



# Forest Economy Program Frequently Asked Questions

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## Funding & Scoring

### **Q: How will the funding be split between the Spring and Fall award rounds?**

**A:** The Forest Economy Program is subject to the availability of funds. Upon completion of the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations process NBRC will post available funds for the 2024 Forest Economy Program. NBRC will not split the available sum between the Spring and Fall award rounds.

### **Q: Where can I find scoring information?**

**A:** Scoring criteria is detailed within the Forest Economy Program Manual found on NBRC’s website, [here](#).

### **Q: Will partial awards be considered?**

**A:** Awards are based on the availability of NBRC funding, and partial awards may be made.



## Eligibility

### **Q: Are for-profits eligible for funding through NBRC's Forest Economy Program?**

**A:** No. For-profits may not receive direct or indirect funding from the NBRC.

Forest Economy Program 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: 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](#).

**Q: Can an eligible entity within an attainment county apply for funding for a project that serves distressed and transitional counties?**

**A:** An eligible entity located within an attainment county may be eligible for NBRC funding if the project occurs within NBRC's service area and provides substantial, significant, and measurable benefit and economic impact to communities within NBRC's region. Please refer to the Waiver section of this FAQ.

**Q: Do projects need to span multiple states?**

**A:** Projects are not required to span multiple states.

## Funding Priorities

**Q: Do outdoor recreation projects fit within the forest economy program?**

**A:** Outdoor recreation projects that include the use of wood products or wood heat are eligible for Forest Economy Funding. Projects that simply include components of outdoor recreation in forested areas will not be competitive under the Forest Economy Program.

**Q: Do non-wood products derived from Northern Border forests count as "forest products"?**

**A:** No. When we refer to forest products, we are strictly referring to products produced using trees from forests within NBRC's service territory.

**Q: Can one organization apply for multiple grants?**

**A:** One organization may apply for multiple grants, however the entity is unlikely to be awarded twice in one year.



**Q: Can one applicant apply under more than one NBRC grant program (for example Catalyst and FEP)?**

**A:** It is not our recommendation that entities plan to apply through multiple NBRC grant programs in a given year. NBRC's various programs have different application requirements and applying through multiple programs will be time intensive.

Instead, should you need help determining to which NBRC program to apply, we recommend entities contact NBRC staff with your project concept. NBRC staff can help determine in which program your project will be most competitive. In the event an eligible entity submits a letter of interest to the Forest Economy Program (for example), which would be more competitive in another NBRC program, NBRC will make a recommendation to the applicant at that time, before a full application has been developed.

**Q: How should partnerships be identified on the pre-application and application?**

**A:** Any and all project partners and their respective roles should be clearly identified in your pre-application.

## **Budget**

**Q: What are eligible expenses for this program?**

**A:** Eligible expenses are listed on page 9-10 of NBRC's Forest Economy Program Manual, which can be found [here](#).

**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: 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: Can funds be used for the planning/ design/ permitting (pre-construction) phase of building infrastructure?**

**A:** Planning/design costs are eligible; however, a stand-alone design/planning project would likely not be competitive in the Forest Economy Program. If planning and design is part of a larger project, that would make for a more competitive application.

## Grant Administration

**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 analysis 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.

## Waiver

**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 applicants or co-applicants located outside of the NBRC service area in a member state with projects 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 the above 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 Forest Economy 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 Forest Economy 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. 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 funding. Please see NBRC's Forest Economy 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:** Forest Economy awards recipients are not required to utilize a local development district (LDD) in its region to administer the grant. As the LDD requirement does not apply to Forest Economy projects, as it does for NBRC's Catalyst Program, a LDD waiver is not required for a Forest Economy applicant. However, If the NBRC determines the applicant and project would benefit from LDD assistance, NBRC may require the applicant contract with an

LDD. This determination will be made at time of pre-application. If a Forest Economy applicant would like LDD grant administration assistance, they can choose to contract for those services and those costs must be included in the proposal's budget.

Detailed information on the role of an LDD in an NBRC project can be found by visiting our website <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/local-development-districts>.

## **Pre-Application Requirements, Forms and Submission**

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

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

**Q: Can we submit our Forest Economy 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. Forest Economy 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.

## 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](http://www.nbrc.gov).

- View NBRC's Annual Reports: [www.nbrc.gov/content/impact-reporting](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/impact-reporting)
- View Forest Economy Program information: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP>
- Learn about NBRC resources including the LDD resource list: [www.nbrc.gov/content/resources](http://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](http://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.