

State of Illinois and ASCM launch first-of-its-kind training program to prepare residents for job fueled by growing e-commerce industry

Illinois Supply Chain Management Training Program to Provide Employment Opportunities While Addressing Growing Demand for Talent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced a new training program designed to prepare more residents for roles in Illinois' growing supply chain management industry. In partnership with the Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM), the Illinois Supply Chain Management Training Program seeks to match residents who have become unemployed or underemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic with training for careers in supply chain management – one of the fastest growing fields in the state.

DCEO's Office of Employment and Training is providing \$250,000 for the ASCM pilots through federal funds to support dislocated workers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The pilots are targeting dislocated workers who have been impacted by COVID-19 and will help Illinois residents across the state seize on the growth of e-commerce, shipping and logistics and transportation industries in Illinois.

"As our workforce is reshaped by the pandemic, two things have never been

clearer – the need to invest in workforce programs that prepare our workers for the jobs of the future as well as strategic programs that can support our health response, which relies heavily on the supply chain," said Governor JB Pritzker. "This innovative training model by the State of Illinois and ASCM responds to these needs and builds on the work we started from day one of this crisis to support Illinois workers and communities as we work to build back our economy."

Since the pandemic hit, the rapid growth of e-commerce has generated an unprecedented demand for new skilled workers, with nearly 2,000 supply chain focused job opportunities in Illinois unfilled today. In the next five years, more than 500,000 supply chain jobs will be added nationally. The program pairs a response to the demand for new talent today and in the years ahead with the State of Illinois' ongoing efforts to create new job training opportunities for residents and those especially impacted during COVID-19.

"As our communities across the state continue to feel the impact of the pandemic, we've made it our fo-

cus from day one to invest in training that will help workers get back on their feet, and into well-paid, in-demand roles of today," said DCEO Director Erin Guthrie. "Illinois is already home to one of the most talented workforces in the country and is a leader in the national supply chain. Through this new partnership with ASCM, we will develop a diverse pipeline of talent that allows companies to plan for long term growth here while ensuring our residents can seize the thousands of jobs coming to Illinois in the years ahead."

Set to begin next month, the program will be piloted in some of Illinois' largest supply chain hubs, Southern Cook County, Metro East and Southern Illinois. An initial 250 participants will begin a one-week virtual training program, with industry aligned curriculum from ASCM covering topics such as inventory management, logistics and consumer distribution principles and basic management skills. At the end of the training, participants will receive a certificate in Essential Supply Chain Management Skills. Those who complete training will have an opportunity to work with

their local workforce agency to apply for supply chain careers available in the area.

"The ASCM Foundation is committed to strengthening supply chains around the world by attracting more people to the industry and providing the education and training necessary for career success," said ASCM CEO Abe Eshkenazi, CSCP, CPA, CAE. "While COVID-19 has posed unprecedented challenges on everyone, we know that Illinois is still a leader in the national supply chain and a top destination for skilled talent. Working alongside the State of Illinois and hiring companies, we'll bring industry-based training to help facilitate career opportunities for Illinoisans who are ready to take the next steps in their careers."

Several Illinois companies have committed to the pilot program, including companies Continental Tires, Geodis, DB Schenker, Worldwide Technologies, PepsiCo, and Phoenix Elevator. DCEO, in partnership with its local workforce agencies facilitating training, will work directly with companies located in the pilot areas to identify additional underemployed individuals

as candidates for training, and to scale the program to meet additional workforce demands in 2021.

"The fast-growing supply chain is a key economic driver for the Southwestern Economic Development Region, and the need for trained workers in this area continues to grow as well," said Tony Fuhrmann, Director of the Madison County Employment and Training Department, workforce training partner for the Metro East Hub. "We are proud to partner with DCEO and ASCM to pilot a new industry training program that will pair businesses in need of trained employees with talented residents of our community looking to take the next step in their career or to simply get back on their feet."

"In our never-ending quest for training tools to prepare the residents of southern Illinois for the jobs of tomorrow, we are thrilled to be a part of the new Illinois Supply Chain Management Training Program to help connect hiring companies with talent in the region," said Kathy Lively, CEO, Man-Tra-Con, Corporation, Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board. "Thanks to the team

at DCEO and ASCM we will provide industry aligned supply chain management training to prepare Illinois residents the thousands of e-commerce jobs today, with many more to be added in the future."

These expanded training opportunities build on continued investments by the State to respond to record unemployment created by COVID-19 and to help dislocated workers return to the job site. Last fall, Governor Pritzker announced a \$16.6 million investment for Illinoisans who lost their jobs during COVID-19, leveraging U.S. DOL grant funding to create training and hiring opportunities for as many as 1,300 residents over the next year.

To learn more about training in supply chain management or to sign up for any other workforce training programs, please visit DCEO's Illinois WorkNet page or Get Hired Illinois – a one-stop-shop portal created by the Pritzker administration to connect Illinoisans with available training and hiring opportunities with growing industries during the COVID-19 crisis.

IDES announces progress in implementing continued assistance act

Revisions Impacting, FPUC, PUA, PUA Overpayments, PEUC, MEUC

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) today announced programmatic updates and changes to several unemployment programs contained within the Continued Assistance Act (CAA), signed into law on December 27, 2020, and the progress the Department is making in implementing the wide-ranging changes to these programs. These updates and changes, outlined below, will impact the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, PUA overpayments waivers, and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program, in addition to the creation of the Mixed-Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) program.

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC): The CAA provides an additional \$300 per week in supplemental benefits to claimants who receive at least \$1 of regular or federal unemployment benefits per week. This additional supplemental benefit applies between the week ending January 2, 2021 and the week ending March 13, 2021. IDES began paying the \$300 FPUC benefit for all programs beginning January 4, 2021.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

Continued Claimants: IDES is instructing all PUA claimants who applied and were approved for PUA benefits prior to the week ending December 26, 2020, and had not exhausted benefit eligibility, to continue to certify to avoid an interruption in benefit payment. The PUA system is undergoing technical updates and testing to add the new 11 weeks of eligibility authorized under the CAA.

The CAA requires PUA claimants to verify employment or self-employment. During the week of February 1, 2021, notices will be sent to inform claimants of the additional 11 weeks of eligibil-

ity, in addition to requests to verify employment or self-employment. The notification will include a deadline to provide information to the Department, along with what information may be submitted to meet the employment or self-employment verification requirement.

Claimants Who Had Exhausted PUA Benefits: PUA claimants who had exhausted benefit eligibility prior to the week ending December 26, 2020 may remain eligible under the extension provided in the CAA and will be notified by IDES of the additional weeks added to their claim based on the method the claimant selected to receive correspondence from the Department.

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New Claimants: The PUA system is undergoing technical changes to move new PUA claimants to pay status and begin the process of verifying wage and employment or self-employment information supplied by the claimant. The CAA also includes a limitation on backdating new PUA claims. Per the CAA, in most cases claimants filing a new PUA claim after December 27, 2020 can backdate to December 6, 2020.

Documentation Requirements: The CAA includes a new requirement for individuals to submit documentation verifying their prior employment or self-employment. Individuals filing a new PUA claim on or after January 31, 2021 (regardless whether the claim is backdated), are required to provide this documentation

within 21 days of application or the date determined by IDES. Individuals who applied for PUA before January 31, 2021 and receive(d) a payment of PUA on or after December 27, 2020, are required to provide employment or self-employment documentation, or documentation demonstrating the beginning of employment or self-employment, within 90 days of application or the date determined by IDES. These deadlines may be extended if the individual shows good cause, and deadlines will be communicated on verification requests provided by the Department.

Documentation can include, but is not limited to, paycheck stubs, earnings and leave statements showing the employer's name and address, W-2 forms when applicable, state or federal employer identification numbers, business licenses, tax returns, business receipts, signed affidavits from persons verifying the individual's self-employment, letters offering employment, statements or affidavits by individuals verifying an offer of employment, written business plans, or a lease agreement.

Overpayment Waivers: IDES has reached out to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for additional direction on the process of addressing waivers on a case-by-case basis, as required by federal guidance. The Department is in the process of identifying which PUA overpayments are subject to waiver, creating a notice and questionnaire for PUA claimants with an overpayment to request a waiver and supply the information needed to make determinations, and drafting determination notices regarding waivers.

This is a new process provided for in the CAA. The Department is aware this population is seeking quick resolution on any request made to waive an overpayment, and has a set goal of moving through this process in a manner that provides clarity for

claimants and allows the Department to efficiently review requests for waiver, while following the federal requirement that each case be reviewed on an individual basis.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC): The CAA provides an additional 11 weeks of PEUC benefits. However, claimant transition to PEUC will vary based on how and when claimants exhaust eligibility for benefits within the various regular and federal unemployment programs. Transition will be evaluated and determined on a claimant-by-claimant basis, and claimants will be notified of their transitions.

Transition Language Between Programs or with a New Benefit Year:

The Department's subject-matter experts are working through the transition language necessary to maintain eligibility for claimants who may exhaust various programs. This involves programming and testing changes within all programs.

Extended Benefits (EB): According to unemployment rate data published by the federal government, the Illinois unemployment rate has fallen below the threshold established by law for the additional 7 weeks of EB to be available in Illinois. Illinois remains triggered onto the standard 13 weeks of EB, and is available to claimants who have exhausted the allotted 26 weeks of regular state unemployment benefits, the 13 weeks of

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits, and (in some cases) the additional 11 weeks of PEUC benefits established under the CAA. Claimants who received 13 or more weeks of EB will transition to the maximum 11 additional weeks of PEUC.

Mixed-Earning Unemployment Compensation (MEUC): States have prioritized managing through CAA changes related to existing programs but intend to move quickly to build the program necessary to implement MEUC. The Department will partner with stakeholders to publicize the program, including eligibility requirements.

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