



## Request for Proposals (RFP)

### Community Supported Enterprise Toolkit

#### Background

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Created by the US Congress in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission ("NBRC") is a Federal-State partnership that seeks to alleviate economic distress and encourage job creation throughout the northern regions in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. The Commission is charged with utilizing a broad set of tools to facilitate economic opportunity for the communities and people of the region. Some of these tools include developing competitive grant programs, issuing contracts, conducting research, initiating demonstration projects, and forming cooperative agreements.

One of the strategies identified within the Commission's most recent five-year strategic plan is to utilize NBRC's role as a nimble funder to respond to emerging economic challenges of the region. The Commission has identified the closure of cornerstone businesses in rural communities as a threat to the economic vitality of the region. Examples of these businesses are general stores, cafes, hardware stores and other places that provide critical goods and services - while also existing as shared third spaces that serve to connect residents of rural communities. The continued loss of these businesses threatens to increase outmigration, exacerbate workforce and demographic trends and have an overall negative impact on the business environment in small towns and villages.

In the absence of traditional commercial real estate markets in many rural communities, one effective strategy for preserving these businesses is the concept of a Community Supported Enterprise (CSE). With this model a third party, typically an organization based in the community, acquires real estate that houses the business utilizing a mix of grants, donations and fundraising. This capital significantly defrays the third party's cost of maintaining or repairing the structure and allows them to lease the space to a business operator at an affordable price. Having removed some of the financial risk of business ownership, the proprietor can focus on running their business, increasing the potential success and longevity of the enterprise.

#### Objective

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The NBRC is seeking to hire a partner with significant expertise in the development and operation of CSE's to create a publicly available toolkit. Specifically, the toolkit would serve as a resource for organizations and individuals seeking to revitalize community infrastructure, reestablish or maintain a critical community business, invigorate a downtown or create local jobs. The toolkit should cover organizational and operational structure for the CSE model and include best practices and examples.

#### Scope

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The NBRC seeks contractors who are experienced in:

- Principles of community driven economic development;
- Creation of materials geared towards volunteers and rural communities with limited capacity;
- Innovative approaches to rural economic development, such as the creation of CSE's;
- Non-profit administration and financial accounting of small businesses;
- Fundraising, philanthropy, and government grant programs;
- Have familiarity with NBRC region communities

The contractor is encouraged to respond with a proposal that demonstrates their experience in these areas and details of how they will approach creating materials that are accessible to a broad range of users. Within the funding available for this project, the contractor may also propose additional related work that would advance the creation of new CSEs or support existing CSEs. NBRC reserves the right to determine whether work beyond the toolkit development can be supported through this contract.

## Deliverables

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The Contractor shall:

- i. Produce a Community Supported Enterprise Toolkit that will assist organizations or individuals in the creation of the following materials:
  - a) Case studies of successful CSEs
  - b) Organizational Bylaws
  - c) Option Agreements
  - d) Operator Lease Agreements
  - e) Filing 501c3 Applications

The Contractor is authorized to subcontract with subject matter experts for assistance in conceptualizing, organizing, and executing the toolkit.

The Contractor may seek funds from other agencies, organizations, and/or foundations to supplement any additional cost.

The final materials will be branded as a public-private partnership between NBRC and the successful contractor. NBRC shall receive adequate and appropriate recognition for their financial support of the materials.

## Required Budgetary Information

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To fully execute this contract, the Contractor will provide the following budget items:

- Staff time & breakdown, in the following format:
  - Title
  - No. hours dedicated to the project
  - Hourly rate
- Overhead and/or administrative charges
- Subcontractor charges (if applicable), to include facilitation and guest presentations/experts

The budget for this project is not to exceed **\$75,000**.

## Period of Performance

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Up to six months from date of award (anticipated February 2026). Contractors will be expected to schedule up to three performance review meetings with NBRC during the period of performance, culminating in a complete Community Supported Enterprise Toolkit.

## Submittal of RFP to NBRC

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Complete RFP documentation must be submitted to the Agency's Deputy Director Molly Taflas, via email (mtaflas@nbrc.gov), no later than 5:00PM EST on January 9, 2026. Please provide the RFP in both MS Word and PDF formats.