



**Propel Aquaculture Fund Mini Grants 2023  
Request For Applications (RFA)**

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## 1. Program Purpose and Background

FocusMaine is seeking applications for Propel Aquaculture Mini Grants as defined in this Request for Application (RFA) document. This document provides the application to be used for submission, instructions for submitting applications, and the procedure and criteria by which the awarded Applicants will be selected.

### 1.1. Program Objectives

The Propel Aquaculture Mini Grant Fund (the Fund) was established by FocusMaine to strengthen the aquaculture value chain in the State of Maine. The Fund is supported by a grant from the Department of Marine Resources.

The goals of the Fund are to:

- A. Increase the number of Maine aquaculture businesses that have the potential to grow, expand their markets, and create sustainable jobs.
- B. Help Maine aquaculture businesses increase production capacity and capability to grow volume/sales in existing and new markets.

### 1.2. Use of Funds

Propel Aquaculture Fund Mini Grants may be used for a variety of purposes that help aquaculture businesses increase revenues and lead to job growth through production/processing capacity or capability improvements. Funds should support aquaculture business growth.

Examples of acceptable uses of funds include purchasing materials to enable expansion, equipment, infrastructure upgrades, consulting to support operations improvements, or food safety certification.

FocusMaine is open to and encourages innovative projects that show a new solution to an old problem, create a new product, use a unique production method, or commercialize a researched product or process. FocusMaine defines innovation broadly and supports innovation in the form of any new ideas or practices, and encourages applicants to think about how their projects may fit into the innovation category.

Projects should be “shovel ready” and be deployable within 3 months of award (April to the end of June). Funds will need to be expended within this 3-month time range. Should additional funding be required for the proposed project, the applicant should have additional funds already secured or a viable approach to securing the necessary funding within the grant period.

## 2. Award Information

FocusMaine anticipates making multiple awards as a result of the RFA process. For this round of Propel Aquaculture Mini Grant applications, up to \$90,000 has been allocated.

Individual aquaculture companies, as defined below, are eligible for a minimum award of \$5,000 and a maximum award of \$10,000.

## 3. Eligibility

Eligible applicants are:

- Maine aquaculture companies defined as producers that breed, grow, and harvest fish, shellfish, or aquatic plants **or**
- Companies that produce value-added aquaculture products

Eligible applicants must:

- Operate within the geographical boundary of the State of Maine
- Source greater than 51% of aquaculture raw materials from Maine aquaculture growers if a value-added producer
- Have a minimum 2021 or 2022 revenue of \$75,000

Eligible projects are for purchasing materials to enable expansion, equipment, infrastructure upgrades, consulting to support operations improvements, or food safety certification. Ideally, projects should contribute to the creation of jobs and/or increase sales in the long term. Grant funds are for future purchases and cannot be used as reimbursement for prior purchases. FocusMaine highly encourages project applications that demonstrate innovation.

## 4. Application and Submission Information

### 4.1. *Application Components*

#### A. General Information

B. Company Profile: The applicant will be asked to provide a company profile that at the minimum includes the number of years in business and the number of full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees.

C. Scope of Work: Applicants will be required to provide a project description, an explanation of the need for the project, and goals/anticipated outcomes for the project.

The need for the project should demonstrate why the project is a company priority and the competitive advantage the project will provide.

- D. Budget Proposal: Applicant will be required to provide an itemized budget and a budget justification/narrative. A budget template is available in Appendix A. Costs incurred prior to the grant award period are not eligible to be included in the budget request.
- E. Annual Revenue: Applicants are asked to provide their 2021 or 2022 tax return to demonstrate an annual revenue greater than \$75,000.

#### 4.2. *Submission Process*

Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on March 03, 2023. Submissions containing original applications, or any additional or revised application files, received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception.

If the need arises, FocusMaine may reopen this RFA.

Only applications received via the application form will be considered. We recommend that you have application materials collected and application answers written out in their final form prior to entering anything into the application form. You can download the application form to review [here](https://focusmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Propel-Aquaculture-Fund-Application-Preview.pdf) (<https://focusmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Propel-Aquaculture-Fund-Application-Preview.pdf>).

FocusMaine assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete form submission and receipt.

The application form can be accessed [here](https://forms.gle/4LBbbBWDHajhRdEx9) (<https://forms.gle/4LBbbBWDHajhRdEx9>).

#### 4.3. *Questions*

All questions regarding this RFA should be directed to [Courtney@focusmaine.org](mailto:Courtney@focusmaine.org). Questions will be accepted from February 06, 2023, until March 01, 2023.

A webinar on this funding opportunity will be held on February 08, 2023, from 12:00-1:00 PM. Preregistration is required and can be done [here](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_S-zYdhN4RqnlI46tlwRgA) ([https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_S-zYdhN4RqnlI46tlwRgA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_S-zYdhN4RqnlI46tlwRgA)). The purpose of the webinar is to provide information about the grant program, answer and/or field questions, and clarify for potential applicants any aspect of the RFA requirements. Although attendance at the webinar is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged that interested applicants attend. If you are unable to attend the webinar, the recording will be posted on the FocusMaine website.

## 5. Application Review Criteria

Scoring Criteria	Points Available
Criteria 1: General Information/Eligibility	Pass/Fail
Criteria 2: Viability of the Project	15
Criteria 3: Potential to create jobs and/or increase sales	20
Criteria 4: Innovation	15
Criteria 5: Scope of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project Description</li><li>• Need for Project</li><li>• Goals/anticipated outcomes</li></ul>	35
Criteria 6: Budget	15
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100 Points</b>

While not an official scoring criteria, FocusMaine aims to fund applicants geographically distributed across the State of Maine. Applicants from geographic areas that are not traditionally funded for aquaculture or business development projects are encouraged to apply. Additionally, FocusMaine encourages applications from historically underrepresented groups, including individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, individuals with mental/physical disabilities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

An evaluation team, composed of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the applications received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFA.

The grant review committee will review all applications that meet the eligibility requirements in Criteria 1 and will make funding recommendations to FocusMaine. FocusMaine reserves the right to make the final funding decision.

FocusMaine takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation.

## 6. Award and Administration Information

Notification of conditional funding decisions will be made in writing by FocusMaine. FocusMaine anticipates that all applicants will be notified by April 2023 via email.

Awardees will be expected to utilize the funds by June 30, 2023, and to provide receipts as a record of the use of the funds. Awardees will also be expected to provide a narrative report to FocusMaine including how funds were used, the benefit of the funds, and relevant photographs. Awardees will be asked to consent to be contacted a year later to complete a brief survey to track the award's impact.

**7. Appendix**

*Appendix A: Sample Budget Summary Template*

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Project Title

Organization Name

**Budget Summary**

	<b><i>Amount</i></b>	<b><i>Budget Narrative</i></b>
Supplies		
Equipment		
Contractual Services		
Other Project Costs (please specify)		
<b>TOTAL</b>		