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Fiscal Year 2025 Quarter 2

# Welcome to the CEI Quarterly Newsletter!

Welcome to the CEI Quarterly Newsletter! We're thrilled to bring you the latest updates, insights, and stories from the heart of the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI). We strive to highlight our collective journey toward creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive procurement landscape across our great state each month. Our mission is fueled by the dedication of our community, partners, and stakeholders, and we are excited to share our progress, celebrate our successes, and discuss the challenges we face together. As we continue to pave the way for transformative change, we invite you to stay informed, engaged, and inspired. Let's forge ahead, united in our commitment to equity and inclusion for all.

## BEP COUNCIL UPDATES

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CEI seeks individuals interested in serving on the Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities (BEP Council). The BEP Council currently consists of 16 members (only 15 are voting members), although the total membership should be 21, as outlined in both the BEP Act and the BEP Council Bylaws.

Illinois residents who wish to be considered for membership are invited to nominate themselves using the application form linked below. The Governor's Office will review your qualifications and consider your nomination for appointment. To submit your nomination, please complete the form here: <https://govappointments.illinois.gov/submit-an-application/>.

If you have any questions or need more information about the responsibilities of a BEP Council member, please don't hesitate to contact us. We look forward to your interest in furthering the council's work.



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## 2024 Summary

As we approach the end of 2024 and look toward the new year, let's take a moment to reflect on all the accomplishments made by the BEP Council.

At the start of 2024, the BEP Council began the year by passing the Goal Waiver Determination Resolution. This resolution fully rescinded the August 2013 goal waiver determination delegation to the Capital Development Board and Public Institutions of Higher Education (PIHE). It also granted BEP the good faith effort waiver request determination responsibility.

The BEP Council appointed Alexandria M. Wilson, JD, CPPB, as BEP Council Secretary. Secretary Wilson, who also serves as CEI's Executive Director, is a procurement professional with extensive knowledge in supplier diversity, contract negotiation, policy implementation, and legal analysis. Her experience with contract compliance, legislation analysis, and solicitation oversight uniquely qualifies her to serve as BEP Council Secretary.

During 2024, several existing reports became standing agenda items during full BEP Council meetings. The 20/20 Report transitioned from being presented only during BEP Council Compliance Subcommittee meetings to a recurring agenda item discussed in each bi-monthly BEP Council meeting. This report identifies all non-construction solicitations by state agencies exceeding \$20,000,000, with less than a 20% established goal before publication. This year, the BEP Council witnessed the reemergence of subcommittee reports during each meeting. Presented by each subcommittee chairperson, these reports provide a concise summary of in-depth research, analysis, and recommendations for each subcommittee, allowing the BEP Council to make informed decisions based on detailed information.

The sheltered market discussion segment is another key component implemented into full BEP Council meetings this year. This segment allows members to discuss the status of supplier diversity achievement and the potential deficiencies resolved by sheltered markets. During this segment, the BEP Council received, reviewed, and discussed the progress of using service firms and any evidence regarding past or present racial, ethnic, or gender-based discrimination that directly impacted a state agency or PIHE contracting with such firms. Suppose the BEP Council finds that there is or has been such discrimination against a specific group, race, or sex. In that case, the BEP Council will establish a sheltered market or adjust an existing sheltered market to address the specific findings.

Other notable BEP Council accomplishments included implementing CEI's revised annual BEP expenditure exemption request reporting template, completing the fiscal year 2024 class exemption request reviews, and timely collecting fiscal year 2025 class exemption requests.

As we reflect on this past year's accomplishments, the BEP Council's adaptability to change and unwavering dedication have propelled BEP's mission forward. We remain optimistic about the BEP Council's positive changes and its commitment to ensuring supplier diversity throughout Illinois.

## BEP Council 2025 Meeting Schedule

To see a listing of BEP Council meeting dates for the 2025 calendar year, check CEI's Public Meeting webpage at <https://cei.illinois.gov/meetings-and-events.html>.

### CEI Staff Updates

Postings for the Certification Analyst position have now closed. Look for new postings in the BEP Compliance Unit and CEI's Legislative Affairs Unit. We encourage applicants who are passionate about public service and interested in monitoring state purchasing through an equity lens to regularly check our [careers webpage](#) or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for job updates.

### Race and Gender Wage Report

CEI is proud to announce significant progress in publishing its inaugural Race and Gender Wage Report. In alignment with Section 40-20 of the CEI Act, this initiative involves a comprehensive data analysis of survey responses from Illinois agencies and PIHEs. With an impressive 98% response rate from applicable agencies and 100% from relevant PIHEs, the data collection effort is set to culminate in a detailed report. This report will be available on CEI's website before the end of fiscal year 2025. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Governor's Office and intra-state stakeholders for their invaluable partnership.

### Diversity Training Report

CEI is critical in monitoring and supervising Illinois supplier and workplace diversity training initiatives. As part of this mission, CEI launched two key surveys in calendar year 2023: the Workplace Diversity Training Survey and the Procurement Supplier Diversity Training Survey. These surveys were developed to gather comprehensive data on diversity training programs within state agencies, boards, commissions, and public institutions of higher education (PIHEs) to assess these initiatives' effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This initiative is directly tied to CEI's statutory obligation under Section 40-10(5) of the CEI Act to oversee the implementation of diversity training within the Illinois workforce, including workplace and procurement diversity practices.

Comprehensive data and insights captured from this effort can be found in CEI's Diversity Training Report located on CEI's [website](#). Survey results revealed a mixed picture of diversity training across state agencies, boards, commissions, and PIHEs. On the positive side, workplace diversity training is being conducted regularly and consistently in many entities, with most respondents indicating that they have formal diversity training programs. However, the data also uncovered a significant need for improvement in procurement supplier diversity training. While some entities reported having well-established diversity training programs for procurement staff, many respondents indicated that supplier diversity training was either insufficient or nonexistent.

### CEI Enhances Services to Strengthen Supplier Diversity

CEI is committed to enhancing its services to better support stakeholders. Recently, CEI staff engaged with the cities of Evanston and Aurora to discuss strategies for strengthening supplier diversity relations. CEI aims to bolster the diverse business ecosystem and encourage greater BEP and VBP participation and success.



## BEP AND VBP CERTIFICATION CORNER

By becoming BEP and VBP-certified, you gain access to various benefits. Your business will be featured in CEI's public online directory, ensuring visibility among State procurement professionals and potential prime vendors. Once certified, you can bid on contract opportunities designated for diverse suppliers. Various municipalities and organizations recognize BEP and VBP certification. Best of all, certification is **FREE!**

### How To Register

Businesses that want to become fully certified BEP or VBP vendors should visit CEI's Supplier Diversity Management Portal (SDMP) at [supplierdiversitymanagementportal.illinois.gov/home.aspx](https://supplierdiversitymanagementportal.illinois.gov/home.aspx).

### I'm Certified. Now What?

#### Register on Procurement Platforms:

We strongly recommend visiting and registering on the Illinois Procurement Gateway (IPG) at [ipg.illinois.gov/home.aspx](https://ipg.illinois.gov/home.aspx). The IPG is an online vendor portal that gathers business information from vendors who wish to conduct business with state agencies and universities. Instead of submitting required information in paper form with every solicitation response, vendors can electronically submit the information in advance.

Chief Procurement Officer of General Services: The CPO-GS oversees the goods and services purchases for roughly 65 State agencies, boards, and commissions. Learn more about CPO-GS at <https://cpo-general.illinois.gov/>.

Chief Procurement Officer of Higher Education: The CPO-HE oversees purchasing by State universities. Learn more about CPO-HE at <https://cpo-highered.illinois.gov/>.

Chief Procurement Officer of Capital Development Board: The CPO-CDB oversees purchases of vertical construction and construction-related services. Learn more about CPO-CDB at <https://cpo-cdb.illinois.gov/>.

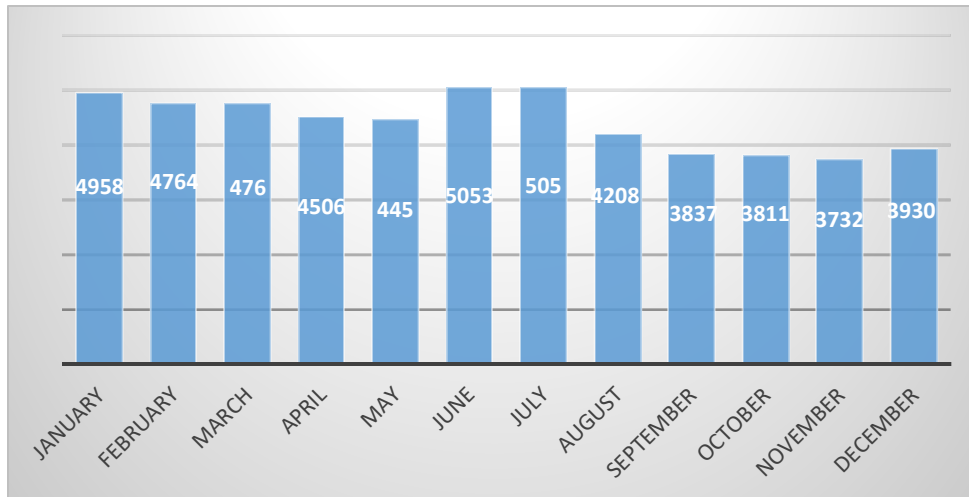
Chief Procurement Officer of Illinois Department of Transportation: The CPO-IDOT oversees purchases of horizontal construction and construction-related services. Learn more about CPO-IDOT at <https://cpo-dot.illinois.gov/>.

#### Enroll in Notifications:

We strongly recommend that all BEP-certified and VBP-certified vendors register with each of the four State of Illinois procurement bulletins to see and receive notifications about potential State contracting opportunities.

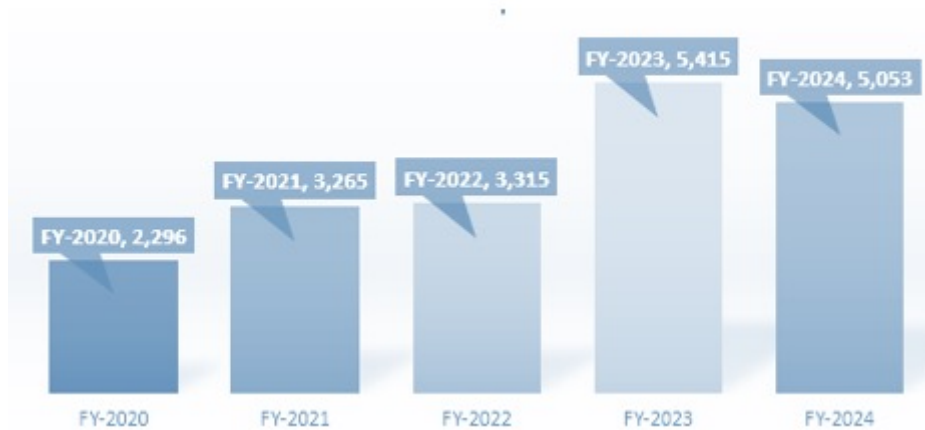


### 2024 Monthly Totals of BEP-Certified Firms



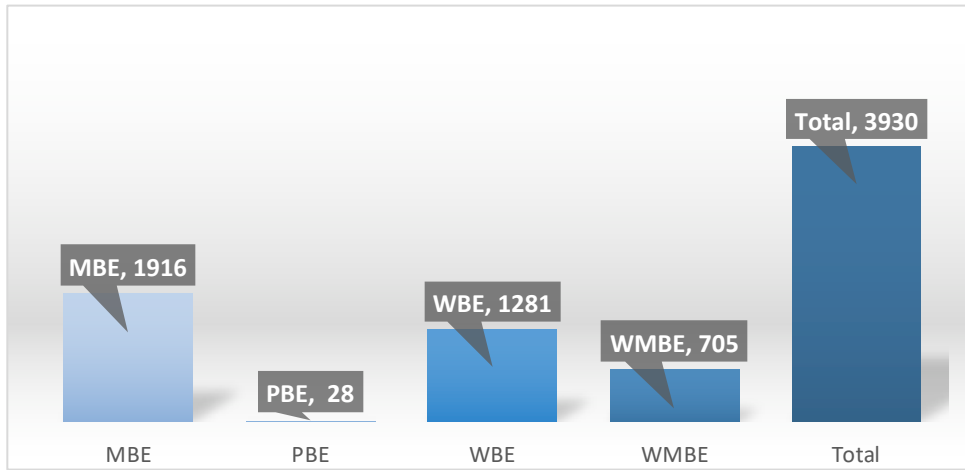
Graph 1 – Above. This graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications for the 2024 calendar year, broken down by month.

### BEP Certification Totals by Year



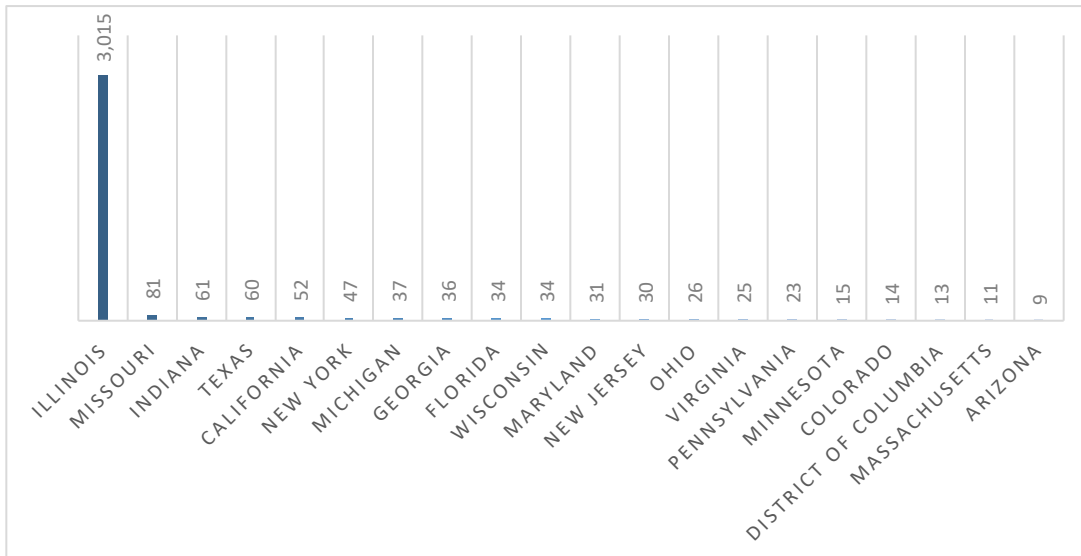
Graph 2 – Above. This graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications granted by CEI for fiscal years 2020 through 2024. (Due to the migration to the new Supplier Diversity Management Portal, the fiscal year was closed early on June 14, 2024.)

### Comparison by Certification Type



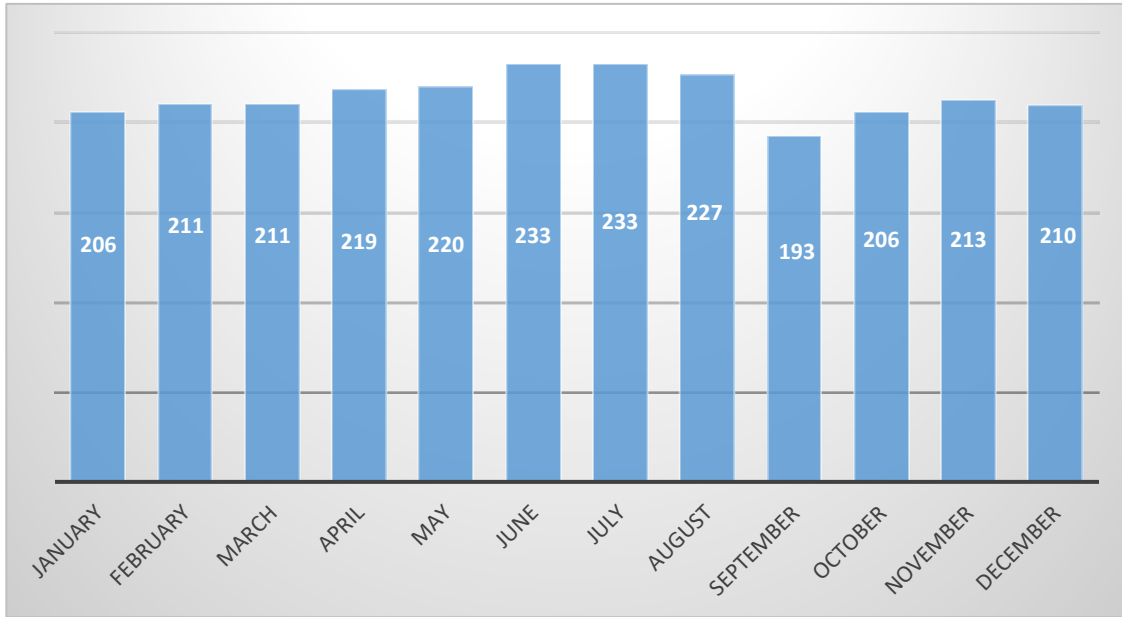
Graph 3 - Above. This graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications by category at the end of the 2024 calendar year. Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) 1,916; Persons with Disabilities Business Enterprise (PBE) 28; Women Business Enterprise (WBE) 1,281; Women Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE) 705.

### Geographical Certification Data



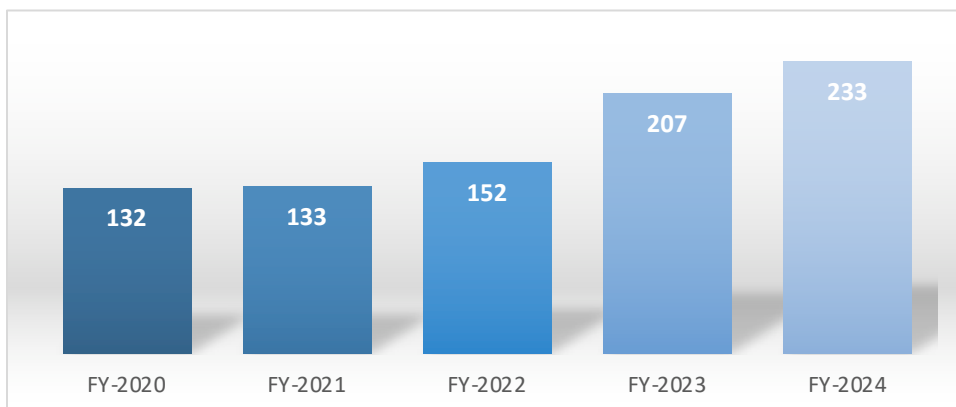
Graph 4 - Above. This graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications by geographical location. The State of Illinois has the highest number of vendors, with 3,015, followed by Missouri with 81 vendors, Indiana with 61, Texas with 60, and California with 52. New York has 47 vendors, Michigan has 37, and Florida and Wisconsin have 34. Maryland follows with 31 vendors, New Jersey has 30, Ohio has 26, and Virginia has 25 vendors.

### VBP Certification Totals by Month



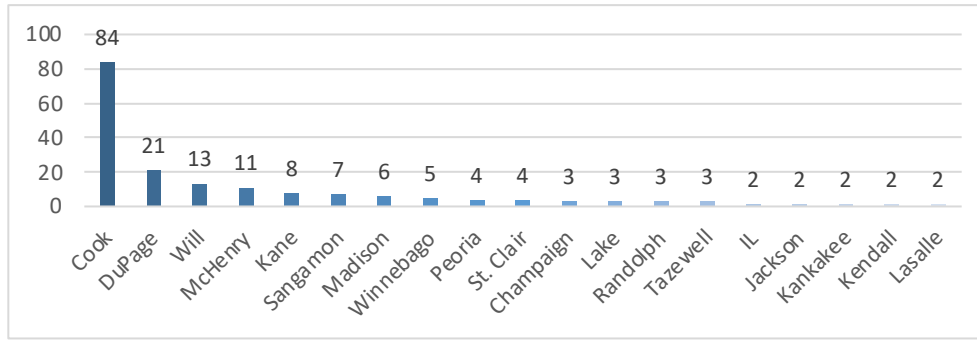
Graph 5 - Above. This graph depicts the total number of Veterans Business Program (VBP) certifications for the 2024 calendar year, broken down by month.

### VBP Certification Totals by Year



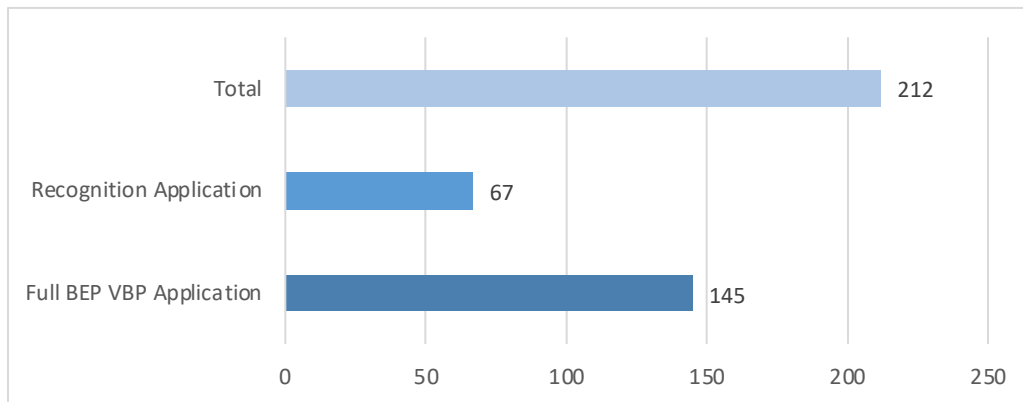
Graph 6 - Above. This graph depicts the total number of VBP-certified vendors for fiscal years 2020 to fiscal year 2024. A notable growth in the number of certified veteran-owned businesses in Illinois.

### VBP Certifications by Geographical Location



Graph 7 - Above. This graph depicts the total number of VBP-certified vendors by county, with the highest concentration located in Cook County, which has 84 firms, followed by DuPage County, which has 21 firms.

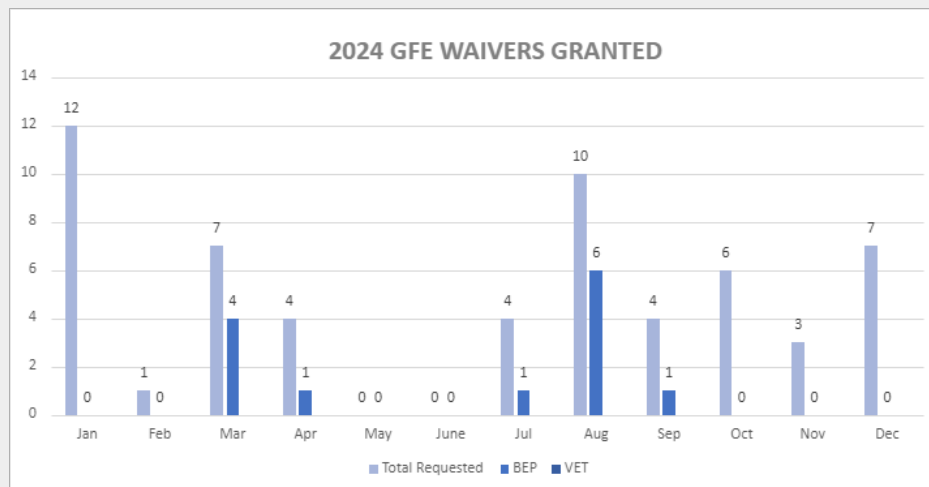
### VBP Certifications by Application Type



Graph 8 - Above. This graph depicts the number of VBP-certified vendors by application type. There are 212 VBP-certified vendors, including 145 full certifications and 67 recognitions.

## COMPLIANCE INSIGHTS

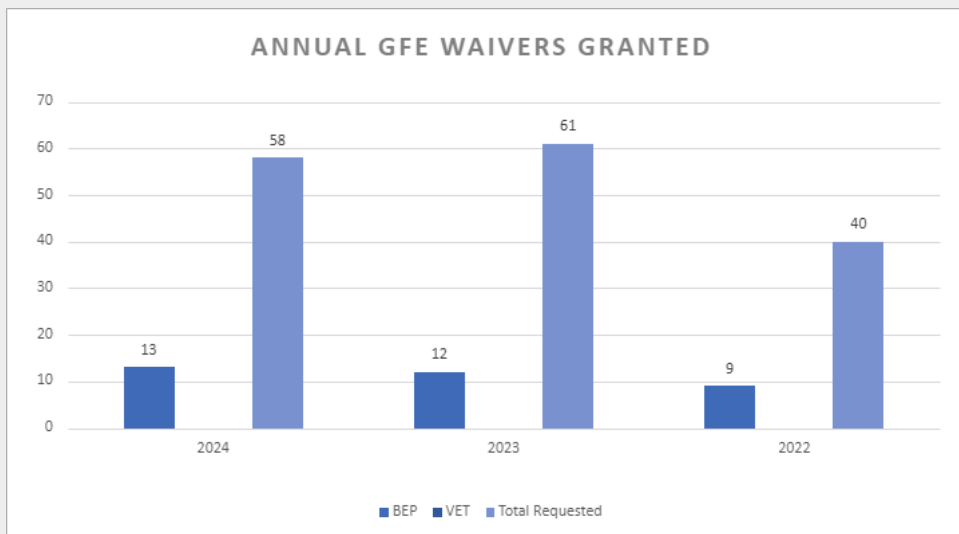
### 2024 Granted Good Faith Effort (GFE) Waivers



Graph 9 - Above. This graph illustrates the number of Good Faith Effort (GFE) waivers requested each month in the 2024 calendar year. Only a small percentage of these GFE requests are granted by CEI's BEP Compliance Unit after a thorough review of the prime bidder's due diligence in achieving BEP participation. VBP, designated above as VET, had zero GFE waiver requests for VBP contracts.

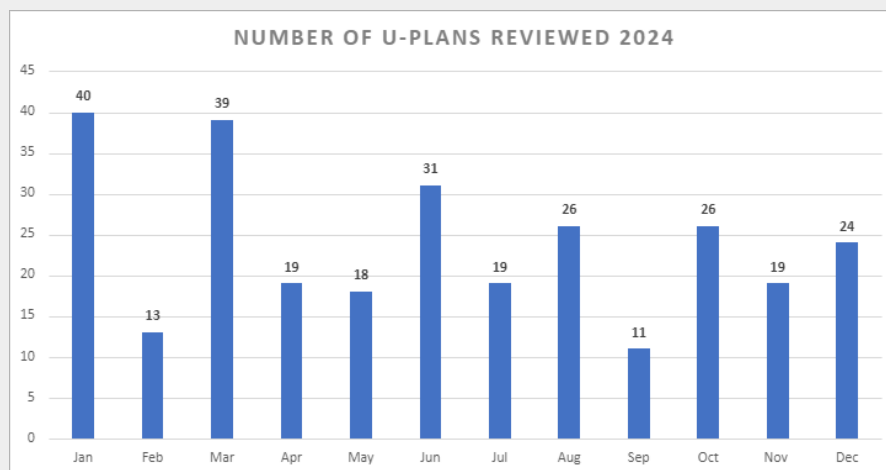


### Granted GFE Waivers by Year



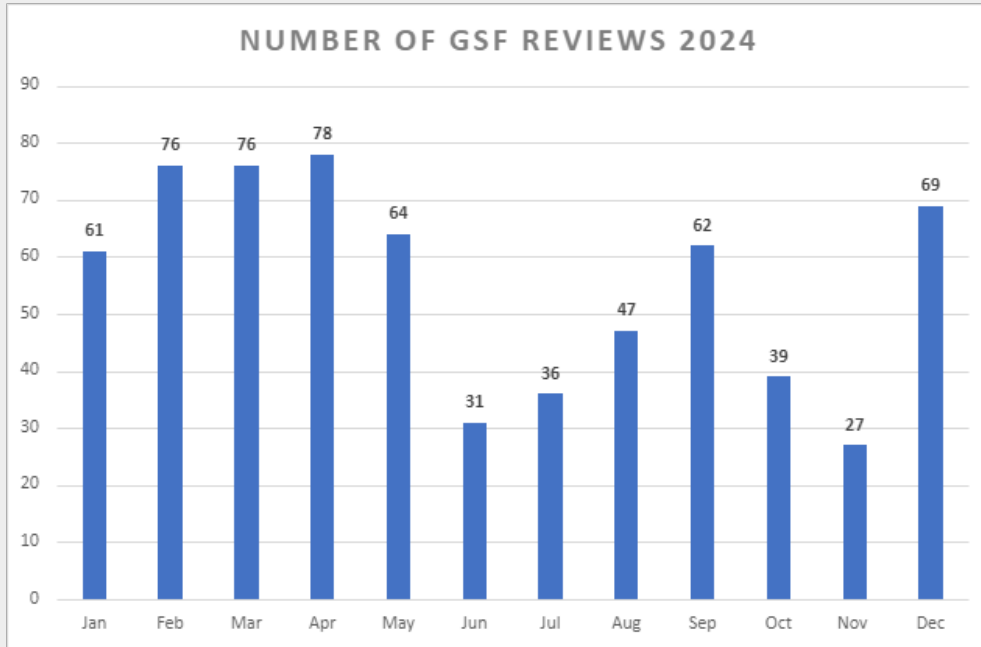
Graph 10 - Above. This three-year chart depicts the number of solicitations that include a GFE waiver from the bidder or offeror over the past three calendar years, deemed acceptable after a thorough review by the BEP Compliance Unit. No GFE waivers for VBP (designated above as VET) were granted in the 2022, 2023, and 2024 calendar years.

### Total Utilization Plans Reviewed by CEI



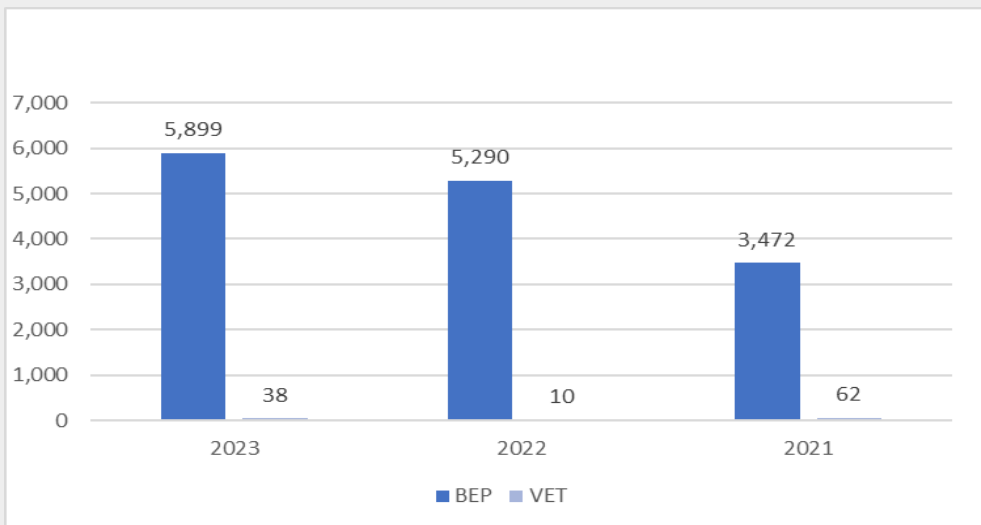
Graph 11 - Above. This chart indicates the number of monthly Utilization Plans reviewed by the BEP Compliance staff throughout the 2024 calendar year from all purchasing entities under the Chief Procurement Office for General Services. The BEP Compliance staff reviews these plans based on the bidding activity for solicitations that include a BEP goal.

### Total Goal Setting and Review Form (GSRF) Reviews



Graph 12 - Above. This graph indicates the number of goal-setting requests received monthly in the 2024 calendar year from all purchasing entities under the Chief Procurement Office for General Services.

### Contract Totals



Graph 13 - Above. This chart indicates a steady increase in contracts awarded to BEP prime and BEP subcontractors.

## OUTREACH OUTLOOK

CEI's Outreach Unit has had an impactful second quarter, engaging in various events and initiatives. We proudly celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, and Veterans Day, fostering cultural awareness and community connection.

CEI's Outreach Unit continues to enhance and support BEP and VBP by proactively engaging with diverse businesses and collaborating with stakeholders across Illinois. CEI's dedicated team fosters awareness and participation in BEP and VBP through targeted outreach initiatives and promotion to our vendor business community through the SDMP, LinkedIn, purchasing entity partnerships, external communications and collaborations, local community groups and associations, chambers of commerce, and legislative outreach.

CEI's outreach end-of-year accomplishments include launching and expanding educational certification training workshops, creating a new BEP and VBP brochure, increasing outreach to diverse business owners, and providing valuable information regarding the benefits and process of becoming certified vendors. The Outreach Unit has also leveraged social media and stakeholder relationships to promote CEI's programming, provide free certification virtual office hours, and increase accessibility and engagement. The Outreach Unit remains committed to strengthening connections and supporting diverse business communities.

CEI's Outreach Unit exceeded its statutorily mandated veterans outreach goal for the fiscal year 2024. Though only two are required, CEI hosted or participated in eight veterans outreach efforts for the fiscal year 2024. They are:

1. 2023 Illinois State Fair Veterans Day
2. Veteran Business & Resource Summit
3. Veteran Business Resources "Coffee Chat"
4. 2024 Veterans Outreach Forum
5. Beyond the Call: Veteran Business Support Symposium
6. North Shore Veteran's Benefit Fair
7. Memorial Day Veteran Hiring and Resource Expo

Black Veterans Expo and Pitch Competition CEI's Outreach Unit collaborated with the Certification Unit to develop a communication campaign geared toward helping to increase BEP and VBP recognition certification, registration, and renewal.

Additionally, the Outreach Unit has developed key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics in alignment with CEI's strategic plan. These metrics focus on increasing supplier diversity and fostering economic development among diverse businesses.

Identified KPIs include:

- Vendor engagement and participation
- Outreach and marketing effectiveness
- Diversity of participating agencies and vendors
- Feedback and continuous improvement
- Budget efficiency, including return on investments

Lastly, CEI's Outreach Unit has improved its event vendor feedback surveys to capture KPIs better.

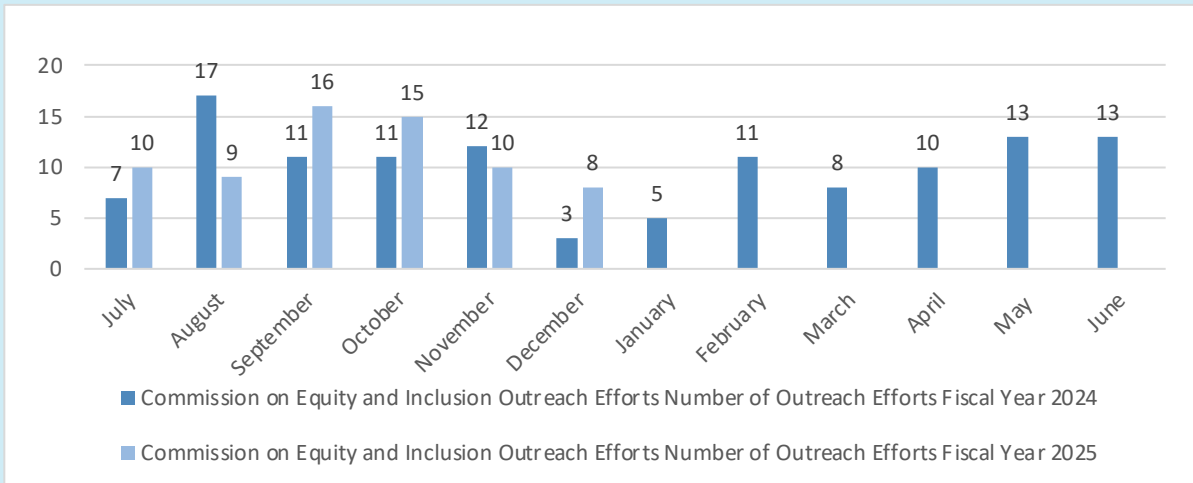
### Outreach Events CEI Participated in this Quarter

State of Illinois Employment and Resource Fair in Honor of Latinx Heritage Month	10/1/2024	Illinois Tollway Contracting with Government: A Roadmap for Business Opportunities	11/8/2024
Roll Call! Veteran Professional Networking Event	10/1/2024	BEP/VBP Certification: Be Surprised by the Benefits with WBDC	11/19/2024
State Representative Hoàn Huynh Community Job and Resource Fair	10/2/2024	Voices of Strength: Inspirational Leadership Among Native American Women	11/20/2024
Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Business Conference & Expo	10/3/2024	Small Business Certification and Procurement: Should I Get Certified Event	11/22/2024
The City of Chicago Department of Procurement Services 2024 Technology Summit	10/8/2024	Government Contracting & Funding: Where to Find the Contracts and Why Get Certified	11/22/2024
Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees 36th Annual Conference	10/11/2024	Veterans Town Hall 2024	12/3/2024
Hines & Jesse Brown Joint Veterans Resource Fair 2024	10/12/2024	City of Chicago Veterans Business Enterprise Day	12/5/2024
Southland Development Authority Presents: How to Become a Certified BEP Vendor	10/15/2024	2024 Department of Innovation & Technology Industry Day	12/10/2024
2024 State of Illinois Vendor Summit	10/17/2024	Chinese Mutual Aid Association Holiday Small Business Diverse Supplier Expo	12/12/2024
Joliet Junior College BEP Workshop at the Will County Chamber of Commerce	10/30/2024	Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation Infinite Hope 2024 Policy Summit	12/13/2024
City of Aurora BEP/VBP Certification Workshop with CEI	11/7/2024	Office of Business Diversity and Capital Planning Construction Summit Sneak Peek	12/17/2024

### Additional CEI Outreach Efforts this Quarter

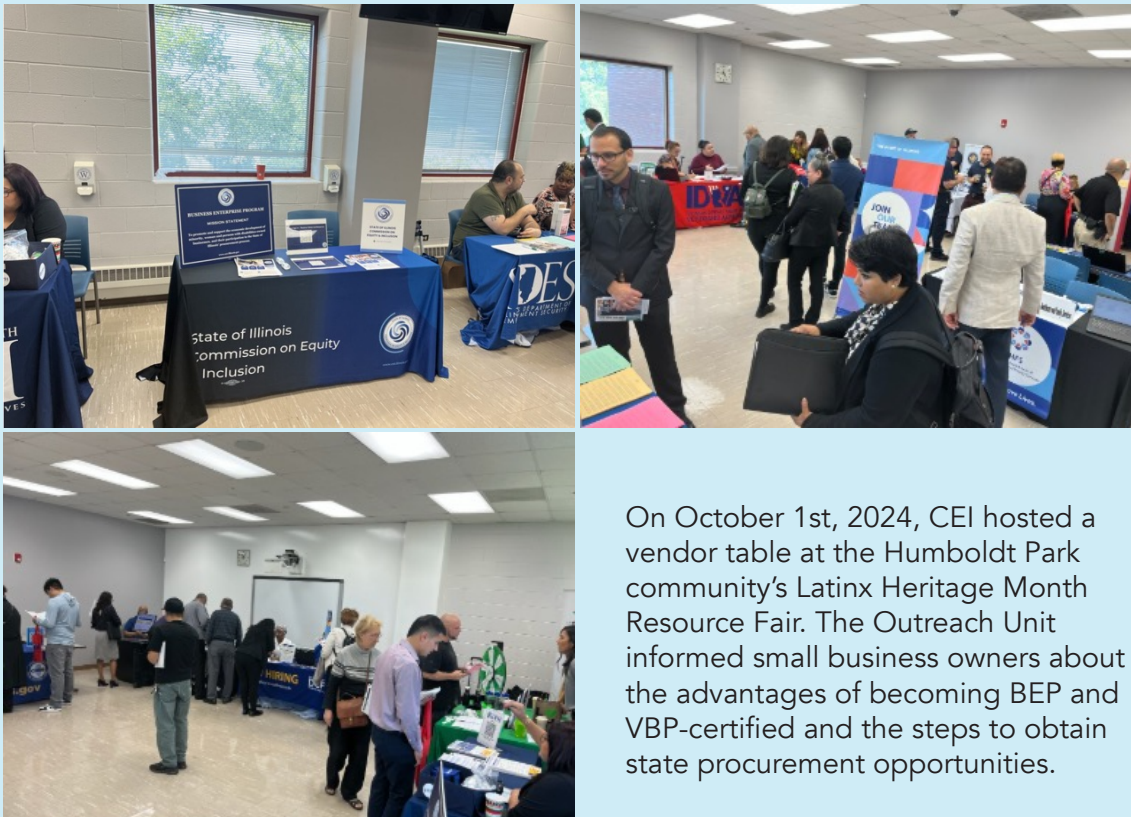
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	10/2/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/14/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	10/9/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/20/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	10/16/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/22/2024
CEI Monthly Meeting	10/16/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/27/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	10/23/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	12/4/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	10/30/2024	CEI Monthly Meeting	12/11/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/6/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	12/11/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	11/13/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Hours	12/18/2024
CEI Monthly Meeting	11/13/2024		

## CEI Outreach Efforts FY24 and FY25



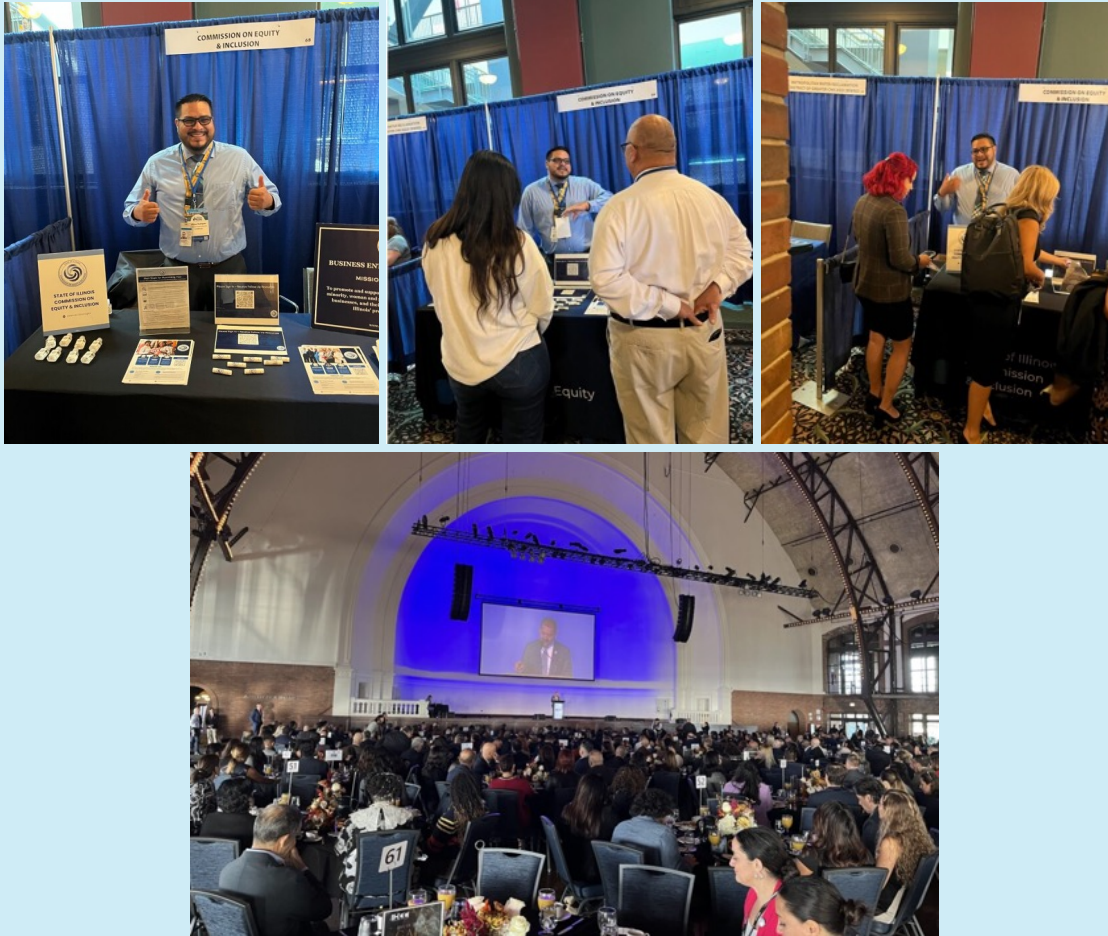
Graph 14. This graph depicts the number of outreach events and efforts CEI's Outreach Unit hosted or participated in during FY24 and FY25. The outreach unit participated in 121 outreach efforts in FY24 and 68 in FY25.

## State of Illinois Employment and Resource Fair in Honor of Latinx Heritage Month



On October 1st, 2024, CEI hosted a vendor table at the Humboldt Park community's Latinx Heritage Month Resource Fair. The Outreach Unit informed small business owners about the advantages of becoming BEP and VBP-certified and the steps to obtain state procurement opportunities.

## Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Business Conference and Expo



CEI participated in the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Business Conference and Expo and attended the breakfast event, where special speakers Chuy Garcia, Alexis Giannoulis, Susana Mendoza, and others spoke to business partners about new initiatives within Illinois. This outreach event occurred on October 3, 2024.

## The City of Chicago Department of Procurement Services 2024 Technology Summit



On October 8, 2024, CEI Outreach Division attended the City of Chicago Department of Procurement Services 2024 Technology Summit.

## Southland Development Authority Presents: How to Become a Certified BEP Vendor



CEI and the Southland Development Authority hosted its first “How to Become a Certified BEP and VBP Vendor” event on October 15, 2024, at the Markham Community Center. The Outreach Unit created this tailored, hands-on workshop to help participants better understand the benefits and processes of BEP and VBP certification.

## Joliet Junior College BEP Workshop at the Will County Chamber of Commerce



Joliet Junior College hosted a BEP and VBP certification workshop in English and Spanish for their Small Business Development Center members; this outreach event occurred on October 30, 2024. The Outreach Unit provided information about the benefits of becoming certified and training on uploading and submitting documents for the certification application through the new SDMP.



## Government Contracting & Funding: Where to Find the Contracts and Why Get Certified



On November 22, 2024, CEI Commissioner Bruce Montgomery served as the keynote speaker for the University of Chicago Polsky Business Center's "Government Contracting and Funding, Where to Find the Contracts and Why Get Certified" event for a group of small business owners. During this event, CEI's Deputy Director LaTasha Binder presented the benefits and processes for BEP and VBP certification, explaining how to understand and use the State of Illinois Quarterly Buying Plan to grow their business.

## City of Chicago Veterans Business Enterprise Day



CEI's Outreach Unit attended the City of Chicago Veterans Business Day event at the Chicago Cultural Center and met with local veteran-owned small business owners. CEI joined the City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois Tollway, and others to encourage veterans who own small businesses to become VBP-certified and to provide them with information regarding Illinois procurement opportunities. This outreach event occurred on December 5, 2024.

## Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation's Infinite Hope Policy Summit



*On December 13, 2024, CEI attended the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation's (ILBCF) "Infinite Hope Policy Summit." From left to right, CEI Chief of Staff Robin Streets, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, BEP Council Member Alan Brazil, CEI Commissioner Bruce Montgomery.*

Participating in ILBCF's Policy Summit as an attendee and resource vendor was an excellent opportunity for CEI to connect with dynamic public servants in local government and the private sector. The summit also provided CEI with a platform to highlight the helpful resources its staff and commissioners provide.

