

Legislative Audit Commission

RESOLUTION NO. 168

Presented by Senator Rose

WHEREAS, The University of Illinois System's Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) and Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) were established as interdisciplinary public-private research institutes under the leadership of University of Illinois President Tim Killeen; and

WHEREAS, The DPI initiative planned to build a headquarters in Chicago and a network of innovation hubs across Illinois, financed through state appropriations and private donations; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, planning for DPI commenced with the objective of establishing a collaborative institution fostering academic and business partnerships, as well as research and development, to prepare students for high-demand tech careers, and to facilitate applied research at its Chicago headquarters and IIN hubs; and

WHEREAS, On October 19, 2017, University of Illinois President Tim Killeen and Governor Bruce Rauner announced the launch of the DPI initiative, emphasizing its mission to leverage research, computing, and commercial resources to create economic opportunities across Illinois by integrating research and development assets from Carbondale to Chicago and linking them with sources of capital; and

WHEREAS, According to the Chicago Sun-Times in December of 2017, it was brought to the Governor's Office's attention that the original intent of the DPI initiative had changed substantially due to private donors' influence; and

WHEREAS, In May 2018, the Illinois Legislature's FY19 budget was approved, which included \$500 million in capital funding for DPI and the establishment of IIN hubs across the state; and

WHEREAS, According to news outlets in August 2018, University of Illinois officials failed to provide lawmakers with clear answers regarding the DPI initiative. President Killeen outlined a proposal lacking concrete details, apart from indicating that the majority of the \$500 million appropriated by the General Assembly would be allocated for building facilities in Chicago and upgrading existing infrastructure across the state; and

WHEREAS, According to the Illinois Public Media in October of 2018, President Killeen stated that the initial \$6 million investment would be disbursed over four years and would not include state funding, which would primarily be used for staffing and other operating expenses; and

WHEREAS, In 2020 matching contributions from the state of Illinois, the University of Illinois System, private donors, and philanthropic sources brought the total investment to \$1.2 billion; and

WHEREAS, On February 5, 2020, capital projects for IIN and DPI were released, allocating funds for various institutions and projects across Illinois; and

WHEREAS, In 2022, DPI announced its headquarters would anchor “The 78,” a \$7 billion megadevelopment in Chicago, with construction expected to begin by 2024; and

WHEREAS, In 2024 the Chicago Tribune released a statement from the University of Illinois affirming The 78 DPI project revision, which planned to split it between a new quantum technology campus on the far South Side and classroom and office space downtown; and

WHEREAS, On January 31st, 2025, the Chicago Sun-Times published a report revealing that Illinois taxpayers have incurred a loss exceeding \$30 million due to the University of Illinois South Loop Project; and

WHEREAS, The DPI and IIN initiative’s mission and projects have undergone numerous changes in the past eight years since its creation, altering the direction of the initiative and raising concerns about transparency in the use of taxpayer dollars; and

WHEREAS, Illinois residents deserve respect and transparency regarding the taxpayer funds used for DPI and IIN; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMISSION, that the Auditor General is directed to conduct a performance audit of the State monies provided to Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network to examine the entities’ purpose and handling of funds appropriated by the General Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the audit include, but not be limited to, the following determinations:

1. A comprehensive accounting of all expenditures of State monies by the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network, assessing the adequacy and appropriateness of these expenditures;
2. A thorough evaluation of the allocation, utilization, and monitoring of the \$500 million appropriated to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Capital Development Board by the Illinois General Assembly, ensuring accuracy and accountability; and
3. An assessment of DPI’s Purpose, Goals, and Impact to include documentation of DPI’s original stated purpose and objectives at its inception; records of any mission, strategic, or operational changes since the initiative began; performance assessments highlighting

progress made toward achieving stated goals; and an assessment on the impact of any changes to its mission and projects since inception on the initiative and its funding to determine if DPI is meeting the purposes for which the State moneys were provided; and be it further

RESOLVED, That any State agency or entity having information relevant to this audit is urged to cooperate fully and promptly with the Auditor General's Office in the conduct of this audit; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Auditor General to commence this audit as soon as possible and report his findings and recommendations upon completion in accordance with the provisions of Section 3-14 of the Illinois State Auditing Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be delivered to the Auditor General and the relevant State agencies involved in DPI and IIN.

Adopted this 29th day of April, 2025


SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE

Senator Chapin Rose

Co-Chair, Legislative Audit Commission


SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE

Representative Fred Crespo

Co-Chair, Legislative Audit Commission