

CEI

Women's

Business Center

Small Business Grant Resource Guide

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Visit us online: ceimaine.org/women

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Welcome to the CEI Women's Business Center'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.

Table of Contents

Tips for the Grant Search	4
Tips for Applying	5
Vocabulary	6
Grants for Small Businesses	7
a. Research, Development, and Innovation	8-9
b. Artistic Project Creation/Continuation	10-14
c. Marketing and Storefront Improvement	15-26
c.1 Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs	18-26
d. Major Capital Acquisition & Upgrade	27-30
e. Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship	31-37
f. Food, Beverage, & Agriculture Business Operations	38-40
g. Outdoor Recreation	41
h. Disaster Relief	42
i. National Grants	43-47
Pitch Competitions & Business Planning Programs	48-52
Contact Info	53

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 – Do not apply for grants that require an entry fee. 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.

Tips for Applying

Prepare Your Application Ahead of Time – Grant applications require extensive financial and organizational documentation as well as a compelling narrative that explains why you are requesting funding. This can take time to prepare, especially when you are running a business, so do not wait for the application open period to begin your application. Search for the previous year’s grant application to familiarize yourself with the requirements and questions. Typically, the applications do not change substantially year to year, and you’ll have plenty of time to adapt to any changes once the new application is available.

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 – Use relevant statistics, U.S. Census data, industry studies, and news reports to lend authority to your narrative. Keep the data focused, not too broad – choose local or statewide facts over global statistics. How widespread or severe is the problem affecting your business within Maine? Who does your business serve in Maine? How has your proposed solution to the problem been used successfully by others in your industry? For example, if you are requesting funds to improve your façade, reference a study that describes how consumers are influenced by attractive storefronts. If you are an employer, use U.S. Census statistics to compare your workers’ wages with the median wage in your county.

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.

Vocabulary

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.

Note: *This resource was last 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*

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.

Research, Development, and Innovation

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.

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.



Research, Development, and Innovation (*continued*)

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 \$750,000.

Match: Yes

Deadline: Determined by each government agency that participates in SBIR

Eligibility: Small business with high-tech innovations

How to Apply: Contact [MTI](#), Maine's official SBIR/STTR support organization. Funding is available to support your application.

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: \$5,500

Match: No

Deadline: October

Eligibility: Founder of an education-focused idea

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

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, 2024

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 17, 2024

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 – 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: To Be Announced (was previously March)

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 – Springboard Artist 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: To Be Announced (was previously March)

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.

Artistic Project Creation/Continuation *(continued)*

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 15, 2023

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.

MAP Fund

Description: Grants to support performing artists and their work as an important pillar of imagining and creating a more vibrant and equitable society.

Funding Amount: \$25k for a new live performance; \$5k in unrestricted general operating support, and \$1k microgrant to redistribute to a fellow artist.

Match: No

Deadline: December 19, 2023

Eligibility: Applicant may be a performing artist or a 501c3.

How to Apply: Visit mapfund.org for additional information and to apply

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: Intent due December 15, 2023; full application due January 26, 2024

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.

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.

- Spring Award Cycle: Letter due in November, full application due in January
- Fall Award Cycle: Letter due May 16, 2024 and full application is due July 18, 2024

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.

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.

Funding Amount: \$25,000

Match: 25% of requested grant amount

Deadline: April

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 32](#) 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 - Domestic Trade Expansion Program (DTEP)

Description: Reimbursement grants to support companies in certain industries to diversify and grow markets within the United States. Eligible businesses may seek financial support for: Market Research and Diversification Assistance; Compliance and Certification Assistance; and Training and Industry Events.

Funding Amount: 75% of total project costs, up to \$15,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: June 17, 2024

Eligibility: Maine-based business operating in these industries: consumable products of food, seafood, or beverage; aerospace and defense; or offshore wind and renewable energy

How to Apply: Visit [MITC’s DTEP webpage](#) for details and application.



Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

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

Description: Funding to support Maine companies working internationally.

Funding Amount: Up to \$20,000 (funding maximum differs per project)

Match: 25% of total project costs.

Deadline: December 15, 2024

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

Maine Office of Business Development – Domestic Trade Grant

Description: Grants to support businesses in target industries to build capacity for increased sales of products and services through sales channel support, trade shows, marketing strategy, capacity building, and other trade assistance.

Funding Amount: \$10k-\$250k, dependent on business size (see online details)

Match: No

Deadline: April 11, 2024

Eligibility: Applicant must have 50% of its employees based in Maine, produce at least 51% of the product value in Maine, and have fewer than 500 employees. Eligible industries include: agriculture/food & beverage, clean energy, construction, aquaculture, forestry, information services, logistics/transportation/warehousing, manufacturing, and retail.

How to Apply: Visit maine.gov/decd/domestic-trade/grants.

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: 2024 deadline to be announced

Eligibility: Small business with 5 or fewer employees, sales in the current year, and gross annual sales of no more than \$150,000.

How to Apply: Find more information and contact your local NVM office by visiting newventuresmaine.org/programs/start-a-business.

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.

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.

Bangor – Façade Improvement Grant

Description: Grants toward the renovation, restoration, and preservation of business facades and storefronts in Bangor. Façade must be visible from the primary means of travel at street level.

Funding Amount: Up to \$15,000

Match: 50% of requested grant amount

Deadline: November

Eligibility: Located in a commercial area of Bangor as specified on the grant's [online map](#). Applicant must be the property owner.

How to Apply: Visit bangormaine.gov/facadegrant for guidelines and application.



Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Caribou – Façade Improvement Grant Program

Description: Grants to improve commercial and mixed-use property facades.

Funding Amount: Up to \$7,500

Match: 50% of total project cost

Deadline: See “How to Apply”; there is a Spring round and a Fall round

Eligibility: Located within Caribou’s Downtown TIF District. Applicant must be property owner.

How to Apply: Print and complete [the application](#) and contact citymanager@cariboumaine.org for more information.

Ellsworth – Heart of Ellsworth Downtown Grants Program

Description: Grants for start-up or expansion projects to help entrepreneurs and support economic opportunities in the City of Ellsworth.

Funding Amount: Up to \$1,000

Match: No

Deadline: 2024 deadline to be announced

Eligibility: Located within downtown Ellsworth

How to Apply: Visit [Downtown Grant Program page](#) and contact cara@heartofellsworth.org for more information.

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.

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: See “How to Apply”

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](#)



Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Richmond Downtown and Village District – Façade Grant Program

Description: Supports façade improvement projects in order to preserve downtown’s unique character and eliminate/prevent conditions of blight.

Funding Amount: 50% of total project cost, up to \$30,000

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

Deadline: June 30, 2024

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 and contact [Darryl Sterling](#)

Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

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](#)

Saco – Small Business Grant Program

Description: Grants to support economic development by funding non-operational projects for businesses with fewer than 50 employees located within Saco city limits.

Funding Amount: 25% of total project costs, up to \$15,000

Match: 75% of total project cost

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Business must be located in Saco and have fewer than 50 employees. Applicant may be property owner or tenant.

How to Apply: Visit sacomaine.org and contact [Torie Gorman](#)

Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Sanford – Façade Grant

Description: Grants to improve the outside appearance and/or restore the original character of commercial buildings in downtown Sanford.

Funding Amount: \$25,000

Match: 25%

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted (expected to be early 2024)

Eligibility: Applicant may be property owner or tenant of a commercial property in the designated area (on Main Street between Roberts Street and Lebanon Streets).

How to Apply: Visit sanfordgrowth.org and contact [Mary Hastings](#).

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 and contact [Denise Clavette](#).

Marketing and Storefront Improvement *(continued)*

Municipal Marketing & Façade Improvement Grant Programs

Waterville – Downtown Façade & Building Improvement Grant Program

Description: Grants to assist in the redevelopment, renovation, restoration, and repair of commercial buildings in Waterville’s downtown district.

Funding Amount: 50% of total project cost, up to \$10,000. However, a “special projects” category may review higher funding requests.

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

Deadline: See “How to Apply”; 2024 information slated to be available in early 2024

Eligibility: Applicant may be property owner or tenant of a commercial or mixed-use property in the designated downtown zone (see map online).

How to Apply: Visit centralmaine.org/façade

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: See “How to Apply”

Eligibility: Located within Westbrook’s downtown district.

How to Apply: Visit westbrookmaine.com and contact [Demetria Pellegrino](#)



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, 2024

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, renewable energy generation, and marine electrification.

Funding Amount: \$4,000

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

Deadline: Rolling through June 10, 2024

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

How to Apply: Visit islandinstitute.org, contact organization to confirm proposed project is a good fit, and complete the online application.



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

Deadline: 1st of the month, beginning July 2023

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.

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”, that receive their own allocation of CDBG funds, in which case the business must apply with the municipality. This includes Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, and all other municipalities of Cumberland County except for Brunswick, Casco, and Frye Island.

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.

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](#).

Northern Borders Regional Commission – Catalyst Program

Description: Grants to support economic development and infrastructure projects that yield job creation and reduce poverty, unemployment, and outmigration.

Funding Amount: Up to \$1 million for infrastructure, up to \$500,000 for non-infrastructure

Match: 50-80% of qualified project costs, depending on location

Deadline: Letter of Intent due in April, full application due in June

Eligibility: Located in a county that is NOT Cumberland, York, Sagadahoc, nor Lincoln. Applicant must be a 501(c) organization, a municipality, or state government.

How to Apply: Visit [nbrc.gov](#) and contact your municipality to discuss a potential application.

Capital Acquisition and Infrastructure Upgrade (cont.)

Town of Gorham – Capital Expenditure Matching Grant

Description: Grants to help local businesses and farms expand into new areas of operation. Funds may be used for a one-time purchase of a capital item, service, or site expansion project.

Funding Amount: \$15,000

Match: 1:1 (50% total project cost)

Deadline: Next round not yet announced; see “How to Apply” for more details

Eligibility: Applicant must be a business or farm located in Gorham, ME and operate in agriculture, retail & food service, or manufacturing & skilled trades.

How to Apply: Visit gorhammaine.org and contact Kevin Jensen, Economic Development Director, kjensen@gorham.me.us or (207) 222-1628

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.

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

Match: Yes; a higher percentage of match will receive higher points in application scoring. See full program guidelines for details.

Deadline: February 28, 2024

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.



Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship

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: financial start-up support such as equipment, initial product, working capital, rehabilitation of space to ready for business; general owner support such as transportation, child care, counseling, peer support; 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.

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

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 (new) or \$11,000 (existing)

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.



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

City of Portland – Microenterprise Grant

Description: Grants to support businesses impacted by the pandemic.

Funding Amount: \$5,000

Deadline: Rolling until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Portland-based business with 7 or fewer employees (including owner). Owner's household income must meet the low-to-moderate standard (see details online).

How to Apply: Visit portlandmaine.gov to apply.

Island Institute – Business Resilience Grants

Description: Grants to promote the resilience of small businesses located on Maine's coast and island communities. Funding may support an investment in supplies or infrastructure, developing new marketing strategies, training or professional development, or hiring a consultant.

Funding Amount: \$2,500

Match: No

Deadline: Rolling through June 10, 2024

Eligibility: Must be located in a coastal or island community in Maine.

How to Apply: Visit grants.islandinstitute.org

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: Letter of Intent due in April, full application due in June

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](#).

Entitlement Area: In Maine, entitlement communities (which are not eligible for this application) include Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, and all other municipalities of Cumberland County except for Brunswick, Casco, and Frye Island.

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

Maine Quality Centers – Compact Funding

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

Funding Amount: 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 State Child Care Infrastructure Grant

Description: Funding to help start new child care businesses and to expand the number of children served by existing child care providers.

Funding Amount: Varies according to project; generally 50-75% of approved project costs, up to \$8,500. If adding a dedicated child care room to an existing home, you may apply for \$25,000. Some applicants are also eligible for a \$2,000 stipend.

Deadline: Rolling through June 2024 or until funding is exhausted

Eligibility: Licensing regulations apply; see “How to Apply” for more details. Must demonstrate that the project will yield an increase in child care capacity.

How to Apply: Visit ceimaine.org/maine-grants for more information and to apply.

Main Street Skowhegan – Technical Assistance

Description: Grants to support business growth and startup operations for entrepreneurs and business owners in Skowhegan.

Funding Amount: \$500 - \$2,000

Match: No

Deadline: May

Eligibility: Located within the Town of Skowhegan; may be new or existing business.

How to Apply: Visit mainstreetskowhegan.org/ta.

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.

Workforce, Job Creation, & Entrepreneurship (cont.)

Regional – Economic Recovery Implementation Hub Grants

Description: Each region of Maine is administering its own Economic Recovery Implementation grant, in accordance with the [Maine Dept. Economic Development program](#). These programs differ across regions, but they share a goal in supporting businesses as they recover from the pandemic through technical assistance, entrepreneurial training, and grants to new businesses established on or after January 1, 2020.

- **York and South Oxford Counties** - visit the [Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission](#) for details; grants available for up to \$20,000.
- **Greater Portland** – visit [Greater Portland Council of Governments](#) for details; grants available for up to \$20,000.
- **Midcoast (all or part of Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, Cumberland, & Waldo Counties)** – visit [Midcoast Council of Governments](#) for details; not yet open, but grants will be available for up to \$50k,000.
- **Kennebec & Somerset Counties** – visit [Central Maine Growth Council](#) for details; grants available for up to \$50,000 with no required match.
- **Aroostook County** – visit [Northern Maine Development Commission](#) for details; grants available for up to \$15,000 with a 1:1 match.
- **Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington, and parts of Waldo Counties** – visit [Eastern Maine Development Corporation](#) for details; grants available for up to \$25,000 and first round is due January 31, 2024
- **Androscoggin and North Oxford Counties** – visit [Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments](#) for details; not yet open

Food, Beverage, and Agriculture Business Operations

CEI Tastemakers

Description: Funding to help established food & beverage companies expand operational capacity and capabilities to meet targeted growth goals. Preference for those producing health, everyday foods.

Funding Amount: Up to \$25,000

Match: No

Deadline: March 1, 2024

Eligibility: Business must produce food/beverage products for human consumption, source from Maine agriculture, aquaculture, or fisheries, and be based & incorporated in Maine.

How to Apply: Visit ceimaine.org – Find an Advisor tab.

Maine Dept. Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry – Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure

Description: Funding to invest in food supply chain resilience, market access, and value-added processing infrastructure. Funds will support expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of Maine-produced food products.

Funding Amount: Up to \$250,000 for infrastructure project grants (due Spring 2024), up to \$100k for equipment-only grants (due Fall 2024)

Match: 1:1 match is required for infrastructure projects. No match required for equipment-only projects.

Deadline: Infrastructure grant due March 2024 (see “How to Apply”); equipment-only in Fall

Eligibility: See full list of eligible applicants online (“How to Apply”).

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

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

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: Pre-proposals due in July

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

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

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

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.

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

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: \$75,000 - \$250,000 depending on project

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

Deadline: Letter of Intent due in April

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.

Disaster Relief

Keep The Faith Fund - Belfast

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

Funding Amount: Not yet announced

Match: Not yet announced

Deadline: Not yet announced

Eligibility: Not yet announced

How to Apply: Visit cityofbelfast.org to stay updated as more information becomes available.

Maine Business Relief Fund

Description: Originally established in the wake of the “Grinch” storm on December 18, this fund aims to provide grants to meet immediate needs, such as equipment replacement operating expenses, supplies, and cleaning expenses.

Funding Amount: \$2,500 - \$10,000

Match: No

Deadline: Rolling on a first-come, first-serve basis (currently closed; may reopen if more funds are raised)

Eligibility: Small Maine businesses that were affected by the Dec. 18th storm.

How to Apply: Visit mainebusinessrelieffund.com for more information and to apply.

National Grants

FedEx Small Business Grant Contest

Description: Grants to support innovative small businesses.

Funding Amount: Up to \$30,000

Match: No

Deadline: April 1, 2024

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

HelloAlice – Small Business Growth Fund

Description: Grants to help small business owners make their next big move.

Funding Amount: \$25,000

Match: No

Deadline: Various dates throughout the year; check online for details

Eligibility: Applicant must be a U.S.-based small business owner with less than \$1M in annual revenue.

How to Apply: Visit helloalice.com for more information

National Grants *(continued)*

HelloAlice/DoorDash – Restaurant Disaster Relief Fund

Description: Grants to support local restaurants affected by a natural disaster.

Funding Amount: Not given

Match: No

Deadline: December 29, 2023; next round due March 2024

Eligibility: Business must be a brick-and-mortar restaurant open for at least the past six months, located in a declared disaster zone. The disaster must have occurred within the past 12 months.

How to Apply: Visit helloalice.com for more information

J.W. Couch Foundation

Description: Grants for general operating support or to help social entrepreneurs get new products off the ground in one of three areas: preservation, education, and wellness.

Funding Amount: No maximum

Match: No

Deadline: March, June, September, December

Eligibility: Applicant business must align with the priority areas of preservation, education, and/or wellness.

How to Apply: Visit jwcouchfoundation.org/apply for more information

National Grants *(continued)*

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

Ladies Who Launch – Launch Program

Description: Grants to support early-stage female and non-binary entrepreneurs.

Funding Amount: \$10,000

Match: No

Deadline: Opens February 2024

Eligibility: Applicant must be a self-identified female or non-binary owner of a small business (at least 51% ownership) with annual revenue between \$100,000-\$499,000.

How to Apply: Visit ladieswholaunch.org/launch-program

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. For 2023, it will focus its efforts on supporting women pursuing professional advancement within at least one key area of the wine industry including Sommelier Certification, WSET Certification or Business of Wine Education course completion.

Funding Amount: Up to \$5,000

Match: No

Deadline: 2024 deadline to be announced

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

NAACP – Powershift Small Business Grant

Description: Grants to empower Black entrepreneurs and businesses.

Funding Amount: \$25,000

Match: No

Deadline: 2024 deadline to be announced

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Black-owned small business.

How to Apply: Visit naacp.org/find-resources/grants

National Grants *(continued)*

NAACP – Backing the B.A.R.

Description: Grants to support Black-owned businesses in the alcohol beverage service, sales, and hospitality industries.

Funding Amount: \$10,000

Match: No

Deadline: 2024 deadline to be announced

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Black business owner with a liquor license or plans to acquire one.

How to Apply: Visit naacp.org/grants/backing-the-bar

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 1, 2023

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.

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: Monthly

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: Varies; 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

Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Downeast Business Boot Camp & Pitch-Off

Description: A nonconsecutive six-day intensive training and prep program for early stage business owners, who will strengthen their business confidence in a collaborative environment as they compete in a final judged pitch event.

Funding Amount: Up to \$5,000

Deadline: See "How to Apply"; next bootcamp will be held in 2024.

Eligibility: Applicant must be a small business in Hancock or Washington County that has been in operation for 1-3 years with fewer than 10 employees and no more than \$500,000 in annual revenue.

How to Apply: Visit ceimaine.org/bizcamp

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: January 17, 2024

Eligibility: Applicant must be based in Maine.

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

Pitch Competitions & Business Planning *(continued)*

Gorham Savings Bank – LaunchPad

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

Funding Amount: \$50,000

Deadline: Fall 2023

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

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.

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: December 4, 2023

Eligibility: Applicant must be a Maine-based entrepreneur.

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

Maine Farmland Trust – Business of Farming

Description: A business workshop for farmers that will help you uncover the story your financial records are telling you, and develop your ability to make strategic business decisions that move you in the direction of your goals.

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

Funding Amount: \$500 as a seed grant at the culmination of the program.

Deadline: December 15, 2024

Eligibility: Applicant must be an experienced Maine-based farmer who wants to analyze their current business model and use the information for decision making.

How to Apply: Visit mainefarmlandtrust.org/farm-network/workshops

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: Fall 2024

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

CEI

Women's

Business Center

Visit us online: ceimaine.org/women

Sign up for our newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/dAj9OTc>

Send us an email: wbc@ceimaine.org

Follow us on Instagram: [instagram.com/CEIWomensBusinessCenter/](https://www.instagram.com/CEIWomensBusinessCenter/)

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