

# Illinois Grocery Initiative

May 2026



**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

# Illinois Grocery Initiative Act

Passed in August 2023; effective January 2024

Established 2 grant programs:

- New Stores in Food Deserts
- Equipment Upgrades



# Parameters of New Stores in Food Deserts

## Eligibility

- Grocery Stores only
- Larger chains excluded
- Food Desert location (urban or rural)

## Grants

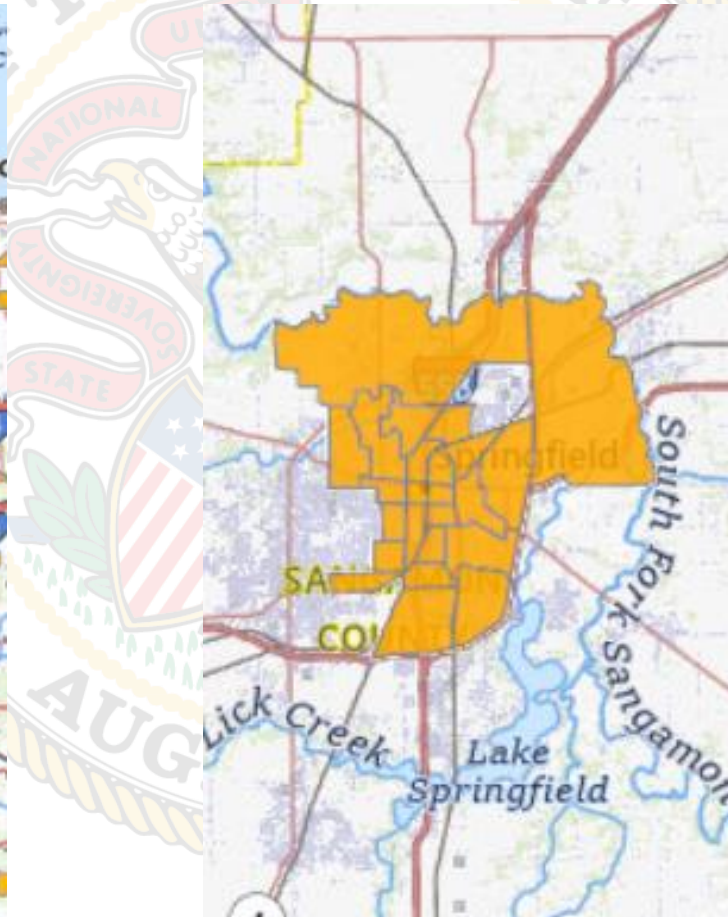
- Awards up to \$2.4M
- Match required (25% of project cost)
- Eligible expenditures
  - Real estate/Construction/Renovation
  - Equipment/Mechanicals
  - 1st year operating costs
- Reimbursement-based

## Technical Assistance

- Provided by Western IL University and Chicago State University
- Free to users
- Prioritizes grantees



# USDA Food Access Research Atlas



Determined by Census Tract

- Low income (Poverty rate/median family income)
- Low access (distance to nearest grocery store)

Last updated in 2019



# New Stores in Food Desert Awards

8 Awards to Date

- 4 in October 2024 for \$6.9M
- 4 in May 2025 for \$9.6M

Status of Projects

- 1 store is currently open
- 2 are expected to open in next several months
- The rest are in various stages of establishing grant agreements or completing construction

Round 3 planning underway



# Challenges and Strategies

Identifying/tailoring Food Desert Locations

Outreach to identify opportunities

Ensuring grantees have tools to succeed

- Managing grants
- Launching/operating stores

Tailoring Oversight over Grantees

- Avoiding silos
- Training opportunities

