



FARMER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

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 Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center is excited to continue supporting the Farmer Community Engagement Grant Program. The goal of this program is to support growers in building social license for their farms by providing financial support for community engagement events.

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 event-related purchases until you have received notification that you have been successful in securing funding. Farmers will be reimbursed for **up to \$650** for direct costs associated with hosting a community event.

Proposals will be evaluated based on anticipated return on investment with respect to impact of the proposed event on increasing community awareness and public education of aquaculture.

The award will only cover direct costs associated with hosting the event. This can include costs of the venue, non-alcoholic refreshments, speakers (for educational events), or educational materials. It will NOT cover salary, and CANNOT be used for events with an entry fee, or any event where there is sale of farm product to the public. The primary purpose of the event is stakeholder engagement. However, funds CAN be used to cover the costs of farm products that are provided by the grant recipient from their own farm at the event (market rate), but these products must be provided to event attendees free of charge. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all appropriate licensing requirements are met for distribution of product. This award will not cover costs associated with holding a scoping session or any activities legally mandated by the permitting process. MAIC will not make purchases or bookings on behalf of the applicant.

Timing & Duration:

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis (monthly). Applications will be reviewed monthly at the beginning of each month.

Eligibility Criteria (who can apply):

- ✓ Applicants must be Maine aquaculture 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 levels, and socioeconomic statuses to apply for this opportunity.

Match Policy:

It is MAIC policy that all funding is matched 1:1. To be eligible for this grant, applicants must detail match, meaning for every \$1 of grant funding received, the applicant must contribute an additional \$1 from their own funds towards the project costs. The match can be one or a combination of the following:

- Simple cash match: Applicants must provide a cash match equivalent to the grant award amount.
- In-kind match: The required match can be provided through in-kind contributions, such as staff time, with documented valuation.

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 3 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- Community Engagement Grant App. (Example: *Smith, J- Community Engagement Grant App*).

Applicant Details:

- Name of the applicant(s)
- Business(es)
- Position(s)
- Contact information (phone and email of applicant(s))

Details about the Event:

- What is the purpose of the event (e.g. foster social connections with stakeholders, educational, etc), and why are you planning it (e.g. upcoming lease expansion, to improve relationship with a specific stakeholder group, etc)?
- Who will attend? (e.g. is this open to the public? Invitation only?)
- Where will you hold the event?
- When will you hold this event (estimated)?
- How will this event help to build social license for your farm?

Budget & Budget Justification:

Please include at least three columns in the budget (requested funds, cash match, and in-kind match). Applicants must include a detailed itemized budget of what the funds will be used for. The award will only cover direct costs associated with hosting the event. This can include costs of the venue, refreshments, speakers (for educational events), or educational materials. It will NOT cover salary, and CANNOT be used for events with an entry fee, or any event where there is sale of farm product to the public. Funds CAN be used to cover the costs of farm products provided by the applicant for the event (market rate), but these products must be provided to event attendees free of charge. This award will not cover costs associated with holding a scoping session or any activities legally mandated by the permitting process. MAIC will not make purchases or bookings on behalf of the applicant.

Please note: The expenses will be released as reimbursements; MAIC will not make purchases on behalf of the applicant.

Example Budget:

Item	Requested Funds	Match funds	
		Cash Match	In-Kind Match
Surry Community Center	\$85/half day		
Oysters (provided by applicant's farm)	\$300		

Speaker Honorarium & Travel Costs	\$75		
Print-outs (we already have some printed out to contribute as in-kind match)	\$50		\$150
Non-alcoholic refreshments, cups	\$35	\$55	
Employee time at the event (4 employees for three hours; 3 at \$25/hour and 1 at \$30/hour)			\$390
TOTALS	\$595	\$55	\$540
TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED			\$595
TOTAL MATCH			\$595

Please include the following information in the budget justification:

- (1) Name of applicant(s) and farm(s)
- (2) Estimated date of event
- (3) Estimated number of attendees

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, applications will be reviewed by a review committee. All applications received by the end of each month will be reviewed together.
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 Community Engagement Grant Program or how to apply, contact Sydney Avena at savena@mainequaculture.org.