



2023 CATALYST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

AVAILABLE FUNDS

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is making available up to \$44 million¹ in grant funds to be competitively awarded through the Catalyst Program. The Catalyst Program brings multiple investment priorities together to stimulate growth and inspire partnerships for rural economic vitality in the northern border region. These projects will be partially funded through the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA).

AWARD SIZE

Non-infrastructure projects will have an award size ranging up to \$500,000.

Infrastructure projects will have an award size ranging up to \$1,000,000, with consideration of awards up to \$3,000,000 for projects that demonstrate their ability to meet the eligibility criteria and address priorities identified by NBRC and member states. To be eligible for the higher maximum, projects must either include multiple infrastructure categories or serve multiple jurisdictions. Eligibility will be determined in the LOI review process conducted by both NBRC and the member States (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine).

Applicants may propose projects with a Federal funding request less than these amounts. There will be no preference given to larger funding requests and proposals for all award sizes will be considered.

NON-INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

Program funding will be used to support non-infrastructure projects including assistance in obtaining job skills training, skills development and employment-related education, entrepreneurship, technology, and business development. Non-infrastructure projects may also include improving basic health care, enhancing nutrition and food security, particularly on issues of equity, access and disparities, and other public services, as well as the promotion of resource conservation, tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space consistent with economic development goals.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

IIJA funding will be used to support the economic revitalization of Northern Border communities within member states by investing in projects that modernize public infrastructure. With this historic investment, the Catalyst Program has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address the region's infrastructure needs and priorities. The infrastructure funding is a component of the core Catalyst Program and will complement the available economic development project funding.

Congress defines public infrastructure projects in NBRC's authorizing language as "transportation," "basic public," "telecommunications," and "energy". NBRC has identified eligible infrastructure projects for this competition:

- Transportation infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair, for the purpose of transporting people and goods, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for

¹ [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, PL. 117-328 (\$25 million); Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, 2021, PL. 117-58 (\$20 million).]

transporting from one point to another, including infrastructure that improves economic mobility for individuals, and may include roads, bike lanes, pedestrian ways, multi-use facilities, railways, airways, waterways, canals, and terminals such as airports, railway stations, bus stations, parking, refueling depots (including fueling docks and fuel stations), EV charging stations, EV Make Ready infrastructure, and seaports.

- Basic public infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair, including those services that are generally necessary to conduct business. Public infrastructure are facilities, systems, and structures that are owned or available for use by the public to catalyze economic development, and includes core infrastructure (such as water, wastewater, and energy) critical infrastructure (such as those required to maintain public health and economic vitality), and community infrastructure (such as those required to improve health outcomes and increase community connectedness). This definition includes specific projects such as: collection and distribution systems, treatment plants and other infrastructure that collects, treats and delivers drinking water and wastewater-related services; electric power generation and transmission to include renewable energy and storage; solid waste to include, recycling, composting, disposal, and waste-to-energy via incineration; systems for heat distribution through sources such as co-generation, biomass, geothermal heating, heat pumps and central solar heating; childcare facilities, outdoor recreation infrastructure and public meeting spaces such as community centers; facilitate and improve health outcomes and physical activity; and increase community connectedness. For the purposes of this program, public safety facilities and equipment are not eligible.
- Telecommunications infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair to accommodate any part of the infrastructure of a telecommunications network, including lines, equipment, apparatus, towers, antennas, etc., and/or cyber infrastructure (routing and switching software, operational support systems, etc.) necessary to transmit information from one location to another, for use, or in connection with, a telecommunications network. Investments in telecommunications infrastructure support reliable and affordable broadband to provide local businesses and entrepreneurs access to the digital marketplace, facilitate online learning and workforce development, and connect communities.

2023 AGENCY INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

The Catalyst Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's economy and communities. All projects must be consistent with the economic development goals of the region and advance a combination of NBRC and member state [strategic investment principles](#). NBRC investment priorities include:

- 1) Projects that provide benefits to or demonstrate meaningful engagement with communities who have been under-represented in past NBRC investments. Underinvested communities include rural communities (population less than 5,000), communities of color, and tribal communities.
- 2) Projects that address multiple needs and cross multiple investment categories.
- 3) Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events.

SCORING

NBRC reviews and scores project proposals based on 5 categories: Project Readiness, Alignment with Investment Goals and Program Priorities, Economic Impacts, Project Costs and Match, and Organizational Capacity. The NBRC can award up to a total of 50 points out of the available 100 points based on the following criteria:

- 1) **Project Readiness.** This category reflects an applicant's ability to perform the proposed work within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award date.
- 2) **Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities.** This category reviews how a project fits within the NBRC strategic investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets NBRC investment priorities in the project summary. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities outlined in the program materials.
- 3) **Economic Impacts.** Projects will be reviewed for anticipated economic impact. Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data.
- 4) **Project Costs and Match.** Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable. Projects have identified secured match and are leveraging non-federal funds. (Note: Projects who utilize the COVID match waiver for a portion or all of the required match will not be penalized in the review and scoring processes).
- 5) **Organizational Capacity.** Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements.

The remaining 50 points will be awarded by the state program in which the project is proposed. States use a similar set of review criteria with an emphasis on state economic development and infrastructure priorities.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- State governments of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- Local governments and secondary and career technical centers (village, town, city and county);
- Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state);
- Indian Tribes; § 200.54 Indian tribe (or “federally recognized Indian tribe”). Indian tribe means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. Chapter 33), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians (25 U.S.C. 450b(e)). See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services
- Non-profit entities. The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code. The non-profit entity must be able to demonstrate they have federal grant experience related to economic development.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Ineligible applicants include for-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c), [40 U.S.C. §15101\(c\)](#). Ineligible entities are also those entities normally deemed eligible but, due to prior federal or state funding history have been identified as ineligible for future investments. Additionally, a non-profit identified by a state that does not have a federally recognized 501(c) status is not an eligible applicant.

COMMISSION SERVICE AREA

Only projects within the NBRC’s service area are eligible for funding under [40 U.S.C. §15733](#). For 2023, the NBRC service area is:

- Maine: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties.

- New Hampshire: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, and Sullivan counties
- New York: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates counties.
- Vermont: all counties within the State

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The infrastructure funding will be available through the Catalyst Program and follow the same submission process as the non-infrastructure projects. Letters of Interest are required for funding consideration. LOIs will be reviewed for eligibility and will be classified as either infrastructure or non-infrastructure projects. NBRC, in coordination with the States, will issue invitations for full applications based on LOIs' adherence to NBRC scoring criteria and relevance to NBRC investment goals and program guidelines. Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply and must be submitted using the NBRC's Application Portal. Applicants should refer to the 2023 Catalyst Program Manual for detailed submission instructions. The Program Manual will be made available on NBRC's website at www.nbrc.gov in mid-March 2023.

CONTACTS

For those considering applications in 2023, please contact NBRC Infrastructure Program Manager, Adrienne Harrison and/or the NBRC Program Manager in the State(s) where the proposed project will take place. These individuals will be happy to assist you as you develop your projects and applications: NBRC's IJA Program Manager: Adrienne Harrison, aharrison@nbrc.gov, 603.369.3001

NBRC State Program Managers

- Maine: Charlotte Mace, charlotte.mace@maine.gov 207.624.7448
- New Hampshire: Steve Fortier, steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov 603.688.5918
- Vermont: Kristie Farnham, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov 802.398.5268
- New York: Kyle Wilber, kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov 518.473.3694

Additional Catalyst Program information can be found on NBRC's website www.nbrc.gov