



Press Release

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Illinois Central College and 40 community partners awarded nearly \$15M to accelerate IT credential production by the US Economic Development Administration for the Good Jobs Challenge grant.

Illinois Central College, Bradley University and Eureka College, along with 40 community partners receive once-in-a-generation funding of nearly \$15 million to develop 1,000 skilled IT employees over the next three years.

The US Economic Development Administration announced that Illinois Central College was the recipient of nearly \$15 million to develop an IT certification ecosystem in Central Illinois. This grant comes as part of the American Rescue Plan to develop training programs that support local economies and place an additional 50,000 workers in quality jobs. ICC's proposal was one of only 32 funded from among over 500 received by the EDA, and 1 of only 2 community colleges funded.

"Illinois Central College is part of the foundation that keeps our Central Illinois community strong, and I'm thrilled to see more than \$14 million in federal funding invested in supporting their efforts to strengthen our local workforce," said Congresswoman Cheri Bustos. "With these resources from the American Rescue Plan, ICC will be able to develop new programming focused on advancing our local workforce and training folks for 21st-century jobs. I was proud to vote for this historic legislation, and I look forward to seeing the incredible impact this investment will have on our community."

The grant will create 1,000 new IT credentials for employees new to the industry as well as incumbent workers who will upskill into new positions. Specific emphasis is placed on removing barriers for poverty-impacted individuals and participants of color, providing wraparound support that enables them to successfully complete credentials and quickly move into good-paying jobs.

"Workforce development programs are vital to stimulating our economy and Dr. Quirk-Bailey and her leadership team at Illinois Central College (ICC) are helping to lead the way in our state to ensure students are prepared to enter into today's workforce," said Rep. Darin LaHood. "The funding awarded to ICC will help strengthen our community and small businesses in central Illinois, and support good-paying jobs. In Congress, I will support the work ICC does so they can continue to be a workforce development leader not only in Illinois, but throughout the country."

“The Illinois Community College System continues to help lead the way in meeting the needs of Illinois’ workforce by providing quality training and education programs like the ones at Illinois Central College. The IT field continues to be a critical industry with growing workforce needs and this effort will not only help meet those needs for Illinois business but also give hundreds of students a greater opportunity to earn higher wages in a shorter amount of time,” said ICCB executive Director Brian Durham.

The new Hired! IT Workforce Accelerator is a local collaboration of industry partners, education institutions, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders, all focused on solving employers’ high-demand IT workforce needs through equity-based strategies to develop the region’s available workforce. This will help create a sustainable IT workforce ecosystem and mitigate barriers to equity and participant success.

“We are thrilled to partner with ICC and Bradley to strengthen our region’s IT workforce,” said Eureka College President Dr. Jamel Wright. “The ‘Good Jobs’ grant will allow us to provide needed credentials for more people to pursue high-demand, above living-wage careers like cybersecurity. This will help us all reach our goal of ensuring viability and prosperity for the entire community.”

“Building relationships with local businesses and non-profit organizations – including great educational partners like Illinois Central College, Eureka College, College of Medicine, and our local school districts – is part of Bradley’s DNA,” said Bradley University President Stephen Standifird. “Bradley’s contribution to the IT Ecosystem Good Jobs Challenge grant award from the EDA is a tangible manifestation of our unwavering commitment to the Peoria community. Bradley University is very pleased and proud to be a strong partner to ICC and our broader community in this exciting endeavor.”

An IT workforce ecosystem will be developed by building both an external talent pipeline of newly credentialed individuals and an internal pipeline of upskilled incumbent workers. Both the uncredentialed and career-changers will be recruited to enroll in accelerated IT programs leading to industry-recognized credentials. As incumbent workers are upskilled to fill intermediate and advanced IT positions within the company, the pipeline of entry-level talent may be targeted to fill the jobs vacated by incumbent workers. Together, these two pipelines will create an interconnected system for employers to access talent.

“This initiative is truly community based. The CEO Council, the East Peoria, Pekin, Morton, and Peoria Chambers and the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council provided outreach and created a pipeline of information for regional employers to ensure broad based involvement,” said Illinois Central College President, Dr. Shelia Quirk-Bailey. “Our community-based organizations (Urban League, Goodwill, METEC and the Minority Business Development Center) all stepped forward to provide wrap around support for the neediest of our new IT credential holders.”

For more information, call (309) 657-1949.

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