



2026 FOREST ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM

Part 1: Overview

The **Forest Economy Program**, administered by the Northern Border Regional Commission, makes awards in the form of Grant Agreements. The program stimulates economic growth in the forest-based industries, including new technologies and viable business models, across the NBRC four-state region in alignment with state economic development plans and forest economy initiatives.

Important Application Dates: The Forest Economy Program will run two funding rounds in 2026. Pre-applications are required for funding consideration. Pre-applications are reviewed by both NBRC and states. NBRC is responsible for determining eligibility and States are responsible for issuing an invitation to apply. Pre-applications determine the final maximum award size eligibility. Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply and must be submitted using NBRC's online application system. Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding under [40 U.S.C. §15733](#).

Spring funding round:

- Pre-applications due before 5:00pm EST on February 27
- Applications due before 5:00pm EST on April 17
- Approximate Grant Award date: June

Fall funding round:

- Pre-applications due before 5:00pm EST on August 18
- Applications due before 5:00pm EST October 16
- Approximate Grant Award date: December

Executive Summary: The Forest Economy Program supports a broad range of economic development initiatives, including infrastructure indirect support of timber and forest-based industries.

Funding Information: NBRC anticipates making up to \$4 million available for competitive awards. Upon completion of the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations process, additional funds may be made available through a revised Forest Economy Program announcement. Forest Economy Program funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. Forest Economy projects are eligible for an award up to \$1 million.

Eligible purposes include community development, workforce training and development, business planning and technical assistance, public infrastructure projects in direct support of the forest economy, and marketing, communication and education work. Detailed definitions, requirements, and examples of eligible projects are available in the Forest Economy Program User Manual.

Cost Sharing Requirements: NBRC defines match as the minimum required by law to receive NBRC funds. Match is calculated on the Total Project Costs. Prospective applicants should refer to the NBRC

distress criteria to determine the level of required match for the project location, which is updated annually as mandated by Congress.

Part 2: Full Text

Program Description: 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. Projects must be consistent with the Program investment priorities of the Forest Economy Program, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives.

Eligible purposes will include one (or multiple) of the following project priorities. For the purposes of this program, “locally sourced” means sourced, where possible, within the [four state NBRC region](#).

- **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 extreme weather readiness.
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
- **Workforce [re] training and development projects** for the purpose of building the employee skills and recruiting and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses. Projects will be reviewed for alignment with EO 14278 including connections to registered apprenticeships, new industries and occupations, and high-growth and emerging sectors.
Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Development and marketing of targeted workforce programs, including registered apprenticeships particularly with new industries and occupations and high-growth and emerging sectors, to support identified employers’ needs for a skilled workforce (i.e. safety, apprenticeship, etc.)
 - Opportunities to train incumbent workers in the forest economy in programs that promote innovation and new technologies (i.e. precision forestry, Artificial Intelligence in the workplace, etc.)
 - Training and recruitment programs that prepare participants for careers in logging, forestry, and related businesses

- **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
- **Public 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, and/or demonstrate the use of wood products in public infrastructure.
Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Energy sourcing or supply upgrades that reduce costs for industry and/or create new markets for residuals
- **Marketing/communication and education work** (MUST BE PAIRED with at least one other project category).
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.

Eligible Commission Service Area: Only projects within the NBRC’s service area are eligible for funding under [40 U.S.C. §15733](#). For 2026, the NBRC service area is:

- **Maine**: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties
- **New Hampshire**: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, Merrimack, and Sullivan counties
- **New York**: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates counties
- **Vermont**: all counties within the state

Eligible Applicants:

- **State governments** of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- **Local governments** and secondary and career technical centers (village, town, city and county)
- **Other political subdivisions of states** (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- **Non-profit entities:** Designated 501(c) and exempt from taxation under 501(a). Non-profit entities must be able to demonstrate they have established operations in a member state, and they have federal grant experience related to economic development.
- **Federally recognized Indian Tribes;** § 200.54 Indian tribe. See annually published [Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services.](#)

Ineligible Applicants:

- For-profit entities
- Other entities that are not a 501(c), [40 U.S.C. 15101\(c\)](#)
- Non-profit entities that do not have a federally recognized 501(c) status
- Entities with prior federal or state funding history that have been identified as ineligible for future investments

Submission Requirements: Pre-applications are reviewed by both NBRC and states. NBRC is responsible for determining eligibility and States are responsible for issuing an invitation to apply. Pre-applications determine the final maximum award size eligibility. Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply and must be submitted using NBRC's online application system. Interested and invited applicants should refer to the 2026 Forest Economy Program User Manual for detailed pre-application and application submission instructions. The User Manual will be made available on NBRC's website at www.nbrc.gov.

Evaluation Priorities: NBRC and state programs review and score proposals using the detailed scoring criteria available in the program manual. The NBRC Grant programs are awarded in partnership with the States of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Preference will be given to proposals that meet Forest Economy 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.

