



Illinois State Black
Chamber of Commerce

Convention Schedule

21ST
ANNUAL CONVENTION



Day 1 | Wednesday, September 9, 2026

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Continental Breakfast	
9:00 AM – Noon	One-on-One Matchmaker Sessions These one-on-one Matchmaking sessions are tailored, efficient meetings that connect you with real opportunities. Whether you're seeking new business, collaborators, or strategic partners, these curated conversations skip small talk and deliver value. Come with your pitch – leave with new possibilities.	Impact Minis: Focused Skill Boosters Continuously throughout this block, attendees can drop into fast, high-impact mini workshops covering targeted business and industry topics. These quick sessions deliver practical insights in bite-sized formats – perfect for learning on the move.
Noon – 12:30 PM	Lunch and Networking	
12:30 PM – 2:00 PM	Inside the Contracting Pipeline: Insights for Growth Construction Panel Go behind the scenes of the construction contracting pipeline with leaders who manage and award major projects. This session breaks down expectations, common challenges, and the keys to building strong prime–sub–agency relationships. Whether you're a seasoned contractor or emerging in the field, you'll walk away with actionable guidance to position your business for bigger bids and better relationships.	
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM	Doing Business with Agencies: A Procurement Conversation Connect with leaders from Central Management Services (CMS), the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the City of Chicago as they highlight upcoming procurement opportunities, project pipelines, and practical steps to successfully work with their agencies and companies.	
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Welcome Reception, Business Excellence Awards, and Entertainment The convention kicks off with an evening of connection, celebration, and entertainment, as we honor outstanding businesses, enjoy live performances, and mingle over food and conversation. It's the perfect way to toast shared success—with purpose, applause, and sparkle.	

Uniting Black businesses with corporations, agencies, and communities to build stronger partnerships and create lasting economic impact.



SEPT 9th– 10th, 2026

WIND CREEK CHICAGO SOUTHLAND
EAST HAZEL CREST, IL

**2 DAYS OF CONNECTION,
COLLABORATION &
BUSINESS GROWTH**





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Day 2 | Thursday, September 10, 2026

7:45 AM – 8:45 AM	VIP Breakfast (Invited Guest)	General Breakfast
9:00 AM	Opening Comments The convention kicks off with welcoming remarks highlighting our shared purpose, celebrating our community, and energizing the room for an unforgettable experience.	
9:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Fireside Chat: The Climb – Inside the CEO Journey to Success Get a behind-the-scenes look at CEOs as they share the pivotal moments, hard decisions, and breakthrough strategies that shaped their rise – including insights from John W. Rogers, Jr., Founder, Chairman, Co-CEO, and CIO of Ariel Investments, and former NBA star Terry Cummings. Real stories, real lessons, real leadership	
10:45 AM – Noon	Energy Forward: The Executive Leadership Roundtable Join top energy leaders for discussions on community investment, energy-efficiency growth, renewable energy, data center demands, policy trends, and the future of the grid. CEOs will share insights, challenges, and their vision for a more resilient and sustainable energy future.	
Noon – 1:00 PM	Business Brilliance: Luncheon and Keynote Speaker This signature session celebrates excellence, sparks new ideas, and highlights outstanding achievement with the presentation of special awards. Join Keynote speaker, Dr. Deloris Thomas, President Joseph Business School, as she discusses their groundbreaking initiative to develop 100,000 businesses generating \$1M in revenue.	
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	A New Prospective: Leveraging Black Political PACs for Collective Power Panel This discussion explores how to strengthen and support the organizations, leaders, and PACs that champion your mission. Attendees will gain insight into building reciprocal relationships, aligning priorities, and ensuring that those who advocate for your goals have the backing they need to drive meaningful impact.	
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM	The Book of AI: From Insight to Impact Discover how AI is reshaping the way businesses operate — from streamlining workflows and improving decision-making to enhancing customer service and strengthening daily operations. Learn why integrating AI across your business is essential for greater efficiency, smarter systems, and measurable growth.	
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Illinois Small Business Growth Initiative Part of the Chamber's statewide effort to help small businesses scale, this workshop examines the essential pillars of Accounting, Banking & Access to Capital, Legal Protection, and HR. Gain practical insights about clearer systems and a high-value foundation for improving operations and achieving long-term growth.	
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Evening Exchange: Food, Fun & Networking Wind down while staying inspired at our final conference event. Enjoy light bites, entertainment, and easy conversation that keeps the energy warm and the motivation high.	



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