



Request for Proposals (RFP)

DEIA Engagement

Since early 2021, the President has issued two Executive Orders (EO) focused, respectively, on internal (E.O. 14035) and external (E.O. 13985) equity [both available in their entirety on the White House's website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/>]. Each EO specified requirements for Federal agencies to develop strategies to address – broadly – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA) as appropriate based on the Agency's mission, geographic area(s) of focus, and workforce composition.

The Northern Border Regional Commission (hereafter: NBRC, Agency, or the Agency) produced two strategy documents to guide the NBRC on both internal and external pathways (consistent with the organization of the aforementioned EOs), and submitted these plans to the U.S. Office of Management & Budget (OMB) for approval and comment. Having received that feedback, the NBRC is eager to deepen these strategies, and to design a plan of action for implementation in the interest of creating as accessible an environment as possible for the communities the NBRC serves. These efforts are also intended to create an accessible environment for employees of the NBRC, such that as the number of staff continues to grow, the staff can accurately reflect the socioeconomic and demographic composition of the communities it serves.

Highlights of the two strategy documents highlighted above include:

1. **Agency Equity Action Plan** (in response to *Executive Order 13985*, focused on External Equity), detailed three initiatives the NBRC will undertake:
 - **Initiative I** is essentially a primary and secondary data collection process that will allow us to learn more about what barriers exist to accessing our funding among under-served communities in our region. Upon identification of these barriers, **Initiative II** follows on by determining specific actions to address those barriers.
 - **Initiative III** expounds on our continuing efforts to engage with Tribal Consultation, consistent with E.O. 13175.
2. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan** (in response to *Executive Order 14035*, focused on Internal Equity), which made a suite of recommendations, to include:
 - Engaging with a DEIA consultant to facilitate learning systems (the purpose of this RFP).
 - Working to integrate DEIA recommendations into the NBRC's updated strategic plan (anticipated 2023).
 - Ensuring that the NBRC recruits a diverse candidate pool, reflective of the diversity of the communities served by the NBRC, and that the NBRC designs human resources policies to accommodate this diversity.

Both of the documents referenced in this section will be made available in their entirety to the selected contractor.

Background

The NBRC is a Federal-State partnership for economic and community development within the most distressed counties of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

The NBRC has grown significantly over the past four Fiscal Years, and in FY'22, was appropriated \$35 million (\$60 million when combined with partnership programs involving multiple federal agencies), deployed across multiple grant programs focused on infrastructure and community development projects. The Agency currently administers over 250 grants across the four-state region, with a staff of 12 professionals who work remotely across three states.

Scope

The NBRC seeks contractors who are:

- Experienced in:
 - Facilitating conversations regarding the prioritization (and sustainability) of an equity focus both internally and externally.
 - Working with small, public-facing organizations with a social mission.
 - Remote/virtual facilitation.
- Have familiarity with NBRC region communities, including extensive contacts within the region.

The contractor is encouraged to respond with whatever mix of approaches they feel would be most beneficial in engaging NBRC staff on the topics addressed in the second paragraph of the first section above (e.g., facilitated conversation, training, individual engagements, assessment tools, etc.).

Please note: 1-2 finalists will be invited to meet with the NBRC's DEIA committee prior to final selection.

The cost of the contract may not exceed **\$50,000**.

Goal

By the end of the engagement, NBRC staff will have the tools and ability to engage in DEIA-focused dialogues internally, and with external stakeholders. This is not to say that additional interventions and/or facilitations will not be necessary, but in general, NBRC leadership and staff should have the internal ability to further and sustain this work.

Required Information for Quote

To be considered, interested contractors should provide the following:

- Registered vendor with the Federal government
- Estimates for this type of work:
 - As a complete project
 - Per hour including hourly wage
- Names of individuals who will be completing this work, including the contractor's primary contact
- Recent examples of former / existing relationships with small, public-facing organizations, ideally within the four-state NBRC service area (if confidentiality is an issue, vendor may utilize a pseudonym) involving similar work
- Evidence of staff capacity and expertise to carry out the goals of this Request for Proposals (e.g., resume, list of qualifications, etc.)

Tasks

The Agency anticipates that the engagement will proceed as follows:

Task #1 (Document Review):

The contractor shall conduct a document review of materials regarding the NBRC, including its mission and functions. The review should also include the materials referenced earlier in this document, specifically the Agency's written responses to the prompts initiated in E.O. 14035 and E.O. 13985.

Task #2 (Initial Engagement / Interviews):

After reviewing the documents referenced in Task #1, the contractor will engage with NBRC leadership to recommend specific approaches to accomplish the scope and goal of this work.

Task #3 (Execute Approaches):

With buy-in from leadership, the contractor will work with the NBRC's DEIA committee to schedule sessions, seeking timing that allows the maximum number of Agency staff to participate, and will deliver the agreed-upon approaches during these sessions.

Task #4 (Final Report, Including Next Steps):

Having delivered the approaches as identified in Task #3, the consultant will prepare a final report that includes next steps and ongoing work for the NBRC (to include, if so recommended, additional work with a consultant).

The report shall be in an "Executive Summary" format consisting of no more than 5 pages. Subsequent text and context shall be included as appendices and exhibits as necessary to support the recommendations provided in the Executive Summary. The contractor shall provide a "draft" Final Report to Agency leadership for review 10 business days prior to Final Submission Due Date. The Agency will provide comments and feedback 5 business days upon receipt of the draft. The Final Report shall be due 15 business days prior to the end of the Period of Performance. Final payment for this requirement will be based on the Agency's acceptance of the Final Report.

Period of Performance

Up to 6 months from date of award (anticipated September 16, 2022). Contractors will be expected to schedule update meetings once per month during the period of performance, culminating in a summary of findings and recommendations for next steps.

Submittal of RFP to NBRC

Complete RFP documentation must be submitted to the Agency's Executive Director Rich Grogan, via email (rgrogan@nbrc.gov), no later than 5:00PM EST on August 31, 2022. Please provide the RFP in both MS Word and PDF formats.

About the NBRC

Created by the US Congress in 2008 and funded since 2010, the NBRC is a Federal-State partnership whose mission is to help alleviate economic distress in portions of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Since its inception, the Commission has awarded more than \$55 million in grants, which has leveraged more than \$142 million to support 248 grants across the four states.

The NBRC partnership is led of the governors of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York as well as a Federal Co-chair, who is appointed by the President. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts.

While Congress allowed the NBRC considerable flexibility in the types of areas in which to focus and invest, the NBRC has created a Five-Year Strategic Plan that emphasizes three goals related to Infrastructure; Business and Entrepreneurial growth; and Leadership and Community Capacity. More information on the NBRC can be found at www.nbrc.gov. The NBRC's enabling statute can be found at 40 USC, Subtitle V ("Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development").