



Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion Announces the BEP & VBP Certification Kickstart Workshop

Joliet, IL — The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI), in collaboration with State Representative Dagmara Avelar, is hosting an in-person Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and Veterans Business Program (VBP) Certification Kickstart Workshop on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at Joliet Junior College in Romeoville, IL. This interactive training session is designed to help small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses begin or complete the State certification process and gain access to Illinois procurement opportunities.

CEI's new Certification Kickstart initiative strengthens the connection between outreach and certification outcomes, providing vendors with practical tools to navigate the application process. For this event, participants will receive step-by-step guidance on creating a certification profile, choosing the correct application type, uploading required documents, and completing all components of the BEP or VBP application. Certification experts will lead a live demonstration and provide real-time assistance.

"Certification is a critical pathway for small and diverse businesses to participate in State contracting," **said CEI Interim Executive Director Robin Streets.** "Our goal is to make certification accessible, easy to navigate, and achievable for every eligible business owner by bringing resources, expertise, and direct assistance together in one location. We are proud to have the support of State Representative Avelar, the Entrepreneur Business Center at Joliet Junior College and the Bolingbrook Chamber of Commerce work together to connect local businesses with the resources they need to become certified and access new opportunities with the State of Illinois. Through this workshop, we are creating a true one-stop certification experience designed to help business owners overcome common barriers and move from application to completion with confidence."

Event Details:

Date: Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Joliet Junior College Room RMA-2013, 1125 W Romeo Rd., Romeoville, IL 60446

Registration is required. Interested vendors can sign up via [Certification Kickstart Workshop Registration](#)

Partner Acknowledgment

This workshop is made possible through the partnership of Joliet Junior College and Illinois APEX Accelerator, whose collaboration strengthens our shared commitment to expanding access to State certification and increasing equity and inclusion throughout the State's procurement landscape.

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