



**Northern Border
Regional Commission**



2024 USER MANUAL

TIMBER FOR TRANSIT 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)

Updated July, 2024 for the Fall grant round

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INTRODUCTION

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

The Timber for Transit Program is designed to advance the use of domestic forest products in transportation infrastructure projects across Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont to showcase the capabilities of wood in these applications.

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Commit to utilizing domestically sourced timber;
- Demonstrate evidence of planning for climate resiliency, including but not limited to carbon capture, increased frequency and intensity of storm events, and sea level rise;
- Utilize projects as a tool for university and industry education and training;
- Demonstrates alignment with state and community initiatives.
- Include promotion/publication/marketing as part of their project deliverables;
- Support, benefit, or engage communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).

Highly competitive projects will demonstrate and widely promote the utility of high value forest products (e.g., glued laminated timber, cross laminated timber, composite materials, etc.) in transportation infrastructure and commit to enhancing climate resilience in rural communities.

PART I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

I. AVAILABLE FUNDING

The Northern Border Regional Commission may award up to \$25,000,000 over the next three years for projects that demonstrate the capabilities of wood in transportation infrastructure.

Transportation Infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair of physical transport facilities, systems and structures, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for transporting from one point to another, that:

- are open to the general public for use,
- facilitate reliable movement of people and goods, and
- influence local and regional economies.

Transportation infrastructure may include roads, railways, airways, waterways, canals and terminals such as airports, railway stations, bus stations, parking, and seaports.

II. PROJECT CATEGORIES

Projects will be classified as either feasibility or implementation projects during the pre-application review process conducted by both NBRC and the member States (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine). For detailed explanations of the feasibility and implementation categories, please see below.

The purpose of this funding is to advance the use of wood-based materials and composites (subsequently identified in this document as “advanced wood materials”) through applied research and demonstration projects that showcase the suitability of such materials to transportation and transportation adjacent infrastructure.

III. AWARD SIZE

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

Feasibility Projects will be awarded a minimum of \$250,000, and a maximum of \$1,000,000.

1. State or regional inventory assessments of the suitability of wood components to address needed transportation infrastructure improvements and/or new construction.
2. Architectural and engineering designs, cost analyses, and permitting necessary for implementation projects as identified below.

Planning resources: For reference, “Standard Plans for Glued Laminated Timber Bridge Superstructures” developed by the USDA Forest Service are available [here](#). For additional information from the National Center for Wood Transportation Structures, visit woodcenter.org.

Implementation Projects will be awarded a minimum of \$1,000,000 and a maximum of \$5,000,000.

1. Transportation infrastructure projects which utilize commercialized wood products and advanced wood materials to address climate adaptive transportation improvements.
2. Design and construction of pilot and demonstration projects that showcase the capabilities and benefits of utilizing advanced wood materials in transportation infrastructure, including projects that are a hybrid of wood and traditional materials.

For example:

- Permanent vehicular and pedestrian bridges that are publicly owned or where public access to privately owned land is documented. These could include trail bridges, covered bridges, culverts and wildlife crossings, etc.
 - Revitalization of existing and construction of new railway structures such as rail bridges. Deferred maintenance projects will not be considered under this program.
 - Waterfront transportation structures
3. Transportation-adjacent structures that utilize advanced wood materials.

For example:

- Highway rest stops, ferry terminals, train stations, etc.
- Transportation infrastructure in support of outdoor recreation and tourism
- Signage and utility transport infrastructure

- Highway sound barriers and retaining walls.

Feasibility & Implementation: Projects which address both feasibility and implementation as described above will be awarded a minimum of \$1MM and a maximum of \$5MM.

NBRC will consider “**higher maximum**” awards (up to \$5MM) for projects that 1) demonstrate alignment with two or more of the funding priorities of the program, 2) project has been identified by NBRC or a State(s) as addressing a time-sensitive issue of magnitude or severity that will be addressed by the proposed project, and 3) construction takes place in two or more eligible communities, counties or states. Eligibility for the maximum award amount will be determined in the PREAPPLICATION review process conducted by NBRC and the member states.

IV. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

Projects funded under the 2024 Timber for Transit 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 exceptions that **require** Significant Benefit Waiver approval to be eligible to seek NBRC funds.

Those exceptions are:

- Applicants and/or co-applicants whose primary place of business/operations is located within an Attainment County but outside of an “Isolated Areas of Distress” that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- Applicants and/or co-applicants whose primary place of business/operations is located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project 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 project investment in and economic impacts to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties is required at the time of preapplication submission. See [Appendix E](#) for waiver details and affidavit.

The match ratio for projects approved under a Significant Benefit Waiver 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 invested in both distressed and transitional counties is eligible for an **averaged match ratio**.
- If more than 50% of requested funds will be used by the applicant/co-applicant entity to support administration of the project outside of a distressed or transitional county, the project is eligible for the 50% reimbursement, **50% match ratio**.

SECTION B. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND INELIGIBILITY

I. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The NBRC Economic and Infrastructure funding is available to:

- State governments of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York
- Local governments (village, town, city, and county)
- Secondary and career technical centers
- Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- Non-profit entities. 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.

IV. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Following the receipt of a Notice to Proceed from NBRC, Timber for Transit 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)

V. INELIGIBLE COSTS

- Application preparation
- Food and beverages*
- Meals and lodging
- Alcohol
- Entertainment
- Appraisals of property to be purchased or used as match.
- Allowance or payment of debts

- Maintenance, 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.

VI. PREVIOUS 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 March 1, 2024 (Spring Round) or September 1, 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 Appendix E of this manual.

SECTION C. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

I. MATCH and COST SHARE

NBRC defines **match** as the minimum amount of non-NBRC funds as required by federal code to receive NBRC funds based on the location of

where the project will occur. This calculation is based on the requested NBRC award amount. In addition, federal code prohibits federal grant funds from making up more than 80% of the total project amount.

NBRC refers to **cost share** as the total of all other funds necessary to complete the project. The recipient will be required to demonstrate they have committed match and cost share, that both meets their minimum required match and is below the 80% federal grant gap, to secure a Notice to Proceed. Refer to Section XV (above) in this Application Manual to determine the amount of required minimum matching funds for your project. To calculate the minimum required match, multiply the NBRC award amount by the designated match rate for the project location.

The minimum match amount may not be the only non-NBRC funds required to complete the project. For example, a project located in a Distressed County requires \$800,000 for completion. The project is eligible to request a maximum of \$640,000 from NBRC. The minimum **match** required for this project is \$128,000 in non-NBRC funds based on a 20% match ratio. The cost share for this project is the remaining amount of \$32,000 (\$800,00 - \$768,000).

NBRC allows cost share to come from other federal sources, however no more than 80% of the project funding can be comprised of federal grant funding sources. Federal loans do not count to the 80% cap. This calculation is based on the Total Project Costs, inclusive of the NBRC award amount and all minimum match and cost share sources. In the earlier example, the total federal grant amount cannot exceed \$640,000 of an \$800,000 project, so the minimum match and cost share could not come from a federal grant source. **While the match and/or cost share may be met by other federal grants, it must be authorized by those other agencies as not all federal dollars can match one another.**

In another example, a project located in a Transitional County requires \$600,000 for completion. The project is eligible to request a maximum of \$300,000 from NBRC, based on a 50% match ratio. The minimum Match required for this project is \$150,000 in non-NBRC funds. While the project may be able to utilize other federal grant funding to meet the minimum match and cost share requirements, the total federal grant amount cannot exceed \$480,000.

The recipient will be required to document that funds necessary to complete the project are 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:

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

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

1. the # of hours staff are anticipated for work on the project;
 2. the pay of those staff (hourly rate); and
 3. the indirect cost rate that will be used (if applicable).
- **Municipal lending:** NBRC requires proof of authorization to spend. This may be different for different states, and may take the form of city council approval, Town or City manager approval, or demonstration of town meeting approval. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they have the appropriate authority to loan/bond funds for the project, but there must be some sort of authorization documented.
 - **Commitment from project partner:** A letter is required to have the following elements:
 1. state the amount of the commitment;
 2. the date that the award was made; and
 3. 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.

- **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 0, or consist of the professional fee charged in any situation. Volunteers may not be: a) counted for the same activity in a different project (counted twice), or b) be federal employees. Additionally, their time must be recorded and be submitted as an invoice. You may include any Indirect Cost Rate in addition to the volunteer rate. Note: the rate that is calculated at the time of the grant agreement will be the rate for the remaining project period until project completion. While the national rates may fluctuate, it is not feasible to renegotiate these rates during

the project period. In-kind services in the form of volunteers on a construction site are highly discouraged.

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

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.

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.

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 I of this manual for how program income is treated under a RLF project.

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

Future revenue or letters of award for which an entity must satisfy conditions to receive the funding are not considered committed dollars.

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 has 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. If the project is multi-state, each state will review applications independently. It is possible to be funded in one state and not another.

III. FEDERAL FUNDING CEILING

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 D. PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES AND SCORING

I. AGENCY INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Commit to utilizing domestically sourced timber.
- Demonstrate evidence of planning for climate resiliency, including but not limited to carbon capture, increased frequency and intensity of storm events, and sea level rise.
- Utilize projects as a tool for university and industry education and training
- Demonstrates alignment with state and community initiatives.
- Include promotion/publication/marketing as part of their project deliverables.
- Support, benefit, or engage communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).

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

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 provide application scores 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.

NBRC and member states review and score project proposals based on 5 categories. These criteria are further described below and within Appendix K of this Manual.

- 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 the 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 Program Investment Priorities.** This category reviews how a project aligns with the Timber for Transit investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets these priorities in the project summary. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities outlined in the program materials. (30 points)
 - 4) **Economic Impacts.** Implementation projects will be reviewed based on anticipated direct economic impact. Feasibility projects should base responses on the anticipated economic impact of implementing the project and provide documentation supporting these anticipated economic impacts. Applicants should also articulate a pathway from feasibility to implementation. 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)

NBRC and the States will consider a project's alignment with the funding priorities for these program dollars when both issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase and in scoring projects at the application phase. When issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase, NBRC and the States will also consider the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment as well as the benefits provided to the broader community and region. When selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase NBRC and the States will also consider a balanced geographic distribution of investments as well as a community or regionally supported need for the project.

III. PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA

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

NBRC may consult external experts to advise on the technical components of projects. NBRC reviews projects and determines eligibility of the applicant, co-applicant and use of funds. NBRC and member states review and score project proposals based on the scoring criteria provided in Appendix K.

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

Please see Appendix K for the NBRC and State scoring matrix.

PART II. APPLYING FOR NBRC FUNDS

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

SECTION A. REGISTRATION

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

You will need the following information on hand to successfully complete your registration:

- Your Employer Identification Number (EIN);
 - Your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. You can obtain a UEI for free by registering with [SAM.gov](#);
 - The County where your entity is organized to do business;
 - The name and contact information of your Authorized Official (limited to one individual). The **Authorized Official** is the executive that has been granted permission to sign all NBRC investment documents that bind the applicant. When submitting an application, you will be required to submit an official resolution from the applicant's legal authority documenting the name and title of the person authorized to act on behalf of the entity. **Only Authorized Officials may sign NBRC documents that bind the applicant, including Registering the applicant in the EGMS.**
 - The name and contact information of 1 other individual authorized to work on your preapplication and application. There is a limit of 2 project contacts. Associating an LDD contact does not count toward project contact total.
-

- Once you have submitted your registration NBRC will review it for completeness and eligibility and either Approve or Reject your Registration. This process may take 1 to 2 business day. If approved, the organization's Authorized Official identified during Registration will receive an email notification regarding Organization Registration approval, and a second email prompting them to set up their username password for their account. If your registration is rejected, you will receive an explanation why it was rejected.

SECTION B. PREAPPLICATION

A preapplication is **required** for the TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM. In 2024, preapplications are **due by 5:00 p.m. EST, on March 22, 2024 (Spring Round) and September 6, 2024 (Fall Round)**.

- Preapplications are required to be submitted using the NBRC Grants Management System. Detailed instructions are available on the NBRC website on the [Resources](#) page in the [Preapplication Guidance Document](#).
- Applicants will be required to register for an account with the NBRC Grants Management System **before** submitting a preapplication. See Section A. Registration above for details.
- A multitude of resources are available on the [Resources](#) page of the NBRC website to assist you in developing your preapplication. Once there, click on “**Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents**” to find a library of helpful resources and forms.
- All waiver requests are **required** to be submitted with the preapplication – see the **Forms and Files Tab** section below for details.
- If a 75% NBRC Prior Investment Waiver and/or a Significant Benefit Waiver is required and not submitted with the preapplication, **the project will be deemed ineligible.**

EARLY PREAPPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:

Prior to the opening of the EGMS for preapplication submissions, applicants can begin to prepare their preapplication. Some helpful first steps include:

- 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/t4t>.
- Reach out to NBRC with questions regarding eligibility and NBRC funding priorities (found in Part I Section E of this manual).
- Discuss projects with your State Program Manager to determine alignment with the State's priorities (see [Appendix K](#) of this manual to review scoring criteria).
- Review eligibility requirements to determine if your project is required to submit a waiver with the preapplication. Waiver details are available in the Appendices of this Manual.
- Review NBRC's [NEPA page](#). All applicants must include NEPA in their project budget and timeline regardless of project type and other state or federal funder requirements.

PREAPPLICATION DEVELOPMENT:

Detailed instructions for using the online grants system to submit a preapplication and two recorded videos are available on the NBRC website on the [Program Areas page](#). Please review these detailed instructions prior to beginning your preapplication in the EGMS. The information provided below is intended to supplement those resources.

Once all support materials have been reviewed, applicants may want to develop narrative responses in a word processing document to then copy and paste into the EGMS preapplication text boxes.

To ensure your preapplication is complete and competitive we have developed these recommendations:

- **Project title** – Please give your project a unique title that provides a brief description of your project. Example: Smithville Wastewater Expansion Project
- **Co-applicant** – List any co-applicants that will play a role in the completion of your project. Co-applicants must meet all the same eligibility requirements as an applicant and must be included in your preapplication to receive NBRC funds or contribute match to the project. Please note that the co-applicant does not receive reimbursements from NBRC. Only the applicant will be eligible to submit and receive direct reimbursements from NBRC.

Overview Tab - Project Information

Responses in this section should be concise but provide enough information so that someone unfamiliar with your community, region and organization will understand your project.

Highly competitive projects will demonstrate how your project supports NBRC and your State's funding priorities, the specific activities to be undertaken with NBRC funding and the expected outcomes.

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

PROJECT ABSTRACT narrative guidance: In total, the Project Abstract should convey the basic intent of the project and alignment with the Timber for Transit Program. The Project Abstract section should not be more than 2-3 paragraphs and include the following information at a summary level. You will be able to elaborate on these topics in other parts of your preapplication:

- Identify the primary purpose, project location, beneficiaries of the project and expected economic impacts of the project.
- List which NBRC Program Funding Category(ies) is most applicable for your project and briefly justify how your project aligns with the Funding Category(ies).
- If project activities funded by NBRC occur in multiple counties or States, please list those here and describe the activities that will take place in each location.
- Describe whether your project meets the Higher Maximum threshold. Higher Maximum awards will be considered for projects that 1) demonstrate alignment with two or more of the funding priorities of the program, 2) project has been identified by NBRC or a State(s) as addressing a time-sensitive issue of magnitude or severity that will be addressed by the proposed project, and 3) construction takes place in two or more eligible communities, counties or states.
- Describe the project scope including what planning activities have taken place, are there components of the project already underway, what will be accomplished with NBRC funding and over what period of time will the project be completed.

PROJECT GOALS AND OUTCOMES narrative guidance: NBRC and State programs both place a strong emphasis on direct and indirect economic impacts of a project. The project goals and outcomes should provide a clear description of how the project addresses an economic need or opportunity in the region, alleviates economic distress, and contributes to economic growth. In total, the goals and outcomes narrative should not be more than 1-2 paragraphs. Develop a response that addresses the following:

- Provide a robust but realistic description of the expected direct economic outcomes (e.g. impacts on jobs, employment, business opportunity, wage growth) of this project. Appendix G lists examples of Economic Outcomes and Outputs. Select those that are most applicable to your project. Highly competitive proposals will include supporting documentation such as letters of support, relevant studies or plans that support your claims. This is also the place to describe how the project aligns with your State's economic development strategies or other community economic development plans. Feasibility projects should base responses on the anticipated economic impact of implementing the project and provide documentation supporting these anticipated economic impacts. Applicants should also articulate a pathway from feasibility to implementation.
- Describe the scale of expected *direct* economic impacts on the community, county, or region.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT narrative

guidance: In total, the Project Beneficiaries and Community Context narrative should not be more than 1-2 paragraphs.

- Describe who will benefit from your project and why this project matters to the community, region and/or State.

STATEMENT OF NEED narrative guidance: In total, the statement of need narrative should not be more than 1-2 paragraphs.

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

PROGRAM INVESTMENT PRIORITIES narrative guidance: Refer to the NBRC Agency Investment Priorities and State Scoring Criteria in this Program User Manual to help you answer this section. The program investment priorities narrative should not be more than 2-3 paragraphs.

- Describe how your project will address NBRC Agency Investment Priorities. You may choose to provide additional details and documentation regarding your project's alignment with NBRC Agency Investment Priorities in the **Project Beneficiaries and Community Context** section.
- If applicable, describe how your project helps the community prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters. Highly competitive projects will include supporting documentation from reports, articles and letters of support.

- Describe and document how your project will address state priorities. If you're unsure about alignment with state priorities, consider connecting with your State Program Manager. NBRC recommends interested applicants in Maine, New York and Vermont complete the Project Interest Form before meeting with their State Program Manager. Interested applicants in New Hampshire are encouraged to sign up for the technical assistance program that is available in eligible New Hampshire counties and communities.

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

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

Does this project benefit an underserved community? NBRC defines underserved communities as those that suffer 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 G for additional resources on identifying underserved communities in the NBRC region.

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

Overview Tab - Project Contacts:

There is a limit of 2 project contacts for each application. One must be the Authorized Official with designated signing authority in the EGMS and you may add one other project contact who will be responsible for working on your NBRC grant submission. Please include their contact information and

role in the project. Detailed instructions for [Adding Users in the GMS](#) is available on the [Resources Page](#).

In addition to the 2 project contacts, you may also associate the contact of your Local Development District (LDD). Your LDD may be a resource for developing your proposal or able to connect you to technical assistance services.

Locations Tab:

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

Budget Tab:

All information provided within the Budget section should be consistent and align with information provided in the Overview section of your preapplication. NBRC has prepared a variety of supplemental resources to assist you with budget development and common budget related errors in the EGMS, which are located on the [Resources page](#) of our website.

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

Budget Tab – Budget Periods Table:

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

Helpful Tips:

- Your Budget Periods table must include costs for NEPA. These must be included in the Consultants budget line.
- The match must meet or exceed the minimum required match amount based on your project location. If you do not enter an adequate match amount, you will receive an error message. Detailed online EGMS guidance is available to navigate error messages and submitting the preapplication.
- Identify how project costs will be allocated between the NBRC share and matching funds.

- No more than 80% of total project costs can come from federal funds (including NBRC share). 40 USC §15506(e).
- Information in this section must be consistent with information provided in the **Budget Narrative** and **Funding Sources Table**.

Budget Tab - Budget Narrative:

The Budget Narrative is used to describe and justify the costs listed in the Budget Periods table and should provide enough information to understand how NBRC funds will be spent. All expenses over \$5,0000 must be listed with a description of the cost and an explanation of how the cost was determined. Please clarify which parts of your budget are estimates, based on quotes or fixed price.

Budget Tab-Funding Sources Table:

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

Helpful Tips:

- Do not enter funds requested from NBRC in this table.
- No more than 80% of total project costs can come from federal funds (including NBRC share). 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.

Forms & Files Tab:

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

- **75% Expenditure Waiver:** This waiver is applicable for those organizations that have an open NBRC grant with a remaining balance of more than 25% of the original grant award. See [Appendix D](#) for more details.
- **Significant Benefit Waiver:** This waiver is applicable in two instances which are described below. See [Appendix E](#) for more details.
 1. A Significant Benefit Waiver is required when a project is located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified “Areas of Isolated Distress” and will bring documented economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.

2. A Significant Benefit Waiver is required when an applicant or co-applicant(s) are located outside of the NBRC service area but in a member state with a project that will bring documented economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- **Local Development District Waiver:** The NBRC Federal-State partnership is aided by a group of regional organizations called **Local Development Districts (LDDs)** that assist the NBRC in its outreach activities and administer NBRC investments for grantees. Timber for Transit awardees are given the option to utilize an LDD for grant administration assistance. See [Appendix F](#) for more information.

EVALUATION OF PREAPPLICATIONS:

The evaluation of preapplications includes three factors:

1. NBRC reviews preapplications for eligibility, including eligible project locations, eligible applicant and co-applicant criteria, and waiver completion.
 - Preapplications that are found to be eligible will receive further review.
 - Preapplications that are found to be ineligible will receive a response from NBRC that includes a description of the ineligible determination.
2. NBRC and State Programs review preapplications for alignment with the Timber for Transit Program priorities. The priorities are highlighted in the NBRC and State Program scoring criteria, available in [Appendix K](#). Eligible preapplications will be prioritized based on alignment with both NBRC and state program priorities.
3. NBRC and State Programs will also consider a) the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment, and b) the benefits provided to the broader community and region.

Preapplications that are invited to submit a full application will receive a response from NBRC in the EGMS with information on the application process, application information sessions and any feedback that was noted by the State Program Manager or NBRC on the proposed project. Determination on waivers and eligibility for the Higher Maximum award amount will be made at this time.

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

SECTION C. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM 2024, application submission is by invitation only. An applicant must submit a Preapplication (formerly known as a Letter of Interest) and have been issued an invitation to submit a Timber for Transit Program application to be eligible for funding. Applications will be required to be submitted via NBRC's [Grants Management System](#).

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

Visit the [Program Areas page](#) of the NBRC website for more details, including pre-recorded programmatic information sessions.

A multitude of resources including step by step instructions on how to complete and submit an application are available on the [Resources](#) page of the NBRC website. Once there, click on "Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents" to find a library of helpful resources and forms.

EARLY APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT STEPS:

Applicants are strongly encouraged to:

- Review your Invitation to Apply for feedback from NBRC and State Program Manager. This is found by logging into the EGMS and viewing the **Collab Tab** in your preapplication. Addressing this feedback in your application will strengthen your proposal.
- Reach out to NBRC with questions regarding NBRC funding priorities. NBRC will consider a project's alignment with funding priorities when scoring applications.
- Discuss your project with a State Program Manager to strengthen alignment with the State's priorities. States will consider a project's alignment with their funding priorities when scoring and selecting finalists.
- Attend an application information session. Visit the [Timber for Transit Program page](#) for more details.
- When selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase NBRC and the States will consider:
 - Balanced geographic distribution of investments.

- Well-documented community or regionally supported need for the project.
- Projects deemed a priority by the State where the project is located.

REQUESTED APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Detailed instructions for using the online grants management system to submit an application ([Creating and Submitting an Application – Guidance Document](#)) and recorded videos are available on the [Resources](#) page of the NBRC website. Please review these detailed instructions prior to beginning your application in the EGMS.

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

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

Overview Tab:

The applicant's registration and all applicant information entered at the preapplication stage will be carried over into the application stage.

Overview Tab – Information:

If the UEI field is not populated, please enter your organization's **Unique Entity ID** (UEI). The UEI is required to receive an award. If an applicant does not have an UEI, please visit [SAM.gov](#). Submitting a registration and getting a Unique Entity ID from SAM.gov is FREE. See the available guidance [How to Update UEI](#) on the [NBRC Resources page](#).

Overview Tab - Announcement Overview:

No edits to this section are required.

Overview Tab-Application Overview:

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

Overview Tab-Project Information:

Responses provided at the time of preapplication will carry over to your application. At this time, you should edit your responses to include new information and/or revisions in response to NBRC and State feedback.

The information provided in this section should provide a robust overview of your project. Highly competitive projects will demonstrate how your project supports NBRC and your State's funding priorities, the specific activities to be undertaken with NBRC funding and the expected outcomes. Provide documentation supporting your responses whenever possible in the form of links to relevant studies, data and reports. You will have the opportunity to elaborate further on the details of your project in the Proposal Tab which is described further in this section of the User Manual.

Overview Tab – Contacts:

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

In this section you may add one other contact to your application, and you can associate your LDD. See the available guidance for "Adding Users in the GMS" on the [NBRC Resources webpage](#).

Overview Tab-Acknowledgement:

Check "I Agree"

Locations Tab:

Locations Tab - Application Match:

Confirm that the match amount is correct based on your project location(s) by reviewing NBRC's Distress Criteria described in Part 1, Section A of this document. If there is a discrepancy with the match listed in the application, please contact NBRC.

Locations Tab-Investment Locations:

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

Locations Tab-Key Performance Indicators:

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

Budget Tab:

NBRC has prepared a variety of supplemental resources to assist you with budget development and common budget related errors in the GMS, which are located on the [Resources page](#) of our website.

Budget Tab - Budget Periods table:

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

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

Helpful Tips:

- The totals in this table must match the SF-424cbw detailed budget, required as an attached document under the "Forms and Files" tab. The budget categories are not in the same order but do correspond with the high-level categories 1-10 on the 424cbw.
- 80% Federal Funding Ceiling – this is calculated on total project costs. There is an EGMS 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 is calculated based on the NBRC requested amount. The EGMS includes a validation process that will verify that the Other Federal Share + Applicant Match + Other is greater than or equal to the required minimum match based on your project location.
- Because NBRC is a federal source of funds, some projects exceed the 80% ceiling with an 80/20 request without additional non-federal funds.

Budget Tab-Budget Narrative:

Update the Budget Narrative to reflect any changes in your budget. All expenses over \$5,000 must be listed with a description of the cost and an explanation of how the cost was determined. Please clarify which parts of

your budget are estimates, based on quotes or fixed price. The budget narrative should provide sufficient information to understand how NBRC funds will be spent.

Budget Tab-Funding Sources and Commitments:

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

Helpful Tips:

- Do not enter funds requested from NBRC in this table.
- No more than 80% of total project costs can come from federal funds (including NBRC share). 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.
- Do not include the NBRC source in the funding sources and commitments table.
- ARPA *is* considered a federal source.
- CDBG and federal loans *are not* considered a federal source.

Proposal Tab:

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

Proposal Tab-Technical Proposal:

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

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

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY narrative guidance: Provide a detailed explanation of the approach and methodology that will be used to implement

your project. Include an explanation and documentation of how the project addresses State and program objectives and investment priorities. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #3.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS narrative guidance: Referencing the KPIs you selected earlier in your application, describe the anticipated economic outcomes and outputs of the project. Highly competitive projects will provide justification and documentation supporting the expected economic impacts in the form of letters of support, business commitments, relevant studies, data and other forms of supporting documentation. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #4.

PROJECT READINESS narrative guidance: Describe if the project is ready for implementation or will require additional planning tasks to begin. Provide a detailed timeline and 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 NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #1

CAPACITY & QUALIFICATIONS narrative guidance: Provide an explanation of the capacity of the organization to meet the project objectives, including any partnerships with other entities to support the project. Provide an explanation of the qualifications of personnel. Contractors, volunteers, partner organizations, etc. as they relate to project objectives, and workplan. See NBRC Program Scoring Criteria #5.

Forms and Files Tab:

Prior to beginning this section of your application, we strongly encourage you to review the [Application Support Document Checklist](#) which can be found on the [NBRC Resources page](#) under the Additional EGMS Guidance Documents section.

Forms and Files Tab - Application Files:

Applicants who received approval for a Significant Benefit or 75% expenditure waiver need to upload the waiver approval file to the application record. Approval was attached to your Invitation to Apply letter, found in your preapplication in the EGMS.

You can also upload supplemental information that supports your application such as reports, commitments from other funders, a detailed workplan, spreadsheets, surveys, architectural or engineering plans, or other graphic information that cannot be uploaded to the text sections of your application.

Forms and Files Tab - Supporting Documents Checklist:

Mandatory documents for all applicants must be completed and uploaded in the EGMS at the time you submit your application. Some documents are applicable only for specific grantees – these have been noted below.

Late documents will not be accepted and may result in your application being deemed ineligible.

Documents MUST be signed by the Authorized Official designated in your Authorized Official Resolution.

- **Authorized Official Resolution (AOR)** - A template is available on the [Resources page](#). The NBRC template is not required, however your organization's resolution must include all the information in the template. The completed file is uploaded to the EGMS and must be submitted with your application. Please plan accordingly to ensure you have sufficient time to obtain your AOR.
- **Certificate of Good Standing – only applicable for 501c organizations.** Your certificate of good standing must be current through the year of your application. Please plan accordingly to ensure you have sufficient time to obtain your Certificate of Good Standing.
- **Form 1001 Debarment Suspension Certification**
- **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)** – only applicable if your organization has a NICRA. For those without a NICRA, the de minimis rate of 10% will be applied.
- **IRS Determination Letter-only applicable for 501c organizations**
- **Letters of Support** – Encouraged but not required. Form letters are acceptable, but often do not have the same impact as individual letters. Support letters should be combined and uploaded as a single PDF.
- **NEPA Intake Form**
- **Project Map - [FEMA flood map](#) and/or** map of project location of your choice.
- **Revolving Loan Fund Documentation** - applicants who are utilizing NBRC funds to create a new or supplement an existing Revolving Loan Fund are required to submit supplemental documentation. RLF documentation must be developed by the applicant and must be uploaded to the EGMS (see NBRC RLF Policy and required documentation in the [Appendix I](#) of the Program User Manual).
- **SF-424cbw** – please complete the details tab only.
- **SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance**
- **SF-424B** (non-construction) **or** **SF-424D** (construction) - One or the other (not both) must be completed depending on the project type.
- **SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities**



APPENDIX A – STATE PROGRAM MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION

Maine

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

New Hampshire

Ian Davis
Department of Business and Economic Affairs
(603) 271-0252
Ian.M.Davis@livefree.nh.gov

New York

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

Vermont

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



APPENDIX B – 2024 TIMBER FOR TRANSIT 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:

Significant Benefit (if applicable)

75% Prior NBRC Investment (if applicable)

September 6, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST

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)

January 2025 (TBD)

NBRC notification of awards & notice to unsuccessful applicants

January 2025 (TBD)



APPENDIX C – NBRC NEPA INTAKE FORM

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies consider potential environmental impacts of their actions before implementation or spending funds on the proposed action. You must complete this initial NEPA Intake Form as part of your NBRC application to provide NBRC Staff with project information relevant to the NEPA process. NBRC will use this information to determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysis that will be required if your proposed project is funded.

Note: Completion of this form does not satisfy NEPA, but it does help NBRC to determine what NEPA analysis will be required. If your project is funded, the NEPA process must be complete before NBRC will issue a Notice to Proceed.

Please complete the NBRC NEPA intake form in PDF format and provide attachments to support the information provided on this form, as needed. The NEPA intake form and supporting documentation should be combined and submitted as one PDF and labeled NEPA INTAKE.

The NEPA INTAKE FORM in fillable PDF Format is available for download in the Grants Management System



APPENDIX D - 75% 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.

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



APPENDIX E – SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT WAIVER

Requesting a significant benefit waiver for consideration.

There are exceptions that **require** Significant Benefit Waiver approval to be eligible to seek NBRC funds.

Those exceptions are:

- Applicants and/or co-applicants whose primary place of business/operations is located within an Attainment County but outside of an “Isolated Areas of Distress” that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- Applicants and/or co-applicants whose primary place of business/operations is located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project 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 preapplication submission.

Process: If an applicant and/or co-applicant can meet the above requirements, they can request a Significant Benefit waiver. 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 investment in and economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties. The executed Significant Benefit Waiver and required project investment and economic support documentation must be submitted in addition to the Preapplication 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 apply 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 Preapplication documentation, the Preapplication will be considered ineligible for further consideration.

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



APPENDIX F – LDD POLICY AND WAIVER

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

LDDs are either an already existing federally designated Economic Development District, as certified by the US Economic Development Administration, or an organization similar in nature to a regional planning commission.

Each TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM awardee is provided the option to utilize an LDD for grant administration assistance. Should a Timber for Transit awardee choose to utilize LDD assistance, the LDD contract executed with the grantee should specify the type of scope of services/grant administration activity that will be provided. A grantee is required to provide a copy of the executed LDD contract as part of the documentation necessary to receive a Partial or Full Notice to Proceed.

LDDs are compensated for their administrative work, through a reimbursement process with the grantee, based on the formula of 2% of the NBRC award. LDD grant administration costs are an eligible NBRC cost for an amount not to exceed the formula. If grant administration assistance beyond the total available under the formula, those must be paid for with matching funds. If used, LDD grant administration costs must be reflected as a line item within the project budget submitted in support of a TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM application for funding.

See [Role of the LDD](#) or visit www.nbrc.gov/content/administration for more information.



APPENDIX G - OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Examples of Outcomes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Revenues Increased: Export Sales: The increase in revenue in export sales that an organization 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.

Workers/Trainees Improved: The number of workers/trainees with improved skills that enable them to obtain employment or to enhance their current employment. For example, the number of workers or trainees obtaining a new job; getting higher pay or a better position; or receiving a certification, measured during the project period when possible. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number of workers or trainees improved may be counted up to three years beyond the project end date. For programs where outcomes are achieved after three or more years, the number of students improved may be counted by an alternative benchmark, such as completion of a skill, level/course, or continued enrollment for the project period. This number is generally the same as, or a subset of, the “workers/trainees served” output measure.

Examples of Outputs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.



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, IJA §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 is 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sub-award: 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 sub-recipient to a lower tier sub-recipient). 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.

Sub-recipient: An entity that receives a sub-award from a recipient or another subrecipient under an award of financial assistance and is accountable to the recipient or other sub-recipient 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 the appendices 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 – PROGRAM SCORING CRITERIA

Timber for Transit 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.</p> <p>Applicant accounts for feasible timelines for completion and includes a short summary of processes in progress or completed.</p> <p>The applicant shows attention to detail and provides a complete application.</p> <p>Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not.</p> <p>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

<p>Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Project timeline is feasible and supports timely project completion.</p> <p>Applicants must identify sources of match in the budget and detailed budget narrative. Leveraged funds in addition to required match should also be described if applicable.</p> <p>Applicants may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment/support to confirm stated match contributions.</p> <p>Budget narrative should be aligned with the project description, provide brief justification for expenses over \$5,000.</p>	10
Points Allocation	
Budget narrative (0-2 points)	2
Detailed project budget (0-4 points)	4
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 TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM	MAXIMUM POINTS
<p>This category reviews how a project fits within the Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant clearly 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, or that will meet multiple investment priorities as outlined in the program materials.</p>	30
Points Allocation	
<p>Project meets investment priority(ies) of the Timber for Transit Program</p> <p>Project describes in the project summary how it meets one or more of the Timber for Transit Program investment priorities. Points are awarded based on details provided, state prioritization and geographical distribution of NBRC funding. Projects will receive four points for each investment priority met. Note – applicants must list and describe how the project meets each specified investment criterion.</p>	25
<p>Additionally, projects that support related regional, state, or local planning efforts or have been identified by NBRC or a member state(s), will be awarded 3 points.</p> <p>Example plans include hazard mitigation plan, climate plan, equity action plan, or comprehensive plan.</p>	3

Applicants who have not received a past NBRC award will be awarded 2 points.	2
SCORING CRITERIA #4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS	MAXIMUM POINTS
Implementation projects will be reviewed based on anticipated direct economic impact. Feasibility projects should base responses on the anticipated economic impact of implementing the project and provide documentation supporting these anticipated economic impacts. Applicants should also articulate a pathway from feasibility to implementation. Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. 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 (0-10 points)	10
Self-identified outcomes and measures of success (up to 20 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. (0-5 points) 	20
SCORING CRITERIA #5: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	MAXIMUM POINTS
Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements. Applicant can identify specific grant-awarded projects they have completed or can demonstrate collaboration and relationships with other entities to ensure the project can meet program requirements and be completed in a timely manner. 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.	20

Points Allocation	
Describes organizational capacity including any partnerships with other entities to fill out expertise (0-8 points)	8
Provides assessment of past performance (0-6 points)	6
Provides description of roles and qualifications of project staff and partners (0-6 points)	6
*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.	