

Maine Building Application Information Packet

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Application Checklist and Reminders

- Read through all selection priorities and questions
- Review important materials in the [Exhibitor Resources](#) section of the webpage
- Use the [online application](#) to submit your info
- Ensure the application is complete and [submitted by deadline](#)
- Be prepared to provide proof of insurance upon request if awarded space
- Be prepared to [remit payment by deadline](#)

Selection Priorities:

The following products and selection areas are prioritized for the Maine Building:

- Exhibitors who can secure and comply with staffing requirements (*fully staff booth with daily time commitment of at least 11 hours*)
- Businesses headquartered in Maine that meet applicable in-state licensing requirements
- Preference will be given to products that use Maine-sourced ingredients and/or materials, as well as:
 - Products that highlight Maine specialty crops and value-added products
 - Products that highlight Maine's natural resources and commerce
 - Consumer goods such as accessories, art, jewelry, apparel, and home and body products
 - Products or services that encourage Maine experiences — visiting Maine!
 - Products that feature Maine craft beverage industry
 - Brands and businesses that currently have a membership listing in: Real Maine, Maine Made, Visit Maine, DMR Seafood Directory
- Food trucks/mobile retail that are self-contained and may be placed at an exterior space
- **For food producers - note:** fried or grilled foods are not permitted in the building at this time. Such foods may be prepared outside as approved by local health department. Food may be par-cooked and heated on site and/or cooked using appliances such as convection ovens, crockpots, toasters, microwaves, etc.

[What to Know About Exhibiting at The Big E's Maine Building](#)

[What to Know – Venue/Attendees](#)

The State of Maine Building, owned by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, is one of seven buildings on the Avenue of States — including one for each New England state, and one for the Grange — located on the Eastern States Exposition (ESE) grounds in West Springfield, MA. The ESE is an agricultural non-profit, home to The Big E! fair — a 100-plus year annual event that attracts more than 1 million attendees for 17 days each September. The fair is a busy, time-intensive, and often hot experience that draws heavy foot traffic. With proper preparation and planning, this can be a financially successful event for exhibitors.

[What to Know – Application/Selection Process](#)

A committee reviews applications. Agreements are awarded based on priorities and space availability. Confirmation will be sent to all applicants via email about the award decision. The anticipated notice date is April 1. If you do not receive an update by this time, email [Building Management](#). There is a waiting list if an applicant is not awarded space or if an application is late, and late applications may be accepted.

[What to Know – Exhibitor Space/Prices/Payment](#)

Available space is dependent upon size requirements of booths from year to year. There are approximately 15 to 25 exhibitors, day to day. Most exhibitors set up for all 17 days of the fair.

Short-term option: There is an introductory, lower-cost option for those who aspire to fulfill a longer-term rental. The short-term option is a fit for those curious about ways to participate in the exhibit space and conduct outreach, promotions, and sales prospecting without committing to the full 17-day schedule.

Exhibitors who are not exhibiting outside for all 17 days must submit final payment by August 1. Invoices are sent to exhibitors by DACF's service center staff. You may pay in full or by installments scheduled with Building Management.

Spaces Available:

Number of days	Location	Approx. Size	Exhibit Group	Rates	July 1	Aug. 1	Oct. 10
17	Interior building space	11w X 13d	A	\$20.00/ square foot	50% Non-refundable	50% Non-refundable	N/A
17	Exterior space building	100 sq. ft.	A	\$1,500, plus 10-percent event gross sales commission	\$1,500.00 Non-refundable	N/A	10% event gross sales commission
6 days	Introductory— multi day— building interior	11w X 13d	B-D	\$150/day	100% of exhibit fee	N/A	N/A
1	Outside building-front lawn	10 x 10	E	\$150/day	100% of exhibit fee	N/A	N/A

Pre-event site visits are available to exhibitors awarded space for 17 days, who are in good standing, and have paid rental fees. Pre-fair site visits happen in June and July. You must email Building Management to coordinate and reserve a time. Otherwise, please attend or watch one of the orientation webinars (available on the website in the spring).

[What to Know – Services/Amenities Available to Exhibitors](#)

- Building Management publishes a library of resources you should read before applying: www.maine.gov/dacf/bigemainebuilding
- **The booth rental fee includes electricity and custodial. All other display and service amenities are exhibitors' responsibility. Most appliances, including many that need special wiring, are the exhibitors' responsibility.**
- ESE offers grounds-wide services, which may have added fees. They include on-site banking, phone, and Internet, limited dry storage, heavy equipment support, and package receipt and delivery services during the fair – <https://www.thebige.com/p/generalinfo/vendor-exhibitor-info>
- The exhibitor lounge in the building includes a shared kitchen and bathroom and **is available exclusively for building personnel and exhibitors**
- A dedicated room block at a local hotel is available, first come first serve, for Maine Building exhibitors. Information is sent separately to awarded applicants.

[What to Know – How Exhibitors May Find Success](#)

Exhibitors may find success if they have the planning, support, and logistics to complete the following:

- ✓ Submit a thorough application – do not leave reviewers guessing about your credibility and goals
- ✓ Fully stock (or resupply) inventory for the duration of exhibiting at the event
- ✓ Budget for expenses: booth rental, staffing, lodging, certifications, and amenities
- ✓ Create and use social media to help tell their story and extend a Maine welcome to attendees and promote their exhibit.
- ✓ Coordinate backup staffing to ensure adequate rest, care, and nutrition
- ✓ Use best practices for food and beverage sampling and sales.

A variety of products have been displayed and sold in the Maine Building. Here are general examples of products that tend to be most successful:

- Those that can be purchased with a credit card (*or card tap at point of sale*)
- Products where the customer perceives a good value for the price
- Unique gifts that offer a memorable keepsake, represent quality craftsmanship
- Easy to carry (or receive text reminder for pickup before departure, or no later than 7 PM)
- Non-alcoholic, simple, refreshing beverages
- Food that is quickly and safely prepared, easily ordered, and convenient to eat while walking
- A product line that could interest a variety of shoppers
- Products and experiences or services that can be sought year-round

Feedback from recent exhibitors:

- ✓ Exhibiting at this event helped dramatically reduce the number of shows exhibitors do each season — the Maine Building revenue was more than 10 other combined events!
- ✓ The event provided some businesses growth from a part-time startup to full-time business
- ✓ Exhibitors report Building Management and custodial supports their success, and they would recommend the venue to peers

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the benefit of exhibiting at the Maine Building versus at a Maine agricultural fair, craft fair, or festival?

- The venue is a regional destination
- In a 17-day time frame, it attracts more visitors than the population of the state of Maine
- This scale provides different marketing, promotional, and sales opportunities

The state of Maine underwrites most of the expenses for the permanent exhibit space. Specifically, the Maine Department of Agriculture Conservation & Forestry manages the venue, and state of Maine funds are budgeted for operations, property and event management, electrical, sewage, and municipal regulations. It also supports coordinated publicity, emergency management, and some exhibitor credentials.

How does the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry promote Maine Building exhibits?

The department provides print, radio, web, and social media promotions featuring exhibitors, and works with The Big E and regional news outlets to provide media alerts for targeted stories about exhibitors and Maine.

I've heard there can be a lot of automobile traffic around the ESE. How does that impact exhibitors?

There is a lot of traffic due to the size and scope of the fair. Exhibitors and fairgoers are encouraged to use the shuttle and carpool services to reduce congestion. It can take up to 30-90 minutes more than the typical GPS predictions to get across town. Exhibitors need to plan vehicle travel routes accordingly.

Given the size of the crowds at the fair, is it safe for exhibitors?

Like any large-scale event, public safety is an important part of event management. The fairgrounds provide public safety, in coordination with local and state emergency management personnel. There is a fire department and EMT/nursing station on site for fairgoers and exhibitors, and a designated public health official. Certain items are prohibited from use on the grounds.

Exhibitors should be proactive by taking care of valuables and managing cash — don't leave them unattended at any time.

There is an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) device in the building and the exhibitor lounge has air conditioning.

Will there be rules about what I can and can't sell in my booth?

Yes. There is a preference for Maine products and services. All exhibitors are required to comply with local regulations regarding product preparation and sales.