

# REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP

## Notice of Funding Opportunity

for the

## Northern Border Regional Commission

**AGENCY:** Northern Border Regional Commission

**ACTION:** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

**SUMMARY:** Authorized by subtitle V of title 40, United States Code, and through Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018 (approved March 23, 2018), Congress dedicated not less than \$3,000,000 of the \$15,000,000 for grants for initiatives that seek to address the decline in forest-based economies throughout the Northern Border Regional Commission region. Additionally, Appropriations Act, 2019 (approved September 21, 2018), directed \$4M of the \$20,000,000 appropriation to be set aside for the same purpose.

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

**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 in the rural areas of the Northern Border Regional Commission region.

**GOAL:** Fund projects that, when completed, increase the ability of the four-state region to attract new opportunities, that are highly leveraged, transformational investments that have a fundamental impact on community economic revitalization.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Specific questions regarding this program's requirements should be directed to [admin@nbro.gov](mailto:admin@nbro.gov) or through [www.nbro.gov](http://www.nbro.gov).

### OVERVIEW INFORMATION

**Federal Agency Name:** Northern Border Regional Commission.

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Regional Forest Economy Partnership

**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement.

**Funding Opportunity Number:** The funding opportunity number is: 'Forests'.

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number for the announcement is: 90.601.

**Dates:** Letters of Interest will be accepted on a rolling basis. Applicants that wish to be considered for funding by April 15 must submit their Letter of Interest by March 15. Applicants that wish to be considered for funding by June 15 must submit their Letters of Interest by May

15. Applicants that wish to be considered by October 15 must submit their Letters of Interest by September 15.

Applications will be reviewed on a first come first serve basis until funds are fully deployed. Once invited to submit a full application the entity may choose to submit an application on any of the Full Application Due deadlines.

<b>Letters of Interest Due</b>	<b>Invitation for Full Application</b>	<b>Full Application Due</b>	<b>Awards Announced</b>
March 15	April 15	May 15	June 15
May 15	June 15	July 15	August 15
September 15	October 15	November 15	December 15

Letters of Interest submitted must be received no later than 5:00 pm eastern time on the application deadline date in order to be considered to be invited for a full application by the dates given above.

Full applications will only be accepted from those entities that have been invited to apply by the Commission.

**Available Funds.** Approximately \$7,000,000

**Authority.** The program is authorized by subtitle V of title 40, United States Code, and through Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018 (approved March 23, 2018) and Appropriations Act, 2019 (approved September 21, 2018)

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION.** This notice announces NBRC’s intention to offer funding to rural communities through a competition made available through its notice of funding.

**Program Description.** The purpose of the program is to assist rural communities in transitioning from a historic dependence on the forest-based economy to discovering new opportunities for economic diversity, independence and innovation. Congress appropriated no less than \$7M to be focused on assisting communities in the NBRC region that have been affected negatively by the decline in the forest-based economy. This NOFO allows for creative opportunities to improve communities in the Northern Border Regional Commission region. NBRC is not prescribing the methods in which this may be accomplished. NBRC does however, provide Investment Goals and directs applications to describe how the work outlined will align with these Goals.

**Partnership.** This NOFO has been developed in coordination with the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). In the spring of 2016 an Economic Development Assessment Team (EDAT) lead by EDA and including; representatives of the U.S. Economic Administration, U.S. Department of the Treasury, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Small Business Administration, and the Northern Border Regional Commission met, with the goal to identify federal resources that could assist the forest products industry create and retain jobs and strengthen the future of the forest economy. The results of this meeting were summarized in a report from which this NOFO was partially crafted.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review this report. A copy of the report is found on the NBRC website.

## Investment Goals

- Increase opportunities to strengthen and expand the regional workforce in order to support a diversified local economy.
- Reuse and redevelop forest economy facilities and infrastructure, including vacant mill sites, to improve opportunities for new local economies.
- Develop vibrant communities, through infrastructure improvements, where people want to live, work and visit.
- Invest in the commercialization of new forest products and the development of new markets for forest product residuals.
- Invest in the emerging outdoor recreation economy.
- Prioritize projects that demonstrate a multi-state impact and/or regional benefit.

**Definitions.** In this announcement, 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 of](#) 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.

## AWARD INFORMATION

**Funding Available.** Approximately \$7 million will be made available through this announcement.

**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 lesser dollars.

**Period of Performance.** The period of performance shall not exceed 48 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.

**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.

## 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 OR MATCHING

### **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 2019 Distress Criteria published by NBRC and available on [www.nbrc.gov/](http://www.nbrc.gov/) resources. (then click on Interactive Map) 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 Letters 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.**

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.**

**However, 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 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/value-volunteer-time/>

## LETTERS OF INTEREST

**Threshold Requirements.** An Evaluation Team consisting of a representatives from all four states, NBRC, and other regional funders will review Letters of Interest that are received on or prior to the deadline. They will be responsible for analyzing whether the Application satisfies at least one number of the following threshold requirements. Projects that meet one or more of the threshold requirements will be given priority over those that do not.

Threshold requirements are as follows (a map of the following is available on the [www.nbrc.gov](http://www.nbrc.gov) website):

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

### Information Required for a Letter of Interest

- ✓ Complete the SF424 for the lead applicant. If more than one organization is collaborating on this project, all co-applicants must provide the following from the 424 on a separate letter (8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 8f, 9) but are not required to fill out the SF424.
- ✓ 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 must be submitted.
- ✓ Cover letter (no more than two pages) that clearly articulates the elements of the proposed project and what it is intended to accomplish. And additionally, expresses how Criteria 5 and 7 will be met.
- ✓ Budget SF 424cbw. And provide evidence that the remainder of the project funds, as outlined, is committed. If funds are not committed attach a plan for obtaining match funding within 6 months. (bullet points will suffice, clarity is important)
- ✓ Narrative for Rating Criteria 1. Demonstrate a clear nexus between the proposed project and the Purpose and Goals set out in this NOFO.
- ✓ Certificate Regarding Lobbying
- ✓ Debarment, Suspension Certification

Invitations to submit a full application for funding will be based on the threshold criteria, the completeness and clarity of information submitted, and a determination of the likelihood that the investment goals will be met.

## **FULL APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Full applications will be by invitation only. Applicants who are invited to apply may submit their full application by any of the dates outlined in above (May 15, July 15 or November 15). **But note:** projects that are awarded will be on a first come first served basis.

Items necessary in order for a complete application include the following:

- ✓ Any items submitted in the Letters of Interest that have been changed/updated or otherwise amended since the time of the Letter of Interest was submitted.
- ✓ 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 below.

**Rating Criteria.** Each full application will be scored based on the seven rating criteria that were developed for the Regional Forest Economy Partnership that assist the Commission in meeting the Purpose and Goals outlined in this NOFO.

### **Rating Criteria 1: Alignment with Purpose and Goals of the Regional Forest Economy Partnership (30 points):**

Applicants should state the problems or barriers the project seeks to address and why they are an impediment to promoting a more secure future for the applicant's community; describe the regional significance of the project, whether it is a part of a comprehensive regional plan, and its relationship to other Federal investments. Describe how the project meets the purpose of this funding opportunity; 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 in the rural areas of the Northern Border Regional Commission region. Further describe how it meets the Investment Goals of this NOFO. As there is a wide range of projects that can be supported through this announcement, not every project is expected to address all NBRC goals. Projects which address multiple goals will be given greater consideration.

An applicant's score on this rating criteria will be based on, the description of the existing conditions that the proposed project is intended to address, the degree to which the proposed project addresses the Initiative's Purpose and Goals, and consistency with existing region-wide plans. 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, meaningfully addresses the specifically identified Goals and aligns with purpose of this NOFO.

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

Applicants are required to clearly identify the benefits or outcomes of its proposed program. The Commission recognizes that each project is unique and thus is allowing 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 and 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. This criteria includes 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. Avoid obvious conflicts in budget line items. (Example: Staff will be providing 40 hours of one-on-one training to potential entrepreneurs - but the budget that is submitted has a personnel figure of \$45K)

*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.
- **Evaluation Methods.** Applicants will describe how they will evaluate the success of their project or activity. They should also describe how project evaluation information will be obtained and documented.
- **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 quality of the proposed work plan including the clarity and logic of proposed activities, quality of the public participation where applicable, clarity of the project schedule, identification of responsible entities for each task, suitability of evaluation methods, identification of potential obstacles. In addition, throughout the narrative the applicant shall demonstrate proper due diligence and project readiness. A Gantt Chart that supports a brief narrative is acceptable.



#### **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 [nbrc.gov](http://nbrc.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.

**Regional Collaboration Experience** - When developing your budget, include under 'Travel' expenses within the SF-424cbw, the estimated cost of two trips to Hanover, NH for one/two people for a one-night stay, in addition to any other planned travel you anticipate. NBRC anticipates having the grant recipients meet and present to the Commission the work that they are doing over the course of the next two years. Make sure to use current per-diem rates (current rates available at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>).

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

The applicant's proposed budget should clearly identify the funding necessary for the entire project. **Do not provide only a budget for the NBRC request.** The budget should include all funds necessary to complete the project as outlined in 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 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 get additional resources or commitments to increase the effectiveness of the proposed program 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 chart below. 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.

<b>Documented Match and Leveraged Resources</b> (of the amount requested under this NOFO)	<b>Points Awarded</b>
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

**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 one receive 50% of the project cost in a grant from NBRC. And lastly, those areas determined to have the minimal amount of distress are labeled ‘attainment’ counties. These counties are not eligible to received NBRC funds unless it can be demonstrated that municipalities within these counties area ‘isolated areas of distress’. The 2019 Distress Criteria has been published by NBRC (see website). It is very important that you review this data and ensure that your project is eligible to apply and what the minimum required match will be.

**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 other grant programming.

*(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’.*  
*((7X20) + (11X50))/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.

### **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 to bring the type of project(s) that is the subject of the planning activities to completion); (links to websites are appreciated)
- ✓ A list of designated staff that is anticipated to manage the proposed project, and their qualifications, as well as other staff anticipated to contribute to the project’s completion (Applicants should demonstrate that they either have sufficient personnel or the ability to procure qualified experts or professionals, with the knowledge, skills, and abilities with relevant experience to carry out the proposed activity); and
- ✓ The applicant’s past history in managing federal funds (applicants should provide examples of past successful federally funded projects and explain how the applicant overcame any obstacles during unsuccessful 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 this rating 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 the

knowledge (within the past 3-5 years) experience in 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, as applicable.

## **EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

The rating criteria to be used to award the maximum points for this NOFO 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 staff shall review and score applications determining scores for each of the rating criteria and present to the Commission. The Commission shall determine final scores based on the following: 1) The score provided by the Sates' 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. These applicants may resubmit their applications at a later date to be considered if funding remains available.

Proposals will be selected by highest score except when necessary to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of grant awards based on geography and to ensure the final awards reflects the range of activities and impacts covered by the goals outlined.

## **APPLIATION RATING**

NBRC is committed to ensuring that programs result in the achievement of NBRC's strategic mission and the purpose of Congressional set aside. To support this effort, grant applications submitted through this NOFO will be rated on the rating criteria set out in section IV of this NOFO. The maximum potential number of points to be awarded is 115.

	<b>Maximum Points</b>
<i>Rating Criteria 1 – Purpose and Alignment</i>	<i>30 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 2 - Clarity of Outcomes</i>	<i>15 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 3 – Work Plan</i>	<i>15 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 4 – Budget</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 5 – Collaboration</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 6 – Match</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>Rating Criteria 7 - Capacity</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>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).</i>	<i>15 points</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>

**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 standard forms and program requirements will be provided with the Grant Agreement.

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

**Debriefing.** For a period of 120 days, beginning upon the date awards are publicly announced, NBRC will provide a debriefing when requested. A request for debriefing must be made in writing or by email by the authorized official whose signature appears on the SF424 or by his or her successor in office and be submitted to [admin@nbrc.gov](mailto:admin@nbrc.gov). Information provided during a debriefing may include, the final score the applicant received and evaluator comments.

**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.

**Learning Opportunities.** NBRC may use the information contained in the grant applications, from the reviews, and/or emerging from grants management or grantee conversations to determine selected grantees that are focused on the same issues, themes, practices, policies and/or who have similar contexts in order for grantees to learn from each other, establish best practices, programs, or policies, pose questions for ongoing research, etc. Invitation, selection, and management of these grantees will be at the sole discretion of NBRC.

## **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 program reporting. Review NBRC's website for grant administration details.

## **AGENCY CONTACTS**

**Programmatic Information:** For program related information, email [admin@nbro.gov](mailto:admin@nbro.gov) or contact Program Director, Christine Frost 603-369-3001 x2.

**General Questions:** General questions regarding this notice should be directed to the [admin@nbro.gov](mailto:admin@nbro.gov).

## SUBMISSION INFORMATION

**Letters of Interest.** Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than the dates set out in this NOFO.

**Full Application.** Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply based review of the Letters of Interest.

**Receipt Dates and Times.** Letters of Interest and Applications must be submitted electronically as **one pdf** by the deadline date, at 5:00 p.m. eastern time.

### Submission Format:

- The entire application shall be submitted as ONE pdf. (with no other attachments) to [admin@nbro.gov](mailto:admin@nbro.gov).
- The email subject line **MUST** be **REGIONAL FOREST ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP**

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

**Intergovernmental Review.** Not required.