



C&I CUSTOM PROGRAM UPDATE – May 2026

Efficiency Maine's [Commercial & Industrial \(C&I\) Custom Program](#) provides Maine businesses and institutions with incentives for site-specific energy efficiency projects that are not otherwise covered by prescriptive incentives. Past examples of successful projects include process-specific energy saving projects, larger compressed air system upgrades, heat recovery systems, refrigeration upgrades, and condensate recovery or steam reduction measures. Incentives for eligible projects range from \$5,000 to \$3,000,000 and are capped at 50% of net project cost for retrofits, or 75% of net incremental cost for new construction or end of life projects.

Our newsletter keeps interested parties informed about important program updates and recently completed projects.

What's New?

Public Level 2 EV Charger RFP – Efficiency Maine seeks qualified bidders to install and operate public Level 2 EV chargers at multifamily, business, and public properties. Proposals will be accepted until March 3, 2027, or until funding is exhausted, whichever comes first. The RFP is federally funded and has flow-down requirements. Interested parties can review the Request for Proposal [here](#).

Demand Response Program Enrollment Open for 2026 Summer Season – The next season of the Demand Response Program will launch on June 1, 2026, and customer enrollment is currently underway. Incentives are available for commercial and industrial customers who can reduce electric load during peak demand periods. Interested customers can learn more and enroll through one of our Program Partners [here](#).

Custom Distributed Generation Program Open to Non-Exporting Solar PV Systems – The C&I Custom Distributed Generation Program now supports non-exporting solar PV systems sited behind customer utility meters. To be eligible, projects must be preapproved before purchase and be approved for interconnection under a Level 3 Interconnection Agreement. Full program details can be found [here](#).

Prescriptive Funding Opportunity Notices (FONs) – The C&I Prescriptive Program currently has two Funding Opportunity Notices (FONs) with enhanced incentives for [school lighting retrofits](#) and [electrification in new affordable multifamily housing](#). Standard incentives remain available for all other facility types.

Success Stories

Sappi Somerset – Skowhegan – Heat Recovery and Process Improvements

Sappi North America's [Somerset Mill](#) is one of the most technically advanced paper mills in North America. Each year, it produces over 1 million tons of paperboard packaging, label papers, and graphic papers. The facility employs nearly 800 people and has been in operation for 50 years.

As part of the \$500 million expansion of paper machine #2, completed in 2025, Sappi engaged with Efficiency Maine's Custom Program to support several value-added efficiency measures, including:

- The expansion of a heat recovery system from paper machine dryer hoods to serve make up air system;
- Installing white water thermal storage to minimize the amount of freshwater needed during periods of high load; and
- The addition of variable frequency drives (VFDs) on five pumps serving process load systems.

Each project improves the overall facility performance in a different way and all three are excellent examples of efficiency measures that can be implemented in industrial settings.

- Paper machine dryer hood heat recovery reduces heating fuel use to serve space heating thermal loads.
- White water thermal storage reduces heating fuel use associated with make-up fresh water and improves operation during paper machine shutdowns and startups.
- Pump VFDs improve the operation of pumps and better align flow with process loads.

The Somerset facility is an iconic Maine paper mill and the investment in the #2 paper machine demonstrates Sappi's commitment to the facility. While all three projects are specific to the facility, VFDs and heat recovery are broadly applicable to many industrial operations. Heat recovery is generally a good investment for any process with constant heat rejection. VFDs usually produce a high return on investment for any pump or fan with the ability to reduce speed.

- Total additional cost of high efficiency equipment: \$10.5M
- Total approximate Custom Program incentive awards: \$2.2M
- Total estimated annual energy savings: 70,000 MMBtus oil

White Water Storage Tank





McCain Foods – Easton – Heat Recovery

For 50 years, the [McCain](#) Foods facility in Easton, Maine, has produced a wide variety of prepared potato products. McCain is highly committed to sustainability, including smart farming practices, efficient operations, and supporting local communities. As a food producer, the facility requires large amounts of heating year-round for cooking and cleaning.

McCain had a preexisting energy recovery system in Easton to recover waste heat from one of their production lines. The energy recovery system had unused heat recovery capacity and McCain engaged with the Custom Program for support to install systems to use that extra capacity. By expanding the energy recovery system, McCain's reduced their steam consumption and associated fuel usage and carbon footprint.

Heat and energy recovery systems can be applied in a broad variety of applications and typically take the form of fluid heat exchangers connecting exhaust and supply systems. The best applications are used year-round, have high temperature waste streams or exhausts, and lower temperature supply air or water.

- Total cost energy recovery system expansion: \$800,000
- Efficiency Maine incentive: \$445,000
- Estimated annual fuel savings: 22,000 MMBtus

Heat Exchanger and Supporting Hot Water Tank



Get Started

- Contact the C&I Custom Program at 207-620-0002 or custom@efficiencymaine.com for potential inquiries.
- Review additional C&I Custom Program eligibility and incentive information on our [website](#).
- Consider a free [Scoping Audit](#) to help you assess where to start.
- Consider a [Technical Assistance Study](#) to help you conduct an energy analysis or develop project designs.