



Industry Led. Community Focused.

SEPTEMBER 2025 E-NEWSLETTER



Blueprints for Opportunity Launch

We launched our new Blueprints for Opportunity series with a packed house at the Training and Business Development Center. The first session brought contractors, assist agencies, developers, and partners together for valuable networking and an inside look at the future [Chicago Fire FC stadium at The 78](#).

Don Biernacki, EVP of [Related Midwest](#), and Dave Baldwin, President of Chicago Fire FC, shared project updates—from timeline and design highlights to workforce goals—underscoring the scale of opportunity this development represents for local contractors and tradespeople.

This opening event set the stage for the series ahead, designed to spark collaboration and ensure that transformative projects deliver lasting benefits for our workforce and neighborhoods.

Special thanks to [Black Contractors Owners and Executives](#), [Black Contractors United Chicago](#), [Chicagoland Associated General Contractors](#), [Chicago UNIDOS in Construction](#), [Federation of Women Contractors](#), [Hispanic American Construction Industry Association \(HACIA\)](#), and [U.S. Minority Contractors Association](#) for co-hosting this important conversation.

Business Development



Join Us for the Next Blueprints for Opportunity Networking Event

Our Blueprints for Opportunity series continues Thursday, September 25 at the Training and Business Development Center with updates on [O'Hare International Airport](#), [Quantum Park](#), and more. Speakers include Mary Person, Senior Vice President of Public-Private Initiatives at Clayco; Samuel Boynes, Manager of Public-Private Initiatives at [Clayco](#); and Kendall Williamson, Director of Community and Industry Engagement at [AHCB](#).

[Register today to learn more about upcoming opportunities!](#)

Running a small business is hard.
The Source is here to help!

We offer small business owners:

Expert Advising

The foundation of The Source's work consists of providing no-cost, one-on-one business advising from members of our trusted network of Business Support Organizations (BSOs). Through a simple intake form, The Source matches business owners with a dedicated business advisor who provides in-depth knowledge and the necessary support to take your business to the next level.

Informative Events

Join in-person and virtual events that connect entrepreneurs to our network of BSOs and industry experts on topics critical to small business success.

Valuable Resources

Access a robust list of resources, including the latest information on sources of financing, taxes, and marketing, curated specifically for business owners at any stage of development.

Our Business Support Organization (BSO) Network:

- Allies for Community Business
- Greater Southwest Development Corporation
- Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Illinois Restaurant Association
- Rogers Park Business Alliance
- Southland Development Authority
- Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council
- Chicago Urban League
- Women's Business Development Center
- Chinese Mutual Aid Association
- 385quared

The Source's Impact*

\$67M in grants distributed to small businesses

28K+ businesses served directly

80% of businesses served owned by people of color

63% of businesses served owned by women

93% of businesses served are microbusinesses (less than 10 employees)

*2020 - 2024



Mohammad Salehi
Owner of Heray Spice, Chicago, IL

"They say to raise a child, you need a nation or a village. I think to raise a business, you also need a nation— you need advisors like the Cook County Source."

Learn more and sign up for assistance for your small business at cookcountysmallbiz.org



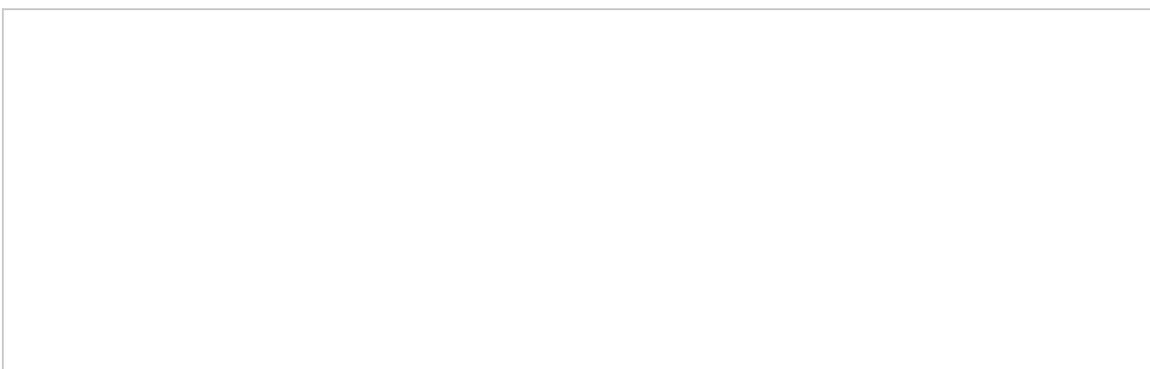
Cook County Small Business Source

The [Cook County Small Business Source](#) offers no-cost support to small business owners through expert business advising, access to capital, events, and a network of over 50 partners. As a partner in this network, HIRE360 helps connect entrepreneurs with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

Whether you're launching a new business or ready to grow, the Source is here to help!

[Learn more and get connected today!](#)

Workforce Development





Congratulations to the First Illinois Works Will County Pre-Apprenticeship Program Graduates!

We celebrated the inaugural graduating class of the [Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program in Will County](#)! Over nine weeks, 18 graduates gained hands-on training, earned certifications like OSHA-10 and CPR, and built the skills to launch careers in union construction and clean energy. Among them was Asante McKinney, whose perseverance—while balancing overnight healthcare shifts and raising her young son—earned her a paid trainee position with [IBEW Local 701](#) in DuPage County, launching her career in the electrical trades.



This milestone was made possible through the leadership of [Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino Tarrant](#), the partnership of the [Will & Grundy Counties Building Trades Council](#), and support from the [Illinois Works Jobs Program Act](#). These graduates are now ready to power their futures and strengthen their communities. Congratulations to all, we can't wait to see what's next!

HIRE360 Illinois Works Will County is now recruiting candidates for its next pre-apprenticeship cohort. Interested individuals can learn more and apply [here](#).

Spotlight On: Jesse Freeman, Plumbers Local 130 UA Apprentice

Jesse Freeman, a proud Chicago native, husband, and father of two, grew up in Bronzeville and on the West Side. Determined to build a stable future for his family, including a high school senior and a young son with autism, he worked in maintenance, metalwork, janitorial services, and property management before pursuing a career in the trades.

Through HIRE360, Jesse gained the resources, mentorship, and guidance to take that next step forward. With the support of his case managers, he is now thriving as an apprentice with [Plumbers Local 130 UA](#).



Jesse's journey reflects the resilience, hard work, and commitment that define HIRE360 participants and showcases the impact of providing pathways to long-term success in the trades.



Spotlight On: Joel Dominguez, LiUNA Apprentice

Joel Dominguez was working full-time at Costco, unsure of his next move and feeling like time was slipping by. That changed when a friend told him about HIRE360 and the support we offer to help people enter the unionized construction trades. Joel came to us with interest, determination, and questions—and we walked with him through the entire process.

Despite early setbacks, Joel didn't give up. With guidance from our team, he applied to the Laborers Union, prepared for interviews and testing, and was accepted. Now, Joel has entered the trades as a proud [LiUNA](#) laborer apprentice!



Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi Tours the HIRE360 Training and Business Development Center

We were honored to welcome [Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi](#) to our Training and Business Development Center, where he met with aspiring trades professionals, toured the solar lab, and saw firsthand the energy in our classrooms. The visit also included a roundtable discussion with contractors such as [Powell Group Corporation \(PGC\)](#) and [Tyro Construction Inc.](#), highlighting how this center connects businesses and tradespeople to build lasting opportunities. The Congressman's support helped bring this center to life, a place designed to prepare people for careers in high-demand industries and strengthen the future workforce.



Illinois Works Cook County Candidates Connect with Mortenson

Construction and DiverzifyPro

[Illinois Works](#) Cook County candidates sat down with two of the industry's top contractors, [Mortenson Construction](#) and [DiverzifyPro](#), for an inside look at what it takes to succeed in the trades. The conversations went beyond presentations, giving participants direct guidance on the skills and mindset that open doors to lasting careers.

By the end of the session, candidates walked away energized, more confident, and better prepared to seize opportunities in the union construction industry.

Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Highlights

The **Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program** is opening doors to the future of clean energy in Illinois. Designed to recruit and prepare candidates from across the state, the program provides a pathway into unionized clean energy construction jobs—careers that offer stability, opportunity, and growth.

Interested in pursuing a career in the construction and building trades through the free Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program? [Learn more about careers in the clean-energy industry.](#)

From Classroom to Career: Tristen and Jorge Join Iron Workers Local 498

Two recent graduates of the [Goodwill of Northern Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) are already making remarkable progress in their careers.

Tristen Halverson joined the [Iron Workers Union Local 498](#) and returned to Goodwill to share his achievement with staff and inspire participants in the current evening class. Jorge Guzman, who completed 188 hours of classroom instruction, hands-on training, and work-readiness preparation, was also accepted into Iron Workers Local 498.



We congratulate Tristen and Jorge on these exciting milestones and look forward to all they will accomplish in the years ahead.



Building New Futures: Aerick and Damario Start Their Journeys with Plasterers & Cement Masons Local 143

Two graduates of the [East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) have already stepped into promising careers.

Aerick McGee of Danville became the first from his class to join [Plasterers & Cement Masons Local #143](#). After starting out in warehouse work, he set his sights on a career that offered long-term stability and advancement. Damario Williams of Champaign also joined Local 143 and is now contributing to projects that include building roads and bridges. After years in a different line of work, he sought an opportunity that would allow him to grow and stay closer to home.

Together, their accomplishments illustrate how opportunities in the trades are helping to shape the next generation of skilled workers across Illinois.



Climate Works at the Illinois State Fair

HIRE360 and the [Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) were featured at the [Illinois State AFL-CIO Labor Pavilion](#) during this year's [Illinois State Fair](#). The event provided a great opportunity to connect with fairgoers, share the many benefits of the program, and highlight current training locations across the state. We're excited to continue introducing more individuals to pathways that lead to good-paying, union careers in the skilled trades.



Our Mission is to Expand Employment Opportunities

Recruitment

Apprenticeship Opportunities – Apply Today!

HIRE360 is proud to partner with leading trade unions across Chicagoland to offer apprenticeship opportunities in the skilled trades. If you're ready to launch a career in construction, now is the time to apply.

Trades Currently Accepting Applications:

- [Boilermakers Local 1](#)
- [Ironworkers Local 63](#)
- [IBEW Local 461 \(Aurora\)](#)
- [Sheet Metal Workers Local 73](#)
- [Operating Engineers Local 150](#)

- [Pipefitters Local 597](#)
- [Roofers and Waterproofers Local 11](#)
- [Bricklayers District Council](#)
- [Electricians – IBEW Local 701 \(DuPage County\)](#)

Each trade has its own application process and deadlines. Your HIRE360 Case Manager can help you navigate the steps, prepare for testing, and strengthen your application.

Reach out for a letter of recommendation and test prep support.

Click "View Entire Message" to see more below!

Are You Taking Your Aptitude Test Soon? HIRE360 Is Here to Help You Prepare

Aptitude testing is a key step toward building your future in the trades, and HIRE360 is here to support you every step of the way.

Our Aptitude Test Prep Program includes:

- Access to practice materials
- Expert guidance
- One-on-one tutoring with a [Chicago Teacher's Union Foundation](#) tutor

Whether you're just getting started or need extra support, we'll help you sharpen your skills and improve your performance.

Get started today:

- Register for our next test prep session now
- Request personalized one-on-one tutoring with a CTUF tutor

Connect with your HIRE360 Case Manager or contact us at: info@HIRE360Chicago.com

Youth Engagement



Building Futures Through the Laborer's Trainee Program

We welcomed 90 students into the Laborer's Trainee Program, giving them the chance to explore a pathway toward careers in the trades and apply for the upcoming [Illinois Works](#) cohort this fall. This program provides another exciting opportunity to keep building their future. Now in its second year, this collaboration with [Chicago Public Schools](#), [Laborers' Local 1001](#), and the City of Chicago continues to open doors and create lasting impact.

Forbes

LEADERSHIP > FORBESWOMEN

Helping Women Entrepreneurs Conquer The \$1 Million Milestone

Forbes recently featured HIRE360 and our partners at [Allies for Community Business \(A4CB\)](#) for our role in helping a HIRE360 borrower gain access to the capital needed to grow. This success was made possible through funding provided by [Wells Fargo](#) through their partnership with A4CB.



Forest Brown, President & CEO Silver Line Construction
PHOTO BY NORMAN SIZEMORE

We appreciate the important work of A4CB and the strength of our collaboration, which continues to expand opportunities for women entrepreneurs and help more small businesses reach their next milestone.

[Read the full story here.](#)

Catch up on the latest HIRE360 headlines

[Will County celebrates graduates of state training program that paves way for careers in trades](#) | Joliet Herald-News

[Congressman Krishnamoorthi's Tour of HIRE360 in Chicago's South Loop](#) | WGN Midday News

[From Executive Chef to Union Plumber](#) | Plumbing & Mechanical Magazine

HIRE360 Supports Aaron James Design in Expanding Opportunities

Jovanna Davis founded [Aaron James Design](#) in 2015 to deliver innovative interior decor and design solutions that balance time, budget, space, and style. Today, she combines her expertise in renovations and new builds to offer full-service design tailored to each client.



With the support of HIRE360, Jovanna was equipped with the tools and connections to compete for larger projects and expand, including guidance on diversity certifications (M/W/DBE), tax advising, and strategic business networking.

The firm's work includes 4400 Grove Apartments, Albany Terrace Apartments, Park Station Lofts, The Haven at Palmer Pointe, and The Foglia Residences at The Chicago Lighthouse.

Learn more at aaronjamesdesign.com or contact [Jovanna](#).

If you're a business owner looking for support, contact [HIRE360 today](#).

HIRE360

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