



Office of Business Development

**Maine Coworking Development Fund
Award Guidelines & Program Participation
Spring 2025**

Applications Due: ~~March 25, 2025, by 11:59PM~~

Extended until March 27, 2025 by 11:59PM

Submit via email attachment to:

BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov

Clarifying questions accepted through March 11, 2025 at

BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov

For more information:

Jake Daniele

Small Business Development Manager

Tel: 207-441-4701 E-mail: Jake.Daniele@maine.gov

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PART I – Background, purpose, parameters, and eligibility

Background.

The Maine Coworking Development Fund was established to strengthen opportunities for entrepreneurship, stimulate innovation in the State by increasing the availability of collaborative workspace environments and address a regional market demand for affordable work environments that support communication, information sharing and networking opportunities.

Purpose and parameters. The Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) is accepting applications for award of grants from the Maine Coworking Development Fund as defined in statute and outlined in this grant guidelines document. This document provides instructions for submitting grant applications, the procedure and criteria by which award recipients will be selected, and the contractual terms of the awards.

The Maine Coworking Development Fund was first established in statute in 2015, <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/5/title5sec13056-G.html>, and recapitalized in 2019, with minimal revisions. The legislature established specific goals for the fund to:

- ❖ Strengthen opportunities for entrepreneurship
- ❖ Stimulate innovation
- ❖ Address regional market demand for affordable work environments (supporting communication, information sharing and networking opportunities)

In addition to these goals, DECD also aspires to meet the goals and intent of Maine's [10-Year Economic Development Strategy](#), which prioritizes innovation, entrepreneurship, and attracting talent.

The allowable use of grants awarded from the fund 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.

Other Program Requirements are:

- ❖ Request should not exceed \$25,000 per collaborative workspace business
- ❖ Request should be tied to specific and demonstrated financial need to achieve goals
- ❖ Awarded funds may be used for building improvements if the award leverages additional investment in the improvements
- ❖ 1-to-1 matching dollars are required

The Department anticipates granting a total amount of \$200,000 during this cycle. The Department has the right to award all or none of available funds. The awards are anticipated to be disbursed before June 30, 2025.

Eligible enterprises. Anyone operating a collaborative workspace business, or is planning to launch a collaborative workspace business, is eligible to apply for a grant from the Coworking Development Fund. 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.”

To be considered eligible, you will need to be able to check off, or give a reasonable timeline for checking off, each item on the eligibility checklist that is part of this application (see Application Appendix A).

A collaborative workspace means coworking, shared working environments that promote collaboration, interaction, socialization and coordination among tenants and members through the co-location of multiple businesses or individuals within that shared work environment.

PART II - Grant Application Content and Instructions

Grant Application Content consists of the following sections:

1. Cover Page (template provided at end of this document)
2. Brief Introduction
3. Brief Project Description
4. Additional informational section, depending on whether it's a new or existing space
5. Appendix A (required) – checklist of statutorily outlined duties of a collaborative workspace business
6. Appendix B (optional) – additional supporting documents
7. Appendix C (required) – certifications

Brief Introduction: Please provide a brief history of the coworking enterprise including business structure, years in business, revenue model, number of current tenants and members, and square footage of the space. Please also provide a brief description of the geographical area served and a description of the regional market demand for coworking opportunities. If a new or yet-to-be-opened enterprise, please provide what you do know about these details.

This section is the opportunity to tell your story – help reviewers understand your enterprise, why it fulfills the goals of the Fund outlined in statute and contributes to your community.

Brief Project Description. Please provide a narrative that addresses the following elements.

- ✓ Please describe the company and project team. You should include brief descriptions of the professional expertise and experiences of the principals involved in the enterprise and the specific project for which you are requesting grant funds and providing match.
- ✓ Please provide a description of the scope of work that will be undertaken with requested grant funds and match. Please indicate which team member will perform which task within the scope of work and include start and completion dates for all activities.
- ✓ Please provide the proposed budget in an appropriate format, including verification of funding from other sources. Please indicate if match is in cash or is in-kind contribution (is it on the company books or is it donated). An organized budget table with well-defined line items is preferred.
- ✓ Please provide the following:
 - A statement of the project objective, including specific information on how the project will further promote the use of the space as a collaborative workspace and demonstrate financial need.
 - A description of the expected significance of the project. Include evidence of a market demand for what you are proposing and the

projected number of members, tenants, or participants that will be served as a result of the project.

- Expected community impact – what does the space mean for your community and what economic impacts are derived, particularly as it relates to Maine’s 10-year EDS.

AND

If proposing a new business or space, please:

- Include a description of any plans that (a) redevelop existing properties located in the downtown area of a municipality; (b) dedicate at least 25% of accessible space to collaborative use; and (c) support at least 5 separate occupants or a targeted number of members;
- A description of the ability of the collaborative workspace business to carry out the required duties listed below in the eligibility elements checklist;
- A summary of the proposed economic impact of the collaborative workspace on the community;
- A description of plans for conformance with regional and local economic development plans, if such plans exist, and any interactions you have had with your local or regional economic development entity;
- A statement of proximity of the collaborative workspace to an accredited Maine community college, college or university;

OR

If the coworking space is an ongoing concern, please:

- Provide your overall implementation or operations plan for the next two years. Help reviewers understand the facilities and resources available or needed for success of the collaborative space. The plan should include:
 - A summary of the proposed economic impact of the collaborative workspace on the community;
 - A description of plans for conformance with regional and local economic development plans (e.g., Maine’s 10-Year EDS), and any interactions you have had with your local or regional economic development entity;
 - A statement of proximity of the collaborative workspace to an accredited Maine community college, college or university.

Application Appendix A

Certification of program elements: Please check each of the following boxes indicating that you meet, or can be reasonably expected to soon meet, the statutory requirements of this program. If you cannot check a box, please provide an explanation of what must to happen to be able to do so and the associated timeline in the indicated space following the checklist. Unchecked boxes do not disqualify you from applying but projected timeline should allow you to check all boxes by completion of funded project.

I have a secure title on the facility for my collaborative workspace

-OR-

I have a two-year or more lease on the facility for my collaborative workspace

-AND-

- I manage the physical development of my collaborative workspace
- I actively market my collaborative workspace and secure tenants, members and participants
- I have a revenue model that includes rental, membership and/or service fees
- I encourage the sharing of ideas between tenants, members and participants and otherwise assist them in using innovative technology and facilities
- I have established policies and criteria for the acceptance and termination of tenants, members and participants
- I maximize the opportunity to succeed for the greatest number of tenants, members and participants
- I will submit annual reports associated with the Coworking Development Fund including annual financial statement, a summary of the economic impact of my workspace on my community, and a list of tenants, members and participants in my workspace

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

My business/organization is currently in good standing with the State of Maine, including payroll, income, sales, and all other applicable taxes, as well as regulatory requirements and license/permit requirements, as applicable.

- Yes
- No

- I understand that some of the information provided will be accessible and subject to disclosure under Maine’s Freedom of Access Act (1 M.R.S. Section 401 et seq.).
- There are no actions, suits or proceedings pending or, to the knowledge of the applicant, threatened against or affecting the applicant and/or business/organization at law or in equity before any court or administrative officer or agency which might result in any material adverse change in the business or financial condition of the applicant.
- I understand that my taxpayer information is confidential under 36 M.R.S. § 191. By signing this form, I authorize Maine Revenue Services (MRS) to verify any confidential information for DECD, relating to the four most recent calendar years that is necessary to evaluate my eligibility for the Maine Business Recovery and Resilience Grant Program and to disclose the status of my Maine tax and filing obligations to DECD as my duly authorized representative, pursuant to 36 M.R.S. §§ 191(2)(A) or (DD)(8).
- I understand that, regarding my Maine tax and filing obligations, the disclosure will be limited to whether any Maine tax liability is presently due or owing and whether it appears, based on my responses in this authorization and a limited review of my confidential information, that I have filed all required Maine tax returns during the tax years stated above
- I will comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations;
- To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information contained in this application is true and correct and current as of the date signed below;

Authorized Signor _____

Authorized Signor Title _____

Date _____

Explanation of unchecked boxes and timeline for being able to certify statutory elements:

Application Appendix B

- Brief resumes of key team members (optional).
- Business Plan in support of the information provided in your introduction and/or proposal narrative (optional). You may wish to do so if the Plan identifies activities that will generate revenue, programming offered, and information on membership/community numbers and growth expectations.
- Financial statements for the past two years (or, if fewer, as many years as the workspace has been in operation) and two years of pro forma financial statements.
- Verification/identification of funding from other sources that are outlined in project budget.
- No more than two additional pages of supporting materials of your choice (e.g., letter of support from Town or Municipality)

Application Appendix C

State of Maine
Department of Economic and Community Development
Office of Business Development
DEBARMENT, PERFORMANCE and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION
Maine Coworking Development Fund

Bidder's Organization Name:	
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By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this proposal:

- a. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.*
- b. Have not within three years of submitting the proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:*
 - i. Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.*
 - ii. Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.*
- c. Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification.*
- d. Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this proposal had one or more federal, state, or local government transactions terminated for cause or default.*
- e. Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this proposal is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.*
- f. Is not a foreign adversary business entity (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies>).*
- g. Is not on the list of prohibited companies (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies>) or does not obtain or purchase any information or communications technology or services included on the list of prohibited information and communications technology and services <https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies> (Title 5 §2030-B).*

Name (Print):	Title:
Authorized Signature:	Date:

Grant Application Instructions

Application Format.

1. All pages should be numbered consecutively beginning with number 1 on the first page of the narrative (this does not include the cover page) through to the end, including all appendices. Please put the name of your business on every page, including appendices.
3. The length of the narrative should be commensurate with the amount of funding requested but in no case should be more than 15 pages.
4. The application cover page, project budget and appendices are not included in the narrative page limitations.
5. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all information requested at the time of submission. Failure to provide information requested, at the discretion of the Department's evaluation review team, result in a lower rating for the incomplete sections.
6. Applicants should complete and submit the Application cover page provided in Appendix C. The cover page must be the first page of the application package. It is important that the cover page show the specific information requested, including Applicant's address(es) and other details listed. The application cover page shall be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the Applicant.
7. The entire application packet should be one PDF document.

Submitting the Application. Applicants should submit applications as an email attachment with a verifiable time stamp no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, ~~March 25th~~ Extended until March 27, 2025, to BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov. You will receive an email verifying receipt of your application.

PART III - Key Events

Timeline of Key Events.

Event Name	Event Date and Time
Grant Announcement Released	February 21, 2025
Questions Accepted and Answers Posted on website until	Accepted until March 11, 2025, Posted by March 14, 2025
Application deadline	Extended until March 27, 2025 (11:59 PM EST timestamp)
Applicants notified of decision on before	April 30, 2025
Anticipated contract start date	May 14, 2025

Question and Answer Period. Potential applicants may submit questions about the program and grant process in writing to BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov through March 11, 2025. Responses to questions will be compiled and posted on the FAQ section of website. For more information contact Jake Daniele at Jake.Daniele@maine.gov.

PART IV - Application evaluation and award process and criteria

Evaluation Process General Information.

- 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.
- The selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration of each application that meets program requirements. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the applications and to ensure that grant awards are made that best further the goals of the fund and to the applicants whose application best satisfies the criteria outlined in this program announcement.
- The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with any or all applicants if needed to obtain clarification of information contained in the applications received. Reviewers may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Interviews/presentations are not required, and other changes to applications will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process.
- Should situations change for the applicant business during the review stage, you may contact the Program Manager to communicate those changes, but there is no guarantee that those changes will be able to be taken into consideration during review. Applicants should submit applications that present requested information as accurately, clearly and completely as possible.

Scoring Weights and Process.

Scoring Weights. The score will be based on a 20-point scale, with the possibility of up to 2 additional points for projects from an economically distressed community and will assess the degree to which each application meets the following evaluation criteria.

- **Connection to Program Goals (4 possible points) (As described in Introduction and Brief Project Description sections):**
 - ✓ Does applicant provide measurable and credible impact on opportunities for strengthening entrepreneurship, stimulating innovation, and/or addressing regional market demand for affordable work environments that support communication, information sharing and networking opportunities?
 - ✓ Does project strengthen collaborative workspace company's ability to operate under good management practice, provide rich networks, and/or deliver customized programming to members, tenants and participants?

➤ **Applicant enterprise & team (4 possible points)**

- ✓ Is applicant building a strong and relevant enterprise, as described in the introduction?
- ✓ Is applicant team strong with relevant skills and experience, as described in the narrative?
- ✓ Is applicant able to check off all the duties of a collaborative workspace business as described in Title 5 MRSA §13056-G and reflected in Appendix A checklist? If not, is there a reasonable expectation for doing so by completion of project?
- ✓ Is business able to take advantage of proximity of the collaborative workspace to an accredited Maine community college, college or university?

➤ **Project Goals & Impact (4 possible points)**

- ✓ Is the scope of work reasonable and credibly accomplished within proposed timeline and budget outlined in the project description section of the narrative?
- ✓ Is the statement of the project objective reasonable and credible, including specific information on how the project will promote the use of the space as a collaborative workspace?
- ✓ 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 the enterprise's implementation or operations plan reflect a reasonable estimation of the facilities and resources available or needed for the project?

➤ **Economic & Community Impact (4 possible points)**

- ✓ Has applicant outlined a vision for the economic and community impacts of the proposed or current collaborative workspace on the community?
- ✓ If applicable, does the application include a description of plans for conformance with regional and local economic development plans, including Maine's 10-year Economic Development Strategy?
- ✓ For new projects, does proposed plan include redevelopment of existing properties or underutilized buildings located in the downtown area of a municipality?
- ✓ Is at least 25% of accessible space dedicated to collaborative use and supporting at least 5 separate tenants or members?
- ✓ Is there coordination with or support from relevant local or regional economic development entities?

➤ **Business Plan & Budget (4 possible points)**

- ✓ Does the applicant put forward a strong business case for the collaborative workspace business, with evidence of success or potential for success in programming, outreach, facility operation, and

- building/monitoring membership and community growth?
- ✓ Do the financials reflect financial health and a reasonable expectation for future sustainability and growth?
- ✓ Has the applicant increased the resiliency of the business, in light of recent economic interruptions (e.g., severe storms, global pandemic, etc.)?
- ✓ Are sources of revenue identified and secured?

➤ **Bonus Points (2 possible points)**

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. Economically distressed counties in Maine include Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset and Washington. Geographic reach should be addressed in the introduction section of the application.

Scoring Process. The review team arrive at the review session having scored each application individually. In preparation for the committee review meeting, scores from each of the reviewers will be compiled. During the committee review, the team will discuss all applications and scores will be updated based on the outcomes of discussion to reflect the consensus of the review team. Awards will be made to the applicant(s) receiving the highest number of evaluation points, based upon the applications' satisfaction of the criteria established in this guiding grant document.

Selection and Award. Notification of Awardee selection or non-selection is anticipated to be made in writing by the Department by April 30, 2025. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all applications, award less than the amount requested, or to make multiple awards.

Negotiations. The Department reserves the right to terminate an agreement with a selected respondent whose efforts are significantly different from the application they submitted in response to the advertised grant announcement. The Department may cancel the grant announcement at its sole discretion.

PART V - Other Information

Contract Administration and Conditions.

Term. The department shall enter into a two-year agreement with each successful applicant that receives a grant. The agreement will include performance measures and indicators to evaluate the performance of the collaborative workspace business in carrying out the activities described in its application and any other indicators determined to be necessary to evaluate the performance of the business. Successful applicants shall submit an annual report for the department's review for the duration of the collaborative workspace project.

Contract Document. The Department will enter into the agreement using a contract in the form of a State of Maine Service Contract. The agreement has the following Riders:

Rider A: Scope of Work

Rider B: Terms and Conditions

Rider C: Exceptions

Rider D: Identification of Country in Which Contracted Work Will Be Performed

The Service Contract document may be found on the Office of State Procurement Services website at the following link:

[Service Contract \(SC\) Template \(locked\) 11.13.2024.pdf](#)

Other forms and contract documents commonly used by the State can be found on the Office of State Procurement Services website at the following link:

[Forms | Office of State Procurement Services](#)

Allocation of Funds. Allocation of funds is final upon successful negotiation and execution of the contract, subject to the review and approval of the Office of Business Development (OBD) Director. Contracts are not considered fully executed and valid until signed by the OBD Director and funds are encumbered. A contract cannot be effective until at least 14 days after award notification and approval by State Purchasing.

The Department estimates having contracts in place by May 14, 2025. The State recognizes, however, that the actual contract effective date depends upon completion of the grant application review process, date of formal award notification, length of contract negotiation, and preparation and approval by the Department. Any appeals to the Department's award decision(s) may further postpone the actual contract effective date, depending upon the outcome. The contract effective date may need to be adjusted, if necessary, to comply with mandated requirements.

In providing services and performing under the contract, the successful award recipient shall act independently and not as an agent of the State of Maine.

Standard State Agreement Provisions.

- **Agreement Administration.** Following the award, OBD's Small Business Development Manager will assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as manager during the entire contract period. OBD staff will

be available after the award to consult with award recipients in the finalization of the contract.

- **Payments and Other Provisions.** The State anticipates paying the award recipient based on net 30 payment terms, upon the receipt of an accurate and acceptable invoice. An invoice will be considered accurate and acceptable if it contains a reference to the State of Maine contract number, contains correct pricing information relative to the contract, and provides any required supporting documents, as applicable, and any other specific and agreed-upon requirements listed within the contract that results from this grant announcement.

Other Application Information. Applicant shall take careful note that in evaluating an application submitted in response to this grant announcement, the Department will consider materials provided in the application, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the applicant (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating an applicant's experience and capabilities. The application shall be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the applicant.

The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in applications received in response to this grant announcement.

All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be applicant's responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

Freedom of Information. Following announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this announcement will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq.).

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html>

PART VI Application Cover Page Template (feel free to reproduce, making sure all requested content is included)

State of Maine
Department of Economic & Community Development
Office of Business Development
APPLICATION COVER PAGE
Maine Coworking Development Fund

Enterprise or Business Name:		
Chief Executive - Name/Title:		
Tel:		E-mail:
Coworking Facilities Street Address:		
Coworking Facilities City/State/Zip:		
<i>(provide information requested below if different from above)</i>		
Lead Point of Contact for Application - Name/Title:		
Tel:		E-mail:
Street Address:		
City/State/Zip:		

Requested Amount:	
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- This application and the financial structure contained herein will remain firm for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the application submission.
- No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the application.
- No attempt has been made or will be made by the applicant to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application.
- The undersigned is authorized to enter into contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

Name:		Title:
Authorized Signature:		Date: