2025 CATALYST PROGRAM GRANT OVERVIEW
Published 12/20/2025, Revised 7/28/2025

APPLICATION DEADLINES
The Catalyst Program will run two funding rounds in 2025:
1. Application due before 5:00pm EST on April 18 (pre-application due before 5:00pm EST on March 7)
2. Application due before 5:00pm EST on October 10 (pre-application due before 5:00pm EST on August 29)

PROGRAM PURPOSE
The Catalyst Program stimulates economic growth and inspires 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. 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. The NBRC invests in job-creating projects that reduce poverty, unemployment, and outmigration.

AVAILABLE FUNDS
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.

AWARD SIZE
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. For detailed explanations of the non-infrastructure and infrastructure categories, please see below and the 2025 Catalyst Program User Manual.

- **Infrastructure Projects:** Projects classified as construction in support of infrastructure are eligible for awards of up to $1,000,000. Infrastructure projects may be eligible for up to an additional $2,000,000 in funding, for a total maximum award of $3,000,000, if the project meets one of the following criteria:
    1. Construction takes place in two or more eligible communities/counties/states; or
    2. Construction involves two or more infrastructure categories (basic public, transportation, or telecommunications).
- **Non-infrastructure Projects:** Projects classified as non-infrastructure projects are eligible for awards of up to $500,000. Feasibility projects have a maximum award size of $100,000.

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

considered.

NON-INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

Catalyst Program funding will be used to support non-infrastructure projects including (additional details in the Catalyst Program User Manual):

Non-Infrastructure 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 live 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).

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

Catalyst Program funding will be used to support infrastructure projects including (additional details in the Catalyst Program User Manual):

Infrastructure 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 such as town halls or community centers that focus on increasing community connectedness 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.	

2025 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 address multiple needs and how those needs align with Catalyst project categories. project fulfills multiple needs. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate efficiencies gained from meeting multiple needs in one project.

3) Projects that adapt to changing conditions and extreme weather events. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from extreme weather.

SCORING

Based on the 6 categories below, NBRC reviews, scores, and awards project proposals up to a total of 50 points out of the available 100 points. The remaining 50 points will be awarded by the state program in which the project is proposed. States use a similar set of review criteria with an emphasis on state economic development and infrastructure priorities. State program scoring criteria is available in the Catalyst Program User Manual.

NBRC Scoring Category	Catalyst Program Review Criteria
1. **Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities**: 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**: 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**: 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**: 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:** 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:** 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.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
- **State governments** of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- **Local governments** and secondary and career technical centers (village, town, city and county)
- **Other political subdivisions of states** (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- **Non-profit entities**: 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**; § 200.54 Indian tribe. See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services.

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

COMMISSION SERVICE AREA
Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding under 40 U.S.C. §15733. For 2025, 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, 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.

The 2025 Distress Criteria identifies counties designated as distressed, transitional, or attainment. Projects located in counties designated as distressed have a 20% non-federal match requirement while project located in counties designated as transitional have a 50% match requirement. Additional details related to match requirements for attainment counties and areas of isolated distress are available in the Catalyst Program User Manual.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION
The application submission process is the same for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. The Catalyst Program will run two funding rounds in 2025, with pre-application deadlines before 5:00pm EST on March 7 and August 29, and full application deadlines before 5:00pm EST on April 18 and October 10, respectively. An updated Catalyst Program Overview will be posted if any changes to dates are made.

Pre-applications are required for funding consideration. Pre-applications will be reviewed for eligibility, maximum award amounts (based on project classification as either infrastructure or non-infrastructure), and adherence to both NBRC agency priorities and state program priorities. Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply at the pre-application phase and must be submitted using NBRC's online application system.

Interested and invited applicants should refer to the 2025 Catalyst Program User Manual for detailed pre-application and application submission instructions. The User Manual will be made available on NBRC's website at www.nbrc.gov.

CONTACTS
Please visit the NBRC Catalyst Program website for information on eligibility and project development. Questions related to eligibility and NBRC agency priorities can be directed to NBRC Catalyst Program Manager, Adrianne Harrison. Questions related to project development and state program priorities can be directed to the NBRC Program Manager in the state(s) where the proposed project will take place.

NBRC's Catalyst Program Manager: Adrianne Harrison, aharrison@nbrc.gov or 603.369.3001

NBRC State Program Managers
- Maine: Charlotte Mace, charlotte.mace@maine.gov or 207.624.7448
- New Hampshire: Ian Carmichael, ian.m.carmichael@livefree.nh.gov or 603.271.0252
- Vermont: Kristie Farnham, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov or 802.398.5268
- New York: Kyle Wilber, kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov or 518.473.3694

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