



FARMER TO FARMER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS 2026

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A: INTRODUCTION

The Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center (MAIC) was established in 1988 as one of the original Industry Outreach Centers under the Maine Science and Technology Commission (MSTC), created through LD 2193, An Act to Establish the Maine Science and Technology Commission.

Our Vision

We envision Maine as a leader in sustainable aquaculture, advancing the production of aquatic species that benefits our communities and the planet.

Our Mission

We advance **economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable** aquaculture as an innovative and competitive solution that contributes to food and economic security, provides goods and services, sustains livelihoods for healthy Maine communities, and supports ecosystem conservation.

The goal of this Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange program is to enable Maine's aquaculturists to undertake technology and knowledge transfer by visiting farmers elsewhere in the U.S. or internationally. For the purposes of this Request for Applications, we define "industry" to include both growers and companies that provide goods and services to industry.

B. FUNDING, DURATION, AND ELIGIBILITY

Funding:

This is a competitive program and we cannot guarantee that all applicants will be awarded. If you are dependent on this funding, please do not make travel reservations until you have received notification that you have been successful in securing funding.

- We anticipate the majority of awards will not exceed \$3,000 per person, and that only 1-2 people per business will travel.
- To be considered, groups greater than 2 people should provide detail on why each person provides unique value to the transfer of knowledge and/or technology to Maine.
- There is a limited amount of funding available for international travel. We anticipate the majority of awards being made for farmer exchanges within the U.S.
- Funding to support conference attendance is allowable only if it is part of a Farmer-to-Farmer exchange.
- Farmer-to-Farmer exchanges are intended to fund trips outside of Maine. Maine-based travel may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Proposals will be evaluated based on anticipated return on investment with respect to impact of the new knowledge/technology on Maine's aquaculture sector.

The award will only cover travel, accommodation, and per diem costs. It will NOT cover salary, equipment, or materials and supplies. The documented expenses will be released as reimbursements.

MAIC will not make travel reservations or bookings on behalf of the applicant.

Timing & Duration:

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. All travel must be completed within 12 months.

Eligibility Criteria (who can apply):

- ✓ Applicants must be members of the Maine aquaculture industry: growers, or companies that provide goods and services to growers. Applicants must be established businesses.
- ✓ We strongly encourage industry members to collaborate with other growers, industry members, or partners. We encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, educational levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this opportunity.
- ✓ Including an extension or applied research partner in the exchange trip has been shown to increase the transfer of knowledge to Maine's aquaculture sector. If you would like help to identify an appropriate extension/applied research partner, please reach out to Sydney Avena (see contact details at the end of this document).
- ✓ Applicants must be willing to present the skills/innovations/knowledge that they acquire:
 - At a Zoom-based webinar to other farmers in Maine (all applicants),
 - At other virtual or in-person training programs for farmers (if invited),

- At the biennial Maine Aquaculture Research, Development & Education Summit (co-sponsored by MAIC and University of Maine Aquaculture Research Institute) (if invited), and
 - At the biennial Northeast Aquaculture Conference & Exposition (NACE).
- ✓ Participants must document their exchange through photos, videos, and/or summary reports and share their findings with assistance from MAIC. Results will be shared via the web, social media and industry conferences.

Match Policy

MAIC's grant policy requires a 1:1 match of all requested funds. For the Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange Program, participants' time is considered in-kind match and no further match funding is required.

C. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Applications must contain the following elements and sub-sections described below. Applications that fail to include all the following elements will not be reviewed. Proposals must be limited to a maximum of 5 pages, including the budget and budget justification (12-point font, double spaced, 1-inch top and bottom margins). **Email completed applications to info@maineaquaculture.org and CC savena@maineaquaculture.org with the following subject line: LAST NAME, FIRST INITIAL- Farmer to Farmer Exchange App. (Example: *Smith, J- Farmer to Farmer Exchange App*).**

Applicant Details:

- Name(s) of the applicant and the people who will participate in the exchange
- Business(es)
- Position(s)
- Contact information (phone and email of applicant(s))

Details about the Exchange:

- Who will you visit (Name, Contact Details)? Do you have permission/agreement from your host(s)? You must include a **letter of support from your host(s)** in your application. (An email will suffice).
- Groups greater than 2 people should provide detail on why each person provides unique value to the transfer of knowledge and/or technology to Maine.
- How long will your exchange trip be?
- When will you travel?
- What do you hope to learn? Please provide some specifics. What type of process/technology(s) are you hoping to learn about? What bottleneck/barrier(s) are you hoping to solve?

Impact:

- What are the anticipated results/impacts of the exchange trip? For your business? For Maine's aquaculture sector more broadly?

Intellectual property considerations:

Our funding requires public access to project results. Please clearly identify and describe proprietary aspects of your proposed visit, and which, if any, would have to be maintained as proprietary information and not part of the public aspects of the project.

Budget & Budget Justification:

Applicants must include a detailed itemized budget of what the travel funds will be used for. The award will only cover travel, accommodation, and per diem costs. It will NOT cover salary, equipment, or materials and supplies.

Please note: *The expenses will be released as reimbursements; MAIC will not make travel reservations or bookings on behalf of the applicant.*

The program is unable to pay for first class or business class travel.

MAIC's *per diem* rates are based on those used by the State of Maine (fiscal year 2025):

Breakfast \$16/day

Lunch \$19/day

Dinner \$28/day

Incidentals \$5/day

TOTAL: \$68/day

Example Budget:

Name of Person(s) Traveling	Location(s)	Item	Rate	Cost
E.g. John Smith	Portland, ME to Seattle, WA return	Airfare	\$200/flight x 2 persons	\$400
	Seattle	Hotel	\$180/night x 2 persons x 2 nights	\$720
	Wenatchee	Hotel	\$180/night x 2 persons x 2 nights	\$720
		<i>Per Diem</i> (meals and incidentals)	\$68/day x 2 persons (\$136/day) x 4 days	\$544
		Mileage	500 miles@ \$0.70/mile	\$350
			TOTAL	\$2,734

Please include the following information in the budget justification:

- (1) Traveler(s) [*names and staff positions*] to visit [*name of farm/organization*]
- (2) Travel dates
- (3) Details of each stop

D. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS AND EVALUATION

Review Process:

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Evaluation:

The evaluation of applications is a multi-step process:

1. Applications will be reviewed by MAIC staff to ensure the application is complete.
2. Once complete, the applications will be reviewed by a review committee.
3. The applicant may be asked to provide further information.
4. The applicant will be notified of the application outcome.

E. CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the farmer to farmer exchange program or how to apply, contact Sydney Avena, savena@mainequaculture.org.