



cei.equity.inclusion@illinois.gov

Fiscal Year 2025 Quarter 4

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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BEP COUNCIL UPDATES

The Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities (BEP Council) was established to facilitate the implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of the goals outlined in the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act (BEP Act).

For the first time since the Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) was established, the BEP Council has reached its full membership threshold of 21 members. Membership in the BEP Council is predicated on the BEP Act, which reserves a total of eight membership slots for State agencies, boards, commissions, and public institutions of higher education, and allocates the remaining 13 positions to be filled through Gubernatorial appointment.

The full roster of BEP Council members has also led to an increase in membership of the BEP Council Compliance, Certification, and Outreach Subcommittees. 62% of BEP Council members are involved in at least one subcommittee, while 33% participate in two or more subcommittees.

In line with best practices, the BEP Council is also reviewing its bylaws to ensure compliance, eliminate outdated terminology, define clear responsibilities, and confirm that procedures are properly outlined.

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Chicago, IL 60603

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THE FISCAL YEAR 2024 EXTENSION AND RENEWAL REPORT

The Illinois Procurement Code (“Code”) requires the Procurement Policy Board (“PPB”) and CEI to file an annual report with the General Assembly identifying the proposed extensions or renewals filed, whether such extensions and renewals were objected to, and the contracts exempt from the stipulations denoted in Section 20-60 of the Code for the previous fiscal year.

The information in this report comes directly from submissions provided by the four State of Illinois Chief Procurement Officers (CPOs):

- Chief Procurement Officer for General Services
- Chief Procurement Officer for Higher Education
- Chief Procurement Officer for the Capital Development Board
- Chief Procurement Officer for the Department of Transportation

The Fiscal Year 2024 Extension and Renewal Report details information gathered by CEI regarding contract extensions and renewals exceeding \$249,999 during fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024.

By relying on primary data from these officials, the report ensures accuracy and provides the most current insights into large contract extensions and renewals across key procurement areas in Illinois. This approach strengthens both the reliability and transparency of the findings.

CERTIFICATION UNIT EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

CEI’s Certification Unit has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and dedication to promoting supplier diversity in the State of Illinois while ensuring compliance with administrative rules. We are proud of the unit’s commitment and commend their efforts to meet key performance indicators throughout the first and second quarters of fiscal year 2025. Among the unit’s team members, one analyst stood out due to her outstanding contributions. Carrie Kowal, who has been named Certification Unit Employee of the Quarter, joined the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) in 2020. Carrie consistently goes above and beyond, not only meeting but exceeding performance goals. She exemplifies superior customer service and eagerly supports outreach efforts, making her an invaluable asset to the Certification Unit and CEI as a whole. Please join us in congratulating Carrie!



HR UPDATES

Sarah Jardine joined CEI's compliance team in April, bringing the total number of full-time dedicated staff members to six. CEI's posting for two compliance officer openings is now closed as we move into the next stage of the hiring process.

We encourage candidates with a passion for public service and an interest in monitoring state purchasing through an equity lens to regularly check our careers page or follow us on social media for job updates.

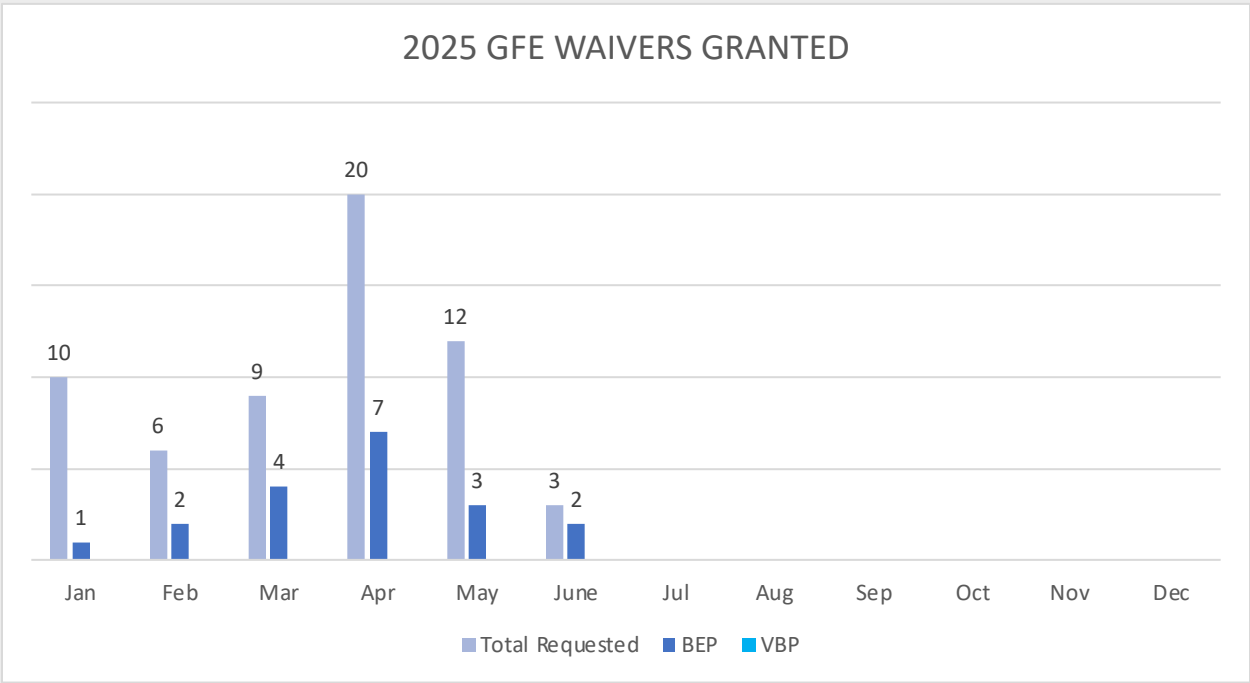
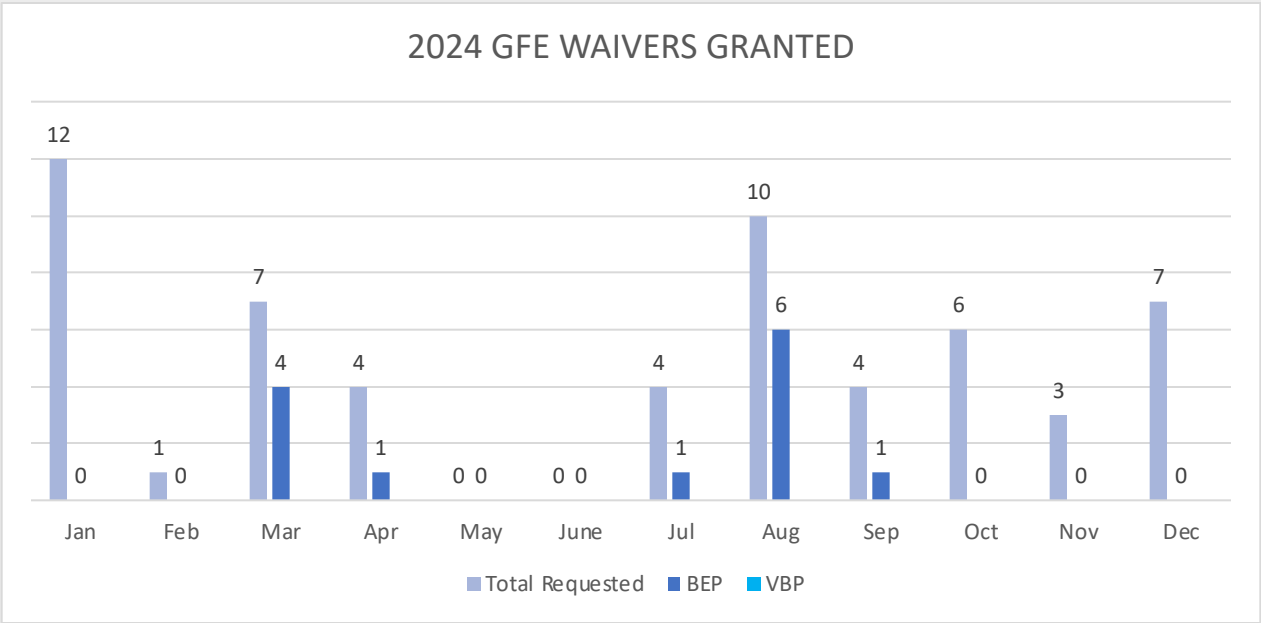


CEI COMMISSIONER REPORT

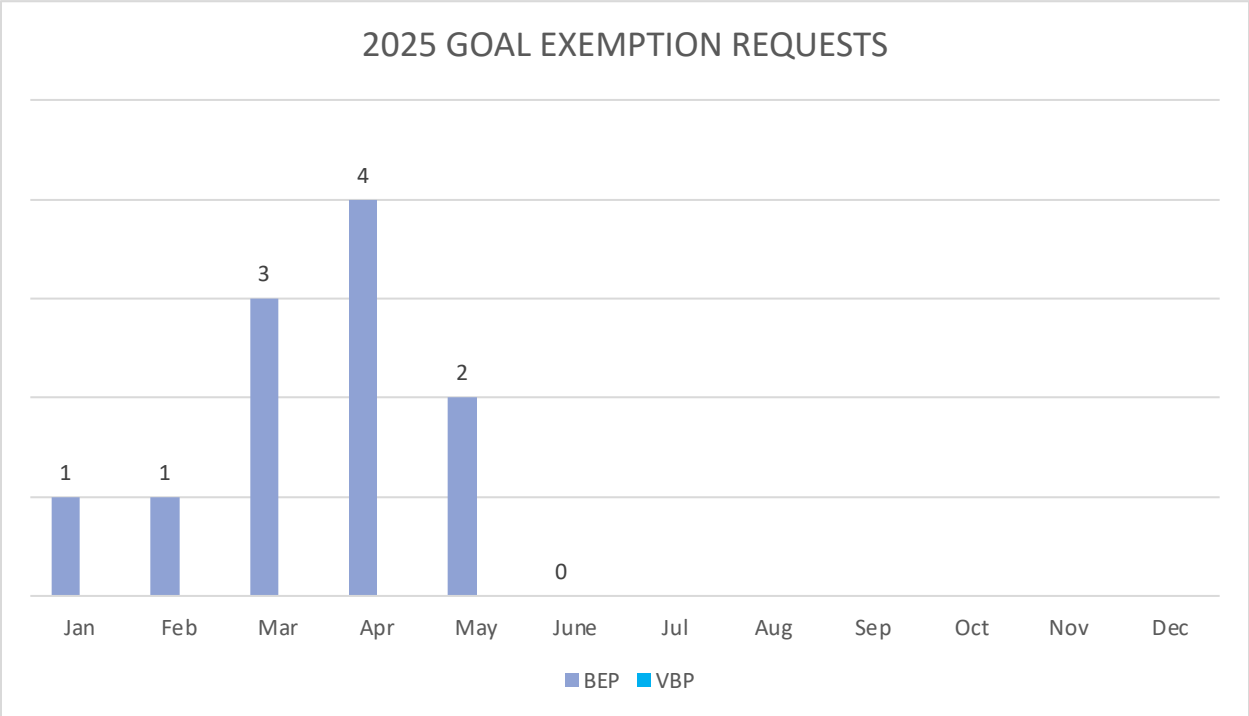
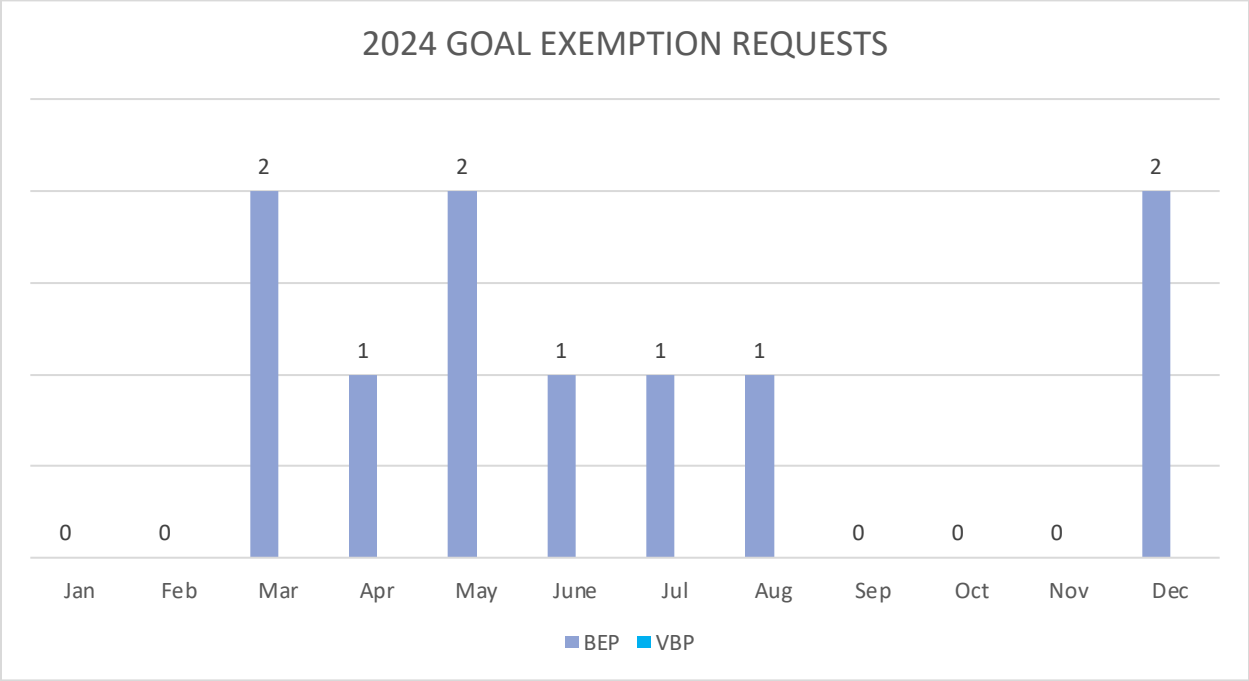
Commissioners continue collaborating with operational staff on various activities and special projects essential to the smooth functioning of CEI. They led a Veterans Business Program certification appeal hearing and also analyzed and developed several memos related to CEI's future strategic plans and upcoming legislation. Additionally, commissioners have started working on the annual Race and Gender Wage Report and the Procurement Scorecard Report. They attended and participated in several meetings across Illinois to ensure CEI's engagement in procurement, outreach, and recognition efforts. Commissioners also contributed to the creation and completion of a year-end survey, providing valuable feedback.

Furthermore, commissioners are partnering with purchasing entities to target the CEI Act pillars and continue developing criteria for a future goods and services disparity study. They are focusing on utilizing existing and upcoming litigation and legislation as benchmarks to establish standards for the supplier diversity studies for which CEI is responsible. Thanks to their efforts, CEI's website now features a new link offering Illinois' small businesses access to free training to help develop their businesses.

As CEI continues to develop and advance the BEP and Veterans Business Program (VBP), the Compliance Unit has significantly enhanced its processes and procedures to better serve stakeholders across Illinois throughout this fiscal year.

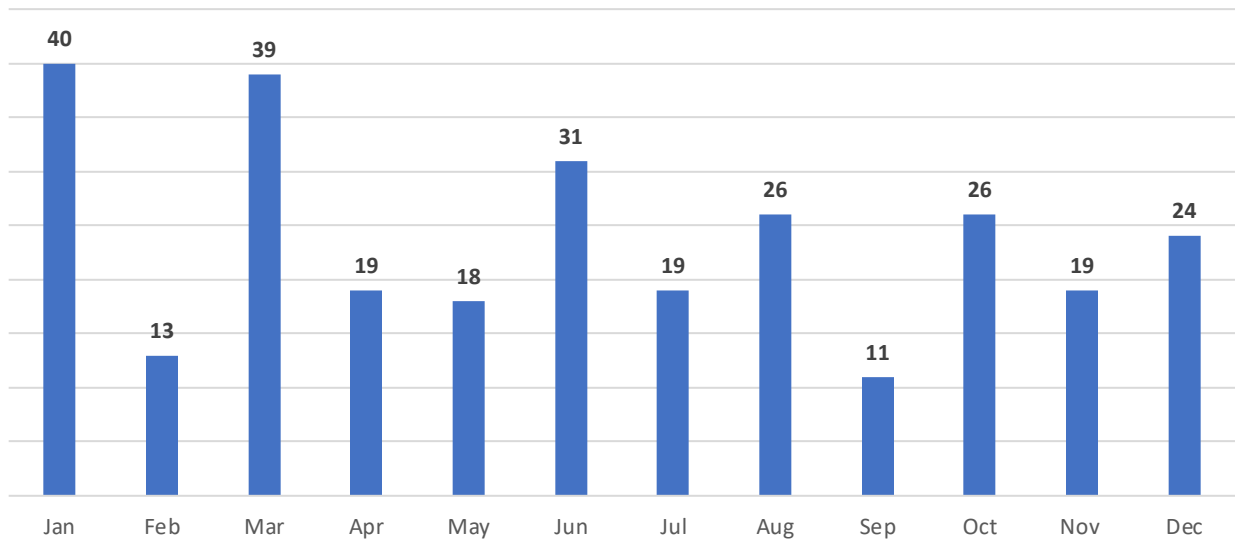


This graph illustrates, on a monthly basis, the number of GFE waiver requests received and the number of those requests that CEI’s Compliance Unit granted. Only a small percentage of these GFE waiver requests are granted by CEI’s Compliance Unit after thorough review of the due diligence taken by the prime bidder to achieve diverse participation on the contract.

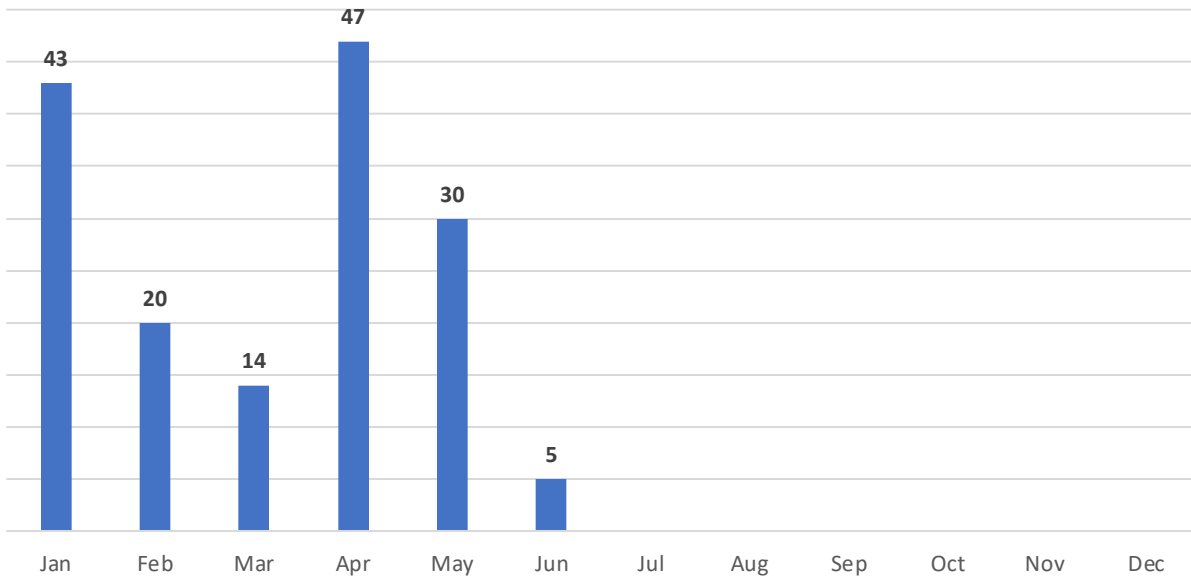


This chart indicates, on a monthly basis, the number of purchasing entity exemption requests for a goal reduction of the calculated goal, including to 0%, that was granted by CEI.

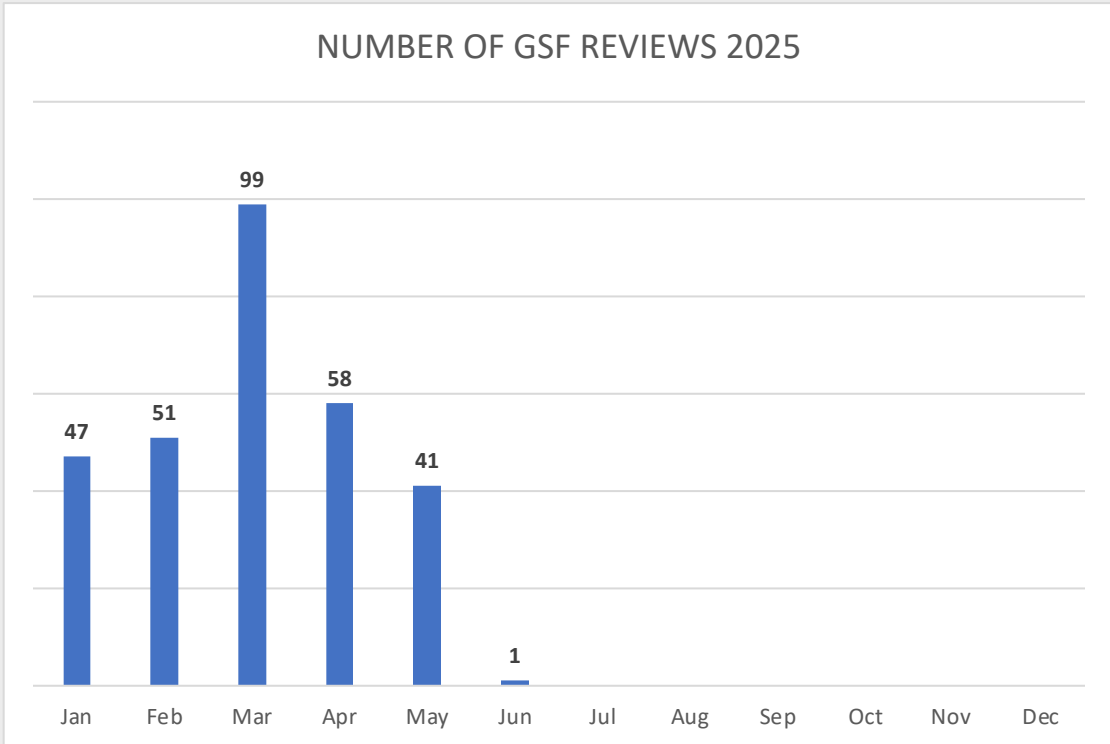
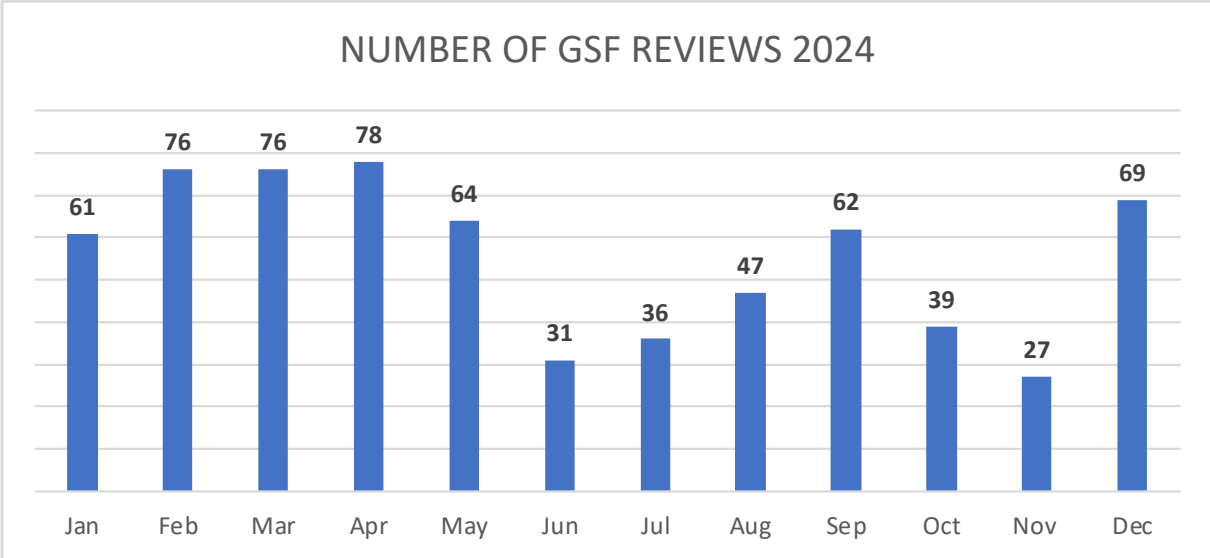
NUMBER OF U-PLANS REVIEWED 2024



NUMBER OF U-PLANS REVIEWED 2025

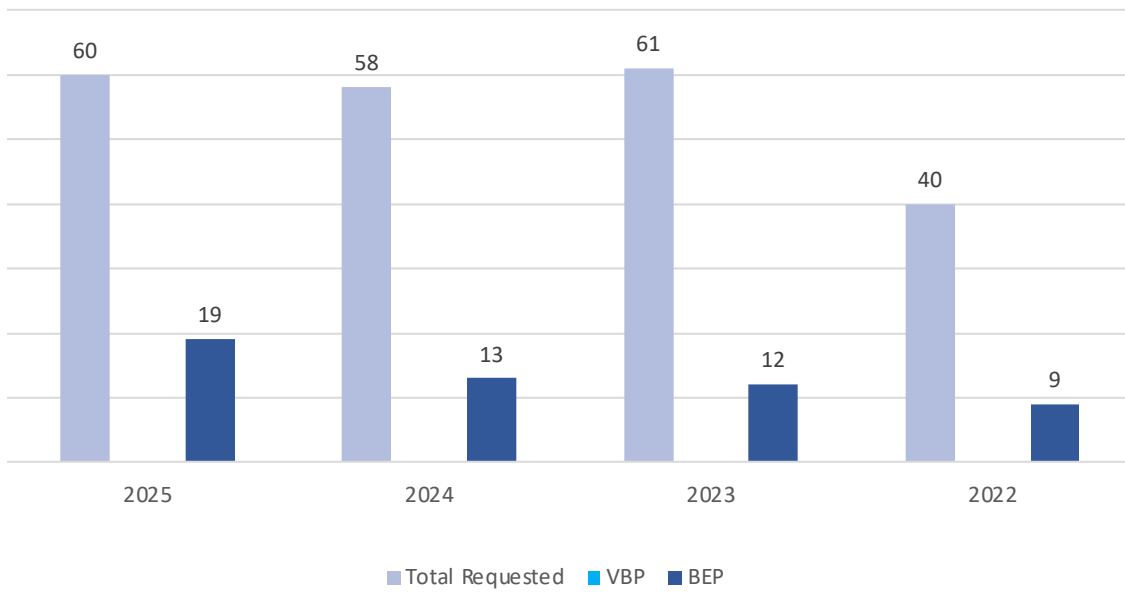


Number of U-Plans Reviewed BEP Compliance reviews are based on the bidding activity on solicitations that contain a BEP goal. This chart indicates the number of U-Plans reviewed by BEP, on a monthly basis, in calendar year 2025 from all departments under the CPO-GS.



Number of GSF Reviews BEP Compliance goal setting reviews are based on the purchasing needs of the department. Currently all procurements over \$100,000 go through the BEP Goal Setting process. This graph indicates the number of goal setting requests received, on a monthly basis, in calendar year 2025 from all departments under the CPO-GS.

ANNUAL GFE WAIVERS GRANTED



This four-year chart depicts the number of solicitations containing a GFE by the bidder or offeror over the last four calendar years that were deemed acceptable after thorough review by CEI's Compliance Unit.

NOTE: The goal setting and Utilization Plan review data indicated on these charts only represent reviews accomplished by the CEI Compliance Unit and do not represent the actual awarded contracts associated with the goal setting and Utilization Plan.



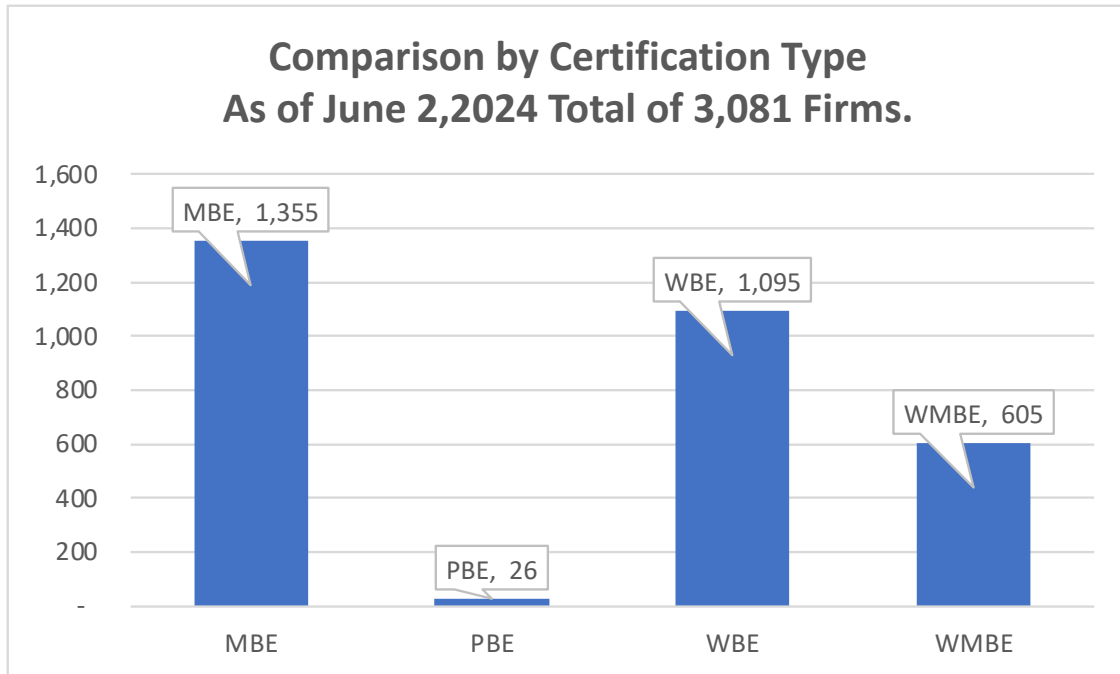
CERTIFICATION

As of June 2, 2025, CEI has certified 3,081 BEP vendors and 203 VBP vendors, demonstrating our strong dedication to creating an inclusive and diverse vendor community. Certification activity peaked in July and August 2024, with Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women Business Enterprises (WBEs) making up the largest shares of CEI's BEP pool. Illinois leads in vendor participation, with certified businesses representing 38 states, showcasing the broad reach of CEI's programs. CEI continues to support streamlined access to certification through the full BEP and VBP and reciprocal certification options.

Additionally, the VBP saw steady growth, with significant participation from service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) and strong representation across Cook, DuPage, Kane, Will, and McHenry counties. These achievements underscore CEI's ongoing commitment to opening doors, removing barriers, and fostering equitable opportunities in State contracting.

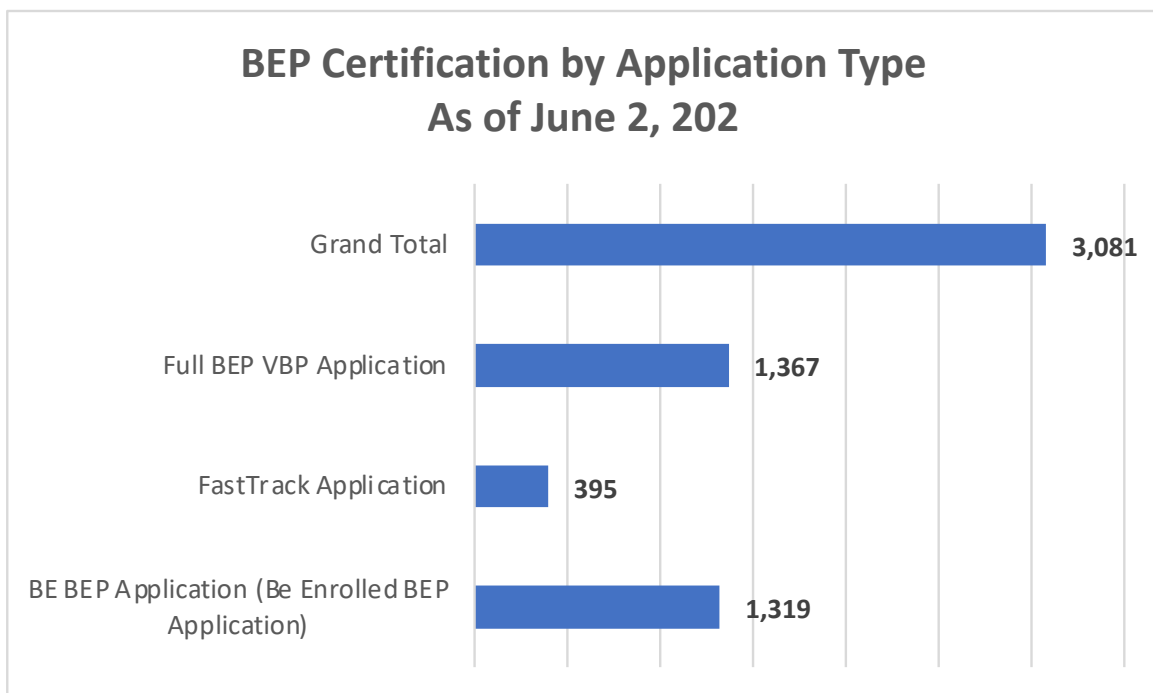
BEP Certified Firms by Month to Month		
Year Month	# of Certified Vendors	
2024 -July		5,053
2024 -August		4,208
2024 -September		3,837
2024 - October		3,811
2024 - November		3,732
2024 -December		3,930
2025 -January		3,800
2025 -February		3,658
2025 - March		3,589
2025 -April		3,380
2025 -May		3,258
*2025 - June		3,081

The average number of certified vendors in CEI's BEP pool is 3,081, with the median at 3,766, based on data from January to June 2025. These numbers provide a useful insight into CEI's progress and performance. Notably, July and August 2024 were the peak months for certified vendors, as there was a significant increase in participation.



Source of data: SDMP as of June 2, 2025.

The chart above clearly shows the distribution of certified vendors in CEI's BEP public vendor directory database as of June 2, 2025. Notably, MBEs make up the largest group, accounting for 43.98% of all certified vendors. Next are WBEs, representing 35.54%, highlighting the important role of women in entrepreneurship. The third group includes Women Minority Business Enterprises (WMBE), at 19.64%, showing progress in intersectional representation. Lastly, Persons with Disabilities Business Enterprises (PBEs) comprise only 0.84%, underscoring the need for greater inclusion and diversity.

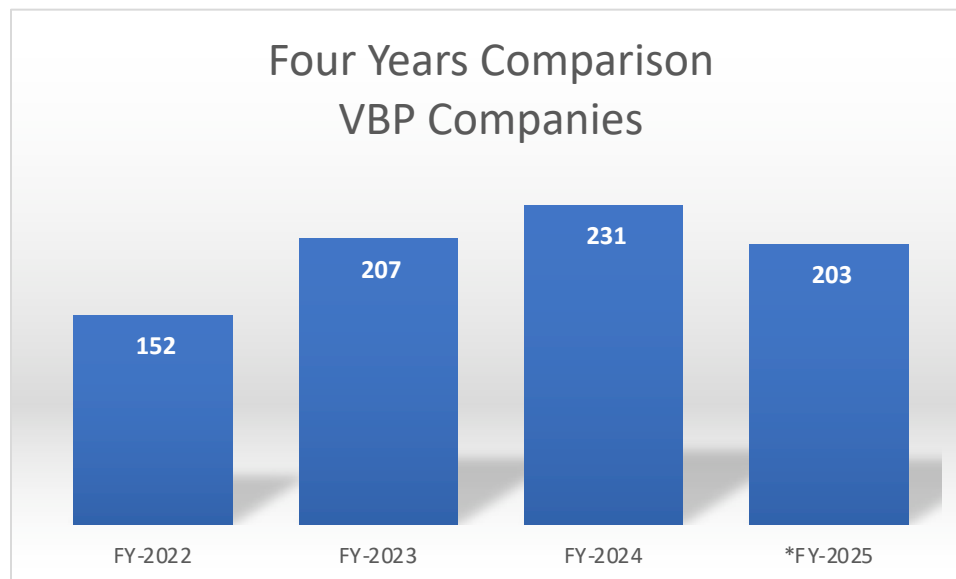


VBP Certified Firms by Month to Month		
Year - Month	# of Certified Vendors	
2024 - July		233
2024 - August		227
2024 -September		193
2024 -October		206
2024 -November		213
2024 - December		210
2025 - January		212
2025 - February		203
2025 -March		209
2025 -Aprial		205
2025 -May		203
*2025 - June		203

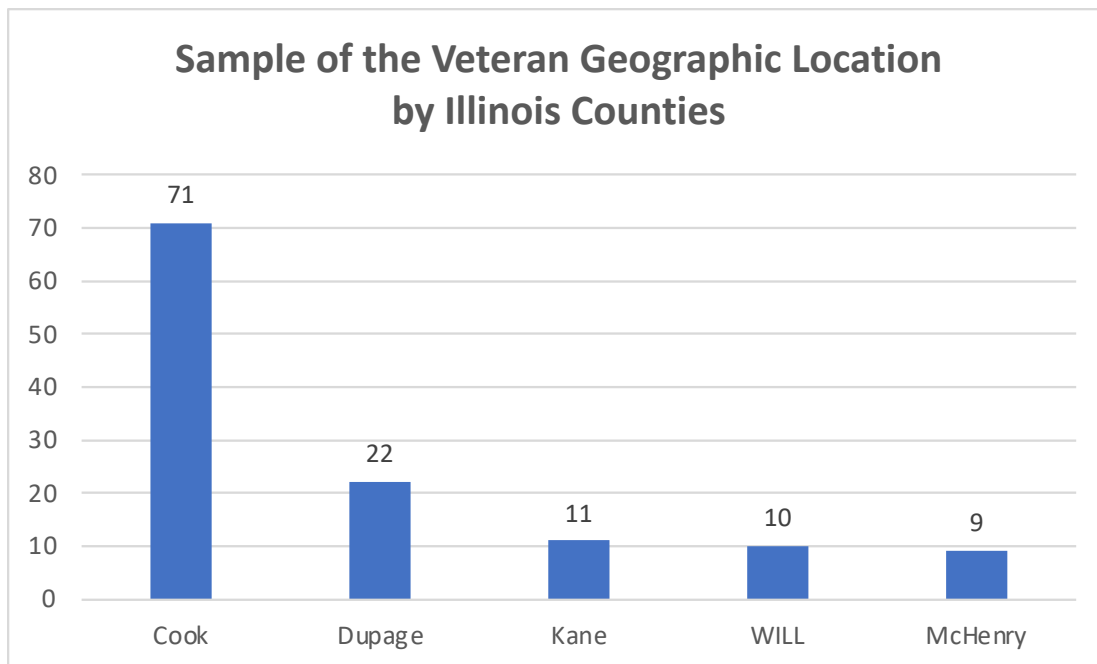
Source of data: SDMP as of June 2, 2025

From July 2024 to June 2025, the VBP vendor pool averaged 209 certified vendors, with a median of 207. These numbers highlight the strength of our vendor pool during this period. Notably, July and August 2024 saw a significant surge in certified vendors.

Note: The final figures for June 2025 are still tentative, as the month is not yet finalized.



As of June 2, there are an impressive 203 certified veteran-owned firms in the VBP, highlighting a strong commitment to supporting our veterans. Of these, 111 are recognized as certified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB), showcasing the remarkable resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of those who have bravely served our country. Additionally, there are 92 certified Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB), further emphasizing the vital role that veterans play in stimulating economic growth and driving innovation. This extensive network not only empowers veterans but also enhances our economy and communities.



Source of data: SDMP as of June 2, 2025

CEI’s VBP is passionately committed to expanding the network of certified veteran vendors. Leading the charge are five counties that exemplify this dedication to veterans. Cook County stands out with an impressive 70 certified veteran vendors, demonstrating strong support for our heroes. DuPage County follows with 22 vendors, while Kane County proudly contributes 11. Will County adds 10 more vendors to this vital effort, and McHenry County completes the list with nine additional vendors.

Championing the success of veteran-owned businesses within the State of Illinois. Together, we are building a strong network that honors the contributions of our veterans.

OUTREACH

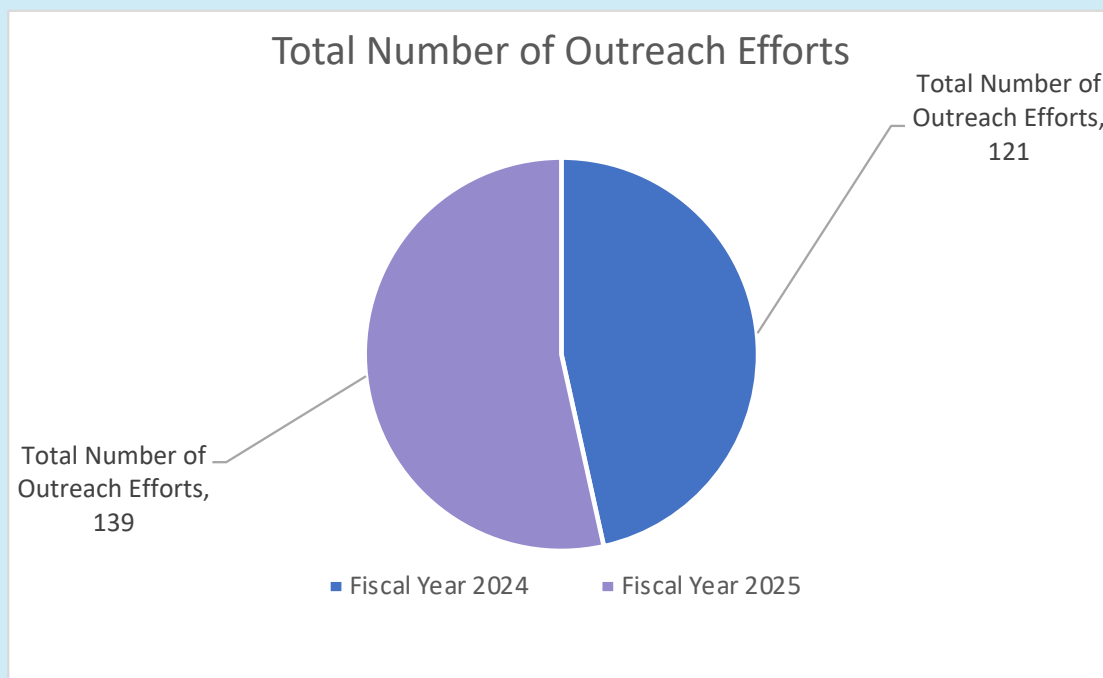
As we close out Fiscal Year 2025, CEI is proud to reflect on the remarkable progress made by the Outreach Unit in educating and empowering Illinois' vendor community. Through innovative programming and strategic partnerships, CEI continues to lead efforts that expand equitable access to procurement opportunities for businesses certified under the BEP and VBP.

This year, CEI launched its first-ever Next Steps Workshop, a quarterly training program designed to help newly certified vendors navigate Illinois' four State procurement bulletin boards. This influential program ensures vendors have the tools and knowledge needed to pursue contracts confidently.

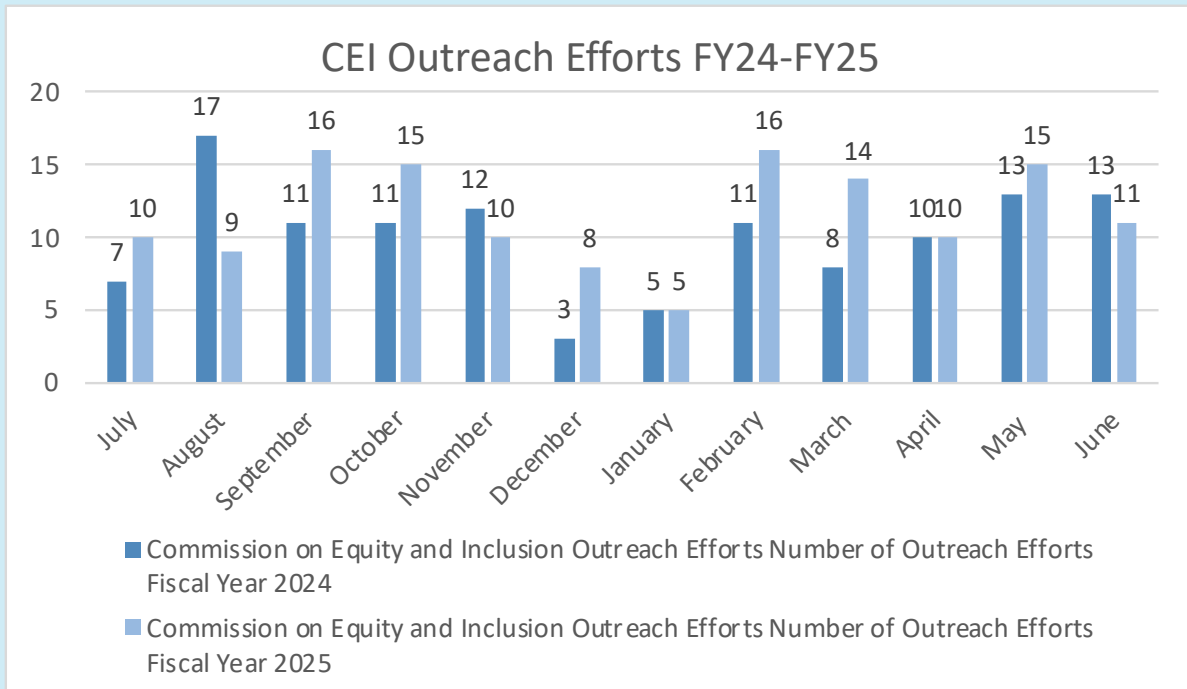
CEI also expanded its reach by hosting two Procurement Series events in partnership with ComEd, an Exelon Company, and the Rockford Airport Authority (RAA). These sessions provided vendors with a comprehensive roadmap to navigate procurement with private and public sector entities that recognize BEP and VBP certifications.

Committed to raising awareness and accessibility of certification, CEI Outreach has delivered presentations at numerous community workshops and is currently creating on-demand video guides to assist vendors with step-by-step instructions for submitting certification applications through the Supplier Diversity Management Portal. An upcoming Pre-Certification Virtual Workshop will also provide valuable guidance to help applicants avoid common mistakes and ensure successful submissions.

In fiscal year 2025, CEI Outreach participated in 139 events, an increase from 121 in fiscal year 2024, including 13 veteran-specific events aimed at strengthening relationships, outreach, and trust within the veteran business owner community. These efforts reflect CEI's unwavering commitment to building a more inclusive vendor ecosystem by fostering meaningful partnerships and creating pathways to State procurement opportunities.



This pie graph compares FY24 to FY25 total outreach efforts completed by CEI staff.



This graph illustrates the number of outreach efforts completed by CEI's Outreach Unit for fiscal years 2024 and 2025, broken down by month.

Commission on Equity and Inclusion Outreach Efforts

Month	Number of Outreach Efforts Fiscal Year 2024	Number of Outreach Efforts Fiscal Year 2025
July	7	10
August	17*	9*
September	11	16*
October	11	15*
November	12*	10
December	3	8*
January	5	5*
February	11	16*
March	8*	14
April	10*	10*
May	13*	15*
June	13*	11*

This table displays the number of outreach efforts completed by CEI's Outreach Unit for fiscal years 2024 and 2025, broken down by month. The * indicates that one or more veteran-specific outreach events were conducted during that month.



SAVE THE DATE

Latin@ Economic Summit

Thursday, July 31
Moraine Valley Community College
Palos Hills, IL

Logos at the bottom include: Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Development, IECR, a stylized arrow logo, a stylized bird logo, HACA, HUB, and a circular logo with the text 'CONNECTIONS & INNOVATION'.



SAVE
the
DATE

MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

2025

SMALL BUSINESS
Conference & Gala

AUGUST 8 - 9, 2025
EMBASSY SUITES CONFERENCE CENTER
EAST PEORIA

Registration opens February 24, 2025

Vendor opportunities will be available
Questions: Info@mbdcillinois.org



THE MWRD'S 2025
Small Business Summit

An inspiring day empowering and connecting small businesses with industry leaders, prime contractors, consultants, and agencies.

TUESDAY
9.9.2025

MALCOLM X COLLEGE

A collage of photos showing people at a summit, including a man in a suit, a woman in a white shirt, and a group of people in a meeting.

The Veteran's Assistance Commission of DuPage County
and the Office of The DuPage County Recorder
are proud to present the 2025



VETERAN'S RESOURCE FAIR

FREE EVENT FOR VETERANS & ACTIVE DUTY



AUGUST 26th, 2025

9:00am - 1:00pm

DUPAGE COUNTY
JACK T. KNUEPFER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
1st FLOOR ATRIUM & AUDITORIUM
421 N COUNTY FARM ROAD
WHEATON, IL 60187

ENJOY REFRESHMENTS, DOOR PRIZES, AND FREEBIES

THE VETERAN'S ASSISTANCE COMMISSION WILL PROVIDE
INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT VETERAN PROGRAMS

THE RECORDER'S OFFICE IS OFFERING FREE RECORDATION OF MILITARY DISCHARGE
DOCUMENTS AND NO COST REGISTRATION FOR THE HONOR REWARDS PROGRAM - USE
THIS REWARDS CARD TO RECIEVE DISCOUNTS AND PERKS AT LOCAL BUSINESSES

A FEW OF OUR OVER 50 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

HINES VA HOSPITAL



10 DEPARTMENTS
REPRESENTED

THE



STICKER IPASSES
ISSUED

OFFICE OF



THE IL ATTORNEY GENERAL
MILITARY VETERAN'S AFFAIRS

DUPAGE COUNTY



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF



THE IL STATE
TREASURER

OFFICE OF



THE IL
COMPTROLLER

STEVEN FIXLER, VAC SUPERINTENDANT

ELIZABETH M. CHAPLIN, RECORDER



VETERAN BUSINESS ADVANTAGE:

UNLOCKING SURPLUS RESOURCES & STATE CERTIFICATION

Take advantage of FREE
resources available for your
Veteran-owned business.

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

10:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Virtual Event



REGISTER NOW!



ABOUT THIS WORKSHOP

This tailored workshop will provide veteran business owners with insights about the advantages of becoming a Veterans Business Program certified vendor with the State of Illinois and provide resources to receive FREE equipment for your business.

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND

- Learn about CEI's Veterans Business Program and its certification process.
- Learn how to obtain FREE equipment for your growing business.
- Maximize your certification and take advantage of procurement opportunities.

Contact Us cei.bep.outreach@illinois.gov

Website cei.illinois.gov



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM/ VETERAN BUSINESS PROGRAM VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

JULY 2025

JULY
2

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



JULY
9

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



JULY
16

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



JULY
23

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



JULY
30

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM





BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM/ VETERAN BUSINESS PROGRAM VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

AUGUST 2025

AUGUST
6

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



AUGUST
13

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



AUGUST
20

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



AUGUST
27

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM





BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM/ VETERAN BUSINESS PROGRAM VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

SEPTEMBER 2025

SEPTEMBER
3

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



SEPTEMBER
10

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



SEPTEMBER
17

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



SEPTEMBER
24

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM



ATTENTION: BEP-CERTIFIED VENDOR NEXT STEPS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR CERTIFICATION WEBINAR

*Maximize Your BEP Certification and Take the
Next Steps for State of Illinois Procurement Bids.*



*Join us and learn about the
important steps to:*

- *Maintain your certification*
- *Expand your certification*
- *Prepare to Bid for Contracts*

July 10th, 2025



11:00am – 12:00pm



Register Now

