



2024 CATALYST PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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GENERAL

Q: Can an applicant apply for more than one program for the same project, e.g. the Catalyst Program to purchase equipment and the Forest Economy Program to train the workforce?

A: There are no restrictions on an entity submitting pre-applications to multiple programs for different projects. NBRC however strongly discourages applicants from applying to multiple programs for the same project and requests that applicants review details to select the appropriate program for their proposed project. Following the review of pre-applications, NBRC may redirect projects to apply to a different NBRC program based on relevance to the associated program.

Q: Does one registration allow for you to cross between multiple pre-applications and/or applications?

A: You will be able to have multiple pre-applications open per registration. You will need to have unique titles for each pre-application. NBRC will provide technical guidance on using the system.

Q: Will you be able to save draft pre-applications and/or applications before submitting them?

A: The system is designed to allow the user to save their work and return to the pre-application. NBRC will provide technical guidance on using the system, however, it is of course recommended that the save feature be used frequently while developing the pre-application.

NBRC ELIGIBILITY

Q: Who is eligible to apply for Catalyst Program funding?

A: The NBRC Economic and Infrastructure funding is available to:

- State governments of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- Local governments (village, town, city, and county)
- Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- Indian Tribes; § 200.54 [Indian tribe](#) (or “federally recognized Indian tribe”). Indian tribe means any [Indian tribe](#), band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([43 U.S.C. Chapter 33](#)), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians ([25 U.S.C. 450b\(e\)](#)). See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services.
- Non-profit entities. The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code. The non-profit entity must be able to demonstrate they have federal grant experience related to economic development.

Ineligible applicants include for-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c), [40 U.S.C. §15101\(c\)](#). Ineligible entities are also those entities normally deemed eligible but, due to prior federal or state funding history have been identified as ineligible for future investments. Additionally, a non-profit identified by a state that does not have a federally recognized 501(c) status is not an eligible applicant.

Q: Are public institutions of higher education or public school districts eligible to apply for Catalyst Program funds?

A: Yes, both public institutions of higher education and public school districts are eligible to apply.

Q: What is the Commission’s Service Area?

A: Only projects within the NBRC’s service area are eligible for funding under 40 U.S.C. §15733. The NBRC service region includes 60 counties across the four-state region. More information about the NBRC region and eligible counties is available [here](#).

Each county in NBRC's service area is classified as "distressed", "transitional", or "attainment" using pre-determined distress criteria as directed by 40 U.S.C., Subtitle V. Distress criteria is applied to communities within attainment counties to identify Isolated Areas of Distress. More information on the process used to assess distress in NBRC counties and the current classifications can be found [here](#).

WAIVERS

Q: How do I know if a Significant Benefits Waiver applies to my project?

A: Generally, projects or applicants/co-applicants that fall outside of the designated distressed counties, transitional counties or Isolated Areas of Distress are not eligible to receive NBRC funds. There are two exceptions that use the Significant Benefits Waiver to allow those entities to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:

1. For projects located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified "Isolated Areas of Distress" that could bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
 - a. A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds invested in a transitional county is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, 50% match ratio.
 - b. A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds invested in a distressed county is eligible for the 80% reimbursement, 20% match ratio.
 - c. A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds being invested in both distressed and transitional counties is eligible for an averaged match ratio.
2. For projects located outside of the NBRC service area in a member state, that could bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
 - a. A project with more than 50% of funds invested in a transitional county is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, 50% match ratio.
 - b. A project with more than 50% of funds invested in a distressed county is eligible for the 80% reimbursement, 20% match ratio.
 - c. A project with NBRC funds being invested equally in distressed and transitional counties - averaged to determine match.
 - d. If more than 50% of the funds are being utilized by the applicant/co-applicant entity where the administration of the project is based outside of a distressed or transitional county, the project is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, 50% match ratio.

If one of these scenarios apply, applicants/co-applicants will need to submit the Significant Benefit Waiver, required documentation, and describe how the NBRC requested funds will be used in distressed counties, transitional counties, or ineligible counties. This information will be used to determine the eligible reimbursement/match ratio. The Significant Benefit Waiver is available on the NBRC Resource website:

<https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration>.

A Significant Benefit Waiver is not available to projects in an Attainment county but not in an Isolated Area of Distress that bring benefits to another Isolated Area of Distress. The benefits must accrue in a county designated as distressed or transitional.

Q: My project is located in a Distressed county but the organization applying for funds is located in an Attainment county. Can I still apply for NBRC funding?

A: An applicant located in an Attainment County must apply for a Significant Benefits Waiver. If the proposed project could bring significant economic benefits to a county designated as Distressed or Transitional, the applicant or co-applicant may apply for a Significant Benefits Waiver. **The significant benefit waiver request and supporting documentation, must be submitted together with the pre-application and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on the pre-application deadline. All waivers in 2024 are due on March 22, 2024 for the Spring funding round or September 6, 2024 for the Fall funding round.** The waiver request will not be considered complete if it does not contain a fully executed Affidavit and supporting documentation. This exception requires a Waiver approved by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor’s Alternates of the four NBRC States. Please see NBRC’s Catalyst Program User Manual for additional information on this requirement.

Q: My project is located in an Attainment County and not in an Isolated Area of Distress. Can I still apply for NBRC funding?

A: A project located in an “attainment” county and not in an Isolated Area of Distress may be eligible for NBRC funding under two conditions:

- A project located in an attainment county that is part of a multi-county project that includes at least one other Distressed or Transitional County is eligible to apply for NBRC funding. Match for multi-county projects will be the average of the counties that make up the project.
- If the project located within an attainment county could bring significant economic benefits to a county designated as Distressed or Transitional, the applicant or co-applicant may apply for a Significant Benefits Waiver. **The significant benefit waiver request and supporting documentation, must be submitted together with the pre-application and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on the pre-application deadline. All waivers in 2024 are due on March 22, 2024 for the Spring funding round or September 6, 2024 for the Fall funding round.** The waiver request will not be considered complete if it does not contain a fully executed Affidavit and supporting documentation. This exception requires a Waiver approved by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor’s Alternates of the four NBRC States. Please see NBRC’s Catalyst Program User Manual for additional information on this requirement.

Q: Am I eligible to apply for funding in 2024 if I have previously received an NBRC investment?

A: An applicant or co-applicant with an open or active NBRC award cannot receive an additional NBRC investment until the current award has both:

- submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project and
- demonstrated that 75% of the cost share has been expended before the pre-application deadline.

If the 75% expenditure requirement cannot be met by March 1, 2024 (Spring Round) or September 1, 2024 (Fall Round), the applicant or co-applicant can apply for a waiver.

The 75% expenditure waiver must be submitted together with the pre-application and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on the pre-application deadline. All waivers in 2024 are due on March 22, 2024 for the Spring funding round or September 6, 2024 for the Fall funding round. The waiver request will not be considered complete if it does not contain a fully executed Affidavit and supporting documentation. If a 75% expenditure waiver is required and is not submitted, the pre-application will be deemed ineligible. The waiver must be approved by the State(s) where the prior award(s) were made and NBRC for the applicant to be eligible to seek Catalyst Program funding. Please see NBRC's Catalyst Program User Manual for additional information on this requirement. The 75% NBRC Prior Investment Expenditure Waiver is available on the NBRC Resources website:

<https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration>.

Q: Do I need to submit a Local Development District Grant Administration Waiver Request?

A: Each NBRC Catalyst award recipient is required to utilize a local development district (LDD) in its region to administer the grant, unless they are a department of State government or have requested and been approved for an LDD waiver. Organizations that can demonstrate capacity for federal grant administration and successful previous grant administration experience may seek a LDD waiver. The waiver request must be submitted on or before the pre-application deadline of 5:00pm EST on March 22, 2024 (Spring round) or September 6, 2024 (Fall round). Please see the NBRC's Catalyst Program User Manual for additional information on waiver eligibility and submission requirements. The Waiver Request from Local Development District Grant Administration is available on the NBRC Resources website: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration>.

AWARD SIZES

Q: What is the amount of money available under the 2024 Catalyst Program?

A: NBRC anticipates making available up to \$50 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding divided equally across the 4 member states. Upon completion of the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations process, additional funds will be made available through the Catalyst Program for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. 2024 Catalyst Program funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. Updates to the available funds will be shared in a revised program announcement.

These federal resources will be competitively awarded through the Catalyst Program in 2024. The Catalyst Program will run two funding rounds with up to \$30MM (approximately \$7.5MM per state) available in Round 1 and up to \$20MM (approximately \$5MM per state) available in Round 2. The Commission may, at its discretion, choose to make available an additional \$5.8MM in total funds (across the 4 member states) via the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the spring funding round.

Q: How much funding is available for my project?

A: NBRC funding maximums are determined by the type of project proposed. Eligibility will be determined in the pre-application review process.

- **Projects classified as construction in support of infrastructure are eligible for awards of up to \$1,000,000.** Projects classified as construction in support of infrastructure may be eligible for up to an additional \$2,000,000 in funding (for a total maximum award of \$3,000,000) if the project meets one of the following criteria: 1) construction takes place in 2 or more eligible communities/counties/states, OR 2) construction involves 2 or more infrastructure categories (basic public, transportation, renewable energy, or telecommunications). For more information on infrastructure projects, please see the Catalyst Program User Manual.
- **Projects classified as non-infrastructure are eligible for awards of up to \$500,000.** For more information on non-infrastructure projects, please see the Catalyst Program User Manual.
- Applicants may propose projects with a federal funding request less than these amounts. There will be no preference given to larger funding requests and proposals for all award sizes will be considered.

PROJECT CLASSIFICATION

Q: What eligible category applies to my project?

A: NBRC has 7 project categories: Basic Public Infrastructure, Transportation, Renewable Energy, Telecommunications, Business and Workforce Development, Basic Healthcare, and Resource Conservation, Recreation and Tourism. Detailed definitions for each category along with examples of projects are available in the Catalyst Program User Manual.

PRO TIP: Use the **decision trees** to classify a proposed project according to the project categories used by NBRC. The project category determines the maximum award amounts.

- **Infrastructure Decision Tree:**

1. Does the proposed project align with an infrastructure category?
2. Is the proposed project primarily construction?

If answers to both questions are YES, the project is considered an infrastructure project by NBRC. An infrastructure project must be a construction project in support of an infrastructure category. The maximum award for an infrastructure project is \$1,000,000. See the Higher Maximum Infrastructure Determination to assess eligibility for up to an additional \$2,000,000.

If the answer to one or both questions is NO, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$500,000.

➤ **Higher Maximum Infrastructure Determination:**

1. Does the infrastructure project include construction in 2 or more jurisdictions?
2. Does the infrastructure project include construction in support of 2 or more infrastructure categories?

If answer to one or both questions is YES, the project is eligible for the higher maximum award amount of up to \$3,000,000.

If the answer to both questions is NO, the project is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$1,000,000.

➤ **Non- Infrastructure Decision Tree:**

1. Does the proposed project align with a non-infrastructure category?

If the answer is YES, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$500,000. For projects proposed under Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation, review the Expanded Basic Public Infrastructure Determination for eligibility as an infrastructure project.

If the answer is NO, the project may not be eligible for a Catalyst Program award.

➤ **Expanded Basic Public Infrastructure Determination for Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation:**

1. Is the proposed Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation project primarily construction?

If the answer is YES, the project is considered construction in support of Basic Public Infrastructure category and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$1,000,000. See the Higher Maximum Infrastructure Determination to assess eligibility for up to an additional \$2,000,000.

If the answer is NO, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$500,000.

Q: Is the planning and engineering for a potential telecommunications project considered infrastructure?

A: No, this would be considered a planning or study not the physical infrastructure. If the project is planning and engineering only, the project will be defined as non-infrastructure. If the planning is part of a grant that also includes construction in support of telecommunications infrastructure, which is an eligible category of infrastructure, then yes.

Q: Is the purchase and installation of rooftop solar systems or heat pumps considered an infrastructure project?

A: To be considered an infrastructure project, the project must consist primarily of construction in support of an infrastructure category. The purchase and installation of residential scale renewable energy systems or individual heating systems does not meet NBRC's threshold for energy infrastructure or primarily construction. This type of project that consists primarily of installation of small scale systems would be considered non-infrastructure with a maximum award size of \$500,000.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Q: When is Catalyst Program information available?

A: NBRC typically announces funding for the Catalyst Program in January of each year. Program materials, including the Catalyst Program Overview, Timeline, and User Manual are announced and available via NBRC's website.

Q: What are the agency investment priorities for the Catalyst Program?

A: The Catalyst Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's economy and communities. All projects must be consistent with the economic development goals of the region and advance a combination of NBRC and member state [strategic investment principles](#). NBRC's Agency Investment Priorities include:

1. Projects that provide direct benefits to communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate direct benefits to rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 and underserved communities. NBRC identifies a underserved community as those who suffer from a combination of economic, health and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources or conditions, such as standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights and vulnerable populations, including minority, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, homeless and limited English-speaking populations.
2. Projects that address multiple needs across eligible infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate efficiencies gained from including multiple funding categories in one project.

3. Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters.

Q: I have a proposed project and am unclear about how best to determine if my project is eligible and/or if it aligns with the investment and scoring priorities of NBRC and the four states. I want to be best prepared for a pre-application submission so what steps should I take?

A: NBRC suggests an interested entity follow these steps to ensure they maximize the information sessions and are prepared to submit a competitive pre-application by the March 22, 2024 deadline:

- Questions regarding eligibility (entity and use of money) must be directed to admin@nbrc.gov as NBRC makes the final determination of eligibility.
- Review the detailed Catalyst Program materials, specifically the User Manual that provides guidance on what entities are eligible, appropriate use of funds, categories NBRC can fund under this program, and the investment priorities. These are all key pieces of information an applicant should familiarize themselves with in preparation to submit a pre-application.
- The [Compliance Manual](#) specifically provides detailed guidance on procurement processes. Projects that have already started work will especially want to understand the procurement requirements associated with NBRC funds. The completion of the NEPA process along with a Notice to Proceed is required before spending NBRC funds, matching funds, or completing any work associated with the project.
- Review Part II and III of the Manual for required pre-application and application information and forms.
- Compare project information compiled for the pre-application to the Catalyst Program Scoring Criteria for NBRC and applicable state(s) in the User Manual. It is recommended to self-evaluate the proposed project to understand alignment with NBRC and state priorities.
- Attend the Catalyst Program information session after following the above steps to be better prepared and have a general understanding of the programmatic materials, investment priorities, scoring priorities, etc. during the discussions. Reviewing the program materials, in detail, will help frame up specific questions to raise during the information sessions.
- If it remains unclear if the project aligns with NBRC priorities following completion of each of the above steps, follow up with NBRC.
- If it remains unclear if the project aligns with State priorities following completion of each of the above steps, follow up with the State Program Manager from the State(s) where the project will occur.

Q: I have programmatic questions regarding the Catalyst Program, who should I contact?

A: Programmatic questions, such as eligibility of entity, use of funds, etc. should be directed to NBRC via an email to admin@nbrc.gov.

NBRC FUNDING POLICIES, MATCH, & COST SHARE

Q: Can NBRC funds match other federal funds?

A: NBRC requires that no more than 80% of total project costs come from federal sources. NBRC allows the use of multiple federal funding sources up to the 80% ceiling. **It is equally important for applicants to check with other federal sources, as each federal agency may have its own restrictions.**

Q: Are ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds considered federal or non-federal funds?

A: ARPA money is considered federal money. It cannot be used as non-federal match.

Q: What is the difference between startup funds and cost of operations?

A: NBRC will not provide funding for ongoing operations of organizations. The rationale is that NBRC funds cannot be relied upon from year to year and sustaining organizations is not in the mission of the NBRC, nor is it in the interest of efficient use of public dollars. NBRC will however provide startup costs for projects and/or facilities. For example: if a nonprofit were to create a program that trained individuals to be ready with new skill sets for potential businesses in the area, NBRC could provide funds in the following ways: NBRC could cover the costs associated with the development of training courses, development of programmatic initiatives to complete training and even potentially pay for training of individuals if there was a specific end goal that could demonstrate that jobs were waiting for those individuals. NBRC could also pay instructors for a specified time-period as a pilot or to get the program off the ground. NBRC would not, however, pay for the instructors for a course that has already been developed and up and running for the past few years. If these types of applications are submitted the applicant should clearly outline how continued funding of the program will be sustainable in the future, absent NBRC funds.

Q: What is the maximum timeframe for an NBRC funded project?

A: The award period, or period of time for a project to be completed, is 3 years.

Q: Do NBRC funds require compliance with Davis-Bacon re: prevailing wage rates?

A: No, funds appropriated by Congress to NBRC are not subject to the Davis-Bacon Act. However, if the project is also using funds from another federal agency that do require Davis-Bacon compliance, the entire project will be subject to those rates.

Q: Can funds be used to purchase a conservation easement?

A: Yes, however, a case must be made for how it is an economic development driver for the region. Each State may prioritize this differently, and it will be up to the States to determine how competitive this type of application is compared to applications that produce jobs. You are strongly encouraged to speak with your state Program Manager within your state.

Q: What are the rules on funding religious activity with Federal money?

A. The United States Supreme Court has said that faith-based organizations may not use direct government support to support "inherently religious" activities. Basically, it means you cannot use any part of a direct Federal grant to fund religious worship, instruction, or proselytization. Instead, organizations may use government money only to support the non-religious social services that they provide. Therefore, faith-based organizations that receive direct governmental funds should take steps to separate, in time or location, their inherently religious activities from the government-funded services that they offer. Such organizations should also carefully account for their use of all government money. This does not mean your organization can't have religious activities. It simply means you can't use taxpayer dollars to fund them. Some faith-based organizations set up separate charitable organizations ("501(c)(3) corporations") to keep programs that receive government money separate from those that engage in inherently religious activities.

Q: What are the applicant match requirements for a Catalyst Program award?

A: NBRC funds require match. The % of match is determined by the county(ies) the project is located in.

- A project located in a county designated as "distressed" requires a 20% match.
- A project located in a county designated as "transitional" requires a 50% match.
- A project located in an "Isolated Area of Distress" requires a 50% match.
- An applicant located in a county designated as "attainment" or outside of an eligible county in a member state with an approved Significant Benefits Waiver is eligible for the match rate associated with the county where NBRC funds are invested. If more than 50% of NBRC funds are invested in a distressed county, the 20% match rate applies. If more than 50% of NBRC funds are invested in a transitional county, the 50% match rate applies. If more than 50% of the funds are invested in both a transitional and distressed county, the average of the match rates applies. If more than 50% of NBRC funds are invested outside of a designated distressed or transitional county, the 50% match rate applies.
- Multi-county projects require an average of match rates.

Q: How is the match requirement calculated for a project in multiple counties or multiple states?

A: Projects located in multiple counties or multiple states require an averaged match. Here are a few examples to help illustrate the match requirements for a multi-county or multi-state award.

- Example 1: Project is located in 2 “distressed” counties. The match for each county is 20%. The average is also 20%.
- Example 2: Project is located in 1 “distressed” county and 1 “transitional” county. The match for the “distressed” county is 20% and the match for the “transitional” county is 50%. The average match is 35%.
- Example 3: Project is located in 2 states including 1 “distressed” county, 1 “transitional” county and 1 “Isolated Area of Distress”. The match for the “distressed” county is 20%, the match for the “transitional” county is 50%, and the match for the “isolated area of distress” is 50%. The average match is 40%.

Q: Can you provide additional guidance on calculating the amount of required applicant match?

A: Match is calculated based on the requested amount of NBRC funds. It is not calculated based on the total project costs. Here are a few examples to help illustrate how to calculate the match amount for a project.

- Example 1: A distressed county-based project requests \$500,000 in NBRC funds. The required match amount is 20%. $\$500,000 \times 20\% = \$100,000$ required match amount.
- Example 2: A transitional county-based project requests \$1,000,000 in NBRC funds. The required match amount is 50%. $\$1,000,000 \times 50\% = \$500,000$ required match amount.
- Example 3: A multi-county-based project requests \$250,000 in NBRC funds. The required match amount is 35%. $\$250,000 \times 35\% = \$87,500$ required match amount.

Q: What is the difference between required match and cost share?

A: Match is defined as the minimum amount of funds or contributions that needs to come from other sources to complete the NBRC funded project. All Catalyst Program awards have a required minimum match determined by the distress level of the county the project is located in. Some projects have total costs that require funds in addition to the NBRC award and the minimum match requirement to complete the project. All other funds (other than NBRC award) that are necessary to complete the project are considered Cost Share.

Q: If a Municipality/Applicant is being given land to use as match for a project, can the value of the land be used as match?

A: For land or other donated real property, a Letter of Intent from the current property owner stating that they will provide the land to the project and stating the sale and ‘appraised’ value of the land, the anticipated date of transaction, and identification of the property is required. Even if the property is being donated, a professional appraisal is required. NOTE: A municipal assessment is NOT an appraisal. An appraisal of the property must have been completed within the past 18 months, or an appraisal must be made prior to issuing a Notice to Proceed if the project is being donated.

Q: Can staff time be used as part of a match or cost share requirement?

A: Yes, with the following exceptions: time that is used to match other programs cannot be used (counted twice, etc.); time must be recorded; cannot use federal employees' time; are not included in any other federal grants; are part of the project budget.

Q: If volunteers are being used, and their time is being tracked for in-kind match for the project, what rate do we use to budget the project?

A: Volunteer rate should be consistent with the national average - http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. Volunteers may not be counted for the same activity in a different project (counted twice) or be federal employees.

Q: We already have funds available for the project that we are proposing. Can these funds be part of our match if we start and/or complete the work before an NBRC grant would be awarded?

A: No. Eligible project expenses (match/cost share and NBRC funds) are only those committed or expended following the issuance of a Notice to Proceed.

Q: How do I know if my project requires a Notice of Federal Interest (NFI)?

A: If NBRC funds are used to purchase real property or funds are used to improve, rehab, or construct real property with an investment of \$250,000 or greater, a Notice of Federal Interest will be required. NBRC has established 20 years as the timeline during which a federal interest remains on real property. It may not be conveyed, transferred, assigned, mortgaged, leased or in any other manner encumbered by the grantee except as authorized in writing by NBRC. Real property is subject to all the requirements of [2 CFR 200.311](#). NBRC's Grant Administration and Compliance manual is the best resource for additional details on a Notice of Federal Interest and example NFI language: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration>.

PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, FORMS, & SUBMISSION

Q: Do I submit the Catalyst Program pre-application online via Grant.gov?

A: No. Once the Catalyst Program is announced each year, NBRC will post the date on our website that the online grants management system will be available for access. Catalyst Program applications must be made through NBRC's online grants management system to be eligible for review.

Q: Can we submit our Catalyst Program pre-application via e-mail or in hard copy vs through the NBRC's online grants management system?

A: No. Pre-applications submitted via hard copy or via email will not be eligible to be reviewed and scored. Catalyst Program pre-applications must be submitted through NBRC's online grants management system.

Q: How do I access NBRC's online grants management system?

A: The link to the grants management system is available on the NBRC website. Detailed instructions for registering your organization for an account as well as completing the pre-application and application are available on the NBRC website as well.

PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS & INVITATION TO APPLY

Q: Who reviews my Catalyst Program pre-application?

A: Catalyst Program pre-applications will be evaluated for eligibility and relevance to the program. NBRC will review pre-applications for eligibility and alignment with NBRC priorities. States will review pre-applications for alignment with state program priorities.

Q: Who makes the final determination of which projects are invited to apply for Catalyst Program funding?

A: States issue the invitation to apply. Projects that are determined to be eligible by NBRC and invited to apply by a state's program manager, will have the opportunity to submit a full application. A pre-application that is not invited to apply will be provided feedback and will be eligible to resubmit in a subsequent funding round.

Q: When will I be notified as to whether my pre-application has been invited to apply?

A: The Catalyst Program Timeline provides pre-application and application key dates, including the dates for NBRC to respond to pre-applications. All pre-applications are expected to receive a response during the **week of April 1, 2024** for the Spring funding round or the **week of September 16, 2024** for the Fall funding round.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, FORMS & SUBMISSION

Q: Am I required to have a UEI # to apply for federal funding?

A: If you do not have a UEI at time of application, the application can still be submitted. If the project is selected for funding, the entity will need a UEI # for NBRC to issue the project a grant agreement.

All applicant organizations need an identifier for federal awards processes. On April 4, 2022, that identifier changed from the Data Universal Number System Number DUNS

number to the Unique Entity ID (UEI), issued by SAM.gov. The Unique Entity ID is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov. As part of this transition, the DUNS Number has been removed from SAM.gov. Entity registration, searching, and data entry in SAM.gov now require use of the new Unique Entity ID. Existing registered entities can find their Unique Entity ID by visiting SAM.gov and following the steps outlined. New entities can get their Unique Entity ID at SAM.gov and, if required, complete an entity registration.

Q: Is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) the same as DUNS?

A: No. The Unique Entity Identifier, or the UEI, is the official name of the “new, non-proprietary identifier” that replaced the DUNS number. The UEI will be requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).
Forms

Q. In completing the SF424cbw (Budget) form, where should I note NBRC funds?

A. The SF424cbw is a federal form that has fields which cannot be modified. The NBRC share of funds should be noted in the column entitled HUD share. The budget form should be completed referencing all project-related costs in the appropriate category with corresponding amounts in the appropriate columns. The template is available from the Resources tab of NBRC’s [website](#).

Q: Is my project required to complete an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act?

A: Yes. Federal agencies are required to consider potential impacts of their actions before implementation or spending funds on the proposed action. Applications for NBRC funding are required to complete and submit a [NEPA Intake Form](#). If the project is selected for funding, this information will be utilized to determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysts that will be required. All applicants are encouraged to review the NEPA guidance and include in their project budget (SF424cbw) and project timeline the completion of NEPA. Completion of NEPA is required for a project to receive a Notice to Proceed.

Q: If staff time is included in the cost of the project, what is the rate that our organization can charge; can we charge our Indirect Cost Rate?

A: Entities that have a Federal Cognizant Agent can submit with their application the letter from such entity demonstrating their Indirect Cost Rate and budget their project accordingly. Those entities without an Indirect Cost Rate determination may use the regular pay of staff plus 10% as their Indirect Cost Rate for purposes of budgeting for the project. The federally approved indirect cost rate, in place at time of application, will be the indirect cost rate for the entirety of the project, and will be referenced in the grant agreement issued for the project. A range of indirect cost rates is not allowed, nor will the indirect cost rate be adjusted, up or down, during the lifecycle of the project.

Q: What is an Indirect Rate?

A: Indirect rates are the 'overhead' that is incurred for employees of the entity applying for funds or volunteers for the project. Typically, an indirect rate is a % of the wages and fringe.

Q: Can we use indirect costs as part of staff time for projects?

A: You may use indirect cost rate from an approved Federal Cognizant Agent with the submission of those documented amounts. If you do not have a Federal Cognizant Agent (generally most non-profits) you may use 10% as your indirect (overhead) costs.

Q: Do I submit the Catalyst Program application online via Grant.gov?

A: No. Once the Catalyst Program is announced each year, NBRC will post the date on our website that the online grants management system will be available for access. NBRC's online grants management system will be available only to entities invited to apply. Catalyst Program applications must be made through NBRC's online grants management system to be eligible for review and scoring.

Q: Can we submit our Catalyst Program application via e-mail or in hard copy vs through the NBRC's online grants management system?

A: No. Applications submitted via hard copy or via email will not be eligible to be reviewed and scored. Catalyst Program applications must be submitted through NBRC's online grants management system.

Q: How do I access NBRC's online grants management system?

A: The link to the grants management system is available on the NBRC website. Detailed instructions for registering your organization for an account as well as completing the pre-application and application are available on the NBRC website as well.

Q: Does BABAA (Buy America, Build America Act) apply to Catalyst Program awards?

A: Yes, the Buy America, Build America Act applies to infrastructure projects funded through the Catalyst Program. BABAA was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference ("Buy American Preference" referred to as "BAP") for iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects. Products that do not fit the definition of manufactured goods are not covered. BABAA does not apply to goods and services. See NBRC's website for additional BABAA guidance: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/BABAA>.

APPLICATION REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS

Q: Who reviews and scores my Catalyst Program application?

A: Catalyst Program applications are reviewed and scored by NBRC and the State(s) where the project will occur. The NBRC and State scoring criteria are available in the Catalyst Program User Manual. Applications are scored using the criteria for a total of up to 100 points. The NBRC scoring criteria makes up to 50 points available. The State scoring criteria makes up to another 50 points available.

If the project is a multi-state project, it will be reviewed and scored by each State where the project will occur. It is possible for a multi-state project to be funded in some states and not in others. In that scenario, the grantee would be requested to provide a revised project scope and project budget to align with the reduced funding.

Q: Who makes the final determination of which projects are awarded Catalyst Program funding?

A: States put forth a slate of the projects they have been selected for funding. Once all States have put forth their slate of selected projects, they are brought to the Commission for a full vote. Voting members consist of the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor's Alternates for each State. For the Catalyst Program, the Commission meeting to vote is typically held in June for the spring funding round and December for the fall funding round.

Q: When will I be notified as to whether my application has been approved for NBRC funding?

A: It is planned that all recipients will be notified if their project has been selected for funding, or not, each year by August 31st.

Q: If my project is not selected for Catalyst Program funding, who should I contact to receive feedback on our application?

A: If your project is not selected for funding, you may contact the State Program Manager to receive feedback on your application. If your project is a multi-state project, you will want to contact each State Program Manager for feedback specific to each state.

Q: How are Projects Selected?

A: The Catalyst Program uses a pre-application process to screen proposed projects for eligibility and relevance to the program. Projects that are deemed eligible and invited to apply by a state's program manager, apply through the approved application system. Eligible applications are reviewed and scored by NBRC and the state program. This scoring process incorporates both NBRC and state priorities articulated in the scoring criteria, state economic development plans, and the NBRC Five Year Strategic Plan. States select projects based on the results of the scoring process and strong alignment with priorities. Selected projects are approved by the four State Governors and the Federal Co-Chair.

The detailed Scoring Criteria used by NBRC and state programs is available in the Catalyst Program Manual. It is recommended an interested applicant self-evaluate their proposed

project using the NBRC and state's program scoring criteria to better understand the relative competitiveness of the project.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Q: Who should I contact if I will need assistance in administering this grant, should the project be awarded funding?

A: Each NBRC Catalyst award recipient is required to utilize a local development district (LDD) in its region to administer the grant, unless they are a department of State government or have requested and been approved for an LDD waiver. LDD's are compensated through reimbursement for their administrative work, based on a maximum of 2% of the grant award. Grant administration may not be sole sourced to an entity other than an LDD, is an allowable grant expense, and must be reflected in the project budget. Please see the Resources tab of NBRC's website for a complete list of Local Development Districts as well as detailed information on the Local Development District requirement.

Q: What Local Development District (LDD) should a multi-county project work with for grant administration services?

A: A multi-county project is treated as one project and therefore an LDD that serves the applicant should be selected as the LDD for a multi-county project. Information on the role of the LDD and those LDDs that have opted in to provide grant administration services are available on the NBRC website: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/local-development-districts>.

Q: If my project is approved by NBRC, can the grant agreement be signed before I have evidence of full funding (match) for the project?

A: Yes. A Catalyst Program grantee has until September 30th of the year following award, to secure all matching funds for their project. While NBRC issues grant agreements in September/October each year to get federal funds obligated as promptly as possible, a grantee does not have authorization to begin their project until they are issued a Notice to Proceed. A Notice to Proceed will not be issued until all match is secured and documented and all other items that are listed in the grant agreement are completed.

Q: What happens if I am approved for NBRC funding but I am unable to secure matching funds?

A: If matching funds are not secured and documented within 12 months of the award date, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the Federal Co-Chair may de-obligate the funds and award them to other projects. A project should be able to put its funding together within a year. If this is not the case, the project is considered premature for funding.

Q: If approved for an NBRC award how will I receive the funds?

A: After evidence of all matching funds has been provided and an agreement between the recipient and NBRC has been signed, and the project has received a Notice to Proceed, they can begin to commit and expend eligible project costs. NBRC funds are reimbursement only. Following the Notice to Proceed, a grantee may request reimbursement of NBRC funds for eligible project costs. Demonstration of required match must also occur in alignment with requesting NBRC funds. Note: Any NBRC funds or matching funds committed or expended prior to the issuance of a Notice to Proceed are not eligible to be reimbursed nor counted as match. Please see NBRC’s Grant Administration and Compliance Manual available to download from <http://www.nbrc.gov/content/resources> for more information.

ABOUT NBRC

Q: Where can I find more information on NBRC?

A: The NBRC website provides information about NBRC, including programs, prior funded projects, and contact information for staff, Governor’s Alternates and State Program Managers: www.nbrc.gov.

- View NBRC’s Annual Reports: www.nbrc.gov/content/impact-reporting
- View Catalyst Program information: www.nbrc.gov/content/catalyst
- Learn about NBRC resources including the LDD resource list: www.nbrc.gov/content/resources
- View and download the NBRC Compliance Manual and all grant administration forms and templates used by NBRC: www.nbrc.gov/content/administration

Q: What is NBRC’s CFDA #?

A: NBRC’s Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number is 90.601. The Title is: Northern Border Regional Development.