

# Governor Pritzker Announces \$250 Million in Grant Awards for Small Businesses

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CHICAGO —During National Small Business Week, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced that the full \$250 million in relief funds have been granted through the Back to Business (B2B) program. This concludes the program, providing nearly 6,500 grants to small

businesses in over 475 cities and more than 90 counties across the state, with 96 percent of awards delivered to businesses in disproportionately impacted communities or in the hardest-hit industries. A list of Illinois B2B grantees can be found [here](#).

“Illinois responded to the pandemic by providing \$1.5 billion in economic relief for childcare providers, local government services, and so many hard-hit small businesses that shape our communities,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “These are investments that preserve jobs and Main Streets and dreams. When we put our state’s fiscal house in order, we can invest taxpayer dollars in building a stronger Illinois for all who call her home.”

This grant program utilized American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help small businesses rehire staff, cover operating costs, afford additional customer safety precautions, and cover other expenses needed to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grants were awarded to applicants on a rolling basis with dollar amounts ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$150,000, based on a percentage of losses each business experienced during the pandemic.

“Our administration is fully committed to stepping up for small businesses, and providing them the resources needed to continue being a pathway of opportunity for entrepreneurship and jobs throughout Illinois,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “The B2B grants have been an amazing source of support and equitable economic recovery, bringing back essential jobs in industries disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.”

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, DCEO set out to support small businesses hardest-hit by the pandemic through the B2B program in order to bolster communities across Illinois,” said DCEO Director Sylvia I. Garcia. “More than half of awards went to businesses owned by people of color and nearly two-thirds went to businesses located in low-income areas most impacted by COVID-19. As Illinois’ small businesses continue to spur economic recovery, DCEO remains wholly committed to prioritizing their success through our resources and programming.”

The B2B grants were prioritized for businesses most in need of support due to the pandemic, including hard hit sectors such as hotels, restaurants, arts and cultural organizations, barbershops and salons, dry cleaners, and fitness centers. The program included set-aside allocations for businesses in disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs); businesses that applied for but did not receive Business Interruption Grants in 2020, as well as specific hard-hit industries.

The breakdown of the grants includes:

- Businesses received a median grant amount of \$20,000, with an average of \$37,512.

- 29 percent of recipients applied for the Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program last year but did not receive funding.
- 64 percent of awards were given to businesses located in disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs), or low-income zip codes that experienced high rates of COVID-19.
- 61 percent of awards were granted to hard-hit industries, including restaurants and taverns, hotels, arts organizations, and salons.
- B2B grant recipients experienced revenue declines of an average of 41 percent in 2020 compared to the year before the pandemic.
- Grants have primarily gone to the smallest businesses:
- 62 percent going to businesses with revenue under \$500,000
- 79 percent going to businesses with revenue under \$1 million

In order to reach businesses most in need, DCEO utilized a community navigator program of over 100 local organizations who assisted in helping raise awareness of the program and provide technical support to businesses owned in hard-hit areas, rural communities, and other hard-to-reach populations.

Over half (53 percent) of B2B grants have gone to businesses owned by people of color. This includes 22 percent of grants to Asian American or Pacific Islander-owned businesses, 15 percent to Black-owned businesses, and 12 percent to Latinx-owned businesses. Additionally, 37 percent of grants went to businesses owned by women. This builds upon the diverse representation in Business Interruption Grants (BIG), for which 40 percent of awards went to businesses owned by people of color.

"COVID-19 ravaged our local economies and put significant stress on our small businesses. This B2B grant program has provided \$250 million in financial support to thousands of entrepreneurs across this state. With a focus on minority-owned businesses, we've been able to accelerate recovery and stimulate economic growth for those who were hit hardest by the pandemic." - *Speaker of the House Chris Welch (D-Westchester)*.

"This relief program has been a vital investment in thousands of small businesses that keep the economy humming throughout our great state. It has kept doors open and people employed at gyms and restaurants, cleaners, and coffee shops. I am hopeful that it made a difference in their economic recovery and will help small businesses thrive in the years to come." - *Senate President Don Harmon, (D-Oak Park)*.

"As we continue to deal with the impact COVID-19 has had on our daily lives, we are at the same time seeing local businesses face immense financial distress as they work to bounce back. The Back to Business Grant program has continued to be a nation-leading

small business assistance program that has provided thousands of businesses across the state with millions of dollars in assistance to help them through these challenging times. I am proud to have led efforts in the Senate to ensure this much-needed funding assistance reaches our hardest-hit communities.” - *Senator Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago)*

“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, our small businesses and nonprofits faced unprecedented challenges as they struggled to make payroll, keep the doors open, and continue providing the services our residents rely on. The Back to Business grant program was able to provide millions of dollars in grant funding to help organizations get through these difficult times and emerge in a position of strength.” –*Representative Margaret Croke (D-Chicago)*.

“Small businesses throughout the state were able to get a lifeline to continue to operate due to our efforts with the B2B grant, our commitment to see our small businesses thrive is unwavering and we will continue to advocate for more resources.” –*Representative Dagmara Avelar (D-Bolingbrook)*.

"As the Representative for one of the most vibrant business corridors in the state, I couldn't be more pleased with the results of the Back to Business Program. Small businesses in Chinatown, Pilsen, and Bridgeport are too often left behind by relief programs and can't spend all day filling out applications. The Back to Business Program reached out, provided assistance, and most importantly delivered with funds so they could keep their lights on." –*Representative Theresa Mah (D-Chicago)*.

“Last month, we passed a balanced budget that replenishes and reinvests in the Back to Business (B2B) grants. As the chair of the Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Tech Innovation Committee, we passed legislation that would further foster the recovery of small businesses and expand opportunities to those who have been historically locked out of our economy.” –*Representative Carol Ammons (D-Urbana)*

“The Back to Business program has been paramount in getting our hardest-hit industries the financial boost they need to get back on their feet as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate all the hard work DCEO has done to roll out these grants to help keep Illinois businesses open.” –*Senator Cristina Castro (D-Elgin)*.

"Small businesses have had it rough the last two years, and that's an understatement. I want to celebrate the great success this program has had in reaching the smallest of the small-- mom and pop businesses with maybe just a few employees. The Back to Business Program has made a difference not just in the board room, but at the kitchen table as well." –*Representative Kathleen Willis (D-Addison)*.

As of May 4, \$250 million in funds have been released, which includes approximately \$7 million that is reserved for ongoing appeals. The final list of recipients and figures may change if a business does not claim the funds, or if an appeal is granted. Any remaining funds from appeals or unclaimed by businesses will be distributed to applicants. DCEO will continue to proactively maintain an up-to-date list of recipients and stats on the B2B webpage, which can be found [here](#).

Through the pandemic, the Pritzker administration has focused on providing assistance to Illinois' hardest-hit businesses and communities. As part of the state's ongoing commitment to supporting small businesses, DCEO will be administering a program to help cover COVID-related costs for startups that went into business after the start of the pandemic. These businesses weren't eligible for B2B. Additionally, as part of the FY23 budget bill, additional relief will be available for restaurants, hotels and businesses focused on the arts later this year.

In addition to ongoing recovery support, DCEO offers a variety of resources and programs for small businesses, including other grants, low-interest loan programs, technical support from Small Business Development Centers, and resources and training through our Office of Minority Economic Empowerment.

To learn more about resources for small businesses, visit [Illinois.gov/DCEO](https://illinois.gov/DCEO) and for additional help navigating resources, contact DCEO's First Stop Business Information Center Services at 800.252.2923 or email [ceo.firststop@illinois.gov](mailto:ceo.firststop@illinois.gov).