FAQs

Seafood Accelerator and Innovation Lab - Catalyst

Q: What types of business entities should apply for SAIL Catalyst?

A: We encourage all business types to apply and participate in the program. However, our curriculum is geared toward for-profit entities (ex. LLC or S-Corp). Some program content (accounting, taxation, business formation) may not be 100% applicable to non-profit and cooperative business models. We will try our best to find materials relevant to non-profits or cooperatives but cannot guarantee that all of the information and resources necessary for your business model will be available through this program.

Q: How do you define a "seafood business"?

A: The Sail Catalyst program is designed for seafood businesses that are currently selling products into direct marketing channels (farmers/fishermen's markets; CSFs; off the boat; dockside; e-commerce; directly to institutions, retailers, cooperatives, etc.) and are seeking skills to help their businesses grow or become stable.

Q: Are there minimum or maximum sales and operating requirements to apply to this program?

A: We don't have minimum or maximum sales requirements for businesses applying to the program. The only operating requirements are that you self-identify as a small or mid-scale seafood business interested in scaling up business or strengthening your operations, sell a portion of your catch directly to consumers, and are committed to actively participating in a majority, if not all, of the training sessions.

Q: How do you define a small or mid-scale seafood business in terms of revenue or number of employees, etc.?

A: We acknowledge that all sizes of businesses need training and support and therefore have not defined the terms "small" or "mid-scale" by revenue or number of employees. SAIL Catalyst will remain inclusive of those who are in need of support and self-identify

as small- or mid-scale operations. We are more interested in whether your values are aligned with Local Catch Network's core values.

Q: Many small fishing businesses are run by a married couple or partnered team. Does there need to be one designated attendee from the business available for the sessions, or can the partners take turns attending sessions?

A: We encourage both of you to attend the training together to ensure all members of the management / ownership team are on the same page and are able to implement the program content into your business. If there is strong continuity of information between two people, it is acceptable for the couples to take turns.

Q: Can participants call in using a phone if they do not have access to a computer or internet? Also, can participants share access to Zoom (2-3 harvesters join together to participate in sessions from one location to access technology)?

A: Having a computer with a webcam and a microphone is ideal. It may not be a complete barrier but it would be more challenging to see information from SAIL sessions on a shared computer. Yes, multiple harvesters could join together to participate. We don't want lack of access to be a reason folks don't apply, reach out to us if you are in need of additional support in this area.

Q: Is this program specifically for wild fisheries, or can our aquaculture business participate?

A: Both wild and aquaculture seafood businesses are invited to participate in the program. Our main focus is to accommodate values-based seafood operations.

Q: What days and times will SAIL Catalyst sessions be scheduled?

A: Generally, training will take place weekly on Tuesday and Thursday from 1-2:30pm EST.

Q: Are there any unexpected costs participants should consider, such as a program fee or travel/lodging for the in-person convening?

A: There are no costs associated with the program. All costs associated with the in-person convening including travel and lodging will be covered for at least one person from each business.

Q: Will there be any 1-on-1 or small group mentoring?

A: LCN is focused on facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and networking. We expect that SAIL participants will increase their knowledge in the program content areas throughout the duration of the program and encourage former SAIL participants to mentor new businesses who are new to direct marketing. Based on the skills taught in SAIL Catalyst, cohort members will be in a better position to apply for our SAIL Mentorship program, where businesses are paired with a stable and mature seafood business for a year. For more information on the differences between the two programs, contact Jessica Gribbon Joyce, LCN Program Manager, jessica.joyce@maine.edu.

Q: Are our business details kept confidential during the application process and afterward?

A: Yes, all business information is confidential in the sense that it doesn't leave the program; only the program staff reviewing applications will see your business details and information. Any business data shared with funders for reporting purposes is aggregated and not from individual businesses.

Q: How many applicants will be selected for the program?

A: Up to 15 participants will be accepted for the 2027 cohort. This is a competitive application process, and we typically have more applications than we can accept.

Q: Will there be a limit to the number of businesses accepted into the program in each region? For example, East Coast, West Coast, Gulf Coast.

A: We will be considering geographical diversity when selecting and forming our final cohort, though there is currently no limit to the number of businesses in each region.

Q: Is there a certification of completion or acknowledgement that businesses receive at the end of the program?

A: Yes. Certificates of completion can be provided upon request. Participants have requested certificates for a variety of reasons, such as to provide to lenders and to promote their businesses.

Q: I am not ready or interested in applying for SAIL Catalyst, but are there volunteer opportunities available with your organization?

A: If you are a technical assistance provider there may be opportunities to incorporate you into future SAIL programming and we ask that you contact us (info@localcatch.org). The Local Catch Network's Executive Committee is an all-volunteer crew with an annual application process. Occasionally, the organization offers other opportunities for people to work on projects or around a topic. Specific ideas for volunteer projects may be considered on a case by case basis.

Q: Is there support for designing a processing facility layout? What about support to navigate state and federal production regulations?

A: We do not provide support for setting up processing facilities or navigating production regulations. The USDA offers no-cost architectural services for stakeholders across the country including initial design and plan evaluation for the construction or remodeling of wholesale markets, farmers markets, public markets, and food hubs. See here for more information.

If you have additional questions, contact:
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