



**Department of Economic
& Community Development**

Office of Business Development

**Maine Coworking Development Fund
Award Guidelines & Program Participation
2021**

Applications Due: November 12, 2021 by 5 PM

Submit via email attachment to:

BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov

Clarifying questions accepted through October 25, 2021 at

BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov

For more information:

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Small Business Development Manager

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PART I – Background, purpose, parameters, and eligibility

Background. Maine’s economic leaders, along with forward-thinking leaders around the country, recognize that creating a supportive environment or “ecosystem” for entrepreneurs (those who organize and manage a new enterprise, usually with considerable initiative and risk) is a critical economic development strategy, but one that can be challenging in rural environments. The Kauffman Foundation, the nation’s largest funder of entrepreneurship research and programming, has increasingly invested funds, research and personnel capacity into the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystem building as both a strategy and career path within local economies. Ecosystem building is the long-term act of intentional and inclusive creation of an environment in which entrepreneurs can start companies and thrive.

Within our ecosystem, Maine’s entrepreneurs need four “c” s to succeed: capital, customers, connections and community. In the past 20 years, Maine has worked to build robust systems for funding and marketing (the first two “c”s) – Maine Technology Institute, Finance Authority of Maine, Maine Venture Fund, Maine International Trade Center, tax incentives and Community Development Block Grants, etc. We are now adding to these existing programs ecosystem-building strategies around connections and community with the Coworking Development Fund and program. Coworking spaces, privately-owned collaborative work spaces, have popped up around the country over the last 10 years enabled by technology and the growth of remote work. While the first wave of coworking was predominantly in urban settings, the second wave is increasingly being used as a more rural and small-town economic development strategy.

Coworking spaces build community and connection for early-stage entrepreneurs, freelancers, and remote workers. These spaces foster dreaming, sharing, iteration, and risk-taking through their energy, density of people, and community-building activities. While entrepreneurial ecosystem building and coworking should not be pursued in a vacuum, they are important strategies to complement traditional economic development and business attraction efforts.

In addition, coworking spaces are at the nexus of multiple areas of economic strategy – they are among the amenities that can be offered to tourists, they serve as a hub of information and community for remote workers, and they serve as a signal to entrepreneurs and new businesses that a community understands the value of connection.

Maine currently has 12-15 coworking spaces outside the Portland area, and 5-9 coworking spaces in the Portland/South Portland area by the definition in the Coworking Fund statute. Like any entrepreneurial endeavor, there is “churn” within Maine’s coworking space businesses – with some closing and new ones opening periodically. National research on coworking spaces suggests it takes at least 13 months for coworking spaces to begin to break even and that those who can achieve 50 members and 5,000 square feet have the greatest chance of success.

The Coworking Development Fund and accompanying program will support the success of these spaces by providing financial assistance and opportunity for collaboration and connection between and among Maine's coworking spaces.

Purpose and parameters. The Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) is seeking to partner with collaborative workspace businesses who are serving key roles in their local communities. DECD is accepting applications for award of grants from the Maine Coworking Development Fund as defined in statute and outlined in this award 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. In addition, this document outlines the accompanying activities of convening and connection between and among coworking spaces that is a part of the overall Coworking Program.

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)

DECD has added to these goals the desire for coworking spaces to strengthen capacity as effective economic players in their communities by building in:

- ❖ Good management
- ❖ Rich networks
- ❖ Customized programming

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. 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 \$20,000 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 total amount available for award during this grant cycle is \$200,000. The Department has the right to award all or none of available funds. The awards will be disbursed over two fiscal years (July 1-June 30), with initial funds anticipated to be disbursed in January 2022.

In addition to grant award requirements, award recipients are asked to participate in the Maine Coworking Program, a convening and connecting opportunity. This program will be co-created with the participating collaborative workspace businesses to build community and connection between and among spaces and their owners and amplify the potential for economic impact throughout Maine. The Program will convene meetings and other learning opportunities for participating collaborative spaces and will be open to both award recipients and other collaborative spaces who choose to join. Together we will also create a reciprocal membership opportunity for coworkers to fluidly move between and among coworking spaces around the State.

Eligible enterprises. Anyone running a collaborative workspace business, or planning 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 (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. Introduction
3. Description of who, what, how, when, how much (budget), why
4. Additional informational section, depending on whether 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

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.

Grant request-specific information: Please provide a narrative that addresses the following elements.

- ✓ Who: Please describe the company and project team. You should include 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.
- ✓ What, how and when: 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.
- ✓ How much: 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).
- ✓ Why: 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

AND

If proposing a new business or space

- 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 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 an ongoing concern

- 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 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.

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

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

Application Appendix B

- Two-page 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

By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the organization, its principals, and any subcontractors named in this Application:

- *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.*
- *Have not within three years of submitting the Application 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;*
 - iii. *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; and*
 - iv. *have not within a three (3) year period preceding this Application had one or more federal, state or local government transactions terminated for cause or default.*
- *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 Application 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.*

Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant's Grant Application, at the discretion of the Department.

To the best of my knowledge all information provided in the enclosed Application, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.

Name:	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 5:00 p.m. EST, November 12, 2021, 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	September 30, 2021
Questions Accepted and Answers Posted on website	October 8-November 1, 2021
Application deadline	November 12, 2021 (5 PM EST timestamp)
Applicants notified? of decision	December 15, 2021
Anticipated contract start date	January 11, 2022

Question and Answer Period. Potential applicants may submit questions about the program and grant process in writing to BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov through November 1, 2021. Responses to questions will be compiled and posted on the FAQ section of website on a weekly basis until November 1?. For more information contact SarahJoy at sarahjoy.chaples@maine.gov.

PART IV - Application evaluation and award process and criteria

Evaluation Process General Information.

- An evaluation team of qualified external reviewers 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 section and section of narrative on “why”)**
 - ✓ 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 “who” and “what” sections of 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 enterprise 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 “what, how and when” 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?
- ✓ For new projects, does proposed plan include redevelopment of existing properties 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?
- ✓ 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. Economically distressed areas are defined by Maine Economic Distress Report reporting on 24-month Average Unemployment Rate and Per Capital Personal Income (up-to-date information can be accessed at <http://www.statsamerica.org/distress/distress.aspx>). 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 will be made in writing by the Department by December 15, 2021. 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 Agreement to Purchase Services (BP54). The agreement has the following Riders:

Rider A: Specification of Work to be Performed

Rider B: Method of Payment and Other Provisions

Rider C: Exceptions to Rider B

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

The complete set of standard BP54 contract documents may be found on the Division of Purchases website at the following link:

<http://www.maine.gov/purchases/info/forms/BP54.doc>

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

<http://www.maine.gov/purchases/info/forms.shtml>

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 a contract in place by January 11, 2022. 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 Manager of Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development 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:
Headquarters Street Address:		
Headquarters 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: