



The Association
of Illinois Rural
and Small Schools

2023 Annual Report

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1787

*Signed August 4th, 2023
by Governor JB Pritzker*



AN ACT concerning education

*SB 1787 is now
Public Act 103-497*

*Section 5. The School Code
is amended by adding
section 22-95 as follows:*

*The Rural Education Advisory Council
is created as a statewide advisory
council to exchange thoughtful
dialogue concerning the needs,
challenges, and opportunities of rural
school districts and to provide policy
recommendations to the State.*



**The Association
of Illinois Rural
and Small Schools**

SB 1787 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

Date	Chamber	Action
2/9/2023	Senate	Filed with Secretary by Sen. David Koehler
2/9/2023	Senate	First Reading
2/9/2023	Senate	Referred to Assignments
2/21/2023	Senate	Assigned to Education
3/8/2023	Senate	Do Pass Education ; 012-000-000
3/8/2023	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of 2nd Reading March 9, 2023
3/9/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Michael W. Halpin
3/10/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Paul Faraci
3/10/2023	Senate	Second Reading
3/10/2023	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of 3rd Reading March 21, 2023
3/10/2023	Senate	Added as Chief Co-Sponsor Sen. Christopher Bell
3/10/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Laura M. Murphy
3/17/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Eljio R. Sims, Jr.
3/23/2023	Senate	Third Reading - Passed: 058-000-000
3/23/2023	House	Arrived in House
3/23/2023	House	Chief House Sponsor Rep. Amy Elik
3/24/2023	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Dan Swanson
3/24/2023	House	First Reading
3/24/2023	House	Referred to Rules Committee
4/11/2023	House	Assigned to Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools
4/19/2023	House	Do Pass / Short Debate Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools ; 009-000-000
4/20/2023	House	Placed on Calendar 2nd Reading - Short Debate
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Sue Scherer
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Charles Meier
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Dave Severin
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. David Fries
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Patrick Windhorst
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Jason Bunting
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Paul Jacobs
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Jed Davis
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. William E. Hauter
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Tom Weber
4/27/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Anna Moeller
4/28/2023	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Filed with Clerk by Rep. Amy Elik
4/28/2023	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Referred to Rules Committee
5/2/2023	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Rules Refers to Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools
5/3/2023	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Recommends Be Adopted Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools ; 009-000-000
5/4/2023	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Adopted
5/4/2023	House	Second Reading - Short Debate
5/4/2023	House	Placed on Calendar Order of 3rd Reading - Short Debate
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Jackie Haas
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Maurice A. West, II
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Dave Vella
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Robert "Bob" Rita
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Martin J. Moylan
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Anthony DeLuca
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Stephanie A. Kifowit
5/4/2023	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Lawrence "Larry" Walsh, Jr.
5/8/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Terri Bryant
5/8/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Erica Harris
5/9/2023	House	Third Reading - Short Debate - Passed 113-000-000
5/10/2023	Senate	Secretary's Desk - Concurrence House Amendment(s) 1
5/10/2023	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of Concurrence House Amendment(s) 1 - May 11, 2023
5/16/2023	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Filed with Secretary Sen. David Koehler
5/16/2023	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Referred to Assignments
5/16/2023	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Assignments Referred to Education
5/16/2023	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion To Concur Recommended Do Adopt Education ; 012-000-000
5/19/2023	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Senate Concurs 057-000-000
5/19/2023	Senate	Senate Concurs
5/19/2023	Senate	Passed Both Houses
5/19/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Sally J. Turner
5/19/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Chapin Rose
5/24/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Doris Turner
5/24/2023	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Mattie Hunter
6/16/2023	Senate	Sent to the Governor
8/4/2023	Senate	Governor Approved
8/4/2023	Senate	Effective Date January 1, 2024
8/4/2023	Senate	Public Act 103-0497

Bill filed by
Sen. David Koehler
on February 3

Bill passed the Senate 58-0
on March 23

Rep. Amy Elik
added as Chief
House Sponsor
on March 23

Rep. Sue Scherer
added as Alternate
Chief Co-Sponsor
on March 23

Bill passed the House 113-0
on May 9

Bill recognized
as "Passed Both
Houses" on May 19

Bill signed by Governor JB Pritzker
on August 4, 2023

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The end and beginning of SB1787 seems to be an oxymoron, but quite the contrary. In 2016 the process began to find the right avenue to cement and solidify a place for the rural school voice in Illinois. As the work progressed, it became clear that our rural friends in Colorado had found the mechanism to accomplish this goal in a very positive and engaging way. The work in Colorado to create the Rural Education Council in state statute within the Colorado Department of Education system became the model for the work we would pursue in Illinois.

The end I speak of occurred on August 5, 2023 when Governor JB Pritzker signed into law Senate Bill 1787 - The Rural Education Advisory Council. Now, one of only two states to have a legislated defined bill that gives a defined voice to rural and small schools is a big deal. The signing of the bill was the end of years of grassroots advocacy, a constant campaign to ensure our voice was being heard, the struggle to navigate the complex legislative process and dealing with outside forces that sometimes felt like we were chasing ghosts.

Our goal was to cement in state statute a place for the council to reside, to garner agency support and a bipartisan vote from the general assembly, and to have statewide representation of school leaders from rural and small schools. The road to August 4th was not easy, more like the many one-lane backroads our school buses travel every day, which are filled with detours, potholes, closed road signs and in fact, sometimes met with confusion, anger, and frustration. We (AIRSS) persevered, never gave up hope, always worked to move the bill forward, and did not back down from our core beliefs. In the end, the bill passed the Illinois House 113-0 and the Senate 58-0, not only a bipartisan vote, but a unanimous vote in the Illinois General Assembly.

The final chapter of this story, but not the end, is one of gratitude. I am grateful for the support of many people who advocated on our behalf. I am especially grateful for the work of our legislative warriors Dr. Patrick M. Twomey and Dr. Jennifer Garrison. Working

with Lindsay Anderson and Sarah Lackore from Turing Associates, the weeks, months, and years were at least a manageable process. Together we brought forward a good piece of legislation, we did the political work necessary to move the bill, and with support of our legislative chief sponsors (Senator David Koehler and Representative Sue Scherer, the original sponsors, and Representative Amy Elik in 2023) the bill passed with a unanimous vote.

Now for the beginning, as I state in the first paragraph, it is the start of the work to utilize SB1787 to create a positive, open dialogue between rural and small schools, the state Superintendent, the agency, and the Illinois State Board of Education. It will require a long-term commitment on the part of our members to fulfill the responsibilities of the Council. It will require an open-minded and forward-thinking approach to address and solve the issues facing our rural and small schools. It will not come without frustration and discouragement, but we must persevere. Lots of eyes will be watching, lots of critics will be ready to question the council. The work should be challenging; if not, we are not making a difference.

In closing, the team that carried the torch for this work will be directly involved in the first year of the Rural Education Advisory council. It is our intention to see this off to a good start and find our footing and voice on behalf of all rural and small schools. You, and anyone reading this letter, are the next generation to carry the torch. We will be looking for the next rural and small school leaders to support the council and look forward to sharing in this important work for the future of our schools.

It has been an honor to serve AIRSS the past ten years and see this legislation to its rightful place in the Illinois education system.

Always advocating for you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Ardrey". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Dave" and "Ardrey" being capitalized and prominent.

David M. Ardrey
Executive Director
Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools

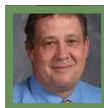
LEADERSHIP



Dr. Jennifer Garrison
President



Mr. David Ardrey
Executive Director



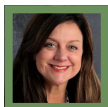
Mr. Edwin Shoemate
Past President



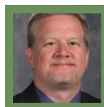
Dr. Patrick M. Twomey
President Emeritus



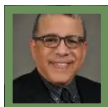
Mr. Larry Lovel
President Elect



Dr. Paige Maginel
Secretary



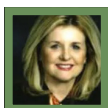
Mr. Chris Janssen
Board Member



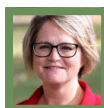
Dr. Ernesto Matias
Advocacy Board Member



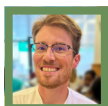
Ms. Jessica Ramos
Advocacy Board Member



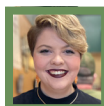
Dr. Marleis Trover
Board Member at Large



Ms. Jerrie A Walters
Treasurer



Mr. John Glasgow
Associate Director



Ms. Hailey Winkleman
Director

The **Mission** of the Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools is to serve as the Voice and advocate for the needs and concerns of rural and small schools.

The AIRSS Board is committed to ensuring equitable access to all rural and small schools in order to provide a high-quality education for all rural students in Illinois and has identified the following **Guiding Principles**:

ADVOCATE – To advocate for better policy, legislation, and funding to improve all Illinois rural and small schools.

VOICE – To provide advice, counsel, and testimony to governmental agencies, as well as members of the Illinois General Assembly, the Illinois Executive branch, and U.S. Congress on all matters concerning Illinois rural and small schools.

ACCESS – To elevate teachers' and students' access to high quality educational opportunities in all Illinois rural and small schools.

Strategic Planning - 2024 through 2028/2030

A Real Understanding of Rural Advocacy & Legislation (RURAL)

This premise of "RURAL" will guide us the next 5+ years as AIRSS shapes the strategic plan for the future. On August 1, 2023 the Executive Committee (Dr. Garrison, Dr. Twomey, Larry Lovel) met to review the draft outline of the strategic plan. This meeting was used to review the framework of the plan, consider changes, offer additions to the draft, and prepare for the full board to review.

The full board met on August 31, 2023 and spent the morning in an in-depth discussion of the outline and offered certain changes to reflect the needs of the organization, a plan that has a legitimate implementation plan and reflects the focus of the priorities around the Rural Education Advisory Council.

The plan that is shared in this annual report will serve as our guide post and working document as we move in to 2024 and beyond. Please consider where you, as a supporting member, might find a place to engage in the significant work ahead for AIRSS and our rural and small schools.

Our Plan: Yr. 1 2024	Yr. 3 2026	Yr. 5 2028	Yr. 6 & 7 2030
Our Goals: VOICE	POLICY	LEADERSHIP	VISION 2030

VOICE: AIRSS Voice is now the backbone of the organization. Continuing the 2014 shift to make AIRSS the Voice of rural and small schools should remain at the forefront of our goals.

- Executive Board Voice – including Executive Committee and Full Board
- Membership Voice – utilizing the membership committee (Larry Lovel, Chris Janssen, Paige Maginel)
- Rural Education Advisory Council Voice – connecting to ISBE
- Career Technical Education Voice – reviewing rural CTE programs

POLICY: AIRSS's policy work identifies key groups in the state, appoints advisors to these groups, and places the rural context at the forefront of discussions

LEADERSHIP: This is where the strategic work will happen, through a joint effort of the Executive Director, Executive Committee, Full Board, and Membership.

- Organization Leadership – succession plan for Executive Leadership
- Board Leadership – focus on growth, engagement, membership, and funding
- Rural Education Advisory Council Leadership – priority for the future
- Rural CTE Leadership – review of rural CTE programs

SCHOOL & DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP

Membership support of advocacy works! Proof is in the passage of Senate Bill 1787 The Rural Education Advisory Council. We need your continued support and involvement. Now more than ever we must show solidarity for rural and small schools.

We are building a road to a strong organization that is advocating on behalf of all students that attend a rural and small school in Illinois. The road is sometimes rough and bumpy, but paved with the hard work of our schools, the commitment of our teachers, and the quality of our students.



Illinois rural schools, communities, and families deserve better and should not accept anything less than the same educational access and opportunities our urban and suburban counterparts are afforded. We have lots of work to do and much to still accomplish and we need your help.

The map on the back of this report shows the location of all 500+ rural and small

schools and our 300+ REAP eligible schools. AIRSS's goal and focus is that each dot becomes a supporting member. Thank you for a great 2023 - help us make 2024 our strongest year of member support yet!

Your membership support at work in advocacy and policy:

- If you are a REAP Eligible School, AIRSS is constantly advocating to the U.S. Dept. of Education of your behalf.
- If you are below EBF Adequacy, especially those below 70%, AIRSS is a strong voice and advocate for improved funding for our rural schools.
- If you are experiencing a teacher shortage, AIRSS is engaged in constant conversation with ISBE to provide support for an intentionally designed pathway to prepare rural educators.
- If you believe that all rural children should receive an equitable education, your membership supports this premise and the work.

Thank you to our supporting members!

Abingdon-Avon CUSD #276
Altamont CUSD #10
Alwood CUSD #225
Astoria CUSD #1
Beecher City Unit #20
Bethel Grade SD 82
Bond County CU #2
Brimfield CUSD #309
Brown County CUSD #1
Brownstown CUSD 201
Bunker Hill CUSD #8
Bushnell-Prairie City SD
Byron CUSD #226
Carmi-White County CUSD #5
Carthage Elementary SD #317
Central A & M CUSD #21
Central City SD #133
Centralia High SD #200
Century CUSD #100
Cerro Gordo CUSD #100
Christopher USD #99
Cobden USD #17
CUSD #4
Crab Orchard CUSD #3
CUSD 3 Fulton County
Dallas Elementary #327
DeLand-Weldon CUSD 57
Dieterich CUSD #30
Dongola USD #66
Dr. Brent McArdle
Dr. Marleis Trover
East Coloma-Nelson CESD 20
Edinburg CUSD #4
Eldorado Unit 4
Elverado CUSD #196
Erie CUSD #1
Fairfield Comm. HS District
#225
Fairfield PSD 112
Farmington Central CUSD 265
Fieldcrest CUSD #6
Forrestville Valley SD #221
Frankfort CUSD #168
Galesburg CUSD No. 205
Gallatin Co. CUSD #7

Geneseo CUSD 228
Georgetown - Ridge Farm
District #4
Goreville CUSD #1
Grand Prairie CCSD #6
Grass Lake SD 36
Greenfield CUSD 10
Hamilton County CUSD 10
Harrisburg Unit #3 Schools
Henry-Senachwine CUSD #5
Hiawatha CUSD #426
Hollis Consolidated SD #328
Illini Bluffs CUSD #327
Illini West HSD #307
Jacksonville SD 117
Jersey CUSD #100
Jonesboro CUSD #43
LaHarpe CSD #347
LaSalle-Peru Township HSD
120
Lena-Winslow CUSD 202
LeRoy CUSD #2
Lexington CUSD #7
Lick Creek CUSD #16
Lowpoint-Washburn CUSD #21
Macomb CUSD #185
Marengo Community HSD #154
Marissa CUSD 40
Mercer County SD #404
Meredosia-Chambersburg
CUSD #11
Meridian CUSD 101
Momence CUSD #1
Monmouth-Roseville CUSD
#238
Mt. Pulaski CUSD 23
Nauvoo-Colusa CUSD No. 325
New Simpson Hill CSD 32
Newark Community High
School CUSD #18
Nokomis CU #22
Norris City-Omaha-Enfield
CUSD #3
North Mac CUSD #34
Okaw Valley CUSD #302
Orion CUSD #223

Pana CUSD #8
Panhandle CUSD
Prairie Central CUSD #8
Prairie Central CUSD 8
Prairieview Ogden CCSD #197
Princeville CUSD #326
Red Bud CUSD #132
ROE #1
ROE #11
ROE #17
ROE #3
Riley CUSD #18
Roanoke-Benson CUSD 60
Rooks Creek CCSD 425
Rossville-Alvin CUSD #7
Scales Mound CUD #211
Scott-Morgan CUSD 2
Selmaville CCSD #10
Shawnee CUSD #84
Shelbyville CUSD #4
Shiloh CUSD #1
South Central CUSD 401
South Fork SD #14
Sparta CUSD 140
Spoon River Valley CUSD 4
St. Rose Elem. SD #14-15
Tri-Point CUSD 6J
Trico CUSD #176
Triopia CUSD #27
Union SD #81
Unity Point SD #140
Vandalia CUSD #203
Vienna HSD 133
Vienna Public SD #55
Villa Grove CUSD #302
Virginia CUSD 64
Waltham SD #185
Waltonville CUSD #1
Warsaw CUSD #316
Waverly CUSD #16
West Prairie CUSD 103
Western CUSD 12
Williamsfield CUSD #210
Williamsville CUSD #15

PARTNERS

AIRSS is thankful for this external network of advocates that strengthen the visibility and mission of AIRSS.



Subject



EVIL EYE CREATIVE STUDIO

It has been a great honor and pleasure to serve AIRSS for the past five years. When I first came to the work, I didn't understand or appreciate the vast and diverse tapestry of rural and small schools. I grew up in a small town, and I remember feeling like I couldn't wait to get out and move to the city.

Through the work with Dave Ardrey, I gained a greater love for not just rural life but the children growing up in rural places. A huge passion of mine is supporting the next generation of leadership, and being a mentor to kids who, like me, fail to see the opportunities in front of them. I now live and work in that small place I couldn't wait to leave, and I have local students help with the work.

Evil Eye Creative Studio is a small but hardworking business, and through the work with AIRSS, we have been connected to the National Rural Education Association, Rural Schools Collaborative, and more. I am eternally grateful for the experience of working with Dave, not just because it's good work experience, but because it's good life experience. Thank you!

Hailey Winkleman
Owner + Founder
Evil Eye Creative Studio

BUDGET

These charts represent the conceptual percentages to operate the organization in a conservative and fiscally prudent manner.

The AIRSS budgeting process is guided by **three specific principles** and is an intentional approach to improve the organization as a whole and specifically our financial strategies:



First, to develop a conservative approach to our income and expense strategies, one that reflects the values of the membership.



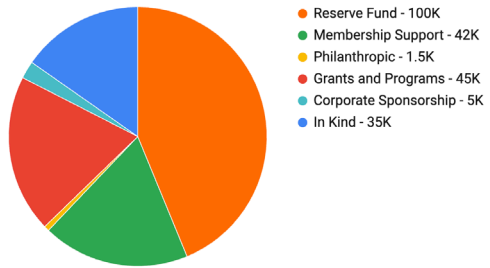
Second, to create a stable revenue stream that does not rely on only one source but is spread out equally among various sources.



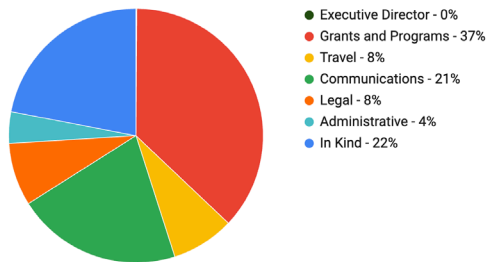
Third, to create a strong revenue line of internal investment (reserve fund) to sustain the organization.

AIRSS will continue to look for growth opportunities while remaining focused on our fiscally responsible guiding principles.

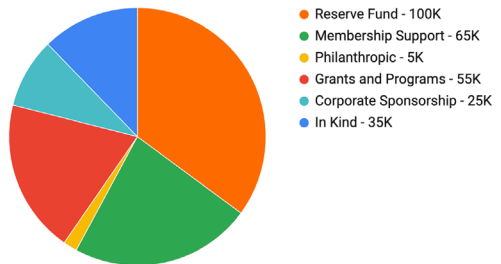
CY23 Actual Income



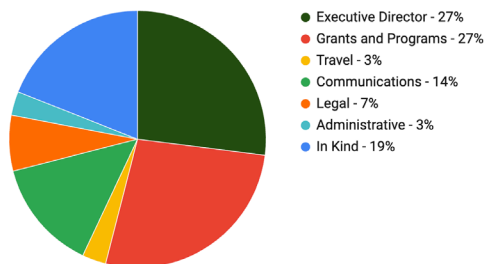
CY23 Actual Expenses



CY24 Projected Income

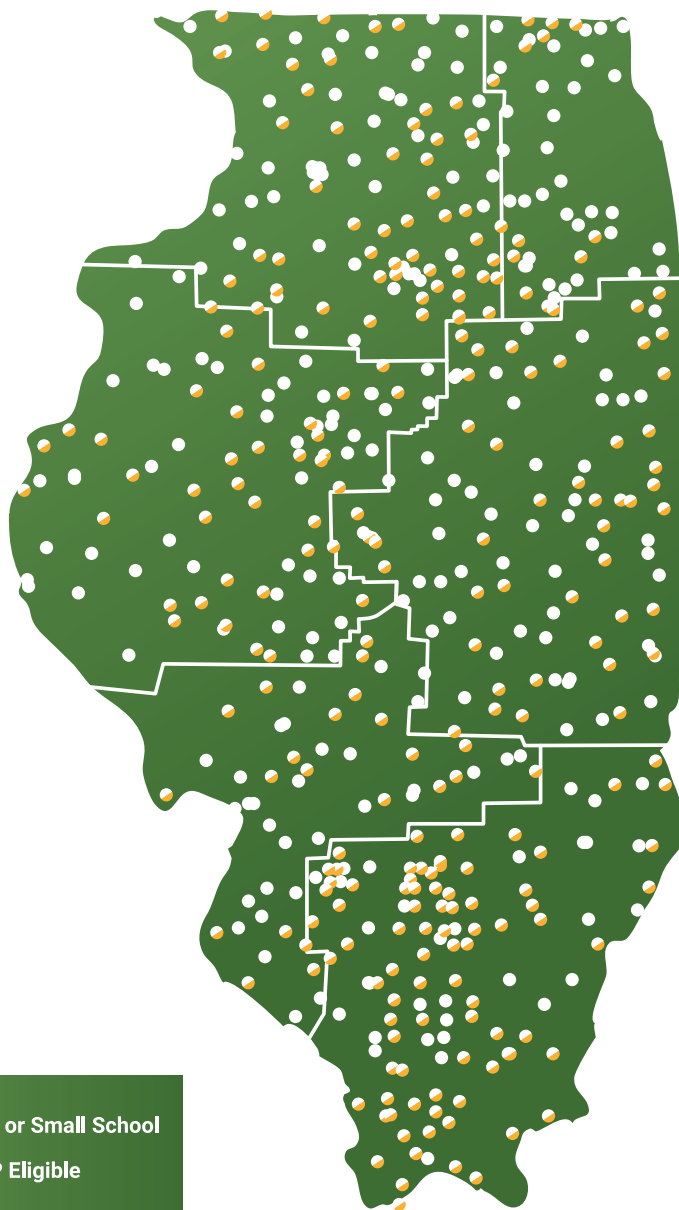


CY24 Projected Expenses



Map of Illinois Rural and Small Schools

within the 6 IARSS Service Areas



● Rural or Small School

● REAP Eligible