



Northern Border  
Regional Commission

# 2025 CATALYST PROGRAM

## Program Information Session

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# NBRC Program Overview Series

- Part 1: Funding Rounds, Timeline & Milestones, Next Steps and Contact information
- Part 2: Eligibility and Waivers
- Part 3: Policies and Requirements
- Part 4: Local Development Districts
- Part 5: Catalyst Program Overview
- Part 6: Forest Economy Program Overview
- Part 7: Timber for Transit Program Overview



Applicants are encouraged to review the **Program User Manual** and **NBRC Compliance Manual** to confirm all requirements will be met in the project.



# Topics for today's session:

## Catalyst Program Overview

- Purpose & Example projects
- Available Funds

## Determining Eligibility

- Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants
- Eligible Locations: NBRC Service Area, Annual Distress Criteria, Determining Eligibility & Match/Reimbursement Ratios
- Eligible Purposes: Project Categories, Project Classification Process & Award Sizes



# Topics for today's session:

## Pre-Application

- Timeline, Process & Requirements, Evaluation
- State Program Priorities & Evaluation of Pre-applications
- What to Expect After the Pre-application

## What's Next

- Project Development
- Grants Management System Information

## Q&A

# 2025 Catalyst Program

## CATALYST

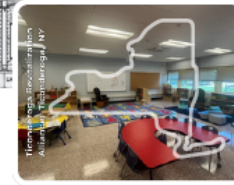
NBRC flagship grant program designed to support a broad range of economic development initiatives that will modernize and expand the region's basic infrastructure and revitalize communities to support and attract the region's workforce.



Basic Public Infrastructure



Outdoor Recreation



Child Care



Business & Workforce Development



### Infrastructure Grants

≤ \$1MM-\$3MM\*

20% to 50% match

### Non-Infrastructure Grants

≤ \$500,000

\*Projects requesting more than \$1MM must meet with the State Program Manager AND address criteria for higher maximum awards.

### Eligible Applicants\*

*\*within the NBRC Service Area of ME, NH, NY, VT*

- State and Local Governments
- Career Technical Centers & Universities
- Other Political Subdivisions
- Non-Profit Entities
- Federally Recognized Indian Tribes



### Investment Priorities

- Rural communities with populations less than 5,000 and underserved communities
- Address multiple needs and demonstrate efficiencies
- Climate resiliency
- ME, NH, NY, VT state level priorities

For more information → [www.nbrc.gov](http://www.nbrc.gov)



# Catalyst Program Overview

The purpose of this program is ***to stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality*** across the four-state NBRC region.

Examples of projects Catalyst may support include, but are not limited to:

- Modernizing and expanding water and wastewater systems
- Revitalizing transportation infrastructure
- Establishing workforce development programs and facilities
- Growing outdoor recreation infrastructure and economies
- Constructing new childcare and healthcare facilities



# 2025 Catalyst Program

## **NBRC anticipates making a minimum of \$59MM available**

- NBRC anticipates issuing a revised program announcement to make additional funds available after the completion of the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations process

## **Catalyst funding to be competitively awarded in two funding rounds**

- Minimum of \$34MM available in Round 1/Spring funding round
- Minimum of \$25MM available in Round 2/Fall funding round
- Round 1/Spring funding round may include **EDA and USDA partnership awards** of up to \$4.8MM
- All awards are subject to the availability of funds



# 2025 Catalyst Program

## **Pre-applications are required for all programs**

- Required to receive an invitation to apply
- NEW!! Due before 5:00pm on March 7 for spring round and August 29 for fall round
- Must be submitted using NBRC's online grants management system
- All waiver requests must be submitted with pre-applications
- Reviewed by NBRC for eligibility and by state programs for alignment with priorities
- Invitations to apply are issued by the state programs

**All pre-application details will be covered in this session!**





# Determining Eligibility

## Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants

### Eligible Locations:

- NBRC Service Area
- 2025 Distress Criteria
- Determining Eligibility & Match/Reimbursement Ratios

### Eligible Purposes:

- Project Categories
- Project Classification Process & Award Sizes

[Review the  
Program  
Overview  
Series!](#)



# Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants

- **State governments:** Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont & New York
- **Local governments:** Village, town, city and county
- Other political **subdivisions of States:** regional planning commissions, authorities of the state
- **Indian Tribes:** See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services
- **Non-profit entities.** All 501(c) organizations

## Ineligible Applicants & Co-Applicants:

- For-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c) are **NOT** eligible to apply for NBRC
- Applicants from outside NBRC member states are ineligible

Applicants will identify entity type in registration process!



# Determining Eligibility & Match

1. Determine if project location is in NBRC Service Area.
2. Determine if project location is in distressed, transitional or attainment county. If in attainment county, determine if exceptions apply or a Significant Benefits Waiver is required.
3. Identify reimbursement and match rate associated with location.

## Resources:

- Program User Manual
- [2024 Distress Criteria](#) on NBRC website

The screenshot shows the Northern Border Regional Commission website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Northern Border Region, Program Areas, Impact & Reporting, and Resources. The main content area is titled "Assessing Distress in NBRC Counties" and contains the following text:

By statute, the Commission is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress among the counties in its service area. Assessing distress is important as the resulting designations reflect whether or not the Commission can provide grants within a county as well as what level of match is required of Commission funded projects.

[Distress Criteria for 2024](#)

Counties are designated as Distressed, Transitional, or Attainment.

**Distressed Counties**

40 U.S.C., Subtitle V 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. Commission grants within Distressed Counties only require a 20% match.

**Transitional Counties**

Counties that are "transitional" counties "have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration" or "are economically distressed and underdeveloped." Commission grants within Transitional Counties require a 50% match.

**Attainment Counties**

Finally, "attainment" counties are those that are neither "distressed" or "transitional." The Commission is not allowed to fund projects within an attainment county.

**Exceptions to Attainment County Eligibility**

In general, NBRC funds may not be provided to projects located within a designated "Attainment County." However, there are opportunities to provide funding to projects within these counties if any one of the following exceptions below is met.

- **Isolated Areas of Distress:** When a county is first designated as "Attainment" the Commission will automatically 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.

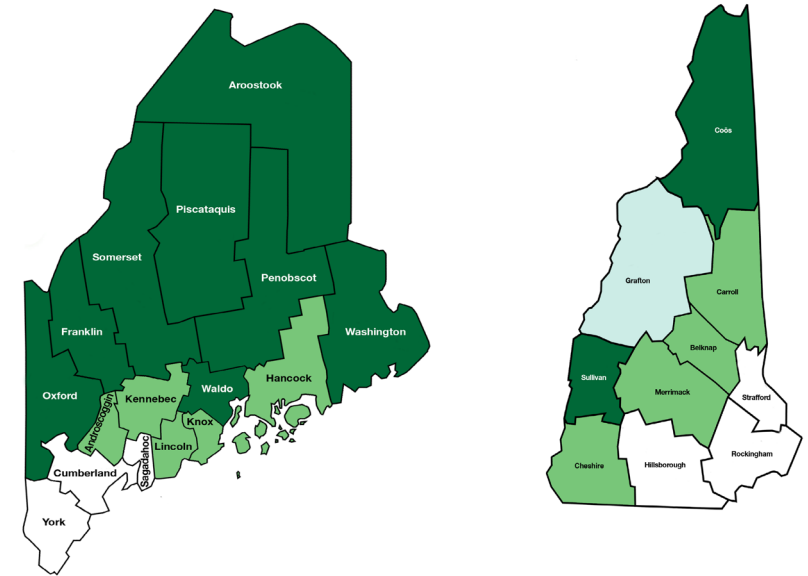


# NBRC Service Area (2025)

**Commission Service Area** - *Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding*

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

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

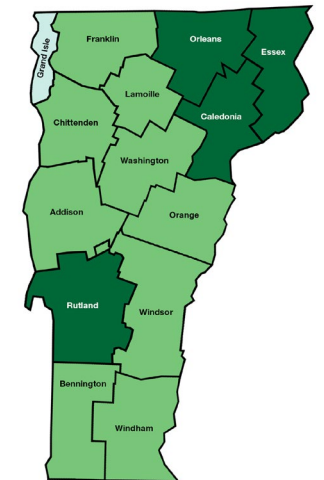
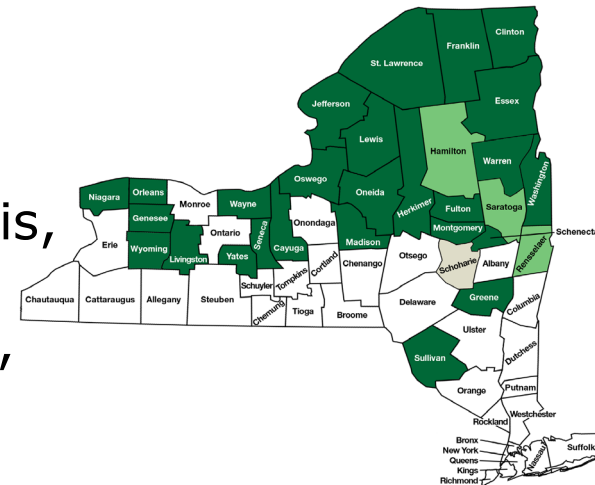




# NBRC Service Area (2025)

**Commission Service Area** - *Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding*

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



**Vermont:** all counties within the State

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



# NBRC Distress Criteria

NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress in its service area. The resulting designations reflect whether the NBRC can provide grants within a county.

**Distressed:** Eligible for 80% funding and require a 20% match

**Transitional:** Eligible for 50% funding and require a 50% match

**Attainment:** Ineligible for funding, unless exceptions apply:

- Isolated Areas of Distress: specific municipality designated distressed
- Significant Benefits: benefits to surrounding distressed and transitional counties (waiver required)
- Multi-county or multi-state project that includes at least one distressed or transitional county. Requires an averaged match



# Significant Benefit Waiver

Projects, applicants or co-applicants that fall outside of the areas eligible to receive NBRC funds should review Significant Benefit Waiver to see if exception applies:

- Projects located within an Attainment County but outside one of the identified “Isolated Areas of Distress” that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- Applicants or co-applicants with established operations located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.
- See SBW requirements detailed within Appendix E of Program User Manual.

If an exception applies, the applicant must request a **Significant Benefit Waiver** to be eligible to receive NBRC funds.



# Significant Benefit Waiver Cont'd

To be considered, the Significant Benefit Waiver request must:

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





# Previous Award Recipients

An eligible applicant with an open or active NBRC award cannot receive an additional NBRC investment until the current award has both

- submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project and
- demonstrated that 75% of the cost share has been expended before the pre-application deadline

If the 75% expenditure requirement cannot be met, the applicant can apply for a waiver. The **75% Expenditure Waiver** must be submitted together with the pre-application.



# LDD Requirement & Waiver

All Catalyst Program awards require the use of a Local Development District for grant administration services including support with quarterly reporting, amendments, reimbursement requests, final reporting and general assistance with NBRC procurement

- Exception for state government entities and LDDs

NEW!! LDDs are compensated for administrative work:

- NBRC awards of \$400,000 or less is \$8,000
- NBRC awards above \$400,000 is based on the formula of 2% of the NBRC requested amount

A waiver may be requested by organizations with the capacity for federal grant administration. The **LDD Waiver** must be submitted together with the pre-application.



# Eligible Purposes

[Review the  
Program  
Overview  
Series!](#)

**Proposed projects must fit one of 7 project categories:**

Infrastructure:

- Basic Public Infrastructure, Transportation, and Telecommunications

Non-Infrastructure:

- Feasibility Projects\***NEW**, Business and Workforce Development, Basic Healthcare, and Resource Conservation, Recreation and Tourism

Resources: Catalyst Program User Manual



# Catalyst Project Classification

1. Identify project category as infrastructure or non-infrastructure
2. Determine if project is primarily construction or non-construction
3. Determine if special classifications apply
  - Expanded definition of basic infrastructure
  - Higher maximum infrastructure **\*NEW** – consult with state program
1. Apply the appropriate maximum award size for your project
  - \$100,000 for feasibility projects
  - \$500,000 for non-infrastructure
  - \$1,000,000 for infrastructure
  - \$3,000,000 for higher maximum infrastructure

Resources: FAQ Project Classification Decision Tree



# NBRC Policies & Requirements

**NBRC policies and requirements are the same across programs.**

- Match and Cost Share
- Federal Funding Ceiling
- Period of Performance
- Ineligible Purpose
- Program Income
- Use of Funds
- Ineligible Costs
- Notice to Proceed

[Review the Program Overview Series!](#)

## **NBRC funding comes with specific requirements**

Applicants are encouraged to review the Program User Manuals and NBRC Compliance Manual to confirm all requirements will be met in the project.



# NBRC Policies & Requirements

- NEPA
- BABAA/Buy American Preference

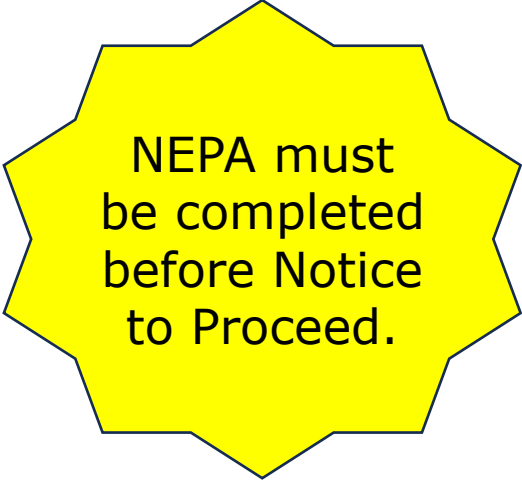
Applicants are encouraged to review the **Program User Manual** and **NBRC Compliance Manual** to confirm all requirements will be met in the project.



# NBRC Funding Requirements Cont'd

## National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

- Categorical Exclusions: a few weeks; no to low \$
- Categorical Exclusions plus section 106 consultation: a few months; \$1,500-\$3,000
- Environmental Assessment: 6-12 months; \$5,000-\$10,000



NEPA must be completed before Notice to Proceed.

All projects need to account for the time it takes to complete the NEPA approval process and estimate a NEPA budget.

Resource: NBRC's [NEPA website](#)



# Buy American Preference

Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference (“Buy American Preference”) for ***iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects.***

- Review NBRC’s website for [BABAA guidance](#).






# Pre-Applications

- **Pre-Application Details:**
  - Timeline, Process & Requirements, Evaluation
- **State Role in Pre-Applications**
- **What to Expect After the Pre-application**



# Pre-Application: Timeline & Key Dates

- Program Information Sessions: February 11 
- Online pre-application system opens: February 10
- Round 1 Pre-applications Due: **March 7 before 5:00pm EST**
- All applicable waivers are due with pre-application:
  - ✓ 75% Waiver Request for Prior Award Recipients (all programs)
  - ✓ Significant Benefit Waiver Request (all programs)
  - ✓ LDD Waiver Request (Catalyst Program only)
- Round 1 Catalyst Program Pre-Application Review: March 10-28
- Responses – feedback/invitations to apply: **week of March 31**

**Pre-applications are required**






# Pre-Application: Process

**All pre-applications must be submitted using NBRC's online grants management system.**

- Detailed guidance is available for accessing system
- Requires registration
- Requires responses to pre-application questions

The screenshot shows the Northern Border Regional Commission website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Northern Border Region, Program Areas, Impact & Reporting, and Resources. The main content area features a link for "GPRA Close out Form" and a section for the "Grants Management System (CATALYST, FOREST ECONOMY and TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAMS)". This section provides technical resources for first-time NBRC applicants or those who requested or received NBRC funding prior to 2024. It includes links to "Register Your Organization's Account" and "Manage Your Organization's Account and Contacts". A bulleted list specifies that these resources are for applicants or awardees with an existing account and includes details on updating UEI, adding contacts, and managing the organization's Authorized Official. A final link, "Creating and Submitting a Pre-Application", is also present, with a bulleted list indicating it is for those with an existing account seeking to apply for NBRC funding and includes a step-by-step technical manual for submitting a pre-application.

← ↻ 🏠 🔒 <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration> 🔍 ⚙️ ⌵ ⋮

 **Northern Border Regional Commission** | [Northern Border Region](#) | [Program Areas](#) | [Impact & Reporting](#) | [Resources](#)

[GPRA Close out Form](#) (Due at close out of project and three years after closeout)

**Grants Management System (CATALYST, FOREST ECONOMY and TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAMS)**

Technical resources for first-time NBRC applicants or those who requested or received NBRC funding prior to 2024

[Register Your Organization's Account](#)

[Manage Your Organization's Account and Contacts](#)

- For applicants or awardees who have an existing account
- Includes details on updating UEI, adding contacts, managing your organization's Authorized Official

[Creating and Submitting a Pre-Application](#)

- For anyone with an existing organization account seeking to apply for NBRC funding
- Step-by-step technical manual for submitting a pre-application in the system (to be used alongside the relevant Program User Manual)



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Applicant and Co-Applicant Information

- Applicant Organization
- Organization Type (eligible applicant type)
- Address
- EIN
- Unique Entity ID - Applicant should enter UEI if one is available. UEI is not required to submit a pre-application but will be required to receive an award.

This information is collected during the registration process.

*This information will be requested as part of the registration process and transferred to the pre-application.*



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Applicant characteristics

- Previous award recipient (If yes, enter NBRC award #)
- Rural community (defined as population less than 5,000)
- Underserved community (defined in Program User Manual)

## Primary Place of Performance – where will the project take place?:

- Address including zip code
- County

## Project Title

- Unique title

*This information will be requested as part of the pre-application.*



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Budget Narrative

- Description of expenses over \$5,000 by category
- Table describing match sources: source, federal v non-federal, and status of match

## Budget Details

- Requested NBRC funds
- Match and Cost Share funds
- Total Project Costs

This information is submitted in the GMS. There are no additional budget documents to upload for pre-application.

**Funds will need to be allocated across budget categories**



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Pre-application budget categories

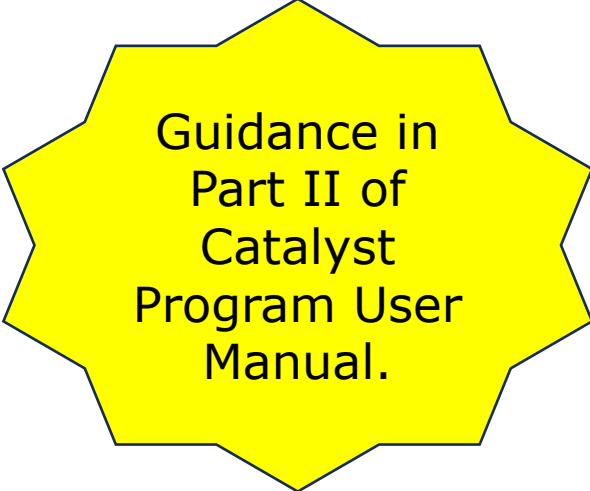
- Personnel
  - Fringe Benefits
  - Travel and Transportation
  - Equipment
  - Supplies and Materials
  - Consultants
  - Contracts and Sub-Grantees
  - Construction
  - Other Direct Costs
  - Indirect Costs
- 
- These budget categories align with the SF-424cbw.
  - Pre-applications DO NOT require the SF-424cbw form, but full applications (by invitation only) will.



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Narrative Questions:

- Project Abstract
  - Project Goals, Outcomes and Outputs
  - Program Investment Priorities
  - Project Beneficiaries and Community Context
  - Statement of Need
- 
- All narrative text boxes have a 5,000-character limit and formatting/editing capabilities.
  - Applicants encouraged to have narrative responses available in a word processing document to easily copy and paste into the pre-application.



Guidance in  
Part II of  
Catalyst  
Program User  
Manual.





# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Project Abstract – Narrative

- Provide a summary of the proposed project.
- Identify the relevant NBRC project category and describes how the project fits the project category. If the project is an infrastructure project, the proposal clearly describes how the project meets the threshold for an infrastructure project. If the project is requesting a higher maximum infrastructure award, the proposal clearly describes how the project meets the criteria for a higher maximum award.
- Describe the status of the project – ready for implementation, planning tasks ongoing, early stages.
- What is the project scope? Over what period of time will this project be completed?



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## **Project goals, outcomes, and outputs - Narrative**

- What are the expected economic outcomes (e.g. impacts on jobs, employment and wage growth) of this project
- Describe the scale of expected economic impacts on the community, county, or region?

**Appendix G lists examples of Economic Outcomes and Outputs**



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## **Program Investment Priorities - Narrative**

- Use this space to describe which NBRC Agency Investment Priorities best apply to this project. See guidance in NBRC Scoring Criteria #1.
- Which state program priorities best apply to this project?

**Refer to the NBRC Agency Investment Priorities and State Scoring Criteria in the Catalyst Program User Manual.**



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## **Project Beneficiaries and Community Context - Narrative**

- Who will benefit?
- Why does this project matter to the community?
- If applicable, how does this project serve or benefit rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 or underserved communities?
- If applicable, how does this project help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters?



# Pre-Application: Requirements

## Statement of Need - Narrative

- What is the challenge or problem the project seeks to address?
- What is the proposed solution?
- Why is this project important?
- Describe the opportunity gained by funding this project now.
- Why is NBRC funding important for this project?

## If applicable, Higher Maximum Infrastructure Request

- If applicable, describe how project meets criteria for a higher maximum infrastructure award.
- Include description of how funds will be allocated to 2 or more infrastructure categories or to 2 or more jurisdictions.



# Evaluation of Pre-Applications

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.

## Resources:

- Catalyst Program User Manual – Scoring Criteria
- NBRC Agency Investment Priorities



# Evaluation of Pre-Applications

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, and
- the benefits provided to the broader community and region



# NBRC Investment Priorities

1. Projects that provide direct benefits to communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate direct benefits to rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 and underserved communities.
2. Projects that address multiple needs across eligible infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate efficiencies gained from including multiple categories in one project.
3. Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters.





# State Program Role

- Project Development
- Review and assess pre-applications for alignment with Catalyst Program priorities
- Issue invitations to apply



## State Program Role

### 3. Outline Project Details

NBRC recommends interested applicants in Maine, New York and Vermont complete the [Project Interest Form](#) before meeting with their State Program Manager. The information in this form allows the program manager to maximize the opportunity for feedback and funding program suggestions during project development meetings. This form is not required.

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. Weblink: <https://nbrc-nh.com/>

### 4. Contact State Program Manager

**Maine:** Send your Project Interest Form to [BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov](mailto:BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov).

**New Hampshire:** Questions about the technical assistance website can be directed to New Hampshire State Program Manager, [Ian Davis](#).

**New York:** Send your Project Interest Form to New York's NBRC Program Manager, [Kyle Wilber](#).

**Vermont:** Send your project interest form to Vermont's NBRC Program Manager, [Kristie Farnham](#).



# What to Expect After Pre-Applications

**During the week of March 31st, applicants will receive notification of pre-application status along with information from NBRC.**

- Invitation to Apply (if available, will include feedback)
- Recommendation to resubmit in future with feedback
- Ineligibility determination



# What's Next

## Project Development

- Determine eligibility
- Register in the GMS!
- Self classify project according to project categories and investment priorities
- Self evaluate project against NBRC scoring criteria
- Meet with State Program Manager if further discussion needed
- Begin developing pre-application responses!



# What's Next

## Grants Management System Information

- Visit the [NBRC Resources webpage](#) for GMS registration and pre-application guidance documents

## A few notes and reminders:

- Registration required for pre-application
- Pre-application required
- Pre-application can only be associated with one funding program at a time



Northern Border  
Regional Commission

# QUESTIONS?

Send future questions to  
[admin@nbrc.gov](mailto:admin@nbrc.gov)



# NBRC Contacts

## NBRC Staff:

- Andrea Smith, NBRC Program Director, [asmith@nbrc.gov](mailto:asmith@nbrc.gov)
- Adrienne Harrison, Catalyst Program Manager, [aharrison@nbrc.gov](mailto:aharrison@nbrc.gov)

## State Program Managers:

- Each State has a Program Manager, who are employees of State government appointed to the role by the Governor's Alternate:
- Maine: Charlotte Mace, [charlotte.mace@maine.gov](mailto:charlotte.mace@maine.gov)
- New Hampshire: Ian Davis, [ian.m.davis@livefree.nh.gov](mailto:ian.m.davis@livefree.nh.gov)
- Vermont: Kristie Farnham, [Kristie.Farnham@vermont.gov](mailto:Kristie.Farnham@vermont.gov)
- New York: Kyle Wilber, [kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov](mailto:kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov)





# Resources

## **NBRC Catalyst Program Website:**

- <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/catalyst>

## **NBRC Distress Criteria:**

- <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/distressed-counties>

## **Local Development Districts (LDDs):**

- Each Catalyst Program award is required to utilize an LDD for grant administration unless they are an agency of State government or have requested and received LDD waiver.
- A complete list of LDDs can be found at <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/local-development-districts>