Northern Border Regional Commission

Forest Economy Program Information Session

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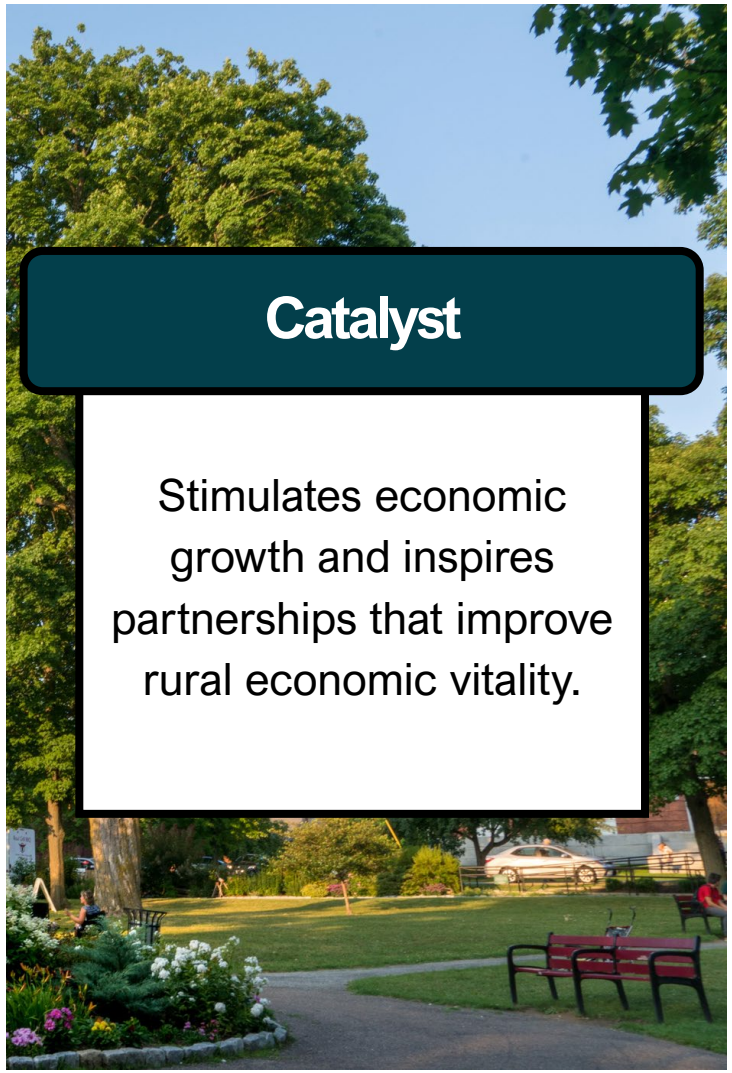
FOSTERING VIBRANT FUTURES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

AGENDA

- Existing resources
- Eligibility, match, and waivers
- Forest Economy Program info
- Pre-Application requirements
- What's next
- Additional resources
- Q&A

NBRC'S THREE CORE GRANT PROGRAMS

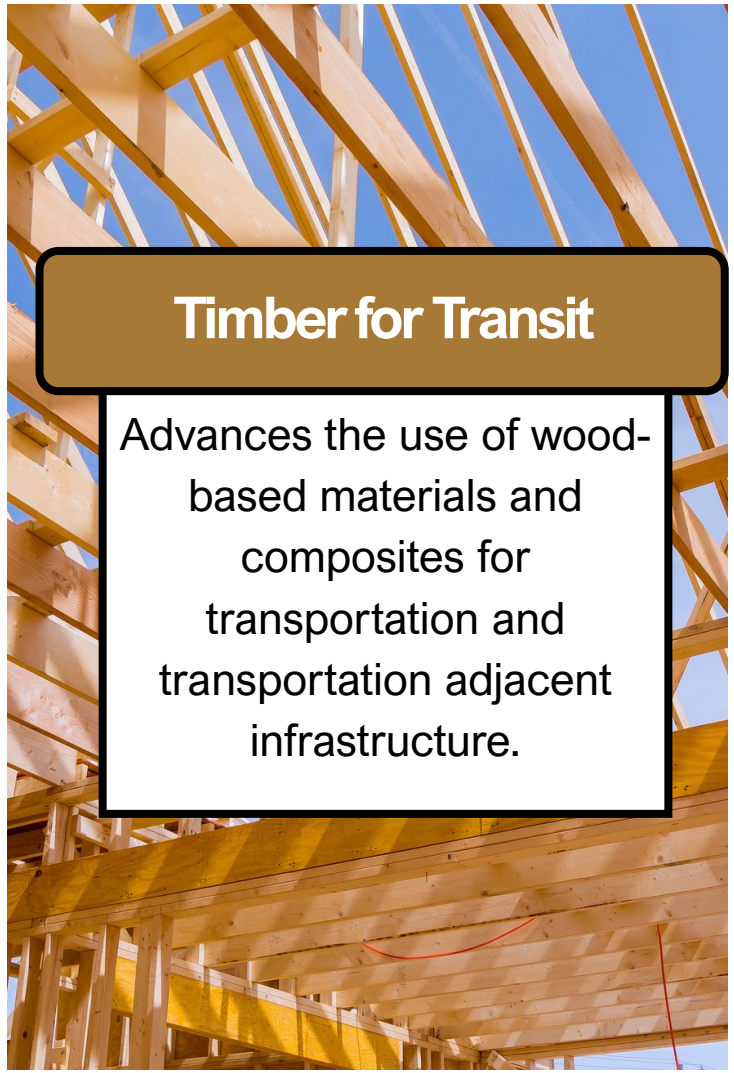


Catalyst

Stimulates economic growth and inspires partnerships that improve rural economic vitality.

Forest Economy

Supports the forest-based economy and assists in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models.



Timber for Transit

Advances the use of wood-based materials and composites for transportation and transportation adjacent infrastructure.

Program Overview Series

- **Part 1:** Funding Rounds, Timeline & Milestones, Next Steps and Contact information
- **Part 2**: Eligibility, Waivers and Match
- **Part 2A**: Determining Required Match
- **Part 3**: Funding 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

Review the Program Overview Series!

Resources: Program User Manual Part 2B

Determining Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility

Geographic Eligibility

- NBRC Service Area
- 2026 Distress Levels and Match Rates
- Determining Eligibility & Match/Reimbursement Ratios

Waivers Opportunities (if applicable, due with pre-application)

- 75% Expenditure Waiver
- Significant Benefits Waiver
- LDD Waiver

Determining Eligibility & Match

1. Determine organization eligibility
2. Determine if project location and applicant/co-applicant are in NBRC Service Area. Determine if your project will require waiver submission at pre-application.
3. Identify reimbursement and match rate associated with location.

Resources:

- NBRC Grant Programs User Manual– (Part 2B covers FEP)
- Project Eligibility and Match Determination

APPLICANT ELIGIBILTY

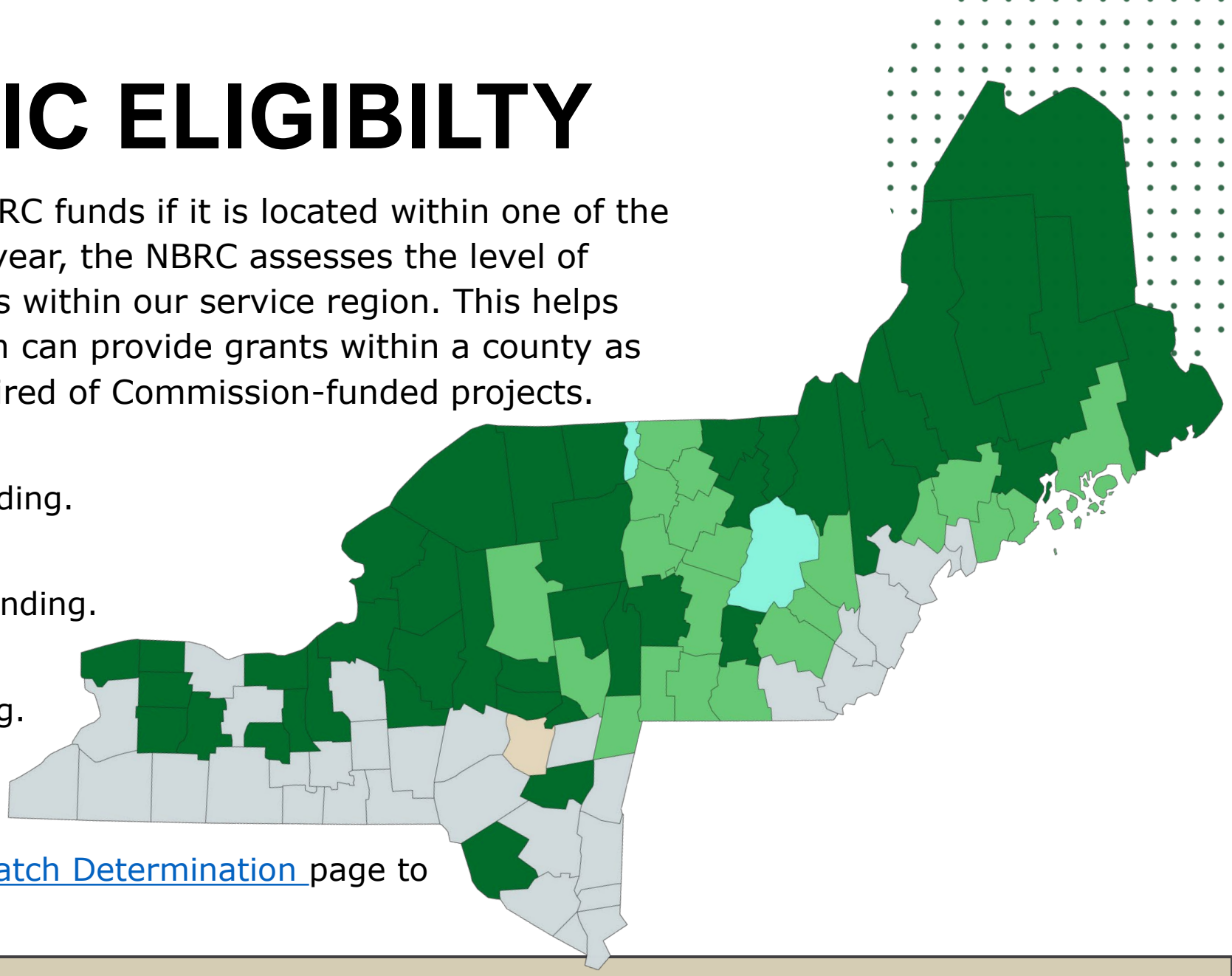
- **STATE GOVERNMENTS**
  Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont
- **SECONDARY AND CAREER TECHNICAL CENTERS**
- **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**
  VILLAGE, TOWN, CITY AND COUNTY
- **NON-PROFITS**
  501(C) ORGANIZATIONS
- **OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS OF STATE**
  REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES OF THE STATE
- **FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED INDIAN TRIBES**

For-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c) are not eligible to apply for funding.

GEOGRAPHIC ELIGIBILTY

Your project may be eligible for NBRC funds if it is located within one of the counties in our service area. Each year, the NBRC assesses the level of economic and demographic distress within our service region. This helps determine whether the Commission can provide grants within a county as well as what level of match is required of Commission-funded projects.

- **Distressed:** Eligible for 80% funding. Requires a 20% match.
- **Transitional:** Eligible for 50% funding. Requires a 50% match.
- **Attainment**: Ineligible for funding. (Some exceptions apply.)



Visit NBRC's Project Eligibility and Match Determination page to learn more and access match tools.

Determining Match Rate

Review Part 2A of Program Overview Series!

2026: NEW Match Rate Determination

Background: Match rate (as mandated by Congress) is determined by the socio-economic indicators of your geography. Each assessment level has a corresponding match rate requirement.

Simplifying Terms: From "match and cost share" to just "match". Large and complex projects may choose to phase the work.

Getting More Granular: Beginning in 2026, NBRC evaluates distress in the region at both a county *and* community level, providing applicants with the option to choose the match rate that is most beneficial based on their project location(s).

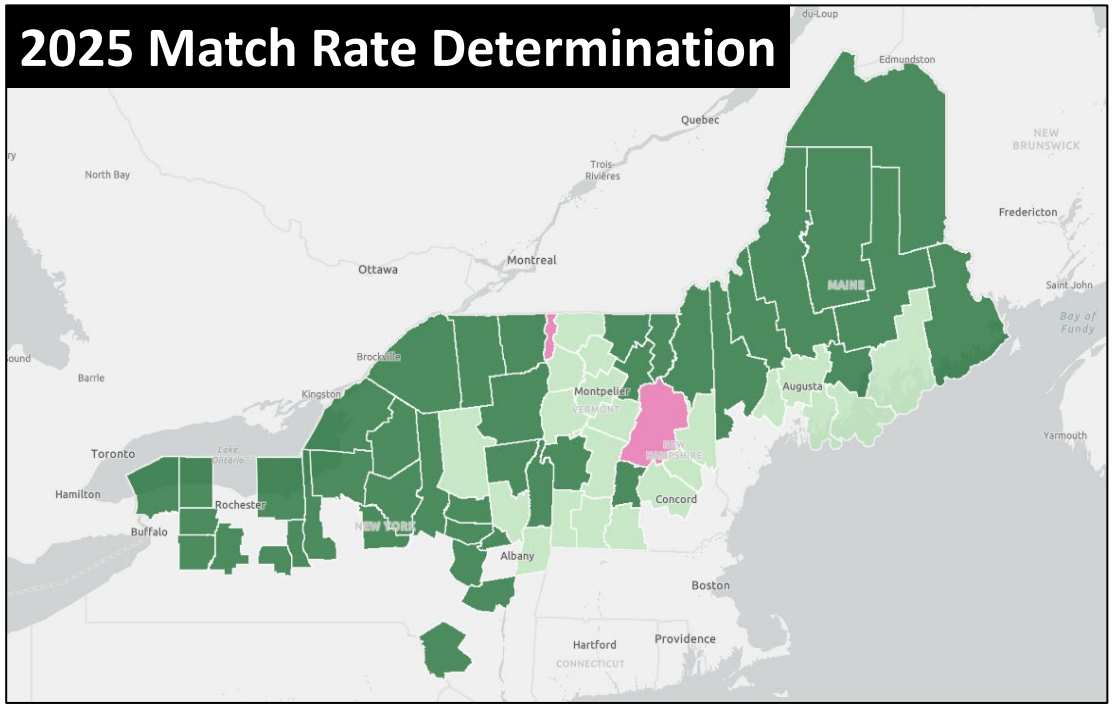
NBRC's 3 Match Tools: New tools have been developed to assist applicants in identifying their match rate.

Determining Match Rate Based on Project Location

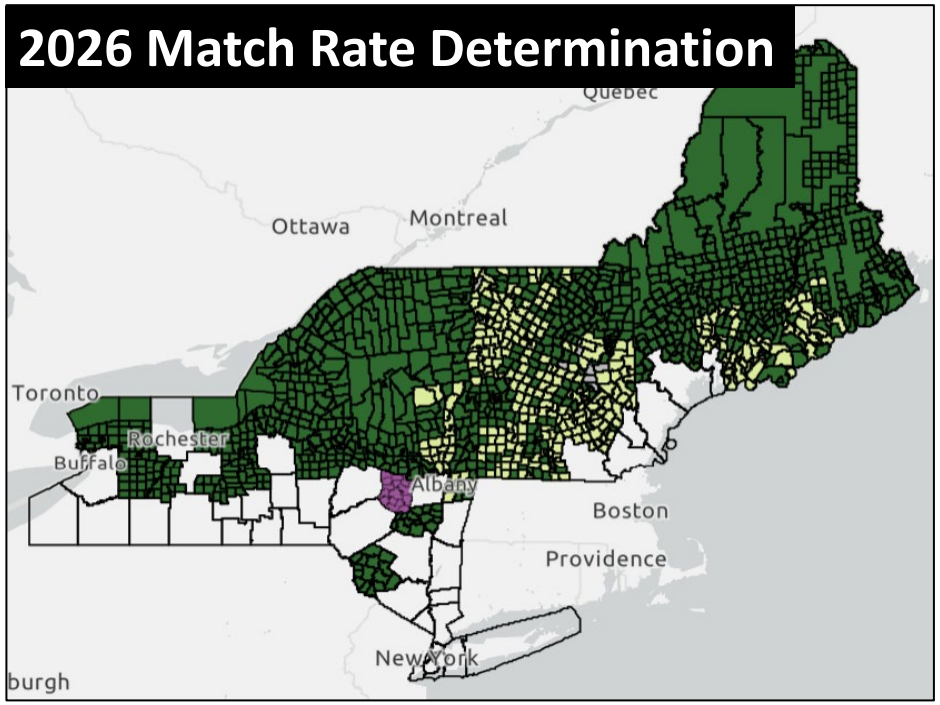
Find your GEOID for pre-application!

Drilling down to community level data **improves the match rate** for many communities.

2025 Match Rate Determination



2026 Match Rate Determination



New Tools to ID Project Match Rate:

1. **PDF List with Match Rate**
2. **Interactive Map**
3. **Match Rate Calculator**

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 match 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.

Resources: NBRC Grant Programs User Manual

Applicants Outside NBRC Service Area

Entities eligible for a **Significant Benefit Waiver** are those who:

- Are located within an Attainment County but not within a Distressed or Transitional community, or
- Are located outside of the NBRC region but within a member state.

Entities eligible for a Significant Benefit Waiver must demonstrate the project will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional communities or counties.

Reference NBRC's Grant Programs User Manual Part 3: Appendices for more information on the Significant Benefit Waiver and process to submit.

Local Development Districts

New in 2026: Requirement applies to FEP

All NBRC competitive program awards require the use of a Local Development District (LDD) for grant administration.

- ✓ Exception for state government entities and LDDs

LDDs are compensated for grant administrative work. The fee structure is as follows:

- $8,000 flat fee for awards of $400,000 or less
- 2% of NBRC requested amount for awards above $400,000.

A current list of participating LDDs can be found on the About LDDs page on NBRC's website

Resources: Program Overview Series Part 4

Forest Economy Program

- Program Purpose
- Timeline
- Available Funding
- Project Categories
- Project Examples
- Program Evaluation Priorities
- State Priorities

Forest Economy Program award history can be found on each of the NBRC state pages:
MAINE | NEW HAMPSHIRE | NEW YORK | VERMONT

Program Purpose

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

Available Funding

The NBRC may award up to $4 million, available for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region’s forest economy and communities. The award maximum is $1 million.

Projects must be consistent with the Program evaluation priorities, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives.

Forest Economy funding will be competitively awarded in two funding rounds

Timeline and Key Dates

Spring Round

- Pre-applications AND Waivers Due: **February 27, 2026 (before 5:00pm EST)**
- Full Applications Due: **April 17, 2026 (before 5:00pm EST)**
- Grant Awards Announced: **June 2026**

Fall Round

- Pre-applications & Waivers Due: **August 28, 2026 (before 5:00pm EST)**
- Full Applications Due: **October 16, 2026 (before 5:00pm EST)**
- Grant Awards Announced: **December 2026**

Dates are subject to change. View the published 2026 NBRC Program Timeline for up-to-date information.

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM (FEP)

Eligible project purposes include:

- **Community development projects** that support the diversified use of forest for economic activity
- **Workforce training and development projects** for the purpose of building the skills, recruiting, and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses
- **Business planning and technical assistance projects** that enhance the viability and sustainability of new and existing forest businesses
- **Public infrastructure projects** that directly support the forest industry
- **Marketing, communication and education projects** that are paired with a public infrastructure, community development or workforce training or development project

**Basic research projects will not be considered*

Eligible Project Examples

Community Development

A project involving construction or renovation of a community gathering space or public building (town hall, public library, museum etc) using mass timber, wood fiber insulation, and advanced wood heat.

Workforce Development

An initiative with connections to local businesses which addresses state-wide forest economy workforce needs, including careers in logging, forestry, and related fields.

Eligible Project Examples

Business Planning and TA

An accelerator and technical assistance program designed to support forest product companies—from emerging entrepreneurs to long-established firms—in achieving their growth goals. The project provides tailored guidance to help businesses scale operations, improve efficiency, strengthen competitiveness, and prepare for long-term succession and sustainability.

Public Infrastructure

A project to redevelop a shuttered paper mill site into a multi-industrial complex and prepare the site for industrial use by new businesses, including forest product companies.

Eligible Project Examples

Marketing, Communication, Education

MUST BE PAIRED with at least one other project category. E.g., Marketing to promote the environmental and climate benefits of forest management and forest products in ways that strengthen markets for wood products.

NBRC Evaluation Priorities

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create and grow needed markets for low-grade forest harvest residuals.
- Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.
- Help to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.

NBRC Evaluation Priorities

- Aid in the revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably for the production of wood products and advanced materials manufacturing.
- Leverage existing (or, in some cases, new) partnerships to impact multiple counties, states and/or the entire NBRC region, and/or have the potential to do so.

State Goals and Priorities

- Forest Opportunity Roadmap Maine (FOR/Maine)
- Maine Tech Hub
- New Hampshire Forest Action Plan (with special attention to the goals and strategies listed under Focus Area – Forest Based Economy, starting on page 149)
- Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap
- New York State Forest Action Plan (with special attention to the focus areas and strategies within Goal #3: Increase Forest Benefits for Humans and All Living Creatures)

Connect with your State Program Manager!

Pre-Application Process & Evaluation

Refer to the Program User Manual and GMS Resources!

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

Pre-Application: Process

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

- Requires registration (establishing a new user account, if not already established). Registration guidance document is available.
- You must "Qualify" for a funding opportunity to create your pre-application. Pre-application guidance document is available.

- **Resources**: Forms & Other Grant Administration Materials: | Northern Border Regional Commission

Pre-Application: Requirements

Applicant and Co-Applicant Information

- Applicant Organization
- Organization Type (eligible applicant type)
- Address
- Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Unique Entity ID (UEI) - Applicant must enter a UEI to complete registration. Go to Sam.gov to receive your UEI.

This info will be collected during GMS registration.

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)

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

- Address including zip code
- County

Project 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 info 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.

Pre-Application: Requirements

Project Abstract – Narrative

- Provide a summary of the proposed project.
- What NBRC eligible purpose and project category does this project address?
- Describe the status of the project – ready for implementation, planning tasks ongoing, early stages.
- What is the project scope? Over what period of time will this project be completed?

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

Resources:

Grant Programs Manual Part 3: Appendix E – Key Performance Indicators

Pre-Application: Requirements

Program Evaluation Priorities - Narrative

- Identify and demonstrate how the project addresses program Evaluation Priorities.
- Identify and demonstrate how the project addresses relevant state priorities.

Resources:

- Grant Programs User Manual Part 2B: Forest Economy Program, and
  - Part 3: Appendix K – Forest Economy Program Scoring Criteria.

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 underrepresented communities?
- If applicable, how does this project help communities plan for extreme weather readiness?
- Address whether/how the project supports regional, state, or local forest economy planning efforts.

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?

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:

- Grant Programs User Manual Part 2B: Forest Economy Program, and
  - Part 3: Appendix K – Forest Economy Program Scoring Criteria.

Pre-Application: Evaluation

When issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase, NBRC and the States will also consider:

- Advisory board input
- the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment;
- the projects identified as a state priority;
- the benefits provided to the broader community and region.

Pre-Application: Evaluation

State Program Manager Role

- Project Development
- Review and assess pre-applications for alignment with Forest Economy Program priorities and local forest economy initiatives and planning efforts

Resources

Complete the Project Interest Form prior to requesting a meeting with State Program Managers

Pre-Application: Evaluation

Advisory Board Role

- Markets the program and serves as a resource for project development
- Evaluates pre-applications and provides sector expertise to State Program Managers for application evaluation
- Serves as a resource to projects invited to submit a full application
- DOES NOT score applications.

What's Next

- ✓ **Determine Eligibility**
- ✓ **Review Resources – Grant Programs User Manual, Overview Series, State Priorities,**
- ✓ **Self classify your project according to project categories and investment priorities**
- ✓ **Self evaluate project against FEP scoring criteria**
- ✓ **Complete a project interest form and connect with your State Program Manager**
- ✓ **Project Development**
- ✓ **Review GMS resources and complete registration**
- ✓ **Begin developing your pre-application responses!**

Grant Program
Resources

- **Grant Programs User Manual and Timeline** are available now!
- The **Pre-Application Support page** holds recorded sessions, the Program Overview Series, and manuals.
- **Forest Economy Program page**
- **Grant Management System** – resources for submitting pre-applications in the GMS.

Thank you!
Questions?

Marina Caceres, Program Manager