



**Northern Border
Regional Commission**



REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP

2020 Application Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Established by Congress in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a partnership between the federal government and the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont.

Authority: Authorized by subtitle V of title 40, United States Code, and through the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill, 2020 (approved December 2019).

Congress directed the Northern Border Regional Commission to dedicate not less than \$4,000,000 for initiatives to address the decline in forest-based economies throughout the region. This follows similar directives in 2018 (\$3,000,000), and 2019 (\$4,000,000). In 2019, these funds comprised the “Regional Forest Economy Partnership” initiative, and a summary of those awards can be found on NBRC’s website, <http://www.nbrc.gov/articles/76>.

In addition to the application requirements set forth in this document, applicants must also comply with applicable requirements established by Congress for NBRC funding.

REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Available Funds: \$5,000,000

Award Size. The maximum award size is \$1,000,000. A minimum award size is \$250,000. The Commission does maintain discretion in reducing the minimum if outcomes can demonstrate that they will make a regional significance with fewer dollars.

Type of Awards. All awards will be made in the form of *Grant Agreements*. NBRC does not anticipate having substantial involvement in the work being conducted under this award.

Period of Performance. The period of performance shall not exceed 36 months from the last day of the federal fiscal year in which the award was made. A grantee must liquidate all obligations incurred under the award no later than 30 days after the end of the period of performance stated in the funding award.

PURPOSE: To address the economic shift produced by the chronic and consistent decline of the forest products industry that has led to displacement of a skilled workforce and significant negative demographic changes across the territory served by the Northern Border Regional Commission.

GOAL: Fund projects that, when completed, increase the ability of the four-state region to attract new opportunities that leverage significant additional investments, and that over time have a potentially transformational impact on community economic revitalization.

Granting Entity Name: Northern Border Regional Commission.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: The NBRC Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number is: 90.601.

RFEP Description. The purpose of the RFEP initiative is to assist rural communities in transitioning from historic dependence on the forest-based economy to discovering new opportunities for economic diversity, independence and innovation. NBRC’s intention is to offer funding to rural communities through a competitive application process.

These opportunities tend to cluster around three strategies, which may or may not be considered mutually exclusive for purposes of a proposal:

1. New technology and innovations that seek to find new uses for forest products and evolve traditional forest economy business models into those that can create sustainable future commercial markets & opportunities. Priority will be given to those projects that leverage the value of the combined woodshed across multiple NBRC states.

Examples include:

- Production of wood-based heating products
 - Production of “Mass Timber” products (e.g., Cross-laminated timber)
2. Workforce re-training and development for the purpose of building the skills needed for forest products businesses.
 3. New industries, or the expansion of current industries (e.g., outdoor recreation), that can provide employment and economic growth opportunities in formerly forest industry-dependent communities.

The RFEP opportunity, and the strategies described just above, are consistent with NBRC’s Strategic Objectives, which guide us to “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;” and “Support and expand a highly productive workforce with skills suited to existing and future business needs.”

Further, RFEP is distinct from NBRC’s core “Economic & Infrastructure Development” funding opportunity in two primary ways:

1. An emphasis on regional partnerships, which ideally prioritize the growth and expansion of initiatives that extend beyond the boundaries of a single community, County or State.
2. The RFEP program emphasizes the learning potential of strategies across the entire NBRC region.

INVESTMENT GOALS

1. Reuse and redevelop forest economy facilities and infrastructure, including vacant mill sites, to improve opportunities for new local economies.
2. Invest in the commercialization of new forest products and the development of new markets for forest product residuals.
3. Invest in new technology that seeks to find new uses for forest products.
4. Invest in the outdoor recreation economy, and other emerging industries, that demonstrate potential for creating economic activity in areas previously served by forest products businesses.
5. Invest in workforce re-training for displaced forest economy workers, in support of re-entry to the workforce in new industries, or new roles within legacy forest economy enterprises.
6. Prioritize projects that leverage existing (or, in some cases, new) partnerships to effect multiple counties, states and/or the entire NBRC region.
7. Invest in community economic recovery and capacity building efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The RFEP opportunity in 2020 also focuses on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (and resulting economic uncertainty) on communities in the NBRC region. As such, a fourth strategy considered in 2020 seeks proposals

focused on collaborative, multi-state projects designed to address innovative solutions to structural weaknesses highlighted by the pandemic, and community efforts to recover economically.

Further, applicants are encouraged to explore complementary Federal resources available to projects as part of the CARES Act and other COVID-19 legislation, which directed agencies such as the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and programs such as the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), to deploy resources to communities impacted by the pandemic.

Examples may include:

- Connectivity upgrades due to the increase in small business owners and employees working remotely.
- Increased access to, or the creation of, telehealth initiatives to serve NBRC communities.
- Support for workforce development initiatives' transition to an online learning environment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Specific questions regarding RFEP requirements should be directed to the respective State Program Manager and Andrea Smith, NBRC's Program Director. See contact information on Page 14.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall have the meanings indicated below.

Grant Agreement. The term 'grant agreement' means an agreement in which the Federal government provides funding authorized by public statute. A federal grant is the vehicle the federal government uses to carry out work that it cannot accomplish alone. A grant is to meet an identified public good or purpose. In this case the 'public good/purpose' is to offset the community degradation that took place with the loss of the established forest products industry. It is not intended to carry out other purposes of the applicant.

Indian Tribe. The term 'Indian Tribe' has the meaning in § 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. 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 that has been formed for the purpose of economic development.

Due diligence. The term 'due diligence' means the measure of prudence, responsibility, and diligence that is expected from, and ordinarily exercised by, a reasonable and prudent person under the circumstances. *Due diligence* helps people and communities understand the nature of an investment, the risks of an investment, and how (or whether) an investment fits into the larger goals of a community. Due diligence isn't just good sense, it's a duty community leaders owe the public, and a non-profit owes its stakeholders, in order to satisfy any legal requirements, especially when investing in real estate or human capital.

Forest products residuals. The term 'Forest products residuals' means materials leftover from logging or the manufacture of wood products, including materials remaining in the forest after harvest, along with bark and sawdust. Wood product mills often convert biomass residuals to energy while manufacturing carbon-sequestering bio-based products that are useful to society.

Commission. The term 'Commission' shall refer to the governing body of the Northern Border Regional Commission, comprised of the Federal Co-Chair (or the entity authorized by Congress in the absence of the Federal Co-Chair) and the Governors (or their appointed Alternates) of the four States that make up the region of NBRC.

Authorizing Official. The term 'Authorizing Official' shall mean the person that has been approved by their board, town or other entity to apply for, accept, and spend public dollars.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants.

- Local governments (village, town, city and county);
- Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state);
- Indian Tribes;
- Non-profit entities.

COST SHARING AND MATCH

Match Requirements.

NBRC will provide up to 80% of a project's costs depending on the counties that are being served. The amount of match is determined by the 2020 Distress Criteria published by NBRC and available on <http://www.nbrc.gov/content/resources> (via the *Assessing Distress* hyperlink therein). Counties listed as 'Distressed' are required to have at least a 20 percent match, while those listed as 'Transitional' are required to have at least a 50 percent match.

The match for multi-county or regional projects will be determined by averaging the match of those counties where the project will take place.

All match provided to meet these requirements must be identified in the application. If the project does not have funding in place at the time of application, a plan on how match will be raised must be outlined and submitted with the Letter of Interest.

Contributions may come from any combination of funds including federal, local, state, and/or private and philanthropic contributions dedicated to the express purposes of this proposal. **Applicants will be scored higher for match resources greater than the required match amount as described. Federal funds are eligible as match only up to a cap of 80% of the total project costs, regardless of the number of Federal participants.**

For all match resources, the applicant must support each source, cash or in-kind, by a letter of commitment from the contributing entity, whether a public or private source. Such supporting documentation must be provided in the form of 1) letters of firm commitment, 2) memorandums of understanding, or 3) other signed agreements. Each letter of commitment, memorandum of understanding, or agreement to participate should include the organization's name, the proposed level and type of commitment, and the responsibilities as they relate to the project being proposed in the application to NBRC. The commitment must be signed and dated by an official of the organization legally able to make commitments on behalf of the organization.

If the applicant does not have signed commitments at the time of application, they will be given 6 months from the date of award to secure match resources if awarded.

Please note: Entities with committed match will be given priority over those without.

In-Kind Contributions.

In-kind contribution can be contributions of professional time. When an individual donates his/her time in a professional capacity to supervise members, train or engage in member development, provide technical assistance on a project, evaluate a project, oversee project quality, or provide pro bono work as a member of the organization on a permanent or temporary basis, the time involved may be considered an in-kind contribution. A letter of commitment from the volunteer or organization providing the number of hours and value of those services must be provided with the application.

Current volunteer rates can be found at: <https://independentsector.org/news-post/new-value-volunteer-time-2019/>

LETTERS OF INTEREST

Information Required for a Letter of Interest:

Applicant Information

Name of Applicant Entity

Type of Entity (i.e., local government, non-profit, etc.)

Primary Contact Name, address, phone number and e-mail

Co-Applicant? If yes, provide name and type of entity

RFEP Request Amount

Project Location(s)

Narrative

For the narrative portion of the LOI, please include a letter (no more than 2 pages) that clearly articulates the following:

1. Overall description of the project, including how it aligns with the aforementioned *Investment Goals*, and the stated purpose and goals of RFEP
2. Specifically identify the challenge the project seeks to address
3. A list and brief description of all of the collaborating partners in the project, and their respective roles
4. Self-identified intended outcomes and measures of success

Budget

Budget narrative to include:

1. Expenses over \$5,000 with brief justification for each;
2. Matching funds detail, to include: Source, amount, date of commitment (and if not yet committed or pending, include anticipated date of commitment)

Threshold Requirements.

NBRC staff and an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from all four states, will review Letters of Interest that are received on or prior to the deadline. The Advisory Board will be responsible for analyzing and evaluating whether the LOI satisfies at least one of the following threshold requirements. Projects that meet one or more of the threshold requirements will be given priority over those that do not. The Advisory Board will determine which projects will be invited to submit a full application.

LOI threshold requirements are as follows:

1. Industry changes in employment as a result of the decline of the forest industry
2. Percent change in wages in the project area
3. Location of mill and other forest-based manufacturing closings in the past 20 years
4. County population losses

Dates: Letters of Interest will be accepted through August 28th. Invitations to submit a full application will be sent by September 30th with full applications due by October 30th.

Invitations to submit a full application for funding will be based on the *Applicant Information, Narrative and Budget and Threshold Requirements* outlined above.

FULL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Full applications will be by invitation only. Applicants who are invited to apply may submit their full application by **5pm on Friday, October 30, 2020**

Rating Criteria. Each full application will be scored based on the seven rating criteria developed for the RFEP, including 15 potential bonus points. These criteria are summarized in the chart below, with detail to follow:

RFEP Core Rating Criteria ¹	Potential Points Awarded
Alignment with Purpose, Goal, and Investment Criteria of the RFEP	30 Points
Clarity of Outcomes	15 Points
Work Plan	15 Points
Budget	10 Points
Collaboration	10 Points
Match Commitment	10 Points
Capacity	10 Points
	100 Total “Core” Points Possible
RFEP Strategic Rating Criteria	Potential Points Awarded
Project includes at least two Opportunity Zones	Up to 5 points
Project includes more than one community, county or state	Up to 5 points
Project is innovative and will result in significant and/or transformational impact	Up to 5 points
	15 Total “Bonus” Points Possible

Rating Criteria 1: Alignment with Purpose, Goal, and Investment Criteria of the RFEP (30 points):

1. Overall description of the project, including how it aligns with the aforementioned Investment Goals, and the stated purpose and goals of RFEP
2. Specific identification of the challenge(s) the project seeks to address

¹ STRATEGIC INITIATIVE (Commission discretion to meet obligations) (NBRC is required by law to ensure that 40% of any Fiscal Year's appropriations are dedicated to physical infrastructure such as telecommunications, transportation and public works projects).

3. A list and brief description of all collaborating partners, and their respective roles
4. Self-identified intended outcomes and measures of success

Through the project description, applicants should specifically refer to the Purpose, Goal, and Investment criteria for the RFEP, and relate these to their project and its outcomes.

- Applicants should further describe the regional significance of the project and its context within the broader regional economy. In this portion, applicants should state whether (and if so, how) the project is complementary to a comprehensive regional plan, and/or statewide economic development priorities.

Points will be awarded based on the extent to which the proposed project clearly and strongly addresses the problems or barriers described, demonstrates an innovative approach, and meaningfully addresses the specifically identified Goals outlined in this Manual. **Please note:** Not every project is expected to address all NBRC goals. However, projects that address multiple goals will be given greater consideration.

Rating Criteria 2: Clarity of Outcomes (15 points):

Applicants are required to clearly identify the benefits or outcomes of its proposed project. The Commission recognizes that each project is unique and thus allow significant latitude to the applicant to set the desired outcomes that will result from implementation of the project. In order for points to be awarded, applicants should select outcomes to report on, and provide baseline data, accompanied by a narrative to describe current conditions related to each outcome determined in the application. For example, a community seeking transportation changes should provide current data on mode share or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the project area. Where possible, data should briefly be provided for the project area as a whole. Explanations for data not available should be provided. Applicants should also describe the connection between their proposed activities and the projected outcomes. Finally, applicants should specify benchmarks that they will establish to measure progress toward these outcomes, both during and following the award period of performance.

Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to identify the outcomes they seek to achieve; the connection between those outcomes and existing conditions, supported by data (where available); the clarity with which they articulate the elements of their plan that will help achieve those outcomes; and the specificity of the benchmarks that they establish to measure progress toward the outcomes.

Rating Criteria 3: Work Plan (15 points):

Applicants must submit a work plan that is consistent with the Uses of Funds described. These criteria include an outline of the following:

- *Proposed Activities.* Briefly describe the proposed activities, including any components that will not be directly funded with Northern Border Regional Commission funding.
- *Schedule.* Briefly describe the project completion schedule, including milestones in each month for the critical management actions for the applicant and any other entity whose cooperation or assistance is necessary to achieve your desired result, including the end dates of each required action and your expected metrics and results. Applicants should be prepared to initiate eligible activities within 60 days of receipt of a Notice to Proceed.
- *Alignment to Budget.* The applicant will outline how the elements of the Work Plan align with the budget, providing a clear connection with each of the budget line items.

Other Work Plan Elements:

- *Responsible Entity*: Indicate the entity responsible for each project and activity, including any elected bodies or bodies appointed by elected officials.
- *Anticipated Obstacles*: Applicants should also identify potential obstacles in executing the proposed activities and discuss steps they would take to overcome those obstacles.

An applicant's score on this rating criteria will be based on the clarity and logic of proposed activities, quality of public participation (where applicable), clarity of the project schedule, identification of responsible entities for each task, suitability of evaluation methods, and identification of potential obstacles. In addition, throughout the narrative the applicant shall demonstrate proper due diligence and project readiness.

Rating Criteria 4: Budget (10 points):

Sources and Uses of Funds/Budget: The applicant's budget proposal should thoroughly estimate all applicable costs (direct, indirect, and administrative), and be presented in a clear and coherent format using Standard Form-424-cbw found on the *nbr.gov* website. The Commission is not required to approve or fund all proposed activities. The applicant must thoroughly document and justify all budget categories and costs and all major tasks of the project.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Investment funds may be used for the following:

- Reasonable fees to contractors but not any fee or profit to the recipient or sub-recipient.
- Construction and pre-construction costs such as engineering.
- Bid performance or payment bonds are eligible costs.
- Indirect costs for work performed by the recipient staff.

If you do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate (such as many non-profits) you may use 10% as your indirect cost rate for the purposes of this application.

Applicable and allowable costs as outlined in the Federal Cost Principles Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200).

INELIGIBLE COSTS

Investment funds may NOT be used for:

- Food and beverages for meetings
- Alcohol
- Entertainment
- Appraisals of property to be purchased or used as match, because it is assumed that in order to determine a budget for the application the value must be known
- Allowance or payment of debts
- Any costs incurred prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed. Consistent with this, no match funding can be documented as part of the project prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed.

Use of Funds by Project Activity: It should be clear how funds in the budget are necessary to carry out the work outlined in Rating Criteria #3.

The applicant's proposed budget should clearly identify the funding necessary for the *entire project* (not just the NBRC request). The budget should include all funds necessary to complete the project as outlined in Rating Criteria #3.

The application will be evaluated on the extent to which proposed resources are appropriate for the scope of the proposed project; the allocation of resources to appropriate activities as described above; the clarity of presentation; and the identification of the complete project including match.

Rating Criteria 5: Collaboration (10 points):

An applicant's score on this rating factor will be based on the extent to which the applicant has established working partnerships with other entities to leverage additional resources or commitments to increase the effectiveness of the proposed activities. Demonstration of creative problem-solving efforts will provide additional points in this rating criteria. The Commission will consider how well the applicant demonstrates strong collaboration among a broad range of participants, including public, private, and nonprofit entities. Additional consideration will be given to applications that specifically involve state-level partners. Consideration will also be given to projects that address the Goals of the Initiative across municipal, county and state political boundaries within the NBRC region and to projects that demonstrate regional impact. Letters of support may be helpful only if they demonstrate how the supporter is going to participate in the project, provide funding or be involved in the project.

Rating Criteria 6: Match Commitment (10 points):

An applicant's score on this rating criteria will be based on how well the application demonstrates the project's ability to obtain other community, local, State, and private support beyond the required match, as outlined. When evaluating this factor, the Commission will take into account two considerations: (1) the amount of resources leveraged that exceeds the required match, (2) whether funding has been secured at the time of application. Applicants will be awarded up to 5 points based on the percentage of match over the required match as outlined in the accompanying chart. Applicants will only be awarded points for match resources that exceed the required match. To score points in this rating factor, resources may be provided by federal, state, regional, or local entities, public or private organizations, and other entities. The applicant should provide supporting documentation of all committed funds. Applicants must record the matched resources along with their funding request on the SF-424 coversheet.

Maximum federal contribution NBRC may be match for other federal programs and may use other federal resources to match its funds. However, there is a maximum federal ceiling of 80% for any project that NBRC is involved with. *(EX: Total project cost = \$2.5M. EDA has awarded \$1.5M to this project. The maximum award from NBRC would be \$500,000 because 80% of 2.5M = \$2M.)*

Required minimum match – NBRC is required to determine, on an annual basis, the distress level of counties within the NBRC region. From this analysis, areas of 'distress' are allowed to have up to 80% of a project funded by NBRC. Areas with less distress, 'transitional' counties, may receive 50% of the project cost in a grant from NBRC. Finally, those areas determined to have the minimal amount of distress are labeled 'attainment' counties. These counties are not eligible to receive NBRC funds unless it can be demonstrated that municipalities within these counties are 'isolated areas of distress'. The 2020 Distress Criteria has been published by NBRC (see nbrc.gov). It is very important that you review these data to ensure that your project is eligible to apply, and to determine minimum required match.

Multi-county/multi-state minimum match – An average of the counties where the project will take place or where work will be conducted consistent with NBRC's EID program.

(Ex: A non-profit has created a partnership where all the counties in the NBRC region for the states of Vermont and New Hampshire are working on a job training program for outdoor recreation. There are 7 counties that are 'distressed', 11 counties that are 'transitional' and 2 counties that are in 'attainment'. $((7 \times 20) + (11 \times 50)) / 20 = 34.5$. The minimum match required would be 34.5%)

Applicants receive five (5) points if they have 100% of their match committed at the time of application. Such evidence must be provided in the form of letters of firm commitment, memoranda of understanding, or other signed agreements to participate. Each letter of commitment, memorandum of understanding, or agreement to participate should include the organization's name, the level of commitment, and the organization's responsibilities as it relates to the specific project proposed for NBRC funding. The commitment must be signed and dated by an official of the organization legally able to make commitments on behalf of the organization. The letter must describe the contributed resources that the applicant will use in the project and their designated purpose. Staff in-kind contributions should be given a monetary value. If the applicant does not provide letters from contributors specifying details and the amount of the actual contributions, those contributions will not be counted.

Documented Match and Leveraged Resources (of the amount requested)	Points Awarded
Minimum required match (20 percent/ 50 percent)	0 points
5% more than required match	1 point
10% more than required match	2 points
15% more than required match	3 points
20% more than required match	4 points
25% more than required match	5 points
% of Match is secured and documented	+ 5 points

Rating Criteria 7: Capacity (10 points):

The applicant will provide:

- Specific examples of previous projects similar to the proposed effort that demonstrate its capacity to implement the proposed work plan (NBRC will give priority to applications that demonstrate the prior experience);
- A list of designated and/or anticipated staff to manage the proposed project, along with their qualifications (applicants should demonstrate that they either have sufficient personnel, or the ability to procure qualified experts or professionals, with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and relevant experience to carry out the proposed activity);
- The applicant's experience managing federal funds (applicants should provide examples of past successful federally funded projects);
- Where applicants do not have experience relevant to the proposed project activities, they should describe their ability to procure individuals or partners with the knowledge and recent (within the past 3-5 years) experience in the proposed activities or other strategies to successfully carry out the proposed activities.

An applicant's score on this rating factor will be based on how well the application demonstrates the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed activities in a timely manner. In rating these criteria, NBRC will consider the applicant's level of experience and capacity to carry out the project activities as described in Rating Criteria 3; the applicant's level of experience as described above; the extent to which the application demonstrates that the applicant has an adequate number of key staff or the ability to procure individuals with knowledge and experience (within the past 3-5 years) relevant to the proposed activities; and the applicant's past history in managing federal funds.

Ratings under this factor are based on the capacity of the applicant's organization and its team, as applicable, and the capacity of other entities that are part of the project application.

Application Documentation

Items necessary for a complete application include the following:

1. Name of Applicant Entity
Type of Entity (i.e., local government, non-profit, etc.)
Primary Contact Name, address, phone number and e-mail
Co-Applicant? If yes, provide name and type of entity
RFEP Request Amount
Project Location(s)
2. Narrative and materials of no more than 15 pages providing an outline of the rating criteria outlined below. The rating criteria must be identified and answered separately as numbered above.
3. [Standard Form 424](#) - Application for Federal Assistance. This must be completed for applicant and all co-applicants. Instructions for the SF424 can be found [here](#)
4. [Standard Form 424cbw](#) – Budget Form. Provide evidence that the remainder of the project funds, as outlined, are committed. **Note:** If funds are not committed attach a plan for obtaining match funding within 6 months.
5. Certificate regarding Lobbying [Standard Form LLL](#)
6. [NBRC Form 1001](#) - Debarment, Suspension Certification
7. If the entity(ies) are non-profits, a copy of the Certificate of Good Standing and IRS determination letter for lead and any/all co-applicants.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The rating criteria to be used to award the maximum points is determined by how fully and thoroughly the applicant answers each item listed in each rating criteria. The Program Managers from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont will coordinate application scoring for each of the rating criteria and present results to the Commission. The Commission shall determine final scores based on the following: 1) The score provided by the States' review of the 7 rating criteria totaling up to 100 points, 2) An additional 1-15 points for Strategic Initiatives determined by the Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair, for a total of 115 potential points. Projects not meeting a score of at least 80 will not be funded.

APPLICATION RATING

NBRC is committed to ensuring that RFEP funded projects result in the achievement of NBRC's strategic mission and the purpose of the Congressional set aside. To support this effort, grant applications submitted will be rated on the rating criteria set out in this application manual.

The maximum potential number of points to be awarded is 115.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified via email or phone call.

NBRC will require selected applicants to participate in negotiations to determine the specific terms of the grant agreement, scope and budget, and necessary federal paperwork. Should NBRC not be able to successfully conclude negotiations with a selected applicant, an award will not be made. If the applicants accept the terms and conditions of the grant agreement, a signed grant agreement must be returned by the date specified. Other required standard forms will be provided with the Grant Agreement.

NBRC reserves the right to publicly post the top-scoring applications in the competition.

Adjustments to Funding

NBRC has the discretion to waive the minimum grant size requirements if the applicant demonstrates the ability to make effective progress toward stated goals with a lesser amount of funds.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS.

Environmental Requirements

All applicants that are proposing to use award funds for land acquisition must comply with NBRC's environmental procedures. Under NBRC's environmental procedures, for those applications involving land acquisition activities requiring environmental review, the notification of award to a selected applicant will constitute a preliminary approval by NBRC, subject to the completion of an environmental review of the proposed site(s), and the execution by NBRC and the recipient of a Grant Agreement. Selection for participation (preliminary approval) does not constitute approval of the proposed site(s). Each proposal will be subject to a NBRC environmental review.

Administrative and Indirect Cost Requirements

An approved federal indirect rate may be used for projects requiring staff compensation. In the event that an applicant does not have an established federal cognizant agent, a 10% de minimis (overhead) rate may be used.

Reporting

NBRC Award Agreements will include the terms and conditions of the award, including the reporting requirements, and be consistent with other NBRC grant reporting. Review NBRC's website for grant administration details.

Intergovernmental Review. Not required.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Letters of Interest. Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than **5:00 p.m. EST August 28, 2020**.

Full Application. Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply based on the review of the Letters of Interest, and must be submitted no later than **5:00 p.m. EST, October 30, 2020**.

Submission Format:

- The entire LOI shall be submitted as ONE pdf. (with no other attachments) to rfep@nbrc.gov. The email subject line for the LOI **MUST** be **REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP LOI**
- The entire Application shall be submitted as ONE pdf (with no other attachments) to rfep@nbrc.gov. The e-mail subject line for the application **MUST** be **REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP APPLICATION**

If these instructions are not followed your information may not be considered.

CONTACTS

RFEP Information/Questions: For RFEP related information or general questions regarding this funding opportunity, please contact NBRC Program Director Andrea Smith by e-mail asmith@nbrc.gov or phone #603-369-3001 x3.

For those considering applications in 2020, please contact the NBRC Program Director and the NBRC Program Managers in the States where the proposed project will take place. Both will be happy to assist you as you develop your projects and applications:

Maine:

Charlotte Mace
207.624.7448
charlotte.mace@maine.gov

New York:

Kyle Wilber
518.473.3694
kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov

New Hampshire:

Mollie Kaylor
603.271.6305
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Vermont:

Kristie Farnham
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