



ILLINOIS INNOVATION NETWORK

The Illinois Innovation Network drives inclusive and integrated research, innovation and economic development across Illinois.

The IIN's 15 hubs – including all of the state's public universities – combine research, public-private partnerships, entrepreneurship and workforce training programs to spur inclusive economic development in their region and across the state.

IIN MEMBERS ARE GUIDED BY THESE PRINCIPLES:

- Drive innovation, workforce development and inclusive economic growth throughout the state of Illinois
- Assess and meet regional needs through a combination of collaborative research, public-private partnerships, and entrepreneurship and training programs
- Collaborate with hubs across the state and share best practices
- Advocate for the value of higher education at the state and national levels

SEED GRANT PROGRAM

- **Sustaining Illinois** – Seed funding to spur collaborations between IIN hubs and address the broad economic, health-related, and social well-being of the state and its communities, and the environmental sustainability of its food and water ecosystem. To date, 40 projects have been funded, representing nearly \$1.2 million in seed investment. This investment is complemented by \$547,000 in follow-on funding from other organizations.
- **Social Innovation and Impact** – Seed funding to address projects that translate research into activities that directly affect lives, address complex social problems, and build trusted partnerships in the community, demonstrate longer-term engagement or depth of engagement, and are scalable or replicable. To date, three projects have been funded, representing \$90,000 in seed investment.

EXPERIENTIAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

- **Falling Walls Lab** – The IIN has hosted statewide innovation pitch competitions in 2019 and 2023 called Falling Walls Lab Illinois. The competition feeds into the Falling Walls Lab Global Finale in Berlin, Germany, recognizing breakthrough ideas among young innovators in all disciplines.

- **Senior Design Projects** – The IIN has established a multi-institutional student experiential learning program working with industry partners. Project teams made up of students from multiple IIN institutions work on specific real-world problems provided by partners like Continental Automotive.
- **Sustainability Conference** – The IIN holds an annual Sustainability Research Conference to highlight findings from Sustaining Illinois seed grant projects.
- **Best Practices Webinar** – the IIN Corporate Engagement Best Practices subcommittee holds multiple webinars each year focused on top ways to connect universities and industry partners.
- **Tech Talk** – The IIN and industry partners stage periodic topical webinars that cover a variety of subjects that showcase the expertise of the universities and companies.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROJECTS

- **NSF: Growing Research Access for Nationally Transformative Equity and Diversity (GRANTED)** – Four IIN hubs are collaborating on an NSF-sponsored workshop to explore ways to increase collaboration and capacity in order to grow the research enterprise throughout the state.
- **NSF: Regional Innovation Engines** – The IIN was awarded a Type 1 (development) award of \$1 million for a project called Advancing Smart Logistics that features eight IIN hubs. It seeks to transform the transportation logistics system through automation and electrification.
- **Quad Cities Advanced Manufacturing** – The IIN will work with Iowa State and the Quad Cities Manufacturing Laboratory to develop a joint center in the Quad Cities that promotes advanced manufacturing research and workforce development.
- **Workforce Education Exchange (WEX)** – The IIN has launched the Workforce Education Exchange (WEX), a concierge for industry partners who want to use Illinois education and workforce development programs to recruit and train workers anywhere in the state.
- **DOE: Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs** – Multiple IIN hubs are involved with the region's \$1B MachH2 award to launch a regional hydrogen production and distribution hub, with the IIN's WEX platform embedded in MachH2's workforce development plan.

COLLABORATIONS WITH THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

- Illinois Broadband Lab** – the IIN is working with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity’s Office of Broadband to facilitate broadband deployment and digital equity throughout the state. The IBL assists the state’s broadband mapping initiatives, engages communities in broadband planning, and serves as the primary resource hub as Illinois navigates federal funding opportunities with respect to broadband infrastructure and digital equity expansion.
- Illinois Five-Year Economic Plan Development** – The IIN is hosting regional and issues-focused workshops across Illinois to collect input for DCEO’s 2024 five-year economic plan. Regional economic development stakeholders are invited to events to provide their near-term priorities and needs, which are compiled to inform the final report.
- Reimagining Electric Vehicles** – The IIN supported DCEO’s efforts to make Illinois a leader in electric vehicle adoption by identifying workforce strategies and conducting energy storage analysis.
- Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD)** – The IIN is collaborating with DCEO on a project that provides digital skills training for inmates at four federal prisons in Illinois.
- Manufacturing Matters** – The IIN is supporting DCEO’s Manufacturing Matters campaign to grow interest in manufacturing across the state. The project aims to develop a regional pipeline of skilled talent in manufacturing and increase enrollment in training programs at the state’s community colleges.

IIN HUBS

The map shows the following locations for the IIN Hubs:

- A:** University of Illinois College of Medicine | Rockford
- B:** Northeastern Illinois University
- C:** Discovery Partners Institute (Part of the University of Illinois System)
- D:** University of Illinois Chicago
- E:** Chicago State University
- F:** Governors State University
- G:** Northern Illinois University
- H:** Western Illinois University
- I:** Distillery Labs
- J:** Western Illinois University
- K:** Illinois State University
- L:** University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- M:** University of Illinois Springfield
- N:** Eastern Illinois University
- O:** Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- P:** Southern Illinois University Carbondale