

ILLINOIS WORKS FOR THE FUTURE

21st Century Workforce Development Fund Act

The 21st Century Workforce Development Fund Act (HB 852) creates the structure for a state-level fund to “promote the State’s interest in the creation and maintenance of a diverse and skilled workforce for the economic development of the State.” Led by sponsors Rep. Will Davis and Sen. Mattie Hunter, the passage of this legislation is the first step towards establishing a sustainable funding source for education, skills training, and other workforce development services that will build the 21st

Century workforce that employers need to grow and Illinois needs to have a strong economy. The fund is structured so that funds from any source—whether state general revenue; bond proceeds; federal; or philanthropic—can be deposited and used to support the priorities outlined in the legislation.

The 21st Century Workforce Development Fund Act:

Prioritizes Illinois residents with the greatest need for training:

- Individuals with barriers to employment
- Individuals with low literacy and math skills
- Workers with jobs affected by state or federal environmental policy

Prioritizes Illinois communities with the greatest need for economic development because they have high rates of unemployment, underemployment, or poverty.

Prioritizes Illinois industries with the greatest need for skilled workers:

- Industries identified to be facing a **critical shortage of skilled workers**.
- **“Green industries”** including:
 - Energy efficient building construction, retrofit, and assessment
 - Renewable energy
 - Deconstruction and materials use
 - Sustainable manufacturing

Allows for funds to be used flexibly to meet local needs for skills training, including:

- Innovative workforce strategies, including: occupational training, basic skills training, sectoral workforce strategies, transitional jobs strategies, and bridge programming.
- Additional funding for successful workforce strategies including the Job Training and Economic Development grant program.
- Related workforce development services needed by individuals in order to succeed in training including job development and support services.
- Local capacity building, program development, and technical assistance activities necessary for the development of new education and training strategies.

Provides for accountable and transparent administration:

- Any funds deposited would be disbursed by a **competitive grantmaking process** administered by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the state agency that is most closely aligned with the fund’s purpose.
- **Establishes an advisory committee** of 21 individuals representing diverse public and private sector stakeholders that make recommendations for grant approval or denial. The advisory committee includes representation from: non-profit organizations; communities outside of Chicago; Local Workforce Investment Boards; labor unions; business; state agencies; and state legislators.

The *Illinois Works for the Future* campaign was launched in 2007 to promote the integration of workforce and economic development policy that *works for everyone*: producing skilled workers, in strong businesses, with good jobs, that foster thriving communities. For more information, go to www.ilworks4future.org or contact Jennifer Becker Mouhcine at the Chicago Jobs Council: jmouhcine@cjcc.net