



# **IL SBDC For Metro East At SIUE And Its Partners Are Illinois Community Navigators**

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the Metro East at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is officially part of the Illinois Community Navigator Program through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The affiliation raises awareness for federal and state grant and loan programs, especially in the underserved business community.

Targeted businesses include women, minority and rural veteran-owned businesses who may find it challenging to access resources, or are simply unaware of the resources available. Using a hub and spoke model, Illinois DCEO is bringing together community organizations from across the state and the spokes will implement grassroots efforts to engage with small businesses.

The SBDC has six partners to assist in these efforts and cover the 9-county region in southwest Illinois. These partners include: The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis-St. Clair County Division, Monroe County Economic Development Corp., National Development Council (NDC), Metro East Business Incubator (MEBI), Jersey County Business Association (JCBA) and Hoyleton Youth and Family Services (Puentes). The nine counties covered are Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, Bond, Clinton, Jersey, Calhoun, Washington and Randolph.

On Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2021, the Illinois Back to Business (B2B) Program portal opens. Administered by the DCEO, the B2B program is a \$250 million grant program to support the continued recovery of small businesses across Illinois. The first in a series of economic recovery programs set to launch by the administration, B2B will offer small businesses access to funds that can help offset losses due to COVID-19, bring back workers and take continued steps to rebuild amid the fallout from the pandemic. The program builds on last year's Business Interruption Grant program, which provided \$580 million to small businesses and childcare providers across the state.

To learn more about the Community Navigator Initiative and for assistance with the B2B Program, contact the SBDC at 618-650-2929 or [sbdcedw@gmail.com](mailto:sbdcedw@gmail.com). The office will provide support or a connection with one of the partners for further assistance.

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