

Coworking Development Fund

Spring 2025 Questions (FAQs)

If we received a past grant (MJRP Coworking Grant) are we eligible to apply?

A previous Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan Coworking Grant award does not exclude you from applying. However, any project funded through the MJRP Coworking Grant cannot seek additional funding from this grant round. In other words, you cannot use funds from the MJRP Coworking Grant and this grant program for the same scope of work/task. Also, please be sure to review our grant guidelines, particularly the following requirement:

- ❖ Request should be tied to specific and demonstrated financial need to achieve goals

Can nonprofits apply?

Collaborative workspace business is defined in the establishing Statute as “a corporation, partnership, limited liability corporation, professional corporation or other legal business entity recognized under the laws of the State engaging in or proposing to engage in economic activity within the State.” Any legal business entity approved to do business in Maine is allowed to apply.

Can an engineering study for a building expansion be eligible within the guidelines?

The allowable use of funds awarded from this grant program is broad, and it is up to the applicant to outline how the requested projects connect to the goals for the Fund and the State’s overall economic development strategy. For this program, a grant is defined as a financial co-investment where the expected return on investment is in the form of community and economic impact, not dollars.

Can operating expenses such as utilities and marketing be eligible within the guidelines?

DECD will assess the merits of each application received based on the goals of the program and on each of the content areas outlined in this grant announcement, and in accordance with the provisions of Title 5 MRSA §13056- G. While not specifically prohibited in the guidelines, applications that include substantial utilities and marketing costs are unlikely to be competitive.

FAQ document, as of March 11, says payroll expense are not eligible for the program. Will this still be the case when the FAQ’s are updated?

Payroll expenses were not the intent of the program. While not specifically prohibited in the guidelines, applications that include substantial payroll costs are unlikely to be competitive.

The FAQ document, as of March 11, is written around financial support for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the MCDF Award Guidelines do not mention COVID-19. Does the application need to specifically address financial impact from the COVID-19 pandemic?

The FAQ was provided as an example from a past grant. The application for the Spring 2025 Coworking Development Fund does not need to address impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It says in the Guidelines that, "Awarded funds may be used for building improvements if the award leverages additional investment in the improvements." But then it says, in a separate bullet, that, "1-to-1 matching dollars are required." Does that mean that 1-to-1 matching dollars are required for any project, or only the ones for building improvements?

All funding must have at least 1-to-1 matching dollars. The statute specifically emphasizes the need for building improvements.

What do you mean by, "If the coworking space is an ongoing concern, please." Does that mean "if the coworking space is currently running?" If so, then I'm confused by the this line: "A summary of the proposed economic impact of the collaborative workspace on the community." How is it a "proposed impact" if it's already running?

Both proposed and existing coworking spaces are eligible to apply. So wording throughout the guidelines and application address the opportunity for either type of project. Coworking spaces that are no longer operating are not eligible to apply.

It says: My workspace provides:

- ☐ **common conference or meeting space**
- ☐ **furnishing and equipment**
- ☐ **connectivity to the internet**
- ☐ **financial consulting, marketing and management assistance services, including access to capital**

-OR-

- ☐ **connections to financial, marketing, and management assistance services, including access to capital.**

Above it, it says that "all checked boxes must be checked." Does the checkbox after "OR" (connections to financial..." have to be checked if all of the other ones above it are checked?

The OR refers to Financial Consulting line or Connections to financial line. You need to check one of those two boxes along with the boxes in the first two lines.

In the scoring, it says, "Does the request include a description of the expected significance of the project, including evidence of the market demand for the type of collaborative workspace proposed in the region in which the space will be located and the projected number of businesses or individuals that will be served with the project?" Does this grant apply to existing coworking spaces or is it only for new ones? How would an existing space be scored here?

Both existing and proposed coworking spaces are eligible to apply. Existing spaces can answer this question by showing the significance of the project to the region. Please see the other check marks under Project Goals and Impact for additional scoring criteria.

5. Does the word "project" throughout these guidelines refer to the coworking space itself, or to the project that the funds will be used for? I read this (below) and it makes me think that it's referring to the coworking space itself.

DECD's Office of Business Development is committed to building the entrepreneurial ecosystems of underserved and underrepresented communities, so will award up to an additional 2 extra points will be given if it can be shown that the project encourages under-represented business owners and/or the coworking space is located in an economically distressed county.

Both existing and proposed coworking space are eligible to apply. Project could refer to creating a new coworking facility or improving an already developed facility.