

AN ACT concerning State government.

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

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

(20 ILCS 605/605-503 new)

Sec. 605-503. Entrepreneurship assistance centers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(c) Each center shall:

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

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

(3) be located in an area accessible to eligible

clients;

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

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

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

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

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

(2) designation of a program director;

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

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

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

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

(g) The Department shall monitor the performance of each

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

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

(h) For purposes of this Section:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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