

Entrepreneur Ecosystem Building in Rural Maine (Congressionally Directed Spending Request)

Timeline and Details- October 3, 2022

Statement from our request to Senator King and Senator Collins: Community and quality of place is what is important to most taxpayers. Small businesses and Main Streets provide those desired places. As remote working increases and small businesses continue to start up in rural and urban areas in Maine, now is the time to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem; One that will guide and provide resources to those risk takers eager to be their own boss and start their own businesses, create jobs, support the tax base in municipalities all while adding to the character and sense of place that people are seeking. Place-based strategies and place-based organizations, like the nine Main Street and Affiliate Programs in this request, can spur economic revitalization, build rural resilience, and foster inclusive, vibrant, and connected rural places for the future.

This is identified as a priority in the State of Maine's 10 Year Strategic Economic Plan and aligns with the goals and needs of the state. This program will have long term lasting impact and provide the opportunities our Main Streets and Affiliate Communities need to reach their economic potential. They can connect small business owners and entrepreneurs to capital and skills training, critical regional and state government and NGO resources, or support new entrepreneurs with low barrier and low-cost incubator spaces. They have relationships. As the Brookings Institute, Bass Center stated in recent entrepreneurship research, "Main Street programs were the critical connective tissue..., helping to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts and facilitate the connections needed for small businesses to withstand economic shock."

The investment in Entrepreneur Ecosystem Development through Main Street and Affiliate programs will have a long-term positive impact on nine communities and the State of Maine.

I. Overview

This project will support entrepreneurship, innovation and post pandemic economic recovery by strengthening and growing entrepreneurial ecosystems in nine communities. The project is individualized, place-based, and connects to existing and emerging regional and state systems and resources.

The nine downtown organizations and 10 communities participating in this program include Main Street Communities: Augusta, Bath, Belfast, Biddeford/Saco together, Gardiner, Rockland, Westbrook and Maine Downtown Affiliate Communities: Ellsworth and Houlton. The program will run from October 2022 – March 31, 2024.

II. Finances

This CDS request is running through the Small Business Administration and as is the case with any federal funding, there will be reporting requirements (quarterly progress reports) and certain allowable/qualified expenses (i.e. this grant cannot cover the food expenses. The funding will be awarded on a reimbursement basis. We will work with you to make sure

that you are aware and understand all federal requirements. Each of the 9 grantees are required to document and track a \$2500 match towards the whole project. That can be in the form of cash or in-kind which we will explain in detail. Each local program will receive \$10,000 in Planning funding and \$50,000 in implementation. Both will be paid out on a reimbursable basis.

III. Timeline and deliverables

- **By October 17, 2022:** MDF will draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed by your local program/organization and by MDF Staff.
- Set up tracking system for match requirement of \$2500 in-kind or cash
- Set up tracking system for income/expenditures (staff and/or consultant time that you will be paying, other expenses for events, hotels, mileage, etc)
- **By October 17, 2022** Form a local Steering Committee to guide the process over the next 18 months. Below are suggestions for make-up of the group and/or skill sets needed. The size of the group is your choice, and you may decide that this work already fits within a committee structure that your organization already has (Suggested size 4-7 people). The Steering Committee will most likely meet monthly, with a few months having two meetings if they are a participant in the ecosystem stakeholder audit meetings. You will learn more about that at our November 1 Kick Off Meeting!
 - i. Someone with financial management and reporting requirements for the organization
 - ii. Local MS or Affiliate program staff
 - iii. Individual with interest or experience in place-based economic development ecosystem building- could be a lender, a local or regional economic development partner or someone else
 - iv. Entrepreneur(s), maker(s), innovator(s)
 - v. Others may include lenders, small businesses, property owners, municipal staff, local elected officials that may or may not be on a relevant committee, etc.
 - vi. Who is missing from your table to do this work in your local community?
- **November 1, 2022** Kick Off Meeting (location: Belfast) 9:00am-2:00pm
 - Who: ideally at least 3 members of your local Steering Committee
 - Agenda: a daylong session learning about what ecosystem building is, macro trends and what you will be doing in each of your communities: Matt Wagner, Vice President, Main Street America will be with us along with our Pilot Project Ecosystem Builders: Lisbon, Monson, Skowhegan
 - Your local planning grant will cover mileage and hotels if needed to attend this event.
- **November 2- 10, 2022** Site Visits with Matt Wagner

These dates have been planned based on a logical travel route for our consultant and I know they may not be ideal for everyone, but we ask for your flexibility. Site visits will be approximately 3-3.5 hours and will include a walking tour (to get a

sense of the assets, vibe and underutilized spaces and opportunities) There will also be a meeting with your Steering Committee. Your planning grant will cover any expenses associated with this event (with the exception of food) through your planning grant.

- November 2 Belfast, Rockland
- November 3 Bath, Westbrook
- November 4 Biddeford/Saco
- November 7 Gardiner, Augusta
- November 8 Ellsworth
- November 9 Houlton
- **November- December 2022/January 2023 Planning**
 - Preparing for the audit process (scheduling meetings, inviting participants, identifying existing data sources)
 - All of the expenses associated with planning may be tracked and invoiced up to \$10,000
 - **12/14 info session via zoom with MDC**
 - **1/9 (9-10AM) Project lead meeting for survey distribution info**
 - Draft survey
 - 10 days for input and additions
 - **Week of 1/23 Surveys distributed**
 - **Surveys close 2/5**
 - wide distribution through your partners, library, media, social media postings
 - **1/30 Pre-meeting exercise for stakeholders – inventory**
 - Due 2/9
- **January 2023- May 2023 Ecosystem Audit Process over ZOOM with Matt Wagner, local stakeholders and MDC Team.**
 - **Week of 2/6 Entrepreneur Focus Group**
 - 7 to 12 entrepreneurs
 - Diverse
 - 1 hour
 - **Week of 2/13 Stakeholders – inventory meeting**
 - This group will spend 3-4 meetings with us
 - Invite traditional and non-traditional service providers (e.g. library, SBDC, Economic Development, Town Govt, Main Street, Chamber, County Govt, CDFI, Business Incubator/Maker Space, College/University, K-12, etc)
 - Hope to have 7-12 players but only need one representative from each of the groups.

- Will focus on getting the baseline inventory of programming in the local and regional areas. Will use the Business Lifecycle Inventory Exercise (homework for participants)
- **Week of 2/27 stakeholders – audit**
 - In advance of meeting we will give the Audit Tool Exercise to be sent back to Matt prior to the meeting. Matt will agglomerate the findings. Meeting time will be spent aligning around the performance as well as are the solutions best serviced locally or regionally.
- **Week of 3/6 stakeholders – organizational matrix**
 - In advance of meeting we will give the Organizational Matrix Exercise to be sent back to Matt prior to the meeting. Matt will agglomerate the findings. Meeting time will be spent aligning around any area gaps and perhaps duplication of efforts. We will also align around primary leads for each segment.
- **Week of 3/13 Steering Committee – alignment**
 - Facilitated conversation around gap alignment and key priority areas to be addressed locally and regionally.
- **REPORTS TO COMMUNITIES WEEK OF 4/24**
- **Week of 5/8 Steering Committee- project brainstorming**
 - Review report findings and recommendations. Address any questions.
- **Week of 5/15 Steering Committee – implementation planning**
- **Due April 15, 2023** 6 Month Report for period Jan 1 -March 31, 2023
- **Week of June 23, 2023** Rural Rise Conference in Maine SAVE THE DATE
- **Q3 and Q4 2023** Implementation– Select and implement project based on reports- \$50,000 will be awarded on a reimbursement basis to each of the 9 participating organizations
- **Due October 15, 2023** 6 Month Report for period April 1- September 30, 2023

6 Month Reports are in sync with the timing of the federal fiscal year and are covering 6 month periods between October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 with due dates following the 15th of the next month.

The timeline is referring to quarter based on a calendar year. (Q1=January – March, Q2=April-June)