

Connecticut DEEP Marine Fisheries Program
Connecticut USDA Seafood Processors Pandemic Response
(USDA SPRS) and Safety Block Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions

This document is intended to address anticipated questions regarding the Connecticut USDA SPRS and Safety Block Grant. This document provides general information about the CT USDA SPRS grant program and the application process. We hope this will be a useful reference for you as you complete your CT USDA SPRS application.

General Information

1. *What was the total amount of funding allocated to Connecticut?*

The 2021 Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety (SPRS) Block Grant Program, part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, signed into law on December 27, 2020, authorized the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to provide \$50 million to eligible state agencies to provide relief to seafood dealers and seafood processors. Connecticut's allocation is \$200,000. CT DEEP and ASMFC are not retaining any funds for overhead costs associated with administration of the funds. DEEP has instructed ASMFC to hold 10% (\$20,000) of the revised aid total in reserve to cover any appeals (any of the funds set aside for appeals that are not ultimately used for that purpose will be evenly distributed among qualified eligible beneficiaries whose qualified expenses exceeded the amount of their original disbursement). After accounting for the appeals set-aside, a total of \$180,000 is available for immediate disbursement to qualified eligible beneficiaries.

2. *Where can I find the application materials?*

The application materials can be found on the CT DEEP USDA SPRS web page:
<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP-Seafood-Processors-Grant-Program>

3. *Are USDA SPRS reimbursement funds I receive considered taxable income?*

Yes. Any disbursement you receive as part of the USDA SPRS reimbursement program is considered taxable income by the federal government. Reimbursement recipients will receive a 1099 tax form from ASMFC ahead of next year's tax filing deadline.

Application Process

4. *How do I apply for CT USDA SPRS reimbursement?*

If you are an eligible beneficiary, as defined by the program, obtain the combined self-certification affidavit and application from the CT DEEP USDA SPRS and Safety Block Grant web page at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP-Seafood-Processors-Grant-Program>

5. *What is an eligible beneficiary?*

Seafood processing facilities and processing vessels, including at-sea processors or dealers.

Processor means the owner, operator, dealer, or agent responsible for any activity that changes the physical condition of a fisheries resource suitable for human consumption, retail sale, industrial uses, or long-term storage, including cooking, canning, smoking, salting, drying, shucking, filleting, freezing, or rendering into meal or oil. Any owner, operator, dealer, or agent exclusively gutting, gilling, heading, or icing seafood without performing any of the above activities is not considered a processor.

At-sea processor means a vessel or other platform that floats and can be moved from one location to another, whether in State waters or water of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), receiving fish and operating as a processor.

Dealer means an entity that first receives fish by way of purchase and sells directly to restaurants, markets, other dealers, processors, or consumers without substantially altering the product.

6. *I am a licensed CT aquaculturist, am I eligible to apply for reimbursement?*

Per the USDA program, licensed CT aquaculturists are NOT eligible applicants under this program.

7. *What is an eligible cost that I can apply for reimbursement for?*

Reimbursement requests can cover the activities associated with:

Workplace Safety Measures: Workplace safety measures, including, but not limited to, personal protective equipment, sanitizer, hand washing stations, air filters, thermometers, cleaning supplies, or similar items.

Market Pivots: Market pivots such as transition to virtual/online sales costs (online platform development and fees, online marketing, credit card processing fees), supplies, new signage.

Retrofitting Facilities: Retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety (retrofitting harvester vessels for onboard vessel processing to maximize open-air activities, plexiglass, walk up windows, heat lamps, fans, tents, propane, weights, tables, chairs).

Transportation: Additional transportation costs incurred to maintain social distancing.

Worker Housing: Additional worker housing costs incurred to maintain social distancing or to allow for quarantining of new or exposed employees.

Medical: Unreimbursed costs associated with providing or enabling vaccinations, testing, or healthcare treatment of infected employees, including any paid leave.

8. *What time frame is covered for expenses?*

CT DEEP will authorize reimbursement to seafood processing facilities and processing vessels for costs incurred between January 27, 2020, the date upon which the public health emergency was declared by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, and December 31, 2021.

9. *If I am a company incorporated in one State, but have facilities in multiple States, do I apply for funds only from the State that I am incorporated, or do I apply for funds where each of my facilities are located?*

Eligible entities should apply to the states where each of the facilities are physically located.

10. *Can a seafood processor request funding for lost revenue under the Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety (SPRS) Grant?*

No. The SPRS Grant Program is authorized under section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 116-260) to provide grants and loans to seafood processors and processing vessels for costs incurred in response to the coronavirus pandemic, including for measures to protect workers against novel coronavirus (COVID-19). As authorized by the CAA and outlined in the SPRS Request for Applications (RFA), SPRS funds will be used for costs incurred in response to COVID-19. The approved eligible categories are: Workplace Safety Measures, Market Pivots, Retrofitting Facilities, Transportation, Worker Housing and Medical. For example, the eligible entity could apply for funds to reimburse costs associated with an employee's paid sick leave or worker housing for quarantine due to COVID. However, lost revenue due to spoilage or foregone production would not be eligible for reimbursement under the SPRS Grant.

11. *Where do I send my application materials?*

The combined self-certification affidavit and application should be e-mailed to CTSEAPRO@asmfc.org

Alternately, if you are unable to submit your application by e-mail, you may send them via U.S. mail to:

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
ATTN: Laura Leach
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N
Arlington VA 22201

HOWEVER - we strongly encourage applicants to submit their application materials via e-mail. Applications submitted via U.S. mail can be problematic (delayed delivery, applications lost in the mail). If you choose to submit your application via U.S. mail, please contact the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program to let us know, so that we can let ASMFC know to expect your application. You can leave a voicemail at 860-434-6043 by selecting menu option 2, Monday through Friday between the hours of, 8:30 am and 4:30 pm.

12. *When is the application deadline?*

All applications must be received or postmarked **BY JUNE 30, 2023.**

13. *Can I apply as a business instead of an individual?*

Applicants must own or operate a Connecticut based business and can have their reimbursement disbursement made out/sent to a business they own/operate, rather than to them in name.

14. *What do I need to submit in addition to my completed application?*

Applicants must submit a completed affidavit application.

Top Section of Application: Personal and Business Information

15. *Why am I being asked for the Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) for my business?*

If you wish to have your aid payment made out/sent to your business, you must provide the Federal EIN for your business for tax purposes (see #3 above). If you do not wish to have your aid payment made out to your business, but rather to you personally, then you do not need to provide your business's Federal EIN but you must provide your SSN.

Section 2 of the Application:

16. *Do I have to complete the Self Certification and Assurances section?*

Yes, all applicants must self-certify they are eligible to receive federal reimbursement funds, that they are a CT based seafood dealing/wholesaling/processing business that meets the definition of an eligible beneficiary and that they incurred expenses within the qualifying timeframe in any of the six cost categories. Applicants also must disclose whether they have applied for USDA SPRS grant funds from any other State or Territory.

The self-certification affidavit section of the application also includes acknowledgement that the information provided is subject to verification and anticipated auditing by either the State of Connecticut, the USDA, or the Office of the Inspector General.

Sections 3 through 8 of the Application:

17. *What are eligible expenses for each category?*

Please see question 8 above for eligible expenses in each cost category.

18. *Do I need to provide proof of each of my expenses with my application?*

No. The application requires a detailed description of each expense you are applying for reimbursement for. The CT DEEP Marine Fisheries Program will randomly select a subset of applications for further verification of expenses. This process will require the applicant to provide additional documentation regarding the expenses declared in their application, including receipts, invoices, and detailed descriptions for each expense identified on their application for reimbursement.