



Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Skokie, IL — The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI), in collaboration with Senator Ram Villivalam and State Representative Kevin Olickal, is hosting an in-person Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and Veterans Business Program (VBP) Certification Kickstart Workshop on Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at Oakton College in Skokie, 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 **Robin Streets, Interim Executive Director of CEI**. "Through this workshop, we are creating a true one-stop process that supports successful certification completion by removing many of the typical challenges business owners face and providing hands-on support every step of the way. Participants will even have access to on-site affidavit notarization, ensuring they can complete their entire State certification application in one visit. Our goal is to make the process more accessible, more direct, and more achievable for every vendor and we're proud to have the full support of Senator Villivalam and Representative Olickal".

Event Details:

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Oakton College Room P232, 7701 Lincoln Ave., Skokie, IL 60077

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

Partner Acknowledgment

This workshop is made possible through the partnership of Oakton College, Illinois APEX Accelerator, and the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, 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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