ann Gillespie. "Today, Illinois reinforces our commitment to investing in apprenticeships and the options they provide for both employers and youth, options even more critical as we work our way through the far-reaching economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic."

"I'm thrilled to see National Able's work recognized," said Representative Theresa Mah. "This is an important investment in workforce training and apprenticeships by the State of Illinois, and it couldn't be coming at a better time."

Over the past several weeks, the Pritzker administration has initiated a series of new programs and recalibrated existing programs to assist both employers and workers in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. This includes the launch of the [Get Hired website](#) to pair job seekers, providing an expansion of cost-free virtual training, career fairs, and hiring opportunities in real-time. Since launching just weeks ago nearly 1,000 residents have registered to participate in over 3,000 courses.

Residents or employers interested in joining the Illinois Apprenticeship Program may visit www.ApprenticeshipIllinois.com to learn more about apprenticeship eligibility and pathways available across a variety of industries in Illinois.