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FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM 2023 Program Manual

Spring 2023

Letter of Interest (required): March 10 by 5pm

Applications (by invite only): April 28 by 5pm

Fall 2023

Letter of Interest (required): Sept 22 by 5pm

Applications (by invite only): Nov. 10 by 5pm

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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 per year for initiatives to address the decline in forest-based economies throughout the region. This follows similar directives in 2018 (\$3,000,000), 2019 (\$4,000,000), 2020 (\$4,000,000) and 2021 (\$4,000,000). These funds comprise the “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.

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Available Funds: \$7,000,000 *(After spring awards, approximately \$4.4MM is available for the fall grant round.)*

Award Size. The maximum award size is \$1,000,000. The Commission does maintain discretion in reducing the minimum if outcomes can demonstrate that they will lead to an outsized impact either directly within the scope of the proposed project, or indirectly through subsequent efforts.

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. For projects awarded funding in June, the period of performance shall begin on July 1 of that year and not exceed 36 months from the date of award. For projects awarded funding in January, the period of performance shall begin on January 1 of that year and not exceed 36 months from the date of award. 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.

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.

Forest Economy Purpose and Program Description. The purpose of this program is to support the forest-based economy, and to assist in the industry’s evolution to include new technologies and viable business models across the 4-state NBRC region.

For those potential applicants familiar with the NBRC’s core Catalyst funding opportunity, the Forest Economy Program is distinct in two important ways:

- The Forest Economy Program emphasizes the potential for impact across the entire NBRC region.
- Infrastructure projects (defined by Congress in NBRC’s authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy) must directly support the forest industry.

Whether funded directly or through partnerships, funds will be awarded to support projects in the forest economy, which may include one (or multiple) of the following:

1. **Community development projects** that support the diversified use of forests within the Northern Border Regional Commission's service area for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably and demonstrates planning for climate resiliency.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Utilization of wood-based heating technologies and/or "Mass Timber" products (e.g., Cross-laminated timber) in public use projects (prioritizing locally sourced* wood products where possible)
- Collaborative efforts to support communities negatively impacted by the decline in the forest-based economy to attract new wood-utilizing enterprises

*For the purposes of this program, "locally sourced" means sourced, where possible, within the [four state NBRC region](#).

2. **Workforce [re] training and development projects** for the purpose of building the skills and recruiting and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Development and marketing of targeted workforce programs to support identified employers' needs for a skilled workforce (i.e., new technology, safety, apprenticeship, etc.)
- Training and recruitment programs that prepare participants for careers in logging, forestry, and related businesses

3. **Marketing/communication and education projects** that promote the environmental and climate benefits of forest management and forest products in ways that strengthen markets for wood products.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Marketing and communications projects that promote the benefits of northern border forests
- Forest resource planning and industry supply chain analysis projects
- Carbon storage, carbon footprint, and/or life cycle analysis projects for wood products

4. **Business planning and technical assistance projects** that enhance the viability and sustainability of new and existing forest businesses

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Technical assistance, training in business skills, and access to financing to local forest industry businesses

5. **Public infrastructure projects** that directly support the forest industry, and/or that demonstrate the use of wood-based products in public infrastructure

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Revitalization of publicly owned transportation systems that serve forest industry operations
- Energy sourcing or supply upgrades that reduce costs for industry and/or create new markets for residuals
- Pilot projects that demonstrate the capabilities of wood-based infrastructure projects

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES: (Numbered for ease of reference in LOIs and applications)

1. Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create new markets for forest product residuals.
2. Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.
3. Support for eligible entities helping to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.
4. Revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably for the production of wood products and advanced materials manufacturing.
5. Encourage projects that leverage existing (or, in some cases, new) partnerships to impact multiple counties, states and/or the entire NBRC region, and/or have the potential to do so.

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.
- Institutions of Higher Education (must be able to demonstrate existing industry partnerships – see rating criteria #3)

LETTER OF INTEREST

LETTERS OF INTEREST ARE REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPLICATION CONSIDERATION

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

Total Project Amount

FEP Request Amount

Project Location(s)

Narrative

For the narrative portion of the LOI, please include a letter (no more than 5 pages) that clearly articulates the following:

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

Budget and Budget Narrative: (not considered part of the 5-page narrative)

Budget – SF424cbw

Budget narrative to include:

1. Expenses over \$5,000 with brief justification for each.
2. Matching funds detail should include the following: Source, amount, date of commitment (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, in coordination with the NBRC State Program Managers, will prioritize the Advisory Board list and determine which projects will be invited to submit a full application.

THERE WILL BE TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO APPLY FOR FOREST ECONOMY FUNDING IN 2023

Spring, 2023:

Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than **5:00 p.m. EST March 10, 2023**. **LOI required information should be submitted as one PDF and sent to fep@nbc.gov. Forest Economy Program LOIs *not* sent to this e-mail address or that are submitted as mailed submissions will not be considered.** Invitations to submit a full application will be sent by the week of April 3rd with full applications due by April 28th.

Fall, 2023:

Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than **5:00 p.m. EST September 22, 2023**. **LOI required information should be submitted as one PDF and sent to fep@nbc.gov. Forest Economy Program LOIs *not* sent to this e-mail address or that are submitted as mailed submissions will not be considered.** Invitations to submit a full application will be sent by the week of October 16th with full applications due by November 10th.

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, April 28, 2023 for spring submission or Friday, November 10, 2023 for fall submissions**. The application and

all support documents must be submitted as one PDF to fep@nbrc.gov. Applications submitted via another e-mail address or by mail will not be considered.

Rating Criteria. Each full application will be scored based on the rating criteria developed for the Forest Economy Program. These criteria are summarized in the chart below, with detail to follow:

FEP Core Rating Criteria	Potential Points Awarded
1. Alignment with Purpose, Goal, and Investment Criteria of the FEP	Up to 30 Points
2. Budget and Work Plan	Up to 20 Points
3. Collaboration and Capacity	Up to 15 Points
4. Clarity of Outcomes	Up to 15 Points
5. Sustainable Innovation	Up to 10 Points
6. Match Commitment	Up to 10 Points
TOTAL POINT VALUE	100 Points

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

1. Overall description of the project, including how it aligns with the Investment Goals, and the stated purpose and goals of FEP
2. Specific identification of the challenge(s) the project seeks to address
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 Forest Economy Program, and relate these to their project and its outcomes.

- Applicants should further describe the regional significance of the project and its relevance 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: Budget and Work Plan (20 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 www.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.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Investment funds may be used for the following:

- Reasonable fees to contractors, but no fees or profits for the recipient or sub-recipient.
- Construction and pre-construction costs, such as engineering.
- Bid performance or payment bonds.
- Indirect costs for work performed by the recipient staff.

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

Further detail on applicable and allowable costs is available 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 (it is assumed that 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 the project budget and work plan.

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.

The applicant's proposed budget and work plan should not include any project funds that have already been committed and/or expended for costs relative to this project. Should the project be selected for funding, any previously committed or expended funds are not eligible to be counted as match, nor are they eligible to be reimbursed with NBRC funds.

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 are as described above; the budget presentation is clear and concise; and the project budget is complete and includes match.

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, to include: monthly milestones for the critical management actions for the applicant, and any other entity whose cooperation or assistance is necessary to achieve your desired result; and 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 the alignment of the work plan and 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 body 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 3: Collaboration and Capacity (15 points):

Ratings under this factor are based on the capacity of the applicant's organization and its team, and the capacity of other entities that are part of the project application. An applicant's established working partnerships with other entities to leverage additional resources or commitments to increase the effectiveness of the proposed activities will also be taken into consideration. Demonstration of creative problem-solving efforts will provide additional points in this rating criteria. Letters of support may be helpful only if they demonstrate how the supporter is going to participate in the project, provide funding, or otherwise be involved in the project.

The applicant can demonstrate their capacity to implement the project, should it be selected for funding, by providing:

- a) Specific examples of previous projects that demonstrate the applicant's capacity to implement the proposed work plan;
- b) An explanation of the applicant's experience managing federal funds (applicants should provide examples of past successful federally funded projects).
- c) A description of the applicant's ability to access individuals or partners with knowledge and recent (within the past 3-5 years) experience in the proposed activities or other strategies to successfully carry out the proposed activities. (This applies only if the applicant does not have experience to provide specific examples described in part a);
- d) For institutes of higher education, a list of existing industry partnerships and a description of the benefit of project activities to said partnerships.

Rating Criteria 4: 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 allows significant latitude to the applicant to set the desired outcomes that will result from implementation of the project. For points to be awarded, applicants should select outcomes to report on, and provide baseline data accompanied by a narrative that describes current conditions related to each outcome determined in the application. Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to:

- Identify intended outcomes;
- Describe the connection between the intended outcomes and existing conditions, supported by data (where available);
- Clearly articulate the elements of their plan that will help achieve the identified intended outcomes;
- Establish specific benchmarks to measure progress toward the outcomes;
- Infrastructure projects must clearly articulate how project activities and outcomes will support the forest products industry.

Rating Criteria 5: Sustainable Innovation (10 points):

An applicant's score on this rating criteria will be based on their ability to demonstrate the project's intent to develop, design, and/or improve innovative new products, technologies, processes, or services to create new markets or improve existing ones, and the applicant's ability to demonstrate how the project will address identified needs or problems.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Strategies with strong research and development components
- Processes that combine new or improved skills, technology, and structure to create or enhance new products and services
- Development of new or improved technologies, such as machinery to increase production, improve product quality, enhance the efficient use of materials, or reduce emissions

Rating Criteria 6: Cost Share and 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 consider: (1) the number of resources leveraged that meets or exceeds the required match, and (2) whether funding has been secured at the time of application.

Applicants receive five (5) points if they have 100% of their match committed and documented at the time of application. Applicants who have 25% or more than their required match (or 125% of required match) committed and documented at time of application will be eligible for up to five (5) additional points. **Applicants will be scored higher for match resources greater than the required match amount as described. 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.**

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 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 the applicant will use in the project and their designated purpose.

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. 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.

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’. Please see www.nbrc.gov/content/distressed-counties for NBRC’s Distress Criteria including details on Isolated Areas of Distress. It is very important that you review this 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 eligible match (based on the distress criteria described above) where the project will take place or where work will be conducted consistent with NBRC’s Catalyst program.

In-Kind Contributions - In-kind contribution can be contributions of professional time. 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. 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/value-of-volunteer-time-2021>.

*** Based on FY’21 appropriations language, NBRC will accept requests from 2023 FEP grant applicants for “no match” applications if the grantee indicates that matching funds are not available because of the impacts of COVID-19. Please see Appendix A of this manual for additional NBRC guidance. Applicants who believe they can demonstrate their project qualifies for “partial match” or “no match” consideration must fully execute the Affidavit template in Appendix A of this manual and submit it along with their completed grant application. With respect to the scoring of FEP applications, and match being one of the required criteria, applicants who submit an executed COVID match waiver affidavit with their application will be considered for the project’s impact and readiness regardless of match. The applicant will not be penalized for lack of match.**

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

By statute ([40 U.S.C. §15702](https://www.uscourts.gov/uscourt/law/40-u-s-c-15702)), the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress in its service area. Assessing distress is important as the resulting designations reflect whether or not the NBRC can provide grants within a county. It also determines the percent of match required for NBRC funded projects.*

Counties are designated per the categories below:

- **Distressed:** Eligible for 80% funding and require a 20% match
- **Transitional:** Eligible for 50% funding and require a 50% match
- **Attainment:** Neither distressed nor transitional. NBRC is not allowed to fund projects within an attainment county unless the project is within an “Isolated Area of Distress” or has been granted a significant benefit waiver. Please see additional information on Attainment Counties in section XVI, below. For additional information regarding distress designations, please visit the Resources tab of NBRC’s website <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/distressed-counties>

*Based on FY'21 appropriations language, NBRC will accept requests from 2023 grant applicants for “no match” applications if the grantee indicates that matching funds are not available because of the impacts of COVID-19. Applicants who believe they can demonstrate their project qualifies for “no match” consideration must fully execute the Affidavit template in Appendix A of this manual and submit it along with their completed grant application.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTATION

Items necessary for an application to be considered eligible to be reviewed and scored include the following:

- 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
DUNS #
EIN#
Total Project Amount
FEP Request Amount
Project Location(s)
- Narrative 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.

Required Support Documents are listed below and should be saved as PDFs and labeled accordingly (for example, NEPA documentation should be one pdf labeled as NEPA.pdf)

- [NEPA Documentation](#) – as outlined in Appendix B.
- [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](#).
- [Standard Form 424cbw](#) – Budget Form. The project budget should only include reference to costs and funds that have not been committed or expended. The funds reflected in the budget should align with the Budget Narrative and provide evidence that the remainder of the project funds, as outlined, are committed. The Budget Narrative should describe how you arrived at your numbers. **Note:** If funds are not committed the narrative should detail how the applicant will obtain match funding within 6 months from date of project award.
- [SF424A - Budget for Non-Construction](#) **and** [SF424B – Assurances for Non-Construction](#)

OR

[SF424C – Budget for Construction](#) **and** [SF424D – Assurances for Construction](#)

- Certificate regarding Lobbying [Standard Form LLL](#) ([Sample SF-LLL](#))
- [NBRC Form 1001](#) - Debarment, Suspension Certification
- [Covid Match Waiver Affidavit](#) (if applicable)
- [Current Certificate of Good Standing](#) (if applicant and/or co-applicant is non-profit)
- IRS determination letter (if applicant and/or co-applicant is non-profit)
- Indirect cost rate documentation (If applicable, letter from cognizant agency with the approved indirect cost rate)
- Resolution by the Applicant's Legal Authority providing authorization to the named person authorized to sign the application to the NBRC. The resolution must also indicate the executive's permission to sign all NBRC investment documents that bind the applicant. Examples of legal authorities include: select boards and councils for municipalities; commissions for counties; state authorized officials or boards for states; boards of directors, or trustees for nonprofits.

Full applications are by invitation only.

Spring Applications: Applicants invited to apply based on the submission of their LOI submitted on or before March 10 may submit their full application by 5pm on Friday April 28, 2023.

Fall Applications: Applicants invited to apply based on the submission of their LOI submitted on or before September 22 may submit their full application by 5pm on Friday November 10, 2023.

One e-mail with the application and all required support documents, each in PDF format, must be submitted to fep@nbr.gov. Applications submitted via another e-mail address or by mail will not be considered.

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 Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair will vote on the projects selected for funding. Projects that fall short of an 80-point threshold will not be considered for funding.

Application Scoring: NBRC is committed to ensuring that FEP funded projects result in the achievement of NBRC's strategic mission and the purpose of the Congressional funding 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 100.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified via email or phone.

NBRC will require selected applicants to provide the documentation necessary to support the award, including but not limited to a project workplan, budget and other federally required paperwork. Should the grantee not be able to provide NBRC with all required documentation within the specified program timelines outlined in this manual, an award will not be made. If the applicant provides the documentation necessary to support the award, NBRC will issue a Grant Agreement under which the grantee is required to sign. The grantee is required to fulfill all terms and conditions during the project's period of performance outlined in the executed Grant Agreement. Successful applicants who do not have documented match commitments at the time of application will be given 6 months from the date of award to secure match resources.

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

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. Each proposal will be subject to a NBRC environmental review and the appropriate NEPA documentation to support the project must be included with the application for FEP funding. Please see Appendix B of this manual for additional information. Selection for participation (preliminary approval) does not constitute approval of the proposed site(s).

Administrative and Indirect Cost Requirements

An approved federal indirect rate may be used for projects requiring staff compensation. If 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 (nbrc.gov) for grant administration details.

Intergovernmental Review. Not required.

SPRING SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Letters of Interest. Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than **5:00 p.m. EST March 10, 2023.**

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, April 28, 2023.**

FALL SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Letters of Interest. Letters of Interest will be accepted from all eligible applicants no later than **5:00 p.m. EST September 22, 2023.**

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, November 10, 2023.**

Submission Format:

- The entire LOI shall be submitted as ONE pdf (with no other attachments) to feop@nbrc.gov. The email subject line for the LOI **MUST** be **FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM LOI**
- The Application and required support documentation must be submitted via one e-mail to feop@nbrc.gov. The e-mail subject line for the application **MUST** be **FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM APPLICATION**

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

CONTACTS

FEP Information/Questions: For FEP related information or general questions regarding this funding opportunity, please contact NBRC Forest Program Manager Marina Bowie by e-mail mbowie@nbrc.gov or phone #603.724.5802.

For those considering applications in 2023, please contact NBRC Forest Economy Program Manager Marina Bowie, the NBRC Program Manager in the State(s) where the proposed project will take place, and/or a Forest Economy Program Advisory Board member. These individuals 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:

Steven Fortier
603.699.5918
steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov

Vermont:

Kristie Farnham
802.398.5268
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Forest Economy Program Advisory Board

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2023 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM TIMELINE

For both Spring and Fall applicants: 2023 Forest Economy Program materials will be made available on the [NBRC website](#) in January 2023.

Spring 2023 Application Timeline

Forest Economy Program Information Sessions	January/February 2023
Letters of Interest (required)	March 10 by 5pm EST
Responses to LOIs including invitations to apply	Week of April 3 rd
Applications Due (by invite only)	April 28 by 5pm EST
NBRC Selection Meeting	June 2023
NBRC notice of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants	By June 30

Fall 2023 Application Timeline

Forest Economy Program Information Sessions	July/August 2023
Letters of Interest (required)	Sept. 22 by 5pm EST
Responses to LOIs including invitations to apply	Week of October 16 th
Applications Due (by invite only)	Nov. 10 by 5pm EST
NBRC Selection Meeting	January 2024
NBRC notice of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants	By January 31, 2024



APPENDIX A – COVID-19 MATCH WAIVER GUIDANCE and AFFIDAVIT

Based on the NBRC's interpretation of FY'21 appropriations language, the NBRC will accept requests from 2021 grant applicants for "no match" applications if the grantee indicates that matching funds are not available because of the impacts of COVID-19.

An applicant seeking a match relief waiver must complete the Affidavit template provided by NBRC (below), which must be signed by the "authorizing official" and included with the "additional documents" submitted with the application.

In the course of completing the Affidavit, the Applicant will identify the percentage of match for which they are requesting a waiver and attesting to the fact that match funding is unavailable due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. If an applicant follows the template and submits an executive waiver of match affidavit with their FEP application, the request will be accepted without further documentation.

With respect to the scoring of FEP applications, and match being one of the required criteria, applicants who submit an executed COVID match waiver affidavit with their application will be considered for the project's impact and readiness regardless of match. The applicant will not be penalized for lack of match.

[Click here for COVID Match Waiver form in fillable PDF format](#)

APPENDIX B – NEPA DOCUMENTATION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies consider potential environmental impacts of their actions before implementation or spending funds on the proposed action. You must complete this initial NEPA Intake Form as part of your NBRC application to provide NBRC Staff with project information relevant to the NEPA process. NBRC will use this information to determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysis that will be required if your proposed project is funded.

Note: Completion of this form does not satisfy NEPA, but it does help NBRC to determine what NEPA analysis will be required. If your project is funded, the NEPA process must be complete before NBRC will issue a Notice to Proceed.

Please complete the NBRC NEPA intake form in PDF format and provide attachments to support the information provided on this form, as needed. The NEPA intake form and supporting documentation should be combined and submitted as one PDF and labeled NEPA INTAKE.

[Click here for NEPA INTAKE FORM](#)



APPENDIX C – SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT WAIVER AFFIDAVIT

Requesting a significant benefit waiver for consideration. An exception exists for projects located within an Attainment County that could bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties outside of that county. If your community or organization is located within an Attainment County, but outside of one of the identified “Isolated Areas of Distress” in the NBRC’s 2023 Distress Criteria, an exception to allow for an application is possible for projects that could bring significant economic benefits to distressed areas.

Process: If a Significant Benefit waiver is being requested, the documentation supporting the waiver request, which includes an executed Significant Benefit Waiver together with clear and convincing evidence of a project’s economic impact beyond the border of the municipality may be submitted together with the Letter of Interest and must be submitted with the Letter of Interest on or before 5:00pm. EST **September 22, 2023**. A Significant Benefit Waiver request requires approval by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor’s Alternates of the four NBRC States. The significant benefit waiver must be approved for the entity to be considered eligible to be issued an invitation to submit an application.

[Click here for Significant Benefit Waiver Affidavit in fillable PDF format](#)

APPENDIX D – FEP PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall have the meanings indicated below.

Grant Agreement. 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. As defined by 2 CFR§ 200.54 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. 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. The non-profit entity must be able to demonstrate they have federal government experience related to economic development and the capacity to administer and complete a project should it be selected for FEP funding.

Due diligence. 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 is not just good sense, it is a duty community leaders owe the public, and a non-profit owes its stakeholders, to satisfy any legal requirements, especially when investing in real estate or human capital.

Forest industry. An industry which depends on forests for their raw material and wood-based industries which include but are not limited to pulp and paper, plywood, wood and veneer.

Forest products. Any material derived from forestry as direct consumption for commercial and personal use, such as lumber, paper, building materials, energy utilities, furniture, firewood, and forest-based bioproducts.

Forest products residuals. Any materials leftover from logging or the manufacture of wood products, including materials remaining in the forest after harvest, along with bark and sawdust. For example, wood product mills often convert biomass residuals to energy while manufacturing carbon-sequestering bio-based products.

Commission. Refers 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 person that has been documented to be the individual approved by their board, town, or other entity to apply for, accept, and spend public dollars. The Authorized Official has been documented to have the legal authority to sign all NBRC investment documents, to submit the FEP application for funding and accept funds for the purposes outlined in the FEP application.