NBRC PROGRAMS USER MANUAL

2026

Northern Border
Regional Commission

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Part 1: NBRC Grant Funding Programs Policies & Requirements

USING THE GRANT PROGRAMS USER MANUAL

The Grant Programs User Manual is organized into 3 parts:

- Part 1 covers the most important information for all three competitive grant programs and should be read first.
- Part 2 provides further details related to the specifics of each program.
- Part 3 contains appendices, including applicable waivers, scoring criteria, program contact information, and other resources.

INTRODUCTION TO NBRC

Established by Congress in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a partnership between the federal government and the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. NBRC manages Congressionally appropriated federal funding for

competitive grant programs, and the Commission members (Federal Co-Chair and Governors of the four member states) vote to approve grant awards. The mission of the NBRC is to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity in the northern border region with flexible funding and strategic support. The NBRC invests in job-creating projects that reduce poverty, unemployment, and outmigration within the geographies that are designated with specific socio-economic distress levels. Additional information is available on the **NBRC website**.

Overview of Grant Programs

The **Catalyst Program** stimulates economic growth and inspires partnerships that improve rural economic vitality across the four-state NBRC region. The Catalyst Program supports a broad range of economic development initiatives that modernize and expand water and wastewater systems; revitalize transportation infrastructure; establish workforce development programs and facilities; grow outdoor recreation infrastructure and economies; and construct new childcare and healthcare facilities. After reviewing Part 1, additional information on the Catalyst Grant Program is available in Part 2A of this Program User Manual: **Catalyst Program User Manual**.

The **Forest Economy Program** supports the forest-based economy and assists in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models across the 4-state NBRC region. The Forest Economy Program is distinct from other programs in two important ways: 1) the Forest Economy Program emphasizes the potential for impact across the entire NBRC region; and 2) Infrastructure projects (defined by Congress in NBRC's authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy) must directly support the forest industry. After reviewing Part 1, additional information on the Forest Economy Program is available in Part 2B of this Program User Manual: **Forest Economy Program User Manual**.

The **Timber for Transit Program** advances 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. 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. After reviewing Part 1, additional information on the Timber for Transit Program is available in Part 2C of this Program User Manual: **Timber for Transit Program User Manual**.

Key Dates & Submission Information Overview

The key dates and application submission process are the same for all NBRC grant programs. The **grant program timeline** provides key dates, including pre-application and application due

dates for the two funding rounds. Any changes to key dates will be updated in the grant program timeline.

Pre-applications are required for funding consideration and must be submitted using NBRC's online Grants Management System (GMS). Pre-applications will be reviewed for eligibility, maximum award amounts, and adherence to program priorities. Applicants will receive a response to the pre-application approximately 4 weeks after submitting to the GMS.

Full applications will only be accepted from those entities expressly invited to apply at the pre-application phase and must be submitted using NBRC's online GMS. Applicants will receive a response to the application approximately 6-8 weeks after submitting in the GMS.

NBRC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This section outlines the eligibility requirements to receive NBRC funding:

- Applicants must be located within NBRC's service area and designated as *Distressed or Transitional.*
    - See the NBRC Eligibility and Match resource page for tools to verify a project location's distress designation and associated minimum match requirement.
    - Eligible applicants include state and local governments, federally recognized tribal entities, educational institutions and non-profits. *For-profit entities are not eligible.*
- Proposed activities must meet NBRC's mission, State Economic Development priorities, and Administration priorities.

If an applicant is outside of the NBRC service area or is outside of the *distressed* or *transitional* geographies, they may be eligible (See **Appendix C - Significant Benefit Requirement and Waiver):**

- If your organization itself is **outside of our jurisdiction** and you are applying to work within the NBRC region, you **will need a waiver**. *(Example: your organization is regional and your headquarters are in Portland, Maine. You will need a significant benefit waiver to prove the economic value of your project will go predominantly to distressed or transitional counties in ME or the 4-state region).*
- If your project location is **inside our jurisdiction, but in an Attainment area, you will need a waiver**. *(Example: your business incubator is in Campton NH, which is an Attainment community. You will need a significant benefit waiver to prove the economic value of your project will go predominantly to serve emerging businesses from distressed or transitional county or community locations.)*

Additional eligibility conditions apply in specific situations:

- Prior award recipients must meet 75% expenditure requirement. See **Appendix B - Prior Award Recipient 75% Expenditure Policy and Waiver** if applicant has an open award that is not yet 75% expended. **If required, 75% Expenditure Waiver must be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm on the due date.**
- Co-applicant should be included when participation by another eligible entity is required to complete the project. A co-applicant is required in cases where a project involves real property owned by an entity other than the primary applicant. Pre-applications will be reviewed for necessary co-applicants.

NBRC FUNDING POLICIES

The following funding policies apply to all NBRC grant programs.

Reimbursement Grant Program

Reimbursement grants are a type of funding where the grantee must first spend their own money on eligible expenses and then submit proof of those expenses to receive reimbursement from NBRC. Organizations should be financially capable of covering costs up front, to minimize delays in the projects. NBRC awarded funds may cover up to 80% of a project but not the total project costs. All applicants must show **matching funds** in project budgets. NBRC awarded funds and matching funds must be spent together using the reimbursement-match ratio. The entire project must be completed and all match (required minimum and above minimum match) accounted for before "close out" with NBRC.

Match

Match is the amount of funds or contributions needed from other sources to complete the NBRC-funded project. NBRC calculates minimum required match based on the socioeconomic distress of your project service area(s).

1. Match may be additional public or private funds, as well as in-kind or volunteer cost share.
2. A project's match rate percentage is the average of each rate—50% or 20%—associated with your project's service area(s). If the project spans a few municipalities, the final match rate will be the **average** of those areas associated match rates.
3. The percentage is then calculated on your Total Project Cost:
   a. *Example 1: If a project's total project costs equal $1,000,000, and the project is located in a 'Transitional' service area, the match rate is calculated at 50%. The project's match amount is 50% of $1,000,000, or $500,000, and the project may also apply to NBRC for up to $500,000.*

b. *Example 2: If a project's total project costs equal $1,000,000, and the project is located in a 'Distressed' service area, the match rate is calculated at 20%. The project's match amount is 20% of $1,000,000, or $200,000, and the project may apply to NBRC for up to $800,000.*

4. NBRC requires all applicants to prove or verify that the minimum match for any project proposal is committed within one year of the grant award.

    a. If the applicant will have difficulty securing the minimum required match within one year, the applicant should consider postponing the application until a later date.

5. If an applicant indicates match above the minimum required match in application materials, NBRC will require these additional leveraged funds to be *verified and documented in the same way as minimum required match.*

    a. Projects with large capital stacks may consider phasing activities and leveraging NBRC funds for one phase with a discrete scope of work and budget. This approach may be encouraged to reduce the administrative burden and potential project delays which often occur for large projects required to complete all scoped activities to receive the full NBRC award. An application for a distinct scope of work and budget that is part of a larger overall project may still capture the broader scope by using the "Additional Investment Leveraged" Key Performance Indicator upon submission of the full application.

Any match (required minimum and above minimum match) must be documented as 'committed' prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed. All NBRC grant programs have maximum grant awards that may not be exceeded.

Determining Project Location & Reimbursement-Match Ratio

Review and complete one of NBRC's Match tools to verify project location and associated minimum match requirement. See the Match Determination resource page for the match requirement associated with your project location.

Federal Funding Ceiling

Match requirements may be satisfied by private sources (such as donations or philanthropic grants) or public sources (such as state grants or other federal agency funding). NBRC's statute (40 U.S.C. Subtitle V §15506: Supplements to Federal grant programs) requires that projects receiving NBRC funds may not exceed 80% of total project costs from all federal funding sources combined. This is the 'federal funding ceiling' for NBRC.

NBRC funds can however be used to satisfy the non-federal cost sharing or match requirements for a project under another federal grant program for which NBRC is not the sole or primary

funding source as outlined in 40 USC 15507. In these instances, NBRC funds would not count towards the federal share of the total project cost.

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).

Ineligible Purposes

- No pass-through funding will be awarded. Eligible entities cannot act as channels for ineligible entities like private businesses or those not listed as Co-Applicants or sub-awardee. 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.
- Projects that promote unfair competition between businesses with the same immediate service area are ineligible.
- No project activities and costs in conflict with Federal Executive Orders will be awarded.

Eligible Costs

After receiving a Notice to Proceed from NBRC, Program funds may be used for:

- Reasonable fees to contractors and consultants (but not any fee or profit to the recipient or sub-recipient)
- Construction and pre-construction costs such as engineering
- Costs for bid, performance, or payment bonds
- Indirect costs for work performed by the recipient's staff. Indirect cost must be documented by a Federal Cognizant Agent or an entity acting on their behalf and documented by a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, submitted with the application. If you do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate (like many nonprofits), the de minimis rate of 15% can be used as the indirect cost rate for the application.
- Costs to complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Grant Administration services through Local Development Districts (LDDs)
- Costs outlined in the Federal Cost Principles (Uniform Guidance 2CFR 200)
- All project-related costs must be included in the detailed project budget (SF-424cbw)

Ineligible Costs

- Application preparation
- Food and beverages generally ineligible. 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. See **Compliance Manual** for additional details.
- Meals and lodging generally ineligible. Consistent with 2 CFR §200.475, travel costs include transportation, lodging, subsistence and related items incurred by employees of the grantee who are specifically identified as having a role in the project according to the project's budget (SF424cbw). See **Compliance Manual** for additional details.
- Alcohol
- Entertainment
- Appraisals of property to be purchased or used as match
- Allowance or payment of debts
- Maintenance, including routine, deferred, and short-term operational needs
- Any costs committed or spent before receiving a Notice to Proceed from NBRC. This includes NBRC award funds, and any funds documented as match for the project. Contracts executed or funds committed prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed will need to be re-bid in accordance with federal procurement requirements.
- Project costs for program participants in conflict with allowances under 2 CFR 200.1 and 2 CFR 200.456
- Project activities and costs in conflict with Federal Executive Orders

Period of Performance

Projects funded by NBRC have a **three-year period of performance.** All work should be completed within this three-year timeframe. Projects should consider time needed to complete NEPA review, permitting, and procurement. See NBRC's **NEPA resource page** for estimated time frames for completing the NEPA assessment. If you think your project will take longer than three years from the time of award, we recommend waiting and applying in a future round when it can be finished within the three-year period.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

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. All applicants need to complete and submit a NEPA Intake Form as part of the application. See NBRC's **NEPA resource page** for additional information on process.

Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA)

BABAA was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference ("Buy American Preference" referred to as "BAP") for iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects. Infrastructure programs funded with Federal dollars, IIJA §70914(a) of Pub. L. 117-58, instructs Federal agencies to ensure that "none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure, including each deficient program, may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured product, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. As the NBRC routinely funds infrastructure projects, BABAA governs future Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) infrastructure investments. See NBRC's **BABAA resource page** for additional information.

Local Development District (LDD) Policy

What is an LDD?

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 help promote local economic growth, especially in distressed areas, by facilitating access to grants, technical assistance, strategic planning and more. LDDs are either an already existing federally designated Economic Development District, as certified by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, or an organization similar in nature to a regional planning commission or council of governments. These organizations, often funded through a combination of state or local funds, are a critical intermediary and partner for rural communities as they enhance community development efforts.

LDDs are knowledgeable about other Federal and State programs that help fund economic and community development projects. They are aware of local concerns as most engage in regional economic development planning of varying degrees. LDDs provide feedback to the Commission on its current programs as well as assist in identifying future areas of focus for the Commission.

NBRC works to strengthen the relationships between rural community applicants and their regional LDDs through a built-in technical assistance service related to grants administration. Each applicant must identify an LDD partner, who will work alongside the grantee to assist with: quarterly and annual reporting, reimbursement requests, grant and contract amendments, final reporting and general assistance. This relationship will build the capacity of under-resourced rural communities over time and can provide critical skills necessary to manage and administer federal funds.

What is the Role of an LDD?

All NBRC awardees, for all grant programs, are required to use an LDD for grant administration assistance. NBRC grant award funds will be shared with the LDD to facilitate this grant administration support. The only exception to this LDD partnership requirement are applicants who are State agencies, LDDs, or have an approved LDD waiver request (submitted at Pre-Application).

- LDDs are compensated for their grant administration services through a reimbursement process with the grantee. 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
  - LDD grant administration costs are an eligible NBRC cost for an amount not to exceed the formula. If grant administration assistance is beyond the total available under the formula, those must be paid for with matching funds.
- NBRC funds cannot be used to pay for any grant administration assistance beyond the total available under the formula.
- LDD grant administration costs must be reflected as an individual line item within the detailed project budget submitted as part of the full application for funding.

Grant administration duties include the following:

- **Partial Notice/Notice to Proceed Documentation**: Assists grantee with uploading their LDD contract in the GMS, assist with getting a PNTP for LDD costs in place, if applicable, and submitting their matching funds documentation.
- **Quarterly and Annual Reporting**: Assists grantee to file all quarterly and annual reports accurately and on time, and with enough information to provide a meaningful outline of the project's status.
- **Reimbursement Requests**: Provides guidance to grantees on filing reimbursement requests and ensures that reimbursement requests are accurate, within approved budget, and contains all the necessary documentation to provide evidence of match and reimbursements that are expected to be paid by NBRC. Duties also include guidance for grantees in establishing organized systems to maintain invoices and documentation related to project expenditures.
- **Close-Out Reporting**: Assists the grantee in submitting all required close-out material accurately and on time once the project is complete.
- **Contract Amendments:** Assists grantees in submitting contract amendments such as a change in authorized official, budget adjustment, contract extension, or project scope adjustment.

- **General Assistance**: Assists with guidance to the grantee with other issues such as what their responsibilities are regarding procurement of goods and services and contractors. Has general knowledge base about federal grant programs, specifically NBRC.

Once a project is awarded, the grantee and LDD should meet to plan for the successful execution of grant administration. The LDD contract executed with the grantee should specify the grant administration services 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.

Can the LDD help a Grantee with more than Grants Administration?

For technical assistance services outside the scope of grants administration support, NBRC requires a separate and additional contract between the LDD and the grantee. These additional services may be allowable under NBRC eligible costs, but are separated in the budget and proposal.

- Additional **project management services** are allowable/eligible activities under NBRC funding but must be reflected in the project budget (SF424cbw) as a separate line item from grant administration and must live in a separate contract with the LDD for those services.
- **NEPA documentation and support services** are eligible NBRC costs, which must be reflected in the project budget (SF424cbw), and the grantee may enter a **separate contract** with the LDD for those services.

LDDs utilized by grantees must have opted into the LDD Partnership Program for the current cycle year and continue to meet programmatic requirements to be eligible to provide grant administration assistance to new grantees.

What is NOT the Role of an LDD?

The LDD is not expected to:

- conduct bid processes and/or assess bid documents for completion
- interview potential consultants, or
- conduct other procurement processes.

LDD Waiver Request

LDD waivers are considered ONLY if your entity has had an NBRC award since 2024, administered through our Grant Management System, or potential extenuating circumstances. **LDD waiver requests must be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due**

date. See **Appendix D – Local Development District (LDD) Waiver Requirements and Affidavit** for details.

Multi-State Projects

Multi-state projects are eligible to apply for NBRC funding.

Multi-state applications for Catalyst Program require review and approval from each state the project is located in. Applications that cover multiple states should contact the state program managers from each state the proposed project is located in. 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.

Multi-state applications for Forest Economy and Timber for Transit Programs are acceptable. Applications that cover multiple states should connect with the state program managers from each state in which the proposed project is located. 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.

APPLYING FOR NBRC FUNDS

Stages of Application

NBRC competitive grant programs have a few important stages. This section will describe the stages, from Project Development to Application Guidance, and refer applicants to relevant and more detailed information on the website.

Specifically, NBRC utilizes a Grants Management System (GMS) portal, through which all pre-applications, applications, and grants administration forms and communications flow. The GMS has a registration system and will have User Roles for both the Grantee and the LDD partner.

NBRC also relies on SAM.gov, a system for coordinated federal award management. It collects, validates and stores data from grantees and suppliers and makes that information available to various government agencies.

Project Development

Before the GMS opens for pre-application submissions, applicants can start preparing project details for a pre-application. Some helpful early project development steps include:

- Review program materials, focusing on eligibility and funding priorities for this program.
- Watch a recorded Program Information Session. For details, visit the relative program page.
- Complete a Project Interest Form to share with State Program Manager before requesting project development guidance or feedback on alignment with state priorities. This is not a pre-application.
- Check eligibility requirements to see if your project needs a waiver with the pre-application. Waiver details are available in the Appendices of this Manual. Contact NBRC with questions regarding eligibility and NBRC funding priorities.
- 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.

Registration

Applicants must register for an account with the NBRC Grants Management System before submitting a pre-application. Registration can be done at any time; however this process is not automated and may take up to 3 business days to complete.

The **Grants Management System – Registration Guidance Document** and two recorded videos specifically focused on the registration process are available on the NBRC resources webpage.

After you submit your registration, NBRC will review it for completeness and eligibility. This process may take 1 to 2 business days. NBRC will either Approve or Reject the registration. If approved, the organization's Authorized Official will get an email about the approval and another email to set up their account's username and password. If rejected, the organization's Authorized Official will receive an explanation.

NBRC will reject registration requests for organizations whose EIN address is outside the NBRC service area with an explanation of the eligibility requirements and the Significant Benefits Waiver. Those with a rejected registration need to follow the instructions to acknowledge their ability to meet the Significant Benefits Waiver requirements. See **Appendix C – Significant Benefits Policy and Waiver**.

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

- Employer Identification Number (EIN);

- 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 GMS.
- Once your registration is approved, you may invite one additional user from your organization to access your account to support your pre-application and application.

Pre-Application Requirements

A pre-application is required for all NBRC grant programs. Pre-applications must be submitted before 5:00pm EST on the due date. See **NBRC Grant Program Timeline**. Pre-applications must be submitted using the NBRC Grants Management System.

All waiver requests must be submitted with the pre-application.

- The pre-application will be marked as ineligible if a 75% Expenditure Waiver and/or a Significant Benefits Waiver is required and NOT submitted.
- An LDD Waiver must be requested and submitted with the pre-application. If the waiver is not approved with the pre-application and the project is invited to the application phase, LDD grant administration services will be required, and the costs must be included in the project budget submitted with the application.
- Waiver determinations are considered final.

Pre-Application Guidance and Resources

Many resources are available on the NBRC website to help you with your pre-application.

Click on "Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents" within **NBRC's Resources webpage** to find a library of helpful resources and forms, including:

- Creating and Submitting a Pre-Application

Click on the **Program Pre-Application Support** webpage to find additional resources, including:

- Program Overview Series
- Pre-Application Overview and Office Hours

- Pre-Application Narrative Guidance by Program

All pre-applications are reviewed by NBRC and by its member states. Feedback will be provided to applicants within the Grants Management System (GMS). If a project is invited to apply, this feedback will provide critical information about eligibility or budget or other key factors that were proposed in the pre-application. If a project is not invited to apply, this feedback will be useful to strengthen an application at a future date. All pre-application feedback from NBRC should be reviewed and addressed at time of submitting an application.

Application Requirements

Applications are by invitation only for all NBRC grant programs. Invited applicants receive an official **Invitation to Apply** by email notification through the GMS.

Applications must also be submitted using the GMS. Applications must be submitted before 5:00pm EST on the due date. See **NBRC Grant Program Timeline**.

Application Guidance and Resources

Visit the Program Areas page of the NBRC website for more details, including pre-recorded programmatic information sessions. Many resources, including step-by-step instructions on how to complete and submit the application, are available on the Resources page of the NBRC website. Click on "Grant Administration Information and Grants Management System (GMS) Guidance Documents" to find a library of helpful resources and forms.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to:

- Review your Invitation to Apply for any feedback or requested revisions from NBRC and State Program Manager. This is found by logging into the GMS and viewing the Collab Tab in your pre-application. The feedback is specific to each project to help fill information gaps and improve the application.
- Contact 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.
- Review application resources. Visit the relevant **Program Page** for more details. Application resources provide guidance and helpful hints for common challenges.
    - Review the **Supporting Documents Checklist** for details on required documents that must be completed as part of the application.
    - Review the **Creating and Submitting an Application** guidance document for information on completing the Application in the GMS.

- In addition to program scoring criteria, when selecting projects for funding awards at the application phase, NBRC and the States will also consider:
    - Balanced geographic distribution of investments
    - Well-documented community or regionally supported need for the project
    - Projects deemed a priority by the State where the project is located
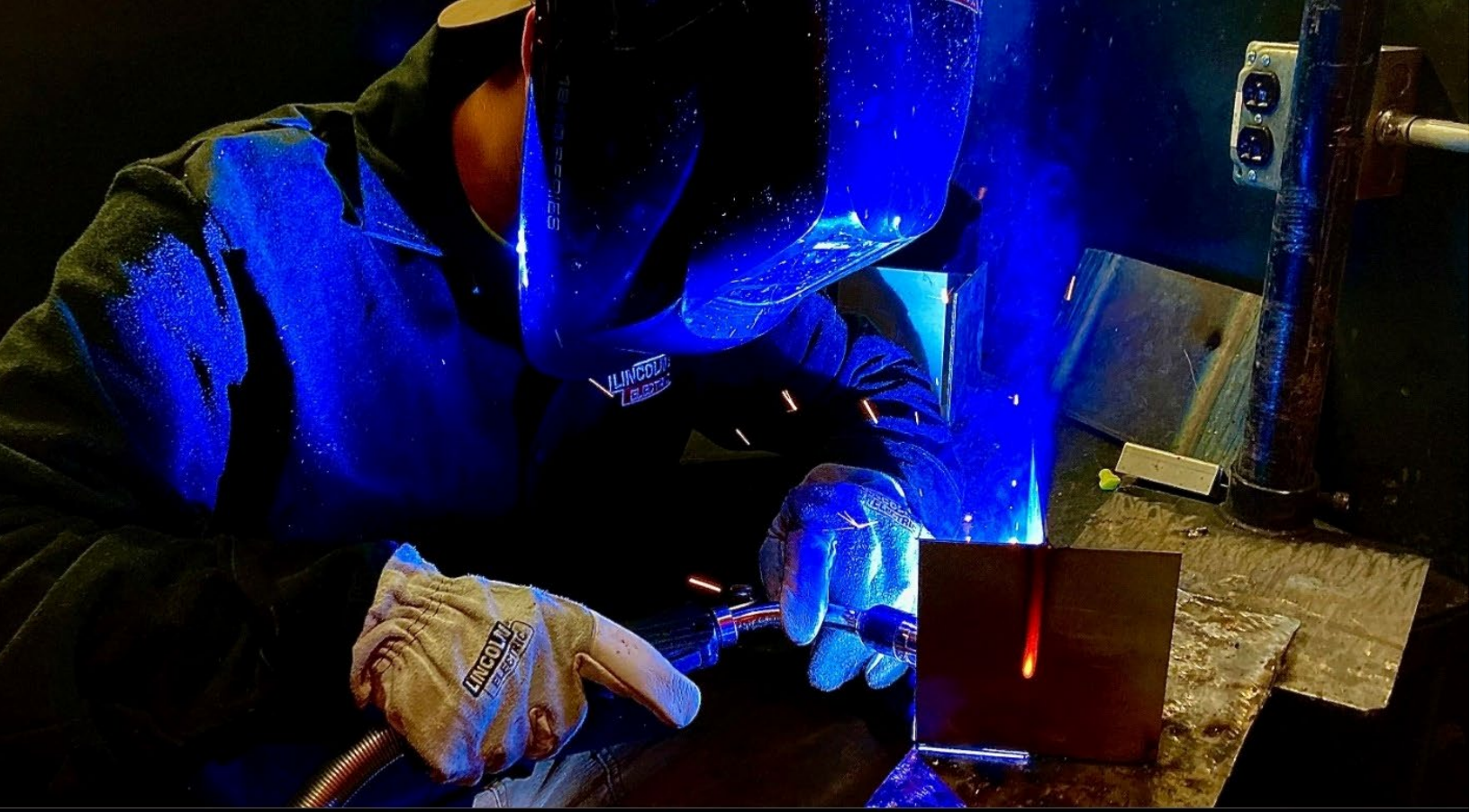
CATALYST PROGRAM MANUAL

Part 2A: Catalyst Grant Program Manual

INTRODUCTION TO CATALYST GRANT PROGRAM

Purpose

The Catalyst Grant Program is NBRC's flagship program and is designed to stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality across the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) four-state region. The Catalyst Program supports 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. The broad approach incorporates each state's economic development priorities, ensuring alignment with those priorities.

Available Funding

NBRC makes funds available each program year to be used across the spring and fall funding rounds. See the **Catalyst Program Overview** for the current available funds. Catalyst Grant Program funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations.

CATALYST PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Purpose, Project Classification and Award Maximum

The Catalyst Program classifies proposed projects based on the primary purpose and award type identified in the pre-application materials. Use the guidance and tables below to determine how the project is classified and the associated award maximum. All projects must be able to clearly identify the **eligible purpose, award type, and maximum funding request** in pre-application and application materials.

Step 1. Choose the eligible category that matches the project's primary purpose.

Review the descriptions of eligible purpose categories and select the category that best aligns with your project's primary purpose. NBRC has provided **Appendix H – Project Classification Details – Definitions, Criteria and Examples** which includes details for each eligible project category and is recommended as a resource to confirm the proposed project meets minimum requirements, eligibility, and aligns with examples. If your project's primary purpose does align with an eligible category, proceed to Step 2. If your project does not clearly fit any eligible category, contact NBRC for guidance on eligibility.

Projects with a primary purpose to support the following categories are considered eligible activities for Catalyst Program investments under 40 UC Subtitle V:

- **Transportation Infrastructure** – Construction of publicly accessible systems and facilities—such as roads, bridges, transit hubs, railways, airports, and ports—that enable the reliable movement of people and goods, strengthen regional economies, and expand access to essential services and opportunities.
- **Basic Public Infrastructure** – Construction of publicly accessible systems and facilities—such as water and wastewater infrastructure, solid waste and heat generation systems, childcare and healthcare infrastructure, outdoor recreation infrastructure, and community meeting infrastructure —that are essential to economic vitality, public health, and regional resilience.

- **Telecommunications Infrastructure** – Construction of physical and digital systems—such as broadband networks, fiber optics, towers, antennas, and cyber infrastructure—that enable the transmission of information, support modern economic activity, expand access to communication services, and connect rural and underserved communities to opportunity.

- **Business and Workforce Development** – Systems, services, programs and facilities that create, retain or expand businesses and equip individuals with job-related education, skills training and employment pathways aligned with the current and future needs of regional employers.

- **Basic Healthcare** - Systems, services, programs, and facilities that improve physical and mental well-being—especially in medically underserved communities—by addressing public health challenges, expanding access to affordable care, strengthening the healthcare workforce, and promoting nutrition, education, and preventative health practices.

- **Resource Conservation, Tourism and Recreation** - Systems, services, programs, facilities, and land acquisition that leverage natural, cultural, and recreational assets to promote sustainable economic development, enhance quality of life, and align with regional goals—through expanded access to outdoor spaces, environmentally responsible tourism, and community-driven conservation efforts.

Step 2. Classify by Award Type and Identify Maximum Funding Request.

Examine the Project Classification Summary table below including the criteria and examples to determine the best match for your project. NBRC has provided **Appendix H – Project Classification Details – Definitions, Criteria and Examples** which includes details for each eligible project category and is recommended as a resource to confirm the proposed project meets minimum requirements, eligibility, and aligns with examples.

Each award type has a defined maximum award—this is the highest amount you may request from NBRC. You may request less than the maximum. There will be no preference given to larger funding requests and proposals for all award sizes will be considered.

- **Implementation Award –** Construction or non-construction projects—such as assets, facilities, and programs—that align with an eligible purpose, program priorities and economic development goals will be classified as an implementation award.
  - o Projects that meet criteria for an infrastructure category are eligible for up to $1,000,000. Projects that meet criteria for multi-infrastructure or multi-jurisdiction infrastructure are eligible for up to $3,000,000. All other projects that

meet implementation award criteria and align with an eligible purpose are eligible for up to $500,000.

- **Feasibility Award** - Early-stage activities—such as planning, engineering, design, cost benefit analysis, permitting, site assessments, and environmental assessments—that align with an eligible purpose, engage community stakeholders, and produce actionable deliverables that support future implementation of infrastructure projects will be classified as a feasibility award.
  - o All projects that meet feasibility award criteria and align with an eligible infrastructure category are eligible for up to $100,000.

Project Classification Summary Table

Eligible Categories	Definition & Requirements	Implementation Award	Feasibility Award
Transportation Infrastructure See Appendix H for more details	Construction of publicly accessible systems and facilities—such as roads, bridges, transit hubs, railways, airports, and ports—that enable the reliable movement of people and goods, strengthen regional economies, and expand access to essential services and opportunities.	$1,000,000 maximum request Requires 50%+ of project costs in construction category. Land acquisition is eligible as part of a construction project.	$100,000 maximum request Early-stage planning activities and technical assistance in support of infrastructure.
Basic Public Infrastructure See Appendix H for more details	Construction of publicly accessible systems and facilities—such as water and wastewater infrastructure, solid waste and heat generation systems, childcare and healthcare infrastructure, outdoor recreation infrastructure, and community meeting infrastructure —that are essential to economic vitality, public health, and regional resilience.	$1,000,000 maximum request Requires 50%+ of project costs in construction category. Land acquisition is eligible as part of a construction project.	$100,000 maximum request Early-stage planning activities and technical assistance in support of infrastructure.
Tele-communications Infrastructure See Appendix H for more details	Construction of physical and digital systems—such as broadband networks, fiber optics, towers, antennas, and cyber infrastructure—that enable the transmission of information, support modern economic activity, expand access to communication services, and connect rural and underserved communities to opportunity.	$1,000,000 maximum request Requires 50%+ of project costs in construction category. Land acquisition is eligible as part of a construction project.	$100,000 maximum request Early-stage planning activities and technical assistance in support of infrastructure.
Multi-Jurisdiction Infrastructure	Construction of single infrastructure category in 2+ jurisdictions and	$3,000,000 maximum request	$100,000 maximum request

	promotes regional efficiency. Jurisdictions may be communities, counties, or states. The project should promote regional approaches to infrastructure and efficiencies gained from constructing a multi-jurisdiction project at the same time. A project serving multiple jurisdictions without construction in more than one jurisdiction is not eligible for the higher award maximum.	Requires 50%+ of project costs in construction category. Requires approval from State Program. Land acquisition is eligible as part of a construction project.	Early-stage planning activities and technical assistance in support of infrastructure.
Multi-Category Infrastructure See Appendix H for more details	Combines 2+ infrastructure categories and promotes efficiency. The project should promote efficiencies gained from pairing construction projects in the same jurisdiction and to encourage creative infrastructure solutions.	$3,000,000 maximum request Requires 50%+ of project costs in construction category. Requires approval from State Program. Land acquisition is eligible as part of a construction project.	$100,000 maximum request Early-stage planning activities, and technical assistance in support of infrastructure.
Business and Workforce Development See Appendix H for more details	Systems, services, programs, facilities, and land acquisition that create, retain or expand businesses and equip individuals with job-related education, skills training and employment pathways aligned with the current and future needs of regional employers. Community development driven technical assistant to build capacity of community organizations by building partnerships, providing expertise and/or training in areas such as developing and implementing programs, resource identification to support and ensure program outcomes, and resource management expertise to assist in planning for identified needs such as infrastructure planning and program evaluation.	$500,000 maximum request	NA.
Basic Healthcare See Appendix H for more details	Systems, services, programs, facilities, and land acquisition that improve physical and mental well-being— especially in medically underserved communities—by addressing public health challenges, expanding access to	$500,000 maximum request	NA

	affordable care, strengthening the healthcare workforce, and promoting nutrition, education, and preventative health practices		
Resource Conservation, Tourism and Recreation See Appendix H for more details	Systems, services, programs, facilities, and land acquisition that leverage natural, cultural, and recreational assets to promote sustainable economic development, enhance quality of life, and align with regional goals—through expanded access to outdoor spaces, environmentally responsible tourism, and community-driven conservation efforts.	$500,000 maximum request	NA

Demonstrating Program Alignment

The Catalyst Program supports NBRC's mission to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity across the region. Proposed projects must clearly demonstrate alignment with Catalyst Program goals, NBRC agency priorities and State economic development strategies. Applicants should use reports, data, and letters of support to support the claims made in application narrative. See NBRC and State scoring criteria for details on how letters of support and other documentation is evaluated.

Catalyst Program Goals

Successful proposals will advance Catalyst Program goals:

- **Advance economic mobility** for individuals, communities and the region
- **Address disparities** in foundational infrastructure
- **Expand access to essential services** such as healthcare and childcare
- **Leverage local assets**—natural, cultural, and economic—to strengthen regional economy
- **Improve resilience** to weather-related disasters and public health challenges

Agency Investment Priorities

Preference will be given to proposals that support NBRC's agency investment priorities:

- Demonstrate direct impacts on the local, state or region's economy and communities including job creation, retention or leveraged private funds.
- Directly benefit rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 people.
- Directly benefit underserved communities. NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 U.S.C. §15702, including high rates of

poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Communities that suffer from a combination of socioeconomic and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, or limited access to basic resources.

- Contribute to community resilience such as how the project helps communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery form extreme weather or strengthens physical, behavioral and social health of community to withstand and adapt to current and projected public health emergencies.

State Economic Development Goals and Priorities

Preference will be given to proposals that support State economic development goals. For more information, view the State Economic Development Strategy that applies to the proposed project:

- Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029
- New Hampshire Recovery and Expansion Strategy
- New York Regional Economic Development Councils & relevant plans
- Vermont 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Vermont Strategic Plan 2018-2023 (FY 2019-FY 2023)
- Vermont prioritizes those projects listed on the Regional Project Prioritization Lists. Check to see if your project qualifies as a priority for Vermont

Key Performance Indicators

NBRC grant programs use a standardized set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess the direct impact of funded projects. These metrics serve as a consistent framework for evaluating both immediate outcomes and long-term regional benefits. Each KPI is expressed as a quantifiable value allowing for clear measurement of progress and impact. KPIs can be used in federal and state reporting. Estimates should be based on credible sources such as facility capacity studies, planning documents, or other validated projections to ensure accuracy and accountability. NBRC has designed nine KPIs which can be used/selected for any of the competitive grant programs. Each grant program (Catalyst, FEP, T4T) have additional KPIs which can be selected.

See **Appendix E – Key Performance Indicators by Program** for details on how to select relevant measures for your project. Review the recommended KPIs in pre-application feedback and enter target values for those that are most aligned with the expected outcomes of the proposed project, up to a maximum of six. These indicators will follow the project through the grant lifecycle including reporting and closeout. Every applicant is expected to report on these KPIs throughout the performance period, and your final/close out report will be compared to your

original estimated KPIs. It is critical that the values entered are achievable, feasible and you have a method to track them.

Examples of Past Funded Projects

A list of past funded projects is available for each state by year on NBRC's Northern Border Region webpage.

CATALYST PROGRAM SCORING

A pre-application is required for all NBRC programs. Pre-applications for the Catalyst Program are reviewed by both NBRC and member states. NBRC is responsible for determining eligibility and States are responsible for issuing an invitation to apply. The evaluation of pre-applications may consider the following criteria:

- Alignment with funding priorities
- Cost-benefit analysis of the requested NBRC funds
- Urgency and impact of the proposed work
- Balanced geographic distribution of awards

Pre-applications determine the final maximum award size eligibility.

A full application for funding will be scored by both NBRC and member states. The maximum score for any Catalyst Program project proposal is 100 points, split evenly between the NBRC review and the State Program review. Each entity scores independently using distinct criteria. The final award decisions are made jointly by the Federal Co-Chair and the Governors' Alternates of member states.

NBRC Review Criteria - Project proposals are evaluated across six categories, with 50 available points, each with specific review criteria. The scoring criteria are summarized here. Detailed NBRC scoring criteria is available in **Appendix I – NBRC Scoring Criteria**.

- **Project Readiness** will be evaluated in 4 areas for a total of 30 points**.**
    - **Approach and Methodology (8 points):** Proposals that clearly describe major project tasks, milestones, and planning activities and make connections between project tasks and expected outcomes will receive a higher score. Proposals should also outline a realistic plan for long-term sustainability beyond NBRC's investment, including maintenance and insurance for real property projects.
    - **Budget Documentation (7 points):** Clear, reasonable, and detailed budgets and cost estimates. Proposals that clearly demonstrate how requested funds will be used will receive a higher score.

- o **Capacity and Qualifications (5 points):** Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements.
- o **Project Readiness (10 points):** Proposals with a detailed timeline demonstrating the ability to achieve a Notice to Proceed within 12 months and complete the project within the three-year performance period, including key dates for NEPA approval and project completion will receive a higher score. Overall readiness factors including application completeness, inclusion of required documentation, and responsiveness to pre-application feedback, match commitment table, and LDD association contribute to the score.

- **Project Impact** will be evaluated in 2 areas for a total of 20 points:
  - o **Alignment with Agency Investment Priorities (5 points):** Alignment with the NBRC strategic investment goals and program priorities. Proposals will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant Agency Investment Priorities.
  - o **Economic & Community Impact (15 points):** Expected economic impacts including effects on jobs and wages and the scale of impact on the community, county or region. Economic impacts should be consistent and supported by feasibility studies, local, state, or regional data. Narratives and/or letters of support from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts are encouraged. Proposals of greater immediacy and that align with the spirit of the Catalyst Program's intent to stimulate economic growth and improve rural economic vitality will receive a higher score. Clear description of the community challenge or problem the project addresses including the importance of the project to the community or region. Proposal should demonstrate why NBRC funding is critical at this time. Proposals that clearly show strong community support through narrative and letters will receive a higher score.

State Review Criteria – Each member state scores project proposals based on its own economic development and infrastructure priorities using criteria similar to NBRC's. States may emphasize alignment with state economic development plans, local economic impact, community support and relevance, and project readiness. Detailed state scoring criteria is available in **Appendix J – State Scoring Criteria**.

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM MANUAL

Part 2B: Forest Economy Grant Program Manual

INTRODUCTION TO FOREST ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM

Purpose

The Forest Economy Grant Program stimulates economic growth in the forest-based industries, including new technologies and viable business models, across the NBRC four-state region. The

Forest Economy Program supports a broad range of economic development initiatives, including infrastructure, which directly supports timber and forest-based industries.

The Forest Economy Grant Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's forest economy and communities. Projects must be consistent with the investment priorities of the Forest Economy Program, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives.

Available Funding

NBRC makes funds available for each program year to be used across the spring and fall rounds for projects that impact the forest-based economy across the NBRC region. This competitive grant program is available for applicants in the entire NBRC service area and is not state based. See the Forest Economy Program Overview for the current available funding. The Forest Economy funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations.

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Purpose, Project Classification and Award Maximum

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.

The Forest Economy Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's forest economy and communities. Projects must be consistent with the Program investment priorities of the Forest Economy Program, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives.

Eligible purposes will include one (or multiple) of the following project priorities. For the purposes of this program, "locally sourced" means harvested and manufactured, where possible, within the four-state NBRC region.

- **Community development projects** that support the diversified use of forests within the Northern Border Regional Commission's service area for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that

utilizes northern border forests sustainably and demonstrates planning for extreme weather readiness.

> Examples include, but are not limited to:
> - Utilization of wood-based heating technologies and/or "Mass Timber" products (e.g., Cross-laminated timber) in public use projects (prioritizing locally sourced* wood products where possible)
> - Collaborative efforts to support communities negatively impacted by the decline in the forest-based economy to attract new wood-utilizing enterprises

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

- **Business planning and technical assistance projects** that enhance the viability and sustainability of new and existing forest businesses.
  > Examples include but are not limited to:
  > - Technical assistance, training in business skills, and access to financing to local forest industry businesses

- **Public infrastructure projects** (defined by Congress in NBRC's authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy) must directly support the forest industry, and/or demonstrate the use of wood products in public infrastructure.
  > Examples include but are not limited to:
  > - Energy sourcing, water, or supply upgrades for an industrial park that is home to multiple forest business tenants.
  >
  > - Public facilities* intended to utilize local forest products in building materials, such as mass timber or wood fiber insulation, and/or energy systems such as advanced wood heat.
  >   > - *Transportation infrastructure projects should refer to Part 2c. Timber for Transportation Grant Program.

- **Marketing/communication and education work** (MUST BE PAIRED with at least one other project category).
    - Examples include but are not limited to:
        - Marketing and communications that promote the benefits of northern border forests
        - Marketing to promote the environmental and climate benefits of forest management and forest products in ways that strengthen markets for wood products.
        - Forest resource planning projects, such as analysis of forest health trends and planning for forest health and sustainability.
        - Industry supply chain analysis projects that evaluate gaps in local supply chains.
        - Carbon storage, carbon footprint, and/or life cycle analysis projects for wood products

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

Demonstrating Program Alignment

The Forest Economy Program supports NBRC's mission to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity across the region. Proposed projects must clearly demonstrate alignment with Forest Economy Program goals, NBRC agency priorities, and State economic development strategies (if applicable). Applicants should use reports, data, and letters of support to back claims made in application narrative. Links to State economic development and forest economy goals are below.

Forest Economy Investment Priorities

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create and grow needed markets for low-grade forest harvest residuals.

- Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.

- Help to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.

- Aid in the revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced material manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably for the production of wood products and advanced materials manufacturing.

- Leverage new or existing partnerships that positively impact either a portion or all of the NBRC region, and/or have the potential to do so.

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

Agency Investment Priorities

The Forest Economy Program supports the Northern Border Regional Commission's funding priorities and guiding investment principles:

- Invest for long-term community vitality and economic prosperity.
- Support local initiatives that contribute to regional solutions.
- Encourage integrative approaches to building economic, community, and environmental well-being and extreme weather resiliency.
- Capitalize on local and regional assets to grow and retain wealth in the region.
- Use NBRC resources to fill gaps in the region's funding environment for community economic development.
- Stimulate and integrate the capacity and resources of other partners and funders.
- Invest in projects that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and increased accessibility.
- Support rural communities and other communities characterized by persistent divestment with capacity building strategies and investments.

State Economic Development Goals and Local Forest Initiatives

The Forest Economy Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's forest economy and communities. Projects must be consistent with the investment priorities of the Forest Economy Program, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives, including but not limited to the following:

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)

Key Performance Indicators

The NBRC programs use a standardized set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess the direct impact of funded projects. These metrics serve as a consistent framework for evaluating both immediate outcomes and long-term regional benefits. Each KPI is expressed as a quantifiable value allowing for clear measurement of progress and impact. Estimates should be based on credible sources such as facility capacity studies, planning documents, or other validated projections to ensure accuracy and accountability.

- The Forest Economy Program uses Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of funded projects across community and workforce development, business planning and technical assistance, marketing, education, and public infrastructure domains. See **Appendix E – Key Performance Indicators** for details on how to select measures for your project. These indicators will follow the project through the grant lifecycle including reporting and closeout. It is critical that the values entered are realistic and reportable.

Past Funded Projects

A list of past funded projects is available for each state by year on NBRC's Northern Border Region webpage.

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM SCORING

Forest Economy Program Review Criteria - Projects are scored based on how fully and thoroughly the applicant addresses each item listed the Program Scoring Criteria. NBRC and the Program Managers from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont independently score all eligible applications received. Projects are scored according to each of six rating criteria and results are

presented to the Commission. The Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair will vote on the projects selected for funding.

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.

The NBRC and member states can award up to a total of 100 points based on the criteria below. Final scores will be calculated based on an average of NBRC and member state project scores.

1. **Agency Investment Priorities.** This category reviews how the project fits within the Forest Economy Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets program priorities in the project summary. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities and project categories outlined in the program materials. (25 points)

2. **Project Budget.** Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable. Projects have identified secured match and are leveraging non-federal funds. (15 points)

3. **Approach and Methodology.** Applicants clearly explain the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake the project including major tasks, partnerships and other necessary details to describe what is necessary to complete the project in a timely manner. Where possible, projects should address the sustainability of the project beyond the grant. (10 points)

4. **Forest Economy Sector Impacts.** Projects will be reviewed for anticipated forest sector impact. Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. Where possible, projects should make connections to local forest economy initiatives. (25 points)

5. **Project Readiness.** This category reflects an applicant's ability to perform the proposed work within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award date. (15 points)

6. **Capacity and Qualifications.** 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. (10 points)

In addition to the above scoring categories, NBRC and the States will also consider:

- the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment
- state priorities, and community, or regionally supported need for the project
- benefits provided to the broader community and region
- a balanced geographic distribution of investments

Please see **Appendix K** for the detailed Forest Economy Program scoring criteria.

2024 T4T Recipient: Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport (VT)

TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM MANUAL

Part 2C: Timber for Transit Grant Program Manual

INTRODUCTION TO TIMBER FOR TRANSIT GRANT PROGRAM

Purpose

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

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 planning for extreme weather readiness. Transportation infrastructure shall mean construction, alteration, or repair, for the purpose of transporting people and goods, including fixed installations and rights of way necessary for transporting from one point to another, including infrastructure that improves economic mobility for individuals.

Available Funding

NBRC makes funds available for each program year to be used across the spring and fall rounds for projects that demonstrate the capabilities of wood in transportation infrastructure.

Transportation infrastructure may include roads, railways, airways, waterways, canals and terminals such as airports, railway stations, bus stations, parking, and seaports. 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
- positively influence local and regional economies.

See the Timber for Transit Program Overview for the current available funding. Timber for Transit funding is subject to the availability of funds, the quantity and quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations.

I.   TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Purpose, Project Classification and Award Maximum

Timber for Transit funding may be used for **feasibility** or **implementation** projects. 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). Eligibility for the higher maximum will also be determined during the pre-application review process.

Visit the Timber for Transit Program webpage to access NBRC's Project Development Guide. The guide will be most useful for applicants in the exploratory stages looking to understand the types of transportation infrastructure that can accommodate wood components.

FEASIBILITY PROJECTS are early-stage activities designed to evaluate and prepare for future implementation of wood-based infrastructure solutions as described in this manual. Feasibility projects are **eligible for awards up to $1,000,000**, and typically include:

- **State or regional inventory assessments** that analyze the suitability of wood components for transportation infrastructure upgrades or new construction.

- **Architectural and engineering designs**, detailed cost analyses, and permitting activities that lay the groundwork for full-scale implementation projects.

These feasibility efforts help determine project viability, align resources, and ensure readiness for future investment.

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. Wood Works Tools & Guides include the U.S. Mass Timber Construction Manual and Wood Works Carbon Calculator.

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS are large-scale, construction-ready initiatives that apply advanced wood materials to improve publicly owned transportation infrastructure and transportation adjacent facilities. Implementation projects are **eligible for awards up to $5,000,000***, these projects include:

- **Transportation infrastructure upgrades** using commercialized wood products to enhance roads, bridges, and related systems.

- **Pilot and demonstration projects** that showcase the performance and benefits of wood-based or hybrid (wood and traditional material) designs—such as publicly owned vehicular and pedestrian bridges, trail crossings, culverts, and waterfront structures.

- **Railway revitalization and new construction**, excluding deferred maintenance.

- **Transportation-adjacent structures** that integrate advanced wood materials, including rest stops, ferry terminals, train stations, signage, sound barriers, and infrastructure supporting outdoor recreation and tourism.

These projects are intended to demonstrate innovation, durability, and regional impact through the strategic use of wood in public transportation infrastructure.

FEASIBILITY & IMPLEMENTATION projects which address both feasibility and implementation as described above will be awarded a minimum of $1,000,000 and a maximum of $5,000,000*.

*HIGHER MAXIMUM (>$1,000,000) DETERMINATIONS

Projects requesting more than $1,000,000 must address the higher maximum requirements of the Timber for Transit program. NBRC will consider awards up to $5,000,000 for projects that demonstrate <u>at least one</u> of the following:

1) Project demonstrates alignment with two or more of the <u>Program Investment Priorities</u> 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

3) Construction takes place in two or more eligible communities/counties/states

Eligibility for the higher maximum award amount will be determined in the pre-application review process conducted by NBRC and the member states. Additional points may be awarded for projects that address more than one of the higher maximum requirements.

Demonstrating Program Alignment

The Timber for Transit Program supports NBRC's mission to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity across the region. Proposed projects must clearly demonstrate alignment with Timber for Transit Program goals, NBRC priorities and State economic development strategies (if applicable). Applicants should use reports, data, and letters of support to back claims made in application narrative.

Timber for Transit Investment Priorities

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Commit to utilizing domestically sourced timber
- Demonstrate evidence of planning for extreme weather readiness, 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 impacted by specific socio-economic indicators.

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.

Preference will be given to proposals where the budget demonstrates the NBRC award will fund activities in alignment with program investment priorities, including feasibility activities, purchase of domestically sourced wood materials and components, promotion and marketing, and industry education and training.

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

Agency Investment Priorities

The Timber for Transit program supports the Northern Border Regional Commission's Transportation Infrastructure funding priority and guiding investment principles:

- Invest for long-term community vitality and economic prosperity.
- Support local initiatives that contribute to regional solutions.
- Encourage integrative approaches to building economic, community, and environmental well-being and extreme weather resiliency.
- Capitalize on local and regional assets to grow and retain wealth in the region.
- Use NBRC resources to fill gaps in the region's funding environment for community economic development.
- Stimulate and integrate the capacity and resources of other partners and funders.
- Invest in projects that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and increased accessibility.
- Support rural communities and other communities characterized by persistent divestment with capacity building strategies and investments.

State Economic Development Goals and Priorities

Add links and references to state program goals and priorities applicable to T4T.

Maine Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)

New Hampshire DOT Ten Year Plan

New York State Transportation Master Plan 2050

Vermont Long-Range Transportation Plan

Key Performance Indicators

The NBRC programs use a standardized set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess the direct impact of funded projects. These metrics serve as a consistent framework for evaluating both immediate outcomes and long-term regional benefits. Each KPI is expressed as a quantifiable value allowing for clear measurement of progress and impact. Estimates should be based on credible sources such as facility capacity studies, planning documents, or other validated projections to ensure accuracy and accountability. Awarded projects will be asked to report on progress toward meeting KPIs.

The Timber for Transit Program uses KPIs to measure the impact of funded projects across feasibility and implementation categories. See **Appendix E – Key Performance Indicators** for details on how to select measures for your project. These indicators will follow the project through the grant lifecycle including reporting and closeout. It is critical that the values entered are realistic and reportable.

Past Funded Projects

A list of past funded projects is available for each state by year on NBRC's Northern Border Region webpage.

TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM SCORING

Timber for Transit Review Criteria - Projects are scored based on how fully and thoroughly the applicant addresses each item listed in the Program Scoring Criteria. NBRC and the Program Managers from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont independently score all eligible applications received. Projects are scored according to each of six rating criteria and results are presented to the Commission. The Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair will vote on the projects selected for funding.

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.

The NBRC and member states can award up to a total of 100 points based on the criteria below. Final scores will be calculated based on an average of NBRC and member state project scores.

1) **Agency Investment Priorities.** This category reviews how the project fits within the Timber for Transit Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets program priorities in the Overview section. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities and project categories outlined in the program materials. (25 points)

2) **Project Budget.** Budgets and costs, including contingency for construction projects, are clear and reasonable. Projects have identified secured match and are leveraging non-federal funds. (15 points)

3) **Approach and Methodology.** Applicants clearly explain the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake the project including major tasks, partnerships and other necessary details to describe what is necessary to complete the project in a timely manner. Where possible, projects should address the sustainability of the project beyond the grant. (10 points)

4) **Economic Impacts.** Projects will be reviewed for anticipated economic impacts. Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. (25 points)

5) **Project Readiness.** This category reflects an applicant's ability to perform the proposed work within the 3-year performance period and begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award date. (15 points)

6) **Capacity and Qualifications.** 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. (10 points)

In addition to the above scoring categories, NBRC and the States will consider:

- the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment
- state priorities, and community, or regionally supported need for the project
- benefits provided to the broader community and region
- a balanced geographic distribution of investments

Please see **Appendix L** for the detailed Timber for Transit Program scoring criteria.

Part 3: Appendices

APPENDIX A - 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.

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. NBRC does not conduct NEPA reviews in advance of a project being awarded our funding.

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 B - 75% Prior Award Expenditure Wavier Requirements & Affidavit

An applicant or co-applicant with an open NBRC award under any NBRC program is not eligible for additional NBRC funding until the current project has both requested reimbursement for 75% or more of the award funds <u>and</u> demonstrated that 75% or more of the cost share has been spent prior to the 1st day of the month of the preapplication deadline.

For example, if the preapplication deadline is February 15th, the 75% expenditure of NBRC funds and match/cost share must be met by February 1st.

If the 75% expenditure requirement has not been met, the entity can apply for a waiver. To be eligible for additional NBRC funding, the 75% Expenditure Waiver request <u>must</u>:

- **Be submitted with the pre-application before 5:00pm EST on due date. See Program Timeline**
- **Include a fully executed Affidavit**
- **Include supporting narrative and documentation for** the current status of the open project, delays encountered (if applicable), expected completion date of the previous NBRC award(s), capacity to complete previous award(s) <u>and</u> take on a new project.
- **Include supporting narrative for** the economic impacts of the proposed new project and how a delay in applying for funding will be a detriment. Economic impact support documentation should include specific information and not be speculative.
- **Be approved by the State(s) where the prior award(s) were made and by NBRC**

Any applicant or co-applicant with an open award that does not meet the 75% expenditure requirement **<u>and</u>** does not submit the required and complete 75% Expenditure Waiver request will have their pre-application marked as **ineligible for further review**.

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 NBRC program funding.

Even when a 75% expenditure waiver is approved, NBRC reserves the right to withhold access to new award funding until prior awards meet certain funding milestones.

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

APPENDIX C - Significant Benefit Waiver Request, Narrative and Affidavit Requirements

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.

Please reference NBRC's Eligibility and Match page for additional guidance on NBRC's service area.

> **Process:** A Significant Benefit Waiver request includes the submission of applicant and co-applicant information, project details including budget and proposal narrative to support the waiver request. The project narrative must include clear and convincing evidence of a project's economic impact to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties or communities. **Failure to fully complete the waiver request and affidavit form and provide detailed project narrative will deem the request ineligible.**
>
> The executed waiver and detailed narrative must be submitted with a **pre-application** within NBRC's Grants Management System (GMS). Please see NBRC's Program Timeline for pre-application deadlines.

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. Only eligible entities may be invited to submit a full application.

If an applicant and/or co-applicant is required to submit a Significant Benefit Waiver and does not submit the fully executed waiver form, narrative and affidavit together with the pre-application via NBRC's Grants Management System (GMS), the pre-application will be considered ineligible for further consideration.

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

APPENDIX D - Local Development District (LDD) Waiver Requirements & Affidavit

LDD Waiver 2026 Draft.docx

The Northern Border Regional Commission (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. These organizations serve as build-in technical assistance for NBRC awards.

Federal legislation states that the NBRC "shall enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts (LDD) in its region. 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."

NBRC awardees are required to utilize an LDD for grant administration assistance unless they are an agency of State government, are an LDD or have requested and received LDD waiver approval from NBRC prior to the submission of an application to any of the NBRC's competitive programs. Whether or not an applicant has had an award since 2024 is one of the strongest determinates of the approval or denial of a waiver. Submission of an LDD waiver does not guarantee approval and all waiver determinations are final.

Please review the services an LDD would provide and be sure you are confident that your entity is able to perform these grant administration tasks independently and internally if the waiver is approved.

If a waiver is approved, NBRC reserves the right, at any time in the award's lifecycle, to reconsider the waiver approval and require a grantee to contract with an LDD for grant administration services.

The Local Development District Waiver in fillable PDF format is available for download in the Grants Management System

APPENDIX E - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Use this resource to identify KPIs that match the expected outcomes of the proposed project. First, check the pre-application feedback from NBRC to see if any KPIs were suggested for your proposed project. Then, choose up to six KPIs that are most important for your project goals. For each KPI you select, create reasonable target values and decide how you will track and document progress. Do not enter target values for every KPI. If a KPI does not apply to your project, enter a target value of 0. Make sure your tracking method is clear and practical, whether it's yearly, cumulative, or based on individual users.

Link: https://www.nbrc.gov/userfiles/files/Programs/Appendix%20E%20-%20Key%20Peformance%20Indicators.pdf

APPENDIX F - Revolving Loan Fund Requirements & Work Plan

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

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. An applicant's primary business does not have to be lending to receive RLF grant funding.

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, the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the grant

agreement, and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements of Federal Awards at 2 CFR Part 200.

Objectives and Strategies

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 retention and/or 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 Applicants

- 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.
- If awarded funding, RLF applicants 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 the grantee's RLF operating plan must be approved by NBRC, in advance.

- 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).
- Responsibility for approving loans and setting terms and conditions through loan agreements consistent with these guidelines resides fully with the Grantee.
- Grantees must submit to NBRC financial progress reports on the loan activity underway and loans closed.
- Selling NBRC RLF loans on a secondary market is not permitted.

Application Requirements:

A written work plan that demonstrates the need and capacity for a NBRC RLF grant is required as part of an RLF application. The work plan should be uploaded as a separate document in the Supporting Documents Checklist and include the following information:

1. 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. Provide a brief history of the organization's lending experience.
2. Describe the use of funds and demonstrate the need for loan funds. At a minimum, applicants should:
    - Provide a set of goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes for the applicant's program.
    - 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.
3. 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 RLF plan or policy should include:
    - 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

4. Provide a brief explanation of how the administration of the RLF will be funded. If applicable, include a list of proposed fees and other charges it will assess borrowers.

As a lending and/ or equity organization, grantees must recognize and comply with their obligations under 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). It is essential to note that NBRC funds used for loans will always be considered federal funds and therefore bound by the requirements imposed by the Commission and the U.S. government.

Eligible Borrowers

- The borrowing firm or any of its owners cannot have a delinquent debt to the federal government.

- 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 at least one of the following:

  - 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 borrowers must meet eligibility requirements for NBRC grants and be located within the NBRC service area.
  - All borrowers must comply with the requirements of applicable federal, state and local laws, including those listed in the grant agreement.

Eligible Loans

- RLF grants may be used for debt financing through direct loans for:
- Machinery, equipment, and other fixed asset acquisitions including transportation/delivery and installation costs.
- Working capital, 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 applicant 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 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.

APPENDIX G - Glossary of Key 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. See 2 CFR 200.405 for further guidance.

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). See 2 CFR 200.403 for further guidance.

Approved Budget: The financial expenditure plan for a grant-supported project, program, or activity, including revisions approved by the NBRC and permissible revisions made by the recipient. The approved budget consists of Federal (grant) funds. The approved project consists of an SF424cbw, Budget Narrative and a SF424a and SF424c for non-infrastructure projects or a SF424cbw, Budget Narrative and a SF424c and SF424d for construction projects. The approved budget is a contractual obligation that can only be changed by NBRC in writing through a Grant Agreement Amendment.

Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA): BABAA was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference ("Buy American Preference" referred to as "BAP") for iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects. infrastructure programs funded with Federal dollars, IIJA §70914(a) of Pub. L. 117-58, instructs Federal agencies to ensure that "none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure, including each deficient program, may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured product, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. As the NBRC routinely funds infrastructure projects BABAA governs future Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) infrastructure investments. See NBRC's website for additional BABAA guidance.

Closeout: The process by which NBRC determines whether all applicable administrative actions and all work required under the award have been completed by the recipient and the awarding office.

Co-Applicant: Must be an NBRC eligible entity and is an organization that performs a substantive role in the completion of the project. Co-applicants share ownership in the project and are responsible for complying with all conditions of the grant as they would if they were a lead or sole applicant.

Construction: "Construction" means construction in support of infrastructure, alteration, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. For purposes of this definition, the terms "buildings, structures, or other real property" include, but are not limited to, improvements of all types, such as bridges, dams, plants, highways, parkways, streets, subways, tunnels, sewers, mains, power lines, cemeteries, pumping stations, railways, airport facilities, terminals, docks, piers, wharves, ways, lighthouses, buoys, jetties, breakwaters, levees, canals, and channels. A project that includes planning and engineering when part of a larger construction implementation will be considered 'construction'; a project solely made up of planning and/or engineering will not be considered 'construction'.

Cooperative Agreement: A financial assistance support mechanism used when there will be substantial Federal programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that NBRC program staff will collaborate or participate in project or program activities as specified in the Notice of Award.

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 and any other federal funders invested in the project.

Funding Opportunity Announcement: NBRC's formally issued announcement of the availability of funding through its website and outreach efforts.

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)).

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 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 or another federal agency.

Commitment of funds: This is a crucial step NBRC takes to formally reserve funds for a grant following notice of award, timely and successful completion of application negotiations, and requesting and receiving a confirmation of available funds from our third party financial provider. Once funds have been confirmed as committed to the project, NBRC issues the project a grant agreement, which serves as the formal contract between the grantee and NBRC.

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. The entire project duration is made up of these components, some which require administrative approval for continued funding.

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. Consistent with 2 CFR 200.308, budget changes that involve revision of the scope of work or objectives of the project, regardless of the grant amount, require NBRC prior approval.

Subaward: Financial assistance in the form of money or property in lieu of money provided under an award by a recipient to an eligible subrecipient (or by an eligible subrecipient to a

lower tier subrecipient). The term includes financial assistance when provided by any legal agreement, even if the agreement is called a contract, but does not include either procurement of goods or services or, for purposes of this policy statement, any form of assistance other than grants and cooperative agreements. The term includes consortium agreements.

Subrecipient: An entity that receives a subaward from a recipient or another subrecipient under an award of financial assistance and is accountable to the recipient or other subrecipient for the use of the Federal funds provided by the subaward.

Supplies: Personal property other than equipment, intangible property, and debt instruments. The category of "supplies" includes items that could be considered equipment, but do not meet the threshold definition.

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: NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 USC 15702, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. These designations are used to target at least 50% of the commission's appropriations to the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped areas. These are often communities that experience significant economic disparity, demographic decline, sub-standard infrastructure, and limited access to medical and educational facilities.

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](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.

CATALYST PROGRAM MANUAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX H - Project Classification Details – Definitions, Criteria and Examples

This resource includes details for each eligible project category. NBRC recommends each applicant use this as a resource to confirm the proposed project meets minimum requirements, eligibility, and aligns with examples.

Link: https://www.nbrc.gov/userfiles/files/Programs/Appendix%20H%20-%20Project%20Classification%20Details.pdf

APPENDIX I – 2026 Catalyst Program Scoring Criteria - NBRC

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<h2 style="text-align:center">NBRC Scoring Criteria</h2>

50 points total. Points are awarded in a range between 0 and the Maximum Points.
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Project Readiness will be evaluated using 4 scoring criteria for a total of 30 points. The overall purpose of this review category is to assess whether the applicant is fully prepared to successfully implement the proposed project within program requirements and performance period. It ensures that the application includes a realistic and compliant schedule, complete documentation, meets required match commitment, and clear connections to required partners like LDDs.
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A **top-scoring proposal** provides a clear, detailed description of project tasks and milestones tied to goals and outcomes, supported by a comprehensive timeline and a well-justified budget with realistic costs and status of matching funds. It demonstrates team qualifications and roles, includes all required documentation, and presents a strong sustainability plan after the award. Overall project readiness assessment is strong.

Typical Range: 25-30 points
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A **medium scoring proposal** provides a generally clear description of project goals and outlines major tasks, though some tasks lack detail and some milestones lack strong connections to outcomes. A timeline is included but does not fully identify NBRC program requirements. The budget offers reasonable cost estimates but does not include explanations for major expenses and key line items such as LDD and NEPA costs may not be clearly described or missing. The project team's qualifications and roles are not well-described, and evidence of past performance is not clear. A sustainability plan is mentioned but not well described. Most required documents are present. Overall readiness assessment for implementation is moderate.

Typical Range: 15-24 points
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A **low scoring proposal** provides only a basic description of the project and its goals, with limited detail on tasks and milestones and weak connections to expected outcomes. The timeline is incomplete or missing and does not clearly align with NBRC program requirements. The budget lacks sufficient explanation of major expenses and is missing line-item details such as LDD and NEPA costs. The status of matching funds is unclear. The project team's qualifications and roles are not well-described, and there is no evidence of past performance. No mention of sustainability plan after award. Several required documents appear incomplete or missing. Overall readiness assessment for implementation is weak.

Typical Range: 0-14 points
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<td>**Scoring Criteria**</td>
<td>**Max Pts**</td>
<td>**Points Allocation**</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Approach & Methodology**</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>**Major Project Tasks (0–3 pts):** Clearly describes all major tasks and milestones, including planning tasks before application and implementation tasks after award. Feasibility projects describe the</td>
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		process to determine project is necessary and how it will contribute to future implementation of infrastructure. Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Approach and Methodology. **Methodology (0–3 pts):** Proposed approach is reasonable and directly connects tasks to goals and expected outcomes. Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Approach and Methodology. **Sustainability (0–2 pts):** Provides detailed plan for long-term maintenance and viability after NBRC investment (e.g., maintenance, insurance for real property, financial viability for programs). Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Approach and Methodology.
Project Budget & Documentation	7	**Use of Funds (0–2 pts):** Clearly shows how NBRC funds will be used. Supporting narrative found in Overview – Project Abstract and Budget – Budget Narrative. **Reasonable Estimates (0–2 pts):** Budget includes realistic cost estimates and budget narrative explains how they were developed. See Budget – Budget Narrative and Forms and Files – SF-424CBW. **Costs Described (0–2 pts):** Budget Narrative explains costs above $5,000 listed in SF-424CBW. See Forms and Files – SF-424CBW. **Key Costs (0–1 pt):** All costs should show line item descriptions. Budget includes LDD and NEPA costs as separate line items, or an explanation if not applicable. LDD costs follow formula. See Forms and Files – SF-424CBW.
Capacity & Qualifications	5	**Roles & Qualifications (0–3 pts):** Identifies project team roles and relevant experience; Up to 2 project contacts clearly listed in Overview - Contacts. Authorized Official and Project Manager clearly listed. **Past Performance (0–2 pts):** Demonstrates success with similar projects or grants. Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Capacity and Qualifications.
Project Readiness	10	**Timeline (0–3 pts):** Shows understanding of program requirements; includes NEPA approval, Notice to Proceed within 12 months, and completion within 3 years. Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Project Readiness. **Complete Application (0–2 pts):** All required documents included and pre-application feedback addressed. Applications that have not submitted critical supporting documentation that will lead to delays in award making will receive a lower score. **Match Amount (0–1 pt):** Documented in funding sources table and includes status of match. See Budget – Funding Sources and Commitments Table. **LDD Association (0–1 pt):** LDD linked to application contacts. Point is not available for applicants with approved LDD waiver or

		applicants that are LDDs or entities of the state. See Overview – Contacts. **Overall Readiness (0–3 pts):** NBRC assessment of readiness factors. Supporting narrative found in Proposal – Project Readiness.
Project Impact will be evaluated using 2 scoring criteria for a total of 20 points. The overall purpose of this review category is to measure how well the proposed project aligns with NBRC priorities and delivers meaningful economic and community benefits. It evaluates eligibility and emphasis on rural or underserved communities, demonstrates clear economic outcomes supported by data, and defines measurable KPIs tied to job and business creation. Additionally, it considers the urgency of community need, broader regional benefits, and stakeholder support.		

A **top-scoring proposal** clearly demonstrates eligibility and prioritizes rural communities. Proposal demonstrates alignment with NBRC priorities to benefit underserved communities and support community resilience. Provides compelling evidence of need through data and community input, articulates tangible economic benefits for both the local area and the broader region, and includes strong letters of support from key stakeholders. Economic outcomes are clearly defined and supported by documentation, with measurable KPIs with a focus on permanent job and business creation. The proposal makes a strong case for funding. **Typical Range: 15-20 points**	A **medium scoring proposal** demonstrates basic eligibility and includes focus on rural communities but no documentation. Proposal demonstrates alignment with one of NBRC priorities but not both and documentation is not complete. Evidence of need is presented but lacks depth and does not describe broader impact. Letters of support are included but are limited in strength or number. Economic outcomes are mentioned, but supporting documentation is minimal, and KPIs are not well described in narrative. The project shows potential for permanent job and business creation, but connections are indirect. The proposal makes a moderate case for funding. **Typical Range: 9-14 points**	A **low scoring proposal** meets basic eligibility requirements but does not benefit rural communities and does not clearly describe how the project addresses NBRC priorities. Evidence of need is weak or not related to economic development and relies on general statements rather than compelling data. Letters of support are either missing or lack substance. Economic outcomes are missing or mentioned but not supported by documentation. KPIs are not described in narrative. The proposal does not describe direct or indirect job or business creation and makes a weak overall case for funding. **Typical Range: 0-8 points**

Scoring Criteria	Max Pts	Points Allocation
Alignment with Agency & Program Priorities	5	**Eligible Project Category (0–1 pt):** Demonstrates alignment with eligible purpose and requirements. If applicable, confirms eligibility for requests above $1M. Supporting narrative found in Overview – Project Abstract.

		First-Time Applicants (0–1 pt): Applicant has not previously received NBRC funds. Supporting narrative in Overview - Program Investment Priorities. **Rural Community (0–1 pt):** Project benefits rural communities (<5,000 population) with data support. Supporting narrative in Overview - Program Investment Priorities. **Combination of Priorities (up to 2 pts):** • ***Directly benefit underserved communities.*** NBRC has statutory authority to define areas within the region as distressed, according to 40 U.S.C. §15702, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration. Communities that suffer from a combination of socioeconomic and environmental burdens, including high unemployment and poverty, basic resources. Supporting narrative in Overview - Program Investment Priorities. • ***Contribute to community resilience*** such as how project helps communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery form extreme weather or strengthens physical, behavioral and social health of community to withstand and adapt to current and projected public health emergencies. Supporting narrative in Overview - Program Investment Priorities.
Economic & Community Impact	15	**Economic Importance (0–3 pts):** Demonstrates why project is critical to local/state/regional economy and identifies clear economic outcomes. Feasibility projects describe anticipated benefits and ROI. Supporting narrative located in Proposal – Economic Impact. **KPIs (0–2 pts):** Identifies 3-6 relevant KPIs, explains targets, and how they will be measured. Locations tab supports KPIs. Supporting narrative located in Proposal – Economic Impacts. **Economic Impacts Documented (0-3 pts):** Economic impacts are supported by feasibility studies, local, state, and/or regional data, supporting narrative or letters of support from local businesses, leaders, and government officials. Supporting narrative located in Proposal – Economic Impacts. **Direct impacts through job or business creation and/or retention (0-2 pts):** Describes number of new permanent jobs or businesses and why the project is directly responsible for those outcomes. Cites studies, statements from business owners, letters of support or other data to document creation of new jobs or businesses. Supporting narrative located in Proposal – Economic Impacts. **Community Need (0–2 pts):** Explains challenge, proposed solution, urgency, importance to community or region, and why NBRC funds are necessary. Supporting narrative located in Overview –

		Statement of Need
		Community Benefits (0–1 pts): Describes where project takes place, direct beneficiaries and larger benefits to community, region, and/or state. Locations tab and Project map supports project location. Supporting narrative located in Overview - Project Beneficiaries & Community Context.
		Community Support (0–2 pt): Demonstrates meaningful support through narrative and letters of support. Supporting narrative located in Overview - Project Beneficiaries & Community Context.

APPENDIX J - State Catalyst Program Scoring Criteria

Maine Scoring Criteria

Maine Scoring Criteria **50 points total.** Points are awarded in a range between 0 and the Maximum Points.					
Scoring Criteria		**Max Pts**	**Evaluation Metric**		
Project Impact on Maine Priorities and Regional Relevance.	The project is regionally relevant with substantial economic impacts as compared to other projects, and a need for NBRC funding is demonstrated. Project is aligned with Maine Priorities: +Infrastructure to support Economic Development; +Workforce Development: Job creation/retention or Attraction of quality jobs; +Business Development: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Increasing productivity; +Tourism/Outdoor Recreation/Conservation; +Community Development initiatives that advance Maine's Economic Development Strategy	15	**0-15 Points.** Review considerations include: impact on Maine NBRC funding priority area, synergy with current regional and statewide initiatives, geographic distribution of grants, regional relevance as compared with other projects, and a demonstrated financial need. *Projects that document regional economic relevance (more than one county or region) may be eligible for up to $2M. Projects that document statewide economic relevance may be eligible for up to $3M. **Applicants seeking greater than $1M must consult with DECD prior to submitting a pre-application to be considered for an award above $1M**		
Alignment with Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan	Project clearly aligns with one of the strategies or actions outlined in Maine's Economic Development Strategy. Applications that details alignment with more than one strategy or action will receive higher points. Healthcare projects: also demonstrate alignment with Maine's Rural Health Transformation Program Plan; Outdoor Rec. Projects:	5	**Weak: 0-1 Points.** Project does not indicate impact/ or has limited alignment with Action(s) from Maine's 10-Year Economic	**Fair: 2-3 Points.** Project moderately aligns with Action(s) from Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy.	**Strong: 4-5 Points.** Project greatly aligns with multiple Actions from Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy.

			Weak	Fair	Strong
	also demonstrate alignment with Maine's Outdoor Recreation Roadmap		Development Strategy.		
Economic Development.	Project supports the economic development of a municipality or region. Project will help existing businesses thrive by increasing productivity or help to attract new industry to the area. Applications that provide specific details supported by feasibility studies, and/or state, regional or local data about the economic impact of the project, will receive more points. Projects that leverage private investment or show collaboration with businesses will receive more points.	10	**Weak: 0-3 Points.** Project does not support the economic development of a municipality or region; application does not address this criteria	**Fair: 4-7 Points.** Project has moderate impact on the economic development of a municipality or region; application addresses this criteria	**Strong: 8-10 Points.** Project has significant or strong economic development impacts and/or, project will result in new businesses/ new industries coming to the area. 10 points awarded if private industry investment is supplied as project match.
Workforce Development.	Project will support the goal of growing Maine's workforce through job creation, retention or attraction of quality jobs; or project will attract talent to areas of Maine that need it. Applications should clearly demonstrate commitment to job creation with evidence that quality jobs will be created or retained or recruitment for quality jobs will occur as a direct result of the investment.	10	**Weak: 0-3 Points.** Project does not indicate impact/or has little impact on Maine's workforce.	**Fair: 4-7 Points.** Project moderately strengthens the workforce.	**Strong: 8-10 Points.** Project greatly strengthens the workforce.

Project Quality, Readiness and Collaboration.	Project can begin immediately, budget is clearly developed with matching funds identified and secured, project funding is sustainable. Application includes clearly defined and measurable outcomes. Project demonstrates alignment and collaboration with other efforts including letters of support and demonstrates capacity to execute the project and achieve milestones;	10	**Weak: 0-3 Points.** Applicant does not indicate or has made little progress towards project readiness, collaboration, and capacity.	**Fair: 4-7 Points.** Applicant has made some progress towards project readiness, collaboration, and capacity.	**Strong: 8-10 Points.** Applicant has fully prepared or made significant progress towards project readiness, collaboration, and capacity.
Total Points		50			

New Hampshire Scoring Criteria

New Hampshire Scoring Criteria **50 points total.** Points are awarded in a range between 0 and the Maximum Points.					
Criteria	**Max Pts**	**Does not articulate**	**Articulates/ Supports**	**Demonstrates**	**Detail**
Alignment with NBRC, state, regional, and local priorities	10	Does not articulate strong alignment to either NBRC funding priorities or local, regional, and state priorities. **(0-3 points)**	Articulates alignment to at least one of the following: - NBRC funding priorities - State strategic priorities - Regional/local priorities **(4-7 points)**	Demonstrates strong alignment to more than one of the following: - NBRC funding priorities - State strategic priorities - Regional/local priorities **(8-10 points)**	Circle and Describe: NBRC priorities, State priorities, Local/Regional priorities
Project Readiness	15	The project lacks detail regarding what match has been secured, the project	The project minimally addresses what match has been secured and the	The project adequately addresses all relevant items from the Detail	All Projects: ☐ *Match Secured* ☐ *Concept and Plan*

		concept & plan, and budget. For infrastructure projects, the site is not identified and the owner has not provided authorization. For procurement, no competitive bidding process is referenced. **(0-5 points)**	project concept & plan. The budget has moderate detail and aligns activities and expenses. For infrastructure projects, the site is identified and the owner has provided authorization. For procurement, a competitive bidding process is referenced. **(6-10 points)**	picklist. Bolded items are clearly detailed. The budget is highly detailed and aligns activities and expenses. For infrastructure projects, the site is identified, the owner has provided authorization, and a clear plan with project cost estimates and a zoning determination letter or list of required permits is provided. For procurement, a competitive bidding process is referenced. **(11-15 points)**	☐ ***Budget*** ☐ Completed Studies ☐ Professional Services Plan Infrastructure Projects or Equipment Purchasing: ☐ ***Site Identification*** ☐ ***Owner Authorization*** ☐ Qualified Project Cost Estimate ☐ Procurement Process Referenced ☐ Zoning Determination Letter or List of Required Permits
Project articulates measurable economic development benefits.	10	Does not articulate or support economic development benefits of the project. **(0-3 points)**	Articulates economic development benefits with insufficient to moderate support. **(4-7 points)**	Demonstrates the economic development benefits of the project, including supporting data, comparable communities, or projections. **(8-10 points)**	Summarize articulated benefit:
Community Buy-In	5	Does not articulate what	Articulates how local and	Demonstrates how local and	Local & Regional

		existing local and regional resources & assets will be used in the project, does not demonstrate community agreement with plan **(0-2 points)**	regional resources & assets will be leveraged in the project, articulates community buy-in. **(3-4 points)**	regional resources & assets will be leveraged in the project, demonstrates community and local leadership buy-in through letters of support, town votes, or other means. **(5 points)**	Resources/ Assets: ☐ Unique Letters of Support ☐ Town Votes or Permits ☐ Other:
Funding need	5	Project will be completed without NBRC funding, or NBRC funds will have minimal impact on project completion. **(0-2 points)**	Articulates how NBRC funds are critical to project completion, or make up a significant share of project costs. **(3-4 points)**	Demonstrates that NBRC funds are necessary for project completion. **(5 points)**	Statement of Need: ☐ Form 990 / Annual Financial Report reviewed
Demonstrates organizational capacity to implement and sustain project	5	Does not articulate or fails to provide supporting documentation of organizational strengths and resources for project management and successful implementation. **(0-2 points)**	Articulates and supports organizational strengths and resources for project management and successful implementation. **(3-4 points)**	Demonstrates prior successful implementation of similar projects or partnerships/int ention to contract with organizations who have had prior successful implementation of similar projects. **(5 points)**	Organizational Capacity:

New York Scoring Criteria

New York Scoring Criteria
50 points total. Points are awarded in a range between 0 and the Maximum Points.

Projects that document regional and/or statewide economic significance may be eligible for up to $3M. **Applicants seeking greater than $1M must consult with the New York Northern Border Regional Commission program office at the New York Department of State prior to submitting their pre-application to be considered for an award above $1M.**

CRITERIA	5 POINTS	3 POINTS	1 POINT	0 POINTS
Financial Need	NBRC funds are critical to project completion and make up a significant share of project cost.	NBRC funds are critical to project completion or make up a significant share of project cost.	NBRC funds will have minimal impact on the ability to complete the project.	Project will be completed without NBRC funding.
Project Need and Significance of Community Impact	Project need and community impact is significant	Project need or community impact is significant	Project need and/or community impact is limited	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Support of applicable Regional Economic Development Council	Project has received a letter of support from REDC	Project supports a specific REDC strategy	Project generally supports REDC plan	Project is inconsistent with an REDC plan
Project Link to Downtowns, Existing Community Centers, or Identified Growth Areas	Project is located in a downtown or community center and is identified as a key objective in a local government's comprehensive plan	Project is located in a downtown or community center and is generally consistent with a local government's comprehensive plan	Project is located outside of a downtown or community center, but creates a linkage to a downtown or connects it to a nearby amenity/asset	Project has no effective on a downtown or community center
Project Sustainability	Application provides clear evidence that the project is sustainable, with clear and long-term measurable goals	Project sustainability is evident, but the goals are unclear or not measurable	Application is unclear about the project's long-term sustainability	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Regional Impact	Project will have an impact across multiple counties	Project will have an impact across multiple	Project will impact a single municipality	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found

		municipalities within a county		
Support for Workforce Development, Entrepreneurship and Emerging Economic Opportunities	Project is a creative, new approach to support workforce and business development in STEM related fields or other emerging opportunities	Project is a creative or new approach to support workforce and business development	Project generally supports workforce training or business development.	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
Development of Community Infrastructure or Assets Critical for Sustainable Development	Project will develop new community infrastructure or assets.	Project is a new effort to leverage existing community infrastructure or assets.	Project enhances existing efforts to leverage community infrastructure or assets.	Applicant did not answer, or information cannot be found
0-10 Points				
Project Significance in meeting New York State priorities?	Review considerations include: the geographic distribution of grants; the uniqueness of the project as reviewed against project applications; the ability of the project to serve as a model for future projects; and the impact on current regional and statewide initiatives.			

Vermont Scoring Criteria

Vermont Scoring Criteria				
50 points total. Points are awarded in a range between 0 and the Maximum Points.				
Scoring Criteria	**Max Pts**	Scale		
1. Project expands/ supports/ retains Vermont's skilled workforce. *(Note: question will not be evaluated solely on quantity of jobs, etc., rather score will be relative to the impact of project size.)* *Applicant may use a variety of indicators to demonstrate workforce impact. Indicators may include:* *- training of existing employees/*	0-5	Weak: 0-1 points Project **does not indicate impact/ or has little impact** on how it will strengthen the workforce in Vermont.	Fair: 2-3 points Project **moderately strengthens** the workforce in Vermont.	Strong: 4-5 points Project **greatly strengthens** the workforce in Vermont.

workforce development *- adding jobs/ job opportunities* *- offering business development* *- wage growth*				
2. Project invests in infrastructure that provides long-term community and economic impacts. *Applicant should demonstrate how the project may positively affect the State of Vermont infrastructure. Eligible NBRC infrastructure costs may include:* *- transportation infrastructure* *- basic public infrastructure* *- telecommunication infrastructure*	**0-10**	Weak: 0-3 points Project **does not indicate impact/ or has little impact** on infrastructure in Vermont.	Fair: 4-7 points Project **moderately strengthens/ positively impacts** on infrastructure in Vermont.	Strong: 8-10 points Project **greatly strengthens/ positively impacts** on infrastructure in Vermont.
3. Quality projects demonstrate readiness, collaboration, capacity, and sustainability. *Applicant may use a variety of indicators to demonstrate project readiness, collaboration, capacity, and sustainability. Indicators may include:* *- Project implementation strategy/ plan is well developed* *- Project's goals and objectives are clearly articulated with measurable outcomes* *- Budget is clearly developed with matching funds identified and/or secured* *- Project demonstrates collaboration with community members, development corporations, project stakeholders/partners, and ACCD/NBRC/DED staff (i.e., letters of support, public meeting minutes, executive summaries)* *- Vermont-specific permits*	**0-10**	Weak: 0-3 points Applicant **does not demonstrate any or little** project readiness, collaboration, capacity, and sustainability.	Fair: 4-7 points Applicant **demonstrates some** project readiness, collaboration, capacity, and sustainability	Strong: 8-10 points Applicant **demonstrates significant** project readiness, collaboration, capacity, and sustainability

(including environmental approvals) are in hand *-Explanation of project sustainability once NBRC funding is exhausted* *-Description of the capacity of the organization/personnel to meet project objectives and goals (i.e., established partnerships, qualifications of project champions, reference prior implementation successes)*				
4. Is the project located within or directly benefiting an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone *For additional information, please visit:* *https://accd.vermont.gov/OpportunityZones* *https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs* *https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/programs/new-markets-tax-credit* *https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/businesses/rural-economic-area-partnership-program-reap-zones*	0-5	Weak: 0-1 points The project **is not located within or does not directly benefit** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone. OR The project **has no or little positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area	Fair: 2-3 points The project **is located outside but directly benefits** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone. OR The project **has a positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone.	Strong: 4-5 points The project **is located within or directly benefits** an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone. OR The project **has a strong positive impact** on an opportunity zone, state designated downtown, village center, New Market Tax Credit Project Area, or Rural Economic Area Partnership Program zone.

		Partnership Program zone.		
5. Project is a priority of the region as identified with the input of ACCD, RDC, and RPC partners though the Regional Priority Project List. *The Applicant project is listed on the Regional Priority Project List*	**0-10**	Assign the following based on ranking on the Regional Priority Project List: Priority 1 = 10 points Priority 2 = 9 points Priority 3 = 8 points Priority 4 = 7 points Priority 5 = 6 points Priority 6 = 5 points Priority 7 = 4 points Priority 8 = 3 points Priority 9 = 2 points Priority 10 = 1 point Statewide/ multiple region project on the priority list = 2 points Feasibility studies that demonstrate a clear link to a future infrastructure implementation project as defined by NBRC = 2 points Note: The fall competition will use the May RPP list and the spring competition will use the December RPP list.		
6. Project supports and contributes to the priority that projects be transformational, attract new businesses or retain existing businesses, be geographically distributed across the state, and encourage capital investment and economic growth. *Applicant may use a variety of indicators to indicate transformational impacts. Indicators may include:* *- regional impacts on workforce development* *- supply chain improvements* *- adding stability to local areas with fragile economic conditions* *- a sector-wide impact that other*	**0-10**	Weak: 0-3 points Project **does not indicate/ or has little impact** beyond immediate economic impacts of job and wage growth (little transformational impact).	Fair: 4-7 points The project has **moderate impacts** beyond immediate economic impacts of job and wage growth (moderate transformational impact).	Strong: 8-10 points The project has **significant or strong impacts** beyond immediate economic impacts of job and wage growth (significant transformational impact).

businesses will be able to benefit from				
Total	**0-50**			

FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM MANUAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX K – Forest Economy Program Scoring Criteria

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="4" style="background-color:#1a6b3c;color:white;text-align:center">Forest Economy Program Scoring Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="4" style="text-align:center">Agency Investment Priorities (0-25 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">Agency Investment Priorities</td>
<td>High scoring proposals provide a clear explanation for project/program fit, clearly articulate how the project will address program investment priorities and relevant local or regional initiatives, and provides a compelling statement of need.

Typical range: 20-25</td>
<td>Medium scoring proposals identify the project category and make some connection to program investment priorities and local initiatives,

Typical range: 10-19</td>
<td>Low scoring proposals may have referenced program investment priorities but failed to make clear and/or convincing connections between project activities and program investment priorities and local initiatives.

Typical range: 0-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">This category reviews how project fits within the Forest Economy Program project categories and evaluation priorities outlined in program materials. The applicant describes how the project addresses relevant investment priorities and project categories, and the project relevance with local or regional forest initiatives. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing this criteria. Consideration of projects identified by the State where the project is located as a priority or that represent a wide geographical distribution of NBRC funds will also result in a higher score.

Overview Tab - Project Abstract:

• Project abstract identifies and describes project fit with the relevant project category or categories. Beyond the first project category identified, projects will</td>
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</table>

receive one additional point for clearly addressing how the scope of work meets each additional project category. Note – applicants must list and describe how the project scope *directly* addresses each specified project category. (0-5 points)

Overview Tab - Program Investment Priorities Narrative:

- Narrative describes how the project meets one or more of the Forest Economy Program investment priorities. Points are awarded based on details provided, state prioritization and geographical distribution of NBRC funding. (0-6 points)
- Projects that demonstrate alignment with more than one investment priority will receive up to four additional points. (0-4 points)
- Consideration of projects identified by the State where the project is located as a priority or that represent a wide geographical distribution of NBRC funds will also result in a higher score. (0-1 points)

Overview Tab - Project beneficiaries and community context

- Narrative describes how the project addresses local and/or regional forest economy initiatives referenced in program materials. Projects that support related regional, state, or local forest economy initiatives or planning efforts will be awarded (0-5 points).
  - Example plans include the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap, Forest Opportunity Roadmap Maine, state resiliency and economic plans, etc.

Overview Tab - Responses to Overview Questions (0-4 points):

- 1st Time Applicants - Applicants who have not received a past NBRC award will be awarded 1 point. (0-1 points)

- Rural Communities – Projects that serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000. (0-1 points)
- Underserved Communities - Describe who will benefit from your project and why this project matters to the community, region and/or State. Describe benefits to underrepresented and/or underserved communities, including rural communities (population less than 5,000). Projects that articulate strategies to reach these communities, including making project activities fully accessible will receive a higher score. (0-1 points)
- Points will be awarded for including letters of support that directly cites benefits to underrepresented communities. (0-1 points)

Project Budget (0-15 points)			
Project Budget	High scoring proposals provide consistent budget figures across all budget sections. The applicant provides significant detail related to project costs and it's clear how NBRC funds will be utilized and how the budget supports project activities described. All funding sources are clearly identified and a plan to secure pending match is described. NEPA costs are included for projects where activities require construction and ground disturbance. Typical Range: 11-15	Medium scoring proposals may have minor inconsistencies in budget figures across budget sections. Applicant provides some detail related to project costs, which generally align with the proposed project activities. Funding to complete the project is identified but plans to secure pending or planned funding may be missing. Typical range: 6-10	Low scoring proposals have inconsistent budget figures across budget sections. Applicant did not provide enough detail related to project costs and unclear how NBRC funds will be utilized or how costs support project activities described. Funding sources to complete the project may be missing. Typical range: 0-5

Details should be provided in the Budget section including Budget Categories Table, Budget Narrative, Funding Sources and Commitments Table, and the required SF-424cbw Detailed Project Budget in the Supporting Documents Checklist.

Forms and Files, Budget Tabs - Detailed Budget SF424cbw, Budget Categories Table:

- Project costs, including contingency for construction projects, are detailed, aligned with project description and reasonable. Detailed Project Budget includes NEPA costs. Unless an LDD waiver request was approved by NBRC, the detailed Project Budget includes LDD grant administration costs in the amount of 2% of the NBRC requested amount. Applicant clearly demonstrates how NBRC requested funds will be used in alignment with project activities described. Applicant demonstrates no project costs or match have been committed or expended prior to the award. (0-8 points)

Budget Tab - Budget Narrative:

- Budget Narrative section: Budget narrative should be aligned with the project description, provide brief justification for expenses over $10,000, describe how the cost estimate was determined, provide a breakdown of expenses that make up the total and overall clarify the connection between the costs and the proposed project. (0-5 points)

Budget Tab - Funding Sources and Commitments

- Match is clearly outlined in the Funding Sources and Commitments table including the source, type of funding, and status. Applicants may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment/support to confirm match contributions. If applicable, leveraged funds in addition to required match should be described in Budget Narrative. (0-2 points)

	Approach & Methodology (0-10 points)		
Approach & Methodology	High scoring proposals clearly explain the chosen approach and methods, and how identified activities that will feed the project's success and timely completion. Major tasks are outlined in a milestone schedule, and key partnerships are identified and described. Typical range: 8-10	Medium scoring proposals explain the chosen approach and provide some explanation for how the chosen methods or activities will enable the project's success and timely completion. A milestone schedule is provided but may lack detail. Partnerships are identified and some description of partner roles is provided. Typical range: 4-7	Low scoring proposals lack detail or missed key components. It's unclear what specific activities the applicant will undertake to meet stated goals and objectives. A milestone schedule lacks detail or isn't provided. Typical range: 0-3

Proposal Tab - Details should be provided in the Approach & Methodology Narrative and optional milestone schedule attachment.

- Applicants clearly explain the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake the project including major tasks, partnerships and other necessary details to describe what is necessary to complete the project in a timely

manner. Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not. Milestone schedules should identify major project events or tasks including environmental review and their scheduled completion dates. (0-7 points)

- Projects demonstrate how activities support related regional, state, or local forest economy planning efforts identified in the Overview Tab (0-3 points).

	Forest Economy Sector Impacts (0-25 points)		
Forest Economy Sector Impacts	High scoring proposals make a clear connection to the challenge the project seeks to address and provide a compelling case for why the project should be funded now, with details on the scale of impact. Economic impacts are well described, and the applicant clearly explains how identified KPIs will be accomplished. Compelling letters of support are provided. Typical range: 20-25	Medium scoring proposals make some connection to the challenge or statement of need. The proposal provides some explanation for why the project should be funded now. The scale of impact is identified but may be unclear. Economic impacts align with identified KPIs but may lack detail. Some letters of support are provided. Typical range: 10-19	Low scoring proposals make little or no connection to an identified challenge or statement of need. The proposal does not provide a compelling case for why the project should be funded now, and little to no detail is provided regarding the scale of impact. Key performance indicators are not described or not substantiated within the application. No compelling letters of support are provided. Typical range: 0-9
	Details should be provided in the Economic Impacts Narrative, Project Goals & Outcomes Narrative, Key Performance Indicators within the Locations Tab, and optional Letters of Support. Projects will be reviewed for anticipated impact on the region's forest economy. Overview Tab – Statement of Need, Beneficiaries and Community Context:		

- Applicant identifies the challenge the project seeks to address (0-5 points)
- 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. (0-2 points)
- Applicant describes the scale of impact for community, county or region. (0-3 points)

Proposal Tab - Economic Impacts narrative:

- The project demonstrates it will have impacts such as job retention, job creation and/or wage growth within an identified timeframe. Selected Key Performance Indicators are further described. (0-5 points)
- Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. Applicants include supporting narratives from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts and the importance to larger economic development strategies. Applicants provide clear documentation of expected impacts with priority consideration given to documentation of expected growth in jobs and wages. Applicant describes how KPIs will be tracked and reported on at project close. (0-5 points)

Forms and Files Tab:

- Applicants are encouraged to include letters of support from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts and the importance to larger economic development strategies. (0-5 points)

	Project Readiness (0-15 points)		
Project Readiness	High scoring proposals are complete and detailed. All required supporting documentation is provided and responses to narrative questions are clear and concise. Timelines are reasonable and demonstrate an understanding for the grant life cycle. The project's	Medium scoring proposals are complete but may lack sufficient detail. Narrative responses could have provided additional information. Timelines may be missing important milestones. Typical range: 6-10	Low scoring proposals are missing key details. Required documentation may be missing or incomplete.

	status/standing at application is clear. Typical range: 11-15		Typical range: 0-5
	Details should be provided in the Proposal Tab - Project Readiness Narrative. • The applicant shows attention to detail and provides a complete application. All required supporting documents are submitted and complete. Responses to narrative questions are complete. (0-5 points) • Applicant accounts for feasible timelines for completion and includes a short summary of processes in progress or completed. Timeline includes NEPA. Applicant demonstrates the project can be completed within the 3-year project period. Timeline shows a Notice to Proceed can be secured within 1 year of award. (0-5 points) • The applicant clearly demonstrates how far the project is in the necessary planning, design, engineering, and state and local permitting processes, and describes expected NEPA activities or otherwise demonstrates the project has considered NEPA. (0-5 points)		
	Capacity & Qualifications (0-10 points)		
Capacity & Qualifications	High scoring proposals clearly describe the organizational capacity including key partnerships. The role and qualifications for each collaborator are well described. Typical range: 8-10	Medium scoring proposals provide some explanation for organizational capacity and identify key partners. The role and qualifications for each collaborator may lack sufficient detail. Typical range: 4-7	Low scoring proposals provide little to no explanation for organizational capacity and may lack partnerships needed to successfully complete the project. Lack of sufficient detail. Typical range: 0-3
	Overview Tab - Project Contacts section should list an LDD Contact role unless applicant received a LDD Waiver at pre-application.		

Proposal Tab – Capacity and Qualifications:

Details should be provided in the Capacity & Qualifications Narrative.

- Describes organizational capacity including any partnerships with other entities to fill out expertise (0-5 points)

- Applicants will be evaluated based on past performance for timely completion, collaboration, staff qualifications, and ability to meet program requirements. Applicants 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. New applicants or applicants with no prior Federal award history will not be reviewed negatively. Provides assessment of past performance. (0-5 points)

TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM MANUAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX L - Timber for Transit Program Scoring Criteria

Timber for Transit Program Scoring Criteria		
Agency Investment Priorities (0-25 points)		
High scoring proposals provide a clear explanation for project/program fit, clearly articulate how the project will address program investment priorities and provide a compelling statement of need. Typical range: 20-25	Medium scoring proposals provide a connection to investment priorities but could have made a more compelling case for how project activities feed into program investment priorities. Typical range: 10-19	Low scoring proposals may have referenced program investment priorities but failed to make clear and/or convincing connections between project activities and T4T investment priorities. Typical range: 0-9

(Row label, vertical: Agency Investment Priorities)

This category reviews how project fits within the Timber for Transit Program purpose and investment goals and program priorities. The applicant describes how the project meets program priorities in the Overview section. Projects will receive a higher score based on completeness of addressing relevant investment priorities and project categories outlined in the program materials. Consideration of projects identified by the State where the project is located as a priority or that represent a wide geographical distribution of NBRC funds will also result in a higher score.

Overview Tab - Project Abstract:

- Project abstract identifies the relevant project category and describes how the project fits the project category (feasibility, implementation, or both). If the project is requesting a higher maximum award, the proposal clearly describes how the project meets the criteria for a higher maximum award. (0-8 points)

Overview Tab - Program Investment Priorities Narrative:

- Project describes 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. (0-8 points)

- Projects will receive additional points for addressing additional investment priorities. (0-4 points)

- Consideration of projects identified by the State where the project is located as a priority or that represent a wide geographical distribution of NBRC funds will also result in a higher score. (0-1 points)

Overview Tab - Responses to Overview Questions:

- 1st Time Applicants - Applicants who have not received a past NBRC award will be awarded 1 point. (0-1 points)

- Rural Communities – Projects that serve a rural community with a population of less than 5,000. (0-1 points)

- Underserved Communities - Describe who will benefit from your project and why this project matters to the community, region and/or State. Describe benefits to underrepresented and/or underserved communities, including rural communities (population less than 5,000). Projects that articulate strategies to reach these communities, including making project activities fully accessible will receive a higher score. (0-1 points)

- Points will be awarded for including letters of support that directly cites benefits to underrepresented communities. (0-1 points)

Project Budget (0-15 points)		
Project Budget	High scoring proposals provide consistent budget figures across all budget sections. The applicant provides significant detail related to project costs	Medium scoring proposals may have minor inconsistencies in budget figures across budget sections. Applicant provides some detail related to project costs, which generally align with	Low scoring proposals have inconsistent budget figures across budget sections. Applicant did not provide enough detail

and it's clear how NBRC funds will be utilized and how the budget supports project activities and program investment priorities described. All funding sources are clearly identified and a plan to secure pending match is described. NEPA costs are included. Typical Range: 11-15	the proposed project activities and program investment priorities. Funding to complete the project is identified but plans to secure pending or planned funding may be missing. Typical range: 6-10	related to project costs and it's difficult to understand how NBRC funds will be utilized or how costs support project activities or program investment priorities. Funding sources to complete the project may be missing. Typical range: 0-5

Details should be provided in the Budget section including Budget Categories Table, Budget Narrative, Funding Sources and Commitments Table, and the required SF-424cbw Detailed Project Budget in the Supporting Documents Checklist.

Forms and Files, Budget Tabs: Detailed Budget SF424cbw, Budget Categories Table:

- Project costs, including contingency for construction projects, are detailed, aligned with project description and reasonable. The budget clearly demonstrates that funds will be used to directly address program investment priorities (including detailed costs for wood product components for implementation projects). Detailed Project Budget includes NEPA costs. If applicable, Detailed Unless an LDD waiver was approved by NBRC, project budget includes LDD grant administration costs in the amount of 2% of the NBRC requested amount. Applicant clearly demonstrates how NBRC requested funds will be used. Applicant demonstrates no project costs or match have been committed or expended prior to the award. (0-8 points)

Budget Tab - Budget Narrative:

- Budget Narrative section: Budget narrative should be aligned with the project description, provide brief justification for expenses over $5,000, describe how the cost estimate was determined, provide a breakdown of expenses that make

	up the total and overall clarify the connection between the costs and the proposed project. (0-5 points) Budget Tab - Funding Sources and Commitments • Match is clearly outlined in the Funding Sources and Commitments table including the source, type of funding, and status. Applicants may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment/support to confirm stated match contributions. If applicable, leveraged funds in addition to required match should be described in Budget Narrative. (0-2 points)		
	Approach & Methodology (0-10 points)		
Approach & Methodology	High scoring proposals clearly explain the chosen approach and methods, and how identified activities will feed the project's success and timely completion. Major tasks are outlined in a milestone schedule and key partnerships are identified and described, and the project makes clear connections to relevant planning efforts. Typical range: 8-10	Medium scoring proposals explain the chosen approach and provide some explanation for how the chosen methods or activities will enable the project's success and timely completion. A milestone schedule is provided but may lack detail. Partnerships are identified and some description of partner roles is provided. Project makes some connection to relevant planning efforts. Typical range: 4-7	Low scoring proposals lack detail or missed key components. It's unclear what activities the applicant will undertake to meet stated goals and objectives. A milestone schedule lacks detail or isn't provided, and the applicant makes little or no connection to relevant planning efforts. Typical range: 0-3

	Details should be provided in the Approach & Methodology Narrative and optional milestone schedule attachment. • Applicants clearly explain the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake the project including major tasks, partnerships and other necessary details to describe what is necessary to complete the project in a timely manner. Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not. Milestone schedules should identify major project events or tasks including environmental review and their scheduled completion dates. (0-7 points) • Projects that support related regional, state, or local economic planning efforts (including forest economy planning efforts) will be awarded 3 points. Example plans include hazard mitigation plan, comprehensive plan, etc. (0-3 points)		
Economic Impacts (0-25 points)			
Economic Impacts	High scoring proposals make a clear connection to the challenge the project seeks to address and provide a compelling case for why the project should be funded now, with details on the scale of impact. Economic impacts are well described, and the applicant clearly explains how identified KPIs will be accomplished. Compelling letters of support are provided. Typical range: 20-25	Medium scoring proposals make some connection to the challenge or statement of need. The proposal provides some explanation for why the project should be funded now. The scale of impact is identified but may be unclear. Economic impacts align with identified KPIs but may lack detail. Some letters of support are provided. Typical range: 10-19	Low scoring proposals make little or no connection to an identified challenge or statement of need. The proposal does not provide a compelling case for why the project should be funded now, and little to no detail is provided regarding the scale of impact. Key performance indicators are not described or not substantiated within the application. No compelling letters of support are provided.

			Typical range: 0-9

Details should be provided in the Economic Impacts Narrative, Project Goals & Outcomes Narrative, Key Performance Indicators within the Locations Tab, and optional Letters of Support. Projects will be reviewed
for anticipated economic impact.

Overview Tab – Statement of Need, Beneficiaries and Community Context:

- Applicant identifies the challenge the project seeks to address (0-5 points)

- 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. (0-2 points)

- Applicant describes the scale of impact for community, county or region. (0-3 points)

Proposal Tab - Economic impacts narrative:

- The project demonstrates it will have impacts such as job retention, job creation and/or wage growth within an identified timeframe. Selected Key Performance Indicators are further described. (0-5 points)

- Economic impacts should be consistent and, where possible, supported by feasibility studies, and/or local, state, or regional data. Applicants include supporting narratives from local businesses, leaders, and government officials regarding anticipated economic impacts and the importance to larger economic development strategies. Applicants provide clear documentation of expected impacts with priority consideration given to documentation of expected growth in jobs and wages. Applicant describes how KPIs will be tracked and reported on at project close. (0-5 points)

Forms and Files Tab:

- 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. (0-5 points)

Project Readiness (0-15 points)			
Project Readiness	High scoring proposals are complete and detailed. All required supporting documentation is provided and responses to narrative questions are clear and concise. Timelines are reasonable and demonstrate an understanding for the grant life cycle. The project's status/standing at application is clear. Typical range: 10-15	Medium scoring proposals are complete but may lack sufficient detail. Narrative responses could have provided additional information. Timelines may be missing important milestones. Typical range: 6-10	Low scoring proposals are missing key details. Required documentation may be missing or incomplete. Typical range: 0-5

Details should be provided in the Proposal Tab - Project Readiness Narrative.

- The applicant shows attention to detail and provides a complete application. All required supporting documents are submitted and complete. Responses to narrative questions are complete. (0-5 points)

- Applicant accounts for feasible timelines for completion and includes a short summary of processes in progress or completed. Timeline includes NEPA. Applicant demonstrates the project can be completed within the 3-year project period. Timeline shows a Notice to Proceed can be secured within 1 year of award. (0-5 points)

- The applicant clearly demonstrates how far the project is in the necessary planning, design, engineering, and state and local permitting processes, and describes expected NEPA activities or otherwise demonstrates the project has considered NEPA. (0-5 points)

Capacity & Qualifications (0-10 points)		
High scoring proposals clearly describe the organizational capacity including key partnerships. The role and qualifications for each collaborator are well described. Typical range: 8-10	Medium scoring proposals provide some explanation for organizational capacity and identify key partners. The role and qualifications for each collaborator may lack sufficient detail. Typical range: 4-7	Low scoring proposals provide little to no explanation for organizational capacity and may lack partnerships needed to successfully complete the project. Lack of sufficient detail. Typical range: 0-3

Capacity & Qualifications

Overview Tab - Project Contacts section of the Overview tab should list a LDD Contact role unless applicant received a LDD Waiver at pre-application.

Proposal Tab - Capacity and Qualifications:

Details should be provided in the Capacity & Qualifications Narrative. Describes organizational capacity including any partnerships with other entities to fill out expertise (0-5 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. New applicants or applicants with no prior Federal award history will not be reviewed negatively. Provides assessment of past performance. (0-5 points)