



cei.equity.inclusion@illinois.gov

Fiscal Year 2025 Quarter 3

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.

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CERTIFICATION CORNER
- OUTREACH OUTLOOK

Notable Highlights

Fiscal Year 2025 Strategic Plan and Impact Report

The Strategic Plan and Impact Report for fiscal year 2025 has been released. This report is a roadmap for achieving CEI's mission during the 2025 fiscal year. It outlines CEI's objectives, initiatives, and priorities to ensure fair access to contracting opportunities while promoting inclusive and equitable procurement processes.

The Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) is vital in advancing equity and inclusion throughout the State of Illinois (State), focusing on fostering diversity in State contracting and hiring practices. CEI ensures that underrepresented businesses and veterans can access critical resources and partnerships by enhancing opportunities for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) participants and Veterans Business Program (VBP) participants. Through collaboration and advocacy, CEI is dedicated to addressing systemic inequities and increasing the participation of these groups in State procurement opportunities. To learn more about these initiatives and their progress, readers are encouraged to review the CEI's Fiscal Year 2025 Strategic Plan and Impact Report, which highlights the agency's goals and measurable outcomes.

To learn more, please select the following link: [Fiscal Year 2025 Strategic Plan and Impact Report](#).



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Fiscal Year 2024 Race and Gender Wage Report

CEI is proud to announce the upcoming release of its inaugural Race and Gender Wage Report. This groundbreaking report marks a significant step forward in CEI's mission to foster workplace transparency, equity, and inclusion.

The Race and Gender Wage Report, scheduled for release in the coming weeks, will be available on CEI's official website. The report provides a comprehensive analysis of wage earnings across race and gender to highlight the current landscape and support meaningful steps toward ensuring fair and inclusive environments.

As CEI prepares to launch this pivotal report, the organization is already looking ahead to its next work phase. The process for the Fiscal Year 2025 Race and Gender Wage Report is set to begin in June, reflecting CEI's ongoing commitment to driving progress and accountability in equity and inclusion efforts.

Stay tuned for the report's release and join CEI in its mission to create a more equitable future. For more information and updates, visit CEI's website.

BEP COUNCIL UPDATES

The Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities (BEP Council) was developed to help implement, monitor, and enforce the goals of the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act (BEP Act).

New BEP Council Members

The BEP Council started the calendar year 2025 off on a high note with the appointment of five new members. CEI welcomes Aundra Williams, Javier Haro, David Hanson, Crystal Young, Gabriela Garza, and Dr. Oliver Kamanzi as the latest additions to the BEP Council.



BEP Council 2025 Meeting Schedule

The BEP Council held a special meeting in January 2025, during which the membership approved a new scheduling cadence that includes a quarterly meeting calendar for the full BEP Council and standardizes the weekday of all meetings. Each meeting will occur at 1:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the meeting month (except in December). The three BEP Council Subcommittees will continue to meet bi-monthly.

2025 BEP Council Public Meeting Quarterly Calendar

| Date | Time | Meeting |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Council |
| Tuesday, June 24, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Council |
| Tuesday, August 26, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Council |
| Tuesday, December 16, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Council |

2025 Certification Subcommittee Public Meeting Calendar

| Date | Time | Meeting |
|----------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| Tuesday, January 14, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, March 25, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, May 6, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, July 1, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, September 2, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, November 4, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Certification Subcommittee |

2025 Compliance Subcommittee Public Meeting Calendar

| Date | Time | Meeting |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Tuesday, January 21, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, March 18, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, May 20, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, July 15, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, September 16, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, November 18, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Compliance Subcommittee |

2025 Outreach Subcommittee Public Meeting Calendar

| Date | Time | Meeting |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| Tuesday, January 28, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |
| Wednesday, April 2, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, May 27, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, July 22, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, September 23, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |
| Tuesday, November 25, 2025 | 1:30 PM | BEP Outreach Subcommittee |

Current BEP Council Members

Click the link [here](#) to see the list of the current BEP Council members and their term dates.

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Alan Brazil | Edith De La Cruz |
| Andrew Johnson | Emilia DiMenco |
| Arielle Johnson | Gabriela Garza |
| Aundra Williams | Javier Haro |
| Bola Delano | Jesse Martinez |
| David Hanson | Khama Sharp |
| Brandy Phillips | Megan Nakano |
| Caronina Grimble | Dr. Natalie Coleman |
| Crystal Young | Nina Harris |
| Debra Jennings-Johnson | Olivier Kamanzi |
| Dr. Terrence Duncan | |



CEI OPERATIONAL UPDATES

BEP Annual Expenditure Report

CEI submitted the Fiscal Year 2024 BEP Annual Expenditure Report to the Governor and members of the General Assembly. This report outlines BEP spending statewide, highlights BEP accomplishments, and illustrates the performance of State agencies, boards, commissions, and public institutions of higher education that are subject to the BEP Act during Fiscal Year 2024. Please click [here](#) to access the report.

BEP Service Category Report

CEI produced the Fiscal Year 2024 BEP Annual Service Category Report. The BEP Service Category Report identifies the service firms used by each State agency, board, commission, and public institution of higher education. It outlines actions to increase the utilization of service firms owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. It lists any recommendations made by the BEP Council to each State agency and public institution of higher education to enhance participation from these service firms. This report was submitted to the Governor, members of the General Assembly, and members of the Bureau of Apprenticeship Programs and Clean Energy Jobs. Please click [here](#) to access the report.

VBP Annual Report

The Fiscal Year 2024 VBP Annual Report is now available on the CEI website for review. This report details the qualified State funds spent with VBP-certified vendors during fiscal year 2024. Please click [here](#) to access the report.

Staff Updates

Marcos Zavala joined CEI's certification unit in January, which brings the total number of full-time dedicated certification staff members to eight. CEI's postings for the compliance officer role are now closed as we transition to the next phase of the hiring process. We encourage candidates passionate about public service and interested in monitoring State purchasing through an equity lens to regularly check our [Careers webpage](#) or follow us on [social media](#) for job updates. Opportunities will continue to arise as CEI grows.

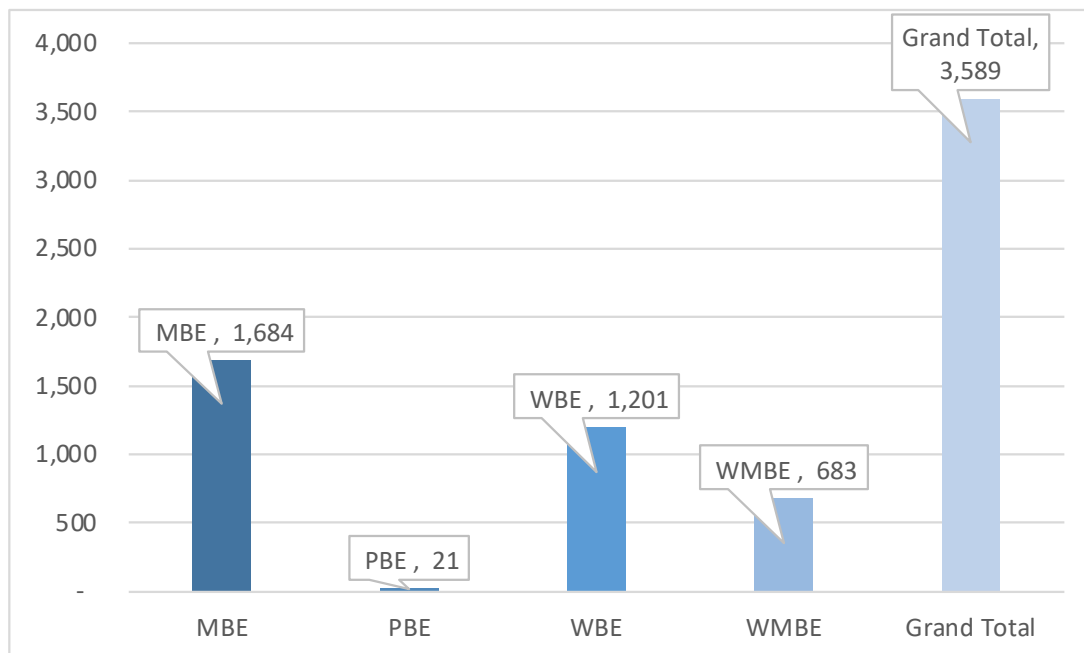


Month-to-Month BEP Certified Firm Totals

| Year Month | # of Certified Vendors |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 2024 - January | 4958 |
| 2024 - February | 4764 |
| 2024 - March | 4766 |
| 2024 - April | 4506 |
| 2024 - May | 4456 |
| 2024 - June | 5053 |
| 2024 - July | 5053 |
| 2024 - August | 4208 |
| 2024 - September | 3837 |
| 2024 - October | 3811 |
| 2024 - November | 3732 |
| 2024 - December | 3930 |
| 2025 - January | 3800 |
| 2025 - February | 3658 |
| 2025 - March | 3589 |

This graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications broken down by month.

BEP Certification Type Comparison

















The graph depicts the total number of BEP certifications by category.

Number of Certified BEP Vendors by Application Type

| BEP Ethnicity Breakdown as of March 6, 2025 | MBE | PBE | WBE | WMBE | Grand Total | Percentage |
|---|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| African American | 805 | 2 | 34 | 396 | 1,237 | 34.47% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 6 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 18 | 0.50% |
| Asian American | 336 | | 21 | 128 | 485 | 13.51% |
| Caucasian American | 4 | 18 | 1,126 | 1 | 1,149 | 32.01% |
| Hispanic American | 528 | 1 | 16 | 146 | 691 | 19.25% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 5 | | 1 | 3 | 9 | 0.25% |
| Grand Total | 1,684 | 21 | 1,201 | 683 | 3,589 | 100.00% |

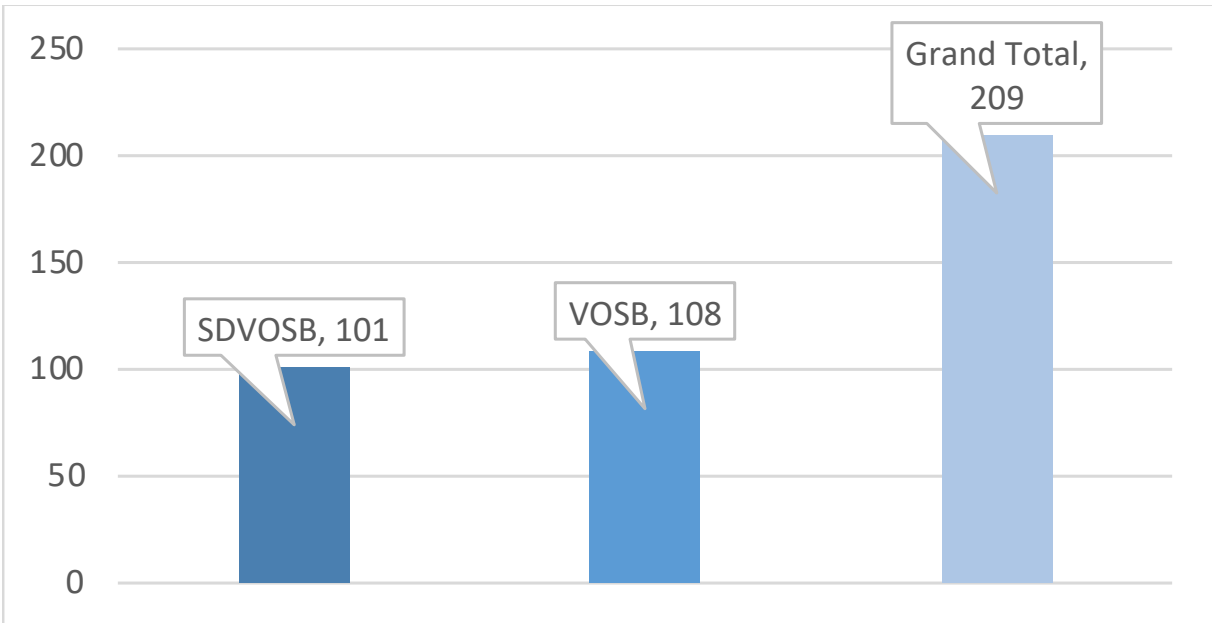
This table depicts the total number of BEP-certified vendors by ethnic group.

VBP Certification Totals by Month

| BEP Certified Firms by Month to Month | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------|
| Year Month | # of Certified Vendors | |
| 2024 - January |  | 4958 |
| 2024 - February |  | 4764 |
| 2024 - March |  | 4766 |
| 2024 - April |  | 4506 |
| 2024 - May |  | 4456 |
| 2024 - June |  | 5053 |
| 2024 - July |  | 5053 |
| 2024 - August |  | 4208 |
| 2024 - September |  | 3837 |
| 2024 - October |  | 3811 |
| 2024 - November |  | 3732 |
| 2024 - December |  | 3930 |
| 2025 - January |  | 3800 |
| 2025 - February |  | 3658 |

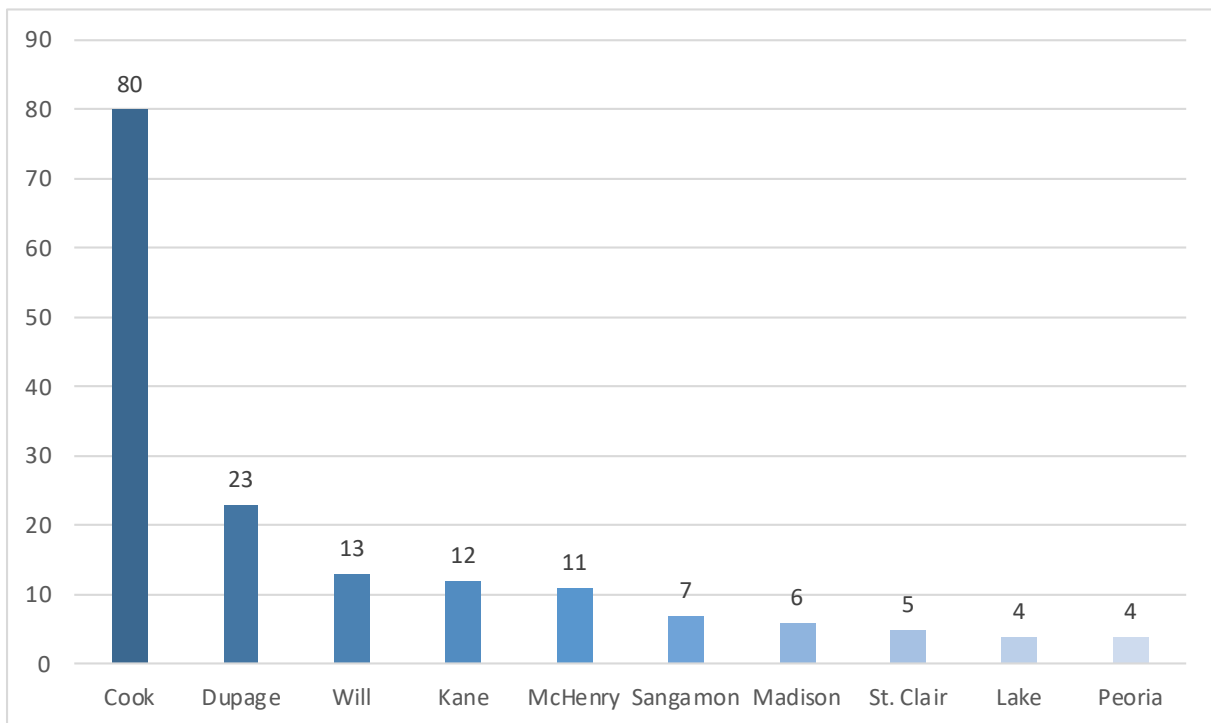
This graph depicts the number of VBP certifications broken down by month.

VBP Certifications by Category



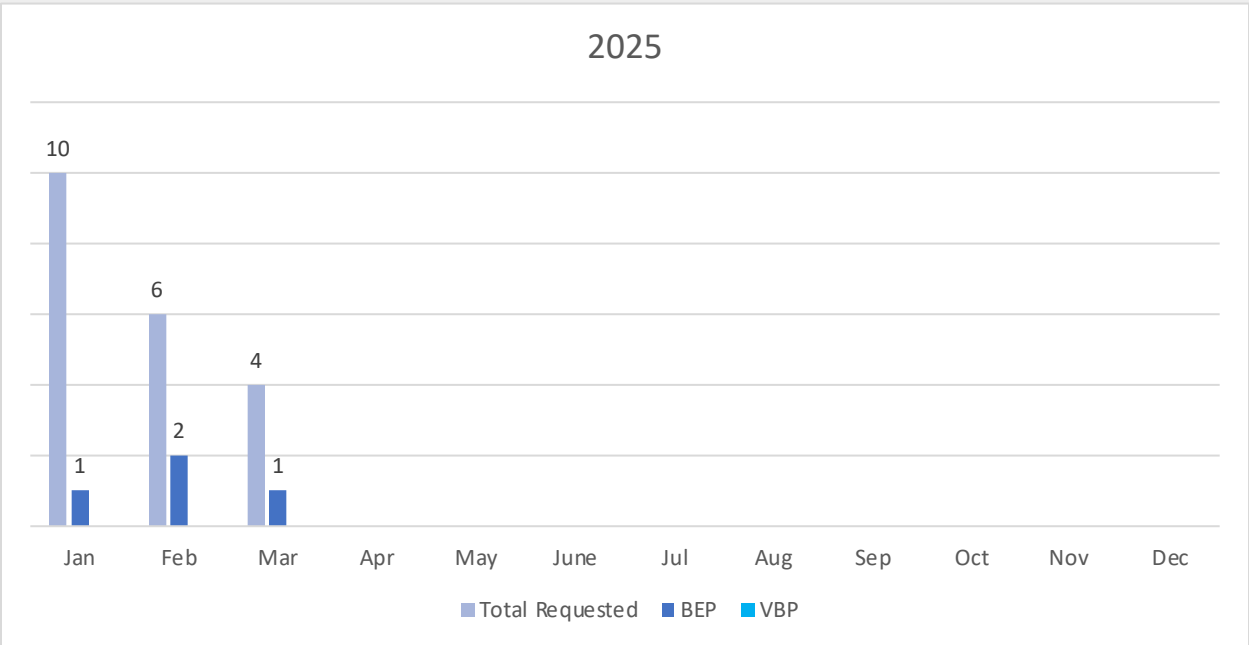
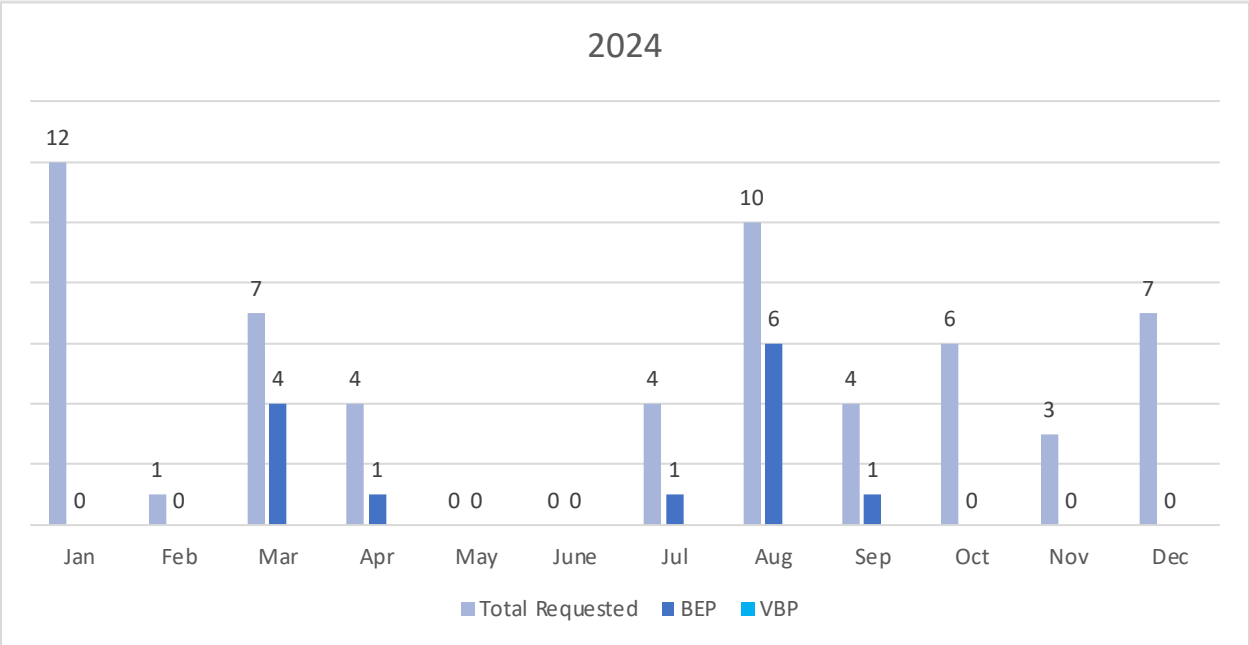
This graph depicts the total number of VBP-certified vendors by certification type. The service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) category has 101 vendors, while the veteran-owned small business (VOSB) category has 108 vendors.

VBP Certifications by Category



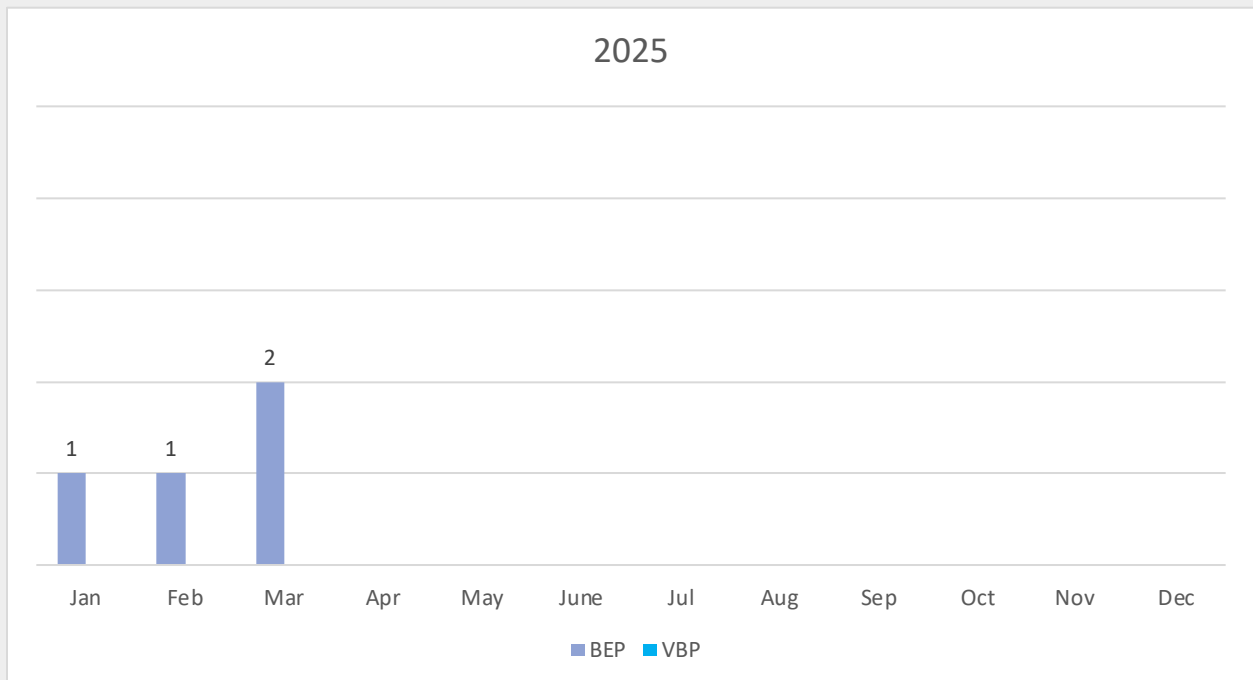
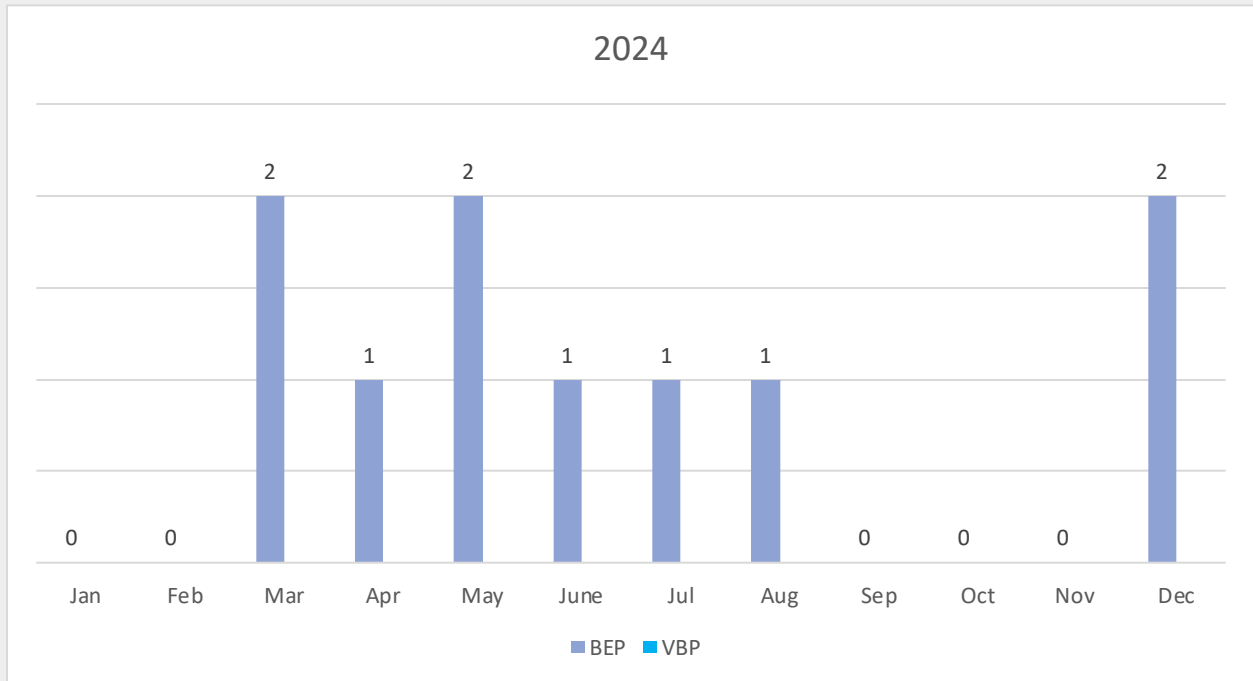
This graph depicts the total number of VBP-certified vendors by county. The highest concentration is in Cook County, which has 80 firms, followed by DuPage County, which has 23 firms.

Vendor Good Faith Effort Waivers Granted



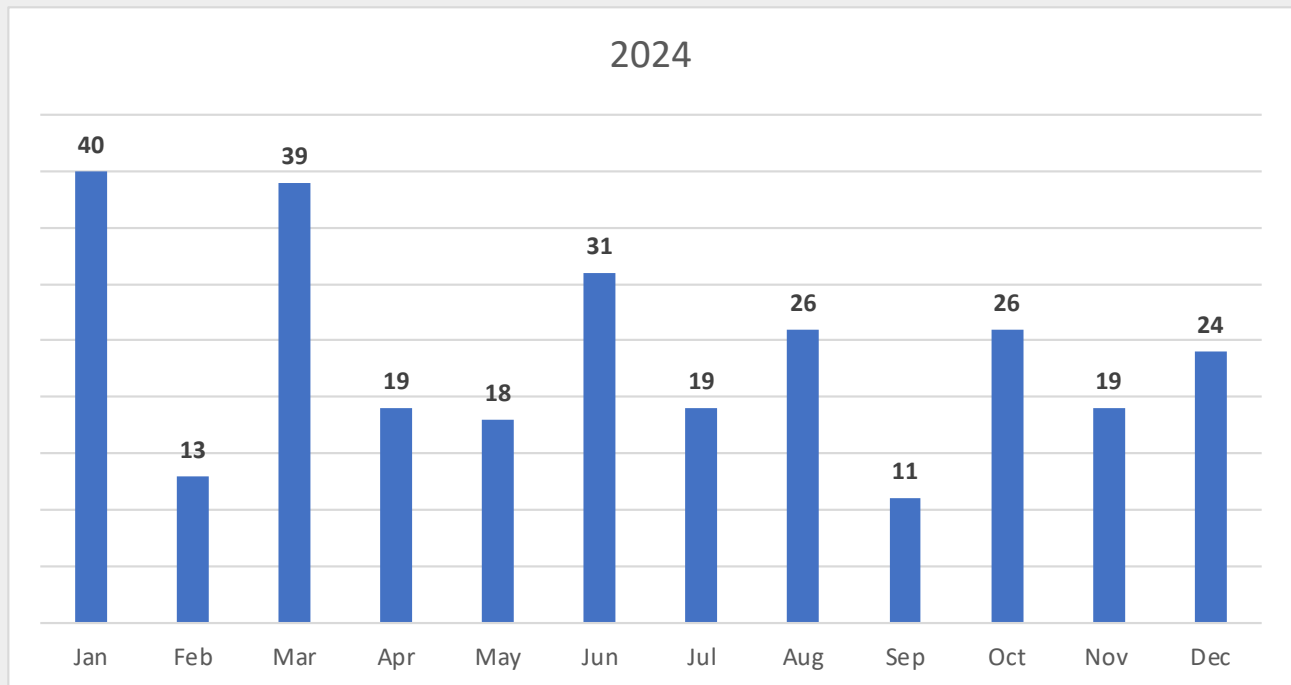
These graphs illustrate the monthly number of vendor good faith effort waiver requests received and the number of those requests granted by CEI’s BEP Compliance Unit.

Purchasing Entity Goal Exemption Requests



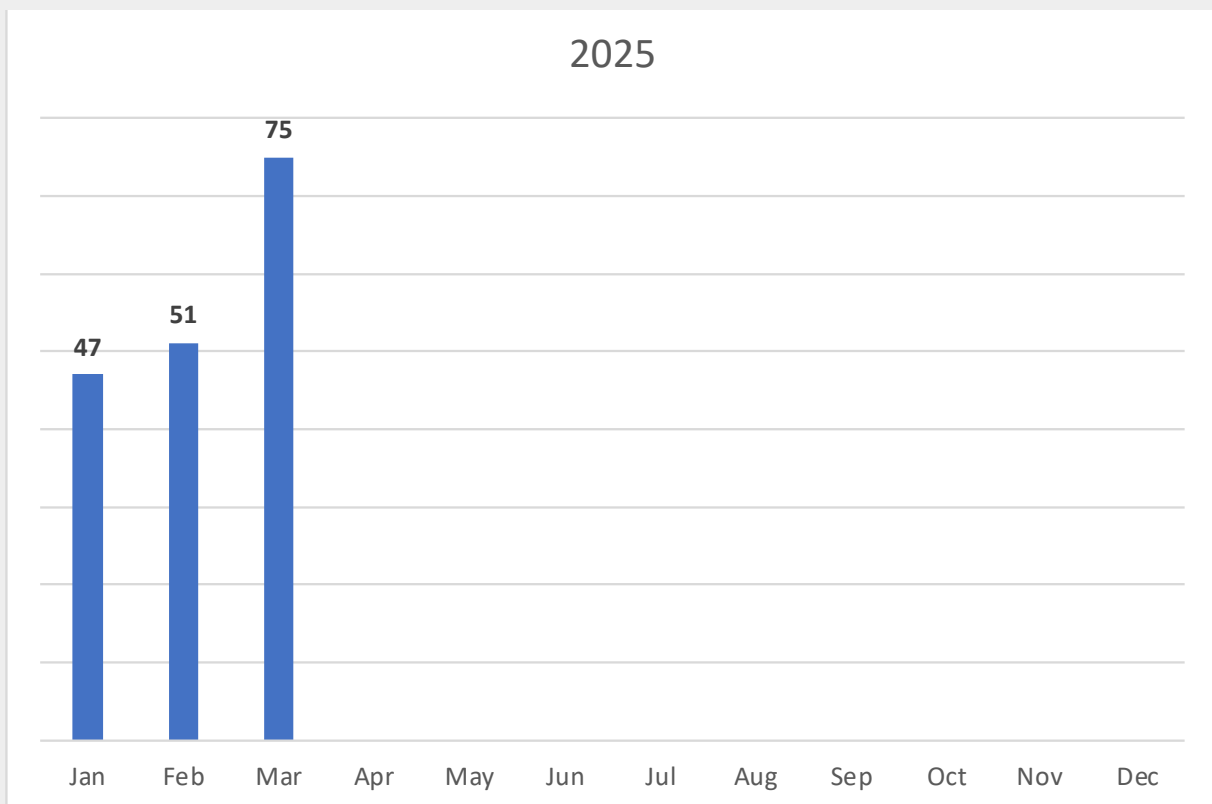
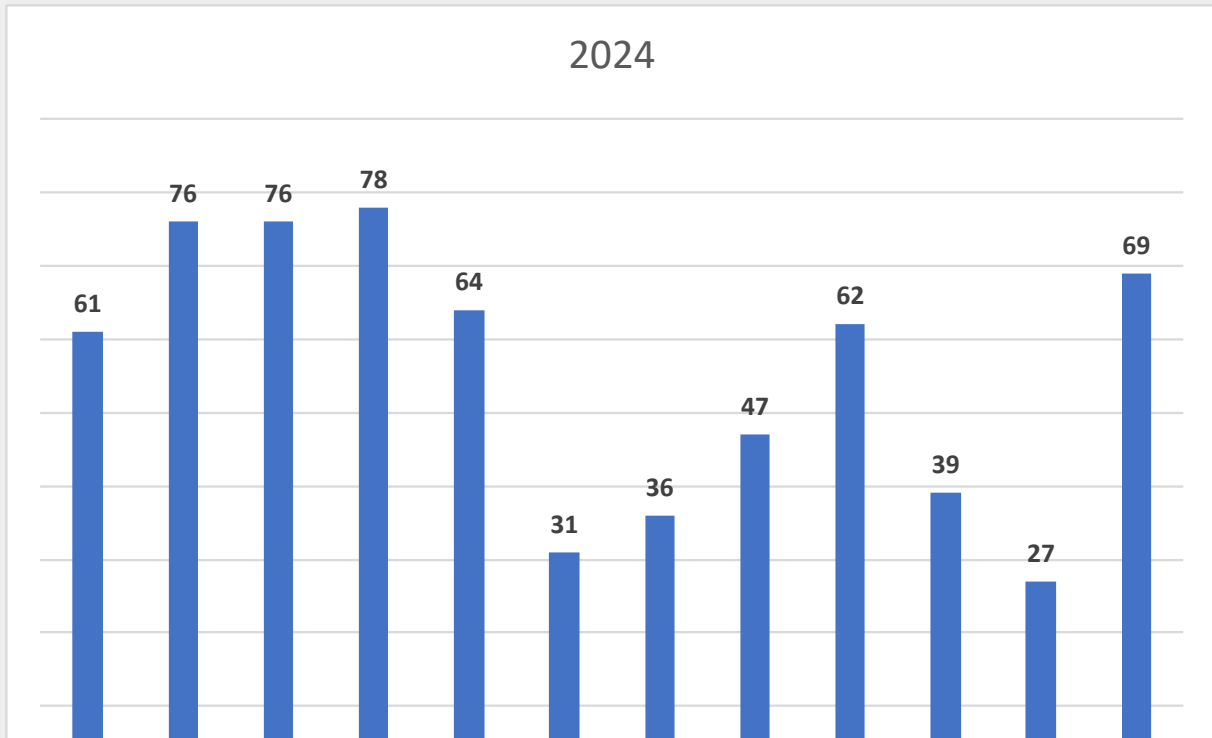
These graphs show the number of purchasing entity exemption requests submitted each month to reduce the calculated goal, including reductions down to 0%, that were granted by CEI's BEP Compliance Unit.

Number of U-Plans Reviewed



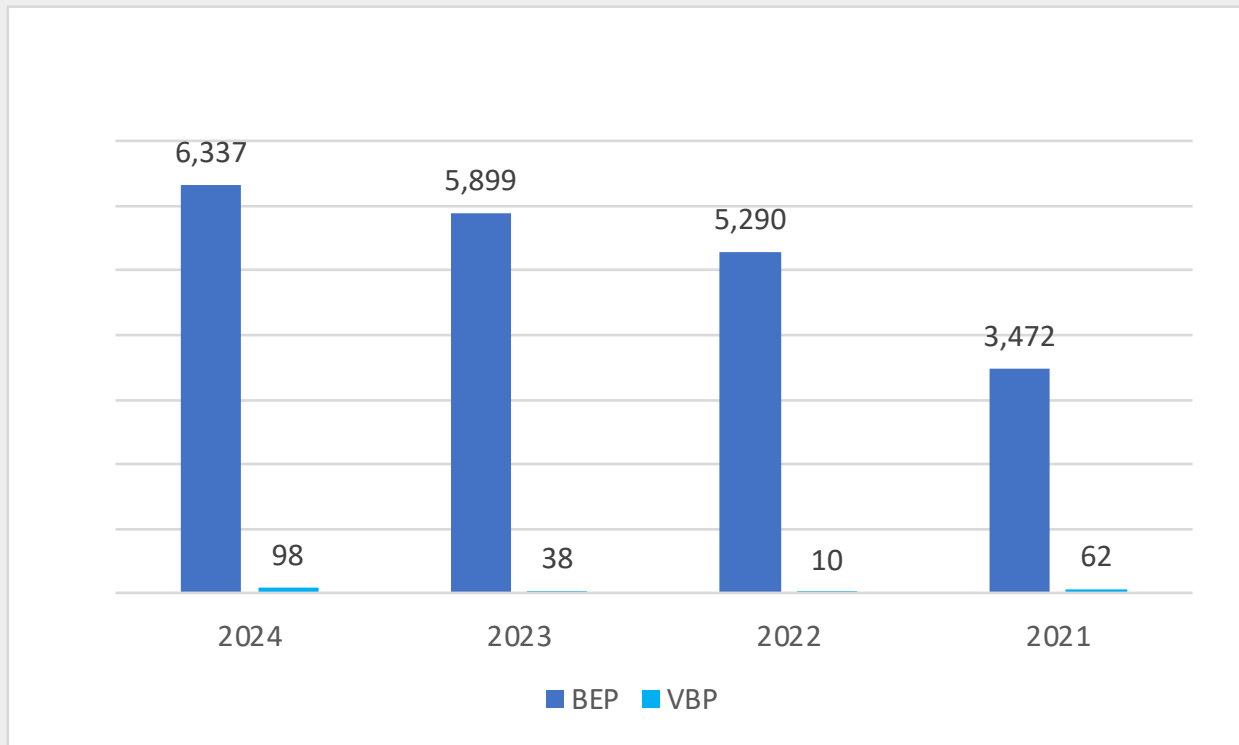
These graphs illustrate the number of Utilization Plans (U-Plans) reviewed by CEI's BEP Compliance Unit each month during the calendar years 2024 and 2025 from all purchasing entities under the Chief Procurement Office for General Services (CPO-GS).

Number of Goal-Setting Form Reviews



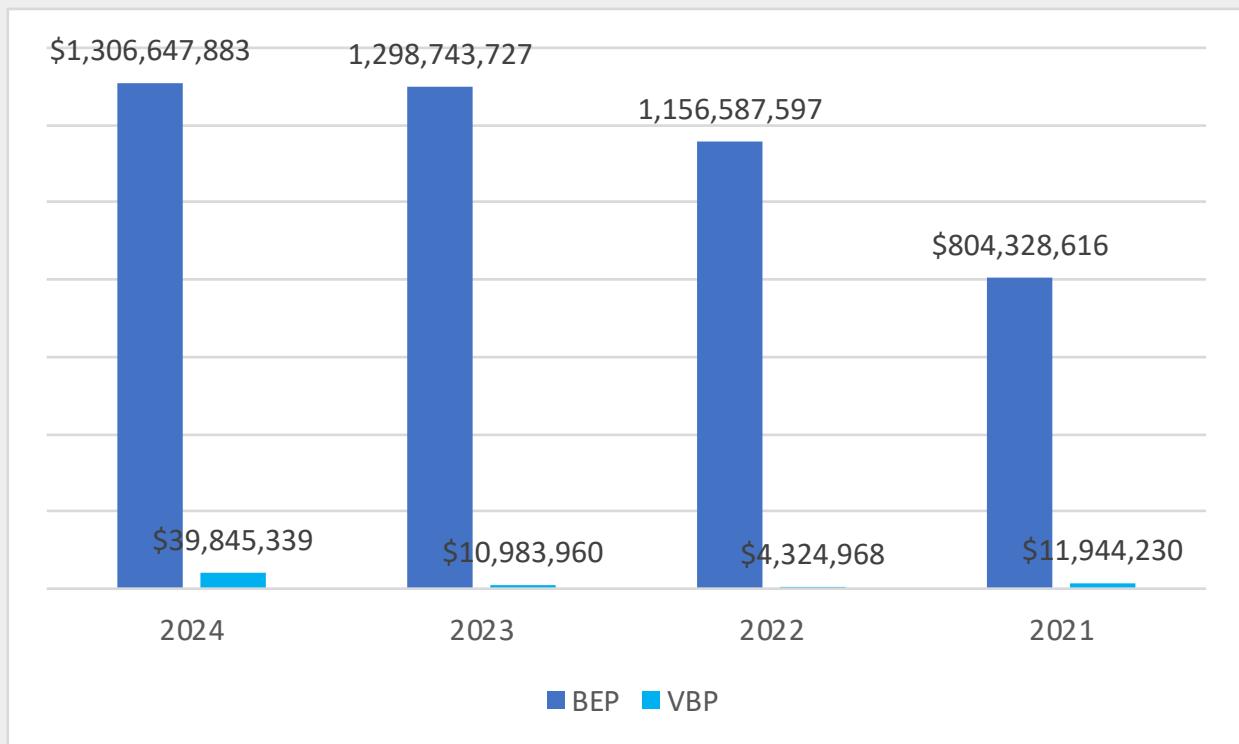
These graphs show the monthly number of goal-setting forms received from all purchasing entities under the CPO-GS in calendar years 2024 and 2025.

Number of Contracts with Supplier Diversity Goals



This graph indicates a steady increase in the number of State contracts awarded to supplier diversity primes and subcontractors in the procurement process.

Fiscal Year BEP Achievement



This graph represents fiscal year expenditures to BEP-certified vendors through the State's procurement process.

OUTREACH OUTLOOK

As we conclude the third quarter of fiscal year 2025, CEI's Outreach Unit has made significant progress in helping to expand BEP and VBP certifications. By increasing the number of educational certification and State procurement resource workshops, CEI has provided tailored certification and procurement resources to diverse communities across the State of Illinois, ensuring greater accessibility and impact. CEI conducts targeted outreach to diverse businesses and partners with State legislators to increase State certification.

CEI's Outreach unit will launch a comprehensive training program for Illinois APEX centers in March. This initiative will equip APEX business counselors with the technical expertise to guide vendors through the BEP and VBP certification processes. Through this immersive training, counselors will gain in-depth knowledge of certification requirements, including ownership documentation, business capabilities, financial records, and structural details. By streamlining the application process and reducing errors, CEI's training will empower APEX centers to provide more effective one-on-one support to vendors, ensuring a smoother path to State certification. This program underscores CEI's dedication to fostering a more inclusive and accessible business environment across Illinois.

In our commitment to strengthening vendor communication and enhancing customer service, we have implemented new outreach strategies, including collecting additional data from CEI incoming calls to better capture vendor needs, provide an additional avenue of support, and improve follow-up. Lastly, CEI is expanding our veteran business community engagement by contacting all new VBP-certified vendors who register through our Supplier Diversity Management Portal with personal follow-up and resources to encourage VBP certification completion.

Looking ahead, CEI Outreach is developing innovative ways to support certified vendors in becoming procurement-ready for bid submissions across all State procurement boards. We are introducing a new initiative to help certified vendors explore business opportunities beyond the government sector, diversify their portfolios, and position them for long-term success in the competitive marketplace. Moreover, CEI Outreach is also developing training for purchasing entities, providing them with the tools they need to excel in their roles and contribute to a more inclusive procurement environment.

Lastly, CEI is hosting a Pre-certification Workshop, the Procurement Opportunity Series, and the Next Steps: Maximizing Your Certification Workshop. We are also working alongside CMS BoSS to cross-promote their Vendor Outreach Calendar, which allows vendors to explore procurement opportunities and gain information about doing business with the State of Illinois.



Outreach Events CEI Participated in the Second Quarter of Fiscal Year 2025

| | | | |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| Legislative Update & Networking for Veteran Business Owners | 1/27/2025 | The Economic Development Center Chinese Mutual Aid Association Business Expo | 3/5/2025 |
| Illinois APEX Accelerator 2025 Monthly Connection Call | 1/28/2025 | Joliet Community College BEP Certification Workshop | 3/6/2025 |
| Roll Call! Veteran Professional Networking Event | 2/26/2025 | Illinois APEX Accelerator 2nd Annual Government Contracting Summit | 3/11/2025 |
| Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce | 2/7/2025 | Illinois APEX Accelerator 2nd Annual Government Contracting Summit: Day 2 | 3/12/2025 |
| Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 2025 Legislative Breakfast | 2/12/2025 | 3rd Annual Business Summit - Next Generation Leaders and Future of Energy | 3/13/2025 |
| Veterans Prosperity Event: Pullman | 2/18/2025 | The Economic Development Center at Chicago Mutual Aid Association Women Event | 3/18/2025 |
| Illinois APEX Accelerator at Champaign County EDC Virtual Workshop | 2/19/2025 | Development Authority BEP & VBP Certification Educational Webinar | 3/18/2025 |
| Illinois Wesleyan University SBDC Government Contracting & Funding Event | 2/19/2025 | Calumet Memorial Park District Job & Resource Fair | 3/21/2025 |
| Governors State Black History Business Symposium | 2/20/2025 | Carl Sandburg College BEP Workshop | 3/27/2025 |
| Rock Valley College Government Contracting Open House | 2/20/2025 | City of Peoria Minority Procurement Expo | 3/27/2025 |
| 34th Today's Challenge Tomorrow's Reward Conference IDOT | 2/26/2025 | City of Chicago Construction Summit | 3/27/2025 |
| Red, White, and You Veteran Job Fair and Resource Event | 2/28/2025 | 2nd Annual Asian Women's Summit | 3/28/2025 |

Upcoming Fiscal Year 2025 Outreach Events

BEP- and VBP-certified Vendor
Next Steps for State Procurement
Quarterly Training 4/3/2025

CEI Procurement Opportunities Series:
ComEd, an Exelon Company 4/9/2025

CEI Procurement Opportunities Series:
Greater Rockford Airport Authority 4/29/2025

The City of Aurora Reverse Vendor Fair 4/17/2025

Asian American & Pacific Islanders
Heritage Month Business Expo 2025 5/1/2025



Fiscal Year 2025 Outreach Efforts

| Month | Fiscal Year 2024 | Fiscal Year 2025 |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| July | 7 | 10 |
| August | 17 | 9* |
| September | 11 | 16* |
| October | 11 | 15* |
| November | 12* | 10 |
| December | 3 | 8* |

| Month | Fiscal Year 2024 | Fiscal Year 2025 |
|----------|------------------|------------------|
| January | 5 | 5* |
| February | 11 | 16* |
| March | 8* | 15 |
| April | 10* | |
| May | 13* | |
| June | 13* | |

This table shows the number of outreach efforts completed by CEI's Outreach Unit for FY24 and FY25, broken down by month. The * indicates that one or more veteran-specific outreach events were conducted during that month.

IDOT's 34th Today's Challenge Tomorrow's Reward Conference



At the 34th Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Reward Conference with IDOT, CEI's Outreach Unit connected with vendors at our booth, sharing valuable insights about upcoming CEI events and guiding them through the BE BEP recognition certification process.

Red, White, and You Veteran Job Fair and Resource Event



CEI's Outreach Unit is expanding its efforts to promote the VBP. We participated in the Red, White, and You Veteran Job Fair and Resource Event, offering valuable information to help veterans navigate the VBP certification process and access new business opportunities.

The Economic Development Center Chinese Mutual Aid Association Business Expo



CEI's Outreach Unit engaged with new vendors at our resource booth, offering essential BEP certification information at the inaugural Chinese Mutual Aid Association Business Expo. This event signified the start of an annual conference, fostering valuable connections for vendors seeking to grow and succeed.

Joliet Community College BEP Certification Workshop



CEI's Outreach Unit and CMS BoSS co-presented at the Joliet Community College Business Development Center Workshop, giving vendors valuable insights into the State Buying Plan and next steps to take after achieving BEP and VBP certification. This event attracted attendees from DuPage, Will, and Grundy counties, providing businesses with a tailored opportunity to learn about State procurement and certification processes.