

1 AN ACT concerning State government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Department of Commerce and Economic
5 Opportunity Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois
6 is amended by adding Section 605-503 as follows:

7 (20 ILCS 605/605-503 new)

8 Sec. 605-503. Entrepreneurship assistance centers.

9 (a) The Department shall establish and support, subject to
10 appropriation, entrepreneurship assistance centers, including
11 the issuance of grants, at career education agencies and
12 not-for-profit corporations including, but not limited to,
13 local development corporations, chambers of commerce,
14 community-based business outreach centers, and other
15 community-based organizations. The purpose of the centers
16 shall be to train minority group members, women, individuals
17 with a disability, dislocated workers, and veterans in the
18 principles and practice of entrepreneurship in order to
19 prepare those persons to pursue self-employment opportunities
20 and to pursue a minority business enterprise or a women-owned
21 business enterprise. The centers shall provide for training in
22 all aspects of business development and small business
23 management as defined by the Department.

1 (b) The Department shall establish criteria for selection
2 and designation of the centers which shall include, but not be
3 limited to:

4 (1) the level of support for the center from local
5 post-secondary education institutions, businesses, and
6 government;

7 (2) the level of financial assistance provided at the
8 local and federal level to support the operations of the
9 center;

10 (3) the applicant's understanding of program goals and
11 objectives articulated by the Department;

12 (4) the plans of the center to supplement State and
13 local funding through fees for services which may be based
14 on a sliding scale based on ability to pay;

15 (5) the need for and anticipated impact of the center
16 on the community in which it will function;

17 (6) the quality of the proposed work plan and staff of
18 the center; and

19 (7) the extent of economic distress in the area to be
20 served.

21 (c) Each center shall:

22 (1) be operated by a board of directors representing
23 community leaders in business, education, finance and
24 government;

25 (2) be incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation;

26 (3) be located in an area accessible to eligible

1 clients;

2 (4) establish an advisory group of community business
3 experts, at least one-half of whom shall be representative
4 of the clientele to be served by the center, which shall
5 constitute a support network to provide counseling and
6 mentoring services to minority group members, women,
7 individuals with a disability, dislocated workers, and
8 veterans from the concept stage of development through the
9 first one to 2 years of existence on a regular basis and as
10 needed thereafter; and

11 (5) establish a referral system and linkages to
12 existing area small business assistance programs and
13 financing sources.

14 (d) Each entrepreneurship assistance center shall provide
15 needed services to eligible clients, including, but not
16 limited to: (i) orientation and screening of prospective
17 entrepreneurs; (ii) analysis of business concepts and
18 technical feasibility; (iii) market analysis; (iv) management
19 analysis and counseling; (v) business planning and financial
20 planning assistance; (vi) referrals to financial resources;
21 (vii) referrals to existing educational programs for training
22 in such areas as marketing, accounting, and other training
23 programs as may be necessary and available; and (viii)
24 referrals to business incubator facilities, when appropriate,
25 for the purpose of entering into agreements to access shared
26 support services.

1 (e) Applications for grants made under this Section shall
2 be made in the manner and on forms prescribed by the
3 Department. The application shall include, but shall not be
4 limited to:

5 (1) a description of the training programs available
6 within the geographic area to be served by the center to
7 which eligible clients may be referred;

8 (2) designation of a program director;

9 (3) plans for providing ongoing technical assistance
10 to program graduates, including linkages with providers of
11 other entrepreneurial assistance programs and with
12 providers of small business technical assistance and
13 services;

14 (4) a program budget, including matching funds,
15 in-kind and otherwise, to be provided by the applicant;

16 and

17 (5) any other requirements as deemed necessary by the
18 Department.

19 (f) Grants made under this Section shall be disbursed for
20 payment of the cost of services and expenses of the program
21 director, the instructors of the participating career
22 education agency or not-for-profit corporation, the faculty
23 and support personnel thereof, and any other person in the
24 service of providing instruction and counseling in furtherance
25 of the program.

26 (g) The Department shall monitor the performance of each

1 entrepreneurial assistance center and require quarterly
2 reports from each center at such time and in such a manner as
3 prescribed by the Department.

4 The Department shall also evaluate the entrepreneurial
5 assistance centers established under this Section and report
6 annually beginning on January 1, 2023, and on or before
7 January 1 of each year thereafter, the results of the
8 evaluation to the Governor and the General Assembly. The
9 report shall discuss the extent to which the centers serve
10 minority group members, women, individuals with a disability,
11 dislocated workers, and veterans; the extent to which the
12 training program is coordinated with other assistance programs
13 targeted to small and new businesses; the ability of the
14 program to leverage other sources of funding and support; and
15 the success of the program in aiding entrepreneurs to start up
16 new businesses, including the number of new business start-ups
17 resulting from the program. The report shall recommend changes
18 and improvements in the training program and in the quality of
19 supplemental technical assistance offered to graduates of the
20 training programs. The report shall be made available to the
21 public on the Department's website. Between evaluation due
22 dates, the Department shall maintain the necessary records and
23 data required to satisfy the evaluation requirements.

24 (h) For purposes of this Section:

25 "Entrepreneurship assistance center" or "center" means the
26 business development centers or programs which provide

1 assistance to primarily minority group members, women,
2 individuals with a disability, dislocated workers and veterans
3 under this Section.

4 "Disability" means, with respect to an individual: (i) a
5 physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or
6 more of the major life activities of an individual; (ii) a
7 record of such an impairment; or (iii) being regarded as
8 having an impairment.

9 "Minority business enterprise" has the same meaning as
10 provided for "minority-owned business" under Section 2 of the
11 Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with
12 Disabilities Act.

13 "Minority group member" has the same meaning as provided
14 for "minority person" under Section 2 of the Business
15 Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with
16 Disabilities Act.

17 "Women-owned business enterprise" has the same meaning as
18 provided for "women-owned business" under Section 2 of the
19 Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with
20 Disabilities Act.

21 "Veteran" means a person who served in and who has
22 received an honorable or general discharge from, the United
23 States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, or
24 reserves thereof, or who served in the Army National Guard,
25 Air National Guard, or Illinois National Guard.