



# Northern Border Regional Commission



## NBRC Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request

As submitted to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees March 13, 2023

# Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request

## Table of Contents

About the NBRC	3
NBRC Members	4
The NBRC Service Area	5
Distressed and Transitional Counties	6
Areas of Investment	7
Grant Programs and FY 2022 Grant Awards	8
Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL)	10
FY 2024 Areas of Focus	10
FY 2024 Proposed Budget	11
Appendix I: Evidence Act Title I Implementation and Evaluation	14

## About the NBRC

---

*Our Vision: The Northern Border region is known for its vital regional economies and thriving communities that provide for the well-being of the region's residents and support the stewardship of the region's natural and cultural assets.*

*Our Mission: The mission of the Northern Border Regional Commission is to catalyze regional, collaborative, and transformative community economic development approaches that alleviate economic distress and position the region for economic growth.*

Authorized by Congress in 2008 (USC 40, Subtitle V) and first appropriated by Congress in 2010, the Northern Border Regional Commission ("NBRC") is modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission federal-state partnership. The NBRC was created to provide infrastructure and economic development assistance to projects in counties that have varying degrees of economic and demographic distress.

Authority and oversight functions of the NBRC are shared by five Members: The Federal Government represented by the Federal Co-Chair, and the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont, represented by the Governors of those States. NBRC investments and policies are approved by the vote of the Federal Co-Chair and the collective vote of the majority of State Governors.

As a Federal-State partnership, the NBRC enjoys a strong network of State economic development leaders who provide guidance and support for NBRC programs. Such support also helps NBRC staff maintain knowledge of local conditions throughout its extensive service area.

The NBRC partnership is also aided by a select number of certified Local Development Districts that assist in grant technical assistance, provide information on complementary grants for projects, and administration of the NBRC grant funds.

The NBRC Members have a shared staff that is accountable and responsible to the Members as a whole. The staff provides impartial information and counsel in support of NBRC programs and direction, as well as a range of administrative functions including finance and contractual relationships.

The NBRC's largest grant program, formerly the State Economic & Infrastructure Development (SEID) program, is undergoing a reconfiguration in FY 2023 due to its layering with funding provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). The resulting "Catalyst Program" will retain the ability to fund projects across the NBRC's statutory authority, and will continue to be informed by the goals and objectives found within the NBRC's Five Year Strategic Plan and through extensive stakeholder outreach that occurred throughout FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Since 2018, the NBRC has also offered the smaller Regional Forest Economy Partnership (RFEP) grant program, which was also extensively re-designed in FY 2022 and re-launched in FY 2023. The program retains its core focus on efforts to support the forest-based economy, and to assist in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models across the NBRC region.

Appropriations continued in FY 2022 and FY 2023 for a suite of partnership initiatives with other Federal agencies, including with the USDA and EDA, and expanded partnerships with the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).



## NBRC Members

---

Policy and oversight decisions of the Commission are made by the Federal Co-Chair and a majority of governors from Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.



### **Representing the Federal Government**

Member: Christopher Saunders, Federal Co-Chair



### **Representing the State of Maine**

Member: The Honorable Janet Mills, Governor

Governor's Alternate:

Commissioner Heather Johnson, Department of Economic & Community Development

NBRC State Program Manager:

Charlotte Mace, Department of Economic & Community Development



### **Representing the State of New Hampshire**

Member: The Honorable Chris Sununu, Governor & State Co-Chair

Governor's Alternate:

Commissioner Taylor Caswell, Department of Business & Economic Affairs

NBRC State Program Manager:

Steve Fortier, Department of Business & Economic Affairs



### **Representing the State of New York**

Member: The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor

Governor's Alternate:

Deputy Secretary of State for Local Government, Mark Pattison, NY Dept. of State

NBRC State Program Manager:

Kyle Wilber, Local Government Services, NY Dept. of State



### **Representing the State of Vermont**

Member: The Honorable Phil Scott, Governor

Governor's Alternate:

Deputy Secretary Tayt Brooks, Agency of Commerce & Community Development

NBRC State Program Manager:

Kristie Farnham & Natalie Elvidge, Agency of Commerce & Community Development

## The NBRC Service Area

---

Recognizing similar economic and demographic challenges facing Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont, Congress delineated the NBRC's service area by statute and only projects within the service area are eligible to receive funding. As of FY 2023, the following counties are included in the NBRC's service area:

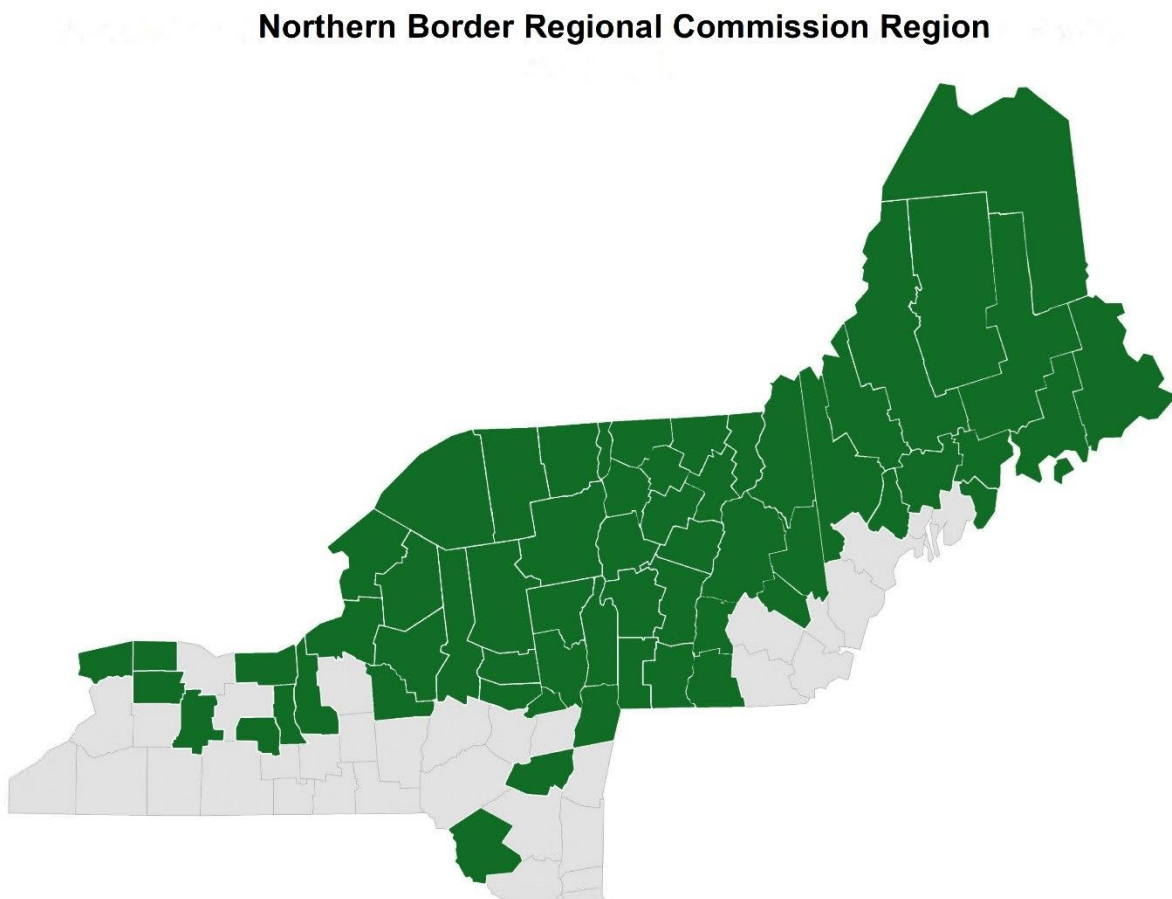
**Maine:** Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties.

**New Hampshire:** Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, and Sullivan counties

**New York:** Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne and Yates counties.

**Vermont:** all counties within the State

---



## Distressed and Transitional Counties

---

By statute, the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress within its region. The reasons for this annual exercise include:

- To have reliable and timely data that can inform NBRC leadership as they create new (and improve existing) economic and infrastructure funding programs,
- To create a benchmark in which annual compilations of economic and demographic data can be compared to the NBRC's Five Year Plan goals,
- To identify whether the NBRC can provide grants to projects within a county,
- To determine the amount of match required<sup>1</sup> by grant applicants for projects,
- To assist States as they develop their own economic and community development programs, and
- To provide publicly available information so local decision makers can prioritize their economic and community development strategies.

### Classification Criteria

The ultimate result of this work is to separate counties and municipalities within the NBRC service area into three classifications: Distressed Counties, Transitional Counties, and Attainment Counties. County data (and the Isolated Areas of Distress referenced below) are updated annually in time to provide guidance to potential grantees.

The NBRC uses the variables in both categories below to determine the classification of each county:

#### Primary Distress Categories

(required by statute for consideration):

- Percent of Population below Poverty Level,
- Unemployment Rate, and
- Percent Change in Population

#### Secondary Distress Categories:

- Percent of Population with a bachelor's degree or higher,
- Median Household Income, and
- Percent of Secondary and Seasonal Homes

### Distressed Counties

Counties classified as "Distressed" are the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped of the NBRC's service area and have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Distressed counties display at least three of the criteria stated above (and at least one in each category). The maximum percent of qualified project costs funded by the NBRC in distressed counties is 80%. Federal law requires the NBRC to provide 50% of appropriations to projects in counties categorized as distressed.

### Transitional Counties

Counties classified as "Transitional" are economically distressed and underdeveloped or have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Transitional counties have at least one of the criteria stated above (in either category). The maximum percent of qualified project costs funded by the NBRC in transitional counties is 50%.

---

<sup>1</sup> In FY 2021, Congress instructed the NBRC to waive matching funds requirements dating back to FY 2020, and in FY 2021 and future years, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Attainment Counties and Isolated Areas of Distress**

Finally, “Attainment” counties are those that are neither “distressed” nor “transitional.” The NBRC is not allowed to fund projects within an attainment county unless the project is within an “Isolated Area of Distress,” or has been granted a waiver. Isolated areas of distress are “areas [municipalities] that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.”

### **Listing of Counties by Distress**

Please refer to the NBRC’s website ([nbrc.gov](http://nbrc.gov)) for the most recent 2023 Distress Criteria.

## **Areas of Investment**

---

The NBRC may invest in the following economic development categories, as described in **40 U.S.C., Subtitle V, §15501**:

1. To develop the transportation infrastructure of its region;
2. To develop the basic public infrastructure of its region;
3. To develop the telecommunications infrastructure of its region;
4. To assist its region in obtaining job skills training, skills development, and employment-related education, entrepreneurship, technology, and business development;
5. To provide assistance to severely economically distressed and underdeveloped areas of its region that lack financial resources for improving basic health care and other public services;
6. To promote resource conservation, tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space in a manner consistent with economic development goals;
7. To promote the development of renewable and alternative energy sources.

Federal law (**40 U.S.C., Subtitle V, §15501**) mandates that 40% of NBRC grants be utilized for infrastructure projects (numbers 1, 2, and 3 above) while 50% of NBRC appropriations shall be dedicated for distressed counties.

### **Strategic Investment**

Considering the wide-ranging nature of these categories and limited funding for grants - and with respect to the NBRC’s enabling legislation that requires a five-year investment plan - the NBRC has created a Strategic Plan that will give the NBRC focus and priorities from 2017-2022<sup>2</sup>. Below are the areas of investment supported in the Strategic Plan:

- Revitalize and modernize essential infrastructure in Northern Border region communities.
- Increase access, affordability, and use of high-speed telecommunications by Northern Border residents and businesses.
- Stabilize and reduce electric and thermal energy costs.
- Retain, expand and diversify business enterprise that capitalizes on the region’s natural, cultural, and economic assets.
- Position the Northern Border region as an attractive and supportive place for creative and entrepreneurial people.
- Support and expand a highly productive workforce with skills suited to existing and future business needs.
- Foster entrepreneurial leadership and capacity for community economic development.

---

<sup>2</sup> Per Commission vote on January 12, 2021, the NBRC extended its 5-year strategic plan through FY2022. The NBRC is working to revise its strategic plan in FY 2023.

- Inform and align local, state, and regional economic development decision making with regional data and perspectives.

The NBRC's Five Year Strategic Plan is available for download from the NBRC's website:  
<http://www.nbrc.gov/content/strategic-plan>

## Grant Programs and FY 2022 Grant Awards

---

FY 2022 appropriations language directed the NBRC to invest across four programs: The State Economic & Infrastructure Development (SEID) Investment Program, the Regional Forest Economy Partnership (RFEP), the State Capacity Building Grant Program (SCG), and a special set aside focused on broadband projects (deployed in partnership with each NBRC State). In addition, funds provided to the NBRC by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Department of Labor (DoL) via the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) program, and the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), complemented annual appropriations and created an opportunity for these Federal agencies to utilize the NBRC's expertise in the region and economic development.

The **State Economic & Infrastructure Development (SEID) Program** is the NBRC's flagship grant program, and funds economic and community development projects and programs within the NBRC's four State region. Projects are scored and prioritized by the NBRC's state-based partners to ensure that projects align with local and statewide economic development plans and objectives. After scoring, the Commission collaboratively approves awards. Awards range in size with a maximum of \$1 million for transportation, basic public, telecommunication, and alternative energy infrastructure, and a maximum of \$350,000 for non-infrastructure projects supporting rural healthcare, workforce, and outdoor recreation and tourism initiatives.

The legacy SEID program is undergoing a rebrand for FY 2023, and will be known as the "Catalyst Program," wherein funds from the NBRC's annual appropriations are made available alongside funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which is addressed separately later in this document. The NBRC will continue to deploy funds under the Catalyst Program title after all BIL funds are obligated, and so will continue to request funds for the program in future years. The FY 2024 Budget requests approximately \$29 million for the Catalyst Program.

In addition to funds provided by annual appropriations, the NBRC applies funds provided by EDA and USDA to Catalyst applicants whose projects align with the strategic objectives and requirements of both the NBRC and each partner agency.

The **Regional Forest Economy Partnership (RFEP) Program** is also undergoing a rebrand in FY 2023. Beginning in FY 2023, RFEP is known as simply the "Forest Economy Program" (FEP), but it retains a focus on supporting the growth and diversification of the forest products industry in the NBRC's region. FEP incentivizes collaboration among entities within the four NBRC states, and in FY 2022 underwent both content and structural changes to ensure better alignment with stakeholder needs in the region. Awards are up to \$1 million and in the past have supported a range of initiatives, to include research on new uses for wood products, workforce development initiatives focused on the industry, and technical assistance in support of wood products and forestry-focused businesses. The FY 2024 Budget requests \$4 million for FEP.



The **State Capacity Grant (SCG)** program debuted in FY2020, in recognition of the increasing complexity of NBRC project development, and the increased amount of effort required by the states to fulfill NBRC-related responsibilities. The funds must be used to build capacity within each state for economic development activities that lead to NBRC and other Federal project proposals. Each state must develop an annual scope of work that is reviewed and approved by the NBRC. To remain eligible, states must be current with regard to the payment of administrative dues. In FY 2022, each NBRC state was eligible for \$250,000, and in FY 2023, due to an increase in appropriations specific to this program, the per State amount increased to \$312,500. The FY 2024 Budget requests \$1.25 million for SCG.

The partnership with HRSA was new in FY 2021 and continued in FY 2022 and FY 2023. These funds continue to span two existing HRSA initiatives: *Rural Health Outreach* and *Rural Communities Opioids Response*. Funded projects are ongoing as of the time of writing.

The parameters of the NBRC's investments are directed by the NBRC's enabling legislation, standard Federal grant requirements, the NBRC's Five-Year Strategic Plan, and State and/or regional economic development plans.

Below is a summary of the grants awarded during the FY 2022 SEID (now Catalyst) round (which includes EDA & USDA awards). RFEP (now FEP) did not deploy funds in FY 2022 while the program underwent significant structural and content changes; FY 2022 funds will be deployed in the FY 2023 FEP program. More detailed information on all NBRC grants was released in the NBRC's 2022 Annual Report, which is available via the *Impact & Reporting* tab on the NBRC's website: [nbc.gov](http://nbc.gov)

<b>Awards: SEID Grants, 2022 (including via EDA &amp; USDA funds)</b>	
Number of Awards:	<b>61</b>
Total Amount of Awards (NBRC Annual Appropriation):	<b>\$24,200,000</b>
Total Amount of Awards (USDA):	<b>\$1,343,336</b>
Total Amount of Awards (EDA):	<b>\$3,000,000</b>
Total Amount Requested by applicants:	<b>\$69,173,445</b>
<b>Awards: RFEP Grants, 2022</b>	
Number of Awards:	<b>0</b>
Total Amount of Awards:	<b>\$0</b>
Total Amount Requested by applicants:	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Awards: HRSA Partnership, 2022</b>	
Total Amount of Awards via <i>Rural Health Outreach</i>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
Total Amount of Awards via <i>Rural Communities Opioids Response</i>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
<b>Awards: USDA (non-SEID), 2020</b>	
Outdoor Recreation Economy Capacity Building:	<b>\$1,566,664 (\$391,666 / State)</b>
<b>Awards: State Capacity Grant</b>	<b>\$1,000,000 (\$250,000 / State)</b>
<b>Awards: State Broadband Capacity Initiatives</b>	<b>\$5,000,000 (\$1,250,000/State)</b>
<b>Please Note:</b> 2023 awards are anticipated to be announced in August 2023.	

## Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

---

The NBRC anticipates awarding \$20 million in BIL funds through the Catalyst Program in FY2023. The BIL funding opportunity will be grounded in regional infrastructure needs identified in constituent interviews and integrates agency equity and climate priorities. BIL funds will allow NBRC to meet more of the region's transportation, public water, renewable energy, and telecommunications needs through higher maximum award size for infrastructure projects and an increase in the expected number of infrastructure awards. BIL funded program development and grant administration staff will provide the necessary internal capacity to support the planned increase in awards.

The NBRC will continue with an informed deployment approach, using an early program evaluation process to inform the BIL funding opportunity in FY 2024. The NBRC anticipates obligations of approximately \$2 million in BIL funds in FY2023, approximately \$30 million in FY2024, and that BIL funds will be fully deployed by the end of FY 2028.

## FY 2024 Areas of Focus

---

The NBRC's activities in FY 2024 will maintain our focus on grantmaking within the NBRC region, while ensuring that resources are invested strategically and in line with guidance from the Administration. The NBRC is well positioned programmatically to align strategic investments with this guidance. Highlights include:

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:** As noted in our FY 2023 request, the NBRC has developed an internal committee to focus on the implementation of Executive Orders 13985 and 14035. Included in FY 2023 in the "Administrative Priorities" line item were funds dedicated to a consulting engagement to include small group and whole-staff training on, broadly, building capacity for internal DEIA conversations, expanding the NBRC's hiring practices to ensure more inclusivity, and working to support intentional investment in underserved communities in the NBRC's region. This work is currently underway, and we anticipate it will continue in FY 2024.
- **Equity:** Regarding the issue of equity specifically, the NBRC completed a research contract in FY 2023 focused on equity issues in the NBRC's region regarding investment priorities. Consisting of a survey, in-depth interviews, and a landscape analysis, the project intentionally sought out underrepresented voices in an attempt to learn how the NBRC can ensure future investments are available and accessible to these communities. Findings from this work drove the development of FY 2023 grant materials and will continue to evolve in FY 2024 as the NBRC continues to try new approaches and subsequently adapt programs to embrace those approaches that prove successful.
- **Evidence Act Title I Implementation and Evaluation:** In FY 2023, the NBRC hired a Data Reporting Specialist to support this critical work, and we have begun to develop a plan that implements the Evidence Act, develops a Learning Agenda, and Evaluation Plan. More details are included in **Appendix I** at the end of this document.
- **Tackling the Climate Crisis:**
  - The NBRC is authorized (**40 U.S.C., Subtitle V, §15501**) "...to promote the development of renewable and alternative energy sources." This authorization has been, and will remain, an optional funding pathway for eligible grantees in all of the NBRC's grant programs.
  - The NBRC continually works with state and local governments to leverage private sector (and other public sector) funding for large-scale infrastructure projects.

- In FY 2023, the NBRC worked with a research contractor to determine regional priorities for infrastructure investments, and was able to quantify that the region prioritizes climate-resilient infrastructure investments. These findings flowed into the scoring and investment prioritization of FY 2023 grant program materials, and this prioritization will continue in FY 2024.
- **Integrating Resilience into Infrastructure Improvements:** Flowing from the statements just above, in FY 2023, the NBRC began requesting specific evidence of engineering and other planning documents from grant applicants to reflect planning for, broadly, climate resiliency. These could include, for example, evidence of meeting 100-year flood standards for water-based infrastructure projects.
- **Cybersecurity:** The NBRC only contracts with U.S. Government-approved contractors procured through our partnership with GSA's procurement division. These contractors must meet a minimum set of cybersecurity standards and comply with all relevant updates to systems. Further, the NBRC has contracted with an external technology firm to continually monitor all of the NBRC's hardware and software applications. Finally, in FY 2023, the NBRC worked to procure a new Grant Management System (GMS), and has worked closely with GSA to ensure that the new system meets newly implemented "FedRAMP" requirements.
- **Burden Reduction for Public Benefit Programs:** As reflected in the budget lines later in this document, the NBRC is working on a broad range of "capacity" initiatives as an Agency, and in collaboration with Federal, State, and local partners throughout the region. This work is rooted in data the NBRC has collected regarding the inability of some underserved communities with respect to conceptualizing projects suitable for Federal funding, and the inability of some communities to effectively compete for and successfully administer Federal funds. The NBRC is piloting several initiatives in FY 2023 and FY 2024 designed to reduce the burdens of communities with respect to seeking and administering Federal awards. These initiatives include a range of activities to include training, resource availability, consulting, and other initiatives not yet defined as of the time of writing.
- **Pay Adjustment:** Line item "Personnel Compensation" below reflects the planning assumption of a 5.2% increase in pay for NBRC employees in FY 2024.

## **FY 2024 Proposed Budget**

---

The 2024 President's Budget requests **\$40,000,000** for the Northern Border Regional Commission in order to carry out the FY 2024 Areas of Focus described in the previous chapter.

---

**Table 1: FY 2024 Budget Request**

	<b>FY 2022 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024 President's Budget</b>
Catalyst Program Grants***	\$28,397,744	\$24,310,589	\$24,210,434
Regional Forest Economy Partnership	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000
State Capacity Grant Program	\$1,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000
Capacity Building & Outdoor Recreation Capacity Administrative	-	\$7,916,117	\$7,916,117
Administrative Federal	\$240,991	\$321,184	\$337,886
50/50 (State Share* / Federal Match)	\$178,362	\$310,588	\$324,183
Office of Federal Co-Chair	\$375,518	\$405,893	\$424,356
Programmatic	\$807,385	\$1,235,629	\$1,287,024
Implementation of Administration Initiatives**		\$250,000	\$250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,000,000</b>	<b>\$40,000,000</b>	<b>\$40,000,000</b>

\*The 50/50 line includes States' share

\*\* This line includes costs associated with the FY 2024 Areas of Focus on pp. 10-11.

\*\*\*The special broadband initiative funded in FY 2021 and FY2022

was not appropriated in FY 2023, and as such, is not included in FY 2023 or FY 2024. Also note that the Catalyst program was formerly "State Economic & Infrastructure Development" (SEID)

**Table 2: Administration – Salaries & Expenses  
Expenses by Category of Administrative Expense**

	<b>FY2022 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2023 Annualized CR</b>	<b>FY 2024 President's Budget</b>
Personnel Compensation (FY 2024 includes 5.2% raise inc.)	\$636,262	\$1,431,547	\$1,510,525
Personnel Benefits	\$164,970	\$232,620	\$244,716
Travel	\$3,433	\$87,822	\$90,457
Rent & Communications	\$53,571	\$51,936	\$53,494
Other Services	\$358,909	\$734,135	\$756,159
Supplies & Materials	\$3,533	\$8,000	\$8,240
Equipment	\$12,916	\$37,823	\$34,041
Implementation of Administration Initiatives*	-	\$250,000	\$250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,233,594</b>	<b>\$2,833,883</b>	<b>\$2,947,632</b>

\* This line includes costs associated with the FY 2024 Areas of Focus on pp. 10-11.

**Note:** Administrative expenses cannot exceed 10% of core appropriation, per 40 U.S.C., Subtitle V

**Table 3: Summary of Resources**

	<b>Enacted/Requested</b>	<b>Carryover</b>	<b>Supplemental</b>	<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>Obligations</b>	<b>Net Outlays</b>
<b>2022 Appropriation</b>	\$35,000,000	\$20,776,656	\$160,000,000*	\$215,776,656	\$21,009,464	\$16,878,992
<b>2023 Appropriation</b>	\$40,000,000	\$200,550,632	\$15,000,000**	\$255,550,632	\$40,000,000	\$35,000,000
<b>2024 President's Budget</b>	\$40,000,000	\$223,000,000	\$0	\$263,000,000	\$72,000,000	\$51,000,000
<b>Change from 2023</b>	\$0	\$22,449,368	(\$15,000,000)	\$7,449,368	\$32,000,000	\$16,000,000

\* Reflects \$150 million BIL/IIJA appropriation and \$10 million FHWA transfer.

\*\* Reflects \$15 million FHWA transfer.



## Appendix I: Evidence Act Title I Implementation and Evaluation

### Implementing the Evidence Act Within NRBC

The NBRC shall continue to learn and improve by expanding evidence building activities, continuing capacity assessments, and implementing evaluation plans in accordance with the Evidence-Based Policy Act of 2018 (“Evidence Act”). The NBRC is working to create the components of a learning agenda, which will include foundational fact finding, the development of ongoing performance measures, and mechanisms to refine our processes over a multi-year time horizon.

### Learning Agenda (Evidence Building Plan)

- 1) The NBRC continues to review internal processes, best practices, institutional knowledge, and stakeholder feedback. The Commission has sought consultation to better understand relationships with stakeholders in the region which will yield both qualitative and quantitative data. In addition, the commission has engaged in capacity work with stakeholders, which is providing foundational qualitative data.
- 2) Current evidence
  - a) At present, current evidence exists across multiple documents, spreadsheets, past annual reports, research, literature, and media. Organizing this evidence into a central, searchable format is an ongoing project.
- 3) Primary learning questions
  - a) Specific locations of past investments, dating to the NBRC’s first grants in 2010; organized into a central, searchable database.
  - b) Identification of populations in which the NBRC has underinvested in the past.
- 4) Evidence needs and gaps
  - a) Foundational fact finding
    - i) Gaps exist in statistics for all grant applications (process), awards, and impacts of awards
    - ii) Accessible descriptive statistics and grantee information
    - iii) Spatial data for applications and grants
  - b) Information for both successful and unsuccessful grant applications
  - c) Quantitative data focused on the equity of past investments, broken down by specific underserved populations in the region, such as Tribes
  - d) Additional variables to include in the NBRC’s annual “Distress” calculations, which could provide more granularity on the level of distress of specific communities
  - e) Connections among data sets for grant applications, awards, and accounting
- 5) Short term goals to fill gaps:
  - a) The review of past fiscal years up to FY2022 will inform activities for FY2023, and inform preparation of FY2024 Learning Agenda and Evaluation Plans
  - b) Personnel
    - i) NBRC has limited resources, and has one Data Reporting Specialist that will coordinate with the rest of the commission as the data program and LA mature
- 6) Long term goals to fill gaps:
  - a) The NBRC shall continue to build data collection and research capabilities that drive new research questions

- b) Also, the NBRC will continue to build internal reporting structures that provides information on outcomes and impacts
- c) Data will drive decision making and adjustments to both grant program and investment guidelines, and grant administration processes in order to improve service to all stakeholders
- d) A public facing reporting platform will link information on past awards and projects, and thus improve stakeholder outreach

### **Performance Measurement and Evaluation Plan**

The standards and practices herein will be a starting point to report and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of programs, processes, and inform policy development. The NBRC is establishing capacity internally for data collection, data governance, performance measurements and evaluation activities.

The standards, as outlined in *M-20-12* shall apply to the NBRC's evaluations:

1. **Relevance and Utility:** the data, reports, and findings shall provide stakeholders with more quantitative information on applications, grant lifecycles, and will provide stakeholders with information to improve processes and policies
2. **Rigor:** The formulas, interpretation, and reporting of the findings shall be peer reviewed and validated. Findings will be supported by application documents, internal data, and other publicly available data sources with consistent measurements across the region
3. **Independence and Objectivity:** The evaluator shall work to reach the appropriate level of independence from stakeholders
4. **Transparency:** The evaluation methods and findings shall be accessible to stakeholders with enough detail to interpret and replicate results
5. **Ethics:** The evaluation materials shall be managed so that the privacy, rights, and safety of stakeholders are protected. This work will be coordinated with the NBRC's existing "DAEO" and "ADAEO" staff members.

### *Performance Measurements:*

There is an ongoing need to report the performance of all programs and their respective grants throughout their lifecycle. And there is a need to better understand outcomes and impacts of programs and projects over time.

- 1) NBRC will better understand the performance of processes internally across programs and quantify, "what happened, when, where, and to whom?"
  - a) The NBRC will continue improving the systemic collection of data and analyses of programs and variables
  - b) Sources for data will be both qualitative and quantitative
  - c) The NBRC will have more information to understand the demographics and geographic location of grant recipients and beneficiaries
  - d) The commission will develop reports that show grant applications, and awarded grants throughout their lifecycle
  - e) This reporting will support the development of indicators to better understand and improve outcomes of grants

*Evaluation:*

- 1) The NBRC shall evaluate the outcomes of programs and the impacts on grant recipients and beneficiaries, distress criteria, and begin causal analyses. And as suggested in *M-12-12*, the appropriate literature, methods, and evidence in conjunction with the expertise of NBRC stakeholders will be a part of the evaluation. The NBRC will support stakeholders with highly usable resources and findings and adjust programs with more evidence-based decisions.
- 2) The NBRC will use data both from internal processes and external sources to evaluate the outcomes of programs. The evaluation will add context, identify trends, and relationships amongst the data, and then work to answer questions such as:

“Why did it happen?; and

“Did that happen as intended?”

- a) The commission will aim to evaluate FY2010 to present in order to evaluate FY2023
- b) NBRC will then plan and coordinate with external stakeholders for additional data collection as needed
- c) The Data Reporting Specialist shall share reusable reports, descriptive statistics (where applicable), with NBRC stakeholders along with background information
- d) NBRC stakeholders will review these reports to validate results, ensure standards are being met, and methods are understood
- e) NBRC stakeholders will review the analyses to adjust programs, policies, and plan future annual evaluations