



Northern Border Regional Commission

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



A FEDERAL-STATE PARTNERSHIP FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IN MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW YORK AND VERMONT

A WORD FROM OUR FEDERAL CO-CHAIR

Review of the Northern Border Regional Commission for 2024

With the end of the year approaching, we take a moment to reflect on the work and accomplishments of the Commission over the past twelve months. This was another milestone year for the Agency with the development and deployment of new programs, improvements to Commission operations, and perhaps most importantly, significant resources awarded to communities throughout the region. This report highlights many of these successes, spotlighting a number of remarkable projects and the work of our new programs and collaborative investments.

An essential tenant of the Commission's work is to continually adapt in ways that better serve the people who live in the NBRC territory. In 2023 the Commission placed a greater focus on supporting projects that address emerging rural and regional needs, such as access to childcare and housing. This year we took another step forward in increasing access to NBRC resources by offering multiple grant rounds, rather than opening these programs just once a year. This improvement was made possible by the deployment of a new grants management system that streamlined the application process and dramatically improved the user experience. We believe these improvements will yield benefits to NBRC applicants for years to come.

The most common way residents of the region benefit from the Commission's work is through projects that are supported by our various grant programs. As part of the Commission's new five-year strategic plan, we are exploring ways that we can broaden and deepen our work through other means of support. To these ends, the Commission partnered with the Northern Forest Center to hold a Northern Outdoor Recreation Summit in May. This regional convening focused on an important economic driver for rural communities and brought together outdoor recreation industry experts and practitioners to chart a collective regional vision to further elevate this sector.

The Commission made similar investments of time and resources in the healthcare space. We know that in some rural communities a lack of access to healthcare is a barrier to retaining existing, or welcoming new, residents and workers. As we previewed at the end of last year, the Commission launched a J-1 Visa Waiver Program allowing NBRC to play a role in addressing the rural healthcare crisis. I am happy to share that this program is now fully operational, and a number of physicians successfully received waivers through NBRC's program and are now practicing in the region.

The coming year promises to be another banner year for the impact and reach of the Commission's work. We plan to deploy another record level of federal resources, advance our strategic plan and above all, continue to support the well-being of the people of this great region.

With warm regards,



Chris Saunders,
Federal Co-Chair Northern Border Regional Commission

COVER IMAGES:

MAINE - Biking: Photo courtesy of the Maine Office of Tourism, NEW HAMPSHIRE - Kayaking: Photo courtesy of the NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development, NEW YORK - Main Street: Photo courtesy of the state of New York, VERMONT - Ski lift: Photo courtesy of the State of Vermont



ABOUT THE NBRC

Fostering Vibrant Futures for Rural Communities

| Vision |

The Northern Border region is known for its vital regional economies and thriving communities that provide for the well-being of the region's residents and support the stewardship of the region's natural and cultural assets.

| Mission |

The mission of the Northern Border Regional Commission is to catalyze regional, collaborative, and transformative community economic development approaches that alleviate economic distress and position the region for economic growth.

Authorized by Congress in 2008 (**40 U.S.C., Subtitle V**), and first appropriated by Congress in 2010, the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a Federal-State partnership modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission. The NBRC was created to provide infrastructure and economic development assistance to projects in counties that have varying degrees of economic and demographic distress.

Authority and oversight functions of the NBRC are shared by five Members: The Federal Government, represented by the Federal Co-Chair, and the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, represented by the Governors of those States. NBRC investments and policies are approved by the vote of the Federal Co-Chair and the collective vote of the majority of State Governors.

As a Federal-State partnership, the NBRC enjoys a strong network of State economic development leaders who provide guidance and support for NBRC programs. Such support also helps NBRC staff maintain knowledge of local conditions throughout its extensive service area.

The NBRC partnership is also aided by Local Development Districts, which serve multiple functions: Technical assistance to grantees; assistance with identifying sources of complementary funds; and administration of NBRC grant funds.

The staff of the NBRC are a permanent, non-partisan administrative structure, charged with implementation of the strategic vision of the Members, including NBRC's grant programs.

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MEMBERS' IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

For activities related to **Authority** and **Oversight** of the NBRC. It is up to each partner to decide on how much work they wish to dedicate to NBRC related activities. These in-kind activities are approved and appropriated by each Member government.

All **funding for grants** is provided by the Federal Government depending on appropriations.

Federal In-Kind



- Federal Co-Chair**
Salary and Benefits
- Alternate Federal Co-Chair**
Salary and Benefits
- Inspector General**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.

Funding For Grants (100%)

Maine In-Kind

- Governor's Alternate**
Salary and Benefits
- NBRC State Program Manager**
Salary and Benefits
- Others**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.



New Hampshire In-Kind

- Governor's Alternate**
Salary and Benefits
- NBRC State Program Manager**
Salary and Benefits
- Others**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.



New York In-Kind

- Governor's Alternate**
Salary and Benefits
- NBRC State Program Manager**
Salary and Benefits
- Others**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.



Vermont In-Kind

- Governor's Alternate**
Salary and Benefits
- NBRC State Program Manager**
Salary and Benefits
- Others**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.



MEMBERS' CASH CONTRIBUTIONS

For activities related to **Management** and **Operations**. These shared staff costs require a unanimous vote of all the States and the Federal Co-Chair. The Federal Co-Chair is not allowed to participate when the States deliberate the extent of their cash participation.



Northern Border Regional Commission

- Executive Director**
Salary and Benefits
- NBRC Staff**
Salary and Benefits
- Operating**
Travel, Rent, Phones, Etc.



2024 | A BRIEF REVIEW

2024 introduced two significant changes to the NBRC's application process: the implementation of a new grants management system (GMS) and the establishment of two funding rounds for all NBRC programs. The GMS was rolled out in the spring, streamlining the application process and providing one resource hub for grant administration and communications. The technology was strategically introduced to accommodate the NBRC's updated programmatic timeline with two points of entry in the spring and fall. This update has increased accessibility to NBRC's Catalyst, Forest Economy, and newly created Timber for Transit programs, providing more flexibility for applicants and just-in-time funding for projects poised to get started.

In 2024 the NBRC also launched a new Strategic Plan to guide the commission's mission through 2029, as mandated by Congress every five years. The updated mission and vision that guide the plan came together through extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration with state leadership. Five pillars of focus were identified, including a commitment to increasing communication and collaboration, strengthening funding and programs, implementing new systems and processes, cultivating a more diverse workforce, and prioritizing capacity building for local and regional partners.

| Highlights |

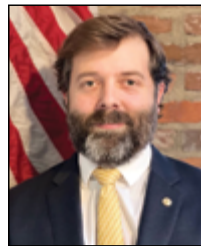
- In June 2024, the NBRC announced \$27 Million in new awards as part of the Catalyst Program's spring competition, of which \$18 Million was made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds. Funds provided by the BIL will unfold over the next three years, and supported the largest infrastructure investments, including foundational infrastructure for expanded housing developments and construction of childcare facilities. Awards for the Catalyst Program's fall competition will be announced in January 2025.
- A new Timber for Transit (T4T) Program was launched in spring 2024 to advance the use of domestic forest products in transportation infrastructure. Through this program, the NBRC may award up to \$25,000,000 over the next three years for projects that demonstrate the capabilities of wood in transportation infrastructure. The program made its first awards in the Spring 2024 round of funding, awarding 2 projects a total of \$2,689,793.
- An expansion to the NBRC's J-1 Visa Waiver Program launched on April 1, 2024, to include physicians practicing specialty medicine. The program was first launched in December 2023 as part of a larger effort to address the national healthcare provider shortage and provide quality, affordable care to rural and underserved communities in the Northern Border region.



NBRC MEMBERS

Photo courtesy of the Maine Office of Tourism

Policy and oversight decisions of the Commission are made by the Federal Co-Chair and a majority of Governors from Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.



Representing the Federal Government

Member: Christopher M. Saunders, Federal Co-Chair



Representing the State of Maine

Member: The Honorable Janet Mills, Governor

Governor's Alternate: Heather Johnson, Commissioner, Dept. of Economic Community Development

NBRC Program Manager: Charlotte Mace, Director, Maine Office of Business Development



Representing the State of New York

Member: The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor

Governor's Alternate: Deputy Secretary of State for Local Government, Mark Pattison

NBRC State Program Manager: Kyle Wilber, Local Government Specialist, NY Secretary of State



Representing the State of New Hampshire

Member: The Honorable Chris Sununu, Governor

Governor's Alternate: Commissioner Taylor Caswell, Dept. of Business and Economic Affairs

NBRC State Program Managers: Ian Davis, NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs



Representing the State of Vermont

Member: The Honorable Phil Scott, Governor

Governor's Alternate: Deputy Secretary Tayt Brooks, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

NBRC State Program Manager: Kristie Farnham, Agency of Commerce and Community Development



ANNUAL DISTRESS CRITERIA

Photo courtesy of NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development

By statute, the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress within its region, and this information is typically released on NBRC's website (nbrc.gov) along with new guidance on the Catalyst program:

- To have reliable and timely data that can inform NBRC leadership as they create new – and improve existing – economic and infrastructure funding programs,
- To create a benchmark in which annual compilations of economic and demographic data can be compared to the NBRC's Five Year Plan goals,
- To identify whether the NBRC can provide grants to projects within a county,
- To determine the level of match required by grant applicants for projects,
- To assist States as they develop their own economic and community development programs.

Annually updated distress criteria are released each spring, along with each year's Catalyst application materials, via the NBRC's website (nbrc.gov). The NBRC is required to allocate 50% of its total appropriations to projects in counties falling within the distressed designation. The maximum percent of a distressed project that can be funded by the NBRC is 80%.

The following overview provides a glimpse at each state's distress level by county in 2024, as well as where awards have been made through NBRC programs and collaboratively with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Please visit nbrc.gov for a detailed list of program award descriptions by state.



STATE OF MAINE AT A GLANCE: FY 2024

Photo courtesy of the Maine Office of Tourism

Catalyst Program (Spring 24)

- 12 projects funded
- \$7,371,022.46 awarded
[One project was jointly funded with EDA]

Forest Economy Program (Fall 23 & Spring 24)

- 3 projects funded
- \$2,745,869 awarded

Timber for Transit Program (Spring 24)

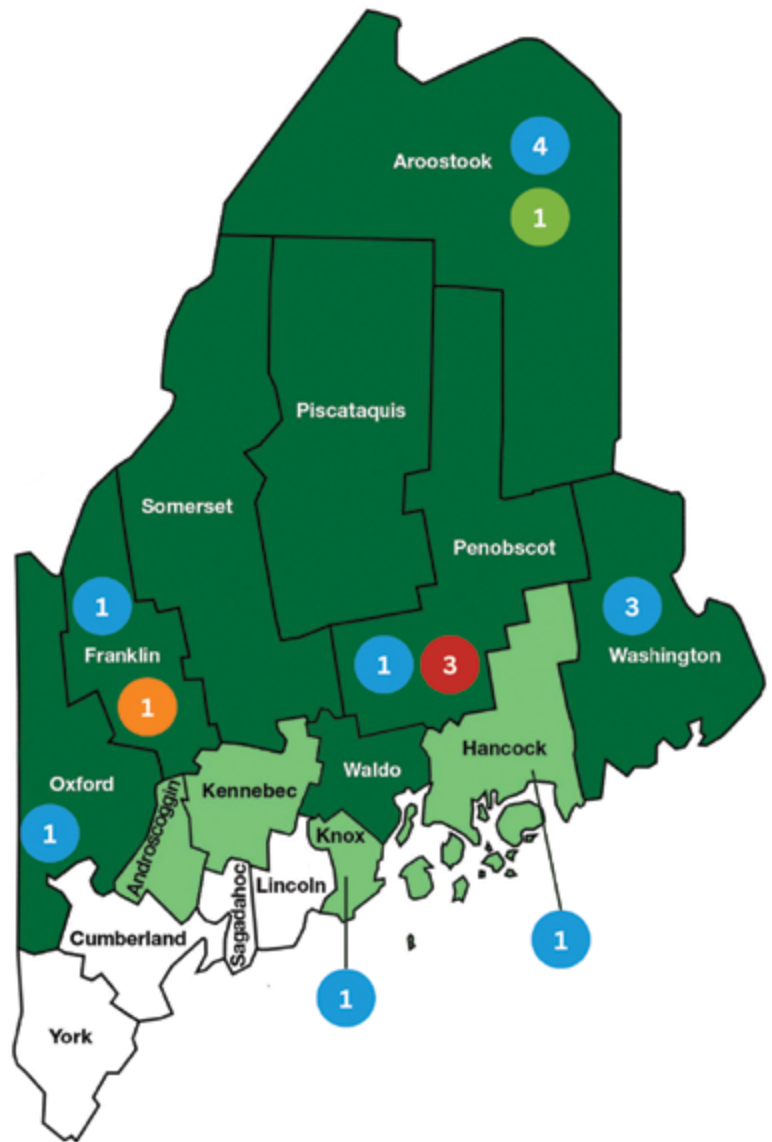
- No awards made

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- 1 project funded
\$750,000 awarded
[This project was also funded with \$250,000 of Catalyst funds]

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- 1 project funded
- \$475,000 awarded



- "Distressed" 20% minimum match
- "Transitional" 50% minimum match
- "Attainment" Ineligible in the NBRC region unless the project is within an Isolated Area of Distress or has requested and received approval of a Significant Benefit Waiver
- Not in the NBRC region

Distressed Counties: Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Washington
Transitional Counties: Androscoggin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Waldo
Attainment Counties: None



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE AT A GLANCE: FY 2024

Photo courtesy of NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development

Catalyst Program (Spring 24)

- 7 projects funded
- \$4,101,776 awarded

Forest Economy Program (Spring 24)

- No awards made in Spring round

Timber for Transit Program (Spring 24)

- 1 project funded
- \$911,393 awarded

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

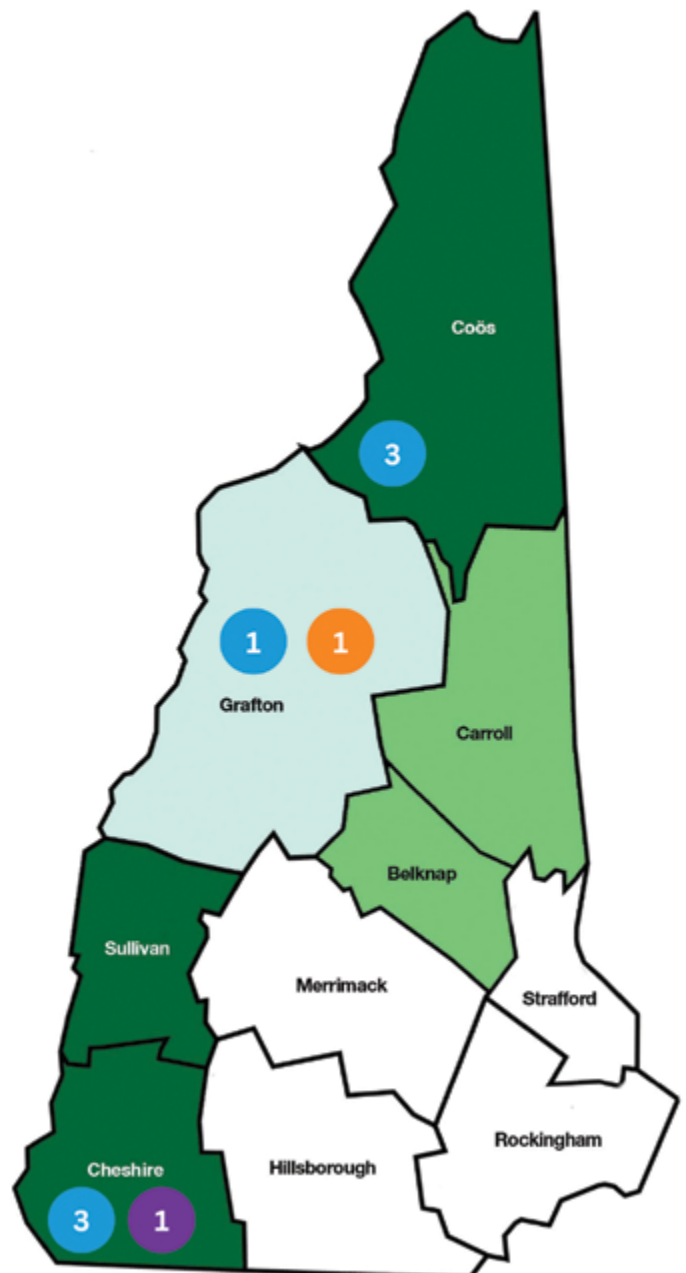
- No awards made in Spring round

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- 1 project funded
- \$475,000 awarded

■	“Distressed” 20% minimum match
■	“Transitional” 50% minimum match
	“Attainment” Ineligible in the NBRC region unless the project is within an Isolated Area of Distress or has requested and received approval of a Significant Benefit Waiver
	Not in the NBRC region

Distressed Counties: Cheshire, Coös, Sullivan
Transitional Counties: Belknap, Carroll
Attainment Counties: Grafton





STATE OF NEW YORK AT A GLANCE: FY 2024

Photo courtesy of the state of New York

Catalyst Program (Spring 24)

- 6 projects funded
- \$7,623,099 awarded

Forest Economy Program (Fall 23)

- 2 projects funded
- \$1,148,856 awarded

Timber for Transit Program (Spring 24)

- No awards made in Spring round

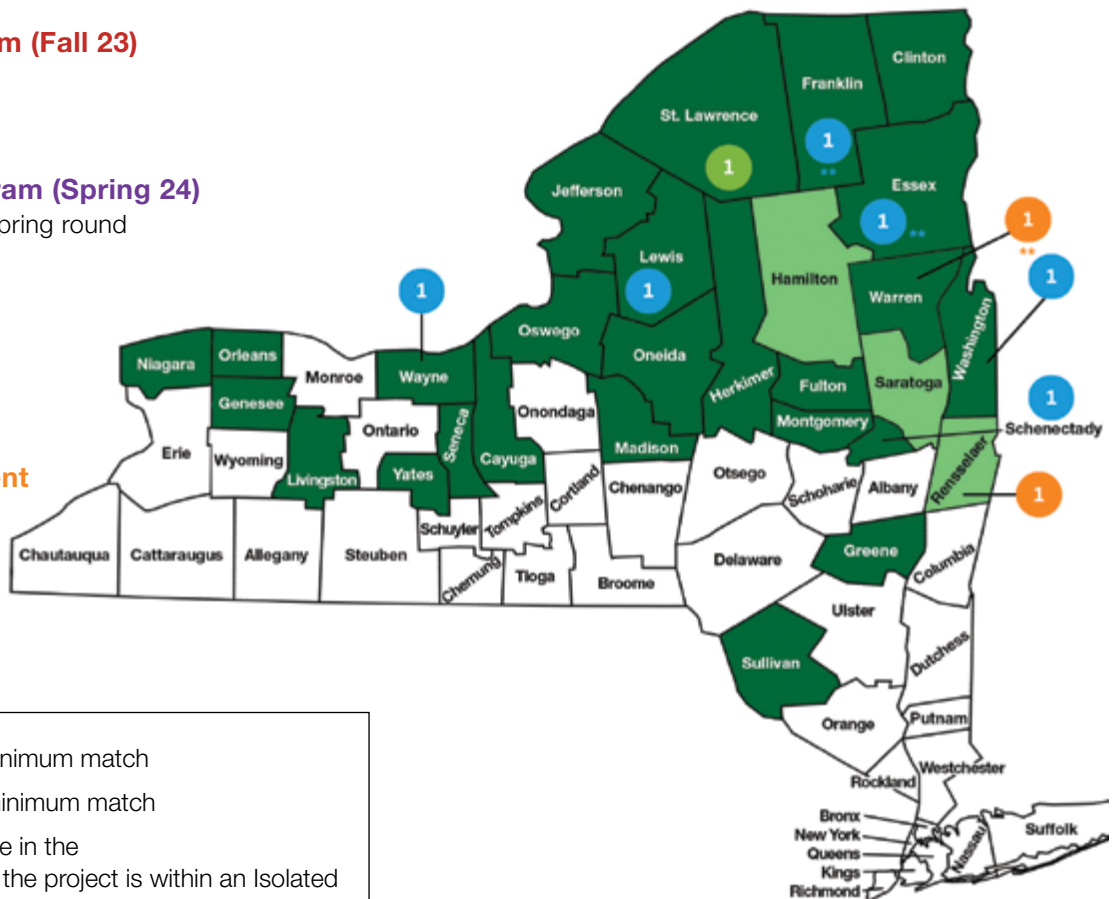
Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- 1 project funded
- \$750,000 awarded

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- 2 projects funded
- \$475,000 awarded

** Multi-jurisdictional project



■	“Distressed” 20% minimum match
■	“Transitional” 50% minimum match
□	“Attainment” Ineligible in the NBRC region unless the project is within an Isolated Area of Distress or has requested and received approval of a Significant Benefit Waiver
□	Not in the NBRC region

Distressed Counties: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Schenectady, St. Lawrence, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates

Transitional Counties: Hamilton, Rensselaer, and Saratoga

Attainment Counties: None



STATE OF VERMONT AT A GLANCE: FY 2024

Photography courtesy of the State of Vermont

Catalyst Program (Spring 24)

- 8 projects funded
- \$7,940,182.12 awarded

Forest Economy Program (Spring 24)

- 2 projects funded
- \$1,560,787 awarded

Timber for Transit Program (Spring 24)

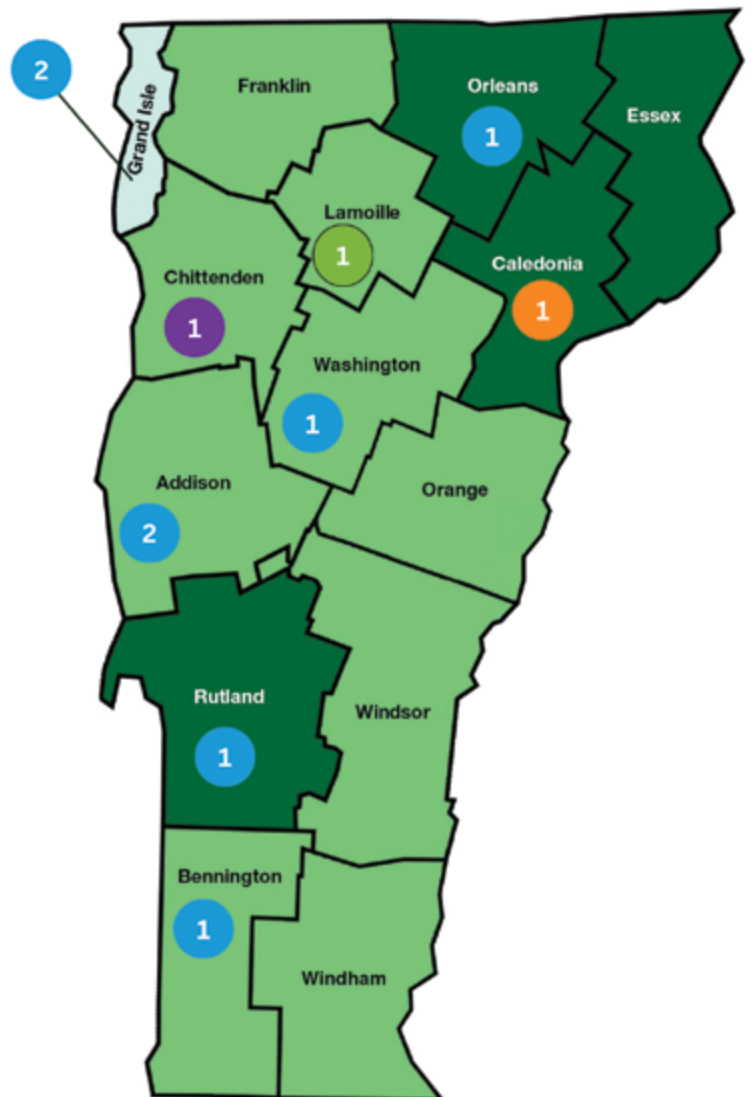
- 1 project funded
- \$1,778,400 awarded

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- 1 project funded
- \$750,000 awarded

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- 1 project funded
- \$475,000 awarded



■	“Distressed” 20% minimum match
■	“Transitional” 50% minimum match
□	“Attainment” Ineligible in the NBRC region unless the project is within an Isolated Area of Distress or has requested and received approval of a Significant Benefit Waiver
□	Not in the NBRC region

Distressed Counties: Caledonia, Essex, Orleans, Rutland

Transitional Counties: Addison, Bennington, Chittenden, Franklin, Lamoille, Orange, Washington, Windham and Windsor

Attainment Counties: Grand Isle

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

2024 CATALYST PROGRAM

The Catalyst Program incorporates elements from the State Economic and Infrastructure Development (SEID) program as well as updated infrastructure priorities to reflect the infusion of funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

AVAILABLE FUNDS:

\$50,000,000 total funds available, approximately \$12,500,000 per State.

An additional \$750,000 per State was made available under the NBRC partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and \$475,000 per State under the partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA-RD).

GOAL:

To stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality across the 4-state region.

PRIORITIZED GRANT PROJECTS:

The Catalyst Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's economy and communities. All projects must be consistent with the economic development goals of the region and advance a combination of NBRC and member state strategic investment priorities.

NBRC priorities include:

- Projects that provide benefits or demonstrate meaningful engagement with communities who have been under-represented in past NBRC investments (including rural communities of population less than 5,000, communities of color and tribal communities)
- Projects that address multiple needs and cross multiple infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories
- Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events
- Economic Impacts such as job retention, job creation and/or wage growth and align with larger economic development strategies
- Project Readiness demonstrated by completed planning, design and permitting, detailed milestones for completion and projects with greater immediacy
- Organizational Capacity demonstrated through collaboration and relationships with other entities, including early outreach to NBRC's Local Development District (LDD) network

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

State and local governments, public institutes of higher education including secondary and career technical centers, other political subdivisions of States, American Indian tribes, and IRS recognized 501(c) organizations.

SPRING 2024 CATALYST SUMMARY

- 149 Pre-applications received totaling over \$140 million in requests
- 110 Applications received totaling over \$111 million in requests
- 33 awards made (12 projects in ME, 7 in NH, 6 in NY; 8 in VT) totaling \$27,033,998.17

Total amount of Matching Funds (from awarded projects): \$96,061,747.7

Cost Share Ratio of 3.5:1

Awards to Distressed areas: 66.9% (required minimum of 50%)

Awards to Infrastructure: 81.6% (required minimum of 40%)

2024 CATALYST PROGRAM BY STATE

MAINE

Applications Received: 25

Total Funds Requested: \$19,457,059.04

Total Funds Awarded: \$7,371,022.46

Percent of Applications Awarded: 48%

NUMBER OF AWARDS: 12

[One project was jointly funded with EDA.]

DISTRESSED COUNTIES: Maine awarded 72.8% of its funds to counties designated as distressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Maine awarded 67.9% of its funds to infrastructure projects, including water/sewer, broadband and transportation.

MATCHING FUNDS: Maine's projects leverage \$21,191,376.32 in other funds.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Applications Received: 15

Total Funds Requested: \$7,127,788.40

Total Funds Awarded: \$4,101,776.00

Percent of Applications Awarded: 46.6%

NUMBER OF AWARDS: 7

DISTRESSED COUNTIES: New Hampshire awarded 75.6% of its funds to counties designated as distressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE: New Hampshire awarded 67% of its funds to infrastructure projects, including water/sewer, broadband and transportation.

MATCHING FUNDS: New Hampshire's projects leverage \$42,158,973.00 in other funds.

NEW YORK

Applications Received: 53

Total Funds Requested: \$63,233,840.75

Total Funds Awarded: \$7,623,099.00

Percent of Applications Awarded: 11.3%

NUMBER OF AWARDS: 6

DISTRESSED COUNTIES: New York awarded 100% of its funds to counties designated as distressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE: New York awarded 90.2% of its funds to infrastructure projects, including water/sewer, broadband and transportation.

MATCHING FUNDS: New York's projects leverage \$13,180,643.52 in other funds.

VERMONT

Applications Received: 17

Total Funds Requested: \$15,486,088.18

Total Funds Awarded: \$7,940,182.12

Percent of Applications Awarded: 47%

NUMBER OF AWARDS: 8

DISTRESSED COUNTIES: Vermont awarded 25% of its funds to counties designated as distressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Vermont awarded 93.7% of its funds to infrastructure projects, including water/sewer, broadband and transportation.

MATCHING FUNDS: Vermont's projects leverage \$19,530,754.86 in other funds.

*For a full list of awarded Catalyst projects, please [visit the NBRC website](#).
Awards for fall 2024 projects will be announced in January 2025.*

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

2024 FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM

AVAILABLE FUNDS:

Fall 2023: \$4,400,000

2024 (Spring and Fall): \$4,000,000

GOAL:

The purpose of this program is to support the forest-based economy, and to assist in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models across the 4-state NBRC region.

PRIORITIZED GRANT PROJECTS:

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create new markets for forest product residuals.
- Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.
- Support for eligible entities helping to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.
- Revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably for the production of wood products and advanced materials manufacturing.
- Encourage projects that leverage existing (or, in some cases, new) partnerships to impact multiple counties, states and/or the entire NBRC region, and/or have the potential to do so.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

State and local governments, secondary and career technical centers, other political subdivisions of States, Native Tribes, non-profits, institutes of higher education.

2023 Fall FEP Summary (Announced January 2024):

- 14 Pre-applications received totaling over \$9.36 million in requests
- 6 awards made (2 projects in VT, 2 projects in ME, 2 project in NY) totaling \$4,455,512
- Total amount of matching funds (from awarded projects): \$4,202,480

2024 Spring FEP Summary:

- 3 Pre-applications received totaling over \$2.7 million in requests
- 1 award made in the state of ME totaling \$1,000,000
- Total amount of matching funds (from awarded projects): \$250,001

Fall 2023

Applications Received: 10

Total Funds Requested: \$7,675,327.88

Spring 2024

Applications Received: 3

Total Funds Requested: \$2,788,654

For a full list of awarded Forest Economy projects, please [visit the NBRC website](#).
Awards for fall 2024 projects will be announced in January 2025.

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

2024 TIMBER FOR TRANSIT PROGRAM

AVAILABLE FUNDS: \$25,000,000

GOAL:

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.

PRIORITIZED GRANT PROJECTS:

- Commit to utilizing domestically sourced timber
- Demonstrate evidence of planning for climate resiliency, 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 historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

State and local governments, secondary and career technical centers, other political subdivisions of States, Native Tribes, non-profits, institutes of higher education.

2024 Spring T4T Summary:

- **5 pre-applications received totaling over \$10.9 million in requests**
- **2 awards made (1 project in VT, 1 project in NH) totaling \$2,689,793**
- **Total amount of matching funds (from awarded projects): \$2,024,979**

Spring 2024

Applications Received: 3

Total Funds Requested: \$7,689,793

*Please visit the NBRC website for a list of [Spring 2024](#) Timber for Transit projects.
Awards for fall 2024 projects will be announced in January 2025.*

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance 2023 NBRC Catalyst Program

New York



Images courtesy of Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance.

Addressing the Childcare Desert in New York’s Essex County

The Center for American Progress defines a childcare desert as “any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.”

Families in the small town of Ticonderoga, New York have felt the effects of living within a childcare desert all too well; when local surveys were conducted, 34% of 140 respondents said they missed 3-5 days of work each month due to unreliable childcare, with virtually no options available for families with children under 2 years old.

When the Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance (TRA) applied for funding through NBRC’s Catalyst Program in 2023, the town in New York’s Essex County only had 16 childcare slots available. There were over 300 children under the age of 6 in need.

The TRA proposed a project that would transform the former St. Mary’s Catholic School, a vacant 1,000 sq ft building, into a public childcare and learning center, walkable to Ticonderoga’s downtown and parks. Through the Catalyst Program’s 2023 funding round, the NBRC awarded \$248,570 to the project.

By August 2024 renovations to the building were completed, Silver Bay YMCA was selected to run the center, 13 full-time and 2 part-time positions were created, and the Ticonderoga Community Early Learning Center’s cheerful rooms were ready to welcome their newly enrolled children.

A former school in Ticonderoga’s community will once again be filled with laughter, young friendships, and the gratitude of working families who have a childcare option they can depend on. A total of 50 new childcare slots were provided (with room to grow) for children as young as 6 weeks old, up to 5 years of age.

“We are so grateful for this support from NBRC and the efforts of our legislators that helped facilitate this grant. Public childcare creation is a very expensive endeavor and small communities like ours rarely have the resources to undertake the investment required. We have very supportive employers like Sylvamo and very generous residents. With the help of NBRC’s public funds, we can marry up the public and private funds to make this happen and build sustainable childcare for our families and employers.”

— Donna Wotton, Tri-Alliance Executive Director

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: North Country Chamber of Commerce 2022 NBRC Catalyst Program

New York



Active Project

Image courtesy of North Country Chamber of Commerce.

Welding a Stronger Workforce in Clinton County, New York

What's a community to do when there are abundant job openings but too few qualified workers to fill the roles? That's a challenge the North Country Chamber of Commerce sought to address, as Clinton County's transportation and aerospace manufacturing companies continued to see growth without a reliable slate of skilled workers to match with open opportunities. One essential trade that was especially lacking in the area's available workforce? Skilled welders.

In 2022 the North Country Chamber applied for funding through NBRC's Catalyst Program (formerly the SEID Program) to develop a comprehensive welding training program and were awarded a \$285,600 grant. The training program would take place at the Clinton Community College's Institute for Advanced Manufacturing in partnership with Lincoln Electric and would train 50 individuals with the skills necessary to enter the local workforce as a welder: setting them up for success with any North Country manufacturing operation.

Funds provided by NBRC are used to address big barriers for potential applicants, most notably the cost. Grant funds offset the cost of participating in training for incumbent workers, high school/vocational school graduates, and unemployed or underemployed individuals in the community. To make the program even more enticing, no previous manufacturing experience is necessary to participate.

In 2024, the Welding Academy is well underway. Each session runs for three weeks with 120 comprehensive hours of instruction, combining both classroom and hands-on style training. There are slots for 12 students per session and no foreseeable trouble with filling them; the in-demand program received an impressive 150 applications for its first cohort in Spring 2023.

"We are incredibly proud of our Welding Academy training initiative that has now **successfully prepared 48 individuals in the greater Plattsburgh-region for high-paying careers in the manufacturing industry. The training, led by a coalition of instructors from Lincoln Electric, Alstom, and Clinton Community College has helped meet an expressed demand for skilled welders from employers in our region. Comprehensive welding training can be expensive and is often financially out of reach, especially for adult learners; this program has provided them with an opportunity to not only learn a lifelong, valuable tradeskill but to do it at no cost to them or their families. Furthermore, **we have obtained a 100% completion rate** in the program by removing all typical barriers individuals face when pursuing training such as lack of childcare, transportation, or loss of income by providing stipends and subsidies to the trainees. This program **would not have been possible without the financial support** of the Northern Border Regional Commission, Empire State Development, the Workforce Development Institute, and our many private employer partners - we thank them for believing and supporting us in achieving this goal."**

— Joel Wood, VP of Strategic Initiatives & Director of NAMTrans, North Country Chamber of Commerce

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation 2023 NBRC Catalyst Program

New Hampshire



Image courtesy of Hannah Schroeder / The Keene Sentinel.

Creating Affordable Housing in New Hampshire's Cheshire County

The Northern Border region has not escaped the nationwide housing shortage, an especially worrisome obstacle for our rural and economically distressed communities. While simply not having enough housing available is one challenge, another layer of concern complicates matters: housing that not only exists but is also affordable to support lower income households.

Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation, an affiliate of Keene Housing, is doing their part to embrace creative solutions in a complicated housing market in Cheshire County's downtown Keene area.

In 2023, the organization applied for a Catalyst Program grant with a project that proposed turning the vacant Roosevelt School into 30 apartments, to be leased to low- and moderate-income households. The project was awarded \$500,000 in grant funds to support infrastructure needs, including new water and sewer lines, power, interior roads, parking areas, and landscaping.

Work is underway to make the first phase of units available, with the expectation that all 30 will be online and occupied by the fall of 2026. A second phase of an additional 30 apartments is expected to follow. Three-quarters of the planned apartments will be one-bedroom units, with two-bedroom units making up the remainder. The apartments will be specifically marketed towards households making between 30 and 60 percent of the area's median income.

In addition to adding to the community's affordable housing pool, the project's proximity to downtown Keene offers another economic benefit: addressing workforce needs by providing a convenient match between potential employers and individuals.

“We’re thrilled to be bringing NBRC Catalyst funds into one of our projects for the first time. With the need for housing and the cost of building it both at all-time highs, NBRC funding is critical to getting this desperately needed housing built.”

**— Joshua R. Meehan,
Keene Housing
Executive Director**

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: North Country Family Health Center, Inc 2024 NBRC Catalyst Program

New York



Providing Primary Care for All in Lewis County, New York

“Over 100 million Americans—nearly one-third of the nation—do not have access to a usual source of primary care due to a shortage of providers in their local community,” sites the 2023 report “Closing the Primary Care Gap” published by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC). Our rural Northern Border communities are among those experiencing a gap in healthcare resources, especially affordable care.

The North Country Family Health Center (NoCo) has made it their mission to serve all patients, regardless of ability to pay, at their Community Health Center in New York’s Lewis County. They are the only provider in the County dedicated to low-income, under-served populations.

In 2024, NoCo was awarded \$549,500 through the spring round of NBRC’s Catalyst Program to bolster healthcare access in the community. Grant funds will be used to assist with expanding rural primary healthcare services through the construction of a new primary care suite in the lower level of the Center’s newly acquired downtown Lowville Medical Associate’s (LMA) building.

The expansion project includes the construction of a 4-exam room suite complete with a provider office, nurse’s station, and reception area. Two full-time providers will accommodate the suite, providing crucial care for community members’ health and social needs, including a focus on health inequalities, social determinants of health, nutrition/food security, and disease prevention and management.

“Without this award we would not be able to move forward with the expansion of primary care space at this location and would not be able to meet the growing primary care needs of those in Lewis County. In anticipation of funding, NoCo has successfully recruited a family practice physician with a specialty in sports medicine and a physician assistant to the practice. These providers, both native to the North Country, are now working with the amazing team of physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners who already provide high quality care at this practice.”

— Joey Marie Horton,
NoCo Chief Executive Officer

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: Saint John Valley Technology Center 2023 NBRC Forest Economy Program

Maine



Image courtesy of St. John Valley Technology Center.

Providing the Right Tools for the Trade in Maine's Aroostook County

You won't earn your driver's license without time spent practicing behind the wheel, but St. John Valley Technology Center (SJVTC) students had their eyes, and futures, set on a piece of machinery a bit grander than a car. In order to set Forestry Program students up for success with careers in the forest industry, time spent in the seat of modern equipment is essential for training. But that modern equipment comes at a steep cost not easily accessible to smaller, rural technical centers like SJVTC.

Among the 15 programs offered at St. John Valley Technology Center (SJVTC), the Forest Technician Technology program speaks to students interested in working among the trees in Maine's great outdoors and beyond. The program highlights many potential careers paths, from conservation scientists to forest technicians, logging professionals, and equipment operators. The program has grown since its launch in the 2019-2020 school year, and in 2023 the Center sought the help of NBRC to add a modern combi-unit to their fleet.

Through the Forest Economy Program, SJVTC was awarded \$946,140 to purchase a 2024 TimberPro TF830D Forwarder Combi-Unit, a multi-function logging machine that would bolster the Center's forestry program. The new machinery allows students to work with a universal fleet and provides hands-on experience with current equipment being used within the forest industry today, ensuring that they can graduate the program with the experience needed to secure a job.

Funding workforce training initiatives helps boost the Center's overall goals as well, including attracting a more diverse forestry workforce, expanding training opportunities, expanding relationships with business stakeholders, and inspiring younger students to engage in forest industry opportunities.

“St. John Valley Technology Center's acquisition of the NBRC grant in the amount of \$946,140 within 2024 is a testament of the collaborative efforts of many business and educational stakeholders along with the Northern Border Regional Commission to fully invest in the current career and technical education of our future leaders within the Forest Industry.”

— Kevin Lavoie, St. John Valley Technology Center Director

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: Patrick Leahy Burlington Int. Airport 2024 NBRC Timber for Transit Program

Vermont



Newly Awarded in 2024

Image courtesy of Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport.

Mass Timber Takes Flight in Vermont's Champlain County

NBRC's Timber for Transit Program launched in 2024 to advance the use of domestic forest products in transportation infrastructure projects. This initiative aligned with the Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport's vision to make sustainability and efficiency efforts the center of its new airport development plans.

In its first-ever round of Spring 2024 funding, the NBRC Timber for Transit Program awarded \$1,778,400 to the Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport (BTV) in Vermont's Champlain County to support the North Concourse Replacement Project (Project NexT). The project, which has been in the Airport's Master Plan for nearly a decade, aims to entirely replace the airport's current northern concourse in favor of a larger, net-zero terminal, four new aircraft gate replacements, four new passenger boarding bridge replacements, new passenger circulation, and hold room space.

A standout feature of the building's future design is its employment of mass timber framing, structure, and maple ceilings, effectively reducing the embodied carbon footprint of the construction. Upon completion, Project NexT will be an exemplary model for the use of high value forest products in transportation infrastructure and a testament to enhancing climate resilience in our rural communities.

"We are incredibly proud to partner with the Northern Border Regional Commission to build our new terminal using sustainable mass timber products. Their \$1.78 million investment has made it possible to bring this beautiful and innovative design to life, showcasing how sustainable materials can play a key role in major transportation infrastructure projects like ours. This terminal will not only serve our growing airline and passenger community but also set a new standard for environmental stewardship in our industry and beyond."

— Nic Longo, Director of Aviation for Leahy BTV

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: Mount Washington Observatory 2023 NBRC Catalyst Program

New Hampshire



Active Project

NBRC Federal Co-Chair, Chris Saunders, attended a ribbon cutting in November 2024 celebrating five remote station installations.

Making Safer, Wiser Weather Forecasts in New Hampshire's Coös County

The ability to predict and prepare for variable weather and extreme storms is crucial for weather-dependent businesses, conservation organizations, and outdoor recreationalists in rural Coös County. In the face of an ever-changing climate, the Mount Washington Observatory (MWO) set out to update and add to its network of weather stations in and around the White Mountains to support the economic, community, and environmental well-being of the region.

In 2023 the Mount Washington Observatory received \$499,046 through the NBRC's Catalyst Program in support of modernizing the Mount Washington Regional Mesonet (MWRM), a network of automated stations that collect weather data around the clock. Data such as temperature, elevation, wind speed, relative humidity and barometric pressure allows the Observatory to collect crucial information for forecasting purposes, as well as create a backlog of historical statistics to paint a clearer picture of how the area's climate is changing.

NBRC funds will help with upgrades to 11 existing stations and the addition of 17 new stations. The project will enable meteorologists to provide accurate, real-time forecasts to help conservation, tourism, and recreation organizations in New Hampshire's North Country plan, develop, and manage natural resource-based tourism while also facilitating their business and workforce development.

“The expansion and upgrades of this project are **already proving invaluable, allowing us to better capture and understand the complexities of weather and climate across northern New Hampshire’s mountainous terrain.**

With the NBRC’s support, we are able to leverage public-private partnerships to significantly expand our weather technology geographically and amplify communication of **real-time data, forecasting, and research.**

The NBRC’s investment in our network of automated weather stations will truly **catalyze growth in tourism, recreation, conservation, and many other key industries of New Hampshire. Businesses and communities require accurate weather information to plan operations and make investments for the future. As we continue to grow this network across the granite state in coming years, **this support provides a solid foundation** on which to build.”**

— Brenda Sullivan, Director of Finance & Administration

U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) COLLABORATIVE AWARDS

Projects are funded under the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the NBRC and the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to amplify both agencies' economic development impact in Northern Border communities. The NBRC has received a special appropriation since 2018 for these awards, which has resulted in working closely with the EDA to award funds to projects that meet the strategic objectives of both agencies.



The awards made in 2024 total **\$2,250,000** for the following projects:

- **Town of Grand Isle, ME – \$750,000:** This project will fund upgrades and new infrastructure for the town's wastewater management system, including an upgraded water treatment plant, wastewater treatment plant, and four wastewater pump stations. Awarded funds will also make the construction of new sludge drying beds possible. *[Note: The NBRC also awarded this project an additional \$250,000 as part of the Agency's Catalyst Program, on June 27, 2024]*
- **St. Lawrence County, NY – \$750,000:** Funds will support the replacement of a bridge carrying Tooley Pond Road over the South Branch of the Grasse River in the Town of Clare. The bridge serves as an important corridor for the timber industry as well as outdoor recreation access.
- **Town of Wolcott, VT – \$750,000:** This project supports the construction of a new, more flood-resilient community wastewater treatment system to serve Wolcott's Village Center; crucial to supporting the village's ability to capitalize on its prime location along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

“Every community, regardless of their size, has a need for **infrastructure that is safe and reliable. Quality infrastructure is an essential building block for successful economic development and **these investments will create economic opportunity** for residents in these communities and throughout the region. One of Congress' directives to regional commissions is to find ways to increase coordination between federal agencies. Our partnership with EDA is a prime example of how we bring the resources of the federal government to bear to the benefit of residents who live here.”**

— NBRC Federal Co-Chair Chris Saunders



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT (USDA RD) COLLABORATIVE AWARDS

NBRC in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD), funded 11 projects. Collectively, these awards amplify both agencies' economic development impact in Northern Border communities. The NBRC has received funding under this partnership since 2019, which has resulted in working closely with USDA RD to award funds to projects that meet the strategic objectives of both agencies.



The awards made in 2024 total **\$1,900,000** for the following projects:

- **University of Maine System-Farmington (Farmington, ME) – \$475,000**

The University will build on its existing Outdoor Recreation Business Administration program (ORBA), which will become a workforce hub of excellence for Western Maine. ORBA will create a streamlined, degree-granting program to generate qualified, skilled workers for existing and new external employer partners in the Maine outdoor recreation sector.

- **Franconia Rink Project (Franconia, NH) – \$475,000**

Grant funds will support the construction of a year-round recreation facility for key activities like an outdoor refrigerated ice rink and pickleball and basketball courts. The project will diversify outdoor activity options, attract tourists year-round to the town center, and provide a recreational resource for the local community.

- **Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board (Lake George, NY) – \$250,000**

Funds will support a regionwide planning project that will assess the availability of cell service and conduct an in-depth analysis of deployable technology options in the Adirondacks. The Regional Planning Board is partnering with the New York State ConnectALL Office to hire a consulting firm to gather signal availability data through drive tests on all state and county roads in Clinton, Essex, Hamilton, Warren, and Washington Counties. This effort will also include the purchase of cell availability data gathered through an online app platform to determine the accuracy and validity of each dataset, with the purpose of informing future work statewide.

- **Hudson Valley Community Foundation (Troy, NY) – \$225,000**

Grant funds will support the development of a new Mechatronics Education and Training Lab (METL). The METL project aims to establish a state-of-the-art mechatronics laboratory. This laboratory will serve as a hub for interdisciplinary learning, workforce development training, and innovation in four interconnected disciplines: mechanics, electrical/electronics, motor control systems, and computer science/information technology.

- **Catamount Film & Arts Co. (St. Johnsbury, VT) – \$475,000**

Funds support the renovation and revitalization of the property to include roofing, structural, HVAC, and energy efficiency improvements. Energy efficient upgrades are a top priority as the project will adapt the high-profile property in the center of St. Johnsbury to changing climate conditions and serve as a model for future energy efficient upgrades in the region.

“Thank you, to the state of New Hampshire, to Northern Border Regional Commission and to the United States Department of Agriculture for believing in the positive impact of this amazing ice rink revitalization project. We will turn this generous award into a beautiful, refrigerated ice skating rink in the winter and pickleball, basketball, and even roller skating in the summer. As a small town of 1,100 residents, it would be impossible for us to do this without you.”

— Jennifer Opalinski of the Franconia Rink Project

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (WORC)

In 2024, NBRC was added to the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) Initiative, managed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). This program provides grant funds to support workforce development activities that prepare workers for good jobs in high-demand occupations in rural communities. The program also awards funding to initiatives directed at workforce development partnerships in support of local and regional workforces' employment and training needs, while also recognizing the need to expand access to supportive services.



On September 4, 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor, in partnership with NBRC, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority announced more than \$49MM in awards, \$6.2MM to recipients serving the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Recipient	State	Amount
Community Concepts Inc.	ME	\$1,182,360
Maine Community College System	ME	\$1,237,568
Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital	NH	\$1,267,392
Northern Forest Center Inc.	NH	\$1,262,512
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	VT	\$1,250,168

The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for WORC 7 is scheduled to be released by April 2025.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA)

In collaboration with the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), in 2024 HRSA funding was awarded to thirteen (13) organizations in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. Grant recipients will use the resources to promote and improve the delivery of healthcare services to rural underserved populations.



Awarded projects address a wide variety of healthcare needs throughout the region, ranging from increasing maternal care in rural communities to expanding behavioral health services. HRSA collaborates with regional partners like the Northern Border Regional Commission to expand access to high-quality healthcare and services in underserved areas to address healthcare disparities, improve health outcomes, and strengthen local health systems, ensuring residents in these rural communities receive the care they need.

The awards made in 2024 total **\$3,118,349** for the following projects:

MAINE

- **Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, Rural Northern Maine Respiratory Therapy Program – \$208,882**
This project will support and strengthen matriculation, retention, graduation and successful employment of participants from an accredited respiratory therapy program serving rural northern Maine. The program will offer a hybrid remote and in-person modality with a focus on student support, retention, and sustainability, and will hire Registered Respiratory Therapists in rural healthcare settings with a focus on retention and professional growth.
- **The Harry E. Davis Partnership for Children’s Oral Health, Maine Dental Connection Clinical Consortium – \$250,000**
This project aims to increase access to dental care for children and families in Maine’s Northern Border Region counties by reaching children who are underserved by the traditional dental system. This includes expanding partnerships with Head Start Centers, providing dental care in additional childcare settings and through growing the workforce of Independent Practicing Dental Hygienists who will implement community-based care in the Dental Connection initiative.
- **Medical Care Development Inc., Seacoast Care Collaborative – \$249,972**
This project will work to serve unbridged island communities by facilitating access to and providing healthcare services through a strong collaborative and consortium; expanding the delivery of new or enhanced healthcare services through evidence-based telehealth models; and improving population health, health outcomes, and sustainability.
- **Maine Health, The Maine Rural GME Education (MERGE) Collaborative – \$167,334**
This Collaborative will work to improve access to maternal care in rural communities through the creation of a novel Rural Ob Training Intensive, providing clinical, didactic, and simulation-based education in rural obstetrics, supported by a new, publicly available Rural Ob Curriculum. The project will integrate patient, trainee and current maternal health provider input into development and ongoing management, and a new alliance with the NERHA and the ME-RMOMs team will build on and expand efforts to serve rural patients.
- **Health Acadia, The HEART Project – \$250,000**
The HEART Project will focus on expanding and enhancing the delivery of behavioral health services and improving health outcomes in Washington and Hancock counties. The goals of this project are to expand the existing regional Consortium, create a new behavioral health workforce development program, expand health navigation programming to include the broader population and to deliver education and training to providers and community members.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA) *continued*

- **Rangley Region Health and Wellness Partnership, Pathways to Wellness: Advancing Rural Health Care Delivery – \$250,000**

This project supports an effective, dynamic rural health network by expanding a multi-sector community health worker program that will utilize the Screening and Health Educator Model, Member of Care Team Delivery Model, and Community Organizer and Capacity Builder Model. Goals of this partnership include reducing health disparities by providing accessible healthcare services rurally and promoting healthy lifestyle choices through education and resources.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- **Partnership for Public Health, Inc, Community Paramedicine & Health Worker Program – \$250,000**

This partnership between community paramedics and community health workers aims to increase preventative care access for underserved populations (older adults, homeless individuals) and improve chronic disease management and reduce hospital readmissions.

- **Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, ACHS Food as Medicine Portable Teaching Kitchen (FMPTK) and TRIP Marketplace for transportation (TRIP – MFT) – \$247,698**

This partnership between community paramedics and community health workers aims to increase preventative care access for underserved populations (older adults, homeless individuals) and improve chronic disease management and reduce hospital readmissions.

- **The Littleton Regional Healthcare Mobile Integrated Healthcare (LRH-MIH) – \$250,000**

The LRH-MIH program was first launched in 2022 to offset the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the diabetic population. This project will expand the scope of the existing program to include high utilizers of emergency medical care and those at risk for hospital admissions/readmissions in Coös and Grafton Counties, focusing particularly on low-income individuals, those requiring additional healthcare support, and older adults.



Photo courtesy of NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA) *continued*

NEW YORK

- **University of Rochester Medical Center, Clinical Workflow Change Management Project for Tri-County Family Medicine (TCFM), and Finger Lakes Health (FLH) – \$250,000**

This project focuses on Integrating Health Information Technology to preserve and grow primary care, women's health, specialty care and rural community hospitals.

- **Carthage Area Hospital, Inc, NSHA Operations Center – \$246,706**

The NSHA Operations center will enhance hospital efficiency and patient care through real-time resource allocation, improved communication, and advanced data analysis, using dashboards to monitor bed availability, staffing, and patient flow. It will also provide ongoing staff training and support, maintain rigorous quality and safety monitoring, and engage stakeholders through regular updates.

- **Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO), Inc., Using the Community Health Worker Model to Improve Clinical and Social Outcomes of Rural High-Needs Individuals – \$250,000**

FDRHPO will engage the Northern Regional Center for Independent Living to provide 3 full-time equivalent Community Health Workers (CHWs) to engage target population members in primary and preventive care, including well visits, cancer screenings, immunizations, transitional and chronic care management, and provide connections to other clinical, behavioral, and social services as needed.

VERMONT

- **Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, Inc, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Care Collaborative & Innovation Network – \$247,757**

This project aims to improve the capacity of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) services to survivors of sexual violence throughout Vermont. Project activities will include trainings to improve clinical competency, knowledge of best practices, and quality improvement skills. An online resource hub will be developed, and an annual impact report will be distributed to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.



Photo courtesy of the state of New York



Northern Border Regional Commission

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