

# Nicor Illinois Community Investment awards \$500,000 in Impact Grants to boost local economies

*Grants to fund nonprofit programs focused on economic mobility, small business and community support initiatives across Northern Illinois*

NORTHERN ILLINOIS, IL, UNITED STATES, August 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nicor Illinois Community Investment (NICI) has [awarded](#) five \$100,000 Impact Grants to nonprofits in Rockford and South Suburban Cook County. These grants support programs advancing economic mobility, small business growth and workforce development.



Pictured: Nicor Illinois Community Investment staff, center, present a check to OAI, Inc while program directors look on. Copyright NICI.

“We’re committed to building stronger, more resilient communities across Northern Illinois,” said Wendell Dallas, president and CEO, Nicor Gas and chairman, NICI Board of Directors. “In 2024 we invested \$5.7 million into communities across the region, supporting economic opportunity, meeting basic needs and protecting our environment through the Nicor Gas Foundation, charitable giving programs and NICI. Our investments reflect our belief that when we uplift communities and invest in needed programs, we create a stronger future for everyone.”

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*Wendell Dallas*

This year’s grantees are:

Southland Development Authority (Tinley Park): Launching the Monarch Fund to provide flexible capital for large-scale

community projects across South Suburban Cook County.

Proactive Community Services (Flossmoor): Expanding to provide pre-apprenticeship workforce

development programs.

OAI, Inc. (Park Forest): Supporting the Southland Clean Energy Training Center for electric vehicle technology and job placement.

Think Big! (Rockford): Enhancing services and events helping aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners grow.

Comprehensive Community Solutions (Rockford): Scaling workforce development and mental health services to serve Rockford's adult population.

"NICI is a collaborative, community-centered foundation working to advance economic opportunity for those who need it most across Northern Illinois," said Tovah McCord, NICI executive director. "These Impact Grants represent our place-based approach to investments and partnerships that are transforming economies and communities."

Several of this year's grantees have received past awards, and partners have been vocal about the funding's impact on strengthening communities in Northern Illinois.

"NICI's investment positioned us to operationalize the Monarch Fund," noted Southland Development Authority CEO Bo Kemp. "This fund functions as a pivotal tool to create flexible capital that can now be deployed in business development and community revitalization projects across our region."

NICI's Impact Grants are part of a multipronged approach to foster economic mobility in Joliet, Rockford and South Suburban Cook County. NICI has invested more than \$1.8 million in Northern Illinois since it was founded by Nicor Gas in 2021. Learn more at [nici-il.org](http://nici-il.org).

#### ABOUT NICOR ILLINOIS COMMUNITY INVESTMENT (NICI)

Nicor Illinois Community Investment (NICI), established in 2021, has invested \$1.825 million in Rockford, Joliet and South Suburban Cook County, benefiting more than 7,000 community members. Each year, NICI provides grants for high-impact community projects, programs supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs and critical support for communities needing assistance. Through its grant portfolio and small business program, NICI invests in transformative work that fosters economic opportunity for everyone in Northern Illinois. For more information, visit <http://nici-il.org>.

#### ABOUT NICOR GAS

Nicor Gas is one of four natural gas distribution companies of Southern Company Gas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Southern Company (NYSE: SO), and serves 2.3 million customers in more than 650 communities across northern Illinois. Ranked as a Crain's 2024 Best Place to Work in Chicago and Most Trusted Utility Brand by Escalent, Nicor Gas is fueling customer choice, innovation, economic growth and a sustainable energy future. Nicor Gas is committed to a goal

of net zero emissions from its operations by 2050, and we are working to keep bills as low as possible as we continue providing access to safe and reliable natural gas. For more information, visit [nicorgas.com](https://www.nicorgas.com).

FULL PRESS RELEASE AT

<https://www.nici-il.org/news/nici-grants-to-encourage-economic-growth>

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