



## Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

### Industry Emergency Viability Grant

Dear Maine Wild Blueberry Industry Member,

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (WBCM) is pleased to announce the **Industry Emergency Viability Grant**, a program designed to help promote the wild blueberry industry and provide financial relief to wild blueberry growers facing unprecedented economic challenges. The 2025 season is estimated to have resulted in approximately **\$28 million in industry losses**, and this grant is intended to help mitigate these impacts and support the continued economic viability of the Maine wild blueberry industry.

Eligible wild blueberry growers are encouraged to apply. Eligible growers must be active producers of Maine wild blueberries in good standing (having paid the Wild Blueberry Tax), and who have submitted a complete application and met the eligibility criteria on or before the deadline of March 18, 2026. This program will distribute **\$1,300,000** in funding based on a number of factors, including but not limited to a proportional analysis **of each applicant's four-year average of production (2022–2025)**. Awards will be made to eligible wild blueberry growers who submit complete applications and meet the eligibility criteria. **All applicants who fulfill the eligibility requirements and submit all supporting documentation will receive payment.** Payment amounts will be calculated as a **percentage of each applicant's total production** relative to the total confirmed production of all awardees. The same percentage will be applied to the confirmed production volumes of each applicant to determine the grant award. The final percentage for grant awards will be determined after all applications are submitted and reviewed by WBCM staff.

Grant funds must be used for eligible operational expenses, including for promotional purposes and to maintain economic viability, and documentation of these expenses must be submitted to WBCM by **October 1, 2026**. Failure to provide documentation may result in partial or full repayment of the grant award.

We aim to use this opportunity to **improve our understanding of the industry and its composition**. The data collected may be used in aggregate to inform the Commission's planning, research, and support programs. We will **protect confidential business information (CBI)**, except as required by law, including civil or criminal proceedings, notwithstanding Maine's Freedom of Access Law. Industry members, including those who serve on the WBCM, will not have access to individual application materials or any CBI.

WBCM staff will handle all applications. A list of awarded entities and the amounts granted will be disclosed as a matter of public record.

Applications must be received by **March 18, 2026**, via email (subject line: "Industry Emergency Viability Grant Application") to [Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu).

Or mailed to:

**Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine**

5784 York Complex, Building #4

Orono, ME 04469

Applicants must provide a working phone number and an email and/or mailing address so that WBCM staff can contact you with questions about your application and provide notification of award status.

Thank you for your continued contribution to Maine's wild blueberry industry. We strongly encourage all eligible members to apply to help us ensure the long-term sustainability of this vital agricultural sector.

Sincerely,



**Eric Venturini**

Executive Director

Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

5784 York Complex, Building #4

Orono, Maine 04469

[Eric.Venturini@maine.edu](mailto:Eric.Venturini@maine.edu)

(207) 478-7612





## Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

### Industry Emergency Viability Grant – Application

Please complete this entire application. Incomplete applications may result in non-payment of award or delay in issuing awards. If you need assistance completing this application, contact Jennifer at [Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu) or (207)581-3490.

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#### Applicant Information

**Legal Business Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DBA (if applicable, business name if different from legal name):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Contact Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City / State / ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Tax-Paying Status Verification & Production Information

Grant awards will be calculated based on factors including but not limited to a **four-year average of production (2022–2025)** and a demonstration that grant funds will be used to maintain economic viability. Applicants must provide evidence of payment of the grower portion of the Wild Blueberry Tax for each year claimed (or a subset of years if they did not produce in one year) to demonstrate good standing and eligibility for an award.

**Production claimed must correspond to the same person or entity that paid the Wild Blueberry Tax.** The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (WBCM) **will not award funding** to multiple applications claiming duplicate production in the same field and year. It is possible that two applicants may claim production on the same acreage, but not for the same poundage. The WBCM will only make awards to entities that bore the cost of paying the Wild Blueberry Tax. If product was aggregated by a cooperative, shipper, or processor, the award will go to the grower who bore the cost of paying the grower portion of the Wild Blueberry Tax.

**Total Pre-Processing Production (lb) Claimed by Year:**

2022: \_\_\_\_\_

2023: \_\_\_\_\_

2024: \_\_\_\_\_

2025: \_\_\_\_\_

**Wild Blueberry Taxpayer Name (if different from applicant):** (Provide the name of the entity that paid the grower tax on your behalf (e.g., your processor).

**Both of the following sets of documentation are required.** Field production totals must align with tax payment records. In many cases, a single document will satisfy both requirements below.

☐ I have attached documentation verifying **payment of Wild Blueberry Tax** for each year claimed (e.g., final payment voucher, settlement statement, grower statement, blueberry tax return).

☐ I have attached documentation verifying **production amounts by year** (scale tickets, settlement statements, processor records, or other suitable records).

**Field Identification for Production Claimed**

Applicants must clearly document each field associated with the production volumes claimed. WBCM staff may cross reference claims to ensure production is not claimed by multiple parties.

For each field, provide:

**Field Owner:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Field Name or Unique ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Town, Township, or Unorganized Territory where field is located:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Town Map # and Lot # of field:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_



**For each field, please complete the following:**

Field Name or Unique ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Production Year	Production Claimed (lb)
2022	
2023	
2024	
2025	

Attach additional pages as needed.

### Intended Use of Grant Funds

Awards must be used for wild blueberry business expenses necessary to maintain economic viability. (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Promotional & Marketing Expenses
- ☐ Input Costs (fertilizer, sulfur, fuel, pollination, IPM, equipment, repairs)
- ☐ Labor & Wages
- ☐ Property Taxes
- ☐ Equipment Maintenance
- ☐ Production Energy Costs
- ☐ Other Operational Expenses (describe below)

**If Other, please describe:**

### Acknowledgements & Certifications

By signing below, the applicant certifies and acknowledges that:

1. All information provided in this application is true, accurate, and complete to the best of the applicant's knowledge.
2. The applicant is the **same person or entity responsible for paying the Wild Blueberry Tax** on the production claimed and understands that the same production may not be claimed by more than one party.



3. Grant funds will be used **exclusively for eligible wild blueberry farm and farm business operational expenses** incurred in the normal course of business to maintain the economic viability of the business.
4. The applicant **will submit clear and verifiable records** (copies of purchase orders, invoices, receipts, payroll records, or comparable documentation) demonstrating that grant funds were used for eligible expenses.
5. **All required expense documentation must be submitted to WBCM no later than October 1, 2026.**
6. The applicant understands that failure to submit required documentation after receiving payment, or submission of documentation that does not clearly demonstrate eligible use of funds, **may result in repayment of all or a portion of the grant award.**
7. By signing and submitting this application, the applicant certifies that they are actively producing and incurring operational expenses related to wild blueberry crops in 2026 and/or 2027.
8. The applicant acknowledges that all application materials are treated as **Confidential Business Information (CBI)**, except as required by law, including civil or criminal proceedings, notwithstanding Maine's Freedom of Access Law.

**Authorized Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Submission Information

Applications must be received by **March 18, 2026**.

Submit completed applications and supporting documentation via **email** (subject line: "Industry Emergency Viability Grant Application") to: [Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Maskala@maine.edu).

or via **mail** to:

### Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

5784 York Complex, Building #4  
Orono, ME 04469

**Note:** Applicants **MUST** provide a working phone number, as well as an email address and/or mailing address so that WBCM staff can contact them with questions about their application and notification of award status.

Incomplete applications or applications missing required documentation may delay award processing or result in the application being deemed ineligible.



## Statutory Authority

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine Industry Emergency Viability Grant is designed to promote the economic viability of the industry in accordance with the Commission's guiding statutes (36 MRS § 4307; § 4303, and 36 MRS § 4312-C, and 36 §4311-A).





## **Industry Emergency Viability Grant Q&A**

### **Can I submit a single application that covers multiple fields?**

Yes, as long as you include identifying information for each field, years for which you are claiming production volume from that field, and per year production volume from that field.

### **Is the information that I provide the Commission confidential?**

Yes. Commission staff will process your application. Commissioners (the industry volunteers that serve on the Commission) will have no access to individual applications. All application materials and records will be handled as confidential business information, pursuant to State law (Maine Revised Statutes, Title 36, § 4316 and Title 1, § 402(3)). This confidential status does not apply to any documents, records or information that is needed as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding to enforce any law under Chapter 701 or any other criminal law, or to documents, records, or information that falls under Maine's Freedom of Access Law (Title 1, Ch. 13, Subchapter 1). Commission staff will compile the information collected in these applications to increase their understanding of the industry and share aggregate information.

### **Will other industry members know how much I was awarded through the Commission Industry Emergency Viability Grant?**

Yes. Final award amounts and recipients (business names) will be shared as a matter of public record.

### **What criteria is the award based on and what may the award be used for?**

The Maine Wild Blueberry Commission may utilize its funds for “activities to promote and advertise wild blueberries” and “activities related to the economic viability of the Maine wild blueberry industry.” Please provide support in the application that any grant award will be used for these purposes.

### **What happens if I don't submit records of business expenses by October 1, 2026, after receiving my award?**

It is important to ensure and document that awards are used to pay wild blueberry business expenses – thus enhancing the viability of the industry as it tries to recover from the production losses and challenges of 2025. If awardees do not submit records of qualifying business expenses by the deadline, the Commission may require full or partial repayment of the award.



**Some fields and the production from that field include multiple levels of “ownership” and “management” that might include landowners, leaseholders, field managers, and/or cooperatives. Who gets the award?**

The awardee must demonstrate that they bore the cost of paying the grower portion of the Wild Blueberry Tax. If multiple owners split the costs of the tax, they should submit as a single business entity, and once the award is received determine how to distribute it amongst business partners.





## Confidentiality Notice

### **Notice of Confidentiality and Protection of Business Information**

Pursuant to **Maine Revised Statutes, Title 36, § 4316** and **Title 1, § 402(3)**, the information provided in this application is intended for the sole purpose of determining eligibility for the Industry Emergency Viability Grant.

#### **1. Designation of Confidential Business Information (CBI)**

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (the "Commission") recognizes that certain data submitted herein—including, but not limited to, **individual harvest yields, proprietary financial statements, tax records, and specific market strategies**—constitute "Confidential Business Information."

#### **2. Statutory Protection**

Under **36 M.R.S. § 4316(4)**, records and information provided to the Commission for the purpose of verifying blueberry production and industry compliance are confidential and are not "public records" as defined in the **Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA)**. Disclosure of such information is strictly prohibited, except as required by law, when presented as an aggregated total, or for the administration of the Commission's official duties.

#### **3. Applicant Responsibility**

Applicants are advised to clearly mark any supplemental documents as "**CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION**" at the top of each page. While the Commission will make every effort to protect information it deems confidential under Maine law, the Commission cannot guarantee protection for information that:

- Is already in the public domain.
- Is required to be disclosed by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- Pertains to the **award amounts and recipients**, which is generally considered a matter of public record.

**Acknowledgement:** By submitting this application, the applicant acknowledges that the Commission will handle sensitive data in accordance with Maine's privacy and confidentiality statutes.



## **Please Complete this Optional Short Survey!**

### **Industry Classification**

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Grower
- ☐ Processor
- ☐ Shipper (someone who transports unprocessed wild blueberries to destinations outside of Maine for commercial purposes)

### **Business Model Information**

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Field manager
- ☐ Organic producer
- ☐ IQF grower
- ☐ IQF processing company
- ☐ Value-added user of unprocessed wild blueberries
- ☐ Fresh-packer
- ☐ Shipper
- ☐ Harvest contractor
- ☐ Member of a Grower Cooperative
- ☐ Landowner

### **Fresh Pack**

Are you interested in considering new, potentially more profitable alternatives to how you currently sell your crop? For example, many fresh pack producers report profitability and estimate an initial investment for fresh pack infrastructure of approximately \$150,000.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What is currently preventing you from developing and investing in a more profitable business model? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Access to capital
- ☐ Access to affordable and reliable labor
- ☐ Lack of information about the costs and benefits of alternatives
- ☐ Access to or knowledge about fresh pack markets and other alternatives
- ☐ Access to or knowledge to develop a fresh pack or alternative business plan
- ☐ Access to or knowledge to construct a fresh pack line or other infrastructure

- ☐ The time and capacity of you and your business partner(s)  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Irrigation and Sustainable Water Source Development

Are you interested in developing sustainable water sources and irrigation for your wild blueberry production?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

What is currently preventing you from developing sustainable water sources and irrigation? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Access to capital  
☐ Affordable and reliable labor / irrigation system maintenance  
☐ Lack of information about the costs and benefits  
☐ Lack of an available water source  
☐ The time and capacity of you and your business partner(s)  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Industry Survey Participation

Would you be willing to participate in **industry surveys** to help WBCM evaluate the financial health of the industry and pinpoint opportunities for investment and capitalization (e.g., developing grant and financing opportunities with state and federal support)?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?**

**This survey is optional. Please consider returning it to the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine with your application.**



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[www.wildblueberrycommissionofmaine.org](http://www.wildblueberrycommissionofmaine.org)