

Business Recovery and Resilience Fund

May 2024

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Definitions

Business Resilience:

- 1) the physical safety of properties, assets, and inventories from extreme weather;
- 2) robustness and redundancy in supply chains and other business-related dependencies, like utilities, internet, etc.;
- 3) safety of employees at work
- 4) long-term viability of the business model to changing climate conditions and policy environments.

What is the Program?

The Maine Legislature established the Business Recovery and Resiliency Fund and funded it with \$10,000,000 to provide grant opportunities to businesses and organizations, including nonprofit organizations, affected by the specified severe weather-related events. These events include the December 18, 2023 storm, the January 10, 2024 storm or the January 13, 2024 storm. Projects may include a recovery component for damage sustained and must include efforts to increase business resilience to future storms and other climate conditions.

What are the programs goals?

This program provides grants to businesses and nonprofit organizations impacted by the December 18, 2023 storm, the January 10, 2024 storm or the January 13, 2024 storm for recovery, rebuilding and investments in more resilient infrastructure. Infrastructure project types may include infrastructure upgrades, improvements, or installation of drainage systems, moving electrical or business equipment, relocating the business to a more protected location within Maine and investing in additional insurance.

The program is not intended to replace lost profits or revenue but rather to help businesses remain viable and resilient against future weather-related events. The top priority is to ensure that all businesses are reopened.

How much funding is available and when can awardees expect funding?

Awards are expected to be capped at \$100,000 with a minimum award of \$2,500. The award caps are subject to change based on need and volume of applications.

The Maine Department of Economic & Community Development has the discretion to award all of the funds or to award fewer awards than planned, based on the quality and completeness of the applications and the demonstration of financial need.

Applications will be accepted until 11:59 on June 25, 2024. It is expected that award winner will receive funding in August.

What are the application criteria?

Project rating criteria may include the viability of the business or nonprofit organization, the ability to match grant funds and the efficacy of the recovery and resilience plan offered in the application. The award criteria must require that recipients demonstrate that the damage or project costs are not covered by Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster funds, or other insurance, and that the recipient has exhausted all emergency relief funding programs currently available. The administration of the funds must include sufficient documentation and record-keeping requirements to provide assurance that funds have been awarded consistent with the program guidelines and used for the intended purpose.

In order to qualify, business/organizations must:

Be physically located in the state of Maine and have had damages in one or more of the disaster declaration storms during the winter of 2023-2024. Those storms include December 18, 2023, January 10, 2024 and/or January 13, 2024.

What will be needed to complete the application?

You will need the following information about your business/organization (and all affiliated businesses/organizations) before you begin your Maine Business Recovery and Resilience Fund application:

- Federal Employer Identification Number or Social Security Number
- Type of business/organization (non-profit or for-profit)
- Principal office address
- “Doing business as” (DBA) name
- Applicant physical address, mailing address (if different) and other contact information
- For businesses: Ownership percentage of each individual owner with greater than 25% equity
- Documentation of any other monies awarded in response to the storms in question (please include all recovery monies received or applied for, to date, including FEMA individual assistance, SBA EIDL program loans, and any other programs)

- A prepared, electronic Maine Vendor Authorization Form/W-9 in the event your business/organization is selected for a grant (https://www.maine.gov/osc/sites/maine.gov/osc/files/inline-files/vendor_ME_W9v5.pdf)

Which expenses are allowable?

- Building and facility repair
- Trail and outdoor recreational infrastructure
- Moving electrical infrastructure (such as an electrical panel above the waterline) or moving business equipment
- Relocating the business to a more protected location within Maine
- Investing in additional insurance

What are some examples of unallowable expenses?

- Depreciation expense
- Entertainment
- Lobbying
- Goods and Services for Personal Use
- Fines, Penalties, Damages and other Settlements.

What is the application timing and deadline?

Applications will be accepted starting May 16 through 11:59 PM June 25, 2024. Visit the online application portal to complete the form electronically. You will receive email confirmation that your application has been received. If you are unable to use the on-line portal, please contact us for assistance using the contact information provided below.

Is the information I provide protected?

The security of your sensitive information is important to us which is why all information is stored securely and only accessible by personnel designated by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. All sensitive information, including Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is encrypted at-rest and in-transit throughout the process. Information collected by this system will not be shared or used for any other purposes besides grant selection and distribution except as may be required by Maine's Freedom of Access Act, 1 M.R.S Section 401 et seq. It is likely that some of the information provided will be accessible under Maine's Freedom of Access Act (1 M.R.S. Section 401 et seq.); however, proprietary information, tax or financial information, and PII will not be disclosed.

After submitting your application, a confirmation email shall be sent with a copy of the submitted application excluding all sensitive PII.

If I am having trouble or concerns, who can I reach out to for assistance?

Please call: 1-800-872-3838 and press 3
Or email: BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov

Please allow up to three business days for someone to get back to you as DECD is expecting to experience a high volume of calls and emails.

Questions from the Webinar

Are Home Owner Associations allowed to apply?

No, as homes and home-based businesses are not permitted, HOAs do not meet the guidelines/intent of the grant.

Are Hotels and Short Term Rentals allowed to apply?

Businesses licensed as a hotels are permitted to apply as a business. Short Term Rentals such as those utilizing AirBnB are not. The distinction being personal and private property.

Are farms a home-based business?

No, farms are not considered a home-based business. Agriculture businesses are allowed to apply for the grant with projects that increase the resilience of the farm/business.

What if a building is both commercial and residential?

Grant funds could be applied to the commercial component of the building. The applicant will need to show that the benefit is going to the commercial side (i.e. improvements are to the first floor where there is only commercial space)

Are generators an allowable expense?

Yes, generators that will increase the resilience of the business or nonprofit organization would be an allowable expense. Applicants will need to use their narrative to provide context as to how it will increase resilience.

Is dune repair an acceptable project?

If a dune is owned by the businesses or nonprofit they would be welcome to apply and provide a narrative. This does not guarantee funding but the project would not be excluded if a justification was accepted.

Should the business who is leasing the space or the property owner apply?

This funding is intended for businesses so in most circumstances the business occupying the space would be the default. A letter of support from the property owner would be advised. There may be circumstances where the business that owns the property would make more sense to be the applicant but this should not be done to sidestep an ineligible business.

Added 5.31.2024

Is there a reporting requirement and a timeline to complete the project?

We expect to have reporting requirements due within a year but that will be defined in the State contract (after award letters are sent out).

Is the April 3-5 storm that received a disaster declaration for Cumberland and York Counties included?

No. Only the storms outline in the grant guidelines are eligible. Expenses from other storms can not be counted toward the damage/match component of this grant.

What is the Match Requirement?

Applicants must provide at least 1 to 1 Match Requirement

The match may include:

1. Cash – in the form of costs paid by the project sponsor and submitted as match instead of for reimbursement.
2. Value of volunteer labor, equipment, and materials
 - a. Value of volunteer labor may be calculated using two methods, depending on the type of labor:
 - i. Professionals – If a person is professionally skilled in the work being donated to the project (i.e., a welder working on a steel trail bridge), the wage rate this individual is normally paid for performing this service may be charged to the project. The rate cannot exceed prevailing wage (excluding common laborer) and/or equipment charges determined by the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). A list of DOT labor and equipment rates can be found at: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/csd/laborrates/>
 - ii. All other volunteer (unskilled) labor – Will be charged at the current Independent Sector rate for Maine. https://independentsector.org/resource/vovt_details/

iii. Donated equipment value may be based on current FEMA rates.
https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_schedule-of-equipment-rates_2021.pdf Volunteer labor, donated equipment and materials may be used as match only and is never a reimbursable item.

b. Volunteer labor must be tracked by logs signed by the volunteers and a supervisor. Volunteer equipment and mileage log templates are available.

3. ***Other state and local grants, and certain federal grants.***

Eligible Project Costs

a. Employee salary for “on-the-ground” project work.

Ineligible Project Match Costs

- a. Food.
- b. Expenses related to the promotion of the organization.
- c. Advertising.
- d. Fundraising.
- e. Features that are ornamental and do not have direct benefit to trail users.
- f. Lodging (unless associated with Maine Conservation Corps expenses).
- g. Clothing (T-shirts, hats, etc.).
- h. General overhead / indirect costs (office rent, utilities, office supplies, postage, administrative time managing the grant or general organizational needs, etc.).