

State of Maine
Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program
RFSI Equipment-Only Grant
Office Hours

**These slides were updated on 9.5.2024 for the
September 5 and September 9 Office Hours and reflect the most current grant RFA
process for the Maine RFSI Equipment-only program.**

<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure.shtml>

Introductions



Michelle Webb, Director of
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Housekeeping

- Please mute your microphone during the presentation.
- This meeting will be recorded. You do not have to have your camera on.
- Ask questions in the meeting chat feature, at any time during the presentation.
- You may turn your mic on to elaborate on your question when it is read by one of the DACF staff team.
- This office hour is primarily for the RFSI Equipment-only grant program.

Agenda

- **New Information related to RFA posting and timeline**
- USDA RFSI Overview
- RFSI Middle of the Supply Chain Definition
- Maine RFSI Equipment-Only Grant FAQs
- Lessons Learned from the Maine RFSI Infrastructure Project Grant (RFA closed April 2024)
- **Questions**

Important Note: the Maine RFSI Equipment-only program is in development. The USDA or Maine Division of Procurement Services may issue further guidelines. The information shared in these office hours is based on current information. Final Maine RFSI Equipment-only Grant guidelines will be provided in the Request for Application (RFA). It is important to read the RFA carefully and follow the directions once it's posted.

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

When the RFA opens, it will be available to download on the Maine Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program webpage.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure.shtml](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure.shtml) highlighted in the address bar. The page header includes a navigation menu with items: About, Animals & Plants, Forest, Geology, Recreation, Farming, Planning, Licensing & Regulations, and Bureaus & Programs. Below the header, the breadcrumb trail reads: DACF Home → Bureaus & Programs → Bureau of Agriculture → Agricultural Resource Development Division → Grants & Loans → Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program. The main content area is titled 'Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program' and includes a section for 'Important Grant Information' and a 'CONTACT US' section.

Important Grant Information

The RFSI Infrastructure Project Grant RFA #202403071 closed on April 29, 2024. We do not anticipate any additional RFSI Infrastructure Project funding.

The RFSI Equipment-Only Grant RFA #TBD is anticipated to open in September 2024.

Please sign up to get notices for grant notices to receive updates on RFSI Equipment-only FAQs Office Hours to be scheduled in September.

CONTACT US

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<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure.shtml>

This is where you will find ALL of the instructions and necessary forms needed to submit an RFSI Equipment-only grant application.

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only Tentative Timeline

- o **September 12, 13, or 16, 2024:** Anticipated date for RFA to open.
- o **Week of September 23, 2024:** Anticipated submitted questions due date.
- o **October 28, 2024:** Anticipated RFA deadline.
- o **March 1, 2025:** The earliest date that contracts will be executed (pending USDA approval).

**This timeline is only an estimate, the posted RFA
will list actual relevant dates**

USDA RFSI Overview

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA AMS) is partnering with state Departments of Agriculture to invest in food supply chain resilience, market access, and value-added processing infrastructure through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI).
- The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) is to build resilience across Maine's middle of the food supply chain. Funds will support expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of Maine-produced food products.
- All RFSI Grant-funded foods and beverages must be for human consumption and be intended to contribute to more and better markets for local producers (no foods intentionally produced or processed for donation to a food bank or pantry network).
- RFSI-funded foods and beverages must be grown, harvested, and processed in the State of Maine by an entity headquartered within the State of Maine. With the exception of the specialty/other food product category, foods and beverages processed on RFSI-funded equipment must contain 51% or more agricultural raw materials grown, harvested, or produced in Maine by weight or volume. Water is excluded from this requirement.
- The USDA defines grown, harvested, and processed to mean farm cultivated and harvested and not wild-caught. No meat, poultry, foraged, or wild-caught ingredients may be included in food products funded in any manner through the RFSI program.
- The Maine Department of Agriculture (DACF) will work in partnership with USDA to make competitive sub-award investments

USDA RFSI Overview

Entities eligible for RFSI Infrastructure Project Grants are:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors.
- Nonprofit organizations **operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities** such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products. Note an organization is only eligible if it is conducting/operating middle-of-the-supply chain activities as a primary role.
- For-profit entities operating middle of the supply chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards.
 - For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the SBA [Size Standards Tool](#)
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle of the supply chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.

Middle of the Supply Chain Definition



<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/images/rfsi-middle-supply-chain.png>

Middle of the Supply Chain Definition

The middle of the supply chain is the stage that occurs after agricultural production and before the product is sold to consumers.

Tomato example: Planting, growing, and harvesting are ineligible. Once the tomato is off the vine, the middle of the supply chain starts. Middle of the supply chain eligible activities include washing and packing the tomato, cold storage, canning and preserving, value-added processing, building/expanding a commercial kitchen for value-added salsa/sauce processing, freezing, and cold/frozen shipping to a restaurant or grocery store. Activities related to retail markets or consumers, such as marketing and promotion, renovation of retail space, or other activities associated with selling tomato products, would be ineligible.

RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

Maine will receive \$3.5 million to offer subaward grants in two categories:

- **RFSI Infrastructure Project Grants**
 - RFA closed in April
 - 5 Projects conditionally awarded
 - Just under \$1M total
- **RFSI Equipment-only Grants**
 - \$2.5 million available
 - \$10,000- \$100,000 per application

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

*No Match
Required*

RFSI Equipment-only Grants
Equipment-only awards will range from \$10,000-\$100,000
Designed for equipment purchases (not associated with facility upgrades, staffing, or non-equipment costs).
The total amount awarded will equal the cost of the special middle-of-the-supply-chain equipment, up to \$100,000.
No match requirement

*No Match
Required*

No Match Required

*No Match
Required*

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

Types of Foods and Beverages Funded

There are five categories of eligible food and beverage products.

- Foods and beverages produced with [specialty crops](#) (farm cultivated and processed for human food consumption),
- Foods and beverages produced with Maine dairy,
- Foods and beverages produced with Maine grains intended for human consumption,
- Foods and beverages produced with Maine farmed aquaculture.
- Maine specialty / other food and beverage products.

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only Grant FAQs

All foods and beverages processed on RFSI-funded equipment must meet the following criteria:

- The majority of ingredients (51 percent or more of all product ingredients by volume, excluding water) are raw agricultural products that are harvested and produced in Maine;
- Substantial transformation (processing) of the ingredients in the product occurred in Maine;
- The headquarters of the company that manufactures the product is in Maine.

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

Products that fall in the **Maine specialty / other food and beverage product** category, and not any other category, must meet the following criteria

- The majority of ingredients (51 percent or more of all product ingredients by volume, excluding water) are raw agricultural products that are harvested and produced in Maine **OR** a statement is provided indicating a smaller composition of Maine grown and harvested ingredients are included in the product and a list and description of which product ingredients are unable to be sourced in Maine (e.g. cocoa, avocado, banana).
- Substantial transformation (processing) of the ingredients in the product occurred in Maine;
- The headquarters of the company that manufactures the product is in Maine.

Maine RFSI Equipment-Only FAQs

- The applicant must be the entity primarily responsible for operating, maintaining, and reporting on the equipment
- Used equipment is allowable
- Multiple pieces of equipment may be allowable
- The applicant must provide a compelling description of how the equipment investment will resolve a challenge or barrier in Maine's middle of the supply chain and help the applicant access more or better markets.



Lessons Learned: RFSI Infrastructure Project RFA

Total # applicants: 34

Total # conditionally awarded: 5

Total # ineligible (did not meet pass/fail criteria): 15

Total \$ amount requested: \$3,982,488.50

Total \$ amount conditionally awarded: \$992,455.64

Lessons Learned: RFSI Infrastructure Project RFA

Potential applicants may not directly ask questions about an open grant RFA.

All questions should be submitted via the Submitted Questions Form that is provided as an Appendix to the RFA

APPENDIX A SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FORM

State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
RFA# TBD

This form should be used by Applicants when submitting written questions to the RFA Coordinator.

If a question is not related to any section of the RFA, enter "N/A" under the RFA Section & Page Number. Add additional rows as necessary. Submit this document in WORD format, not PDF.

Applicant Entity Name:

RFA Section & Page Number	Question

Lessons Learned: RFSI Infrastructure Project RFA

Applicants should carefully read the scoring criteria rubric published in the RFA

Scoring Criteria	Points Available
1) Pass/Fail Scoring Criteria #1	Pass/Fail
2) Pass/Fail Scoring Criteria #2 a.	Pass/Fail
3) Scorable Criteria TBD	<u>7</u>
4) Scorable Criteria TBD	<u>3</u>

Lessons Learned: RFSI Infrastructure Project RFA

Applicants should make sure they can open all of the required forms linked in the RFA

Contact the RFA Coordinator if you are unable to open a file.

Application completeness and adherence to the format outlined in the RFA is important.

PART TBD APPLICATION FORM

Applicants must use the Forms embedded below to submit their application in response to this RFA.

The TBD forms may be obtained in a Word (.docx) format by double clicking on the document icons below.



The TBD Form may be obtained in an Excel (.xlsx) format by double clicking on the document icon below.



RFSI Equipment-Only Questions



Thank You!



Contact: Michelle.T.Webb@maine.gov

**A copy of the Questions and Answers from the RFSI
Office hours will be posted online**

<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure.shtml>