The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is offering competitive grants to local entities for conducting locally led courtesy boat inspection programs. The following are key components for the 2024 grant process:

* Applications must be submitted directly to Maine DEP no later than **March 4th, 2024**.
* Applicants must complete or update the State of Maine Vendor Form which requires a Tax Identification Number (TIN). Grant funds will **only** be processed if the address on the invoice matches the address listed on the grantee’s current Vendor Form **even when using EFT.** The address is used for verification and to mail IRS 1099 forms.
* Grantees must provide inspection data electronically to DEP regularly throughout the season. Grant payments are contingent upon DEP receiving electronic inspection data by the timeline laid out in this Notice.

##### The Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) in Bridgton will continue to assist administering the grant program in 2024. DEP will evaluate the applications and issue payments while LEA will receive and review final reports for completeness. Boat inspection trainings will be conducted by LEA following protocol developed by DEP and LEA found in the CBI Handbook.

##### I. Eligible Organizations and Guidelines

##### Eligible organizations include municipal and county governments, quasi-municipal organizations (including water districts) and 501c (3) organizations.

##### All grantees must have a State of Maine Vendor Form on file with the state which provides the state with your organization’s Tax Identification Number (TIN) and payment address. The Vendor Form and instructions are being sent to you with the Grant Notification and Application forms.

All grant money received under the program must be used for the sole purpose of running a CBI Program. Grant funds may NOT be used to purchase food, conduct plant surveys or rent port-a-potties and other ramp improvement materials.

##### *Infested Lakes – Submitting an application is not necessary*

##### Associations running inspection programs on infested lakes will be contacted directly by DEP regarding funding for a Courtesy Boat Inspection Program. These groups are required to provide inspection data electronically and a final report, the same as groups of un-infested lakes, including a budget showing how funds were spent.

Note: We highly recommend that groups or organizations conducting a Courtesy Boat Inspection Program obtain general liability insurance.

# II. Award Criteria

Evaluation of the following criteria and the amount of available funds will determine the award amount for a specific application:

* Vulnerability to infestation per DEP analysis. This criterion will be given greater consideration in the scoring process from 2024 on. The Vulnerability Analysis can be accessed here: <https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/vulnerability.html>
* Number of ramps where inspections will occur and number of inspections per ramp in 2023 (if applicable).
* Inspection rate (number of inspections per hour) at each ramp in 2023 (per DEP inspection database).
* 100% Total match: cash and in-kind match as percentage of the total grant award.
* Preference will be given to those groups that completed all of the previous year’s grant requirements in a timely fashion.

# III. DEP Expectations of Applicants seeking funds

Submit application and vendor form to DEP

Uninfested lake applicants must submit the CBI application (separate document provided with this Notice) to DEP by **March 4th, 2024**. Applications are not required from infested lake programs.

**Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT, aka Direct Deposit) is required for the 2024 season**. The required EFT forms will be included in the application materials. EFT does not decrease processing time but will reduce risk and time spent using the USPS to deliver checks.

#### Inspector Training

#### Grant recipients (from both infested and uninfested lakes) must have at least one person trained in 2024 by LEA staff using DEP/LEA protocol. The objective is to have one person in each group well-versed in the inspection protocol who will train individual inspectors when they are hired.

Inspect Boats and Associated Equipment for Aquatic Species

Grant recipients shall staff boat ramps identified in their application, preferably at high use times. The staff are to offer voluntary boat inspections to boaters. In the case of lakes with known invasive aquatic plant infestations, inspections shall occur at boat access sites directed by Maine DEP.

Inspectors shall engage boaters in a cordial manner and, upon boaters’ permission, inspect boats and associated equipment. The inspector shall collect and record data necessary for the boat inspection form. The inspector shall also encourage boaters to inspect boats and equipment on their own (self-inspection) and shall generally explain the threat posed by invasive aquatic species.

Provide Local match

All Groups must provide a minimum of 100% match, some of which must include cash.

The match must be shown on the final report. The proportion of match to award in 2023 (relative to award) will impact the amount of grant received the following year.

Eligible match activities and items include donations of time or materials and cash expenses (not from grant funds) directly related to the CBI program such as: volunteer services for coordination and inspections, local funds for paid CBI employee hours, data entry, payroll costs, copying, postage, and administrative supplies. Match expenses are not paid with grant money.

If using mileage for match, the applicant must use the **State mileage rate of $0.50 per mile**. **The match rate for volunteer services, previously $26.77/hr., is now $28.89** (posted at <http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time> as of February 2024).

Submission of inspection data and reports including financial information

* Grant recipients are required to enter CBI data using the Survey123 CBI app created by DEP and the data must be kept up-to-date.
* Some portion of inspection data collected through the July 4th weekend must be submitted to DEP by July 9th, 2024, approval of the initial payment. Payment will not be provided if no inspections are entered by the July 9th due date.
* Invoices for initial grant payments will not be processed after July 12th. In this case the entire award will be provided upon receipt and approval of the final report.
* Final grant funds will be released once all inspection data and a final report are submitted and approved by DEP. Invoices for the final grant payment will not be processed after December 6th, 2024.
* The final report is to be sent to LEA by the deadline found in section IV. To help you track the information needed for the final report, understand that the information in the application (separate document) is the same information required for the final report. The final report form will be sent later in the season. See report deadlines in section IV below.

# IV. Key Dates and Payment Guidelines

Grant payments and reporting (PLEASE BE AWARE OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE PAYMENT PROCESS IN 2024):

There will be two payments for the 2024 season under the following guidelines:

* Invoices for initial and final payments must be generated by the grantee.
* Jpegs and signatures drawn using the Adobe pen or marker tool will not be accepted. Grantees must a.) Use the official Adobe signature tool or, b.) provide a handwritten signature on a physical copy which is then scanned and converted to pdf or mailed to DEP.
* Initial invoices for seventy-five percent of the award can be submitted upon entry of initial inspections into the CBI Survey123 app. Inspections can be entered by the grantee at any time after their coordinator has completed the CBI training for the 2024 season and may be conducted by an employee or volunteer.
* Grantees requiring funds prior to the completion of initial inspection efforts will need to submit a letter stating proof of hardship (i.e., unable to hire personnel). Financial information may be required.
* The final payment of twenty-five percent will be paid upon receipt of the remaining inspection data and approval of the final report.
* The final report must be submitted to LEA by November 8th, 2024, unless permission is obtained from DEP. The final payment may be forfeited if the final report and/or electronic inspection data is not submitted by this deadline.

# Application Deadline

* **Reports and Applications must use Excel or an equivalent spreadsheet program.** The application and final report are available as an Excel file. For your convenience the Excel application form pre-populates cells based on entered information in the first table.
* **Please note that an online submission option using Survey123 is being developed for the 2024 final report. Should this become a viable option, groups will be encouraged to utilize the online submission form.**
* The deadline for applications is **Friday, March 4th, 2024**. Decisions on applications will be made by **April 12th, 2024.**
* Submit the completed application to Chris Reily, DEP at chris.reily@maine.gov

If updating your Vendor Form, submit it as soon as possible; do not wait to submit it with your application.

Contact Chris at (207) 815-8085 with questions