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Contact: Lauren Huffman
Lauren.Huffman@illinois.gov

PRITZKER ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES $2 MILLION INVESTMENT TO EXPAND SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES VYING FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

New investments will open two new Procurement Technical Assistance Centers in Chicago; build on continued investments in statewide support for small businesses during COVID-19 crisis

CHICAGO– The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today joined Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton at the Greater Southwest Development Corporation and community members to announce the opening of two new Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) and ongoing support for another seven centers across Illinois. Supported by a $2 million state and federal investment, these new centers will help more small businesses compete for contracts with local, state and/or federal government agencies where they can sell goods or services and in turn grow their business.

PTACs play a critical role in providing businesses with support needed to enter the world of government contracting. Last year alone, PTACs helped Illinois small businesses secure nearly 800 government contracts valued at over $1.1 billion.

"This is an exciting time for small businesses that create jobs and provide valuable services to the community," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** "Now these new centers will put tech support within these same communities, heightening visibility and business growth for entrepreneurs. Governor Pritzker and I continue to be committed to providing resources to small businesses that are the backbone of the Illinois economy."

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, DCEO is focused on ensuring new and existing businesses across Illinois receive the support they need to grow and succeed,” **said DCEO Acting Director Michael Negron.** “While many businesses face uncertainty due to COVID-19, government contracting offers a viable opportunity for businesses to build their own capacity while supporting delivery of critical services that residents depend upon. These new investments in our PTACs will help expand the reach of our community-based programs to communities with the greatest needs and to ensure more businesses have access to these free services.”

The State’s investments pave the way for two new community-based centers and expand the reach of existing PTACs – bringing the statewide network to a total of 9 locations. Two new PTAC locations will launch in August:

- Greater Southwest Development Corporation
- Far South Community Development Corporation

New and existing PTACs were selected to receive funding following a robust competitive process launched in June, which required a review of programmatic capacity and to ensure host organizations could provide financial matching. Additionally, the review process evaluated [illegible] and access to PTACs in areas throughout the state.

“We work hard in Springfield to make sure [illegible] gr[illegible] **State Representative Sonya Harper.** “This e[illegible]strict a[illegible]

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the south side gain better access to government contracts but will also help to heal the economic inequities our black and brown businesses and communities face. I look forward to ensuring these PTACs continue to get the state support they need to grow all businesses in Illinois."

"The world of government contracting can be difficult, especially for minority business owners," **said State Senator Mattie Hunter**. "The implementation of these new procurement centers would play a crucial part in equipping businesses with the support necessary to have a successful launch, and longevity in their respected fields."

Both of the newest PTACs are located in underserved areas and assist businesses owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities understand the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) certification process. They also assist with applying for BEP certification, gaining access to State of Illinois contract opportunities and identifying BEP contracting opportunities.

"BEP certification creates a pathway to wealth generation for minority-owned businesses and supports economic development in underserved communities," **said Director Janel L. Forde, Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS)**. "Small and medium-sized businesses are vital to the state's economy and this investment will directly support their growth and development."

"Greater Southwest Development Corporation is excited to partner with the Illinois Department of Commerce and the Defense Logistics Agency as we open a Procurement and Technical Assistance Center in the Southwest side of Chicago," **said Adrian Soto, Executive Director - Greater Southwest Development Corporation**. "The center will provide services to help local businesses compete for government contracts resulting in much needed investment and resources to Chicago's Southwest side."

The $2 million investment to the program includes $1.25 million investment by the state and the U.S. Department of Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), paired with $812,500 in matching funds by partner organizations. New and existing PTACs are available to help support businesses with one-on-one counseling, certification assistance, technical information, marketing assistance and training pertaining to selling their goods and services to government agencies.

"I am excited to see the newest Illinois PTAC come to the Greater Southwest Development Corporation right here in the 16th Ward," **said Alderman Stephanie D. Coleman**. "Our minority small businesses and contractors will truly benefit from the one-on-one professional guidance that PTACs provide to secure government contracts. I appreciate the Pritzker administration's continued focus on to ensuring that our minority contractors have the best chance to succeed."

Existing Illinois PTACs include locations at: Bradley University; College of DuPage; Women's Business Development Center; Joseph Business School; Western Illinois University; Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; and the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

"At Open Water, our mission is to keep as many plastic bottles as we can from polluting our lakes, oceans and waterways," **said Nicole Doucet, CEO and Co-Founder of Open Water.** "The SBDC has been a great source of support and advice as small businesses like ours face these challenging times. We are very much looking forward to continuing to grow our business and work with the PT… …l with environmentally-friendly packaging in minc…

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the reach of Illinois' SBDC network, comprised of a total of 42 community-based locations around the state. These state-funded community centers help connect small businesses with information and assistance in applying for state and federal emergency relief programs, including over $300 million in small business assistance programs launched by DCEO since March.

Additionally, to support more businesses with training and capacity building, throughout August, National Black Business Month, DCEO is teaming up with Groupon to convene a series of virtual, insightful discussions. The next workshop, "Navigating COVID-19 and Civil Unrest: Federal and State Resources for Black Businesses," will be held on Thursday, August 27th, featuring Lt. Governor Stratton and Groupon's CEO. These workshops are free – please find more details here (/dceo/AboutDCEO/Pages/MinEcoEmp.aspx).
For more information on where to find the nearest PTAC location, visit: https://bit.ly/PTACfinder (https://bit.ly/PTACfinder). For more on additional business assistance programs offered by DCEO, please visit DCEO's website (https://dceocovid19resources.com/pdf/DCEOCOVID-19EmergencyResourcesforBusiness.pdf) or follow us on social at @IllinoisDCEO.

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