

Shovel-Ready Sites Q&A

Q: What is the purpose of the Shovel Ready Sites grant program?

A: The purpose is to provide funding for site preparation for underutilized properties that can transform into economic development opportunities across Illinois.

Q: What type of projects qualify for this funding?

A Rebuild Illinois Shovel Ready Sites grant funds can be used to prepare a site for future investment or to renovate or construct a building for future use. Eligible projects will implement strategies for revitalizing a specific area, and could include the following:

- Site acquisition
- Environmental site assessment
- Architectural planning and engineering design
- Site preparation and improvement (excluding remediation)
- Clearance
- Demolition and removal of buildings
- Rehabilitation, reconstruction or improvement of existing buildings
- Utility work
- Other bondable site preparation activities that are not specifically disallowed

Q: Does the project have to be publicly owned to qualify?

A: No.

Q: How much funding is available?

A: \$13 million is available for the Shovel Ready component of Rebuild Illinois. Individual grants may range from \$250K to \$2M.

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Many entities are eligible to apply, including units of local government, local economic development organizations, and companies (for-profit or non-profit) who are capable of handling the project and complying with its requirements. All applicants must be registered and have completed the Internal Control Questionnaire (ICQ), available at the [GATA Grantee Portal](#), for the current year prior to application submission.

Q: What is the applications timeline?

A: Applications will be accepted for the Shovel Ready program on a rolling basis.

Q: What expenditures are specifically disallowed?

A: The following activities are identified as ineligible for this grant opportunity:

- Environmental remediation and clean-up activities
- Administration or Activity Delivery costs associated with the management of grant activities (However, reasonable Administration costs may be included as leverage/match to the grant funds)
- Indirect costs
- Planning only projects (e.g., creation of regional economic development plans, downtown revitalization strategies, market studies, etc.)

- Demolition only projects
- Construction of buildings, or portions thereof, used predominantly for the general conduct of government (e.g., city halls, courthouses, jails, police stations).
- General government expenses
- Costs of operating and maintaining public infrastructure and services (e.g., mowing parks, replacing streetlight bulbs)
- Servicing or refinancing of existing debt
- Operational expenses.
- Lease payments for rental of equipment or facilities.
- Costs of staff or resident labor and material outside of project construction
- Expenditures to acquire or construct temporary facilities
- Purchase of automobiles, trucks, farm equipment, boats or rolling stock
- Livestock or laboratory animals
- Unpredictable or unusual legal expenses
- Costs for archaeological digs, research or exploration

Q: These grants can be used for brownfield redevelopment, but environmental remediation activities are not an eligible expense. Is support available for remediation?

A: This grant can be used to cover a range of relevant expenses for brownfields, including environmental assessment; demolition and removal of buildings; utility extensions; and site preparation activities, such as test-drilling, levelling, excavating, and more. For environmental remediation, including lead abatement and asbestos removal, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) may be able to provide assistance and financial support. More information [here](#).

Q: How will projects be evaluated and ranked?

A: The highest-scoring projects will be those that can clearly demonstrate that they address a clear need of the community, that they will result in more economic development opportunities, and that they have community support. Projects will be evaluated according to the following criteria (100 total points):

- Project Impact (37.5 pts)
- Job Creation (15 pts)
- Community Benefit (20 pts)
- Community Support (17.5 pts)
- Project Readiness (10 pts)

Q: Will vendors owned by minorities and women have an opportunity to participate?

A: The Business Enterprise Program, which applies to all grants of \$250K or more, establishes a goal for contracting with businesses owned by persons who are minority, female, or who have disabilities. In addition, the quality of each applicant's Minority Inclusion Plan contributes to the Project Impact score.

Q: My project meets eligibility requirements for multiple Rebuild Illinois grants. Can I apply to multiple grants for the same project?

A: Yes. You can use different state grants to pay for different components of the same project.

Q: I know that there are sites that would benefit from this funding in my community, but we have not undertaken the planning/project development for us to score well on this grant. What can we do?

A: Grants from the Rebuild Illinois capital plan will be deployed over the course of the next four to five years. If you move forward on economic development planning and project planning for impactful projects in your community over the next few years, you will have the opportunity to access other Rebuild Illinois grants in the future. Projects that are well-developed and tied to a local or regional economic plan are more likely to be competitive for future Rebuild Illinois grants.

Q: This looks complicated. Is there support for applying for this grant?

A: You can find detailed information about the grant and how to apply at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/CommunityInfrastructure/Pages/default.aspx>. You may also e-mail us at CEO.OCD@Illinois.gov or call your regional representative at the Office of Community Development (phone numbers [here](#)) if you have any questions.

If you would like direct support in preparing an application, we recommend reaching out to your regional planning commission or a local or regional economic development organization for a referral. Local chambers of commerce may also be able to support your efforts.

Q: What state and federal mandates must applicants be aware of?

A: Applicants must commit to compliance with all applicable state and federal requirements. Key mandates to be mindful of include:

- 2 CFR 200 and the Grantee Accountability & Transparency Act (GATA)
- The Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989
- The Illinois Endangered Species Act and the Illinois Natural Area Preservation Act
- Illinois Prevailing Wage Act
- Illinois Works Jobs Program Act
- Business Enterprise Program
- Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act
- Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing Accessibility Laws
- The National Emission Standards for hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) of the U.S. Clean Air Act

Q: Are public hearings required?

A: A public hearing must be held prior to passage of a local council's commitment of funds for the application. If no unit of local government is committing funds, this requirement does not apply.

Q: How is this grant opportunity different from regular Community Development Block Grants?

A: The CDBG grant programs administered by the State do not include a program focused on shovel ready sites. In addition, Rebuild Illinois grants are available to eligible applicants throughout the state. CDBG grants administered by DCEO are generally only available in low- and moderate-income areas and outside so-called "Entitlement Areas." Rebuild Illinois Shovel Ready Sites is an excellent complimentary program that can prepare a location for new businesses to locate, which then may benefit from the CDBG Economic Development program or other Rebuild Illinois capital grants.