

Establishment of Shared Biotechnology Lab & Office Space to Encourage, Promote, Stimulate and Support Life Science Startup Ventures in Maine

Request for Proposals

Please respond by July 1, 2025

Background

The State of Maine is developing distinct expertise and capabilities across the life sciences. Surveyed companies are advancing science in key thematic areas including molecular diagnostics, marine biotechnology, regenerative and plantbased therapeutics, animal health, and bioinformatics. These efforts are often integrated with strengths in information technology and precision manufacturing, creating crosssector innovation in biomanufacturing and data-driven life sciences.

These are sectors that are also supported by Maine Technology funding.

Maine is home to more than 480 companies and organizations engaged in the life sciences, spanning the full continuum from discovery research to commercialization. The state boasts several world-renowned research institutions, including The Jackson Laboratory, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, Mount Desert Island



Biological Laboratory, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and MaineHealth Institute for Research. It also hosts leading life sciences companies such as IDEXX, Corning, Puritan Medical, Covetrus, Abbott Labs, and The Baker Company.In addition to its industry strength, Maine benefits from a strong academic foundation. The state is home to elite research universities—including the Roux Institute at Northeastern University, the University of Maine, and the University of New England—as well as some of the nation's most prestigious liberal arts colleges, including Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby Colleges.

Life science jobs in Maine grew by **42%** in the last 5 years, outpacing all other New England States With its close proximity to Greater Boston's renowned life sciences cluster, Maine is well positioned to attract and grow early-stage life sciences startups. While the Greater Portland area is seeing a growing concentration of activity, the state continues to face significant gaps in laboratory infrastructure and the corresponding ecosystem support—both of which are critical to helping these companies successfully launch and scale in Maine.

To address this need, the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), in partnership with the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development, is seeking proposals for a \$2.6M–\$2.7M grant aimed at establishing a new commercial life sciences laboratory and incubator. This

facility will provide shared lab and office space for emerging biotechnology and life sciences companies, enabling them to launch and scale their ventures.

Beyond physical infrastructure, the ideal laboratory operator will actively contribute to the growth of Maine's life sciences ecosystem—supporting workforce development, facilitating access to financing, hosting events, and offering entrepreneurial education and programming across the state.

Project Goals

MTI is seeking a qualified and experienced organization with a proven track record in developing and operating world-class biotechnology and life sciences incubators and shared laboratory facilities. The goal is to launch and scale the next generation of life sciences startups through the creation of a professionally managed, state-of-the-art laboratory.

The envisioned facility will serve as a dynamic, differentiated incubator—bringing together expert science mentors, workforce development programs, and investors to support entrepreneurs in efficiently growing their companies in Maine.

In addition to operating the facility, the selected organization will ideally play a leadership role in community-building efforts, including advanced educational programming, startup pitch events, and investor engagement sessions.

Ideal candidate attributes include:

- A strong history of operating at the intersection of academia and entrepreneurship, with experience facilitating translational activity between research and commercialization—ideally through the creation or management of organizations bridging academic and industry stakeholders.
- A demonstrated ability to build and sustain lab and office facilities with clear, competitive, and accessible pricing models for resident companies.
- A demonstrated commitment to supporting Maine's life sciences and biotechnology ecosystem.

Anticipated Components of a Successful Proposal

Successful proposals will outline a compelling, feasible plan to develop and operate a shared laboratory and incubator that strengthens Maine's life sciences ecosystem. Proposals should demonstrate alignment with the following components and guiding principles:

1. Project Scope, Location, and Timeline

• Provide a detailed scope of work, timeline, and budget for the buildout of a state-of-theart shared laboratory and incubator.

2. Laboratory Design & Target Users

- Describe the physical layout, lab and office infrastructure, and planned equipment to support general and specialized life sciences work.
- Facility should be designed for small-scale users (1–15 scientists) with flexible lease terms (ideally six months or less) to accommodate early-stage startups.

3. Financial Viability & Pricing

- Provide a clear plan for achieving operational sustainability beyond initial grant funding, including:
 - Three-year pro forma P&L and cash flow projections.
 - Revenue model and pricing structure for lab and office space.
 - Rental rates should be competitive, with affordable options for the earliest-stage users.

• Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet matching fund requirements and cover any costs beyond the award amount.

4. Facility Management & Safety

- Detail the proposed management structure and include policies for lab safety, environmental compliance, waste management, and required training for users.
- The facility must operate as a neutral, multi-user space accessible to startups, researchers, and companies across institutions.

5. Ecosystem Engagement & Entrepreneurial Support

- Outline plans to support tenant success through mentorship, workforce training, business development resources, and events.
- Include synergies with local organizations such as universities, economic development groups, and research institutions.
- Proposals incorporating access to venture funding, grants, or capital support for startups are encouraged.

6. Growth Potential & Adaptability

- Facility design should allow for scalability and adaptability in response to industry changes and tenant growth.
- Preference will be given to proposals that strengthen long-term ecosystem infrastructure and demonstrate the ability to evolve with the sector's needs.

Results of Life Science Feasibility Study – Q1 2025

In the first quarter of 2025, MTI contracted with FocusMaine—working through its consulting partner, Delmar Group—to assess potential demand for a commercial wet-lab facility in Maine. Led by an experienced life sciences and shared lab infrastructure specialist, the study gathered input from prospective users and ecosystem partners statewide. It cataloged existing wet lab infrastructure and offered recommendations for a facility designed to meet the unique needs of Maine's life sciences sector.

The study included input from potential users as well as broader ecosystem partners across the state. That study can be found in Appendix A of this RFP.

Support from MTI

One of the findings from the feasibility study noted:

"While there is clear interest in shared lab infrastructure—particularly among companies with active or anticipated wet lab needs—the overall pool of demand remains modest and heavily early-stage. Pairing a shared lab with wraparound support such as technical services, mentorship, capital access, and connectivity, will be critical to maximizing its impact."

MTI recognizes the need to support and nurture the early-stage life science companies in the state. A successful ecosystem development program for life science companies integrates a range of interconnected components that collectively foster innovation, growth, and sustainability. Drawing from industry best practices and recent research, the core components include:

• Alliances and Partnerships

- Talent Development
- Infrastructure and Facilities
- Funding and Investments
- Development and Commercialization Support
- Policy, Governance, and Community Engagement

The feasibility study surfaced both significant gaps and strong partner support for advancing this vision collaboratively. Stakeholders expressed a shared desire to contribute to a broader ecosystem strategy anchored by the shared lab initiative.

As one of the largest funders in the state for these early stage companies, MTI is committed to supporting the continued growth of the life sciences sector in Maine. In the coming weeks, MTI will be refining plans to expand its leadership capacity and deepen coordination across the life sciences ecosystem. MTI is committed to continuing to invest its resources into strengthening the life sciences pipeline, with a focus on connecting companies to capital, technical assistance, and access to resources.

Eligible Organizations

Eligible organizations must establish and maintain a presence within the State of Maine, if not be headquartered in Maine. At the time of submission, the organization must be in compliance with all laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances of the United States, the State of Maine, and if selected to establish the life sciences incubator, must remain in compliance during the term of the service agreement. Eligible providers must have experience operating a shared life sciences lab and office space, and encouraging, promoting, stimulating, and supporting startups engaged in the sector.

Timetable

- Issuance of RFP: May 7, 2025
- Submission of Written Proposals Due: July 1, 2025
- Review and Diligence: July 2025 Final Selection: On or about August 1, 2025

Inquiries

Questions concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Matt Hoffner

Maine Technology Institute 16 Middle Street, 2nd Floor Portland, ME 04101 MHoffner@MaineTechnology.org Tel: (207) 332-8287

MTI is available to meet with any party regarding this RFP and answer questions regarding scope, timeline, and scoring. Please request a meeting and it will be scheduled as soon as mutually convenient.

Please note: Any questions (in writing or in face-to-face meetings) may be anonymized and answered in writing and distributed to all parties that have received the RFP.

Submissions

Proposals must be received by MTI **no later than 5:00 PM on July 1, 2025.** Proposals may be electronically transmitted, mailed, or delivered to the attention of Matt Hoffner (see Inquiries). Timely delivery of proposals is the sole responsibility of the provider. MTI will confirm receipt of any proposal received via email to the applicant.

Late submissions will not be considered. All providers acknowledge and understand that MTI will not pay for any costs incurred in connection with the preparation or submission of a proposal.

Proposal Format

Proposals should not exceed 15 pages. That said, MTI does not endeavor to be overly prescriptive. We are open to innovative and creative proposals that will help us achieve our goals.

Budget

Please provide a detailed 24-month project budget, including:

- Profit & Loss statement
- Cash flow forecast

Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated by a team composed of MTI staff and a selected Life Sciences Advisory Committee. The following evaluation rubric will be used in the scoring of applications.

Criterion	Description	Points
Track Record of Prior Performance	Proposal demonstrates a track record of building self-sustaining laboratory office facilities with competitive pricing for clients— strong support for users. Examples of past performance, letters of recommendation, and any other points of differentiation vs. other lab operators.	0–30
Scope of Work and Budget	Proposal includes a detailed scope of work, timeline, and overall budget for the project.	0–15
Equipment and Lab Purchases	A list of equipment and lab services that matches the needs of the Maine Life Science industry. Procurement funds utilized by 9/30/2026.	0–10

Facility Management and Operations	Planned organization and lab management structure for the facility including addressing health, safety, training, procurement, and waste management.	0–15
Ecosystem Experience	Plan outlines experience in working with local organizations to create a dynamic life science industry within the state.	0–20
Additional Consideration	Examples of past ecosystem development identified—all users.	0–10

MTI reserves the right to reject any and all submissions without the right of recourse by proposers.

MTI expects to make an award announcement in early August 2025.

References

Please provide three references that can speak to the organization's experience in developing and/or managing a life sciences incubator and lab.

About Maine Technology Institute

The Maine Technology Institute's core mission is to diversify and grow Maine's economy by encouraging, promoting, stimulating, and supporting innovation and its transformation into new products, services, and companies—leading to the creation and retention of quality jobs in Maine.

MTI is an industry-led, State-funded, nonprofit corporation that offers early-stage capital and commercialization assistance in the form of competitive grants, loans, and equity investments, as well as entrepreneurial guidance and mentorship. It supports the research, development, and application of technologies that create new products, processes, and services, generating high-quality jobs across Maine.

Additionally, MTI is occasionally asked to administer research and development-focused bonds and other initiatives on behalf of the State, to stimulate private and public-sector investments in R&D infrastructure, equipment, facilities, and to help advance emerging technologies and innovation throughout Maine.



Lab Space in Maine: Demand, Gaps, and Opportunities

Assessing infrastructure needs and ecosystem readiness to support Maine's growing life sciences sector. May 2025



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Life Sciences in Maine

Validating demand

Maine's life sciences sector is growing, fueled by more than 500 organizations spanning biotechnology, diagnostics and medical devices, marine and aquaculture science, healthcare innovation, and fields like AI, data science, and bioinformatics. Strong institutional feeders and a steady rise in early-stage ventures are encouraging signs of momentum. However, flexible and affordable shared lab space is critical to advancing research, commercialization, and company growth.

This report assesses demand for a shared lab facility in Southern Maine, drawing on 86 survey responses, 40+ stakeholder interviews, and secondary research. Findings confirm a fragmented lab ecosystem, strong interest in a centralized, professionally managed facility with wraparound services, and a meaningful - though modest - level of demand.

Key Findings

Challenges

Recommendations

- support.

All imagery in this report provided by the BioME Visual Storytelling Library unless otherwise noted.

• Fragmented and Limited Lab Infrastructure:

Four small-scale shared lab facilities exist, primarily in rural areas with limited services.

• Early-Stage Demand: Over two-thirds of potential lab users surveyed either use or expect to use lab space. Most are small (1-4 employees) early-stage companies relying on MTI, public grants, and friend and family capital.

• **Diverse Scientific Priorities:** Demand spans biotechnology, R&D, AI/data science, diagnostics, genomics, and marine and aquaculture sciences, reinforcing the need for flexible, multi-use lab space that supports both core life sciences and Maine's natural resource-based industries. • Collaborative Support: Institutions and community groups, while not direct users, are eager to contribute through

partnerships, programming, and network access.

• High price sensitivity among startups and limited access to Series A/B capital.

• Fragmented and geographically diverse ecosystem with no unifying entity coordinating lab space or entrepreneurial support.

• Some skepticism about whether space is the most urgent need versus growing the company pipeline.

• **Design for Flexibility:** Support wet and dry lab use with modular designs and short-term use agreements. • Pair Space with Services: Provide shared equipment, mentorship, regulatory guidance, and commercialization

• Embrace a Hub-and-Spoke Model: Anchor a flagship site in Southern Maine, with opportunities to collaborate and share knowledge with independently operated regional lab sites. • Pilot First: Start small, keep costs low, and align with broader strategies to de-risk early investment.

Purpose and Ecosystem Context

This report assesses demand for a shared lab facility in Maine. It is intended to support an upcoming MTI funding opportunity that will help launch a new shared laboratory space to strengthen Maine's growing life sciences sector. It also seeks to better understand and catalogue existing spaces available in the state, and how they are being used.

Maine's life sciences ecosystem is gaining traction, spanning a broad range of subsectors including healthcare innovation, diagnostics and medical devices, animal health, AI and data science, bioinformatics, marine science, and nanocellulose and forest byproducts. This activity and diversity reflects the state's unique strengths and opportunities, and contributes to growing demand for supportive infrastructure. The state is also home to a strong network of institutional feeders - including universities, nonprofit research institutes, and hospitals - that are producing new talent, research, and innovation-ready startups. This activity and diversity reflect the state's unique strengths and opportunities, and contributes to growing demand for supportive infrastructure.

Despite growing momentum, Maine lacks the physical infrastructure needed to support early-stage life sciences growth, particularly flexible shared lab space where scientists and entrepreneurs can prototype, iterate, and scale. One of Maine's challenges is achieving greater

density of activity by concentrating resources and companies. Southern Maine offers the strongest opportunity to build critical mass, with a high concentration of industry, startups, healthcare systems, talent, and institutional feeders — plus proximity to transit hubs and to Boston, the world's leading life sciences cluster. A well-located, flexible shared lab here could fill a critical gap and serve as a key node for the sector's next stage of development.

More detailed ecosystem data is available through BioME¹ and other statewide partners, and this report builds on that foundation to focus specifically on the infrastructure and demand-side opportunity.

Methodology

This study draws on three primary sources of input: online surveys conducted over two weeks in April 2025, 40+ interviews with key ecosystem stakeholders, and secondary research on lab pricing models and best practices for shared infrastructure. Together, these inputs offer a view of current conditions, needs, and opportunities within Maine's life sciences landscape. Maine's life sciences ecosystem is gaining traction, spanning a broad range of subsectors including healthcare innovation, diagnostics and medical devices, animal health, AI and data science, bioinformatics, marine science, and nanocellulose and forest byproducts.

Surveys and interviews targeted three core stakeholder groups: tenants (startups, small companies, and entrepreneurs), institutional partners (universities, hospitals, funders, and research institutes), and community groups (economic development organizations, community members, and supporting entities). For tenants, data collection focused on organizational type, size, funding stage, and specific lab needs. Institutional partners were queried about spinout activity, lab space usage, and potential roles in supporting a shared lab. Community groups provided perspective on broader ecosystem engagement and advocacy potential.

Data was analyzed both by group and thematically. Group-specific insights (e.g., spinout trends, funding sources) were preserved, while cross-cutting themes such as science types and facility needs were aggregated.

We distributed the survey to 274 stakeholders and received 86 responses (31% response rate), including 47 from tenants and startups², 21 from institutional partners³, and 18 from community organizations. The sample provides statistically meaningful insights from tenants, directional input from institutional partners, and qualitative feedback from community groups⁴.

This analysis provides a snapshot in time, and demand is expected to evolve as the ecosystem matures. Responses are self-reported and may underrepresent stealth or pre-launch efforts.

¹ https://biomaine.org/industry-impact

 $^{^2\,}$ The tenant group included 155 companies funded by MTI in life sciences or adjacent fields.

³ Institutional partner responses were normalized to one response per institution to prevent overrepresentation.

⁴ Surveys were distributed via email, direct outreach, and social media, leveraging networks from organizations such as MTI, FocusMaine, BioMaine, and Nexus Maine.

Salmonics working in their lab at TechPlace in Brunswick

Part I

Existing Infrastructure and Gaps

To map Maine's shared lab infrastructure, we combined secondary research with direct outreach to lab operators and input from our networks. Each space was assessed for size, location, access model, usage restrictions, and pricing (where available).

This analysis focuses on shared lab space —defined as multi-tenant laboratory environments that are commercially accessible on a short-term basis and include shared equipment, lab management, services, or programming. To be included in this report, facilities must be open to the broader market (not limited to affiliates of a host institution) and operate free from intellectual property entanglements. Currently, only a small number of spaces in Maine meet this definition. These facilities are geographically dispersed, modest in scale, and limited in capacity. The largest available site offers just 3,100 square feet (SF) of lab space, and most facilities are located in older or lower-grade buildings not specifically designed for modern lab use.

While all four facilities are nominally classified as shared lab spaces, only BioPILOT / BioIN currently operates as a multi-tenant facility. The other three — TechPlace, UpStart Maine, and Union River Innovation Center — are each presently occupied by a single lab tenant. In the case of UpStart, the lab is exclusively used by the University of Maine⁵.

Among these, BioPILOT / BioIN stands out as the only space with a robust suite of shared scientific equipment and dedicated scientific staff. In contrast, the other three facilities primarily offer "as-is" lab space, which means that it is offered without access to equipment, centralized services or other labspecific support. However, what those facilities offer that BioPILOT / BioIN currently lacks is access to office and "wrap-around" space, such as conference rooms, kitchens, and common areas. TechPlace in particular includes access to industrial and maker space, making it well-suited for product development that combines lab and fabrication needs.

Facility	Location
BioPILOT / BioIN	Portland
TechPlace	Brunswick
Union River Innovation Center	Ellsworth
UpStart Maine	Orono

BioPILOT space; Photo courtesy of the Roux Institute

Lab SF	Overall SF	Opened	Pricing ⁶
3,100	3,100	2024	~\$700
2,000	95,000	2015	\$1600
~300	2,700	2018	Subsidized
1,600	20,000	2008	~\$7007

Spotlight: BioPilot/BioIN

As a new entrant to the Portland market, BioPILOT / BioIN soft launched in late 2024 and was formally announced in March 2025. Located within the USM Science Building, the space combines two complementary models:

1. BioPILOT (operated by the Roux Institute): Offers a membership-based model for access to shared instrumentation, available in packages (e.g., 10 or 20 hours/month).

2. BioIN (operated by USM): Provides traditional shared lab space for rent.

BioIN currently houses 3 companies, and early interest suggests the facility may reach capacity by summer. The current cohort of users is receiving subsidized access, so pricing data is still preliminary.

⁵ UpStart Center lab space may become available in the coming year as the University completes its new Green Engineering Building on campus.

⁶ Per bench, per month.

⁷UpStart charges ~\$40/SF for lab space. For comparison purposes, this has been normalized to an estimated "per bench" rate.

Other Categories of Spaces and Resources

While this study focused on multi-tenant shared labs with access to shared equipment and services, Maine also has other types of lab facilities that play distinct roles in the ecosystem. These examples are representative, not comprehensive.

Sublease Lab Space:

Several statewide sublease options, like at USM in Lewiston, offer "as-is" lab space with no shared services, specialized equipment, or startup support. These require traditional leases and aren't true shared labs or incubators.

INBRE Network:

Maine's IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) supports statewide research infrastructure through access to core facilities and shared instrumentation at partner institutions. While geared toward academic rather than commercial use, INBRE remains a key resource for the life sciences ecosystem.

Institution-Anchored Facilities:

Maine Center for Biomedical Innovation Bar Harbor: Located at MDIBL, this 12,000 SF facility formerly served as an incubator and now functions mainly as a teaching and training site for INBRE. It remains a fully equipped lab and may consider new incubator tenants case by case.

MaineHealth Innovation

Portland: Founded in 2020, MaineHealth Innovation supports novel solutions to unmet care needs across the MaineHealth system, which spans more than 23,000 care team members in Maine and New Hampshire. It fosters a culture of innovation through education, funding, and connections that accelerate problem-solving. Core services include seed funding, IP and commercialization guidance, hands-on workshops, and a structured innovation cohort program.

Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

East Boothbay: This nonprofit research institution offers rentable lab and greenhouse space and contract services to support micro- and macro-algae (seaweed) biotech innovation. Resources include bioreactors, flow-through seawater systems with environmental controls, chemical and microscopic analysis, genome sequencing, computational modeling, 3D printing, and waterfront access. Bigelow also plans to launch the Marine Algae Research and Innovation Accelerator (MARIA) to advance algae commercialization.

University of Maine

UMaine operates and partners with a network of coastal research and aquaculture centers supporting research, education, and innovation. These include the Darling Marine Center in Walpole (marine biology, oceanography, aquaculture) with wet labs, seawater systems, and vessels; the Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research (CCAR) in Franklin, a business incubation facility with hatchery services and industry-scale infrastructure; and the Downeast Institute (DEI) in Beals, an independent nonprofit affiliated with UMaine Machias, operating a shellfish hatchery and marine science field station.

Key Takeaways

Maine's existing shared lab infrastructure is extremely limited, with only one true multitenant facility — BioPILOT / BioIN — which is nearing capacity. Other facilities classified as shared labs offer primarily private or "asis" space with minimal shared equipment or centralized support. Existing lab spaces are fragmented across the state, vary widely in access and services, and have low visibility to potential users.

Shared Lab Pricing: Comparative Context

Most Maine-based life sciences companies are pre-Series A, with a significant portion being bootstrapped, selffunded, or supported by public funding sources such as the Maine Technology Institute (MTI). This profile suggests high price sensitivity among potential lab users, especially compared to more established markets.

By contrast, the Boston-Cambridge region — home to one of the world's most advanced biotech clusters offers a mature and highly capitalized ecosystem. Earlystage companies there benefit from an abundance of shared lab facilities — nearly 20, according to MassBio — backed by deep venture funding and extensive support infrastructure. Not surprisingly, this demand drives premium pricing:

Boston-Cambridge core: \$4,000–\$4,800 per bench/month Greater Boston suburbs: \$2,500–\$3,000 per bench/month Secondary markets (e.g., Worcester, Lowell): Similar to suburban Boston pricing

While these price points provide useful context, comparisons should be made with caution. Maine's lab users often operate with more limited resources and require more affordable, right-sized space solutions tailored to early-stage needs.

This contrast underscores the importance of designing shared lab infrastructure in Maine that balances affordability with functionality, ensuring accessibility for early-stage innovators critical to the state's emerging life sciences sector.

Part II

Spinout Activity from Institutional Partners

Spinout activity from Maine's universities and research institutions plays a key role in shaping life sciences demand and infrastructure needs. Funders, meanwhile, provide critical early-stage capital for these companies to launch and grow. To better understand commercialization activity and infrastructure needs across the system, we surveyed a representative sample of 13 distinct organizations — including universities, research institutions, and funders — ensuring no duplication of responses. Many of Maine's key research institutions are geographically dispersed. The University of Maine — Maine's flagship R1 institution — is based in Orono, while private research institutes such as Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, The Jackson Laboratory (JAX), the Down East Institute, and MDI Biological Laboratory (MDIBL) are located in rural coastal communities. As a result, spinout activity is often tied to these regions and housed in on-campus facilities. In contrast, private sector life sciences activity is more concentrated in Greater Portland, supported by feeders such as the University of New England (UNE), Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), the Roux Institute, MaineHealth, the University of Southern Maine (USM), and earlystage financing networks.

Strong Support for Commercialization

Of the 13 institutions that responded to the survey, 92%, or 11 institutions, reported supporting startup creation (all industries). However, actual startup output over the past five years varies widely:

- 36% (4 institutions) created 1–3 companies
- 36% reported moderate output (4–20 startups)
- 27% (3 institutions) produced 21 or more

This distribution suggests that while support for commercialization is widespread, only a subset of institutions are producing spinouts at scale.

Life Sciences Spinouts & Lab Space

When focusing specifically on companies requiring lab space, just under 70% of institutions reported producing spinouts with that need over the past five years. Among this group, activity to date remains relatively modest with 7 of 9 institutions creating just 1–3 life sciences startups, and 2 institutions creating 4–10.

Life sciences startups met their lab space needs through a mix of channels. Roughly equal numbers relied on on-campus facilities or turned to out-of-state labs and incubators, while a smaller share accessed local lab or incubator space. Only one institution reported that lab space was unavailable.

Looking Ahead

Despite the modest scale of past spinout activity, nearly two-thirds of institutions anticipate growth in commercialization over the next five years. However, that optimism is tempered by concerns around federal regulatory changes and reduced federal and state research funding, both critical to supporting earlystage innovation in Maine.

Part III

Demand for Shared Lab Space

Across tenants, institutional partners, and community groups, a clear set of shared priorities emerged around the scientific disciplines and industries that would most benefit from a shared lab facility in Maine. While each group reflected its unique perspective, the aggregate results point to strong alignment on core life sciences areas where shared infrastructure could have the greatest impact. These patterns held true across both the full respondent pools and the subset of organizations that currently use or anticipate needing lab space.

Scientific Priorities

Blended responses across all groups identified the following scientific areas as the highest priorities for shared lab support based on current demand and strategic focus: biotechnology, research and development, AI and data science (including bioinformatics), diagnostics, genomics, and marine and aquaculture science.

While these top areas were broadly consistent, different respondent groups emphasized them to varying degrees:

- Institutions prioritized AI, data science, and marine science applications.
- Tenants and community groups emphasized biotechnology and general R&D.

Lower-priority areas included advanced materials, agri-food tech, and CRO services, though these remain important for maintaining a diverse ecosystem. Together, the findings support the need for a shared lab designed around core disciplines with the flexibility to serve emerging sectors, particularly those linked to Maine's natural resource strengths.

Facility and Infrastructure Needs

Wet lab space and analytical/instrumentation facilities emerged as the highest-priority needs across all user groups, consistently cited as essential infrastructure. These foundational resources are critical for supporting early-stage research, translational science, and product development.

Mid-tier priorities included dry lab space, tissue culture capabilities, and biomanufacturing/scale-up space. These needs reflect the importance of flexible environments that can support computational work, molecular workflows, and early manufacturing activities.

Bacterial rooms with biosafety cabinets, chemistry/ fume hood facilities, and BSL-2 environments were also cited, highlighting specialized requirements within the ecosystem. Vivarium and clean room facilities were lower priorities across all groups.

While there were slight variations in emphasis — such as institutional partners leaning more toward dry lab and scale-up capabilities, and community respondents prioritizing tissue culture respondents broadly converged on the importance of a modular, multi-use facility that can accommodate foundational workflows and specialized needs.

Tenant Profile

Organization Type

Tenant respondents represented a crosssection of Maine's entrepreneurial landscape, primarily composed of early-stage startups. Many identified as CEOs, managing partners, or founding directors - offering a firsthand view of infrastructure needs from those steering commercialization efforts. The group also included nonprofits, contract service providers, and at least one academic researcher, reflecting the overlap between university-based innovation and market-driven ventures.

Stage & Size

Lab space demand is primarily driven by small and early-stage companies. 68% of lab-spaceinterested companies were founded in the last 5 years and 71% have 1-4 employees. Only 5 companies (16%) of lab-space-interested companies had 10 or more employees. These figures highlight the importance of cost-effective, right-sized space that can scale with growth.

Funding Status

Tenant companies rely heavily on public and early-stage funding sources, with MTI funding cited by over 70% of respondents-reflecting both its central role in Maine's life sciences ecosystem as well as the high proportion of MTI-funded companies in our distribution list. Among lab-interested companies in particular, there is a notable reliance on Friends & Family

(46%) and Public/Grant Funding (42%), indicating that many ventures are still navigating early R&D with informal or non-dilutive capital. Venture capital remains limited, with fewer than 8% reporting Series A or B funding, underscoring the pre-revenue status of much of Maine's pipeline and the importance of affordable, lowrisk lab access.

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Tenant and Community Interest

Survey findings across all three groups demonstrated strong interest in the concept of a shared lab. Among tenant respondents, over two-thirds either currently use wet lab space (13 respondents, 28%) or anticipate needing it in the future (18 respondents, 39%). When asked more broadly whether they would use a shared lab if it were available, 57% (27 respondents) expressed current interest or within the next one to three years. Over half also reported difficulty in finding appropriate lab space. Among community respondents, 7 organizations (39%) indicated they would use shared lab space if it were available.

Opportunities for Ecosystem Collaboration

Support from community organizations and institutional partners reflects enthusiasm for a shared lab in Maine, though most contributions are expected to be collaborative rather than financial. While only one institutional partner indicated they might directly use the space, many expressed willingness to support the initiative through partnerships, referrals, educational programming, or access to networks and expertise. Community groups were especially enthusiastic, citing interest in mentoring, research collaboration, equipment sharing, and support for pilot production.

These responses suggest an opportunity to build a more interconnected support system that leverages Maine's existing assets - networks, talent, and programming well beyond the lab's physical footprint.

Stakeholder Cautions and Considerations

At the same time, some stakeholders expressed skepticism about whether physical space is the ecosystem's most pressing need. Representatives from entrepreneurship networks and funding groups questioned whether Maine has reached a critical mass of life sciences companies to justify a new facility. Others pointed to more immediate barriers — such as limited access to early-stage capital, mentorship, and business support — that could constrain sector growth regardless of infrastructure investments.

Several stakeholders also noted that the life sciences market is evolving toward more "assetlight" and "lab-light" models, particularly in diagnostics and medical devices, precision medicine, and computational biology, where innovation increasingly happens outside traditional labs. Supporting these digitalfirst entrepreneurs — through strategies like microgrants, cloud credits, CRO access, and fractional technical support — could help Maine retain and grow life sciences founders without relying solely on physical infrastructure.

Additionally, some recommended maximizing the use of existing lab spaces — lowering costs, easing access, and improving visibility — before developing new facilities.

Additional Demand Signals

Beyond direct survey feedback, secondary market activity provides further insight into life sciences growth in Maine. The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), which administers the Maine Seed Capital Tax Credit Program, reports that 14% of accredited companies — 15 in total — are in the life sciences sector. Since launching the Maine Funding Network in May 2024, FAME has also received 33 applications from companies in biotech, environmental technology, and healthcare, representing 10% of total applicants.

In contrast, startup support organizations such as Maine Venture Fund and the Maine Center for Entrepreneurs (MCE) report minimal current demand for wet lab space. Feedback from MCE points to steady activity in healthcare, medical device, and digital health startups, but relatively few wet lab-based biotech ventures. Most life sciences startups to date have needed dry lab, bench, or light manufacturing space, rather than specialized facilities like fume hoods or cleanrooms.

While life sciences activity is growing, any shared lab investment will need to accommodate a broad range of users — not just traditional biotechnology startups — through flexible, modular infrastructure.

Strategic Considerations and Recommendations

Survey findings across institutional, community, and tenant groups reveal both promising signals and limitations within Maine's life sciences ecosystem. While there is clear interest in shared lab infrastructure particularly among companies with active or anticipated wet lab needs — the overall pool of demand remains modest and heavily early-stage. Pairing a shared lab with wraparound support such as technical services, mentorship, capital access, and connectivity, will be critical to maximizing its impact.

Infrastructure and Support Gaps

Several structural gaps emerged:

- **Geographic Dispersion:** Maine's life sciences assets are spread across the state, limiting resource sharing, coordination, and access to critical infrastructure for early-stage companies.
- **Limited dry lab and analytical support:** Demand extends beyond traditional wet lab users to include companies focused on AI, data science, and bioinformatics, diagnostics and medical devices, food science, aquaculture, and forest product applications — building for flexibility will reach the broadest possible audience.
- **Early Funding Environment:** Most Maine companies are in early development stages and rely heavily on non-dilutive or informal capital, reinforcing the need for flexible, affordable, and scalable lab solutions tailored to pre-revenue enterprises.
- Ecosystem coordination challenges: While there is broad institutional willingness to support shared lab efforts through partnerships, programming, or referrals, there is no central organizing force to coordinate across these stakeholders. This limits the ability to streamline services, concentrate investment, or create a statewide innovation pipeline. Several respondents emphasized the importance of ensuring alignment and avoiding duplication—especially given the tight funding environment.

Recommendations and Next Steps

To respond effectively, any shared lab solution should:

- **Embrace sectoral diversity:** Spaces should be designed to support this diversity of Maine's life sciences sector rather than focus narrowly on a biotech-only model.
- **Pair physical space with services:** Layer in mentorship, regulatory and commercialization support, equipment access, and grant-writing assistance. These offerings can be housed on-site or provided via partnerships with institutions and service providers.
- **Consider a "hub-and-spoke" model:** Given geographic dispersion, consider anchoring one larger facility in a central location (e.g., Portland) but then collaborate with smaller independent sites in other geographies through streamlined access, programming, or knowledge share. This approach could better serve the state's distributed entrepreneurial base.
- Strengthen Capital Readiness: Expand access to early-stage capital and improve availability of venture capital and Series A/B funding within Maine.
 Provide commercialization and business development support to help companies reach investment readiness, and offer training and mentorship to improve fundraising success as ventures mature.
- **Build flexibility into design:** Modular lab space with options for wet, dry, and light-scale manufacturing use will best serve Maine's needs. Avoid over-designing for any single use case.
- **Pilot and validate:** Consider an approach that allows you to test, learn, pivot, and scale in response to demand—prioritizing affordability and operational flexibility along the way.

Closing

A successful shared lab strategy must integrate capital readiness, investment attraction, and robust wraparound support, going beyond physical space alone. A shared lab facility, if built with flexibility, accessibility, and collaboration at its core, can serve as a cornerstone of Maine's growing life sciences economy. But its success will ultimately depend on building a true platform for entrepreneurship — not just a building — that connects innovators to the resources, services, and community they need to thrive.

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About the Project Partners

Maine Technology Institute

The Maine Technology Institute (MTI) is a state-funded nonprofit that drives innovation and economic growth by providing early-stage funding, commercialization support, and entrepreneurial guidance in 7 industry segments. MTI invests in technologies that create new products, services, and quality jobs across Maine, and also administers initiatives to strengthen the state's research and development infrastructure. mainetechnology.org

FocusMaine

FocusMaine is a private-sector-led initiative dedicated to accelerating job growth and strengthening Maine's economy by investing in high-potential industries. Through targeted efforts in agriculture, aquaculture, and life sciences, FocusMaine works to expand career opportunities, attract new talent, and foster sustainable economic growth across the state. focusmaine.org

Delmar Group

Delmar Group is a Maine-based consulting firm focused on building stronger communities through economic development, workforce initiatives, and ecosystem strategy. With deep experience in innovation ecosystems and sector growth, Delmar Group partners with organizations to design and implement solutions that drive entrepreneurship, investment, and job creation. delmargr.com