



2024 USER MANUAL

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM

Preapplication (Required) Deadlines

March 22, 2024 (Spring Round)

September 6, 2024 (Fall Round)

Application by Invitation Only Deadlines

May 3, 2024 (Spring Round)

October 18, 2024 (Fall Round)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PART I. PROGRAM INFORMATION	4
SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION	4
I. AVAILABLE FUNDING	4
II. PROJECT CATEGORIES	4
III. AWARD SIZE	5
IV. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE	5
V. COMMISSION SERVICE AREA	5
VI. 2024 DISTRESS CRITERIA	5
VII. DESIGNATED DISTRESSED COUNTIES	6
IX. DESIGNATED ATTAINMENT COUNTIES	7
SECTION B. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND INELIGIBILITY	9
I. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	9
II. INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	10
III. INELIGIBLE PURPOSES	10
III. ELIGIBLE COSTS	10
IV. INELIGIBLE COSTS	11
V. NBRC PRIOR INVESTMENT AWARDEES	11
SECTION C. PROGRAM FUNDING CATEGORIES	12
I. Community Development	12
II. Workforce [re] training and development	13
III. Business planning and technical assistance	13
IV. Marketing/communication and education	13
V. Infrastructure in direct support of the forest economy	14
SECTION D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	15
I. MATCH and COST SHARE*	15
II. MULTI-STATE PROJECTS	18
III. FEDERAL FUNDING CEILING	18
SECTION E. PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES AND SCORING	19
I. PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES	19
II. PROJECT SCORING	19
III. PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA	21
PART II. PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	22
PART III. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS (BY INVITATION ONLY)	32
APPENDIX A – PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION	38
APPENDIX B – 2024 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM SPRING TIMELINE	39
APPENDIX C – 2024 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM FALL TIMELINE	40
APPENDIX D – NBRC NEPA INTAKE FORM	41
APPENDIX E - 75% NBRC PRIOR INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE POLICY & WAIVER	42
APPENDIX F – SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT WAIVER AFFIDAVIT	43
APPENDIX G- OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS	44
APPENDIX H – APPLICATION RESOURCES	48
APPENDIX I - REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROGRAM	49
APPENDIX J – GLOSSARY OF TERMS	59
APPENDIX K –SCORING CRITERIA	65



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 regional, collaborative, and transformative community economic development approaches that alleviate economic distress and position the region for economic growth.

The Forest Economy Program is designed to support the forest-based economy, and to assist in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models across the 4-state NBRC region.

The Forest Economy Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's forest economy and communities.

2024 AGENCY INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create and grow needed markets for low-grade forest harvest residuals.
- Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.
- Help to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.
- Aid in the revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably for the production of wood products and advanced materials manufacturing.
- Leverage new or existing partnerships that positively impact either a portion or all of the NBRC region, and/or have the potential to do so.

PART I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

I. AVAILABLE FUNDING

The NBRC will make available \$4 million for awards under the two funding rounds of the Fiscal Year 2024 Forest Economy Program. NBRC may elect to award additional funds to applications received under this funding announcement.

II. PROJECT CATEGORIES

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

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

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

1. Community development projects
2. Workforce training and development projects
3. Business planning and technical assistance projects
4. Marketing/communication and education work (must be paired with one or more of the other project categories (#1-3 or 5))
5. Infrastructure in direct support of the forest economy

Full descriptions and examples of the above project categories can be found in section C of this document.

III. AWARD SIZE

Forest Economy projects are eligible for an award up to \$1,000,000.

IV. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

Projects funded under the 2024 Forest Economy Program will have a three-year period of performance. If you anticipate your project will take more than three years from the time of award, we recommend postponing your application to a future round of funding when the project can be completed within three years.

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, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties.

New Hampshire: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, and Sullivan counties

New York: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates counties.

Vermont: all counties within the State

NOTE: See Section VI of this manual for detailed information on the 2024 Distress Criteria. See Section VII for a breakdown of Distressed, Transitional and Attainment Counties by State.

VI. 2024 DISTRESS CRITERIA

By statute, the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress within its region.

Federal law (**40 U.S.C., Subtitle V, §15702**) states that, '**distressed**' counties are those that, "have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration" and "are the most severely and persistently economic

distressed and underdeveloped.” The NBRC is required to allocate 50% of its total appropriations to projects in counties falling within this designation. The maximum percent of a “distressed” project that can be funded by the NBRC is **80%**.

‘Transitional’ counties “have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration” or “are economically distressed and underdeveloped.” The maximum percent of a “transitional” project that can be funded by the NBRC is **50%**.

‘Attainment’ counties are those that are neither ‘distressed’ nor ‘transitional.’ The NBRC is not allowed to fund projects within an attainment county unless the project is within an ‘isolated area of distress,’ or has requested and been approved for a significant benefit waiver. Isolated areas of distress are “areas [municipalities] that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.”. The maximum percent of an “attainment” project that can be funded by the NBRC is **50%**.

Because poverty, unemployment, and outmigration are only parts of an economic situation, the NBRC has adopted categories above and beyond those directed by statute. These “Secondary Distress Categories” provide a more in-depth survey of the NBRC’s service area as well as greater opportunities to gauge the success of the NBRC’s programs over time. These include Educational Attainment (bachelor’s degree or higher), Household Income, and Seasonal Home Ownership.

Data that is collected and priorities given to the data

1. “Primary” Distress Categories:

- a. Percent of population below the poverty level
- b. Unemployment rate
- c. Percent change in population

2. “Secondary” Distress Categories:

- a. Percent of population with a bachelor’s degree or higher
- b. Median household income
- c. Percent of secondary and/or seasonal homes

VII. DESIGNATED DISTRESSED COUNTIES

The following counties are designated as **Distressed** for the purposes of prioritization and match.

Maine: Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington

New Hampshire: Cheshire, Coös, and Sullivan

New York: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, St. Lawrence, Schenectady, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates

Vermont: Caledonia, Essex, Orleans, and Rutland

VIII. DESIGNATED TRANSITIONAL COUNTIES

Accordingly, the following counties are designated as **Transitional** for the purposes of prioritization and match.

Maine: Androscoggin, Hancock, Kennebec, and Knox

New Hampshire: Belknap and Carroll

New York: Hamilton, Rensselaer, and Saratoga

Vermont: Addison, Bennington, Chittenden, Franklin, Lamoille, Orange, Washington, Windham, and Windsor.

IX. DESIGNATED ATTAINMENT COUNTIES

The following counties are designated as **Attainment**.

New Hampshire: Grafton County

Vermont: Grand Isle County

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 [Distress Criteria](#) on the NBRC website.

If a project is located within an Isolated Area of Distress, an application may be submitted, but the applicant must indicate the location of the isolated area in the application.

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. Match for multi-county projects will be the average of the counties that make up the project.

3. Significant Benefit Waiver:

There are two exceptions that **require** a Significant Benefits Waiver to allow those projects or applicants/co-applicants that fall outside of the designated distressed counties, transitional counties and Areas of Isolated Distress within an Attainment county to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:

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

If one of the above two scenarios apply to applicants and/or co-applicants, a Significant Benefit Waiver along with the documentation of economic impacts is required at the time of pre-application submission. See Appendix E for waiver details and affidavit. **If a Significant Benefit Waiver is being requested, the waiver and the documentation supporting the waiver request must be submitted together with the Pre-application by 5:00 p.m. EST March 22, 2024 [Spring Round] and September 6, 2024 [Fall Round]. The Significant Benefit Waiver requires approval by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor's Alternates of the four NBRC States.**

The required documentation includes: narrative and/or other documentation of clear and convincing evidence of a project's economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties, and documentation must clearly identify costs and activities that will occur in distressed counties, transitional counties, or outside of the NBRC service area. This

information will be used in the waiver review process to determine the eligible reimbursement/match ratio and in the NBRC Federal Co-Chair and 4 Governor’s Alternates approval process.

The match ratio is determined based on the amount of funds invested in counties designated as distressed or transitional.

- 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**.
- 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 invested in a distressed county is eligible for the 80% reimbursement, **20% 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**.
- 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 Forest Economy 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. The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code. The non-profit entity must be able to demonstrate they have federal grant experience related to economic development.

- Indian Tribes; § 200.54 [Indian tribe](#) (or “federally recognized Indian tribe”). Indian tribe means any [Indian tribe](#), band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([43 U.S.C. Chapter 33](#)), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United [States](#) to Indians because of their status as Indians ([25 U.S.C. 450b\(e\)](#)). See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services

II. 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.

III. INELIGIBLE PURPOSES

No pass-through funding will be awarded. Eligible entities may not be conduits for ineligible entities such as private-sector businesses or other entities that are 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.
- Funds may be used to match other federally funded projects (when both federal agencies allow) only when the total grant funds from NBRC and other federal funders does not exceed 80% of the total project budget. [40 USC §15506\(e\)](#).
- Projects that promote unfair competition between businesses with the same immediate service area.

III. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Following the receipt of a Notice to Proceed from NBRC, Forest Economy Program funds may be used for:

- Reasonable fees to contractors but not any fee or profit to the recipient or sub-recipient.
- Construction and pre-construction costs such as engineering.

- Bid, performance, or payment bonds are eligible costs.
- Indirect costs for work performed by the recipient staff. Indirect cost must be documented by a Federal Cognizant Agent or an entity acting on their behalf and documentation of same submitted with the application. If you do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate (such as many non-profits) you may use 10% as your indirect cost rate for the purposes of this application.
- Applicable and allocable costs as outlined in the Federal Cost Principles. Uniform Guidance (2CFR 200).
- All project related costs must be reflected in the project budget (SF424cbw)

IV. 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, such as routine maintenance, deferred maintenance, and short-term operational needs
- Any committed or expended costs incurred prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed. This includes both NBRC funds and any funds documented as match to the project.
- Project costs committed or expended prior to receipt of a Notice to Proceed from NBRC

*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.

V. NBRC PRIOR INVESTMENT AWARDEES

If an applicant has received a prior NBRC award, the entity is only eligible to receive additional NBRC investment if they have submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project and demonstrated that 75% of the cost share has been expended by Friday March 1, 2024 [Spring round] or by Friday August 16, 2024 [Fall round].

If the 75% expenditure has not been met, the entity can apply for a waiver. **To be considered, a 75% Expenditure Waiver request must contain a fully executed Affidavit and supporting documentation and must be submitted together with the pre-application by 5:00pm EST on March 22, 2024 [Spring round] or September 6, 2024 [Fall round].**

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 funding under NBRC programs. If an applicant or co-applicant is required to submit a 75% Expenditure Waiver and does not, the pre-application will be considered ineligible for further consideration.

Please see the waiver policy and a link to the fillable PDF waiver form, including what documentation should be included in support of the waiver, in the Appendix D of this manual.

SECTION C. PROGRAM FUNDING CATEGORIES

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

- The Forest Economy Program emphasizes the potential to impact the forest-based economy across the entire NBRC region.
- Infrastructure projects (defined by Congress in NBRC's authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy) must directly support the forest industry. *Please note -Infrastructure projects will be moved to the Catalyst program competition if the applicant does not clearly describe how the infrastructure supports the forest economy.* Infrastructure categories are further described below.

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

I. Community Development

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

Examples include, but are not limited to:

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

*For the purposes of this program, “locally sourced” means sourced, where possible, within the four state NBRC region.

II. Workforce [re] training and development

Projects with a focus on building the skills and recruiting and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses.

Examples include but are not limited to:

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

III. Business planning and technical assistance

Projects that enhance the viability and sustainability of new and existing forest businesses.

Examples include but are not limited to:

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

IV. Marketing/communication and education

This category must be paired with one or more of the above project priorities (#’s 1-3).

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Marketing and communications that promote the benefits of northern border forests

- Marketing to promote the environmental and climate benefits of forest management and forest products in ways that strengthen markets for wood products.
- Forest resource planning and industry supply chain analysis projects.
- Carbon storage, carbon footprint, and/or life cycle analysis projects for wood products

Research: Basic research projects will not be considered. Preference will be given to applied research and demonstration projects that demonstrate a strong connection to industry.

V. Infrastructure in direct support of the forest economy

Infrastructure projects (defined by Congress in NBRC’s authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy) must directly support the forest industry.

Transportation Infrastructure:

Transportation infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair, for the purpose of transporting people and goods, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for transporting from one point to another, including infrastructure that improves economic mobility for individuals, and may include roads, railways, airways, waterways, canals and terminals such as airports, railway stations, bus stations, parking, refueling depots (including fueling docks and fuel stations), EV charging stations, EV Make Ready infrastructure, and seaports.

Basic Public Infrastructure:

Basic public infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair, including those services that are generally necessary to conduct business. Public infrastructure are facilities, systems, and structures that are owned or available for use by the public to catalyze economic development, and includes core infrastructure (such as water, wastewater, and energy) critical infrastructure (such as those required to maintain public health and economic vitality), and community infrastructure (such as those required to improve health outcomes and increase community connectedness). This definition includes specific projects such as: collection and distribution systems, treatment plants and other infrastructure that collects, treats and delivers drinking water and wastewater-related services; electric power generation and transmission to include renewable energy and storage; solid waste to include recycling, composting, disposal, and waste-to-energy via incineration; systems for heat distribution through sources such as co-

generation, biomass, geothermal heating, heat pumps and central solar heating; childcare facilities, outdoor recreation infrastructure and public meeting spaces such as community centers which facilitate and improve health outcomes and physical activity and increase community connectedness.

Telecommunications Infrastructure:

Telecommunications infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair to accommodate any part of the infrastructure of a telecommunications network, including lines, equipment, apparatus, towers, antennas, etc., and/or cyber infrastructure (routing and switching software, operational support systems, etc.) necessary to transmit information from one location to another, for use, or in connection with, a telecommunications network. Investments in telecommunications infrastructure support reliable and affordable broadband to provide local businesses and entrepreneurs access to the digital marketplace, facilitate online learning and workforce development, and connect communities.

Public safety entities are not eligible under this heading.

Renewable and Alternative Energy Infrastructure:

Renewable energy shall mean construction, alteration, or repair including what is generally defined as any naturally occurring, theoretically inexhaustible source of energy, such as biomass, solar, wind, tidal, wave, and hydroelectric power that is not derived from fossil or nuclear fuel. Publicly owned and non-profit entities are eligible. Facilities that are owned by a for profit entity or who will serve to benefit as a pass-through from an eligible entity will NOT be eligible.

SECTION D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

I. MATCH and COST SHARE*

NBRC defines **match** as the minimum amount of funds or contributions that must come from other sources to complete the NBRC funded project required by law to receive NBRC funds. **Cost share** is defined as the total of other funds necessary to complete the project. Refer to Section XV (above) in this Application Manual to determine the amount of required matching funds for your project. To calculate the required match, multiply the NBRC request amount by the designated match rate for the project location. Additional details on match and examples are available in the Forest Economy Program FAQ. The recipient will be required to demonstrate that

funds necessary to complete the project are documented as committed to receive a Notice to Proceed. With the following qualifications and exceptions, matching or cost sharing requirements may be satisfied by any of the following:

1. 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:
 - a. state the amount of the commitment;
 - b. the dates the commitment will cover, consistent with the period of performance; and
 - c. the funds are for the purpose outlined in the application;
 - d. 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:

- a. the # of hours staff are anticipated for work on the project;
 - b. the pay of those staff (hourly rate);
 - c. and the indirect cost rate that will be used (if applicable).
2. 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.
3. Commitment from project partner: A letter is required to have the following elements:
 - a. state the amount of the commitment;
 - b. the date that the award was made;
 - c. the purpose of the funds must match the scope outlined in the application.

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

4. 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. $4 \times 1.5 \times 5 = 30$ hours \times 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.

5. Municipal Force Accounts: Applicants must document that they have the 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.
6. Land or other donated real property or equipment: 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. NOTE: 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. RE EQUIPMENT: 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. [NOTE: 2 CFR 200.306(i)(1) does not address the timing of the donation of property]
7. 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.
8. 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.

9. Unless NBRC expressly approves use of program income under the additive alternate contained in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(2) or the cost share alternative in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(3), 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. 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.
10. 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.
11. If an applicant includes matching funds/cost share in their application, cost share 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 necessary to complete the project within a year of grant award, the applicant should consider postponing the application until a later date.

II. MULTI-STATE PROJECTS

Applications that cover multiple states are acceptable. 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.

III. FEDERAL FUNDING CEILING

If a project uses funds from multiple federal sources (including the NBRC), no more than 80% of a total project cost* can be comprised of federal grant funds. For example, if an applicant receives \$100,000 from another federal source, such as the Economic Development Administration, and the total project cost is \$200,000, the total NBRC award could not exceed \$60,000. **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. PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

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

II. PROJECT SCORING

The rating criteria to be used to award the maximum points is determined by how fully and thoroughly the applicant answers each item listed in each rating criteria. NBRC and the Program Managers from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont will coordinate application scoring for each of the rating criteria and present results to the Commission. The Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair will vote on the projects selected for funding. Projects that fall short of an 80-point threshold will not be considered for funding.

With review and sector specific feedback from the Advisory Board, NBRC reviews and scores project proposals based on 5 categories: Project Readiness, Alignment with Investment Goals and Program Priorities, Economic Impacts, Project Costs and Match, and Organizational Capacity. The NBRC and member states can award up to a total of 100 points based on the criteria below. Final scores will be calculated based on an average of NBRC and member state project scores.

- 1. Project Readiness.** This category reflects an applicant's ability to perform the proposed work within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award date. (10 points)

- 2. Project Costs and Match.** Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable. Projects have identified secured match and are leveraging non-federal funds. (10 points)

- 3. Alignment with Purpose, Goal and Investment Priorities of the Forest Economy Program.** This category reviews how project fits within the Forest Economy Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets program priorities in the project summary. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities and project categories outlined in the program materials. (30 points)

- 4. Forest Economy Sector Impacts.** Projects will be reviewed for anticipated forest sector impact. Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. (30 points)

- 5. Organizational Capacity.** Applicants should demonstrate they have sufficient organizational capacity to successfully meet NBRC program requirements (ability to complete project on time, staff qualifications, partnerships, etc). If an applicant has received prior NBRC awards, their performance in administering those awards will also be considered. (20 points)

In addition to the above scoring categories, 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, projects identified as a state priority, 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, state prioritization, as well as state, community, or regionally supported need for the project.

III. PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA

Each State scores all eligible applications received independently, utilizing the scoring criteria provided within this manual. **The maximum point value is 100.**

NBRC reviews projects and determines eligibility of the applicant, co-applicant and use of funds

Please see Appendix K for the Forest Economy Program scoring matrix.

PART II. PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

FOR FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM 2024, applicants must submit a Pre-application (formerly known as a Letter of Interest) to be considered for an invitation to submit a Forest Economy Program application.

Pre-applications are required and are due by 5:00 p.m. EST, on March 22, 2024 (Spring Round) and September 6, 2024 (Fall Round).

If a 75% NBRC Prior Investment Waiver or Significant Benefit Waiver is required and not submitted with the Pre-application, the project will be deemed ineligible at the Pre-application phase of the process.

If the NBRC determines the applicant and project would benefit from LDD assistance, NBRC may require the applicant contract with an LDD. This determination will be made at time of pre-application. If an LDD contract is required and the project is invited to move forward to the application phase, LDD grant administration costs must be included in the project budget submitted in support of the application.

Pre-applications will be required to be submitted via NBRC's Grants Management System. Detailed instructions for registration and submitting a pre-application are available on the NBRC website on the [Program Areas page](#).

EARLY PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:

- Review program materials, with specific attention to eligibility and funding priorities for this program.
- View a recorded Program Information Session. For details, visit <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP>.
- Reach out to NBRC with questions regarding eligibility and NBRC funding priorities.
- Discuss projects with a State Program Manager to determine alignment with the State's priorities.

- Review eligibility requirements to determine if your project is required to submit a waiver with the pre-application. Waiver details are available in Appendices E and F of this Forest Economy Program User Manual.
 - Significant Benefit Waiver
 - 75% NBRC Prior Investment Waiver

REQUESTED APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Applicants will be required to register for an account with the NBRC Grants Management System. The **Authorized Official** will need to be responsible for registering the organization. Additional project contacts can be added to the organization once registration is complete and those contacts will be allowed to create and develop the pre-application content.

Detailed instructions for registration are available on the NBRC website on the Program Areas page. Applicants can go to the online grants management system to register. Information to be collected as part of the **registration process** includes:

- Applicant organization name, type, address, congressional district, county, country and contact information
 - SAM Expiration Date, Organization FY End Date, and 4-Digit Zip Code Extension are not required.
- Applicant Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Applicant Unique Entity ID (UEI)
- Applicants should enter UEI if one is available. UEI is not required to submit a pre-application but will be required to receive an award. If an applicant does not have an UEI, please visit <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>. Submitting a registration and getting a Unique Entity ID are FREE.
- Vendor ID – Not Applicable
- Authorized Representative name, title, address, email, phone number
 - The Authorized Official (aka Authorized Official) is the person with signing authority for the organization and will be responsible for submitting documents like applications, amendment requests and committing the organization to funding opportunities and formal grant agreements.

Detailed instructions for using the online grants system to submit a pre-application are available on the NBRC website on the Program Areas page. Requested information as part of the pre-application process includes:

- Pre-application information including title and if there is a co-applicant
- Project Narrative information including Project Abstract, Project Goals and Outcomes, Project Beneficiaries and Community Context, Statement of Need, and Program Investment Priorities. See Requested Narrative Information below for detailed guidance on response requirements.
- Information including
 - Have you previously received NBRC funds? If yes, please provide NBRC grant number
 - Does this project serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000?
 - Does this project benefit an underserved community? A community who suffers from a combination of economic, health and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources or conditions, such as standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights and vulnerable populations, including minority, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, homeless, and limited English-speaking populations. See Appendix H for additional resources on identifying underserved communities in the NBRC region.
- Project Contacts including adding any project key contacts.
- Project location including state(s) and county(ies).
- Detailed Budget information. See Requested Budget Information below for more guidance on Budget requirements.
- Budget Narrative information. See Requested Budget Information below for more guidance on Budget Narrative requirements.
- Submit waiver supporting documents that apply to your project.
 - All waivers are required at the pre-application phase. Applicants should review the Forest Economy Program User Manual for information on waiver requirements.

REQUESTED NARRATIVE INFORMATION

- Pre-application asks for responses to 5 narrative questions. Each narrative text box has a 10,000-character limit and formatting/editing capabilities. Applicants should consider developing narrative responses in a word processing document to easily copy and paste into the pre-application text boxes.
- **Project Abstract**
 - Provide a summary of the proposed project.
 - What NBRC eligible purpose and project category does this project address?
 - Describe the status of the project – ready for implementation, planning tasks ongoing, early stages.
 - What is the project scope? Over what period of time will this project be completed?
- **Project Goals, Outcomes and Outputs**
 - What are the expected economic outcomes (e.g. impacts on jobs, employment and wage growth) of this project
 - Describe the scale of expected economic impacts on the community, county, or region?
 - Appendix F lists examples of Economic Outcomes and Outputs
- **Program Investment Priorities**
 - Which Program Investment Priorities best apply to this project?
 - Refer to the Forest Economy Program Investment Priorities and Scoring Criteria listed in this Program User Manual.
- **Project Beneficiaries and Community Context**
 - Who will benefit?
 - Why does this project matter to the community?
 - If applicable, how does this project serve or benefit rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 or underserved communities?

- If applicable, how does this project help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters?
- **Statement of Need**
 - What is the challenge or problem the project seeks to address?
 - What is the proposed solution?
 - Why is this project important?
 - Describe the opportunity gained by funding this project now.
 - Why is NBRC funding important for this project?

REQUESTED BUDGET INFORMATION:

Budget Narrative

- Pre-application asks the applicant to complete a Budget Narrative text box including a funding sources table. There are no support documents required for the Budget Narrative.
- The Budget Narrative should include a cost-justification for each expense over \$5,000 included in the detailed budget provided to NBRC.
- The funding sources table must be completed to provide an overview of the sources of funds for the proposed project. The funding sources table will ask for 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).
- The funding sources table will assist a grantee in identifying how much of their project is made up from federal funds. No more than 80% of total project costs can come from federal funds. 40 USC §15506(e).
- 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.

Detailed Budget

- Pre-application asks the applicant to complete a detailed project budget. The rightmost columns allow the applicant to identify how the costs will be allocated between the NBRC Share and other contributors (including Match funds). This information will help the reviewers understand how NBRC funds and Match and/or Cost Share funds will be used.
- The match must meet or exceed the minimum required match amount. 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.
- The Budget categories align with the SF-424cbw budget form. This form is not requested with the pre-application, but is required as a supplemental document with the full application (by invitation only).
- The pre-application detailed budget allows the applicant to enter costs within each budget category. The category totals and total project costs will reflect all lines entered in each category.
- The budget categories in the detailed budget include:
 - Personnel:

This section should show the labor costs for all individuals supporting the grant program effort (regardless of the source of their salaries). The hours and costs are for the full life of the grant. If an individual is employed by a contractor or subgrantee, their labor costs should not be shown here. Please include all labor costs that are associated with the proposed grant program, including those costs that will be paid for with in-kind or matching funds. Do not show fringe or other indirect costs in this section. Please use the hourly labor cost for salaried employees (use 2080 hours per year or the value your organization uses to perform this calculation). An employee working less than full time on the grant should show the numbers of hours they will work on the grant.
 - Fringe Benefits

Use the standard fringe rates used by your organization. You may use a single fringe rate (a percentage of the total direct labor) or list each of the individual fringe charges. The spreadsheet is set up to use the Total Direct Labor Cost as the base for the fringe calculation. If your organization calculates fringe benefits differently, please use a different base and discuss how you calculate fringe as a comment.

- Travel and Transportation

If you plan on reimbursing staff for the use of privately owned vehicles or if you are required to reimburse your organization for mileage charges, show your mileage and cost estimates in this section. Show the estimated cost of airfare required to support the grant program effort. Show the destination and the purpose of the travel as well as the estimated cost of the tickets. If you or are charged monthly by your organization for a vehicle for use by the grant program, indicate those costs in this section. Provide estimates for other transportation costs that may be incurred (taxi, etc.). For travel which will require the payment of subsistence or per diem in accordance with your organization's policies. Indicate the location of the travel.

- Equipment

Equipment is defined by NBRC as tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit.

- Supplies and Materials

Supplies and materials are consumable and non-consumable items that have a depreciated unit value of less than \$5,000. Please list the proposed supplies and materials as either Consumable Supplies or as Non-Consumable Materials. List the consumable supplies you propose to purchase. General office or other common supplies may be estimated using an anticipated consumption rate. List furniture, computers, printers, and other items that will not be consumed in use. Please list the quantity and unit cost.

- Consultants

Please indicate the consultants you will use. Indicate the type of consultant (skills), the number of days you expect to use them, and their daily rate.

- Contracts and Sub-Grantees

List the contractors and sub-grantees that will help accomplish the grant effort. Examples of contracts that should be shown here include contracts with Community Based Organizations, liability insurance; and training and certification for contractors and workers. If any contractor, sub-contractor, or sub-grantee is expected to receive over 10% of the total Federal amount requested, a separate Grant Application Detailed Budget (Worksheet) should be developed for that contractor or sub-grantee and the total amount of their proposed effort should be shown as a single entry in this section. Unless your proposed program will perform the primary grant effort with in-house employees (which should be listed in section 1), the costs of performing the primary grant activities should be shown in this section. Types of activities which should be shown in this section: • Contracts for all services • Training for individuals not on staff • Contracts with Community Based Organizations or Other Governmental Organizations (note the 10% requirement discussed above) • Insurance if your program will procure it separately Please provide a short description of the activity the contractor or subgrantee will perform, if not evident.

- Construction

Enter estimated amounts needed to cover administrative expenses. Do not include costs that are related to the normal functions of government. Enter estimated site and right(s)-of-way acquisition costs (this includes purchase, lease, and/or easements). Enter estimated costs related to relocation advisory assistance, replacement housing, relocation payments to displaced persons and businesses, etc. Enter estimated basic engineering fees related to construction (this includes start-up services and preparation of project performance work plan). Enter estimated engineering costs, such as surveys, tests, soil borings, etc. Enter estimated engineering inspection costs. Enter the estimated site preparation and restoration costs that are not

included in the basic construction contract. Enter the estimated costs related to demolition activities. Enter estimated costs of the construction contract. Enter estimated cost of office, shop, laboratory, safety equipment, etc. to be used at the facility, if such costs are not included in the construction contract. Enter any estimated contingency costs. Enter estimated miscellaneous costs.

- Other Direct Costs

Other Direct Costs include a number of items that are not appropriate for other sections. Other Direct Costs may include: Staff training, Telecommunications, Printing and postage Relocation, if costs are paid directly by your organization (if relocation costs are paid by a subgrantee, it should be reflected in Section 7)

- Indirect Costs

Indirect costs (including Facilities and Administration costs) are those costs that have been incurred for common or joint purposes. These costs benefit more than one cost objective and cannot be readily identified with a particular final cost objective without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Indicate your approved Indirect Cost Rate (if any) and calculate the indirect costs in accordance with the terms of your approved indirect cost rate and enter the resulting amount. Also show the applicable cost base amount and identify the proposed cost base type.

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 State Program Managers, and Advisory Board members review pre-applications for alignment with the Forest Economy Program scoring criteria, available in Appendix K.
 - Eligible pre-applications will be prioritized based on alignment with program priorities.
3. Reviewers 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.

Pre-applications prioritized for invitations to apply, will receive a response from NBRC with information on the application process, application information sessions and any feedback that was noted on the proposed project.

- 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 well-documented community or regionally supported need for the project.

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/or any feedback noted by reviewers.

PART III. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS (BY INVITATION ONLY)

FOR FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM 2024, application submission is by invitation only. An applicant must submit a Pre-application (formerly known as a Letter of Interest) and have been issued an invitation to submit a Forest Economy Program application to be eligible for funding.

LINK TO GMS:

<https://nbrcgrants.my.site.com/ApplicantLanding?username=null>

Applications (by invitation only) are due by 5:00 p.m. EST, on May 3, 2024 (Spring Round) and October 18, 2024 (Fall Round)

Applications will be required to be submitted via NBRC's Grants Management System.

Additional guidance regarding application requirements will be covered during the application programmatic information sessions.

Visit the [Program Areas page](#) of the NBRC website for more details, including step by step instructions for how to complete and submit an application.

EARLY APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:

Applicants are strongly encouraged to:

- Review the Invitation to Apply for feedback from NBRC and State Program Manager.
- Attend an application information session. Visit <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/program-areas> for more details.
- Reach out to NBRC with questions regarding eligibility and NBRC funding priorities.
- Discuss their projects with a State Program Manager to strengthen alignment with the State's priorities.
- NBRC and the States will consider a project's alignment with the funding priorities for these program dollars when scoring projects at the application phase.

- When selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase NBRC and the States will also consider:
 - Balanced geographic distribution of investments
 - Well-documented community or regionally supported need for the project
 - Projects deemed a priority by the State where the project is located

REQUESTED APPLICANT INFORMATION:

- Application Content – Complete the application by entering the required information for each of the following tabs. **Save often!**
 - **Overview Tab** of the Application
 - The applicant’s registration and all applicant information entered at the preapplication stage will be carried over into the application stage.
 - Applicant Information. Applicants should enter their **Unique Entity ID** (UEI). The UEI is required to receive an award. If an applicant does not have an UEI, please visit <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>. Submitting a registration and getting a Unique Entity ID from SAM.gov are FREE.
 - Opportunity Overview. This section is pre-populated with information related to the NBRC opportunity announcement.
 - Project Information. This section includes sections titled: “Project Abstract”, “Project Goals and Outcomes”, “Project Beneficiaries and Community Context”, “Statement of Need”, “Program Investment Priorities”, “Have you previously received NBRC funds?”, “Does this project benefit an underserved community?”, and “Which of these is most applicable to the applicant organization?”. ***Your answers from the pre-application will be populated, and you can further edit your answers to include new information or revisions in response to NBRC and State feedback.***
 - 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.

- Associate your LDD in the contacts section.
- Acknowledgement. Check “I Agree”

○ **Locations Tab** of the Application

- Application Match section: Confirm correct match. If there is a discrepancy with the match listed in the application, please contact NBRC.
- Investment Locations section: enter the street, city, state and zip code of the location(s) where the project will have investments. 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.
- Key Performance Indicators: edit and enter the Target value for each KPI. If the KPI does not apply to your project, enter 0.

○ **Budget Tab** of the Application

- Budget table – ***budget information will be carried over from preapplication.*** Revise budget categories based on new estimates, more detailed data, or corrections requested in the preapplication.
- The totals should 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.
 - NBRC Share column
 - Other Federal column

- Applicant Match column
- Other column
- 80% Federal Funding Ceiling – calculated on total project costs. There is a GMS validation process in place to verify that the NBRC Share + Other Federal Share must be less than or equal to 80% of the amount under Total Project Costs.
- Applicant match – calculated on NBRC requested amount. There is a GMS validation process in place to verify that Other Federal Share + Applicant Match + Other is greater than or equal to the required minimum match.
- Because NBRC is a federal source of funds, some projects exceed the 80% ceiling with a 80/20 request without additional non-federal funds.
- See Program Scoring Criteria #2
- Budget Narrative – carried over from pre-application
 - Populate the justification for requested project costs over \$5,000
 - Template available for guidance
 - See Program Scoring Criteria #2
- Funding sources and commitments – carried over from pre-application
 - *Do not include the NBRC source in the funding sources and commitments table*
 - ARPA is considered a federal source
 - CDBG and loans *are not* considered a federal source
 - See Program Scoring Criteria #2
- **Proposal Tab** of the Application
 - Technical Proposal. This section includes sections titled: “Approach & Methodology”, “Economic Impacts”, “Project Readiness”, and “Capacity & Qualifications”. Follow the following instructions for each:

- Review the information you put together for the pre-application and build on it here. Do not copy and paste from the project narrative, but rather expound upon the information previously provided with additional detail, where possible.
 - Prep in word document, then copy and paste into GMS. Keep the formatting simple, e.g. bullet points rather than tables and cells to avoid potential errors when saving complicated formatting. 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: Provide an explanation of the approach and methodology that will be used to meet the project objectives. Identify and explain how the project addresses program objectives and investment priorities. See Program Scoring Criteria #3.
 - Economic Impacts: Explain the anticipated economic outcomes and outputs of the project. See Program Scoring Criteria #4.
 - Project Readiness: Describe if the project is ready for implementation or will require additional planning tasks to begin. Provide a detailed milestone schedule for completion of the project, along with an explanation of the applicant's ability to complete the proposed work within the 3-year period of performance. See Program Scoring Criteria #1
 - Capacity & Qualifications: Provide an explanation of the capacity of the organization to meet the project objectives, including any partnerships with other entities to support project. Provide an explanation of the qualifications of the personnel as they relate to project objectives. See Program Scoring Criteria #5.
- **Forms and Files Tab** of the Application
 - Supporting Documents Checklist. Mandatory documents for all applicants must be completed and uploaded or attached to the application system. They include:

- SF-424cbw (details tab only)
 - NEPA Intake Form
 - Authorized Official Resolution
 - SF-424B
 - SF-424D
 - Waiver approval documentation. Applicants who received approval for a 75% Expenditure Waiver, Significant Benefits Waiver, and/or LDD Waiver need to confirm the waiver approval file is attached.
- Non-profit applicants have additional mandatory documents which must be completed and uploaded or attached to that application system
 - Certificate of Good Standing
 - IRS Determination Letter
 - Indirect Cost Rate documentation. Applicants who use an indirect rate other than the diminimis rate of 10%, are required to upload or attach the negotiated indirect rate cost agreement with a cognizant agency. Otherwise, the diminimis rate will be applied.
 - **IF APPLICABLE: Applicants who are utilizing NBRC funds to create a new or supplement an existing Revolving Loan Fund are required to submit documentation in addition to the items listed above.**

*Revolving Loan Fund Documentation. See NBRC RLF Policy and required documentation in the Appendix of this User Manual. This additional RLF documentation must be developed by the applicant in response to Appendix instructions and must be uploaded to the GMS.



APPENDIX A – PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Northern Border Regional Commission

Marina Bowie
Forest Economy Program Manager
(603) 724-5802
mbowie@nbrc.gov

NBRC State Program Managers

Maine

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

New York

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

New Hampshire

Steve Fortier
Department of Business and Economic
Affairs
(603) 688-5918
steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov

Vermont

Kristie Farnham
Agency of Commerce & Community
Development
(802) 392-5268
kristie.farnham@vermont.gov

Forest Economy Program Advisory Board Members

Commission

Representative: Joe Short, jshort@northernforest.org (603) 491-2651

Maine: Dana Doran, dana@plcloggers.org (207) 688.8195
Eric Kingsley, kingsley@inrslc.com (207) 233-9910

New Hampshire: Andy Fast, Andrew.Fast@unh.edu (603) 862-2402
Jasen Stock, jstock@nhtoa.org (603) 674-8148

Vermont: Christine McGowan, christine@vsjf.org (802) 828-5770
Charlie Hancock, northernwoodsforestry@gmail.com
(802) 326-2093

New York: Michelle Capone, mcapone@danc.org (315) 661-3200
Daniel Berheide, dberheide@wetelcom.com (518) 461-3614



APPENDIX B – 2024 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM SPRING TIMELINE

Program Milestones and Key Dates

Timeline and Program Overview on Website	December 22, 2023
Program Manual (additional program related materials)	January 2024
Program Information Sessions (Virtual)	February 2024
Grants Management System (GMS) Office Hours	March 2024

Spring Round Key Dates

Online Grants Management System open	March 11, 2024
Pre-applications due (Required)	March 22, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST
Waivers:	March 22, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

Significant Benefit (if applicable)
75% Prior NBRC Investment (if applicable)

Online Grants Management System open	April 15, 2024
Application Information Sessions (Virtual)	April 2024

Spring Round Applications due (By invitation only) May 3, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

NBRC Commission Meeting	June 20-21, 2024
NBRC notification of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants	June 28, 2024

APPENDIX C – 2024 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM FALL TIMELINE

Fall Round Key Dates

Online Grants Management System open

August 15, 2024

Pre-applications due (Required)

September 6, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

Waivers:

September 6, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

Significant Benefit and
75% Prior NBRC Investment (if applicable)

Online Application system open

September 15, 2024

Application Information Sessions

September 2024

Fall Round Applications due (By invitation only) October 18, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

NBRC Commission Meeting (Virtual)

Week of December 2, 2024

NBRC notification of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants

December 20, 2024



APPENDIX D – 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.

[Click here for NEPA INTAKE FORM in fillable PDF Format](#)



APPENDIX E - 75% NBRC PRIOR INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE POLICY & WAIVER

If an applicant and/or co-applicant has an outstanding NBRC investment (under any program), they are not eligible to be considered for additional NBRC funding until their current project has both: submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project and demonstrated that 75% of the cost share has been expended by **March 1, 2024 (Spring Round) or September 1, 2024 (Fall Round)**. If the 75% expenditure cannot be met, the entity can apply for a waiver.

The waiver request will not be considered complete if it does not contain a fully executed Affidavit and supporting documentation. 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 2024 NBRC program funding.

If the 75% expenditure requirement cannot be met by the deadline, a request for a waiver of this requirement, **together with documentation to support the waiver**, including the current status of the project, delays encountered (if applicable), projected completion date of the prior NBRC award(s), capacity to both complete prior award(s) and take on new projects. Information to support the waiver should also include the economic impacts of the proposed project, and how a delay in applying for funding will be a detriment. Economic impact support documentation should include specific and not speculative information.

NOTE: If an applicant needs to submit a 75% expenditure waiver, the executed Affidavit together with documentation supporting the waiver request must be submitted in addition to the required Preapplication documentation and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. March 22, 2024 (Spring Round) or September 6, 2024 (Fall Round).

The waiver must be approved by NBRC for the applicant to be eligible for invitation to the application phase of the process. If an applicant or co-applicant is required to submit a 75% Expenditure Waiver and does not, the Preapplication will be considered ineligible for further consideration.

[Click here for 75% NBRC Prior Investment Expenditure Waiver in fillable PDF format](#)



APPENDIX F – SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT WAIVER AFFIDAVIT

Requesting a significant benefit waiver for consideration. There are two exceptions that require a Significant Benefits Waiver to allow those projects or applicants/co-applicants that fall outside of the designated distressed counties, transitional counties and Areas of Isolated Distress within an Attainment county to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:

1. An exception exists for projects located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified “Areas of Isolated Distress” that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
2. An exception exists for applicants or co-applicants located outside of the NBRC service area in a member state with projects that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.

Process: If a Significant Benefit waiver is being requested, the documentation supporting the waiver request, which includes an executed Significant Benefit Waiver **together with documentation to support the waiver**, including clear and convincing evidence of a project’s economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties, must be submitted in addition to the Pre-application required documentation and **must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. March 22, 2024 (Spring Round) or September 6, 2024 (Fall Round)**. A Significant Benefit Waiver request requires approval by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor’s Alternates of the four NBRC States. The significant benefit waiver must be approved for the entity to be considered eligible to be issued an invitation to submit an application for funding.

If an applicant or co-applicant is required to submit a Significant Benefit Waiver and does not submit the waiver form in addition to the documentation referenced above, in addition to the required Pre-application documentation, the Pre-application will be considered ineligible for further consideration.

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



APPENDIX G- OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Examples of Outcomes

Communities Improved: The number of communities negatively impacted by the decline in the forest-based economy with a measurable improvement as a result of an NBRC project, including projects that attract new wood-utilizing enterprises, infrastructure to support the forest-based industry, utilization of wood-based heating technologies in public use projects, and educational opportunities. This measure should also be used for technical assistance grants. The “communities improved” number will generally be the same as, or a subset of, the “communities served” output measure.

Workers/Trainees/Students 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, degree or other career credential, measured during the project period when possible. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number of workers, trainees or students 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 individuals 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.

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 in support of the forest-based industry, 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,

in support of the forest-based industry, 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 in support of the forest-based industry, 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 may apply to workforce training and development projects, and business planning and technical assistance projects, for example. The number should be substantiated by participating or impacted organizations as a result of the project, and measured within the period of performance and/or up to three years following the period of performance end date. 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.

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 renewable energy projects 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.

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 a 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 a 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.

Workers/Trainees Served: The number of worker/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.
- **EJScreen** is the EPA's environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic socioeconomic indicators. EJScreen users choose a geographic area by type the name of a town, county or state into the “find address or place” search box. The tool then provides demographic socioeconomic and environmental information for that area. The most relevant data for the NBRC application can be found under the “Additional Demographics” map layer. A popup box with Additional Demographics will appear and the user can select “People of Color Population” then “Add to Map”, and “American Indian Population” then “Add to Map”. When the user clicks on an area of the map, a popup box allows you to “Generate Report” which will give you all of the demographics for that area. The user can print or save the report for future reference or inclusion with the application as supporting data. All of the EJScreen indicators are publicly available data.

EJScreen was designed as a web-based tool to provide easy access to reports and maps without the need to install software. To help beginners get started using EJScreen, a basic step-by-step walk-through is provided here. The User Guide is available for download at: [User Guide for EJScreen \(pdf\)](#),

- **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

It is NBRC’s policy not to provide RLF grant funding only to entities whose primary business is lending. 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.

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

One of the major problems in local business development, and a significant contributing factor to local economic distress, is credit availability. Even when credit may be available, the cost and terms of the credit may prevent firms from expanding, continuing operations, or starting up. The result may be a community's loss of jobs, tax revenues, and private investment. 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.
- 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. A work plan should include:

- 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.
- Demonstrate a need for loan funds. As a minimum, applicants should 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.
- Include a list of proposed fees and other charges it will assess borrowers.
- 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 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 are some of the items that should be addressed by the applicant's RLF plan.
- Provide a set of goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes for the applicant's program.

RLF Loan Program Policies

- NBRC RLF grantees must adhere to NBRC RLF Loan Program policies recorded in this publication. Grantees must affirm that they understand and do agree to operate RLFs in accordance with the NBRC RLF policies contained in these guidelines. NBRC relies on the affirmation of each grantee's chief executive officer, on this plan, as a basis for releasing loan funds to the grantee.
- 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.

- NBRC RLF grantees must adhere to NBRC RLF Loan Program policies recorded in this publication. Grantees must affirm that they understand and do agree to operate RLFs in accordance with the NBRC RLF policies contained in these guidelines. NBRC relies on the affirmation of each grantee's chief executive officer, on this plan, as a basis for releasing loan funds to the grantee.

Borrowers and Loans

- Private, for-profit firms that do business within the NBRC Service Area are the primary eligible target market for RLF loans. Firms must include majority US citizens or legal resident ownership. The borrower may be located outside the Service Area, but the activity financed, and its benefits must be within the NBRC's Service Area.
- 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 any nonprofit.
- 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 for any officer or employee of a grantee, any current member of a grantee's loan review committee, administrative board or staff that reviews, approves, or otherwise participates in decisions on RLF loans, and people related to them by blood, marriage, or law are prohibited. Former members of the board, former members of the staff and former members of the loan review committee are barred from receiving NBRC RLF loan assistance for one year from the date of termination of their

service. Loan activities that directly benefit these individuals or people related to them by blood, marriage, or law are prohibited for a period of one year from the date of termination of service of such related person.

- 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%.

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.

Program Income

- Program income is the income received by the grantee earned as a result of lending authorized by the grant agreement. Program income typically includes but is not limited to the following, however described by the grantee.
 - Loan interest.
 - Fees for processing loan applications.
 - Loan closing fees.
 - Periodic fees for servicing loans.
 - Penalties and interest caused by the borrower's late payment.
 - Proceeds from the sale of collateral in excess of the unpaid balance of the original loan.
 - Interest earned on loan repayment balances while awaiting re-lending.
- Program income will be added to the loan fund to expand RLF lending or used to cover reasonable and necessary administrative costs of the RLF.
- Grantees must keep complete records (e.g., timecards, logs, invoices, vouchers) to document those administrative costs. Administrative costs include direct costs that are specifically identifiable to an RLF cost and indirect costs which are incurred for common objectives.

Funds Management

- Grantees may request advance payments only at the time and in the amount immediately needed to close loans.
- All grant payments (drawdown) made by NBRC to grantees are advance payments and are made based on a Grantee invoice as well as supporting documents such as either a letter of commitment to the borrower or a proposal to extend credit approved by the grantee's loan review committee. All payments

are made by automated clearing house (ACH) procedures. Grantees are provided with an ACH enrollment form with their initial grant contract.

- Grant advances should not be requested earlier than 30 days prior to the anticipated loan closing date. Should the forecast loan closing date be delayed by more than 60 days beyond the forecasted date, Grantee should be prepared to return the advance to the NBRC.
- Grantees must place funds advanced from NBRC or returned to the RLF from lending activities in accounts pending the closing of new loans. Interest earning accounts may be federally insured deposits or short-term certificates of deposit that are covered by deposit insurance.
- Excess Un-loaned Funds
- If RLF grantees are not using NBRC grant funds for lending activities, grants may be revoked and grant funds recovered, as follows:
 - If an RLF grantee does not require an initial advance payment from an RLF grant (either capitalization or recapitalization) within 12 months following the date of a Notice to Proceed document, NBRC may revoke its approval of such RLF grant.
 - If an RLF grantee does not require the full amount of a previously approved RLF grant (either capitalization or recapitalization) within 36 months of grant notice to proceed, the unused grant balance may be de-obligated by NBRC.
 - Nothing in this section shall cause a grantee to be automatically ineligible for additional RLF grant recapitalizations.

Reporting

Quarterly Progress Reports: Using the Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR), each Recipient is required to provide quarterly progress reports beginning October 1, 2024. Quarterly reports will be required until all NBRC funds are disbursed by the grantee for loans. Reports are due as follows:

Reporting Period:	October 1 - December 31	Report Due by January 31
Reporting Period:	January 1 - March 31	Report Due by April 30
Reporting Period:	April 1 - June 30	Report Due by July 31
Reporting Period:	July 1 - September 30	Report Due by October 30

Annual Financial, Loan Portfolio, and Audit Reports: Following full disbursement of funds to the grantee, reports for RLF activities for any Federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30) will be due on October 30. Reports will extend beyond project closeout until all resulting

principal from loans has been paid in full back to the grantee or seven years after a Notice to Proceed has been issued, whichever is sooner.

Project Monitoring

- NBRC monitors RLF grant performance through required reports submitted by the grantee, audit findings, grantee site visits and other necessary contact with the grantee.
- Grantees are responsible for operating NBRC funded RLF's in accordance with the terms of the NBRC's statutory provisions (40 USC, Subtitle V), NBRC RLF Guidelines, the grant agreement and the grantee's RLF operating plan. RLF grants are held by the grantee as trustee for the benefit of borrowers and potential borrowers.
- Grantees may be required to repay NBRC the amount of NBRC RLF funds used in violation of the code, these guidelines, the grant agreement, or the grantee's operating plan.
- A grantee's failure to comply with these guidelines or the terms of the grant, including reporting requirements, may be cause for terminating the grant. When grants are terminated for cause, NBRC has the right to recover grant funds and/or the assets of the RLF project, in accordance with the legal rights of the grantee and the Commission.



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.

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.

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: A community who suffers from a combination of economic, health and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources or conditions, such as standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights and

vulnerable populations, including minority, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, homeless, and limited English-speaking populations. 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](https://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 – SCORING CRITERIA

Forest Economy Program Scoring Criteria	
SCORING CRITERIA #1: PROJECT READINESS	MAXIMUM POINTS
<p>This category reflects an applicant's ability to perform the proposed work within the 3-year award period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award. The applicant clearly demonstrates how far along the project is in the necessary planning, design, engineering, and state and local permitting processes including the completion of NEPA. Applicant accounts for feasible timelines for completion and includes a short summary of processes in progress or completed. The applicant shows attention to detail and provides a complete application. Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not. 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.</p>	10
Points Allocation	
Planning and Design (0-2 points)	2 points
Partnerships (0-2 points)	2 points
Timeline and Milestone Schedule (0-2 points)	2 points
Project need and opportunity (0-2 points)	2 points
Immediacy and relevance (0-2 points)	2 points
SCORING CRITERIA #2: PROJECT COSTS AND MATCH	MAXIMUM POINTS

Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable. Project costs and match are clearly outlined. Project costs should include a detailed project budget that aligns with the project description. Project budget shows detailed costs and relevant cost estimates. Project timeline is feasible and supports timely project completion. Applicants must identify sources of match in the budget and detailed budget narrative. Applicants may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment/support to confirm stated match contributions. Leveraged funds in addition to required match should also be described if applicable. Budget narrative should be aligned with the project description, provide brief justification for expenses over \$5,000.	10
Points Allocation	
Budget narrative (0-4 points)	4
Detailed project budget (0-2 points)	2
Relevant cost estimates (0-2 points)	2
Match/cost share to complete project clearly identified (0-2 points)	2
SCORING CRITERIA #3: ALIGNMENT WITH PURPOSE, GOALS AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES OF THE FEP	
MAXIMUM POINTS	
This category reviews how project fits within the Forest Economy Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets program priorities in the project summary. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities and project categories outlined in the program materials. Consideration of projects identified by the State where the project is located as a priority or that represent a wide geographical distribution of NBRC funds will also result in a higher score.	30
Points Allocation	
Project meets investment priority(ies) of the Forest Economy Program. Project describes in the project summary how it meets one or more of the Forest Economy Program investment priorities. Points are awarded based on details provided, state prioritization and geographical distribution of NBRC funding. Projects will receive two points for each investment priority met. Note – applicants must list and describe how the project meets each specified investment criterion. (0-15 points)	15

Project scope addresses identified project category(ies) of the Forest Economy Program. Project describes how the scope of work fits within one or more of the Forest Economy Program project categories. Points are awarded based on details provided. Projects will receive ten points for clearly addressing how the scope of work meets a single project category. (0-10 points)	10
Beyond the first project category identified (see row above), projects will receive one additional point for clearly addressing how the scope of work meets each additional project category. Note – applicants must list and describe how the project scope addresses each specified project category. (0-3 points)	3
New applicants: Applicants who have not received a past NBRC award will be awarded 2 points.	2
SCORING CRITERIA #4: FOREST ECONOMY SECTOR IMPACT	
	MAXIMUM POINTS
Projects will be reviewed for anticipated impact on the region’s forest economy. The project demonstrates it will have impacts such as job retention, job creation and/or wage growth within an identified timeframe. Applicants are encouraged to include narratives from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts and the importance to larger economic development strategies.	30
Points Allocation	
Applicant identifies the challenge the project seeks to address (0-5 points)	5
Self-identified outcomes and measures of success (up to 25 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs and employment impacts are described (0-5 points) • Describes scale of impact for community, county, or region (0-5 points) • Documentation provided to support expected impacts (0-5 points) • Industry and/or community support for the project is represented through letters of support (0-10 points) 	25
SCORING CRITERIA #5: COLLABORATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	
	MAXIMUM POINTS

<p>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. If an applicant has received funding under a prior NBRC award, their performance in administering those awards will also be considered. New applicants or applicants with no prior Federal award history will not be reviewed negatively*. Describe roles and qualifications of staff and partners. Describe the partnerships in place.</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Points Allocation</p>	
<p>Describes organizational capacity including any partnerships with other entities to fill out expertise (0-8 points)</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>Provides assessment of past performance (0-6 points)</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Provides description of roles and qualifications of project staff and partners (0-6 points)</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>*If an entity is awarded funding and deemed to not have sufficient internal capacity to self-administer their project, NBRC may require the entity to contract with a Local Development District (LDD) who has opted in to NBRC’s LDD Partnership Program.</p>	