



2017 Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Investment Application

Frequently Asked Questions: As of March 1, 2017

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q: What is the maximum grant that can be made by the NBRC?

A: Maximum is \$500,000 for 'infrastructure' projects, and \$250,000 for all other projects.

2. Q: What is the definition of 'infrastructure'?

A: As defined in the NBRC enabling legislation it is the physical parts a project:

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE: Transportation Infrastructure shall mean basic physical structures needed to support and/or create a transportation system; a term connoting the physical underpinnings of transportation systems, including, but not limited to, roads, bridges, rail, port facilities, airports, transit, and sidewalks. For transit systems: all the fixed components of the transit system, such as rights-of-way, tracks, signal equipment, stations, park-and-ride lots, bus stops and maintenance facilities. Regular maintenance or deferred maintenance, such as funding for resurfacing, restoring, rehabilitating and reconstructing will NOT be eligible for funding. Federal roads and bridges will NOT be eligible for funding.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE: Broadband projects (not to include speculative or feasibility-type studies — rather, complete and sustainable projects) will be considered. The physical components of interrelated systems providing services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance communications that encourage business growth and development may be funded. Applicants should identify gaps in current regional inventory of telecommunication needs. The gap between a community's broadband today (existing infrastructure, including capacity, speed and pricing, and level of adoption) and its needs should define the type, technology, size and scale of the project.

BASIC PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE: The term Basic Public Infrastructure shall mean water and wastewater facilities, electric and gas utilities, or solid waste landfills — or any structures that aid in the reduction of the need for landfills such as recycling and composting or other services necessary to promote growth and/or attract business. Generally, basic infrastructure is presumed to have a useful life of 20 years or more. NBRC investments funds will NOT be used for projects deemed to be Maintenance or Deferred Maintenance. Maintenance shall mean the work of keeping something in proper condition or upkeep. Deferred Maintenance shall mean to put off, postpone, or procrastinate the act of maintenance.

3. 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.

4. Q: *If the engineering is part of an entire application that includes the implementation of the infrastructure is the application considered an infrastructure project?*

A: Yes.

5. **Q:** *Of the total federal allocation to NBRC, what amount of grant funds are committed to projects in each state for 2017?*
A: The Federal Government is currently working under a Continuing Resolution (CR) until April 28, 2017. NBRC will not know until after that date what the funding level will be. We anticipate knowing funding levels some time in May 2017.
6. **Q:** *When will I be notified as to whether my application has been approved for NBRC funding?*
A: The first week of August, 2017.
7. **Q:** *If my project is approved by NBRC, can the investment agreement be signed before I have evidence of full funding (match) for the project?*
A: An agreement will be required to be returned by September 1, 2017, regardless of match funding being in place. However, recipients cannot begin work on the project prior to receiving a '**Notice to Proceed**'. A Notice to Proceed will not be issued until all match is secured and documented.
8. **Q:** *What happens if I am approved for NBRC funding but am unable to secure matching funds?*
A: If match is not secured and documented by September 30, 2018, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the Federal Co-Chair will de-obligate the funds and award them to other projects.
9. **Q:** *If approved for an NBRC grant how will I receive the funds?*
A: After evidence of all matching funds has been provided and an investment agreement between the recipient and NBRC has been signed, NBRC funds are reimbursed through electronic transfer of funds. An SF270 must be submitted with back up documentation of funds spent. Preferably monthly. Note that any matching funds or eligible project expenses cannot be spent prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed.
10. **Q:** *If I receive both NBRC and EDA funding, who would administer the investment?*
A: Excluding State entities, all awardees will be required to hire a designated Local Development District to administer their investment. The application and Application Manual will provide additional information on this.
11. **Q:** *If I have any questions about NBRC or the application process, who do I talk to?*
A: Christine Frost, Program Director, NBRC 603-369-3001 cfrost@nbrtc.gov. Or the Program Manager for your state; their contact information can be found in the ApplicationManual found at www.nbrtc.gov.
12. **Q:** *If our community is listed as an "Isolated Area of Distress" but is also in an "Attainment County," are we eligible to apply for funding?*
A: Yes, Make sure that you identify in the Application the Isolated Area of Distress that you are located in. For more information on Isolated Areas of Distress, see the NBRC website. www.nbrtc.org.
13. **Q:** *What is the difference between start up 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 start up 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 absences of NBRC funds.

14. **Q:** *Is there any other way that our community might be eligible to apply if we are in an “Attainment County” and we do not meet the criteria for an “Isolated Area of Distress”?*
A: There are two situations that could provide eligibility in municipalities that are not in an “Isolated Areas of Distress”:
- 1.If the application covers more than one county, and the “Attainment County” is part of an application that consists of one or more counties that are not “Attainment Counties”.
 - 2.If the project is regional in nature and is intended to benefit areas and populations that are external to the “Attainment County”. In this case, you must first obtain a “Waiver” from the Federal Co-Chair. More information can be obtained in the Program Manual found on the 2016 Economic and Infrastructure Development Investment page at the website www.nbrc.gov. Requests for waivers are due April 30, 2017.

II. ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

15. **Q:** *If I have previously received an NBRC investment am I eligible to apply again?*
A: If a grantee has an outstanding investment with NBRC, they cannot receive additional NBRC investments until their current project has: 1. Submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project by July 30, 2017, and 2. Demonstrated that 75% of the match has been completed by July 30, 2017. So, you may apply, but the award may go to another entity unless the above criteria is met.
16. **Q:** *What is the maximum timeframe for an NBRC funded project?*
A: The investment period (time that the project shall be completed) shall be October 1, 2017, to September 30, 2020, unless permission has been given to begin the project prior to October 1, 2017.
17. **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 professionals plus 10% as their Indirect Cost Rate for purposes of budgeting for the project.
18. **Q:** *Does use of NBRC funds require compliance with Davis-Bacon re: prevailing wage rates?*

A: No, 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.

19. **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. See www.nbrc.gov

III. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

20. **Q:** *What is the CFDA #?*

A: The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number is 90.601. The Title is: Northern Border Regional Development

21. **Q:** *Where can I access all NBRC application forms?*

A: www.nbrc.gov is anticipated to be up and running by March 1, 2017. Any and all forms for the application will be available "go live," through this website beginning March 1, 2017.

22. **Q:** *On the Federal SF424 form, what should I enter as the Funding Opportunity and Title (Question 12)?*

A: Leave the Funding Opportunity # blank. The title should be "Economic and Infrastructure Development Investment Program"

23. **Q:** *On the Federal SF 424, for Question 17, what is the earliest start date I can enter for my proposed project?*

A: October 1, 2017, unless you have permission from NBRC staff to begin earlier. The proposed project start date cannot be before NBRC funds can be committed/obligated at the federal level.

24. **Q:** *On the Federal SF424, for Question 19, is the application subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?*

A: No.

25. **Q:** *If I am including letters of support for my project proposal, who should they be addressed to?*

A: The Federal Co-Chair of the Northern Border Regional Commission, Mark Scarano, 53 Pleasant Street, Suite 3602, Concord, NH 03301 and cc: the appropriate State Governor's Alternate found in the Application Manual on the website.

26. **Q:** *It is unclear how I apply. Can you be more specific?*

A: NBRC is in the process of setting up an online web-based portal that will provide for applications to be more easily submitted. Because the portal is not yet established instructions are not available. NBRC anticipates that the portal will be available by mid to late April. If an applicant wishes to submit an application prior to when the portal is available they may always do so via USPS.

27. **Q:** *Do I submit the investment application online via Grant.gov?*

A: No, all applications will be sent to one location. Check the NBRC website for updated instruction on applications.

IV. MATCH QUESTIONS

28. **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: In most instances yes, when the following criteria are met. The land/property may not be transferred to the City/Applicant until the City/Applicant has received a “Notice to Proceed” by NBRC. The value of the property may not exceed the value of a qualified appraisal. You may not use a municipal assessment as the value. Appraisal costs are not covered by NBRC.

29. **Q:** *Can NBRC funds be used as matching funds for other federal grant or loan programs, even programs they specifically stipulate that other sources of federal funds cannot be used as a source of match?*

A: Yes, the statutory provisions of the enabling legislation for NBRC allow NBRC funds to be treated as non-federal funding for match purposes. **However,** NBRC funds still maintain their Federal status and must be counted toward the 80% ceiling of federal funds being expended for any one project.

30. **Q:** *Can staff time be used as part of a match 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.

31. **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.

32. **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 which is currently \$23.56 per hour. As with question 13, volunteers may not be: counted for the same activity in a different project (counted twice) or be federal employees. Additionally, their time must be recorded for reimbursements and you may not include any Indirect Cost Rate along with the \$23.56.

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

A: No. Eligible project expenses are only those incurred after execution of the investment agreement and a Notice to Proceed. There may be rare situations that would require information that cannot be elaborated on in a Q&A. Please contact the Program Director.

It is important to note that his Q&A will be updated as additional information is solidified. Please visit the website at www.nbrc.gov to ensure that you have the most up to date Q&A. (this document was last updated on March 1, 2017)