Northern Border Regional Commission

2025 CATALYST PROGRAM USER MANUAL

CATALYST PROGRAM

Pre-Application (Required) Deadlines
March 7, 2025 (Spring Round)
August 29, 2025 (Fall Round)

Application by Invitation Only Deadlines
April 18, 2025 (Spring Round)
October 10, 2025 (Fall Round)

Updated July 30, 2025

www.nbrc.gov

Photo, Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Established by Congress in 2008, the NBRC is a partnership between the federal government and the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. NBRC investment funds originate from the Federal Government but are approved by the Federal Government's NBRC representative (Federal Co-Chair) and the Governors of the four States. The mission of the Northern Border Regional Commission is to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity in the northern border region with flexible funding and strategic support. The NBRC invests in job-creating projects that reduce poverty, unemployment, and outmigration.

The Catalyst Program is NBRC's flagship program and is designed to stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality across the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) four-state region. The Catalyst Program supports a broad range of economic development initiatives that will modernize and expand the region's basic infrastructure and revitalize communities to support and attract the region's workforce.

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 economic development strategies. NBRC's agency investment priorities include:

1. Projects that directly benefit communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments will be prioritized. The focus is on rural communities with fewer than 5,000 people and underserved communities.
2. Projects that demonstrate how they meet multiple needs within Catalyst project categories and are designed to create efficiencies will be prioritized.
3. Projects that adapt to changing conditions and demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and recover from extreme weather will be prioritized.

PART I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

I.   AVAILABLE FUNDING

Through the 2025 Catalyst Program, NBRC anticipates making up to $87.5 million available for competitive awards. The Catalyst Program will run two funding rounds with $40 million available in the fall round.

Upon completion of the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations process, additional funds may be made available through a revised Catalyst Program announcement. 2025 Catalyst Program funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations.

II.   PROJECT CATEGORIES

Projects will be classified as either non-infrastructure or infrastructure during the pre-application review process conducted by both NBRC and the member states (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine). This classification determines the maximum potential award size for the project. Definitions and examples of infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects can be found in Section C of this manual.

Table 1. Non-Infrastructure Funding Purpose and Description	
Detailed non-infrastructure project category definitions and examples are available in Section C of this manual. Maximum award size is $500,000.	
Project Type	**Project Activities**
Feasibility Projects (Maximum award size of $100,000)	Planning, design and/or feasibility projects that: • align with an NBRC infrastructure category • demonstrate community support and engagement • result in deliverables that support the implementation of an infrastructure project
Workforce and Business Development	Projects that will be most competitive will demonstrate a clear connection to: • job training, skill development, and employment-related education for identified businesses in a specific economic sector • workforce attraction and retention activities that demonstrate a direct link to job placement and/or employment gaps • recruitment and/or training supporting industries critical to the state's economic strategies • development or expansion of existing programs to meet the current and future needs of an identified region's employers

	• business development activities, such as support for start-up and early-state companies, or opportunities for long term growth for identified businesses are also competitive
Basic Healthcare[1]	Systems, services, programs and facilities that support: • well-being with a focus on needs of medically underserved communities • solve community health problems • provide accessible, cost-effective and efficient approaches to enhance physical and mental health.
Resource Conservation, Tourism, Recreation[2]	Systems, services, programs, facilities, easement and land purchases that: • promote resource conservation, tourism, or recreation as part of an asset-based economic development approach • improves the overall quality of life for individuals that live, work and recreate in the region • are consistent with local, state or regional economic development goals.
[1] Basic healthcare projects that include construction of, or structural improvements to, non-profit medical facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, community health and mental health centers, public health centers, rehabilitation facilities, etc., with a focus on medically underserved areas will be classified as Basic Public Infrastructure (See Infrastructure Funding below). [2] Outdoor recreation projects that include construction of, or structural improvements to, assets, facilities, systems and structures for recreation trails and are open to the general public are classified as Basic Public Infrastructure (See Infrastructure Funding below).	

Table 2. Infrastructure Funding Purpose and Description

Detailed infrastructure project category definitions and examples are available in Section C of this manual. Maximum award size is $1-3MM. Projects requesting more than $1,000,000 must meet with the State Program Manager AND address criteria for higher maximum awards.

Project Type	Project Activities
Transportation	Construction, alteration, or repair of physical transport facilities, systems and structures, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for transporting from one point to another, that: • are open to the general public for use • facilitate reliable movement of people and goods • influence local and regional economies.
Basic Public Infrastructure[3]	Construction, alteration, or repair of assets, facilities, systems and structures that: • are open to the general public for use • crucial to the functioning of an economy • provide the foundation for economic growth in the community and region.
Water and Wastewater *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of drinking water and wastewater assets, facilities, systems and structures that collect, treat and deliver drinking water and wastewater.
Solid Waste *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of solid waste assets, facilities, systems and structures that include recycling, composting, disposal, and waste-to-energy via incineration.

Heat Generation Systems *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of heat generation assets, facilities, systems and structures that include cogeneration, biomass, geothermal heating, and heat pumps.
Outdoor Recreation *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of outdoor recreation trails and facilities that: • demonstrate increased health and social benefits • support resident attraction and retention goals • increase sustainable outdoor recreation tourism as part of a coordinated effort.
Public Meeting Spaces *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of public meeting spaces and facilities designed and maintained to increase community connectedness, strengthen the social fabric of the community, and meet the general basic public infrastructure requirements.
Childcare or Basic Healthcare Facilities *Part of Basic Public Infrastructure*	Construction, alteration, or repair of childcare or basic healthcare facilities that meet the general basic public infrastructure requirements.
Telecommunications Infrastructure	Construction, alteration, or repair telecommunications infrastructure, cyber infrastructure, and network infrastructure that: • aid in the transmission of information or signals • are crucial to running a modern, industrialized economy • provide the foundation for communication services.
[3] Projects classified as Basic Public Infrastructure must align with an identified category of Water and Wastewater, Solid Waste, Heat Generation Systems, Outdoor Recreation, Public Meeting Spaces, Childcare Facilities, or Basic Healthcare Facilities.	

III. AWARD SIZE

Non-infrastructure projects will have a maximum award size of $500,000. Feasibility projects will have a maximum award size of $100,000.

Infrastructure projects will have a maximum award size of $1,000,000.

Infrastructure projects may request a higher maximum award size of up to $3,000,000 after consulting with the state program manager. The project must meet one of the NBRC criteria for a higher maximum award size to be eligible:
1. construction takes place in 2 or more eligible jurisdictions (communities, counties, or states) OR
2. construction involves 2 or more infrastructure categories (basic public, transportation, or telecommunications).

Eligibility for the higher maximum award will be determined in the pre-application review process conducted by both NBRC and the member States (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine). Requests above $1M must contact the state program manager. See Section C of this manual for additional information regarding eligibility for the higher maximum award.

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.

IV. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

Projects funded by NBRC have a three-year period of performance. All work should be completed within this three-year timeframe. Projects should consider time needed to complete NEPA review, permitting and procurement. If you think your project will take longer than three years from the time of award, we recommend waiting and applying in a future round when it can be finished within the three-year period.

V. COMMISSION SERVICE AREA

Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding under 40 U.S.C. §15733. The NBRC service area is:

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

New Hampshire: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, Merrimack, 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, Schoharie*, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties.

Vermont: all counties within the State

*With active awards in Schoharie County from another federal commission, the county is not currently eligible for NBRC funding in FY 2025 per NBRC's statute and has not been included in distress calculations.

VI. ANNUAL DISTRESS CRITERIA

By statute, the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress within its region (40 U.S.C, Subtitle V, §15702). Assessing distress is important as the resulting designations reflect whether the Commission can provide grants within a county as well as what level of match is required of Commission funded projects. For more details on the Annual Distress Criteria, county designations, and matching requirements, visit the NBRC's Assessing Distress Criteria webpage.

NBRC funds may not be awarded to projects located within a designated Attainment County. There are three exceptions to this:

1. **Isolated Areas of Distress**
   When a county is designated as Attainment, the Commission will collect economic and demographic data within that county to identify Isolated Areas of Distress. Isolated Areas of Distress are municipalities that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. For a listing of the Isolated Areas of Distress see the **Annual Distress Criteria** on the NBRC website.

   If a project is located within an Isolated Areas of Distress, an application may be submitted, but the applicant must indicate the location of the isolated area in the application. The match ratio for Isolated Areas of Distress projects is 50%.

2. **Multi-County Projects**
   Projects within an Attainment County may be funded if the project is part of a multi-county project that includes at least one other Distressed or Transitional County. The match ratio for multi-county projects is based on the average of the counties that make up the project.

3. **Significant Benefit Waiver**
   There are two exceptions that <u>**require**</u> a Significant Benefit Waiver to allow those projects, applicants or co-applicants that fall outside of the areas that meet the Commission's <u>annual distress criteria</u> to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:
   - An exception exists for **projects** located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified "Isolated Areas of Distress" that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties. See significant benefit waiver requirements detailed below and within **Appendix E**.
   - An exception exists for **applicants or co-applicants** with established operations located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties. See significant benefit waiver requirements detailed below and within **Appendix E**.

If an exception applies, the applicant must request a Significant Benefit Waiver to be eligible to receive NBRC funds. To be considered, the Significant Benefit Waiver request must:
- **Be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**
- **Include a fully executed waiver request**
- **Include narrative and supporting documents** showing clear and convincing evidence of a project's economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties
- **Include description of costs and activities** that will take place in distressed counties, transitional counties, attainment counties, or outside the NBRC service area. This information will be used in the waiver review process to determine the eligible reimbursement/match ratio.

- **Be approved by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor's Alternates of the four NBRC States**

See **Appendix E** for Significant Benefit Waiver details and affidavit. Any applicant or co-applicant that is required to submit a Significant Benefit Waiver and **does not** submit the required waiver request and required documentation will have their pre-application marked as **ineligible for further review**.

The match ratio for projects with an approved Significant Benefit Waiver is based on the amount of funds invested in distressed or transitional counties.
- A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds invested in a distressed county is eligible for the 80% reimbursement, **20% match ratio**.
- A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds invested in a transitional county is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, **50% match ratio**.
- A project with more than 50% of requested NBRC funds being invested in both distressed and transitional counties is eligible for an **averaged match ratio**.
- A project with more than 50% of requested funds invested in an Attainment County, outside of an Areas of Isolated Distress is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, **50% match ratio**.
- If more than 50% of requested funds being used by the applicant/co-applicant entity to support administration of the project outside of a distressed or transitional county, the project is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, **50% match ratio**.

SECTION B. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND INELIGIBILITY

I.   ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The NBRC Economic and Infrastructure funding is available to:
- **State governments** of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- **Local governments** (village, town, city, and county)
- **Secondary and career technical centers**
- **Other political subdivisions of States** (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- **Non-profit entities** that are designated 501(c) and exempt from taxation under 501(a). Non-profit entities must be able to demonstrate they have established operations in a member state, and they have federal grant experience related to economic development.
- **Federally recognized Indian Tribes** (2 CFR § 200.54 Indian tribe) (or "federally recognized Indian tribe"). See annually published **Bureau of Indian Affairs** list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services

II.   INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Ineligible applicants include for-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c) organization under 40 U.S.C. §15101(c). Entities that are normally eligible but have an unsatisfactory federal or state funding history are also not eligible. A non-profit entity identified by a state that does not have a federally recognized 501(c) status is also not eligible.

III. INELIGIBLE PURPOSES

- No pass-through funding will be awarded. Eligible entities cannot act as channels for ineligible entities like private businesses or those not listed as Co-Applicants. Property purchased with NBRC funding cannot, in turn, be sold or donated to the private entity beneficiary.
- No financial assistance will be authorized to assist any relocation from one area of the region to another.
- NBRC investment funds cannot be used to "supplant" existing federal programs.
- Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants when authorized by those other agencies, but only up to 80% of the total project cost. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See Section D Part III. Federal Funding Ceiling.
- Projects that promote unfair competition between businesses with the same immediate service area are ineligible.
- Project activities and costs in conflict with Federal Executive Orders.

IV. ELIGIBLE COSTS

After* receiving a Notice to Proceed from NBRC, Catalyst Program funds may be used for:
- Reasonable fees to contractors and consultants (but not any fee or profit to the recipient or sub-recipient)
- Construction and pre-construction costs such as engineering
- Costs for bid, performance, or payment bonds
- Indirect costs for work performed by the recipient's staff. Indirect cost must be documented by a Federal Cognizant Agent or an entity acting on their behalf and documented by a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, submitted with the application. If you do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate (like many non-profits), the de minimis rate of 15% can be used as the indirect cost rate for the application.
- Costs outlined in the Federal Cost Principles (Uniform Guidance 2CFR 200).
- All project-related costs must be included in the detailed project budget (SF-424cbw)

  *Procurement: Funds committed prior to NBRC issuance of a project Notice to Proceed will not be eligible for reimbursement and cannot count toward match and cost share. Contracts executed or funds committed prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed will need to be re-bid in accordance with federal procurement requirements.

V.   INELIGIBLE COSTS

• Application preparation
• Food and beverages*
• Meals and lodging
• Alcohol
• Entertainment
• Appraisals of property to be purchased or used as match
• Allowance or payment of debts
• Maintenance, including routine, deferred, and short-term operational needs
• Any costs committed or spent before receiving a Notice to Proceed from NBRC. This includes NBRC award funds, and any funds documented as match for the project. Contracts executed or funds committed prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed will need to be re-bid in accordance with federal procurement requirements
• Project costs for program participants in conflict with allowances under 2 CFR 200.1 and 2 CFR 200.456
• Project activities and costs in conflict with Federal Executive Orders.

*NBRC will only cover the cost of food and beverages when being purchased for the express purpose of a conference or forum held in support of the project and is clearly outlined in the project budget. NBRC will not cover the costs of alcoholic beverages, or tips associated with the purchase of food or beverages.

VI.   NBRC PRIOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

An applicant or co-applicant with an open NBRC award under any NBRC program is not eligible for additional NBRC funding until the current project has both requested reimbursement for 75% or more of the award funds and demonstrated that 75% or more of the cost share has been spent **by February 1, 2025 [Spring round] or August 1, 2025 [Fall round]**.

If the 75% expenditure requirement has not been met, the entity can apply for a waiver. To be eligible for additional NBRC funding, the 75% Prior Award Expenditure Waiver request must:

• **Be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**
• **Include a fully executed Affidavit**
• **Include supporting narrative and documentation describing** the current status of the open project, delays encountered (if applicable), expected completion date of the previous NBRC award(s), capacity to complete previous award(s) and take on a new project.
• **Include supporting narrative for** the economic impacts of the proposed new project and how a delay in applying for funding will be a detriment. Economic

impact support documentation should include specific information and not be speculative.

- **Be approved by NBRC and the State(s) where the prior award(s) were made.**

Any applicant or co-applicant with an open award that does not meet the 75% expenditure requirement **and** does not submit the required 75% Expenditure Waiver request will have their pre-application marked as **ineligible for further review**. See **Appendix D** of this manual for the 75% expenditure requirement and waiver policy, including the documentation needed to support the waiver request.

SECTION C. PROGRAM FUNDING CATEGORIES

Projects with a primary purpose to support the following categories are considered eligible activities for Catalyst Program investments under 40 UC Subtitle V. The following definitions and examples should be used to support project development and to determine project classification.

I. INFRASTRUCTURE

Catalyst Program funding will be used to support the community and economic revitalization of Northern Border communities within member states by investing in projects that modernize public infrastructure. All projects classified as infrastructure must focus on construction in support of infrastructure facilities, systems, and structures that are open to the general public for use, support day-to-day activities of a modern economy, and enhance the region's standard of living. Grant recipients must maintain ownership/control over all investments made with NBRC funds, ownership of physical equipment and/or structures may not transfer to any other entity, unless fully depreciated.

Congress defines public infrastructure projects in NBRC's authorizing language as "transportation", "basic public," "telecommunications," and "energy" and requires NBRC to award 40% of all funds to public infrastructure projects. These infrastructure categories are further described below. Projects focused on planning and design for an infrastructure project should be classified as a non-infrastructure project in the Infrastructure Feasibility category. Projects with a renewable energy component will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consistency with the Executive Order Unleashing American Energy.

Transportation Infrastructure
Construction, alteration, or repair of physical transport facilities, systems and structures, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for transporting from one point to another, that:
- are open to the general public for use,

- facilitate reliable movement of people and goods, and
- influence local and regional economies.

Transportation Infrastructure May Include: runways, taxiways, aircraft parking areas, passenger and cargo terminals, ground transportation interchanges, roads, bridges, tunnels, sidewalks, bike paths, bike lanes, bus stations, parking, refueling depots, freight and passenger rail lines or tracks, rail yards, railway stations, special rail systems such as trams and light rail, canals, seaports, harbors, waterways, cargo and ferry terminals, commercial wharves, docking areas, and port services. Transportation infrastructure projects that can incorporate the use of innovative wood products should consider NBRC's <u>Timber for Transit Program</u>.

Examples of NBRC Funded Transportation Infrastructure Projects:
Air transportation infrastructure
- Expanding airport terminals to serve growing demand in rural communities and meet energy efficiency and ADA-compliance goals.
- Installation of an electric aircraft charger at a rural regional airport.

Road transportation infrastructure
- Upgrading a critical road segment to improve reliability and transport of local goods during high tides and flooding events.

Rail transportation infrastructure
- Rehabilitating an inactive section of industrial track and bridge to restore reliable, direct rail service to a paper mill and allow for further industrial development of industrial parcels.

Higher Maximum - Transportation and Basic Public Infrastructure:
- Improvements to sections of two streets include sewer lines, in-ground storm drains and catch basins, sidewalks, curbing, pedestrian crossings.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed transportation infrastructure investments will increase economic mobility within a community or increase access to resources and economic opportunity for rural and underserved communities. Examples include access to food assistance programs, child and healthcare facilities, affordable and workforce housing, or workforce development resources. Please also demonstrate how the project helps the community in becoming more prepared for extreme weather and disasters.

Basic Public Infrastructure
Construction, alteration or repair of assets, facilities, systems and structures that are:
- open to the general public for use,
- crucial to the functioning of an economy, and
- provide the foundation for economic growth in the community and region.

Basic Public Infrastructure May Include: Drinking water and wastewater systems including collection and distribution systems, treatment plants and other infrastructure that collects, treats and delivers drinking water and wastewater; flood control systems such as water retention, slow flow, and diversion strategies. Solid waste to include recycling, composting, disposal, and waste-to-energy via incineration; Heat generation systems including cogeneration, biomass, geothermal heating, heat pumps, and central solar heating; Childcare facilities; Healthcare facilities; Outdoor recreation trails and facilities that demonstrate increased health and social benefits, support resident attraction and retention goals and increase sustainable outdoor recreation tourism as part of a coordinated effort (In measuring eligibility of outdoor recreation infrastructure, NBRC defines these projects as recreational activities undertaken for pleasure that generally involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments outdoors.); Public meeting spaces and facilities designed and maintained to increase community connectedness, strengthen the social fabric of the community, and meet the general basic public infrastructure requirements.

Examples of NBRC Funded Basic Public Infrastructure Projects:
Critical infrastructure systems
- Expanding access to public water and wastewater services to revitalize underutilized commercial or industrial facilities.
- Replacing water main pipe and constructing new water storage tank to improve water service reliability.

Infrastructure required to maintain public health and economic vitality:
- Replacing an outdated heating system with an energy efficient biomass boiler, boiler backup, and exterior wood chip silo at a health center complex.
- Renovating and/or constructing a facility for a health clinic and expanding capacity for specialized facilities such as a negative pressure isolation wing.

Infrastructure focused on community economic resilience projects that increase community connectedness:
- Resurfacing trails, improving trailhead parking areas, and establishing miles of new mountain bike trails.
- Renovating an underutilized historic building on Main Street for a new cultural arts center and theater.

Higher Maximum - Infrastructure with multiple jurisdictions:
- Constructing childcare facilities in multiple jurisdictions to increase availability of childcare in rural communities.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed basic public infrastructure investments will modernize and expand access to basic public systems and services, promote economic growth, or reduce inequalities for rural and underserved communities. Examples include access to safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater services, child and healthcare facilities, affordable and workforce housing, outdoor recreation assets, and

community centers. Please also demonstrate how the project helps the community in becoming more prepared for extreme weather and disasters. Municipal offices as standalone projects are not eligible. Applications related to public meeting spaces must clearly identify how a project is designed to foster community connectedness and strengthen the social fabric of the community or region.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

Construction, alteration, or repair to the systems, networks and components that:
- aid in the transmission of information or signals,
- are crucial to running a modern, industrialized economy, and
- provide the foundation for communication services.

Telecommunications Infrastructure May Include: Passive infrastructure or non-electronic infrastructure such as lines, equipment, apparatus, towers, and antennas; cyber infrastructure such as routing and switching software, operational support systems; Wired, wireless, and hybrid network infrastructure such as network nodes, network services, telecom services, and satellite systems; Communication networks in support of remote outdoor recreation search and rescue operations and capabilities.

Examples of NBRC Funded Telecommunications Infrastructure Projects:
Broadband, transmission systems, networks and components:
- Replacing 40-year-old submarine electric cable with larger, greater capacity submarine cable combined with high-speed broadband fiber optic cable to provide reliable power and high-speed internet to all households and businesses in rural island community.
- Constructing new miles of fiber-optic network that will serve as a middle mile network connecting and integrating into the existing fiber networks.
- Public-private partnership to construct a fiber optic broadband network providing access for every household and business in the community to fast, reliable and affordable Internet service.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed telecommunications infrastructure investments will increase economic mobility within a community, increase access to reliable and affordable telecommunications services, provide local businesses and entrepreneurs with access to the digital marketplace, facilitate online learning and workforce development, and connect communities. and promote economic opportunity for rural and underserved communities. For the purposes of this program, awards to public safety entities will only be made where the investments primary use of equipment and infrastructure is to support outdoor recreation by increasing the confidence of potential user groups that they will have access to communications networks or where projects seek to minimize or improve the role for search and rescue operations due to the increase in outdoor recreation in remote areas of the four states. Public safety facilities and communications equipment as standalone projects are not eligible. Applications related to public safety must clearly demonstrate an impact to matters that are within the scope of the NBRC program.

Infrastructure Higher Maximum Award Qualifications

Projects classified as construction in support of infrastructure may be eligible for up to an additional $2,000,000 in funding (for a total maximum award of $3,000,000), which will be determined in the pre-application review process conducted by NBRC and the members states. To be eligible for the higher maximum, the project must meet one of the following criteria:

1. Construction takes place in two or more eligible communities/counties/states. To meet this criterion, the construction of an infrastructure category will need to physically occur in 2 or more eligible communities, counties, or states. The purpose of this criteria is to allow for regional approaches to infrastructure and efficiencies gained from constructing a multi-jurisdiction project at the same time. Examples include but are not limited to a wastewater treatment project that connects a new community to an existing facility, pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure that connects two village centers, or construction of childcare centers in multiple towns. **OR**

2. Construction involves two or more infrastructure categories (basic public, transportation, or telecommunications). To meet this criterion, the project will need to demonstrate construction of infrastructure in two categories as part of the same project. The purpose of this criteria is to allow for efficiencies gained from pairing construction projects in the same community and to encourage creative infrastructure projects. Examples include but are not limited to sidewalk and road construction paired with sewer or water upgrades, and installation of water and telecommunications infrastructure as part of an industrial park development. Two or more types of basic public infrastructure do not meet the criteria for the higher maximum award size.

These criteria will not be satisfied by proposing two or more distinct projects that are not inherently connected in attempt to be deemed eligible for the higher funding threshold.

II.   NON-INFRASTRUCTURE

Non-infrastructure is defined as the systems, services, programs and facilities that support the foundation for economic activity, ensure people can participate in productive economic activities, and enhance the region's standard of living. Projects may include construction activities. Eligible non-infrastructure categories are described below. Any applicant interested in applying for revolving loan funds should read the Appendix of this Program Manual to understand the uses and limitations of any revolving loan fund set up through NBRC.

Feasibility Projects (Maximum award size of $100,000)
Planning, design and/or feasibility projects that:
- align with an NBRC infrastructure category
- demonstrate community support and engagement
- result in deliverables that support the implementation of an infrastructure project

Feasibility Projects May Include: Comprehensive, long-range plan for infrastructure; Architectural and engineering designs, cost analyses, permitting, and regulatory approval necessary for the implementation of infrastructure projects; Planning activities in alignment with state and regional priorities in addressing needed infrastructure improvements and/or new construction; Assessment of environmental impacts and/or historic preservation studies necessary to be completed as a component to the project satisfying NEPA requirements. Feasibility projects have a maximum award size of $100,000.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate alignment with infrastructure categories.

Workforce Development
Systems, services, programs and facilities that support:
- job training and employment-related education,
- workforce attraction and retention and
- meet the current and future needs of the region's employers

Eligible Workforce Development Projects May Include: Job skills training, skills development, virtual or distance learning for job training, employment-related education for specific employer to fill immediate job openings or retain current jobs, workforce recruitment and/or training supporting industries critical to the state's economic strategies, development of and/or expansion of existing programs to meet the needs of identified employers.

Workforce training shall be delivered using existing public educational facilities (EPEFs) located in the region. However, if the applicant demonstrates (1) sufficient information demonstrating an EPEF's inability (e.g., insufficient capacity, curriculum, and/or accessibility) to satisfy the defined need, and the applicant (2) demonstrates a compelling need to use a non-EPEF for such training, then a project may be eligible.

Ineligible Workforce Development projects include the following:

- Those designed to direct general operating support for educational institutions
- Early education, childcare and related programs
- Programs/trainings without clear connection to job creation/retention
- Development or expansion of raining activities that do not clearly identify employers

Examples of NBRC Funded Workforce Development Projects:
Job training and employment-related education:
- Workforce initiative to connect people with career training and employment, test private sector transportation solutions, create and implement a training program for employers to address recruitment, and hiring and retention best practices for a culturally diverse workforce.

- Digital literacy and computer skills learning for adult learners to develop workforce skills that will increase employability of participants who will be better qualified.
- Comprehensive welding training program to train and prepare individuals to enter the workforce as a welder. Trainees will have the skills required to obtain a welding job at regional manufacturing operations. Trained welders will support both the short and long-term workforce needs of regional manufacturers.

Workforce attraction and retention:
- Expand workforce recruitment and retention activities for professionals and paraprofessionals to fill vacancies in the region and ensure service continuity and quality of care.
- Plan to address workforce housing deficiencies in the region including inventory of the available area median income housing and rental units, economic analysis of unmet housing needs, strategy for addressing identified issues.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed workforce development investments will expand access to training and job-related education, improve employers access to a qualified workforce, attract and retain workers for rural and underserved communities, or expand access to affordable and workforce housing to meet employer needs. Applicants should document and describe specific employer needs and immediate job openings relevant to project focus.

Business Development
Systems, services, programs and facilities that
- create, retain or expand businesses,
- cultivate partnerships and opportunities for long-term growth and development of businesses or
- accelerate the successful development of start-up and early-stage companies

Business Development Projects May Include: entrepreneurship, start-up and expansion of business incubators or industrial parks, community marketing and advertising initiatives, assistance for business growth and expansion, increased productivity and innovation, entrepreneur training, capitalization of revolving loan funds that will make loans for start-ups.

Examples of NBRC Funded Business Development Projects:
Create, retain or expand businesses:
- Workforce and business development program as part of a maker space venue for entrepreneurs to launch a business with low overhead, for people whose careers were disrupted by COVID to retain, for works to up-skill in pursuit of higher-paying roles, and for people who were formerly incarcerated or who are in recovery to gain vital employability and technical skills.

Cultivate partnerships and opportunities for long-term growth and development of businesses:

- Engage and support commercial fishers in coastal communities to address income uncertainty and industry volatility through diversification, business coaching, training, technical assistance, financial literacy education and resources, connection to career opportunities, and connection to recovery and behavioral health resources.
- Technical assistance for community resiliency planning, growth strategies for second stage businesses, and access to capital/investments.
- Capacity to convene and support formal working groups focused on regional challenges including housing, childcare and food systems, a statewide entrepreneur support organization network, and collaborative information sharing among the networks.

Accelerate the successful development of start-up and early-stage companies:

- Construct center for entrepreneurship to provide area small business with open coworking, office/desk space, meeting rooms, training, programming and technical assistance.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed business development investments will create or retain jobs, create economic and business growth opportunities in rural and underserved communities, or use of innovation and technology to create conditions for economic and business growth. Funding of start-up projects, such as business incubators or industrial parks, must have committed business tenants. Expansion of existing business incubators and industrial parks are also allowed. Business Incubation shall mean a business support process that accelerates the successful development of start-up and early-stage companies by providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services.

Basic Healthcare

Systems, services, programs and facilities that

- enhance the standards of well-being with a focus on needs of medically underserved communities,
- solve community health problems or
- provide accessible, cost-effective and efficient approaches *to enhance* physical and mental health

Basic Healthcare Projects May Include: Innovative approaches to improving both emergent and ongoing chronic challenges in public health; technological and facility improvements to non-profit medical facilities such as hospitals, clinics, community health and mental health centers, public health centers, rehabilitation facilities, etc.; health education services and those actively addressing health inequities and social drivers of health; technical assistance to healthcare facilities and networks; programs that improve the healthcare workforce in rural areas through recruitment, training and advancement opportunities; health-related education services; initiatives that expand

healthcare services in traditional clinic settings as well as non-traditional healthcare settings; capacity to deliver telehealth services; up-to-date data and information systems; developing community health policies and plans; link people to needed personal health care services; research for innovative solutions to solve community health problems; improve nutrition and food security; treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder; incorporating preventative health practices that include improving access to health and wellness activities, nutrition and food security. Operating costs of facilities are ineligible. Basic healthcare projects that include construction of, or structural improvements to, non-profit medical facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, community health and mental health centers, public health centers, rehabilitation facilities, etc., with a focus on medically underserved areas will be classified as Basic Public Infrastructure.

Examples of NBRC Funded Basic Healthcare Projects:
- Renovation of foodbank facility to increase fresh food storage capacity and to improve its warehouse racking layout and office and volunteer space.
- Acquisition of a grocery store for ownership and operation as a non-profit social grocery for the purposes of retaining jobs, saving a critical Main Street business and increasing food security to vulnerable populations.
- Create a healthcare-related simulation lab to provide entry-level training and upskilling education for healthcare workers. The lab will allow learners to earn stackable credentials, practicing hands-on skills in a controlled environment with instructor oversight.
- Redevelopment and renovation of facilities to expand space and organizational capacity to deliver health, nutrition, and recreational programs.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed healthcare investments will ensure people can participate in productive economic activities, solve a recognized community or regional health problem, prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health including disease prevention and management, enhance nutrition and food security, or meet local and regional demands for healthcare services with a focus on medically underserved areas. Applicants should document contributions of basic healthcare projects to the economy including expanding access to a healthy workforce and jobs created or retained in the healthcare sector. Applicants should document benefits of healthcare projects on issues of accessibility and admittance access.

Resource Conservation, Tourism, Recreation
Systems, services, programs, facilities, easement and land purchases that
- promote resource conservation, tourism, or recreation as part of an asset-based economic development approach,
- improves the overall quality of life for individuals that live, work and recreate in the region
- are consistent with local, state or regional economic development goals

Resource Conservation, Tourism and Recreation Projects May Include: access to existing recreation trail networks including access roads, parking, bridges and signage; safe places to be active; foster an awareness of the benefits of physical activity; preservation of open space for recreation; programs that prepare individuals to plan, develop, and manage tourism in a natural resource setting, with an emphasis on applying environmentally sound, culturally sensitive, and economically sustainable principles; projects in support of sustainable tourism that can potentially mitigate the harmful impacts of visitation to natural areas while supporting the conservation of the ecosystem; building capacity of communities to leverage natural, socio-cultural, and economic advantages to create sustained economic growth;
Outdoor recreation projects that include construction of, or structural improvements to, assets, facilities, systems and structures for recreation trails and are open to the general public are classified as Basic Public Infrastructure.

Examples of NBRC Funded Resource Conservation, Tourism and Recreation Projects:
- Trail hubs that support access to existing trails, such as rail trails, hiking and biking trails, trail-related services, such as bike racks, bike repair stations, and trailside amenities such as ADA compliant restrooms, information kiosks, views, tables, benches, food services, and artwork.
- Planning and design for multi-use trail networks that serve as connectors between downtowns and other destinations, including planning for new networks and improvement plans for existing trails.   *Construction of trails would be classified as outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- Construction of boat ramp and accessible education pier to improve functionality and safety, expand access and foster educational and recreational opportunities.
- Rehabilitation of covered bridge to connect recreational trails and enhance attraction for visitors.
- Creation of riverfront park.
- Tourism hub project to blend existing green space, park amenities, and recreation infrastructure with a seasonal retail market incubator space, pop up shops, installation of power, improvement of sidewalks and addition of crosswalk for safer pedestrian crossing. This project will allow for the tribal businesses and artisans to participate in the retail space created by the pop-up shops and farmers' market.
- Purchase of equipment to support outdoor recreation and sustain existing businesses and encourage tourism including purchase of snowmobile, cross country ski and winter biking trail grooming equipment or snowmaking equipment.
- Purchase and installation of stage sound equipment, rigging and lighting to support addition of live productions in downtown venue to attract visitors and residents for performances.

Demonstrating Program Alignment: Applicants should demonstrate through reports, data and letters of support how proposed resource conservation, tourism and recreation investments will ensure safe access to places to be active and recreation infrastructure,

leverage a community's natural environmental and cultural assets for long-term economic growth, or improves the quality of life of individuals that live, work, and recreate in the region with a focus on rural and underserved communities. Applicants should document project contributions to local, regional or state economy including potential for creating new jobs. While easements and land purchases are eligible under the federal criteria, an economic development case needs to be made to substantiate the use of funds. All projects must also be consistent with the economic development goals of the region.

SECTION D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

I.   MATCH AND COST SHARE

Match is the minimum amount of funds or contributions needed from other sources to complete the NBRC-funded project. **Cost share** is the total amount of all other funds needed to complete the project.

To calculate the required match, multiply the NBRC award amount by the designated match ratio for the project location. See Section V (above) of this manual and the Annual Distress Criteria to determine the applicable match ratio for your project. Additional details on match and examples are available in the Catalyst FAQ.

The recipient will be required to document that funds necessary to complete the project are committed prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed.

Match and cost share identified in an application must be committed within one year of grant award. This date allows for extraordinary situations that may occur. If an applicant will have difficulty securing all match and cost share within one year of the award date, the applicant should consider postponing the application until a later date.

With the following qualifications and exceptions, matching or cost sharing requirements may be satisfied by any of the following:

- **Applicant is providing cost share:** Letter from the appropriate authority stating that the entity will provide the cost share. Letter is required to have the following elements:
  1. state the amount of the commitment;
  2. the dates the commitment will cover, consistent with the period of performance;
  3. the funds are for the purpose outlined in the application;
  4. document hours dedicated to project as differentiated from their "normal employment" responsibilities.

  If the funds will be used for paying staff within the applicant's organization, the letter should also state the following:

1. the # of hours staff are anticipated for work on the project;
2. the pay of those staff (hourly rate);
3. and the indirect cost rate that will be used (if applicable).

- **Municipal lending:** NBRC requires proof of authorization to spend. This may be different for different states, and may take the form of city council approval, Town or City manager approval, or demonstration of town meeting approval. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they have the appropriate authority to loan/bond funds for the project, but there must be some sort of authorization documented.

- **Commitment from project partner:** A commitment letter is required to have the following elements:
1. state the amount of the commitment;
2. the date that the award was made;
3. the purpose of the funds must match the scope outlined in the application.

  A letter of submission, or status notification of 'application received' or 'pending' is NOT a letter of commitment.

- **Volunteer Services:** Provide a written plan of how the volunteer donation amount will be calculated. (Ex: 4 meetings a year, taking place quarterly that are expected to last 1.5 hours and 5 volunteers will participate. 4X1.5X5 = 30 hours x 24.14 = $723.60.) The volunteer rate may be used as cost share and should be consistent with the national average www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time, or consist of the professional fee charged in any situation. Volunteers may not be: a) counted for the same activity in a different project (counted twice), or b) be federal employees. Additionally, their time must be recorded and be submitted as an invoice. You may include any Indirect Cost Rate in addition to the volunteer rate. Note: the rate that is calculated at the time of the grant agreement will be the rate for the remaining project period until project completion. While the national rates may fluctuate, it is not feasible to renegotiate these rates during the project period. In-kind services in the form of volunteers on a construction site are highly discouraged.

- **Municipal Force Accounts:** Applicants must document that they have experienced staff. Force account work is limited to work that the municipality can demonstrate is within the technical skill and managerial ability of the applicant and its forces. The applicant must provide an accounting of time and costs and provide appropriate documentation of indirect costs, if being used. Both salaries of staff and cost of mobilization and fees for vehicles may be counted as cost share when those costs are appropriately documented.

- **Land or other donated real property or equipment:** Land: A Letter of Intent from the current property owner stating that they will provide the land to the project stating the sale and 'appraised' value of the land, the anticipated date of

transaction, and identification of the property. Even if the property is being donated, a professional appraisal is required. A municipal assessment is NOT an appraisal. An appraisal of the property must have been completed within the past 18 months, or an appraisal must be made prior to issuing a Notice to Proceed if the project is being donated. Equipment: A letter from the entity that is donating equipment must provide a letter with the following elements: 1. Date that the equipment will be transferred to the grantee; 2. market value of the equipment; 3. a description of the equipment, and 4. A statement that the donation is for the purpose of the project as detailed in the grant agreement. (2 CFR 200.306(i)(1) does not address the timing of the donation of property.)

Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants where authorized for up to 80% of the total project cost. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See Section D Part III. Federal Funding Ceiling.

Neither costs, nor the value of third-party in-kind contributions, may count towards satisfying a cost sharing requirement of a grant agreement if they have been or will be counted towards satisfying a cost sharing requirement of another Federal grant agreement, a federal procurement contract, or any other award of Federal funds in another project.

Costs and third-party in-kind contributions counting towards satisfying a cost-sharing requirement must be verifiable from the records of the applicant. These records must show how the value placed on third party in-kind contributions was derived. To the extent feasible, volunteer services will be supported by the same methods that the organization uses to support the allocability of regular personnel costs.

It is required to treat **program income** under the deductive method as outlined in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(1). This means that if program income is received it will reduce the NBRC award amount. Program income can be treated under the additive alternate contained in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(2) or the cost share alternative in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(3) if applicant has received approval from NBRC. This does not apply to Revolving Loan Fund projects. See the Appendix of this manual for how program income is treated under a RLF project.

IMPORTANT BUDGET PLANNING CONSIDERATION: Matching funds for a project must be expended alongside NBRC funding according to the designated reimbursement rate (usually 80% or 50% depending on the project location and match rate).

II.   MULTI-STATE PROJECTS

Multi-state projects are eligible to apply for NBRC funding, however these projects do require review and approval from each state the project is located in. Applications that cover multiple states should contact the state program managers from each state the proposed project is located in.

Within the pre-application and application documents, the financial request for each state involved in the application must be provided. If yours is a multi-state or multi-county application, please make sure to include within your application a comprehensive list of the counties and states in which the project will occur. If the project is multi-state, each state will review applications independently. It is possible to be funded in one state and not another.

III.   FEDERAL FUNDING CEILING

Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants where authorized for up to 80% of the total project cost, so as not to exceed the maximum federal contribution allowed as outlined in _40 U.S.C. Subtitle V §15506_: _Supplements to Federal grant programs_.

NBRC funds can however be used to satisfy _the non-federal cost sharing or match requirements_ for a project under another Federal grant program for which NBRC is not the sole or primary funding source as outlined in 40 USC 15507. _In these instances, NBRC funds would not count towards the federal share of the total project cost._

It is equally important for applicants to check with other federal sources, as each federal agency may have its own restrictions. See 40 USC §15506(e).

SECTION E. PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES AND SCORING

I.   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 economic development strategies. NBRC investment priorities include:

1. Projects that directly benefit communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments will be prioritized. The focus is on rural communities with fewer than 5,000 people and underserved communities. NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 USC 15702, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Communities that suffer from a combination of socioeconomic and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources.

2. Projects that demonstrate how they meet multiple needs within Catalyst project categories and are designed to create efficiencies will be prioritized.

3. Projects that adapt to changing conditions and demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and recover from extreme weather will be prioritized.

II. PROGRAM SCORING

NBRC reviews and scores project proposals based on 6 categories: Alignment with Investment Goals and Program Priorities, Project Budget, Approach and Methodology, Economic Impacts, Project Readiness, and Capacity and Qualifications. The NBRC can award up to a total of 50 points out of the available 100 points based on the following criteria:

Table 5. NBRC's Catalyst Program Scoring Criteria	
NBRC Scoring Category	**NBRC Review Criteria**
1. Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities *Maximum 15 Points*	• Alignment with the NBRC strategic investment goals and program priorities. • Proposals will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant 2025 Agency Investment Priorities.
2. Project Budget *Maximum 10 points*	• Clear, reasonable, and detailed budgets and cost estimates. • Proposals that clearly demonstrate how requested funds will be used will receive a higher score.
3. Approach and Methodology *Maximum 5 points*	• Clear and detailed description of the steps to complete the project and achieve desired results within the project period. • Relevance to regional, state, or local planning efforts as well as the financial sustainability of the project. • Proposals that include a detailed milestone schedule or work plan will receive a higher score.
4. Economic Impacts *Maximum 10 points*	• Expected economic impacts including effects on jobs and wages and the scale of impact on the community, county or region. • Economic impacts should be consistent and supported by feasibility studies, local, state, or regional data. Narratives and/or letters of support. from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts are encouraged. • Proposals of greater immediacy and that align with the spirit of the Catalyst Program's intent to stimulate

	economic growth and improve rural economic vitality will receive a higher score.
5. **Project Readiness** *Maximum 5 points*	• Proposals will be reviewed for completeness, feasible timelines that account for required environmental review, and demonstrate how far along in the project is in the planning and design process. • Proposals that demonstrate the proposed work can be completed within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of the award date will receive a higher score.
6. **Capacity and Qualifications** *Maximum 5 points*	• Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements. • Proposals that describe key partnerships in place to support project implementation and can demonstrate early engagement with Local Development Districts will receive a higher score.

The remaining 50 points will be awarded by the state in which the project is proposed. States use a similar set of review criteria with an emphasis on state economic development and infrastructure priorities. Please review the scoring matrix for NBRC and the state specific scoring for each State.

Projects that will occur in multiple states are strongly encouraged to communicate about their project with the State Program Manager in each state, to understand how their project may or may not align with state priorities.

NBRC and the States will consider a project's alignment with the funding priorities for these program dollars when both issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase and in scoring projects at the application phase.

When issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase, NBRC and the States will also consider the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment as well as the benefits provided to the broader community and region.

When selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase NBRC and the States will also consider a balanced geographic distribution of investments as well as a community or regionally supported need for the project.

III.   PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA

NBRC and each State scores all eligible applications received independently using the scoring criteria provided within **Appendix K** of this manual. **The maximum point value is 100.**

NBRC reviews projects and determines eligibility of the applicant, co-applicant and use of funds. NBRC reviews and scores projects for a maximum of 50 points based on NBRC Agency Scoring Criteria.

Member states review and score project proposals based on their state specific program scoring criteria and economic development priorities for a maximum of 50 points.

Multi-state projects will be reviewed and scored independently by each state the project will take place in. A multi-state application may be awarded in one state and not in another.

Final decisions about Catalyst Program funding awards are approved jointly between the Federal Co-Chair and the Governors' Alternates.

PART II. APPLYING FOR NBRC FUNDS

All applicants are now required to submit their pre-application and application through NBRC's [web-based Grants Management System](). Paper and e-mailed submissions will not be considered for funding.

SECTION A. REGISTRATION

The first step in preparing for a submission through NBRC's grants management system (GMS) is to register your organization. Registration can be done at any time. We have prepared guidance documents and resources to help you complete this process. Please visit the **[NBRC Resources page]()** where you will find the ***[Grants Management System – Registration Guidance Document]()*** and two recorded videos specifically focused on the Registration process.

You will need the following information on hand to successfully complete your registration:
- Your Employer Identification Number (EIN);
- Your Unique Entity Identifier UEI) number. You can obtain a UEI for free by registering with **[SAM.gov]()**;
- The County where your entity is organized to do business;
- The name and contact information of your Authorized Official (limited to one individual). The **Authorized Official** is the executive that has been granted permission to sign all NBRC investment documents that bind the applicant. When submitting an application, you will be required to submit an official resolution from the applicant's legal authority documenting the name and title of the person

authorized to act on behalf of the entity. **Only Authorized Officials may sign NBRC documents that bind the applicant, including Registering the applicant in the GMS.**

- The name and contact information of 1 other individual authorized to work on your pre-application and application. There is a limit of 2 project contacts. Associating an LDD Contact does not count toward the project contact total.

After you submit your registration, NBRC will review it for completeness and eligibility. This process may take 1 to 2 business days. NBRC will either Approve or Reject the registration. If approved, the organization's Authorized Official will get an email about the approval and another email to set up their account's username and password. If rejected, the organization's Authorized Official will receive an explanation.

SECTION B. PRE-APPLICATION

A pre-application is **required** for the CATALYST PROGRAM. **Pre-applications must be submitted before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**

- Pre-applications must be submitted using the NBRC Grants Management System. Detailed instructions are available on the NBRC website in the ***Pre-application Guidance Document*** on the **Resources** page.
- Applicants must register for an account with the NBRC Grants Management System **before** submitting a pre-application. See Section A. Registration above for details.
- Many resources are available on the **Resources** page of the NBRC website to help you with your pre-application. Click on "**Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents**" to find a library of helpful resources and forms.
- All waiver requests **must** be submitted with the pre-application. See the **Forms and Files Tab** section for details.
  - The pre-application will be marked as ineligible if a **75% Expenditure Waiver** and/or a **Significant Benefit Waiver** is required and NOT submitted.
  - An LDD Waiver **must** be requested and submitted with the pre-application. If the waiver is not submitted with the pre-application and the project is invited to the application phase, LDD grant administration services will be required, and the costs must be included in the project budget submitted with the application.

EARLY PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:
Before the GMS opens for pre-application submissions, applicants can start preparing their pre-applications. Some helpful first steps include:
- Review program materials, focusing on eligibility and funding priorities for this program.
- Watch a recorded Program Information Session. For details, visit https://www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst.

- Contact NBRC with questions regarding eligibility and NBRC funding priorities (found in Part I Section E of this manual).
- Discuss projects with your State Program Manager to ensure they align with the State's priorities (see Appendix K of this manual to review your states scoring criteria).
- Check eligibility requirements to see if your project needs a waiver with the pre-application. Waiver details are available in the Appendices of this Manual.
- Review NBRC's <u>NEPA page</u>. All applicants <u>must</u> include NEPA in their project budget and timeline, regardless of project type and other state or federal funder requirements.

PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT:
Detailed instructions for using the online GMS to submit a pre-application and two recorded videos are available on the NBRC website on the <u>Program Areas page</u>. Please review these instructions before starting your pre-application in the GMS. The information provided below is intended to supplement those resources.

After reviewing all support materials, you may want to write your narrative responses in a word processing document to then copy and paste into the GMS pre-application text boxes.

Here are some recommendations to ensure your pre-application is complete and competitive:
- **Project title** – Please give your project a unique title that provides a brief description of your project. Example: Smithville Wastewater Expansion Project
- **Co-applicant** – List any co-applicants that will play a role in the completion of your project. Co-applicants **must** meet all the same eligibility requirements as an applicant and must be included in your pre-application in order to directly benefit from NBRC funds without going through an open and competitive bid process. An entity that owns a property receiving the benefit of an NBRC investment must be included as a co-applicant.

Overview Tab - Project Information
Responses in this section should be concise but give enough information so that someone who is not familiar with your community, region, and organization will understand your project.

Competitive projects will show how they support NBRC and your State's funding priorities, what specific activities will be completed with NBRC funding, and the expected outcomes.

Each narrative text box has limited formatting, so keep your responses simple. Do not paste tables, bullets or text with extensive formatting into the text box. Do not attach lengthy reports to your pre-application, instead provide weblinks to studies and reports that support the need for your project. Please provide weblinks to studies and reports that support your project.

PROJECT ABSTRACT narrative guidance: The Project Abstract should explain the basic idea of the project and how it fits with the Catalyst Program. It should be no more than 2-3 paragraphs long and include the following information:

- **Primary purpose:** State the main goal, project location, beneficiaries, and expected economic impacts.
- **Funding Category:** List which NBRC Program Funding Category(ies) your project fits into and briefly explain why.
- **Higher Maximum Award Request (if applicable):** Describe how your project meets the criteria for the Higher Maximum Award size. List the multiple project categories or multiple locations that satisfy the NBRC criteria. Describe if you have discussed the higher maximum award request with the State Program Manager.
- **Project Scope:** Describe what planning has been done, if parts of the project are already underway, what will be done with NBRC funding, and the project's timeline.

PROJECT GOALS AND OUTCOMES narrative guidance: NBRC and State programs both place a strong emphasis on direct and indirect economic impacts of a project. The project goals and outcomes should clearly describe how the project meets an economic need or opportunity in the region, alleviates economic distress, and contributes to economic growth. The goals and outcomes narrative should be 1-2 paragraphs long and include the following information:

- Provide a robust but realistic description of the expected direct economic outcomes (e.g. impacts on jobs, employment, business opportunity, wage growth) of this project. Appendix G lists examples of Economic Outcomes and Outputs. Choose those that best apply to your project. Competitive proposals will include supporting documentation such as letters of support, relevant studies or plans that back up your claims.
- Describe how the project aligns with your State's economic development strategies and other community economic development plans.
- Describe the scale of expected *direct* economic impacts on the community, county, or region.
- Describe project sustainability including if and how the proposed work/program/infrastructure will be sustained beyond the life of the grant.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT narrative guidance: The Project Beneficiaries and Community Context narrative should be 1-2 paragraphs long and include the following information:

- Describe who will benefit from your project and why this project matters to the community, region and/or State. Describe benefits to underrepresented and/or underserved communities. Projects that articulate strategies to reach these communities, including making project activities fully accessible will receive a higher score. Letters of support or other documentation of community support that directly cites benefits to underrepresented communities will receive a higher score. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #1 and the state program scoring criteria.

STATEMENT OF NEED narrative guidance: The statement of need narrative should be 1-2 paragraphs and include the following information:

- Describe why the project is important, the challenge or problem the project seeks to address and how it relates to NBRC and State investment priorities.
- Describe the proposed solution and the opportunity gained by funding this project now and why NBRC funding is important for this project.

PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES narrative guidance: Refer to the NBRC Agency Investment Priorities, NBRC Scoring Criteria #1, and State Scoring Criteria in this Program User Manual to help you answer this section. The program investment priorities narrative should be 2-3 paragraphs long and include the following information:

- Describe how your project will address NBRC Agency Investment Priorities #2 and #3. Details and documentation regarding your project's alignment with NBRC Agency Investment Priority #1 should be described in the **Project Beneficiaries and Community Context** section.
- Describe how your project meets multiple needs and how those needs align with Catalyst project categories. If applicable, describe how the project is designed to create efficiencies.
- Describe how your project helps communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from extreme weather. For healthcare related projects, applicant demonstrates how the project strengthens its community's physical, behavioral and social health to withstand and adapt to current and projected public health emergencies. Projects that are not located in a FEMA Flood Hazard Zone or describe mitigation measures to protect from the 1-percent-annual-chance flood will receive a higher score. Highly competitive projects will include supporting documentation from reports, articles and letters of support.
- Describe and document how your project will address state priorities. If you're unsure about alignment with state priorities, consider connecting with your State Program Manager. NBRC recommends interested applicants in Maine, New York and Vermont complete the Project Interest Form before meeting with their State Program Manager. Interested applicants in New Hampshire are encouraged to sign up for the technical assistance program that is available in eligible New Hampshire counties and communities.

Have you previously received NBRC funds? If yes, please provide NBRC grant number. If you believe you have received an NBRC grant in the past, but are not sure of the NBRC grant number, please email admin@nbrc.gov and we will provide you with that information.

Does this project serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000? Please include a simple yes or no response. If yes, provide documentation (census data, municipal or planning reports, etc.) that your project is located within a community of <5,000 people. Proposals that do not include documentation will not receive points for this scoring category.

Does this project benefit an underserved community? NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 USC 15702, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Communities that suffer from a combination of socioeconomic and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources or conditions, such as sub-standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights concerns are communities which may be most applicable. See **Appendix H** for additional resources on identifying underserved communities in the NBRC region.

Please provide documentation only for the town(s) where NBRC funds will be spent or target population(s) to be served. You may also discuss the scale of the impact to the region or population to be impacted. Proposals that do not include documentation will not receive points for this scoring criteria. If applicable, provide documentation (census data, municipal or planning reports, etc.) that your project benefits an underserved community.

Overview Tab - Project Contacts
There is a limit of 2 project contacts for each application. One must be the Authorized Official with designated signing authority in the GMS and you may add one other project contact who will be responsible for working on your NBRC grant submission. Please include their contact information and role with the project.   Detailed instructions for *Adding Users in the GMS* is available on the **Resources Page**.

In addition to the 2 project contacts, you may also associate the contact from your Local Development District (LDD) as your "LDD Contact". Your LDD may be a resource for developing your proposal or able to connect you to technical assistance services. **Catalyst Program applicants will receive an additional point if they can show early outreach to their LDD**.

Locations Tab
List only the County(ies) and State(s) where project activities will occur. Do not include County(ies) and State(s) that may be impacted as a result of your project.

Budget Tab
All information provided within the Budget section should be consistent and align with information provided in the Overview section of your pre-application. NBRC has prepared a variety of supplemental resources to assist you with budget development and common budget related errors in the GMS, which are located on the **Resources page** of our website.

If you are invited to submit a full application, the information you provide in this section will carry over to your application. Budget details provided in your pre-application may be preliminary and based on the information available at the time. If you are invited to submit an application, you will need to update any budget details that have changed.

Budget Tab – Budget Periods Table

Use the Budget Periods table to map out expected project costs by category and funding source. These budget categories align with the SF-424cbw budget form which will be required for those invited to submit a full application.

Helpful Tips:
- Your Budget Periods table <u>must</u> include costs for NEPA and LDD grant administration if you are not requesting an LDD waiver. These must be included in the Consultants budget line. Note: LDDs are compensated for their grant administration services through a reimbursement process with the grantee. The grant administration fee for all NBRC awards of $400,000 or less is $8,000. The grant administration fee for all NBRC awards above $400,000 is based on the formula of 2% of the NBRC requested amount.
- The match must meet or exceed the minimum required match amount based on your project location. If you do not enter adequate match, you will receive an error message. Detailed online grants management system guidance is available to navigate error messages and submitting the pre-application.
- Identify how project costs will be allocated between the NBRC share and matching funds.
- Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants when authorized by those other agencies, but only up to 80% of the total project cost. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See Section D Part III. Federal Funding Ceiling.
- Information in this section must be consistent with information provided in the **Budget Narrative** and **Funding Sources Table**. <u>Use the "GMS helper" tool embedded in the SF-424cbw to ensure consistency across the Budget Periods Table, SF-424cbw detailed budget, and Funding Sources Table!</u>

Budget Tab - Budget Narrative
The Budget Narrative is used to describe and justify the costs listed in the Budget Periods table and should provide enough information to understand how NBRC funds will be spent. All expenses over $5,000 must be listed with a description of the cost and an explanation of how the cost was determined. Please clarify which parts of your budget are estimates, based on quotes or fixed price.

Budget Tab-Funding Sources Table
In the Funding Sources table you will list the source (name and federal or non-federal), type (loan, grant, other), amount, date of commitment or anticipated date of commitment, and status (secured/committed, pending/anticipated). Total amounts in this table must align with total amounts in the Budget Periods Table.

Helpful Tips:
- Do not enter funds requested from NBRC in this table.
- Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants when authorized by those other agencies, but only up to 80% of the total project cost. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See Section D Part III. Federal Funding Ceiling.

- NBRC funds may be used to match other federally funded projects (when both federal agencies allow).
- NBRC funds may not be used to "supplant" existing federal programs.

Forms & Files Tab

At the time of pre-application, there are three waiver documents to consider in the Forms and Files section. **If you intend to submit a waiver, it must be done during the pre-application phase.**

- **75% Prior Award Expenditure Waiver**: This waiver is applicable for those organizations that have an open NBRC grant with a remaining balance of more than 25% of the original grant award. See **Appendix D** for more details.
- **Significant Benefit Waiver:** This waiver is applicable in two instances which are described below. See **Appendix E** for more details.
  1. An exception exists for **projects** located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified "Isolated Areas of Distress" that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
  2. An exception exists for **applicants or co-applicants** with established operations located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- **Local Development District Waiver:** The NBRC Federal-State partnership is aided by a group of regional organizations called **Local Development Districts (LDDs)** that assist the NBRC in its outreach activities and administer NBRC investments for grantees. Each Catalyst Program award is required to use an LDD for grant administration assistance unless the applicant is an agency of State government, an LDD themselves, or has requested and received LDD waiver approval from NBRC prior to the submission of the application. See **Appendix F** for more information.

EVALUATION OF PRE-APPLICATIONS:

The evaluation of pre-applications includes three factors:
1. NBRC reviews pre-applications for eligibility, including eligible project locations, eligible applicant and co-applicant criteria, and waiver completion.
   - Pre-applications that are found to be eligible will receive further review.
   - Pre-applications that are found to be ineligible will receive a response from NBRC that includes a description of the ineligible determination.
2. NBRC and State Programs review pre-applications for alignment with the Catalyst Program priorities. The priorities are highlighted in the NBRC and State Program scoring criteria, available in **Appendix K**. Eligible pre-applications will be prioritized based on alignment with both NBRC and state program priorities.
3. NBRC and State Programs will also consider a) the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment, and b) the benefits provided to the broader community and region.
4. NBRC and states will consider the apparent sustainability of the project beyond the life of the grant.

Pre-applications that are invited to submit a full application will receive a response from NBRC in the GMS with information on the application process, access to application information sessions, and if available feedback that was noted by the State Program Manager or NBRC on the proposed project. Determination on waivers and eligibility for the Higher Maximum award requests will be made at this time.

Pre-applications that do not receive an invitation to apply for the current funding round will receive information about submitting a pre-application for future funding rounds and any feedback that was noted by the State Program Manager or NBRC on the proposed project.

SECTION C. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

For all NBRC funding programs, <u>applications are by invitation only</u>. An applicant must submit a pre-application (formerly known as a Letter of Interest) and have been issued an invitation to apply to the Catalyst Program to be eligible to apply for funding. Applications must be submitted using NBRC's Grants Management System.

Applications must be submitted before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.

Visit the <u>Program Areas page</u> of the NBRC website for more details, including pre-recorded programmatic information sessions. Many resources, including step-by-step instructions on how to complete and submit an application, are available on the Resources page of the NBRC website. Click on "Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents" to find a library of helpful resources and forms.

EARLY APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:
Applicants are strongly encouraged to:
- Review your Invitation to Apply for any feedback or requested revisions from NBRC and State Program Manager. This is found by logging into the GMS and viewing the **Collab Tab** in your pre-application. The feedback is specific to each project to help fill information gaps and improve the application.
- Contact NBRC with questions regarding NBRC funding priorities. NBRC will consider a project's alignment with funding priorities when scoring applications.
- Discuss your project with a State Program Manager to strengthen alignment with the State's priorities. States will consider a project's alignment with their funding priorities when scoring and selecting finalists.
- Review application resources. Visit the <u>Catalyst Program Page</u> for more details. Application resources provide guidance and helpful hints for common challenges.
- When selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase NBRC and the States will consider:
  - Balanced geographic distribution of investments
  - Well-documented community or regionally supported need for the project

   o Projects deemed a priority by the State where the project is located

REQUESTED APPLICANT INFORMATION:
Detailed instructions for using the online grants system to submit an application (***Creating and Submitting an Application – Guidance Document*)** and recorded videos are available on the Resources page of the NBRC website. Please review these detailed instructions prior to beginning your application in the GMS.

Each narrative text box supports limited formatting – please keep your responses simple and do not paste tables, bullets or text with extensive formatting into the text box. Please provide weblinks to studies and reports that support the need for your project – please do not attach lengthy reports to your application.

Complete the application by entering the required information for each of the following tabs and remember to **save often!**

Overview Tab
The applicant's registration and all applicant information entered at the pre-application stage will be carried over into the application stage.

Overview Tab – Information
If the UEI field is not populated, please enter your organization's **Unique Entity ID** (UEI). The UEI is required to receive an award. If an applicant does not have an UEI, please visit **SAM.gov**. Submitting a registration and getting a Unique Entity ID from SAM.gov are FREE. This process can take some time to complete with SAM.gov so please plan ahead. See the available guidance *How to Update UEI* on the NBRC Resources page.

Overview Tab - Announcement Overview
No edits to this section are required.

Overview Tab-Application Overview
No edits to this section are required. Changes will be automatically updated from other sections of your application.

Overview Tab-Project Information
Responses provided at the time of pre-application will carry over to your application. At this time, you should edit your responses to include new information and/or revisions in response to NBRC and State feedback.
The information provided in this section should provide a robust overview of your project. Highly competitive projects will demonstrate how your project supports NBRC and your State's funding priorities, the specific activities to be undertaken with NBRC funding and the expected outcomes. Provide documentation supporting your responses whenever possible in the form of links to relevant studies, data and reports. You will have the opportunity to elaborate further on the details of your project in the Proposal Tab which is described further in this section of the User Manual.

Overview Tab – Contacts
Your organization's Authorized Representative will be listed under Project Role as the "Project Director/Manager". This contact also needs to be designated as a key contact. **It is extremely important that the person designated in the GMS as your Authorized Representative matches the person identified as your Authorized Official in the Authorized Official Resolution** which is a document required as part of your application submission. More details can be found in the Forms and Files section of this document.

In this section you may add one other contact to your application and you can Associate your LDD. See the available guidance for "Adding Users in the GMS" on the **NBRC Resources webpage**.

Overview Tab-Acknowledgement
Check "I Agree"

Locations Tab

Locations Tab - Application Match
Confirm that the match amount is correct based on your project location(s) by reviewing NBRC's Distress Criteria described in Section A of this document. If there is a discrepancy with the match listed in the application, please contact NBRC.

Locations Tab-Investment Locations
Enter the street, city, state and zip code of the location(s) where the project will have investments. The locations chosen should represent where work funded by NBRC will occur. There is a validation function associated with investment locations. Enter all locations associated with the investment of project funds and attempt to validate using the Census tool. Leave in all locations, including those determined "invalid" by Census, as we also need to associate locations with key performance indicators in the next section. If the investment location returns an "Invalid" Status, we encourage applicants to enter the latitude/longitude coordinates in the address bar.

Locations Tab-Key Performance Indicators
Edit and enter the Target value for each Key Performance Indicator (KPI). If the KPI does not apply to your project, enter 0. Competitive projects will provide detailed justification and support for the KPIs selected in the **Proposal Tab** of the application. Scoring is based on the quality of information provided, rather than the quantity of KPIs selected.

Budget Tab
NBRC has prepared a variety of supplemental resources to assist you with budget development and common budget related errors in the GMS, which are located on the **Resources page** of our website.

Budget Tab - Budget Periods table

Budget information will be carried over from your pre-application. Please revise each section of the budget based on new estimates, more detailed data, or corrections requested by NBRC or State Program Managers in your invitation to apply.

It is critical that the totals from your SF-424cbw detailed budget (found in the Forms and Files Tab), Budget table and Funding Sources and Commitments table match.

Helpful Tips:
- The totals in this table must match the SF-424cbw detailed budget, required as an attached document under the "Forms and Files" tab. The budget categories are not in the same order but do correspond with the high-level categories 1-10 on the 424cbw.
- 80% Federal Funding Ceiling – this is calculated on total project costs. NBRC Share + Other Federal Share must be less than or equal to 80% of the amount under Total Project Costs. An exception applies to projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal funder. See Section D. Part III Federal Funding Ceiling.
- Applicant match is calculated based on the NBRC requested amount. The GMS includes a validation process that will verify that the Other Federal Share + Applicant Match + Other is greater than or equal to the required minimum match based on your project location.
- Some projects with an 80/20 match ratio may exceed the federal funding ceiling without additional non-federal funds.

Budget Tab-Budget Narrative
Update the Budget Narrative to reflect any changes in your budget. All expenses over $5,000 must be listed with a description of the cost and an explanation of how the cost was determined. Please clarify which parts of your budget are estimates, based on quotes or fixed price. The budget narrative should provide sufficient information to understand how NBRC funds will be spent.

Budget-Tab-Funding Sources and Commitments
In the Funding Sources table you will list the source (name and federal or non-federal), type (loan, grant, other), amount, date of commitment or anticipated date of commitment, and status (secured/committed, pending/anticipated). Total amounts in this table must align with total amounts in the Budget Periods Table and the SF-424cbw.

Helpful Tips:
- Do not enter funds requested from NBRC in this table. Only include non-NBRC funding sources. Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants when authorized by those other agencies, but only up to 80% of the total project cost. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See Section D Part III. Federal Funding Ceiling.

- NBRC funds may be used to match other federally funded projects (when both federal agencies allow).
- NBRC funds may not be used to "supplant" existing federal programs.
- ARPA *is* considered a federal source.
- CDBG and federal loans *are not* considered a federal source

Proposal Tab

This section should be used to build and expand on information provided in the Overview Tab. **Do not copy and paste from the project narrative you developed in the Overview Tab.** Responses in this section should be concise but provide enough information so that someone unfamiliar with your community, region and organization will understand your project.

Proposal Tab-Technical Proposal.

Highly competitive projects will demonstrate how your project supports NBRC and your State's funding priorities, how and when your project will be implemented, the expected economic impacts of your project, and who will be responsible for implementing each part of the project and their qualifications. Additional guidance on each section is provided below.

Prep in a word document, then copy and paste your responses into the GMS. Keep the formatting simple, e.g. bullet points rather than tables and cells to avoid potential errors when saving complicated formatting. **Save Often!**

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY narrative guidance: Provide a clear and detailed description of the approach and methodology that will be used to implement your project including the steps to complete the project and achieve desired results within the project period. Proposals that include a detailed milestone schedule or work plan will receive a higher score. Include an explanation and documentation of how the project's relevance to regional, state, or local planning efforts including State priorities. Include an explanation and documentation of the sustainability of the project. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #3 and the state program scoring criteria.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS narrative guidance: Referencing the KPIs you selected earlier in your application, describe the expected economic impacts of the project including expected impacts on jobs and wages and the scale of impact on the community, county or region. Highly competitive projects will provide justification and documentation supporting the expected economic impacts in the form of letters of support, business commitments, relevant studies, data and other forms of supporting documentation. Proposals of greater immediacy and that align with the spirit of the Catalyst Program's intent to stimulate economic growth and improve rural economic vitality will receive a higher score. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #4 and the state program scoring criteria.

PROJECT READINESS narrative guidance: Describe if the project is ready for implementation including the timelines that account for required environmental review

and how far along the project is in the planning and design process. Proposals that demonstrate the proposed work can be completed within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of the award date will receive a higher score. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #5 and the state program scoring criteria.

CAPACITY & QUALIFICATIONS narrative guidance: Provide an explanation of the capacity of the organization to meet the project objectives, including past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications. Proposals that describe key partnerships in place to support project implementation and can demonstrate early engagement with Local Development Districts will receive a higher score. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #6 and state program scoring criteria.

Forms and Files Tab
Prior to beginning this section of your application, we strongly encourage you to review the *Application Support Document Checklist* which can be found on the **NBRC Resources page** under the Additional GMS Guidance Documents section.

Forms and Files Tab - Application Files
Applicants who received approval for an LDD, Significant Benefit or 75% expenditure waiver need to upload the waiver approval file to the application record. Approval was attached to your Invitation to Apply letter, found in your pre-application in the GMS. You can also upload supplemental information that supports your application such as reports, commitments from other funders, a detailed workplan, spreadsheets, surveys, architectural or engineering plans, or other graphic information that cannot be uploaded to the text sections of your application.

Forms and Files Tab - Supporting Documents Checklist
Mandatory documents for all applicants must be completed and uploaded in the GMS at the time you submit your application. Some documents are applicable only for specific grantees – these have been noted below. **Late documents will not be accepted and may result in your application being deemed ineligible. Where applicable, documents MUST be signed by the Authorized Official designated in your Authorized Official Resolution.**

- **Authorized Official Resolution (AOR)** - A template is available on the **Resources page**. The NBRC template is not required, however your organization's resolution must include all the information in the template. The completed file is uploaded to the GMS and must be submitted with your application. Please plan accordingly to ensure you have sufficient time to obtain your AOR.
- **Certificate of Good Standing** – **only applicable for 501c organizations.** Your certificate of good standing must be current though the year of your application. Please plan accordingly to ensure you have sufficient time to obtain your Certificate of Good Standing.
- **Form 1001 Debarment Suspension Certification**

- **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) –** only applicable if your organization has a NICRA. For those without a NICRA, the de minimis rate of 10% will be applied.
- **IRS Determination or Affirmation Letter-only applicable for 501c organizations**
- **Letters of Support –** Encouraged but not required. Form letters are acceptable but often do not have the same impact as individual letters. Support letters should be combined and uploaded as a single pdf.
- **NEPA Intake Form**
- **Project Map [FEMA flood map](#) and/or** map of project location of your choice. The map must include a property address or coordinates if an address is not available.
- **Revolving Loan Fund Documentation -** applicants who are utilizing NBRC funds to create a new or supplement an existing Revolving Loan Fund are required to submit supplemental documentation. RLF Application documentation must be developed by the applicant and must be uploaded to the GMS. (see NBRC RLF Policy and required documentation in the Appendix I of the Program User Manual)
- **SF-424cbw** – please complete the details tab only
- **SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance**
- **SF-424B** (non-construction) **or SF-424D** (construction) - One or the other (not both) must be completed depending on the project type.
- **SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – STATE PROGRAM MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION

Maine
Charlotte Mace
DECD – Office of Business Development
(207) 624-7448
charlotte.mace@maine.gov

New Hampshire
Ian Carmichael
Department of Business and Economic Affairs
(603) 419-9709
ian.m.carmichael@livefree.nh.gov

New York

Kyle Wilber
Department of State, Division of Local Government Services
(518) 473-3355
kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov

Vermont
Kristie Farnham
Agency of Commerce & Community Development

(802) 392-5268
kristie.farnham@vermont.gov

APPENDIX B – 2025 CATALYST PROGRAM TIMELINE

Spring Round Key Dates

Online Grants Management System for pre-applications   February 10, 2025

Pre-applications due (Required)   **before 5:00 pm EST March 7, 2025**

Waivers due with pre-application:
- Local Development District (LDD) Waiver (if applicable)
- Significant Benefit Waiver (if applicable)
- 75% Prior Award Expenditure Waiver (if applicable)

GMS reopens for Invited Applicants Only   by March 31, 2025

Application Information Sessions   March 31-April 11, 2025

Applications due (By invitation only)   **before 5:00 pm EST April 18, 2025**

NBRC Commission Meeting (Virtual)   late May 2025

Notification of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants   June 12, 2025

Fall Round Key Dates

Online Grants Management System for pre-applications   August 1, 2025

Pre-applications due (Required)   **before 5:00 pm EST August 29, 2025**

Waivers due with pre-application:
- Local Development District (LDD) Waiver (if applicable)
- Significant Benefit Waiver (if applicable)
- 75% Prior Award Expenditure Waiver (if applicable)

GMS reopens for Invited Applicants Only   by September 22, 2025

Application Information Sessions   September/October 2025

Applications due (By invitation only)   **before 5:00 pm EST October 10, 2025**

NBRC Commission Meeting (Virtual)   November/December 2025

Notification of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants   December 2025

APPENDIX C – NBRC NEPA INTAKE FORM

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.

The NEPA Intake Form in fillable PDF format is available for download in the Grants Management System.

APPENDIX D - 75% PRIOR AWARD EXPENDITURE POLICY & WAIVER

An applicant or co-applicant with an open NBRC award under any NBRC program is not eligible for additional NBRC funding until the current project has both requested reimbursement for 75% or more of the award funds <u>and</u> demonstrated that 75% or more of the cost share has been spent **by February 1, 2025 [Spring round] or August 1, 2025 [Fall round]**.

If the 75% expenditure requirement has not been met, the entity can apply for a waiver. To be eligible for additional NBRC funding, the 75% Expenditure Waiver request <u>must</u>:

- **Be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**
- **Include a fully executed Affidavit**
- **Include supporting narrative and documentation for** the current status of the open project, delays encountered (if applicable), expected completion date of the previous NBRC award(s), capacity to complete previous award(s) <u>and</u> take on a new project.
- **Include supporting narrative for** the economic impacts of the proposed new project and how a delay in applying for funding will be a detriment. Economic impact support documentation should include specific information and not be speculative.
- **Be approved by the State(s) where the prior award(s) were made and by NBRC**

Any applicant or co-applicant with an open award that does not meet the 75% expenditure requirement **and** does not submit the required and complete 75% Expenditure Waiver request will have their pre-application marked as **ineligible for further review**.

The waiver must be approved by the State(s) where the prior award(s) were made and NBRC for the applicant to be eligible to seek NBRC program funding. Even when a 75% expenditure waiver is approved, NBRC reserves the right to withhold access to new award funding until prior awards meet certain funding milestones.

The 75% Prior Award Expenditure Waiver in fillable PDF format is available for download in the Grants Management System.

APPENDIX E – SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT WAIVER AFFIDAVIT

Requesting a significant benefit waiver for funding consideration eligibility. There are two exceptions that **require** a Significant Benefit Waiver to allow those projects, applicants and/or co-applicants that fall outside of the areas that meet the Commission's annual distress criteria as designated in Table 4 of the Catalyst Program User Manual to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:

- An exception exists for **projects** located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified "Isolated Areas of Distress" that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- An exception exists for **applicants or co-applicants** located outside of the NBRC service area but has established operations within a member state when the project that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.

If an exception applies, the applicant and/or co-applicant must submit a Significant Benefit Waiver request with the pre-application to be eligible to receive NBRC funds.

Process: If an applicant and/or co-applicant meet the above requirements they can request a Significant Benefit Waiver. To be considered, the Significant Benefit Waiver request must:

- **Be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**
- **Include a fully executed waiver request**
- **Include narrative and supporting documents** showing clear and convincing evidence of a project's economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties
- **Include description of costs and activities** that will take place in distressed counties, transitional counties, attainment counties, or outside the NBRC service area. This information will be used in the waiver review process to determine the eligible reimbursement/match ratio.

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 apply for funding. **Any applicant or co-applicant that is required to submit a Significant Benefit Waiver and <u>does not</u> submit the required waiver request and required documentation will have their pre-application marked as ineligible for further review.**

The Significant Benefit Waiver Affidavit in fillable PDF format is available for download in the Grants Management System

APPENDIX F – LDD POLICY AND WAIVER

The NBRC Federal-State partnership is aided by a group of regional organizations called **Local Development Districts (LDDs)** that assist the NBRC in its outreach activities and administer NBRC investments for grantees.

Federal legislation states that the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), "shall enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts (LDD) in its region. LDDs are either an already existing federally designated Economic Development District, as certified by the US Economic Development Administration, or an organization similar in nature to a regional planning commission. The LDD must have opted in to provide grant administration and meet NBRC training requirements to be eligible to provide grant administration to a Catalyst Program grantee.

In addition to the federal mandate, the NBRC's appropriation has grown significantly in recent years. This is beneficial to the region, but with it comes increased oversight responsibilities and administration. NBRC can maintain its small staff by partnering with LDDs. **NBRC Catalyst Program awardees are required to us an LDD for grant administration assistance unless they are an agency of State government or have requested and received LDD waiver approval from NBRC prior to the submission of the Catalyst Program application.**

The LDD contract executed with the grantee should specify the type of scope of services/grant administration activity that will be provided. A grantee is required to provide a copy of the executed LDD contract as part of the documentation necessary to receive a Partial or Full Notice to Proceed.

LDDs are compensated for their grant administration services through a reimbursement process with the grantee. The grant administration fee for all NBRC awards of $400,000 or less is $8,000. The grant administration fee for all NBRC awards above $400,000 is based on the formula of 2% of the NBRC requested amount. LDD grant administration costs are an eligible NBRC cost for an amount not to exceed the formula. If grant administration assistance beyond the total available under the formula, those must be paid for with matching funds. LDD grant administration costs must be reflected as a line item within the project budget submitted in support of a Catalyst Program application for funding.

See Role of the LDD or visit www.nbrc.gov/content/administration for more information.

If a LDD waiver is being requested, the request must be submitted in addition to the pre-application required documentation and must be received before **5:00pm EST on due date. See Appendix B – Catalyst Program Timeline.**

The LDD Waiver Affidavit in fillable PDF format is available for download in the Grants Management System

APPENDIX G - OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Examples of Outcomes

Businesses Created: Businesses created and/or retained, jobs created and/or retained, private investment leveraged, specific community improvements, non-export (tourism) revenues as a result of an NBRC project.

Communities Improved: The number of communities with a measurable improvement as a result of an NBRC project, including projects that improve planning, civic participation, infrastructure, and educational opportunities. This measure should also be used for consolidated technical assistance grants. The "communities improved" number will generally be the same as, or a subset of, the "communities served" output measure.

Costs Reduced: Costs reduced as a result of project activities, within one year of project implementation. For example, small business technical assistance may help a business streamline and cut costs, or an energy-efficiency program may help to reduce energy costs, through a renegotiated flat fee for energy use or through a reduction in kilowatt hours used. See the output measure "energy capacity."

Households Improved: The number of households with measurable improvement as a result of an NBRC project. For each project, this number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the "households served" output measure.

Jobs Created: The projected number of jobs (direct hires, excluding construction jobs) that will result from an NBRC project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date. Part-time and seasonal jobs should be converted to full-time equivalents and rounded up to whole numbers. Note: for infrastructure projects, employers should provide letters stating their intention to create a specific number of new jobs; for non-infrastructure jobs, applicants should estimate the number of jobs that will be created by the organizations expected to benefit from the project.

Jobs Retained: The number of jobs that would be lost or relocated without the NBRC project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date. Note: for infrastructure projects, employers must provide letters explicitly stating the number of jobs at risk, due to loss of competitiveness or relocation, without the project. For non-infrastructure projects, applicants should estimate the number of existing jobs that would be at risk, due to loss of competitiveness or relocation, without the NBRC-funded project.

Leveraged Private Investment (LPI): The dollar amount of private-sector financial commitments, outside of project costs, that result from a project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date. Note: for infrastructure projects, businesses should provide letters stating their intention to make a specific level of investment if the project is funded; for non-infrastructure

jobs, applicants should estimate the dollar value of investments that will be made by the company or companies that will benefit from the project.

Organizations Improved: The number of organizations with a measurable improvement as a result of an NBRC project. This number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the "organizations served" output measure.

Participants Improved: The number of participants with a measurable improvement as a result of the project (use when patients, students, or worker/trainee measures do not apply). A plan and a method for measuring the degree of improvement must be provided. This number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the "participants served" output measure.

Programs Implemented: The number of new programs, or the number of ongoing activities related to a defined goal, that are implemented as a result of an NBRC project. If possible, use with other measures that indicate the results of the project, such as students, workers, participants, etc.

Revenues Increased: Export Sales: The increase in revenue in export sales that a business or businesses realize as a result of an NBRC project, within three years of the project end date.

Revenues Increased: Non-Export Sales: The increase in revenue in domestic (non-export) sales that a business or businesses realize as a result of an NBRC project, within three years of the project end date.

Students Improved: The number of students who obtain a job in the field for which they were specifically trained; the number that receive a diploma, certificate, or other career credential; or the number of students who successfully complete a course or unit of study and/or graduate to the next grade or level necessary to continue their education. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number of students improved may be counted up to three years beyond the project end date. For programs where final outcomes are achieved after three or more years, the number of students improved may be counted by an alternative benchmark, such as the number of students completing a skill, grade, or level, or continued enrollment for the project period. This number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the "students served" output measure.

Telecom Sites: The number of new telecom services installed as a result of an NBRC project. This diverse measure includes, but is not limited to, new telemedicine sites, new Wi-fi hotspots, a new wireless router or computer lab, new fiber run to an industrial site, a new antenna used to provide broadband service, etc.

Workers/Trainees Improved: The number of workers/trainees with improved skills that enable them to obtain employment or to enhance their current employment. For example, the number of workers or trainees obtaining a new job; getting higher pay or a better position; or receiving a certification, measured during the project period when possible. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number or workers or trainees improved may be counted up to three years beyond the project end date. For programs where outcomes are achieved after three or more years,

the number of students improved may be counted by an alternative benchmark, such as completion of a skill, level/course, or continued enrollment for the project period. This number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the "workers/trainees served" output measure.

Examples of Outputs

Access Road Miles: The length of the access roads constructed as part of the project, in miles or decimals of miles (not linear feet).

Acreage: The number of acres impacted by an NBRC site-development or reclamation project, such as the number of acres graded and prepared for development at an emerging industrial park, the number of acres open to future development, the number of acres permanently preserved for farmland, or other preservation efforts that improve the local economy, or the number of acres remediated in a reclamation project.

Businesses Served: The number of businesses served by an NBRC project, including entrepreneurship projects, business technical assistance, and infrastructure projects.

Communities Served: The number of communities served by an NBRC project, including projects that improve planning, civic participation, infrastructure, and educational opportunities. For consolidated technical assistance grants, the number of communities served is the number of projects submitted by state NBRC program offices.

Energy Capacity (KWh/KW): The number of kilowatt hours saved by energy efficiency projects, or kilowatts produced by energy projects within one year of project implementation.

Housing Units Constructed/Rehabbed: The number of housing units constructed or rehabilitated as a part of an NBRC housing or community development project.

Linear Feet: The number of linear feet of pipe, wire, cable, trails, etc., to be constructed or installed.

New Visitors: Days: The number of new daytime visitors to a tourism destination times the number of days they visit, within one year of project implementation.

New Visitors: Overnights: The number of new overnight visitors to a tourism destination times the number of their overnight stays, within one year of project implementation.

Organizations Served: The number of organizations served by an NBRC project, including hospitals, schools, churches, non-profits, non-governmental organizations.

Patients Served: The number of unique patients receiving clinical services one or more times as a result of an NBRC health project. For equipment projects, report the number of patients served during the project period and one year after the

equipment is deployed. For health projects that do not provide clinical services (such as health promotion activities), use the measure "participants served."

Participants Served: The number of individual participants that can be served or are targeted by an NBRC project (use when patients, students, or worker/trainee measures do not apply). This can include the number of attendees at a meeting, workshop, or conference. For example, the number of individuals participating in a planning process; or the number of individuals attending health promotion activities.

Plans/Reports: The number of plans or reports developed as a result of an NBRC project. This could include strategic plans, master plans, concept plans, or plans for infrastructure improvements or new programs, as well as research reports, feasibility studies, etc. This measure is often paired with the outcome "Programs Implemented," since a program or specific activity is often implemented as a result of a planning process.

Square Feet: The number of square feet constructed or improved by an NBRC project, such as the square footage of a renovated community center, a newly constructed parking lot, a reconfigured interior space, etc.

Students Served: The number of students that an NBRC education project will be able to serve, measured during the project period, when possible (e.g., the number of students served by a science and technology program in a given semester or year). For projects that are not fully operational during the project period, the measurement time period may be extended up to three years after the project end date. Projects that expand existing programs count only the additional number of students served.

System Capacity (MGD/MG): The capacity of a water or sewer system, in millions of gallons per day; or the capacity of a water tank, in millions of gallons. This includes the capacity of a new water or sewage treatment plant or water tank, or the increase in capacity of a plant due to renovation, new equipment, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.

Workers/Trainees Served: The number of workers/trainees that an NBRC training project will be able to serve, measured during the project period when possible. For example, the number of worker/trainees the project will be able to enroll in a new workforce education program. For projects that are not fully operational during the project period, the measurement time period may be extended up to three years after the project end date. Projects that expand existing programs count only the additional number of workers/trainees that the project will be able to serve.

APPENDIX H – APPLICATION RESOURCES

Census data and Community Demographics data from public sources:

- **The American Community Survey (ACS)** releases new data every year through a variety of data tables that you can access with different data tools. Data Profiles contain the most popular social, economic, housing, and demographic data for a single geographic area. The Data Profiles summarize the data, providing both estimates and percentages, to cover the most basic data on all ACS topics. These profiles are available at data.census.gov.

- **Bureau of Indian Affairs US Domestic Sovereign Nations**: Land Areas of Federally Recognized Tribes. The U.S. Domestic Sovereign Nations: Land Areas of Federally-recognized Tribes map (commonly referred to as Indian lands) gives the user the ability to zoom, change base maps, and identify tribal lands with the BIA Land Area Representation (LAR). The LAR depicts the external extent of Federal Indian reservations, land held in "trust" by the United States, "restricted fee" or "mixed ownership" tracts for Federally recognized tribes and individual Indians.

APPENDIX I - REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROGRAM

Definitions

- "RLF" is an acronym for Revolving Loan Fund
- Indian tribe—The term "Indian tribe" has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 45 (b)).
- Nonprofit organization—The term "nonprofit organization" 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.

Overview

 A revolving loan fund is a pool of money used by an eligible applicant for the purpose of making loans to create and/or save jobs. As loans are repaid by the borrowers, the money is returned to the RLF to make other loans. In that manner, the RLF fund becomes an ongoing or "revolving" financial tool. An applicant's primary business does not have to be lending to receive RLF grant funding.

The major difference between the Northern Border Regional Commission's RLF program and conventional lending is the lending goal. For conventional lending institutions, the goal is profit. For an NBRC RLF, the goal is saving and creating private-sector jobs. Revolving loan funds are not a substitute for conventional lending sources. Given the small size of the RLF program and the limited resources of each project, revolving loan funds are not intended to match or replace the capacity of banks or other lending organizations. RLFs are designed to fill gaps in existing local financial markets and to provide or attract capital which otherwise would not be available for economic development. As part of the grant agreement, NBRC requires that RLF projects be administered in accordance with a revolving loan fund plan developed by the grant applicant and approved by the NBRC.

An applicant's RLF plan defines specific objectives and operating procedures, including standards and selection criteria for loans in the portfolio. NBRC does not review or approve individual loans made by the RLF. Instead, NBRC monitors RLF project activities for conformance with the NBRC's statute (40 USC, Subtitle V), these guidelines, the RLF plan, and other conditions of the grant agreement.

Objectives and Strategies

 The primary objective of the NBRC RLF program is saving and creating private-sector jobs. Projects are expected to support specific types of economic activities planned or underway in the area. These may include, depending on local needs and conditions, one or more of the following:

- Small business development, including the start-up or expansion of locally owned businesses as measured by job creation.
- Existing business and saving jobs.
- Redevelopment of blighted land and vacant facilities for productive use.
- Modernization and rehabilitation of existing industrial or manufacturing facilities; and/or
- Support for the use of new technologies, growth industries, high-tech firms.

The effectiveness of a revolving loan fund project as a development tool will depend on its lending policies and financing techniques. These may include, but are not limited to:
- Modifications in repayment terms, such as deferral of initial principal or interest payments.
- Taking greater risks than banks are traditionally prepared to take when substantial economic development benefits will result if the borrower succeeds.
- Providing below market interest rates.
- Short turn-around time in processing applications; and/or
- Reducing the risk of commercial lenders by providing subordinate financing.

RLF Grantees

- Applicants must have robust staff capacity in any of the following areas of expertise: finance, law, credit analysis, loan packaging, loan processing and servicing. Applicants must have enough resources to cover the administrative costs of RLF operations.
- Grantees may request changes to their RLF operating plan that improve RLF administration and/or enhance the ability of the grantee to meet the original objectives of the RLF project. All revisions to a grantee's RLF operating plan must be approved by NBRC, in advance.
- Applicants must have a strong and established loan review committee.
- As lending organizations, RLF grantees must recognize their obligations to federal and state law including but not limited to the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), 15 U.S.C. 1691-1691f, as implemented by Federal Reserve Board Regulation B and the Internal Revenue Code requirements for lender cancellation of debt (Form 1099C, Cancellation of Debt).

Application Requirements:

A written work plan that demonstrates the need and capacity for a NBRC RLF grant is required as part of an RLF application. The work plan should be uploaded as a separate document in the Supporting Documents Checklist and include the following information:

1. A complete listing of all staff and loan review committee members responsible for administering the RLF along with a statement of their qualifications and experience. Provide a brief history of the organization's lending experience.
2. Describe the use of funds and demonstrate the need for loan funds. At a minimum, applicants should:

- Provide a set of goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes for the applicant's program.
- Identify a sufficient number of proposed and known ultimate recipients it has on hand to justify NBRC funding of its RLF grant request or include well developed targeting criteria for borrowers consistent with the applicant's mission.

3. Include the applicant's plan for loaning the grant funds. The plan, which may be in the form of an existing RLF policy, must be of sufficient detail to provide the NBRC with a complete understanding of what the applicant will accomplish by lending the funds and the complete mechanics of how the funds will get from the applicant to the borrower. The RLF plan or policy should include:
   - service area,
   - eligibility criteria,
   - loan purposes,
   - fees,
   - rates,
   - terms,
   - collateral requirements,
   - limits,
   - priorities,
   - application process,
   - method of disposition of the funds to the borrower,
   - monitoring of the borrower's accomplishments,
   - reporting requirements by the borrowers, and
   - the actions that an applicant plans to take to deal with a delinquency

4. Provide a brief explanation of how the administration of the RLF will be funded. If applicable, include a list of proposed fees and other charges it will assess borrowers.

As a lending and/ or equity organization, grantees must recognize and comply with their obligations under federal and state law, including but not limited to the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), 15 U.S.C. 1691-1691f, as implemented by Federal Reserve Board Regulation B, and the Internal Revenue Code requirements for lender cancellation of debt (Form 1099C, Cancellation of Debt). It is essential to note that NBRC funds used for loans will always be considered federal funds and therefore bound by the requirements imposed by the Commission and the U.S. government.

Borrowers and Loans

- The borrowing firm or any of its owners cannot have a delinquent debt to the federal government.
- Private, for-profit developers, whose development projects create jobs within the Region: The eligibility conditions for lending to private, for-profit firms apply equally to developers. Developers must hold binding commitments for development occupancy from private business tenants.

Eligible Borrowers

- A borrower is eligible for RLF financing only when credit is not otherwise available on terms and conditions that would permit accomplishment of the borrower's project. RLF participation in a project must not displace local commercial lenders. The grantee is responsible for determining that a borrower meets this requirement and for maintaining documentation in the loan file describing, in each case, the basis for the determination. A borrower eligibility determination must be supported by either:
- A loan commitment letter from the commercial lender participating in the project.
- A commercial lender letter declining participation.
- A memorandum documenting discussion with commercial lenders about the limits of their participation in a borrower's project.

Eligible Loans

- RLF grants may be used for debt financing through direct loans for:
- Machinery, equipment, and other fixed asset acquisition including transportation/delivery and installation costs.
- New construction, alteration, modification, repair, and renovation of existing facilities, demolition, and site preparation.
- Land acquisition that is an integral part of a project where the dominant funding requirement is for building acquisition or construction.
- Working capital, which can include but is not limited to loans for the interest obligation of interim construction loans, not to exceed a term of three years, and for reasonable fees of loan packaging, environmental data collection, consultants, and fees of licensed professionals (engineers, architects, lawyers, accountants, and appraisers); and
- Refinancing existing debt only when the Grantee can document that the project is viable and necessary and that jobs will be lost or not created.

Loan Projects Not Eligible for NBRC Funds

- Grantees may not make loans to themselves or to a subsidiary (Where *subsidiaries* are organizations under common control through common officers, directors, members, or employees).
- Loans only for land acquisition are not permitted.
- Loans which assist the relocation of businesses are prohibited under 40 USC §15501(f).
- Loans to acquire an equity position for the RLF in private businesses.
- Loans to subsidize interest payments on existing loans except for interim construction financing.
- Loans that provide the mandatory equity contribution required of borrowers for other federal loan programs.

- Loans that refinance existing debt solely for the purpose of reducing the risk to existing lenders.
- Loans that establish revolving lines of credit for borrowers.
- Loans that create a potential conflict-of-interest or the appearance of a conflict-of-interest
- All borrower loan activities and economic benefits resulting from loan activities must be located within the NBRC Service Area. NBRC RLF loan assistance must be withdrawn if for any reason the activity financed, or the economic benefit is moved from the NBRC Service Area.
- A Grantee's operating plan must articulate that the maximum percentage of costs of any loan project that may be financed from Federal sources, including NBRC originated RLF funds, is 80%. An exception exists for projects where NBRC is neither the sole nor primary federal source of funding. See <u>Section D, Part III: Federal Funding Ceiling.</u>

NBRC RLF Lending Policies

General
- The responsibility for approving loans and setting terms and conditions consistent with these guidelines resides fully with the Grantee.
- Grantees may make loans and guarantees to eligible borrowers at interest rates and under conditions determined by the grantee to be most appropriate in achieving the goals of the RLF.
- Financing should be designed to assist firms with special credit problems, and therefore may involve greater risks and more lenient terms than commercial lenders may provide. To encourage the participation of commercial lenders in a loan project, the RLF loan may be for a longer period than that of other project lenders or may involve a period of interest-only payments by the borrower.
- A formal written loan application is required for each potential borrower. As a minimum the application should include General information identifying the borrower, management and business history, the project description, a schedule of proposed financing, number of employees, and proposed job impact of the project.
- Grantees must offer loan assistance by formal commitment letter which shall include a clear identification of the collateral and other loan terms offered, the conditions of the loan and other loan documentation required. A borrower must sign an acceptance of the loan commitment offered.
- A loan agreement between the grantee and borrower is required.

Collateral
- When determining collateral requirements, the grantee must consider the merits and potential economic benefits of each request. When appropriate and practical, RLF financing may be secured by liens or assignments of rights in assets as follows:

- The purpose of a loan is for working capital, a Grantee will normally obtain collateral such as liens on inventories, accounts receivable, fixed assets and/or other available assets of the borrower. Such liens shall be properly recorded as prescribed by applicable state and local Uniform Commercial Code laws. The lien position of the RLF may be subordinate and made inferior to lien(s) securing other loans made in this project.
- In addition to these types of security, grantees may also require security in the form of the assignment of patents and licenses, the acquisition of hazard, liability and other forms of insurance including flood insurance as appropriate, performance bonds and such other additional security as a grantee determines is necessary to mitigate the RLF's exposure. The RLF must be shown as a lender loss payee by endorsement on insurance.
- RLF loans to closely held corporations, partnerships, or proprietorships dependent for their continuing success on certain individuals ordinarily will be required to provide, and assign to the RLF, life insurance on these key persons.
- Personal guarantees from a borrower's principal owners (partnerships and proprietorships) and their spouses to the extent permitted by law (see the Equal Credit Opportunity Act), making them jointly and severally liable for the loan, should be required. In case of a corporate borrower, in addition to the pledging of corporate assets, members of the Board of Directors holding 20 percent or more of the corporation's outstanding common stock or 20 percent or more of the corporation's voting stock and their spouses (if jointly held), should guarantee loans.
- Should a grantee determine that it is necessary or desirable to take actions to protect or further the interests of the RLF, the grantee should act to sell, collect, liquidate, or otherwise recover on loans or guarantees extended by the RLF in accordance with the legal rights of the grantee, other lenders and the RLF borrower.
- A Grantee may modify the terms under which RLF financing has been extended to enhance the ability of the RLF to achieve program objectives.

RLF Administration/Grant Funds

- RLF grant principal may be used only to fund loans. It is the grantee's responsibility to provide for the administrative costs of staffing and operating the RLF. These costs may not be charged against grant principal unless specifically authorized in the grant.
- All repayments of RLF grant principal must be returned to the RLF for subsequent lending. Proceeds from the sale, collection or liquidation of loan collateral must also be returned to the RLF for lending. The reasonable costs of collection or action to recover a loan are treated as administrative expenses. Any proceeds from the sales of collateral assets above the original unpaid amount of the loan are treated as program income.
Selling NBRC RLF loans on a secondary market is not permitted.

APPENDIX J – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Administrative Requirements: The general practices that are common to the administration of grants, such as financial accountability, reporting, equipment management, and retention of records.

Allocable Cost: A cost that is allocable to a particular cost objective (i.e., a specific function, grant project, service, department, or other activity) in accordance with the relative benefits received. A cost is allocable to a federal award where it is treated consistently with other costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances and (1) is incurred specifically for the award, (2) benefits both the award and other work and can be distributed in reasonable proportion to the benefits received, or (3) is necessary for the overall operation of the organization.

Allowable Cost: A cost incurred by a recipient that is: (1) reasonable for the performance of the award; (2) allocable; (3) in conformance with any limitations or exclusions set forth in the Federal cost principles applicable to the organization incurring the cost as to the type or amount of cost; (4) consistent with regulations, policies, and procedures of the recipient that are applied uniformly to both federally supported and other activities of the organization; (5) accorded consistent treatment as a direct or indirect cost; (6) determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and (7) not included as a cost in any other federally supported award (unless specifically authorized by statute).

Approved Budget: The financial expenditure plan for a grant-supported project, program, or activity, including revisions approved by the NBRC and permissible revisions made by the recipient. The approved budget consists of Federal (grant) funds. The approved project consists of an SF424cbw, Budget Narrative and a SF424a and SF424c for non-infrastructure projects or a SF424cbw, Budget Narrative and a SF424c and SF424d for construction projects. The approved budget is a contractual obligation that can only be changed by NBRC in writing through a Grant Agreement Amendment.

Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA): BABAA was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference ("Buy American Preference" referred to as "BAP") for iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects. infrastructure programs funded with Federal dollars, IIJA §70914(a) of Pub. L. 117-58, instructs Federal agencies to ensure that "none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure, including each deficient program, may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured product, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. As the NBRC routinely funds infrastructure projects BABAA governs future Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) infrastructure investments. See NBRC's website for additional BABAA guidance.

Closeout: The process by which NBRC determines whether all applicable administrative actions and all work required under the award have been completed by the recipient and the awarding office.

Construction: "Construction" means construction in support of infrastructure, alteration, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. For purposes of this definition, the terms "buildings, structures, or other real property" include, but are not limited to, improvements of all types, such as bridges, dams, plants, highways, parkways, streets, subways, tunnels, sewers, mains, power lines, cemeteries, pumping stations, railways, airport facilities, terminals, docks, piers, wharves, ways, lighthouses, buoys, jetties, breakwaters, levees, canals, and channels. A project that includes planning and engineering when part of a larger construction implementation will be considered 'construction'; a project solely made up of planning and/or engineering will not be considered 'construction'.

Cooperative Agreement: A financial assistance support mechanism used when there will be substantial Federal programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that NBRC program staff will collaborate or participate in project or program activities as specified in the Notice of Award.

Cost Share: All other funds (other than NBRC award) that are necessary to complete the project.

Direct Costs: Costs that can be identified specifically with a particular project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity, or that can be directly assigned to such activities relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy.

Ecotourism: Focused on environmental protection, ecological conservation, poverty alleviation and educating on local environments and natural surroundings, creating minimal impact on people and the environment.

Entity Identification Number (EIN): A three-part coding scheme of 12 characters used to identify organizations and individuals. The first character identifies the recipient as an organization or an individual. The next 9 characters are the Internal Revenue Service tax number identification (TIN) for organizations or the social security number (SSN) for individuals. The last 2 characters are a suffix to provide distinction between organizational entities that are assigned a single EIN and those that have more than one EIN. The entities could be subsidiaries, divisions, branches, subdivisions, or other organizational groupings of a major organizational entity.

Equipment: An article of tangible nonexpendable personal property that has a useful life of more than 1 year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit or the capitalization threshold established by the recipient, whichever is less.

Federal Funds Authorized: The total amount of Federal funds obligated by the NBRC for use by the recipient.

Federal Share: The amount, generally expressed as a percentage of total project costs, of financial, property, and other direct assistance provided by the NBRC.

Funding Opportunity Announcement: NBRC's formally issued announcement of the availability of funding through its website and outreach efforts.

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)).

Indirect Costs: Costs that are incurred by a recipient for common or joint objectives and cannot be identified specifically with a particular project or program. These costs also are known as "facilities and administrative costs." The federally approved indirect cost rate, in place at time of application, will be the indirect cost rate for the entirety of the project. A range of indirect cost rates is not allowed, nor will the indirect cost rate be adjusted, up or down, during the lifecycle of the project.

Local Development District (LDDs): LDDs are either an already existing federally designated Economic Development District, as certified by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, or an established regional development organization, often established as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) entity that is organized and operated in a manner that ensures broad-based community participation to contribute to the development and implementation of programs in the region. LDDs are utilized in the administration of NBRC investments for grantees.

Match: The minimum amount of funds or contributions that needs to come from other sources to complete the NBRC funded project.

Multi-Jurisdictional Projects: Projects that both clearly identify multiple locations (i.e., municipalities, counties, states) together with budgets that demonstrate the activities and investments that will occur in each location. If the project documentation submitted does not clearly identify locations within the narrative and corresponding categories and amounts within the budget, the project will not be considered multi-jurisdictional.

Non Federal Share: The portion of allowable project costs not borne by the NBRC.

Obligations: The amounts of orders placed, contracts and subawards, goods and services received, and similar transactions by a recipient during a budget period that will require payment during the same or a future budget period.

Outlays or Expenditures: The charges made to the federally sponsored project or program.

Program Income: Gross income earned by a recipient that is directly generated by the grant-supported project, program, or activity or earned as a result of the award **and must be authorized by the grant agreement. Grantees must keep complete records to document program income.**

Project Period: The total time for which support of a project has been programmatically approved. The total project period comprises the initial competitive segment, any subsequent competitive segments resulting from a competing continuation award, and any non-competing extensions.

Real Property: Land, including land improvements, structures, and appurtenances, but not movable machinery and equipment.

Reasonable Cost: A cost whose nature or amount does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing when the decision was made to incur the cost.

Recipient: The organization or individual that receives a grant or cooperative agreement award from NBRC and is responsible and accountable for the use of the funds provided and for the performance of the grant-supported project or activity. The recipient is the entire legal entity even if a particular component is designated in the Grant Agreement. The term includes "**grantee**."

Significant Rebudgeting: A threshold that is reached when expenditures in a single direct cost budget category deviate (increase or decrease) from the approved budget amount for that budget category for that budget period by a specified amount. Significant rebudgeting is one indicator of change in scope.

Subaward: Financial assistance in the form of money or property in lieu of money provided under an award by a recipient to an eligible subrecipient (or by an eligible subrecipient to a lower tier subrecipient). The term includes financial assistance when provided by any legal agreement, even if the agreement is called a contract, but does not include either procurement of goods or services or, for purposes of this policy statement, any form of assistance other than grants and cooperative agreements. The term includes consortium agreements.

Subrecipient: An entity that receives a subaward from a recipient or another subrecipient under an award of financial assistance and is accountable to the recipient or other subrecipient for the use of the Federal funds provided by the subaward.

Supplies: Personal property other than equipment, intangible property, and debt instruments. The category of "supplies" includes items that could be considered equipment, but do not meet the threshold definition.

Sustainable Tourism: The aim of sustainable tourism is to increase the benefits while also minimizing negative impacts on the environmental and local communities caused by tourism for destinations. This can be achieved by: Protecting natural environments, wildlife and natural resources when developing and managing tourism activities.

Terms and Conditions: All legal requirements imposed on a grant by the NBRC, whether based on statute, regulation, policy, or other document referenced. In addition to general terms and conditions, the grant agreement may include other conditions that are considered necessary to attain the award's objectives, facilitate post-award administration, conserve grant funds, or otherwise protect the Federal government's interests.

Underserved Communities: NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 USC 15702, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Communities that suffer from a combination of socioeconomic and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources or conditions, such as sub-standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights concerns are communities which may be most applicable. See **Appendix H** for additional resources on identifying underserved communities in the NBRC region.

Unique Entity ID (UEI) number: The UEI is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov. Entity registration, searching, and data entry in SAM.gov now require use of the new Unique Entity ID. Effective April 4, 2022, the identifier for the federal awards processes changed from the Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number to UEI.

Unallowable Cost: A cost specified by law or regulation, Federal cost principles, or term and condition of award that may not be reimbursed under a grant and may not be counted as cost share.

APPENDIX K – NBRC and STATE SCORING CRITERIA

NBRC CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA
50 POINTS MAXIMUM, UPDATED 1/2025

1. **Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities (Maximum 15 points)**			
	High scoring proposals provide clear and detailed explanations of how proposed project addresses multiple agency priorities. Typical Range: 11-15 points	Medium scoring proposals generally indicate the proposal attempted to address multiple priorities but due to the nature of the proposed project or lack of details was not able to clearly address multiple priorities. Typical Range: 6-10 points	Low scoring proposals generally indicate the proposal did not provide enough information to determine how the proposed project addresses agency priorities or did not attempt to address agency priorities. Typical Range: 0-5 points
Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for alignment with the NBRC strategic investment goals and program priorities. Proposals will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities outlined in the program materials. Details should be provided in the Project Abstract, Project Beneficiaries and Community Context Narrative, Program Investment Priorities Narrative, optional Letters of Support, and responses to the Overview questions: Have you previously received NBRC funds, Does this project serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000 and Does this project benefit an underserved community. <u>Points Allocation</u> Project Abstract: • Project abstract identifies the relevant NBRC project category and describes how the project fits the project category. If the project is an infrastructure project, the proposal clearly describes how the project meets the threshold for an infrastructure project. If the project is requesting a higher maximum infrastructure award, the proposal clearly describes how the project meets the criteria for a higher maximum award. (0-1 points) Project Beneficiaries and Community Context Narrative: • Describe who will benefit from your project and why this project matters to the community, region and/or State. Describe benefits to underrepresented and/or underserved communities. Projects that articulate strategies to reach these communities, including making project activities fully accessible will receive a higher score. Letters of support or other documentation of community support that directly cites benefits to underrepresented communities will receive a higher score. (0-2 points)		

	Program Investment Priorities Narrative:
	• Efficient Project Design & Multiple Needs - Proposal describes how the project design generates efficiencies. (0-1 points) Proposal describes how project meets multiple needs and how those needs align with Catalyst project categories. (0-2 points)
	• Community Resilience - Applicant demonstrates how project helps communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from extreme weather. For healthcare related projects, applicant demonstrates how the project strengthens its community's physical, behavioral and social health to withstand and adapt to current and projected public health emergencies. (0-1 points) Project is not located within a FEMA Flood Hazard Zone, or, if project is in a FEMA Flood Hazard Zone, project has described mitigation measures to protect from 1-percent-annual-chance flood. (0-1 points) Project clearly describes how identified actions contribute to community resilience. (0-1 points)
	• NOTE: The proposal should clearly identify relevant state program priorities and respond to relevant state scoring criteria. See the scoring criteria for the state(s) your project is located in.
	Responses to Overview questions:
	• 1st Time Applicants - Applicants who have not received a past NBRC award will be awarded 1 point. (0-1 points)
	• Rural Communities – Projects that serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000. (0-1 points)
	• Underserved Communities - Project demonstrates benefits to underrepresented communities, including rural communities (population less than 5,000) and underserved communities. NBRC will award points for qualitative description of how the project provides benefits to underrepresented communities in the region. (0-2 points) Projects that articulate strategies to reach these communities, including making project activities fully accessible will receive a higher score. (0-1 points) Points will be awarded for including letters of support that directly cites benefits to underrepresented communities. (0-1 points)

2. Project Budget (Maximum 10 points)

Applications that receive a high score indicate the proposal provided clear, accurate and complete budget information including required NEPA and LDD costs, explanation of costs, and match or cost share. Typical Range: 8-10 points	Applications that receive medium scores from NBRC generally indicate the budget information was missing some critical details but was still able to communicate how NBRC funds would be used. Typical Range: 4-7 points	Applications that receive low scores from NBRC generally indicate the budget information provided was inadequate and lacked the detail necessary to determine how NBRC funds would be used. Typical Range: 0-3 points

Project Budget - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for clear, reasonable, and detailed budgets and cost estimates. Proposals that clearly demonstrate how requested funds will be used will receive a higher score. Details should be provided in the Budget section including Budget Categories Table, Budget Narrative, Funding Sources and Commitments Table, and the required SF-424cbw Detailed Project Budget in the Supporting Documents Checklist. Points Allocation • Project costs, including contingency for construction projects, are detailed, align with project description and reasonable. SF-424cbw Detailed Project Budget includes NEPA costs. If applicable, SF-424cbw Detailed Project Budget includes LDD grant administration costs in the amount of 2% of the NBRC requested amount. Applicant clearly demonstrates how NBRC requested funds will be used. Applicant demonstrates no project costs or match have been committed or expended prior to the award. (0-5 points) • Budget narrative should be aligned with the project description, provide brief justification for expenses over $10,000, describe how the cost estimate was determined, provide a break down of expenses that make up the total and overall clarify the connection between the costs and the proposed project. If requesting the higher maximum for an infrastructure project, the budget narrative must describe how the requested funds will be allocated across infrastructure categories or the multiple locations. (0-3 points) • Match is clearly outlined in the Funding Sources and Commitments table including the source, type of funding, and status. Applicants may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment/support to confirm stated match contributions. If applicable, leveraged funds in addition to required match should be described in Budget Narrative. (0-2 points)

3. Approach & Methodology (Maximum 5 points)

	High scoring proposals provide clear and detailed explanation of project implementation plans including descriptions of project milestones, partnerships, and financial sustainability of the project. Typical Range: 4-5 points	Medium scoring proposals generally indicate project implementation is not well articulated. Typical Range: 3 points	Low scoring proposals generally indicate multiple deficiencies in project implementation. Deficiencies should be considered seriously before awards are made. Typical Range: 0-2 points
Approach & Methodology - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for clear and detailed description of the approach and methodology that will be used to implement your project including the steps to complete the project and achieve desired results within the project period of performance. Proposals that include a detailed milestone schedule or work plan will receive a higher score. Proposals will also be reviewed for relevance to regional, state or local planning efforts.		

	Include an explanation and documentation of the sustainability of the project after NBRC's investment. Details should be provided in the Approach & Methodology Narrative and optional milestone schedule attachment. Points Allocation • Applicants clearly explain the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake the project including major tasks, partnerships and other necessary details to describe what is necessary to complete the project in a timely manner. Applicants include information on how the project is sustainable after NBRC's investment. Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not. Milestone schedules should identify major project events or tasks including environmental review and their scheduled completion dates. (0-3 points) • Projects that support related regional, state, or local planning efforts will be awarded 1 point. Example plans include hazard mitigation plan, climate plan, or comprehensive plan. (0-2 points)		
4. Economic Impacts (Maximum 10 points)			
	High scoring proposals provide clear connections to economic indicators, data and evidence to support the expected impacts, and align with the spirit of the Catalyst Program's intent to stimulate economic growth and improve rural economic vitality. Typical Range: 8-10 points	Medium scoring proposals generally indicate there are strong economic connections but either lacked data and evidence to support the economic impacts or did not clearly articulate economic indicators. Typical Range: 4-7 points	Low scoring proposals generally indicate a lack of detail and little to no documentation of expected economic impacts. Typical Range: 0-3 points
Economic Impacts - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for expected economic impacts including effects on jobs and wages and the scale of impact on the community, county or region. Economic impacts should be consistent and supported by feasibility studies and/or local, state or regional data. Narratives and/or letters of support from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts are encouraged. Proposals of greater immediacy and that align with the spirit of the Catalyst Program's intent to stimulate economic growth and improve rural economic vitality will receive a higher score. KPIs and/or project outcomes and outputs should be referenced in the narrative. Details should be provided in the Economic Impacts Narrative, Project Goals & Outcomes Narrative, Key Performance Indicators within the Locations Tab, and optional Letters of Support. Points Allocation		

- The project demonstrates it will have direct economic impacts within an identified timeframe with priority consideration given to growth in jobs and wages Selected Key Performance Indicators are further described. (0-2 points)
- Applicant describes the scale of impact for community, county or region. (0-2 points)
- Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. Applicants include supporting narratives from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts and the importance to larger economic development strategies. Applicants provide clear documentation of expected impacts with priority consideration given to documentation of expected growth in jobs and wages. Applicant describes how KPIs will be tracked and reported on at project close and includes indicators of a successful project. (0-4 points)
- Applicants describe the project need and the opportunity gained by funding this project now and/or lost by not funding it now. Projects of greater immediacy are given a higher score. (0-2 points)

5. Project Readiness (Maximum 5 points)

	High scoring proposals indicate the proposal is technically sound and has the planning elements that make for successful projects. Typical Range: 4-5 points	Medium scoring proposals generally indicate a deficiency in a critical planning element. This is a flag that the project may take considerable support to be successful or could see delays in implementation due to not having considered NEPA. Typical Range: 3 points	Low scoring proposals generally indicate multiple deficiencies in critical planning. Deficiencies should be considered seriously before awards are made. Typical Range: 0-2 points
Project Readiness - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for completeness, feasible timelines that account for required environmental review, and demonstrate how far along the project is in the planning and design process. Proposals that demonstrate the proposed work can be completed within the 3-year project period of performance and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of the award date will receive a higher score. Details should be provided in the Project Readiness Narrative. Points Allocation • The applicant shows attention to detail and provides a complete application. All required supporting documents are submitted and complete. Responses to narrative questions are complete. (0-1 points) • Applicant accounts for feasible timelines for completion and includes a short summary of processes in progress or completed.		

	Timeline includes NEPA. Applicant demonstrates the project can be completed within the 3-year project period. Timeline shows a Notice to Proceed can be secured within 1 year of award. (0-2 points) • The applicant clearly demonstrates how far along the project is in the necessary planning, design, engineering, and state and local permitting processes, and describes expected NEPA activities or otherwise demonstrates the project has considered NEPA. (0-2 points)		

6. Capacity & Qualifications (Maximum 5 points)			
	High scoring proposals clearly describe the organizational capacity including key partnerships, past performance, and roles and qualifications of staff and partners. They have also demonstrated engagement with LDDs. Typical Range: 4-5 points	Medium scoring proposals generally indicate some lack of detail including not providing clear understanding of organizational capacity or key partnerships. Typical Range: 3 points	Low scoring proposals provide little to no explanation for organizational capacity and may lack partnerships needed to successfully complete the project. Typical Range: 0-2 points
Capacity & Qualifications - Evaluation Criteria and Points Allocation	Proposals will be reviewed for details on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications and the ability to meet program requirements. Proposals that describe key partnerships in place to support project implementation and can demonstrate early engagement with Local Development Districts will receive a higher score. Details should be provided in the Capacity & Qualifications Narrative. Project Contacts section of the Overview tab should list a LDD Contact role unless applicant received a LDD Waiver at pre-application. Points Allocation • Describes organizational capacity to complete project including any partnerships with other entities to fill out expertise (0-2 points) • Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements. Applicant can identify specific grant-awarded projects they have completed or can demonstrate collaboration and relationships with other entities to ensure the project can meet program requirements and be completed in a timely manner. New applicants or applicants with no prior Federal award history will not be reviewed negatively. Provides assessment of past performance. (0-1 points) • Describes roles and qualifications of staff and partners. (0-1 points) • Early outreach to LDD can consist of adding the LDD contact to the application in the GMS, attaching communication from LDD to the application in the GMS, or other evidence of communicating with the LDD. (0-1 points)		

MAINE CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA
50 POINTS MAXIMUM, UPDATED 1/2025

*New for 2025 - Projects that meet NBRC's higher maximum criteria and can document regional economic relevance (serving more than one county or region) may be eligible for up to $2M. Projects that meet NBRC's higher maximum criteria and can document statewide economic relevance may be eligible for up to $3M.

Applicants seeking greater than $1M must consult with DECD prior to submitting their pre-application to be considered for an award above $1M

Scoring Criteria		Max Pts	Evaluation Metric		
Project Impact on Maine Priorities and Regional Relevance.	Project's significance in meeting Maine Priorities: Infrastructure to support Economic Development (Water, Wastewater, Transportation, Broadband), Tourism, Workforce Development and Attraction, Innovation/Entrepreneurship, and Renewable Energy/Climate Resiliency. Overall, the project is regionally relevant with substantial economic development impacts as compared to other projects, and a need for NBRC funding is demonstrated	15	0-15 Points. Review considerations include: impact on Maine NBRC funding priority area, synergy with current regional and statewide initiatives, geographic distribution of grants, regional relevance as compared with other projects, and a demonstrated financial need.		
Alignment with Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy (www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan)	Project clearly aligns with one of the strategies or actions outlined in Maine's Economic Development Strategy. Applications that details alignment with more than one strategy or action will receive higher points.	5	Weak: 0-1 Points. Project does not indicate impact/ or has limited alignment with Action(s) from Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy.	Fair: 2-3 Points. Project moderately aligns with Action(s) from Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy.	Strong: 4-5 Points. Project greatly aligns with multiple Actions from Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy
Economic Development.	Project supports the economic development of a municipality or region. Project will help existing businesses thrive or help to attract new industry to the area. Applications that provide specific details	10	Weak: 0-3 Points. Project does not support the economic development of a	Fair: 4-7 Points. Project has moderate impact on the economic development of a	Strong: 8-10 Points. Project has significant or strong economic development

	supported by feasibility studies, and/or state, regional or local data about the economic impact of the project, will receive more points. Projects that leverage private investment or show collaboration with businesses will receive more points.		municipality or region; application does not address this criteria.	municipality or region; application addresses this criteria.	impacts and/or, project will result in new businesses/new industries coming to the area. 10 points awarded if private industry investment is supplied as project match.
Workforce Development.	Project will support the creation, retention or attraction of quality jobs; or project will attract talent/workforce to areas of Maine that need it. Applications should clearly demonstrate commitment to job creation with evidence that jobs will be created or retained as a direct result of the investment; or project will attract new workers to areas of Maine and industries that need more workers (with evidence of this need).	10	Weak: 0-3 Points. Project does not indicate impact/or has little impact on Maine's workforce.	Fair: 4-7 Points. Project moderately strengthens the workforce.	Strong: 8-10 Points. Project greatly strengthens the workforce.
Project Quality, Readiness and Collaboration.	Project can begin immediately, budget is clearly developed with matching funds identified and project funding is sustainable. Application includes clearly defined and measurable results/goals, demonstrates alignment and collaboration with other efforts with letters of support; and demonstrates capacity to execute project and achieve milestones;	10	Weak: 0-3 Points. Applicant does not indicate or has made little progress towards project readiness, collaboration, and capacity.	Fair: 4-7 Points. Applicant has made some progress towards project readiness, collaboration, and capacity.	
Total		50			

NEW HAMPSHIRE CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA
50 POINTS MAXIMUM, UPDATED 1/2025

Criteria	Description	Max Pts	Does not articulate	Articulates/ Supports	Demonstrates
Alignment with NBRC, state, regional, and local priorities	The project aligns with NBRC funding priorities and objectives within one or more of the following: **NH's Economy Recovery and Expansion Strategy (ERES) and NBRC specific state priorities. **Your region's Comprehensive Economy Development Strategy (CEDS) **A comparable regional strategies **Local plans	10	Does not articulate strong alignment to either NBRC funding priorities or local, regional, and state priorities. (0-3 points)	Articulates alignment to NBRC funding priorities or strong alignment with local, regional, and state priorities, but not both. (4-7 points)	Demonstrates strong alignment to NBRC funding priorities as well as strong alignment with local, regional, and state priorities. (8-10 points)
Project Readiness	Project is ready to begin immediately; planning activities are complete, and all match funding is secured.	15	The project lacks detail in budget, site control for infrastructure, implementation plan, local permitting & approvals, or does not have secured match. (0-5 points)	Project has a clear and realistic budget linking expenses to proposed activities, site control for infrastructure, a clear implementation plan including procurement process, and match secured (6-10 points)	Project is "shovel ready", articulating a clear and realistic budget linking expenses to proposed activities, demonstrating site control for infrastructure, a clear implementation plan including procurement processes, an articulated plan for local permitting & approvals, and match secured. (11-15 points)
Project articulates measurable economic development benefits.	Project clearly demonstrates positive effects on the business or workforce development ecosystems, including	10	Does not articulate or support economic development benefits of the project. (0-3 points)	Articulates economic development benefits with insufficient to	Demonstrates the economic development benefits of the project, including supporting data,

	new or retained jobs, markets, and businesses.			moderate support. (4-7 points)	comparable communities, or projections. (8-10 points)
Community Buy-In	Leverages existing local and regional resources & assets to promote economic growth and demonstrates community agreement with the proposed project.	5	Does not articulate what existing local and regional resources & assets will be used in the project, does not demonstrate community agreement with plan (0-2 points)	Articulates how local and regional resources & assets will be leveraged in the project, articulates process for community feedback and approval, as well as a plan for navigating that process. (3-4 points)	Demonstrates how local and regional resources & assets will be leveraged in the project, demonstrates community and local leadership buy-in through letters of support, town votes, or other means. (5 points)
Funding need	Applicant articulates how NBRC funding is necessary to move the project forward.	5	Project will be completed without NBRC funding, or NBRC funds will have minimal impact on the ability to complete the project. (0-2 points)	Articulates how NBRC funds are critical to project completion, or make up a significant share of project costs. (3-4 points)	Demonstrates that NBRC funds are critical to project completion and make up a significant share of project cost. (5 points)
Demonstrates organizational capacity to implement and sustain project	Applicant demonstrates organizational capacity for project management, implementation, and sustainment through project completion.	5	Does not articulate or fails to provide supporting documentation of organizational strengths and resources for project management and successful implementation. (0-2 points)	Articulates and supports organizational strengths and resources for project management and successful implementation. (3-4 points)	Demonstrates prior successful implementation of similar projects or partnerships/intention to contract with organizations who have had prior successful implementation of similar projects. (5 points)

NEW YORK CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA
50 POINTS MAXIMUM, UPDATED 1/2025

*New for 2025 - Projects that document regional and/or statewide economic significance may be eligible for up to $3M.

Applicants seeking greater than $1M must consult with the New York Northern Border Regional Commission program office at the New York Department of State prior to submitting their pre-application to be considered for an award above $1M.

CRITERIA	5 POINTS	3 POINTS	1 POINT	0 POINTS
Financial Need	NBRC funds are critical to project completion and make up a significant share of project cost.	NBRC funds are critical to project completion or make up a significant share of project cost.	NBRC funds will have minimal impact on the ability to complete the project.	Project will be completed without NBRC funding.
Project Need and Significance of Community Impact	Project need and community impact is significant	Project need or community impact is significant	Project need and/or community impact is limited	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Support of applicable Regional Economic Development Council	Project has received a letter of support from REDC	Project supports a specific REDC strategy	Project generally supports REDC plan	Project is inconsistent with an REDC plan
Project Link to Downtowns, Existing Community Centers, or Identified Growth Areas	Project is located in a downtown or community center and is identified as a key objective in a local government's comprehensive plan	Project is located in a downtown or community center and is generally consistent with a local government's comprehensive plan	Project is located outside of a downtown or community center, but creates a linkage to a downtown or connects it to a nearby amenity/asset	Project has no effective on a downtown or community center
Project Sustainability	Application provides clear evidence that the project is sustainable, with clear and long-term measurable goals	Project sustainability is evident, but the goals are unclear or not measurable	Application is unclear about the project's long-term sustainability	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Regional Impact	Project will have an impact across multiple counties	Project will have an impact across multiple municipalities within a county	Project will impact a single municipality	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Support for Workforce Development,	Project is a creative, new approach to	Project is a creative or new approach to	Project generally supports workforce	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found

Entrepreneurship and Emerging Economic Opportunities	support workforce and business development in STEM related fields or other emerging opportunities	support workforce and business development	training or business development.	
Development of Community Infrastructure or Assets Critical for Sustainable Development	Project will develop new community infrastructure or assets.	Project is a new effort to leverage existing community infrastructure or assets.	Project enhances existing efforts to leverage community infrastructure or assets.	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
0-10 Points				
Project Significance in meeting New York State priorities?	Review considerations include: the geographic distribution of grants; the uniqueness of the project as reviewed against project applications; the ability of the project to serve as a model for future projects; and the impact on current regional and statewide initiatives.			

VERMONT CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA
50 POINTS MAXIMUM, UPDATED 1/2024

SCORING CRITERIA	MAX POINTS	SCALE		
1. Project expands/ supports/ retains Vermont's skilled workforce. *(Note: question will not be evaluated solely on quantity of jobs, etc., rather score will be relative to the impact of project size.)* *Applicant may use a variety of indicators to demonstrate workforce impact. Indicators may include:* *- training of existing employees/ workforce development* *- adding jobs/ job opportunities* *- offering business development* *- wage growth*	0-10	**Weak: 0-3 points** Project **does not indicate impact/ or has little impact** on how it will strengthen the workforce in Vermont.	**Fair: 4-7 points** Project **moderately strengthens** the workforce in Vermont.	**Strong: 8-10 points** Project **greatly strengthens** the workforce in Vermont.
2. Project invests in infrastructure that provides long-term community and economic impacts. *Applicant should demonstrate how the project may positively affect the State of Vermont infrastructure. Eligible NBRC infrastructure costs may include:* *- transportation infrastructure* *- basic public infrastructure* *- telecommunication infrastructure* *- renewable and alternative energy investments*	0-10	**Weak: 0-3 points** Project **does not indicate impact/ or has little impact** on infrastructure in Vermont.	**Fair: 4-7 points** Project **moderately strengthens/ positively impacts** on infrastructure in Vermont.	**Strong: 8-10 points** Project **greatly strengthens/ positively impacts** on infrastructure in Vermont.
3. Project is ready to begin/ Applicant indicates sufficient readiness. *Applicant may use a variety of indicators to indicate project readiness and the ability to begin the project. Indicators may include:* *- project implementation strategy/ plan* *- clear articulation of a project's goals and objectives for the funding* *- progress towards securing match funding* *- applicant has clear support from community/ has collaborated with*	0-5	**Weak: 0-1 points** Applicant **does not indicate or has made little progress** towards project readiness.	**Fair: 2-3 points** Applicant has made **some progress** towards project readiness.	**Strong: 4-5 points** Applicant has **completed or made significant progress on** towards project readiness.

community members, development corporations, ACCD/NBRC/DED staff - *Vermont-specific permits (including environmental approvals)*				
4. Is the project located within or directly benefiting an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center? *For additional information, please visit:* *https://accd.vermont.gov/Opportunity Zones* *https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs*	0-5	**Weak: 0-1 points** The project **is not located within or does not directly benefit** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center. OR The project **has no or little positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center.	**Fair: 2-3 points** The project **is located outside but directly benefits** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center. OR The project **has a positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center.	**Strong: 4-5 points** The project **is located within or directly benefits** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center. OR The project **has a strong positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, or village center.
5. Project is a priority of the region as identified with the input of ACCD, RDC, and RPC partners though the "Regional Project Prioritization Lists". *The Applicant project is listed and aligned with the Regional Project Prioritization Lists (https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Border-Regional-Commission).*	0-10	Assign the following based on ranking on the Regional Project Prioritization Lists: Priority 1 = 10 points Priority 2 = 9 points Priority 3 = 8 points Priority 4 = 7 points Priority 5 = 6 points Priority 6 = 5 points Priority 7 = 4 points Priority 8 = 3 points Priority 9 = 2 points Priority 10 = 1 point Statewide/ multiple region project on the priority list = 2 points Note: The Spring funding round will use the December RPP list, and the Fall funding round will use the May RPP list.		
6. Project supports and contributes to the priority that projects be transformational, attract new businesses or retain existing businesses, be geographically distributed across the state, and encourage capital investment and economic growth.	0-10	**Weak: 0-3 points** Project **does not indicate/ or has little impact** beyond immediate economic impacts of job and wage growth (little	**Fair: 4-7 points** The project has **moderate impacts** beyond immediate economic impacts of job and wage growth (moderate	**Strong: 8-10 points** The project has **significant or strong impacts** beyond immediate economic

		transformational impact).	transformational impact).	impacts of job and wage growth (significant transformational impact).
Applicants may use a variety of indicators to indicate transformational impacts. Indicators may include: *- regional impacts on workforce development* *- supply chain improvements* *- adding stability to local areas with fragile economic conditions* *- a sector-wide impact that other businesses will be able to benefit from*				