

DOMESTIC TRADE GRANT PROGRAM

*Frequently Asked Questions
February 2024*

What is Domestic Trade?

Domestic trade is the exchange of goods within the boundaries of a country. For this program, it refers to the exchange of goods within the United States.

What is the Domestic Trade Program?

Many of our state's small businesses lack the necessary resources to expand their customer bases beyond Maine. The Domestic Trade Program supports Maine's small- to mid-sized businesses working to grow sales across the United States.

Established at the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's Office of Business Development with the support of the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, this pilot program helps companies identify and reach new customers by providing market data and analysis, marketing support, and project grants for sales channel support. These grants are intended to expand Maine-based businesses' activities into new markets - particularly those out of state.

Does my business or organization qualify?

To qualify for a Domestic Trade Grants (DTG), a Maine-based business or organization (501c3, 501c6, Tribe) must be in one of the following industries: Agriculture, Seafood and Food Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Construction and Trades, Fishing, Forestry, Information Services, Logistics, Manufacturing, or Retail/Wholesale. Please see this [link](#) for a helpful list of qualifying industries.

How do you define "Maine-based business"?

"Maine-based business" is defined as a business with 50% or more of its employees and contract employees based in Maine.

Can organizations apply as a collaborative initiative amongst several businesses?

Yes. These efforts must be managed by a single lead applicant. Collaborative initiatives can be organized around industry focus, geographic area, or aligned strategies across multiple impacted and related industries. The projects must have direct involvement in an allowable industry and have a primary focus on increasing sales within the industry. Collaborative initiative applications will be evaluated on the same criteria as individual business applications. Collaborative initiatives will be required to report on the sales that resulted from the funded activities at 6- and 12-month intervals.

What can the funds be used for?

The funds must be used for a specific, defined project over a time-limited period to increase the business' or organization's domestic trade activities (i.e., sales of a Maine product/service in other states). Projects should focus on one or more of the qualified activity areas below:

Sales Channel Support. Businesses and organizations may apply for funding for development/expansion of a sales platform, development of B2B/B2C strategies, and the development of other retail enhancements.

Trade Shows. Businesses and organizations may apply to participate in a trade show(s) to actively increase out-of-state business activity by securing lead generation, business partnerships, and new sales opportunities.

Marketing. Businesses and organizations may apply for funding for consultants or other providers to create/refine a marketing plan to increase domestic sales or a specific marketing campaign focused on out-of-state sales (e.g., traditional media, social media platform support, SEO, etc.)

Technical Assistance. Businesses and organizations may apply for funding of technical assistance targeted at increasing domestic trade activity with the goal of creating discrete, actionable, and measurable strategies to increase domestic sales.

What is the timeline for starting and finishing projects?

The project period will run from the date of the award until December 31, 2025. All projects must be completed, and all associated grant money must be spent by December 31, 2025.

What is needed to apply?

Potential applicants must have the following before starting the application process:

1. Each applicant must obtain a Unique Entity Identification number through [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
2. Each applicant must submit its NAICS code that can be found on the United States Census [website](#).
3. Each applicant must supply a W-9 [form](#) from the IRS.
4. Each applicant must supply a project description and budget for a discrete, actionable, and measurable project that fits one of the four allowable activities. Templates for project description and budget can be found [here](#). Project descriptions must include the project's timeframe and identify a specific project end date. All projects must be complete December 31, 2025.
5. Each applicant is expected to agree to the program guidelines and attest to appropriate statements.

How can I get help with the application process?

You may access a project narrative template [here](#) and a budget template [here](#). Further questions can be directed to 207-387-2919.

Are there translation services available?

Yes. You may call 207-387-2919 and request translation services. You may also send questions and requests to DomesticTrade@gpcog.org.

How will the application be scored?

Only complete applications will be considered. Each application will be reviewed for:

- 1) Demonstration of the entity's capacity to implement outlined activities in the proposal.
- 2) Strength and detail of the proposed project plan.
- 3) Potential to increase domestic sales of goods and services.
- 4) Location of business. Higher scores will be awarded to businesses and organizations in economically disadvantaged areas according to the [United States Census Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) cross referenced with the per capita income by county in 2021. Location scores

may also consider the applicant's supply chain. (As an example, an applicant that sources raw product or is actively supporting the harvest of raw materials from rural counties.)

- 5) Access to previous MJRP funding. Higher scores will be awarded to businesses and organizations that haven't previously accessed funding through the Maine Job & Recovery Plan.
- 6) Alignment with the Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029.

What are the key dates of the Domestic Trade Program grants?

DECD anticipates two rounds of equal funding of approximately \$3 million each.

1st Round (Completed)

2nd Round:

Opens: February, 2024

Application Deadline: April 11, 2024, at 5:00PM

Project Completion by December 31, 2025

Grant awards from the second round of funding are anticipated to be disbursed before the end of June 2024.

What are the requirements/responsibilities of successful awardees?

Each awardee is expected to report on the grant award progress by filling out two follow-up questionnaires, one 6 months after the award is granted and one 12 months after the award. In addition, each awardee is expected to return any unused funds 180 days (about 6 months) after the project end date. By accepting the grant award, the awardee understands the Maine Department of Community and Economic Development may ask permission to use its name, likeness, logo, and project to highlight the success of the Domestic Trade Jumpstart Program.

What is the Greater Portland Council of Governments' role in this program?

The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) is administering the Domestic Trade Grant on behalf of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. GPCOG's responsibilities include providing application assistance, accepting applications, scoring applications, distributing funds, and conducting post-award follow-up. Even though GPCOG is a regional organization, this grant opportunity is for Maine businesses throughout the entire state. No preference will be given to businesses in the GPCOG service area.

What is the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan?

The Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan is Governor Mills' plan, approved by the Legislature, to invest nearly \$1 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to improve the lives of Maine people and families, help businesses, create good-paying jobs, and build an economy poised for future prosperity.

If my application is denied, how can I get more information about why it was denied?

If your application was denied and you wish to get more information as to why your project/application wasn't competitive, please email DomesticTrade@gpcog.org.

If my application is denied, can I submit an appeal?

Yes. You may submit an appeal within two weeks of receiving denial by emailing DomesticTrade@gpcog.org with the applicant's name and "appeal" in the subject line. The appealed application will then be scored by a set of new evaluators and decided accordingly. Please note appeals are on a first-come, first-served basis and are subject to available funding.

Can I apply again if I do not get approved for funding in the first round?

Yes. There are two rounds of funding. Any applicant that was denied during the first round of may resubmit during the second round. Please note that DECD has the discretion to adjust available funding in each phase.

How do I get or find my Unique Entity ID (UEI) number and is there any cost to me to obtain a UEI number?

- There is no cost to obtain a UEI number.
- The UEI number is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
- Existing registered entities can find their Unique Entity ID number by following the steps [here](#).
- New entities can get their UEI number at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and, if required, complete an entity registration.
- The [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) website has a video and a list of FAQs. (Videos can be found halfway down the page.)

Is there a monetary match requirement?

No. Providing a monetary match is not required but could be one component of demonstrating an applicant's capacity to implement the project. There is a "monetary match" line on the template budget as a proposed project's budget may be greater than the grant funding.

Is travel an allowable expense?

Costs related to tradeshow, industry events or matchmakers may include lodging, airfare and meal/incidentals based on current GSA reimbursement rates. Event fees such as booth rental and registration fees may also be submitted. In total, costs incurred will be covered up to \$7,500 per event. The details of the event should be specified, including name of event, date, and location. The date of the event must be within the project period stated in the application.

Is equipment an allowable expense?

Equipment, defined as any item over \$5,000, is not an allowable expense.

What cost documentation is expected in the proposed budget?

Providing details for expenses demonstrates a business capacity to implement the project. It is recommended that the applicant provides hyperlinked URLs to single line items over \$2,500 in the proposed budget.

Can an entity be part of its own application and collaborative initiative?

Yes. The proposed projects must not overlap. If an entity is on more than one application for the same proposed project, both applications will be disqualified.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) support team can be reached via email at DomesticTrade@gpcog.org.