

Small Business Grant Resource Guide

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Welcome to the CEI's guide for small business grants in Maine. We realize that as a small business owner, it may be difficult to invest in the type of innovation, transformational equipment, renovation, professional development, or research that will propel your business forward. Fortunately, there are several local, statewide, and federal funding programs that will provide
grant funding.

We invite you to use this guide as you plan for business startup and expansion [that will yield new products and create jobs]. And remember, our advisors are always available to help you determine which of these grant opportunities may be the right fit for you.

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Tips for the Grant Search

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Most grant deadlines are scheduled between January and May, although some opportunities are rolling (e.g. no deadline), and some are available on a monthly basis. However, in many cases, the grant application will not become available until 14 days before the deadline. In other instances, you may be required to submit a brief Letter of Interest (LOI); if approved, you will be invited to submit a full application that is due 1-2 months after approval. Deadlines also change without warning. You should plan to frequently monitor the websites of any grants for which you might apply.

BEWARE OF SCAMS

Always read the Official Rules and confirm that the rules state that no entry fee is required and that a purchase does not improve an applicant's likelihood of receiving funds. Please note that this caveat does not apply to the grant opportunities that are available only to members of credible organizations like the National Association for the Self Employed, which may require paid memberships.Additionally, be sure you know who you're sending personal business or financial information to. For example, any official email from the SBA (Small Business Administration) will end in @sba.gov. Be leery of outside organizations posing as the SBA, or other funders.

UNDERSTAND WHO IS THE ELIGIBLE APPLICANT

With many state and federal grants, the official applicant must be the Town or City in which your business is located, even if the project benefits you as a business. Before applying, contact your municipal office to discuss the grant opportunity and the process your municipality has for grant applications. You may need to ask your Town or City Council for approval and advertise a Public Hearing for local input.

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Tips for Applying

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION AHEAD OF TIME

Grant applications require extensive documentation - both financial and organizational - plus a compelling narrative explaining your funding request. Since preparation takes significant time while running a business, start before the application period opens. Review last year's application to understand requirements, as they typically remain similar year-to-year, giving you time to adapt to any changes when the new version launches.

GET AN EXTRA SET OF EYES TO READ YOUR APPLICATION

Funders do not know your business as well as you do, so it can be helpful to get an outside perspective. Is your application easy to understand? Does it convey the importance of funding for your business growth and local economic development? Ask an advisor, savvy friend, or fellow business owner to help; you don’t need to pay someone to do this review for you.

INCORPORATE A BROADER CONTEXT

Support your narrative with focused data from statistics, Census figures, industry studies and news reports - prioritizing local/state facts over global ones. Demonstrate the scope of the problem in Maine, who you serve, and how others have successfully implemented your proposed solution. For instance, cite studies on storefront aesthetics' impact on consumers when requesting façade funds, or compare your wages to county medians using Census data.

KNOW YOUR FUNDER

Understand what is important to your funder and tailor your application to it. You can find a funder’s mission and values on the funder’s website. While you’re researching, look at the types of projects the funder has previously funded and ensure that your proposed project aligns well with them.

Sign up for their e-newsletter and follow them on social media to understand what current issues they’re talking about.

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VOCABULARY



Entitlement Community : Specific municipalities which receive their own Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) fund allocation. If your business is located in one of these communities, you would apply to the municipality, not the State of Maine's Dept. Economic & Community Development. Entitlement Communities include: Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, and all other municipalities of Cumberland County except for Brunswick, Casco, and Frye Island.

Match : Many grant programs require matching funds, or match. This is additional funding to supplement the grant funds and complete the project. Depending on the organization, eligible sources of match may or may not include: your own investment; other grants; loans; in-kind donations, time, services (e.g. a graphic designer agrees to work for free for you); or your own labor and investment. In addition, a funder may require that the match not be expended before you receive their grant funds. It's important to understand how each grantor defines match – review the grant application carefully for details.

TIF: Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a tool to encourage investment in under -developed, blighted areas. Administered by each municipality, a TIF district allows developers of properties within the district to recover a portion of the property tax increase that their development generates. For example, if a developer redevelops a blighted building, the property tax valuation increases from $5 to $10. Under a Credit Enhancement Agreement (CEA) signed with the municipality, the developer may recover a portion of the $5 increase in order to offset some of the expenses of development. The remaining property tax gain will go to a TIF fund designed to support designated economic development projects.

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GRANTS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The following list of grants for small businesses is organized by how the grant funds may be used. Please note that the deadline may change year to year; we encourage you to research these grant opportunities using the given websites for updated information.

Note: This resource was originally published in November of 2023. Grant opportunities are fluid and likely to change, and we're doing our best to keep this list current. If you are aware of information that needs to be updated or corrected, please email the CEI Women's Business Center at wbc@ceimaine.org

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Research, Development, and Innovation

NewSchools Venture Fund

Description: Grant investment for innovative solutions that expand the definition of what works in the U.S. education system. Each funding cycle has specific funding priorities, including "learning solutions" and "teaching reimagined".

Funding Amount: $150,000 - $250,000

Match: No

Deadline: January 8, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be early-stage (no more than 3 years old) or an established organization with a new initiative).

How to Apply: Visit newschools.org/apply-for-funding.

Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center

Description: Grants to encourage industry development by promoting applied aquaculture research.

Funding Amount: $5,000 - $50,000

Match: 1:1 match (100% of requested grant amount)

Deadline: By invite only

Eligibility: Project must relate to aquaculture research.

How to Apply: Visit MAIC's Grants webpage and contact MAIC at www.maineaquaculture.org/contact to determine if your research project is a good fit. You may also review MAIC's research priority report on their website.

Research, Development, and Innovation *(continued)*

Maine Technology Institute

Description: Grants for businesses and individuals to support Maine's innovation economy.

Funding Amount: Meet with an MTI Advisor to discuss an appropriate funding request.

Match: 1:1 match (100% of requested investment amount)

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Your business must fit within these seven targeted sectors: biotechnology; composites & advanced materials; environmental technology; forest products & agriculture; information technology; marine technology & aquaculture; and precision manufacturing.

How to Apply: Complete an Online Intake Form at mainetechnology.org and meet with an MTI advisor.

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)

Description: Grants to support scientific excellence and the commercialization of technological innovation through the investment of federal research funds to support a strong U.S. economy.

Funding Amount: Determined each year; generally Phase I is $250,000 and Phase II is $650,000.

Match: Yes

Deadline: Determined by each government agency that participates in SBIR

Eligibility: Small business with high-tech innovations in the R&D phase. Funds can not be used for commercialization activities.

How to Apply: Contact Central Maine Growth Council, Maine's official SBIR/STTR support organization.

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Research, Development, and Innovation *(continued)*

Tiny Fellowship from 4.0

Description: Technical assistance, accompanied by a grant, to support founders of education-focused ideas in developing a proof of concept by conducting a pilot.

Funding Amount: $5,000

Match: No

Deadline: October 2025

Eligibility: Founder of an education-focused idea

How to Apply : Visit 4pt0.org/tiny.

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Artistic Project Creation/Continuation

Ellis - Beauregard Foundation – Project Grant

Description: Funding to support bold, risk-taking artwork within or outside standard exhibition venues. Compelling projects utilize unconventional approaches, collaboration, critical dialogue, and innovative community engagement methods.

Funding Amount: $10,000

Match: No

Deadline: August 1, 2025

Eligibility: Artist is at least 18 years old, based in Maine, and not a student. Artist teams are eligible.

How to Apply: Visit ellis-beauregardfoundation.org and complete the application.

Gottlieb Foundation – Individual Support Grant

Description: Grants to support mature artists who have dedicated their lives to developing their art in the media of sculpture, painting, and printmaking.

Funding Amount: $25,000

Match: No

Deadline: January 15, 2025

Eligibility: An artist in the above media who has been creating art for at least 20 years and is in financial need.

How to Apply: Visit gottliebfoundation.org and complete the online application.

Artistic Project Creation/Continuation *(continued)*

Maine Arts Commission – Artist Project Grant

Description: Grants to assist individual artists with the creation of new artistic work, the continuation of existing practices, professional development, or bringing their art to the public.

Funding Amount: $2,500

Match: No

Deadline: February 26, 2025

Eligibility: A full-time, non-student Maine artist over the age of 18.

How to Apply: Visit mainearts.maine.gov, create a Maine Arts Commission account, and complete the online application.

Maine Arts Commission – Artist Springboard Grant

Description: Grants to assist individual artists who have *not* been previously funded by the Maine Arts Commission. Funds may be used toward the creation of new artistic work, the continuation of existing practices, professional development, or bringing their art to the public.

Funding Amount: $1,500

Match: No

Deadline: February 26, 2025

Eligibility: A full-time, non-student Maine artist over the age of 18 who has not been previously awarded Maine Arts Commission funding (excepting apprenticeships).

How to Apply: Visit mainearts.maine.gov, create a Maine Arts Commission account, and complete the online application.

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Artistic Project Creation/Continuation *(continued)*

Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands – Allagash Wilderness Waterway Artist Residency

Description: A two-week Residency to immerse a visual artist in the exceptional AWW wilderness to interpret and share their experience through their art.

Funding Amount: $1,000

Match: No

Deadline: February 3, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a visual artist and agree to holding at least one public program within a year of their stay that showcases their experience and the art inspired by their stay. Must also gift one original piece of their Allagash-inspired art to the Bureau.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/dacf/parks.

Maine Community Foundation - Leonard & Renee Minsky Fund for Arts Education

Description: Grants to support professional visual and/or performing arts artists to work with teachers to bring arts into the classroom.

Funding Amount: $1,000 (at least 75% of funds will support the artist's fee)

Match: No

Deadline: December 16, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a school in Washington or Penobscot County, applying for grades 3-5.

How to Apply: Visit mainecf.org and complete the online application.

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Artistic Project Creation/Continuation *(continued)*

OPERA America – Opera Grants for Women Composers (Discovery)

Description: Grants to support female-identifying composers in developing new operas.

Funding Amount: $15,000

Match: No

Deadline: Letter of Intent due September 2025

Eligibility: Must be a female-identifying composer with U.S. citizenship, permanent residency, or DACA status.

How to Apply: Visit operaamerica.org/programs/services/grants-awards and complete the online application.

Space 538 – Kindling Fund

Description: Grants to support artist-organized projects that engage audiences and incorporate the visual arts in inventive and meaningful ways.

Funding Amount: $3,000 - $5,000

Match: No

Deadline: November

Eligibility: Must be an artist, art writer, curator, or art organizer in the state of Maine. May not be a student. May not have previously received $15,000 in grants from the Fund.

How to Apply: Visit space538.org/kindling-fund

Artistic Project Creation/Continuation *(continued)*

VIA Art Fund – Artist Production Grant

Description: Grants to support the production and exhibition of new artistic commissions, most often exhibited in public spaces with high levels of public engagement.

Funding Amount: $25,000 - $100,000

Match: Grants typically fund 35-40% of the total project budget

Deadline: There are two semiannual rounds, and each requires a letter of intent and a full application upon invitation. Next round: Letter of Intent is due May 15, 2025.

Eligibility: Applicant may be a U.S. based or international artist, curator, nonprofit, cultural institution, art production platform, biennial and/or festival.

How to Apply: Visit viaartfund.org/apply/ and complete the online application.

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement

Maine Community Development Block Grant – Community Enterprise Grant

Description: Grant funds for business façade improvements and streetscapes in downtown and village areas that are experiencing blight.

Funding Amount: $25,000

Match: 25% of requested grant amount

Deadline: February 21, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a unit of local government, though you may apply directly to your municipality if it is an "entitlement community" (see slide 6 for a list).

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/decd/community-development/cdbg-program, review the Application Process and Program Statement, then contact your municipality.

Maine International Trade Center - State Trade Expansion Program (STEP)

Description: Funding to support Maine companies who seek new international sales and export growth. This is a reimbursement-based grant.

Funding Amount: $5,000 - $10,000

Match: 25% of total project costs.

Deadline: February application window closed, next round TBA

Eligibility: Applicant must be a small business with at least one year in operation and at least 51% of its operations located in Maine.

How to Apply: Visit MITC's webpage for details.

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

New Ventures Maine Mini Marketing Grant

Description: Grants to strengthen access to markets for small businesses by supporting the development of professional, well-planned marketing tools, materials, and activities.

Funding Amount: $1,000

Match: 25% of the funding request amount

Deadline: February 28, 2025

Eligibility: Small business with 5 or fewer employees, sales within the last 12 months, and gross annual sales of no more than $150,000 in the previous calendar year.

How to Apply: Find more information and contact your local NVM office by visiting newventuresmaine.org.

Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Many towns and cities in Maine offer grant funding to businesses and property owners for the restoration of downtown storefronts. If this list does not include the town or city in which your business is located, we recommend that you visit your town/city's website to see if they are starting a grant program. As well, many façade grant programs are temporary and may not be available in the future.

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Augusta – Sign Grant

Description: Grants toward the cost of new signage for new or existing businesses in downtown Augusta.

Funding Amount: $500

Match: Not stated

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Located in downtown Augusta; sign design must conform with city codes.

How to Apply: Visit augustadowntown.com/opportunity and e-mail director@augustadowntown.com to request an application.

Ellsworth – Downtown Façade Improvement Program

Description: Grants to protect and preserve the authenticity of downtown Ellsworth. Available to owners of commercial properties to improve or restore the original character of their buildings.

Funding Amount: Up to $25,000

Match: 25% of total project cost

Deadline: March 14, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be the owner of a commercial property located in downtown Ellsworth that is at least 50 years old. See online guidelines for more details.

How to Apply: Visit ellsworthmaine.gov/façade.

Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Fairfield – Façade Improvement & Marketing Assistance Program

Description: Grants to enhance the viability of local commercial businesses in Fairfield through façade improvements or advertising & branding efforts.

Funding Amount: Up to $25,000 for façade improvements | up to $3,000 for marketing project

Match: 50% of total project cost

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Located within the Town of Fairfield. Total marketing project cost must exceed $1,000; total construction cost must exceed $3,000.

How to Apply: Visit the Town of Fairfield's Business Resources webpage for the application.

Houlton – Façade Grant Program

Description: Grants encourage private investment improving downtown Houlton's historic facades.

Funding Amount: Up to $5,000

Match: 50% of total project cost

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Located within the Houlton Downtown TIF District

How to Apply: Visit houlton-maine.com/departments/economic-development for application and contact information.

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Lewiston – Façade Improvement for Commercial Buildings Program

Description: 100% deferred loan to enhance the appearance of the commercial area, encourage private investment in storefronts, and assist business owners with rehabilitating storefronts. Eligible activities can include exterior renovations, including the entryway, exterior lighting, signage, window repair/replacement, masonry, repointing, painting, and awnings. Payable upon ownership change.

Funding Amount: Up to $35,000 for owners | $2,000 for tenants

Match: 1:1

Deadline: Rolling as long as funding is available

Eligibility: Property owner or tenant business improvements must either: create jobs for LMI individuals; provide 51% of services to LMI individuals; or improve a blighted commercial storefront. Must be commercial business or property in Lewiston.

How to Apply: Visit lewistonmaine.gov; guidelines here

Lewiston – Façade Improvement for Historic Preservation Program

Description: Similar to above, but for mixed-used properties on National Register of Historic Places.

Funding Amount: Up to $35,000

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested funding amount)

Deadline: See “How to Apply”

Eligibility: Similar to above; must be mixed-use property on National Register.

How to Apply: Visit lewistonmaine.gov; guidelines here

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Richmond Downtown and Village District – Façade Grant Program

Description: Supports façade improvement projects to preserve downtown's unique character and eliminate/prevent conditions of blight. Projects must be complete within 6 months of approval.

Funding Amount: 50% of total project cost, up to $20,000

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested funding amount)

Deadline: March 31, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be property owner or tenant of mixed-use, commercial, or residential property in the downtown TIF zone or Pipeline/Compressor Station TIF zone.

How to Apply: Visit richmondmaine.com/departments/economicdevelopment to view the application materials.

Saco – Facade Grant Program

Description: Grants to support economic development and community revitalization by funding façade improvement activities in Downtown and Cape Ellis areas.

Funding Amount: 50% of total project costs, up to $15,000

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested funding amount)

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Business must be located in Saco (review specific zones online) and have fewer than 50 employees. Applicant may be property owner or tenant.

How to Apply: Visit sacomaine.org and contact Torie Gorman

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Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

South Berwick – Downtown Façade Grant Program

Description: Grants to support economic development and community revitalization through a variety of façade improvement projects.

Funding Amount: 50% of total project costs, up to $10,000

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested grant amount)

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Applicant may be property owner or tenant of a commercial property in the designated downtown opportunity area.

How to Apply: Visit southberwickmaine.org, review the application packet, and contact DeCarlo Brown.

Westbrook – Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program

Description: Grants to assist businesses and property owners in making physical improvements to their building exterior.

Funding Amount: Up to $15,000

Match: 50% of total project cost

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Located within Westbrook's downtown district.

How to Apply: Visit westbrookmaine.com and contact Demetria Pellegrino

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Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade

Efficiency Maine – Manufacturer Thermal Efficiency Projects

Description: Incentives to reduce a manufacturers' fuel usage, including natural gas, oil, biomass, and other fuels.

Funding Amount: See "How to Apply", as funding differs per project

Match: Yes (depends on project)

Deadline: June 30, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine-based manufacturer with a NAICS code beginning with 31, 32, or 33.

How to Apply: Visit efficiencymaine.com to learn more and apply.

Island Institute – Spark! Grant

Description: Grants to support working waterfront energy projects that improve energy efficiency, switch to renewable energy, and/or reduce consumption of fossil fuels. Current priorities include shoreside charging infrastructure, charging infrastructure, shoreside renewable energy generation, marine electrification, energy efficiency, and weatherization.

Funding Amount: $4,000

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested grant amount)

Deadline: June 1, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a working waterfront business based in Maine's island and/or coastal communities, including: processing facilities, co-op buildings and offices, shared equipment/ storage sheds/workshops, fishing vessels, and docks and yards.

How to Apply: Visit islandinstitute.org.

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Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade

Maine Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Economic Development Program

Description: Grants to provide gap funding for the purchase of equipment or working capital to create jobs for low-to-moderate income individuals.

Funding Amount: Up to $30,000 per job created, up to $100,000

Match: Yes, but amount is unstated. Funder emphasizes that funding is to fill a gap in financing.

Deadline: 1st of the month, starting in July 2025

Eligibility: At least 51% of the jobs created by the project must be held by low-to-middle income workers. Applicant must be the municipality. All jobs must be permanent and measured as FTE.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/decd/community-development/cdbg, review the Program Statement, then select the most recent Economic Development Program application, and contact your local municipality to discuss a potential application.

Note: In most municipalities throughout the State, the municipality (not the business owner) is the applicant for this grant. The exception is specific municipalities called "entitlement communities" – apply directly to your municipality.

Maine Guide to Climate Incentives

Description: A guide to incentives available for businesses that seek to invest in electric vehicles, electric vehicle chargers, rooftop solar, and energy efficiency projects.

How to Learn More: Visit maine.gov/climateplan.

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Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade *(cont.)*

Maine Regional Planning Organizations – Brownfields Grants

Description: Grants to assess and remediate potential environmental contamination concerns to enable the reuse, redevelopment, or expansion of that site.

Funding Amount: Varies according to region and phase of project

Match: Varies

Deadline: Varies

Eligibility: Site must be considered "blight" and unable to be redeveloped because of perceived or actual environmental contamination concerns. Applicant may need to be the municipality.

How to Apply: Contact your Regional Planning Organization – find yours here. You may also find more information about Brownfields on the Maine Dept. Environmental Protection webpage.

Moosehead Lake Economic Development Corp. – Allen Family Economic Growth Fund

Description: Grants to help new business owners start their business. Funds may support business start-up operations including planning, market research, and legal filings.

Funding Amount: $2,500

Match: 50%

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Applicant must be starting a business in the Moosehead Lake region.

How to Apply: Visit mooseheadlakeedc.com to complete the application.

Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade *(cont.)*

USDA – Rural Business Development Grant

Description: Grants to support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas. Funding is also available for business renovation and capital equipment. Note that the business is expected to pay back the funding to the municipality over an agreed-upon timeline.

Funding Amount: N/A (smaller grants given priority)

Match: Yes; a higher percentage of match will receive higher points in application scoring.

Deadline: February 28, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a municipality or nonprofit corporation. Must be located in a rural area; that is, outside the urbanized periphery of a city with more than 50,000 residents.
Business must have fewer than 50 employees.

How to Apply: Visit rd.usda.gov and contact your municipality to discuss.

USDA – Rural Energy for America Program

Description: Guaranteed loan financing and grants to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Funding Amount: Up to $1 million, depending on project

Match: 50%

Deadline: Rolling through March 31, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant business must be small and be located in a rural area with a population of 50,000 or less.

How to Apply: Visit rd.usda.gov and contact the Maine RD Energy Coordinator.

Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade *(cont.)*

US Dept. Energy – Industrial Training & Assessment Centers (ITAC) Implementation Grant

Description: Grants to implement recommendations published in an energy efficiency assessment performed by a U.S. Dept. Energy qualified assessor.

Funding Amount: Up to $300,000

Match: 1:1 (50% of total project costs)

Deadline: Rolling, reviewed quarterly

Eligibility: Applicant must be a small or midsize manufacturer with fewer than 500 employees and under $100M in annual revenue. To get an assessment, must spend at least $100,000 on annual energy costs.

How to Apply: Visit betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov to learn more about the Technical Assistance assessment (local contact is Matt Davis, Matt.Davis@UNH.Edu). Once you have an assessment, visit energywerx.org/itac to apply for an implementation grant.

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Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship

City of Portland – Growing Child Care Grant

Description: Grants to encourage the start up of home-based child care businesses and assist existing home-based child care, center-based child care, and before/after-school child care.

Funding Amount: Up to $15,500 for new businesses, up to $16,000 for existing businesses

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: New businesses must be located/planned to locate in Portland with capacity for 3-12 children (12 preferred). Existing businesses must be located in Portland, serve fewer than 50 children, and be currently licensed.

How to Apply: Visit portlandmaine.gov to apply.

City of Lewiston – Micro - Enterprise Grant

Description: Grants to help entrepreneurs and existing businesses build capacity, develop business in the target area, and increase the tax base. Eligible uses include: equipment, initial product, working capital, rehabilitation of space to ready for business; general owner support such as transportation, child care, counseling; technical assistance; and training to increase capacity.

Funding Amount: $2,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: N/A, but availability is dependent on CDBG funding

Eligibility: Business must employ 1-5 people, one of which is owner. Jobs created/retained must be for individuals with low-to-moderate income (LMI), and/or owner has LMI.

How to Apply: Visit lewistonmaine.gov for more information.

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Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship *(cont.)*

Dirigo Business Incentives (Maine Dept. Economic & Community Development)

Description: A tax credit for an employee's participation in an eligible training program, including approved private training.

Funding Amount: $2,000 per worker

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: A for-profit business in the following sectors: agriculture, forestry, & fishing; manufacturing; long-distance freight transportation; software publishing; data processing and computer design services; engineering, architecture, and scientific R&D services

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/decd/business-development and contact DirigoBusiness@maine.gov.

Maine Aquaculture Association & Gulf of Maine Research Institute – Maine Aquaculture Apprenticeship Program

Description: An apprenticeship program registered with the Maine Dept. Labor which provides apprentices with valuable experience, mentorship, and training in essential occupational skills in aquaculture. Apprentices gain 2,000 hours of on-the-job training at an aquaculture farm, and 145 hours of related technical instruction from Southern Maine Community College.

Funding Amount: A $3,000 pay stipend to supplement wages paid by the employer.

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Aquaculture farm

How to Apply: Visit maineaqua.org/apprenticeship and contact Christian Brayden.

Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship *(cont.)*

Maine Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Microenterprise Assistance Grant

Description: Grants to provide gap funding for working capital and/or the purchase of equipment, supplies, and inventory to create jobs for low-to-moderate income individuals.

Funding Amount: $10,000

Match: Not stated

Deadline: 1st of the month, starting July 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a business with 5 or fewer employees, including the owner. Owner's household income must meet the Low-to-Moderate federal standard. Must not be located in an entitlement community.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/decd/community-development/cdbg, review the Program Statement, then select the most recent Economic Development Program application, and contact your local Small Business Development Center.

Maine Dept. Labor – Maine Apprenticeship Program

Description: Support to design a customized apprenticeship program in a variety of industries.

Funding Amount: $1,500 signing bonus and $500 reimbursement per apprentice

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Trainees must be 16 years or older, may be incumbent or new hire.

How to Apply: Visit apprenticeship.maine.gov/ to fill out a contact form.

Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship *(cont.)*

Maine Quality Centers – Compact Funding

Description: Grants to support workforce training of incumbent frontline employees. Contact for more information and to build a customized plan.

Funding Amount: 50% of eligible training costs, up to $1,200 per employee for professional development

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Trainees must be 18 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and currently work full-time or part-time for the applicant as a frontline worker.

How to Apply: Visit mccs.me.edu/workforce-training to apply or fill out a contact form.

Maine Quality Centers – Put ME to Work

Description: Grants to support the establishment of training programs for high-wage jobs. Contact for more information and to build a customized plan.

Funding Amount: Up to 50% of the start-up costs.

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Must agree to hire successful program graduates and pay them at least $2.50 above the minimum hourly wage, or at/above median wage for the relevant occupation.

How to Apply: Visit mccs.me.edu/workforce-training to apply or fill out a contact form.

Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship *(cont.)*

Maine Technology Institute – Maine Entrepreneurial Resource Corps (MERC)

Description: Financial support for approved projects conducted with a vendor listed in MTI's database of vetted consultants in 40+ areas of expertise.

Funding Amount: 50% of approved project cost, up to $15,000.

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Maine-based business within MTI's seven technology sectors and earns less than $2M in annual revenue. Projects should be short-term (ideally three months or shorter) and cost no more than $30k. Businesses must complete a VIRAL assessment (see "How to Apply").

How to Apply: Visit mainetechnology.org/mti-funding/merc – both consultants and businesses seeking consultants may apply.

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Catalyzing Regional Dairy Workforce

Description: Grants to support the development, expansion, and operations of existing workforce programs that are ready to expand services that will benefit existing and potential employees of dairy farms and dairy processors. Programs supported may be federally Registered Apprenticeships, state registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, internships, or other training programs.

Funding Amount: $20,000 - $100,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: June 5, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must currently provide workforce development programming in the Northeast U.S. May include university/college, non-profit, dairy processor, manufacturing extension or training center, or producer/trade association.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/dairy-workforce-grant

CEI
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Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Operations

CEI Tastemakers

Description: Funding to support, scale, and strengthen Maine's local food economy by helping established food & beverage companies meet targeted growth goals. Construction costs are not eligible.

Funding Amount: $25,000

Match: No

Deadline: January 31, 2025

Eligibility: Maine-based business must produce food/beverage products for human consumption, source from (or be a) Maine agriculture, aquaculture, or fishery businesses, and have generated revenue for at least 12 months.

How to Apply: Visit ceimaine.org to apply online.

Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center – Farmer to Farmer Exchange Program

Description: Funding to enable Maine aquaculturists to undertake technology and knowledge transfer by visiting farmers elsewhere in the U.S. or internationally.

Funding Amount: $3,000 per person for up to 2 people

Match: No

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Applicant must be an aquaculture grower, and willing to present the findings they acquire through the exchange.

How to Apply: Visit Visit maineaquaculture.org/farmer-funding-opportunities.

CEI
Coastal Enterprises

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Maine Dept. Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry – Maine Farms for the Future

Description: Grants for farm business owners to conduct research, strategic business planning, and investment in their "*Ideas for Change*" that might increase Farm Vitality, which is defined as, "*an increase in long-term, maintainable, farm profitability and net worth*."

Funding Amount: $6,000 (Phase 1), $25,000 (Phase 2)

Match: Not stated

Deadline: March 7, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant is owner or partner in a for-profit farm business that has been commercially producing agricultural products (not marijuana) in Maine for at least 24 months.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association – Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant

Description: Grants to promote, develop, and market U.S. fisheries and/or develop technologies that promote sustainable seafood production and harvesting.

Funding Amount: $25,000 - $500,000

Match: Not stated

Deadline: TBA

Eligibility: U.S. Citizens, corporations, partnerships, associations, or other non-federal entity.

How to Apply: Visit fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/saltonstall-kennedy-grant-competition

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Dairy Food Safety & Certification Grant

Description: Grants to enable dairy farmers, processors, dairy brands, and/or producer associations to take actionable steps to improve the safety of dairy products. The program may address biosecurity or food safety, including written plan development, training, technical assistance, certain infrastructure improvements, special testing costs, and audits or certifications.

Funding Amount: $10,000 - $75,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: April 24, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a dairy farm, processor, producer association, or brand that markets Northeast dairy products using a licensed dairy processor. Applicant must already meet basic food safety requirements.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/grants/dairy-food-safety-certification

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Dairy Farm Improvement & Modernization

Description: Grants to support dairy farmers in improving their operations for long-term success. This grant focuses on projects that update outdated systems or try new and innovative solutions, with the goal of enhancing farm viability, reducing climate impacts, improving milk quality or value, improving worker conditions, and strengthening the farm's ability to respond to challenges.

Funding Amount: $15,000 - $100,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: Fall 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a dairy farmer, producer cooperative or service provider applying on behalf of groups of farmers , or a milk buyer in the Northeast U.S.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/grants/farm-improvement-modernization

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Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Dairy Co -Packing Grant

Description: Grants to support dairy processors who wish to initiate new co-packing arrangements as well as those with existing co-packing capabilities looking to scale up production, expand product lines, or establish new co-packing partnerships. Additionally, dairy brands currently using co-packing services or planning to initiate co-packing arrangements are eligible to apply, provided the project focuses on scaling or initiating production of existing products through co-packing.

Funding Amount: $15,000 - $150,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: April 10, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a licensed dairy processor or a dairy brand in the Northeast U.S.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/processor-copacking-startup-grant

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Dairy Marketing & Branding Services

Description: Grants to help established value-added dairy processors, producer associations, and dairy brands strengthen their brand and expand market reach. This funding supports hiring professional marketing or branding experts to develop strategies that increase consumer awareness, improve product positioning, and drive sales of value-added dairy products.

Funding Amount: $10,000 - $50,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: May 8, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a dairy brand, licensed dairy processor, or a producer association in the Northeast U.S.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/grants/dairy-marketing-branding-services

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Dairy Processor Modernization Grant

Description: Grants to support dairy processors in modernizing their processing facility to allow for long--term business viability. Projects funded through this grant will focus primarily on upgrading or adding specialized dairy processing or packaging equipment that is necessary for business growth and viability.

Funding Amount: $15,000 - $350,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: *Will open in June 2025*

1. Eligibility: Licensed dairy processor that is based in, manufactures products in, and sources milk or dairy components form within the Northeast U.S.

How to Apply: Visit nedairyinnovation.com/grants/dairy-processor-modernization-grant

Northeast SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education) – Farmer Grant Program

Description: Grants to farmers to explore new concepts in sustainable agriculture conducted through experiments, surveys, prototypes, on-farm demonstrations or other research and education techniques.

Funding Amount: $5,000 - $30,000

Match: Not stated

Deadline: November 2025

Eligibility: Commercial farm business in the Northeast U.S. region.

How to Apply: Visit northeast.sare.org/grants

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Northeast SARE – Historically Underserved Farming Communities Grant Program

Description: Grants to fund projects that create farming and food system opportunities for historically underserved farmers/farming communities and prioritizes work that engages, and is led by, people with experience from those communities.

Funding Amount: $150,000 - $250,000

Match: Not stated

Deadline: January 7, 2025

Eligibility: Farmers must meet the USDA definition of Socially Disadvantaged.

How to Apply: Visit northeast.sare.org/grants

Northeast SARE – Research & Education Grant

Description: Grants to fund projects that result in gains in farmer knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes that are then applied to make measurable on-farm changes leading to greater sustainability.

Funding Amount: $30,000 - $250,000

Match: Not stated

Deadline: August 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a farmer or a for-profit business that works with farmers.

How to Apply: Visit northeast.sare.org/grants

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

Northeast USDA Regional Food Business Center – Business Builder Sub -Award

Description: A grant program to equip small- and mid-sized farm and food businesses with funding to develop and amplify regional supply chains. Grant funds may be used for post-harvest activities (farm gate/landing to table), including processing, storage and transportation.

Funding Amount: $50,000 - $100,000

Match: Not required

Deadline: April 7, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be a farm and/or food business, including aquaculture and wild-caught fisheries, with $1M or less in annual revenue or $350,000 or less in revenue are eligible to apply (funding track dependent).

How to Apply: Visit nasda.org/business-builder-sub-awards

USDA – Farmers Market Promotion Program

Description: Grants to develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally- and regionally-produced agricultural products by developing, coordinating, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance for market opportunities.

Funding Amount: $50,000 - $500,000 depending on project

Match: 25% of requested grant amount

Deadline: May 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be an agricultural business, producer network or association, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) network, nonprofit, or local government. However,
project cannot benefit just one business – it must be collaborative.

How to Apply: Visit rd.usda.gov and contact the Maine USDA office at (207) 990-9127.

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Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Op. *(cont.)*

USDA – Local Food Promotion Program

Description: Grants to develop, coordinate and expand local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer to consumer marketing to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.

Funding Amount: $25,000 - $750,000 depending on project

Match: 25% of requested grant amount

Deadline: May 2024

Eligibility: Applicant may be an agricultural business, producer network or association, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) network, nonprofit, or local government. However, project cannot benefit just one business – it must be collaborative.

How to Apply: Visit rd.usda.gov and contact the Maine USDA office at (207) 990-9127.

USDA – Value -Added Producer Grant

Description: Grants to help agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and marketing of new products. The program intends to create new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.

Funding Amount: Up to $75,000 or $250,000 depending on project (planning vs. working capital)

Match: 1:1 (100% of requested grant amount)

Deadline: April 2025

Eligibility: Applicant may be an agricultural producer (independent or group), farmer or rancher cooperative, or a majority-controlled producer-based business venture.

How to Apply: Visit rd.usda.gov and contact the Maine USDA office at (207) 990-9127.

Outdoor Recreation

Maine Dept. Inland Fisheries & Wildlife – Youth Conservation Camp Grants

Description: Grants to support scholarships to youth conservation education programs.

Funding Amount: $400 per camper per week of camp

Match: No

Deadline: See “How to Apply”

Eligibility: Must demonstrate the ability and documented experience to provide the following Basic Conservation Camp curriculum through either a residential or day camp experience for Maine resident boys and girls ages 8-17.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/ifw for more information and to apply.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Partners for Fish & Wildlife

Description: Grants to private landowners to restore and conserve fish and wildlife habitat for the benefit of federal trust resources.

Funding Amount: $750,000

Match: No

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Applicant must be private landowner; preference for projects in priority areas.

How to Apply: Visit fws.gov/partners for more information and to apply.

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Disaster Relief

Keep The Faith Fund - Belfast

Description: Grants to support Belfast businesses affected by the coastal storms in January 2024.

Funding Amount: $1,000

Match: None

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Business must have been impacted by the coastal storms and be located along the Harbor.

How to Apply: Visit cityofbelfast.org.

HelloAlice & DoorDash – Restaurant Disaster Relief Fund

Description: Grants to support U.S. restaurants affected by natural disasters. Funding must go toward expenses that are not covered by insurance.

Funding Amount: $1,000

Match: None

Deadline: March 3, 2025

Eligibility: Disaster must have occurred within the past 12 months, and your business must have been in operation for at least six months.

How to Apply: Visit helloalice.com/grants to learn more and apply.



National Grants

Boundless Futures Foundation – EmpowHER Grant

Description: Grants to women who are starting businesses with a social impact in one of three topic areas: poverty & hunger; sustainability; strong communities.

Funding Amount: Up to $25,000 (reimbursement basis)

Match: No

Deadline: Rolling; open 4-6 weeks at the beginning of each quarter

Eligibility: Applicant must be a female entrepreneur at least 22 years old. Business must be based in the U.S. and be no more than three years old.

How to Apply: Visit boundlessfutures.org/our-impact for more information and to apply.

Echoing Green Fellowship

Description: Grants and mentorship to transformational leaders who challenge the status quo. Fellows work to advance equity in education, climate justice, human rights, health, and more.

Funding Amount: Up to $100,000

Match: No

Deadline: October 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be at least 18 years old and the primary decision maker of the business.

How to Apply: Visit echoinggreen.org/fellowship for more information and to apply.



National Grants *(continued)*

FedEx Small Business Grant Contest

Description: Grants to support innovative small businesses.

Funding Amount: Up to $30,000

Match: No

Deadline: 2025 deadline TBA

Eligibility: Applicant must be a U.S.-based small business owner and a FedEx customer.

How to Apply: Visit fedex.com/en-us/small-business/grant-contest for more information.

IFundWomen – Universal Grant Application

Description: Enter into grant applicant database for notification and invitation to apply to eligible grant opportunities to support woman-owned small businesses.

Funding Amount: Varies

Match: Varies

Deadline: Rolling

Eligibility: Applicant must be a self-identified woman entrepreneur with at least 50% ownership in the business.

How to Apply: Visit ifundwomen.com/grants



National Grants *(continued)*

McBride Sisters – Yes She Can Fund

Description: Grants to support advancement of professional women on their journey to learn and master the business of wine, spirits, and hospitality.

Funding Amount: Up to $5,000

Match: No

Deadline: May 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a female professional or entrepreneur currently working in, and seeking leadership positions in, the wine & spirits industry.

How to Apply: Visit mcbridesistersfund.org/grants-and-scholarships

Stacy's Rise Project

Description: Grants to support female entrepreneurs in the food & beverage consumer packaged goods (CPG) sector.

Funding Amount: $25,000

Match: No

Deadline: December 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a U.S.-based female food CPG entrepreneur with between $25k-$1M in annualized sales.

How to Apply: Visit stacyssnacks.com/riseproject and follow the instructions to create a free account on the HelloAlice platform.

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Pitch Competitions & Business Planning Programs

Big Gig

Description: Funding to create a supportive network and to bring positive change and economic growth to the communities of Maine's Penobscot River Valley.

Funding Amount: $500 with the opportunity to compete for $5,000

Deadline: First round deadline is January 26, 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine entrepreneur with a business idea or early-stage business.

How to Apply: Visit biggig.org

Dirigo Labs

Description: A startup accelerator for visionary founders who disrupt the status quo in Maine. Cohorts complete a 12-week curriculum and have the opportunity to pitch for $25,000.

Funding Amount: $25,000

Deadline: February/March 2025; see "How to Apply"

Eligibility: Applicants are founders of established businesses and are screened for coachability, viability, and scalability.

How to Apply: Visit dirigolabs.org/accelerator

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Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Entrepreneurship for All – Business Accelerator

Description: A free, one-year program providing immersive business training, mentorship, and access to an extended professional network.

Funding Amount: Participants are able to pitch for seed money quarterly

Deadline: 2025 schedule TBA

Eligibility: Applicant must be based in Maine.

How to Apply: Visit eforall.org/programs/maine-spring-2024-accelerator/

Gorham Savings Bank – LaunchPad

Description: Funding to support Maine ingenuity, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Funding Amount: $50,000

Deadline: August 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a legally-registered, Maine-based business or a legal resident of Maine at least 18 years of age.

How to Apply: Visit gorhamsavings.bank/launchpad

Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Greenlight Maine

Description: A competitive reality television show for Maine startups.

Funding Amount: $100,000 for regular competition, and $10,000 for collegiate competition

Deadline: See “How to Apply”

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine entrepreneur with an early-stage business.

How to Apply: Visit greenlightmaine.com for more information.

Gulf of Maine Research Institute – BlueTech Boost Incubator

Description: A 10-week program designed to help founders in the ocean sector overcome hurdles and reach specific milestones.

Funding Amount: $2,500 - $7,500

Deadline: September 9, 2024

Eligibility: Ocean sector entrepreneurs with relevance to the Gulf of Maine.

How to Apply: Visit gmri.org/projects/bluetech-boost-incubator-program.

Coastal Enterprises



Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Maine Center for Entrepreneurs – Top Gun

Description: A 15-week business accelerator program that combines hands-on mentoring with high-impact weekly gatherings. At the culmination of the program, participants may compete for a cash prize.

Cost: $600 and scholarships are available

Prize: $25,000

Deadline: November 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine-based entrepreneur.

How to Apply: Visit mced.biz/top-gun

Maine Farmland Trust – Business of Farming (1-yr) and Farming for the Long Haul (2-yr)

Description: A 1-year or 2-year business workshop for farmers that will help you analyze your business model, strengthen your financial planning skills, and explore what long-term viability looks like for your farm business.

Cost: Sliding scale from $25-$500; you will receive the full amount back upon program completion.

Funding Amount: $500 (Business of Farming) to $55,000 (Farming for Long Haul)

Deadline: Next round opens Fall 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be an experienced Maine-based farmer.

How to Apply: Visit mainefarmlandtrust.org/farmers/grow-your-farm-business.

Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Maine Venture Fund – Maine Startup Challenge

Description: A business plan competition for Maine's startup ecosystem, designed to encourage participation and entrepreneurial thinking across all ages.

Funding Amount: Up to $8,000

Match: No

Deadline: Next round opens Spring 2025

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine-based early-stage business or startup; may be pre-revenue or in the idea stage. Ideas must be original and your own.

How to Apply: Visit maineventurefund.com

Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship – Business Lab

Description: A business plan to help aspiring entrepreneurs create, refine, implement, and present their business. Includes a pitch competition for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Funding Amount: See "How to Apply"

Match: No

Deadline: 2025 schedule TBA

Eligibility: Entrepreneurs in the greater Skowhegan area.

How to Apply: Visit skowheganentrepreneurship.com for more details.

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