



2021 Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) State Economic and Infrastructure Grant Program Application Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Q: If I have any eligibility questions about the program or need technical assistance within the application portal who do I talk to?**

A: NBRC 603-369-3001 admin@nbrc.gov. For information about the review and scoring of your project and/or its alignment with state funding priorities, please contact the program manager for your state. If your project is a multi-state project you should contact each State Program Manager to discuss how your project aligns with the State specific scoring criteria and their priorities for funding under this program. State Program Manager contact information can be found by visiting the State-specific pages at www.nbrc.gov (i.e., www.nbrc.gov/content/maine)

2. **Q: Where can I access all NBRC application forms?**

A: www.nbrc.gov/content/eid

3. **Q: What is NBRC's CFDA #?**

A: The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number is 90.601. The Title is: Northern Border Regional Development.

4. **Q: What is the maximum grant that can be made by the NBRC?**

A: Maximum is \$1,000,000 for 'construction' projects, and \$350,000 for all other projects.

5. **Q: If I have previously received an NBRC investment am I eligible to apply again?**

A: If the applicant has an existing SEID project with NBRC, you are encouraged to have your current project both (1) submit reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project by May 1, 2021; and (2) demonstrate that 75% of the cost share has been expended by May 1, 2021, before applying for additional SEID funding.

A prior applicant who cannot meet the 75% expenditure rule outlined above but can demonstrate their project delays are due to the impacts of COVID-19 are also eligible to submit a waiver. NOTE: A request for a waiver, together with documentation to support

the waiver of this requirement, must be submitted to NBRC's Program Director Andrea Smith at asmith@nbrc.gov and received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST, May 1, 2021.

6. Q: What is the definition of 'construction'?

A: "Construction" means construction, 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'.

8. Q: Is the planning and engineering for a potential telecommunications project considered infrastructure?

A: No, this would be considered a planning or study not the physical infrastructure, but if the planning is part of a grant that includes implementation, then yes.

9. Q: If my project is approved by NBRC, can the grant agreement be signed before I have evidence of full funding (match) for the project?

*A: A Grant Agreement will be issued by NBRC in September and will required to be returned before October 1st, regardless of match funding being in place. However, recipients cannot begin work on the project prior to receiving a 'Notice to Proceed'. **A Notice to Proceed will not be issued until all match is secured and documented and all other items that are listed in the grant agreement are completed.***

10. Q: What happens if I am approved for NBRC funding but am unable to secure matching funds?

A: If match is not secured and documented by September 30, 2022, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the Federal Co-Chair may de-obligate the funds and award them to other projects. A project should be able to put its funding together within a year, if this is not the case, the project is considered premature for funding.

11. Q: If approved for an NBRC grant how will I receive the funds?

A: After evidence of all matching funds has been provided and an agreement between the recipient and NBRC has been signed, NBRC funds are reimbursed through electronic transfer of funds. An SF270 must be submitted with back up documentation of funds spent. Note that any matching funds or eligible project expenses cannot be spent prior to

receiving a Notice to Proceed. Please see NBRC's Grant Administration and Compliance Manual available to download from <http://www.nbrc.gov/content/resources> for more information.

12. Q: What is the difference between startup funds and cost of operations?

A: NBRC will not provide funding for ongoing operations of organizations. The rationale is that NBRC funds cannot be relied upon from year to year and sustaining organizations is not in the mission of the NBRC, nor is it in the interest of efficient use of public dollars. NBRC will however provide startup costs for projects and/or facilities. For example: if a nonprofit were to create a program that trained individuals to be ready with new skill sets for potential businesses in the area NBRC could provide funds in the following ways. NBRC could cover the costs associated with the development of training courses, development of programmatic initiatives to complete training and even potentially pay for training of individuals if there was a specific end goal that could demonstrate that jobs were waiting for those individuals. NBRC could also pay instructors for a specified time-period as a pilot or to get the program off the ground. NBRC would not however pay for the instructors for a course that has already been developed and up and running for the past few years. If these types of applications are submitted the applicant should clearly outline how continued funding of the program will be sustainable in the future absences of NBRC funds.

13. Q: What is the maximum timeframe for an NBRC funded project?

A: The investment period (time that the project shall be completed) shall be October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2024, unless permission has been given to begin the project prior to October 1, 2021.

14. Q: If staff time is included in the cost of the project, what is the rate that our organization can charge; can we charge our Indirect Cost Rate?

A: Entities that have a Federal Cognizant Agent can submit with their application the letter from such entity demonstrating their Indirect Cost Rate, and budget their project accordingly. Those entities without an Indirect Cost Rate determination may use the regular pay of staff plus 10% as their Indirect Cost Rate for purposes of budgeting for the project.

15. Q: Does use of NBRC funds require compliance with Davis-Bacon re: prevailing wage rates?

A: Not for funding that Congress has appropriated to NBRC, however if the project is also using funds from another federal agency that do require Davis-Bacon compliance, the entire project will be subject to those rates. Additionally, Congress has directed the Economic Development Administration to provide funds to NBRC. If awards are made using EDA funds, those projects will be subject to Davis-Bacon prevailing wages.

16. Q: Can funds be used to purchase a conservation easement?

A: Yes, however, a case must be made for how it is an economic development driver for the region. Each State may prioritize this differently, and it will be up to the States to determine how competitive this type of application is compared to applications that produce jobs. You are strongly encouraged to speak with your state Program Manager within your state. See www.nbrc.gov

17. Q: On the Federal SF424 form, what should I enter as the Funding Opportunity and Title (Question 12)?

A: Leave the Funding Opportunity # blank. The title should be "Economic and Infrastructure Development Investment Program"

18. Q: On the Federal SF 424, for Question 17, what is the earliest start date I can enter for my proposed project?

A: October 1, 2021, unless you have permission from NBRC staff to begin earlier. The proposed project start date cannot be before NBRC funds can be committed/obligated at the federal level.

19. Q: On the Federal SF424, for Question 19, is the application subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?

A: For projects located solely located in ME, NY, or VT the answer is No. Currently NH is the only state in the NBRC Service Area for which this applies to. If your project is located in NH, in whole or in part, please review <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/eo12372spoc.pdf> for additional information.

20. Q: If I am including letters of support for my project proposal, who should they be addressed to?

*A: The letters should be addressed to Office of the Federal Co-Chair of the Northern Border Regional Commission, 53 Pleasant Street, Suite 1501, Concord, NH 03301, and cc: the appropriate State Governor's Alternate. **A hard copy of the letter should not be mailed, as due to COVID-19, NBRC employees are currently working remotely. Please combine all letters of support as one pdf and upload them as part of the supporting documentation submitted with your 2021 SEID application.***

21. Q: It is unclear how I apply. Can you be more specific?

A: Go to the www.nbrc.gov website and following the instructions which will take you to a link that will go to the online application form.

22. **Q: Do I submit the investment application online via Grant.gov?**

A: No.

23. **Q: If a Municipality/Applicant is being given land to use as match for a project, can the value of the land be used as match?**

A: In most instances yes when the following criteria are met. The value of the property may not exceed the value of a qualified appraisal. You may not use a municipal assessment as the value.

24. **Q: Can NBRC funds be used as cost share for other federal grant or loan programs, even programs that specifically stipulate that other sources of federal funds cannot be used as a source of match or cost share?**

A: Statutory provisions for NBRC allow NBRC to be used to match/cost share other federal grants. However, NBRC funds still maintain their Federal status and must be counted toward the 80% ceiling of federal funds being expended for any one project. If another federal agency prohibits using federal funds for cost-share then you may not use NBRC funds. Both agencies must allow the use of federal funds – think lowest common denominator.

25. **Q: Can staff time be used as part of a match or cost share requirement?**

A: Yes, with the following exceptions: time that is used to match other programs cannot be used (counted twice, etc.); time must be recorded; cannot use federal employees' time; are not included in any other federal grants; are part of the project budget.

26. **Q: What is an Indirect Rate?**

A: Indirect rates are the 'overhead' that is incurred for employees of the entity applying for funds or volunteers for the project. Typically, an indirect rate is a % of the wages and fringe.

27. **Q: Can we use indirect costs as part of staff time for projects?**

A: You may use indirect cost rate from an approved Federal Cognizant Agent with the submission of those documented amounts. If you do not have a Federal Cognizant Agent (generally most non-profits) you may use 10% as your indirect (overhead) costs.

28. **Q: If volunteers are being used, and their time is being tracked for in-kind match for the project, what rate do we use to budget the project?**

A: Volunteer rate should be consistent with the national average. http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. As with question 13, volunteers may not be: counted for the same activity in a different project (counted twice) or be federal employees.

29. **Q: We already have funds available for the project that we are proposing. Can these funds be part of our match if we start and/or complete the work before a NBRC grant would be awarded?**

A: No. Eligible project expenses (match and NBRC funds) are only those incurred after execution of the investment agreement and after the Notice to Proceed has been issued. No matching funds or NBRC funds can be committed or expended prior to the project receiving a Notice to Proceed from NBRC.

30. **Q: Can we submit our 2021 application via e-mail or in hard copy vs through the NBRC application portal?**

A: No. Applications that are not submitted through NBRC's application portal will not be eligible for review and scoring.

31. **Q: Who should I contact if I will need assistance in administering this grant, should the project be awarded funding?**

A: Each NBRC award recipient is required to utilize a local development district (LDD) in its region to administer the grant, unless they are a department of State government or have requested and been approved for an LDD waiver. LDD's are compensated for their administrative work based on the following formula: 5% of the first \$100,000 awarded and 1% of all dollars in excess of \$100,000. Grant administration may not be sole sourced to an entity other than an LDD and is an allowable grant expense. **If your project is in VT, you do not need to budget for technical assistance, as the State of VT reduces its annual EID allocation to pay for an LDD assistance program.** For more information on the NBRC-LDD partnership, including a LDD map and contact information, please visit www.nbrc.gov/content/loca-development-districts

32. **Q: Who reviews and scores my SEID application?**

A: SEID applications are reviewed and scored by the State where the project will occur. If the project is a multi-state project, it will be reviewed and scored by each State where the project will occur. It is possible for a multi-state project to be funded in some states and not in others. In that scenario, the grantee would be requested to provide a revised project scope and project budget to align with the reduced funding.

33. **Q: Who makes the final determination of which projects are awarded SEID funding?**

A: States put forth a slate of the projects they have selected for funding. Once all States have put forth their slate of selected projects, they are brought to the Commission for a full vote. Voting members consist of the Federal Co-Chair and the Governor's Alternates for each State.

34. **Q: When will I be notified as to whether my application has been approved for NBRC funding?**

A: It is planned that all recipients will be notified if their project has been selected for funding, or not, by August 31st.

35. **Q: If my project is not selected for funding, who should I contact to receive feedback on our application?**

A: If your project is not selected for funding, you may contact the State Program Manager to receive feedback on your application. If your project is a multi-state project, you will want to contact each State Program Manager for feedback specific to each state.

Resources:

www.nbrc.gov for information about NBRC, including contact information for staff, Governor's Alternates and State Program Managers

www.nbrc.gov/content/eid for 2021 Application materials, including the 2021 SEID Application Manual and program timeline