



**JB Pritzker, Governor**  
**Kristin Richards, Director**

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Illinois Awarded \$6.8 Million Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor** *Funds Aimed to Promote Equitable Access to the Unemployment Insurance System*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) announced today Illinois has been awarded a \$6.8 million equity grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The grant will allow IDES to better understand and address equity gaps within the state’s unemployment insurance (UI) system.

IDES will leverage the equity grant to fund four major equity projects, all grounded in using expanded data to identify potential inequities in the unemployment pipeline within underrepresented groups. Using new demographic data and user insights, the Department intends to refine UI service delivery systems, processes, and communications for more equitable access and experience. This includes making UI information easier to understand, translating information into multiple languages, expanded self-service digital options, and increased outreach to community level organizations.

“Since 2019, Governor Pritzker’s administration has supported IDES in its efforts to improve services to individuals with limited English proficiency and other barriers to access,” **said IDES Director Kristin Richards.** “The work continues, and this grant opportunity will allow IDES to develop the data necessary to make targeted investments to promote equity in our state’s UI system and ensure eligible individuals have access to benefits.”

In addition to the equity grant, Illinois is working closely with U.S. DOL to use additional federal resources provided to states through a Tiger Team engagement intended to assist with fraud prevention and detection, benefit timeliness and claims management, and equitable access to UI services.

U.S. DOL announced the funding opportunity, provided through the American Rescue Plan Act, for states last August to expand outreach, promote awareness, improve technology, streamline instructions, provide translation services, increase staffing, and address other accessibility issues in marginalized communities. To date, Illinois is among 27 other states and the District of Columbia who have been awarded more than \$150 million in the equity grant.

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### **About the Department of Employment Security**

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) provides vital employment services to Illinois workers, employers, and job seekers with resources including [Job Fairs](#) and [IllinoisJobLink.com](http://IllinoisJobLink.com), analyzes and disseminates actionable [Labor Market Information](#), and administers the [Unemployment Insurance Program](#). To see the full range of services provided by IDES, and for the latest news concerning the department, visit [IDES.Illinois.gov](http://IDES.Illinois.gov).

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