



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Michael J. Madigan
Speaker of the House
300 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Speaker Madigan:

Pursuant to P.A. 101-497, which was signed into law in the 2019, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity shall complete an assessment of its current practices related to marketing programs administered by the Department and the extent to which the Department assist Illinois residents in the use and coordination of programs offered by the Department. If the Department determines, after completion of the assessment that, a Citizens Services Coordinator is needed to assist Illinois resident in obtaining services and programs offered by the Department, then the Department may, subject to appropriation, hire an individual to serve as a Citizens Services Coordinator.

This assessment was performed in March 2020, but due to staff turnover, was not submitted.

Upon completion of the assessment, the Department has determined that hiring a Citizens Services Coordinator is not needed at this time and marketing and outreach efforts can be conducted and increased with existing staff. The Department does acknowledge that much work is needed in increasing these efforts, and, particularly in the light of the Department administering nearly \$3 billion in Rebuild Illinois capital funds, has identified increasing these efforts as a top priority over the next year. The Department offers incredibly important programs and services to Illinois residents and businesses and it is incumbent upon the Department to ensure that residents and businesses are aware of these services.

To that end, the Department, under the direction of the Governor and the Governor's Office, has embarked upon an ambitious effort to promote Department programs and services through consistent integrated marketing and communications efforts across the State. This approach includes the following:

- Creating a unified and seamless experience for stakeholders to interact with the brand in all aspects, including advertising, public relations, direct marketing and social media.
- Our strategies include augmenting the capabilities of existing marketing channels and acquiring new ones to efficiently deliver the content our audiences need.

- Since November 2019, the Department has worked to develop a new website design that is built to be mobile responsive, that offers ease of use and no limitations in customization and is provided in multiple languages for our multicultural audiences.
- The Department has purchased a social media content management program that allows us to manage conversations with partners, communities, and businesses, improve content publishing, and deliver industry-specific engaging stories.
- The Department now publishes a weekly e-newsletter that showcases business and program success stories that are relevant to our stakeholders and is distributed to nearly 40,000 contacts including municipalities, chambers of commerce, economic development centers and business partners. The Department has sent 86 e-newsletters from November 2019 to September 2020.
- To continuously improve customer satisfaction and provide the resources our constituents are looking for, we have developed webinars and presentations around the grant application process and technical assistance workshops for the cannabis industry as well as marketing collateral for all of our communities (African American, Hispanic, Asian American, veteran, and disabled).
- The Department has trained staff at all of the 42 Small Business Development Centers across the State to provide trainings and guidance on how to navigate the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (“GATA”) process and to become GATA pre-qualified. In addition, the Department has provided GATA and Department Capital budget presentations to large audiences in partnership with members of the General Assembly.
- The Department has trained and readied all front-line facing staff to respond to questions related to any DCEO programs or services and is holding these staff accountable to provide presentations, attend critical community meetings and represent the Department as much as possible in communities and regions across the State.

The Department will continue to explore additional digital marketing efforts and implement those that will support the advancement of the state’s economy and raise Illinois’ profile as a premier global business destination while serving our multicultural communities. The Department is also committed to increasing its efforts to engage communities across the State and provide educational and informational sessions as it relates to the programs and services offered by the Department, particularly those communities that are impacted by high unemployment, blight and poverty.

As always, please contact me or my staff to address questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Erin B. Guthrie
Director