

Gov. Pritzker Awards \$10 Million In Illinois Soundstage Capital Grants

February 28 2024 10:31 AM



CHICAGO — Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced \$10 million in grant funding for local film studio infrastructure projects through the Illinois Soundstage Program. This grant funding will support the state’s continued efforts to position Illinois as a leading production center in North America and help diversify the film industry outside of Chicago, all while boosting economic and workforce development across the state. The Fields Studios (\$5 million), located in Chicago, Fresh Films (\$3.8 million) in Rock

Island, and Flyover Studios (\$1.1 million) in Champaign have all been awarded funding through this program.

“The demand for film production space in Illinois is growing every day,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Congratulations to the grantees of the new \$10 million Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program. I know I speak on behalf of the people of Illinois when I say that we cannot wait to see what you create.”

"The film industry has strong roots in Illinois, and now we are actively encouraging upward expansion and increased diversity. Through tax credits, grants, and training programs, we hope to make space for more perspectives in the field," said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton. "The Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant will directly benefit production teams, who in turn will benefit local economies. How better to share the beauty of our state than by bringing Illinois to people's screens through film?"

The goal of the Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program is to fund studio infrastructure projects in order to bolster Illinois' rapidly growing streaming, TV and film industry. The grant funds can be used for building and modernizing soundstages and production space which will help attract large scale projects to Illinois while simultaneously bolstering business for local vendors and businesses and creating employment opportunities.

“The Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program is helping to grow Illinois' status as a world-class destination for award-winning productions,” said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. “This funding will not only help expand the film industry across the state, but it will also bolster revenue for our local economies and help provide job opportunities for Illinoisans seeking a long career in the film industry.”

Illinois has seen tremendous growth in the film industry due to the Illinois Film Production Tax Credit, a 30 percent tax credit on qualified expenditures, including production spending, salaries, and an additional 15 percent on salaries for people who live in economically disadvantaged areas. Unlike other states, Illinois does not have a cap on film and television tax credits – a program that was extended through 2033 by Governor Pritzker.

The State's tax credit has resulted in a \$6.81 return on investment for every dollar spent on the incentive, resulting in \$3.6 billion in economic activity between FY17 and FY22.

The Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program funding opportunity was made available to nonprofit organizations, education organizations, and for-profit organizations throughout the state through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

“Knickpoint Ventures is thrilled to present The Fields Studios - the culmination of years of work to deliver this extraordinary piece of critical infrastructure to the Illinois film and television community,” said Zain Koita, Managing Partner of Knickpoint Ventures. “Over the last several years we have transformed this vacant, 23 acre abandoned industrial complex into a thriving mixed-use campus with retail, office, and residential already on site. The delivery of the first, and only, purpose built sound stages in Illinois is the perfect complement to this thriving urban creative campus. The Fields Studios will enable Illinois to advance its commitment to growing the film and television business locally as it creates tremendous economic impact to the people and businesses surrounding the project. The Fields Studios will create countless new job opportunities including over 1,000 new film related union job opportunities necessary to deliver top quality productions that share Illinois’ stories with the world. We are thankful for the state’s ongoing partnership to make Illinois a top filming destination globally and promote this dynamic industry as a cornerstone of Illinois’ future growth.”

“Fresh Films is beyond thankful to be receiving this grant to build a studio in Rock Island County. We worked in collaboration with other local partners to showcase how combining our region's unique locations and history with soundstage studio infrastructure will attract large-scale TV and film productions to this part of the state,” said Kelli Feigley, Founder & Managing Director of Fresh Films. “The studio will serve as a catalyst to diversify the local economy, not just in job creation for local talent but also in how it can attract professionals from the entertainment industry, spurring the growth of related businesses and services which adds to the overall financial health of the community. The grant is an investment in economic growth, cultural enrichment, and community development, with far-reaching benefits for the Western Illinois region and for the State of Illinois. We look at this as an opportunity for all boats to rise as we partner together to benefit the region and its Illinois residents.”

“We are proud and excited to be the recipients of this state grant to help build Flyover Film Studios in central Illinois, furthering the reach of the film industry and its economic impact to our region,” said Jennifer Shelby, President of Flyover Studios.

In order to build upon the state's reputation as a national destination for film and TV production, in 2022, the state launched the Film and TV Workforce Training Program, which is designed to increase diversity in Illinois' film industry. Since the program’s launch, the Illinois Film Office has partnered with various organizations across the state to train and hire over 200 individuals, mostly women and students of color, that are historically underrepresented in the industry.