



Port of Baltimore Worker Retention Program Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective Applicants

(Updated 4/17/2024)

Question: How do I apply?

Answer: The application can be found [here](#).

Question: How much funding can I apply for?

Answer: Applicants may request up to \$200,000, with a maximum expenditure of \$7,500 per worker.

Question: Is my business eligible to apply for this funding?

Answer: Eligible applicants are Maryland based small-businesses, labor unions, trade associations, or companies that contract with or are members of a trade association who rely on access to the Port, and whose activities are hindered or halted entirely due to reduced Port operations that can demonstrate a need for employee retention due to the impacts of the Francis Scott Key bridge collapse. **The purpose of the program is to allow organizations to retain their workers; therefore, proposals must demonstrate that an applicant has between 2 and 499 connected staff.** The following definitions will be used to determine eligibility:

- Maryland-based: an organization that has its principal business operations located in the State or will use any program funds for its workforce or operations within the State
- Small business: an independent organization operating with 500 or fewer full-time equivalent workers in Maryland
- Port-impacted: an organization such as:
 - i. One located directly on the Port of Baltimore;
 - ii. A rail business;
 - iii. A terminal operator;
 - iv. A liquid storage terminal operation;
 - v. An auto terminal operator;
 - vi. A labor union;
 - vii. A “roll on roll off” terminal operator;
 - viii. A warehousing and logistics operation;
 - ix. A manufacturer; or
 - x. Any other type of organization that can reasonably demonstrate negative business impacts due to the temporary Port reductions (MD Labor will consider these applicants on a case-by-case basis).



Applicants must be in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation and the Comptroller of Maryland. In addition, organizations that pay Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes must be up-to-date on payments to MD Labor. Additionally, all grantees must be committed to resuming operations to the fullest extent practicable once the Port resumes full operation.

Question: What can funding be used for?

Answer: Funding is meant to minimize or eliminate the need for layoffs by enabling businesses to retain their employees until the Port fully reopens. Funds may be used:

- a. To support payroll costs to include wage subsidies for businesses and their workers who may have experienced revenue loss,
- b. For training costs related to upskilling employees while keeping them on payroll and training on safety and operations necessitated by the FSK bridge collapse,
- c. To provide supportive services for workers,
- d. For the Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance program, and
- e. Anything else deemed allowable by request in writing with prior approval from MD Labor.

Question: Where do I submit my application?

Answer: Applications should be submitted via email to Worker.Retention@maryland.gov. The full application package should be submitted in a single email.

Question: What needs to be included with my application?

Answer: Submissions should include the completed two part application, including the Program Narrative and Program Budget. Please note that the Program Budget should be submitted as an Excel (.xlsx or .xls) file.

Question: When are applications due?

Answer: Applications will be accepted upon issuance of the *Port of Baltimore Worker Retention Program* policy and will be reviewed on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis until program funds are exhausted or the modification or rescission of Executive Order 01.01.2024.11 whichever comes first. The Department may release available funding in multiple tranches in order to assess interest and accurately deploy resources during the evolving situation created by the temporary Port disruption.

Question: Will I have to repay this funding to the State?

Answer: Grants do **not** need to be repaid to the State if an awardee adheres to the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and to the fullest extent practicable, retains workers who benefit from funding at the same hours, rates of pay, and benefits that were in effect before the reduced operations of the Port for at least 60 days from the grant award. However, if a claim is paid to a grant recipient for losses incurred as a result of the reduction in operations at the Port



or the bridge collapse, the Grantee is required to reimburse the Department within six months of the receipt of an insurance claim or other funds. Applicants should consult with their attorneys to ensure compliance with this requirement.

Question: What is the Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program? Where can I learn more?

Answer: The Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance program is a joint effort between the State and businesses to avoid layoffs during which staff work a reduced number of hours and collect a partial UI benefit. For more information about the Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program, please visit our [webpage](#).

Question: The policy states that in order to be eligible for a grant award all applicants that pay UI taxes must be up-to-date on payments to Labor. What if I am on a payment plan? Can I be considered "up to date" in this case?

Answer: Yes, if an employer has entered into an agreement with Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI) and is in compliance with that agreement, they may be eligible for an award. The business should request documentation from the DUI that verifies their good standing. This documentation can be requested by sending an email to DLUemployerassistance-labor@maryland.gov or by calling 410-949-0033.

Question: Can I receive an advance payment?

Answer: Yes, approved applicants will receive 100% of their grant funds up front.

Question: What are examples of supportive services that the grant can cover?

Answer: Examples of supportive services include transportation allowances, childcare or dependent costs, housing costs, mental health services, and any other supportive service requested and approved by MD Labor.

Question: When can I expect to hear back about my application?

Answer: All applications will be reviewed and applicants will be notified of a decision by email within five business days.

Question: When will my grant begin?

Answer: The grant start date will be the date that the grant agreement is fully executed by the applicant and returned to Labor. If an application is approved, the applicant will be provided with a *Port of Baltimore Worker Retention Program Award Notification* to be executed by the business. Approved businesses must submit a signed grant agreement to Labor for review within five business days of notification per instructions on the award letter. Once signed, the grant award is considered executed. Grant agreements that are not returned to Labor within five business days will be considered null and void and the applicant will forfeit the award.



Question: How long do I have to spend funds?

Answer: Grantees must spend all *Port of Baltimore Worker Retention Program* dollars within 60 days of the full execution of the grant agreement.

Question: Will this program conflict with my workplace's collective bargaining agreement?

Answer: Each workplace and each collective bargaining agreement are different, but in general if benefits and incentives are equally distributed to all employees, then this program may not create a direct conflict with existing collective bargaining agreements. Applicants are encouraged to review the terms of this program with their attorney to determine how it may affect collective bargaining.

Question: Do I need to keep documentation related to expenditures on my grant?

Answer: Yes. It is possible that staff from the Maryland Department of Labor will ask to review documentation that substantiates the expenditures made with grant funding and employee retention. Grantees should keep all detailed documentation related to the grant for up to 4 years after the end of the grant or after the resolution of any insurance claims relating to the reduced operations of the Port, whichever is later.

Question: Will I be required to submit reports for this grant?

Answer: Yes. Within 30 days after exhausting the award amount, grantees must submit a narrative and an expense report to Labor. In addition, Grantees are required to report the resolution of any insurance claims and answer any requests regarding the status of a claim, even if it occurs after the grant has been closed out.

Question: What if my business receives insurance proceeds or proceeds from a lawsuit filed in relation to the reduced operations at the Port? Does this impact my grant and if so, how?

Answer: If an insurance claim or other recovery as a result of a cause of action has been paid to a grant recipient, they must notify the Department via worker.retention@maryland.gov of the receipt of any funds as a result of those claims. In addition, the Department must be reimbursed within six months of the receipt of an insurance claim or other funds, as appropriate.

Question: Can I submit multiple applications?

Answer: Eligible applicants may apply for up to \$200,000, with a maximum expenditure of \$7,500 per worker. Labor may consider multiple applications per unique business entity, but will not award more than \$200,000 to any one grantee. If an individual applies for multiple grants on behalf of different businesses, applicants must disclose that in the *Port of Baltimore Worker Retention Program* application. Failure to disclose this information shall result in the Department recapturing the awarded funds.