Northern Border Regional Commission

Request for Proposal (RFP): Northern Border Regional Commission Inaugural Regional Convening

Background

Created by the US Congress in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission ("NBRC") is a Federal-State partnership that seeks to alleviate economic distress and encourage job creation throughout the northern regions in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Since 2017, the NBRC has grown significantly, with core appropriations tripling over that time. NBRC is charged with supporting business retention and expansion, creating programs that encourage workforce and job creation, facilitate sharing of best practices and strengthen the capacity of rural communities for project management, execution and financial management.

The NBRC's staff includes both Federal and non-Federal employees, who work remotely across the NBRC's service area. More information on the NBRC can be found at www.nbrc.gov. The NBRC's enabling statute can be found at 40 USC, Subtitle V ("Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development").

Overview

The central focus of the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity in the northeast by strategically deploying its resources and capital. This mission is operationalized by creating authentic partnerships both with, and among, communities across the territory. Consistent with the feedback the Commission heard while developing its five-year strategic plan, NBRC believes that as part of this mission it has a responsibility to deepen these partnerships and relationships in a variety of different ways.

The core work of the NBRC as a funder is to invest in community-led projects; building both infrastructure and strategies for economic opportunities in rural areas. One of the greatest barriers to successful project implementation and economic transformation is rural capacity; a lack of professional skillsets, expertise and model best practices for community leaders, development partners and state policy makers to mobilize opportunities at a regional level. The NBRC is also a partner, which overlaps some of the competencies outlined in the funder role, but pushes deeper into technical assistance, project development, project replication, and the development of opportunities for multi-state collaboration. This partnership role is also expressly at the State Government level, where the NBRC partners not only with each States' economic development functions, but extends into healthcare, tourism, housing, and natural resources.

The NBRC is seeking a contractor to plan, organize, and facilitate an inaugural regional convening aimed at bringing together funding, technical assistance, and regional economic development partners from across its service area for the purpose of identifying the "state of the region" and for discussion about trends, where the region is headed, and how these entities can work together to fund efforts that show the promise of success.

Scope

The NBRC is seeking a contractor who can develop and deploy the following:

i. Research, plan, organize, and facilitate (and/or arrange for facilitation; see sub-contracting note below) a two-day (one overnight) regional convening.
   a) This task includes arranging for lodging, meeting space, food, and other relevant elements to ensure a successful event.
ii. Convene an advisory board-like entity to plan the event's content and determine the appropriate mix of attendees. The frequency of advisory board meetings ahead of the symposium will be determined in consultation with the NBRC. The advisory board shall include representation from the Contractor and the NBRC.
iii. Execute an initial scan of other significant events, symposiums, and convenings taking place in the region and propose a potential date and location(s) for the convening to be held and scheduled.
iv. Coordinate outreach and marketing activities required to reach target audiences for the convening, as well as information sharing and technology platform management necessary for attendee registration, etc.,
v. Provide complete and adequate organizational, technical, and administrative assistance during the convening.
vi. Work with advisory board and other designated NBRC personnel, and stakeholders to develop a summary report following the symposium, to include, at a minimum:
   i) Attendee registration lists.
   ii) Summaries of findings from large group sessions and small group "breakout" sessions.
   iii) Executive summary, to include high-level conclusions and recommendations for next steps.

The Contractor is authorized to subcontract with acceptable facilitators and subject matter experts for assistance in conceptualizing, organizing, and executing the symposium. The Contractor may seek funds from other agencies, organizations, and/or foundations to supplement any additional cost with approval from NBRC.

Project Concept and Schedule

The convening will proceed along these tracks:

i. **Plenary & General Sessions:** High-level talks, inspiration, and level-setting with respect to the "state of the region,", building a diverse economic future from the region's core, foundational assets and positive trends. The audience for these sessions would be all participants.
   i. These sessions should highlight 3-4 successful NBRC grantees in a relatively short, structured way. Grantees could present throughout the event, rather than restricting them to a single session. This process could demonstrate the breadth of the types of grants that the NBRC provides.
   ii. Sector specific content, with focus areas that may include disaster recovery and forest health, forest products and manufacturing, outdoor recreation, rural healthcare, etc.

ii. **Rural Community Practitioner and Grantee Track:** An opportunity for entities in the region seeking funding to interact with the NBRC and other funders. This could include NBRC Staff 'Office Hours' running concurrently to content sessions/presentations, and curated conversations on key topic areas, such as Community Supported Enterprises, Adaptive Re-Use, Transformative Community projects, Capital Stacking, etc. The audience for these sessions would be potential grantees.

iii. **Rural Development Hubs, Intermediaries and LDDs Track**: Structured opportunities to foster collaboration among intermediary partners, such as how to build innovative rural housing models, how to advance municipal shared services, or other critical topics for the rural development partners who support towns and communities. The structure of these sessions would be to provide peer-to-peer networking opportunities and problem-solving design. An example would be a topic such as 'What are your solutions for building capacity in our smallest towns?'

iv. **Rural Investors and Funders Track**: Structured and open networking opportunities for funders, showcasing both best practices from our region with invited guest speakers with experience in creative and innovative funding collaboration from other regions. Examples include: "Learning from West Virginia's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem and Invest Appalachia" and "How the Community Foundations of the Northern Border Advance Economic Opportunity" and "The Role of CDFIs for Rural Places"

The planning and schedule for the regional convening is not yet determined, though is expected to take place in the next 12-18 months. Commencement of the work outlined in the scope section above should begin after contract execution in October 2026.

Required Information for Proposal

To be considered, interested contractors should provide:

Structure of workplan activities, to include:

- Planning meetings and communications
- Structures, procedures for reaching cost estimates for convening
- Plan for outreach and coordination with partners and attendees and registration management
- Examples of previous similar activities and logistics/coordination at a similar scale

Budget for the project, to include:

- Staff time & breakdown, in the following format:
  - Title
  - No. hours dedicated to the project
  - Hourly rate
- Overhead and/or administrative charges

Additional costs associated with the convening such as, but not limited to, the venue, lodging, transportation, speaker fees, etc. will be included in a separate budget set in collaboration with the NBRC.

Project Cost

The cost of the contract may not exceed $200,000 in total.

Period of Performance

The selected contractor will be retained for up to eighteen months, with the potential for an extension of the contract for an additional six months (as needed to accommodate the final scheduled date of the convening).

Submittal of RFP to NBRC

Complete RFP documentation must be submitted to the Agency's Deputy Director Molly Taflas, via email (mtaflas@nbrc.gov), no later than 5:00PM EST on Friday, September 18, 2026. Please provide the RFP in a PDF format.