



Northern Border
Regional Commission

2024 CATALYST PROGRAM

Program Information Session for New Hampshire

Andrea Smith, NBRC Program Director: asmith@nbrc.gov

Adrienne Harrison, Catalyst Program Manager: aharrison@nbrc.gov

Sarah Demers, NBRC Program Coordinator: sdemers@nbrc.gov



Topics for today's session:

Catalyst Program Overview

- Purpose & Example projects
- Available Funds

Determining Eligibility

- Eligible Locations: NBRC Service Area, 2024 Distress Criteria, Determining Eligibility & Match/Reimbursement Ratios
- Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants
- Eligible Purposes: Project Categories, Project Classification Process & Award Sizes



Topics for today's session:

Pre-Application

- Timeline, Process & Requirements, Evaluation
- State Program Priorities & Evaluation of Pre-applications
- What to Expect After the Pre-application

What's Next

- Project Development
- NBRC Office Hours
- Grants Management System Training

Q&A



Catalyst Program Overview

The purpose of this program is ***to stimulate economic growth and inspire partnerships that improve rural economic vitality*** across the four-state NBRC region.

Examples of projects Catalyst may support include, but are not limited to:

- Modernizing and expanding water and wastewater systems
- Revitalizing transportation infrastructure
- Establishing workforce development programs and facilities
- Growing outdoor recreation infrastructure and economies
- Constructing new childcare and healthcare facilities



2024 Catalyst Program

NBRC anticipates making a minimum of \$50MM available

- NBRC anticipates issuing a revised program announcement to make additional funds available after the completion of the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations process

NEW! Catalyst funding to be competitively awarded in two funding rounds

- Minimum of \$30MM available in Round 1/Spring funding round
- Minimum of \$20MM available in Round 2/Fall funding round
- Round 1/Spring funding round may include **EDA and USDA partnership awards** of up to \$5.8MM
- All awards are subject to the availability of funds



2024 Catalyst Program

NEW! Pre-application process will replace the former Letters of Interest process

- Required to receive an invitation to apply
- Due by 5:00pm on March 15 for spring round and September 6 for fall round
- Must be submitted using NBRC's **NEW!!** online grants management system
- **NEW!!** All waiver requests must be submitted with pre-applications
- Reviewed by NBRC for eligibility and by state programs for alignment with priorities
- Invitations to apply are issued by the state programs

All pre-application details will be covered in this session!



Determining Eligibility

Eligible Locations:

- NBRC Service Area
- 2024 Distress Criteria
- Determining Eligibility & Match/Reimbursement Ratios

Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants

Eligible Purposes:

- Project Categories
- Project Classification Process & Award Sizes



NBRC Service Area

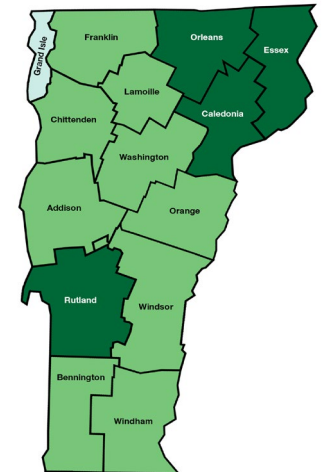
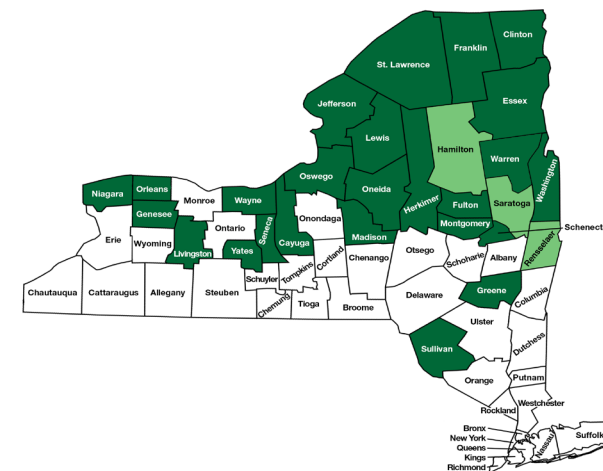
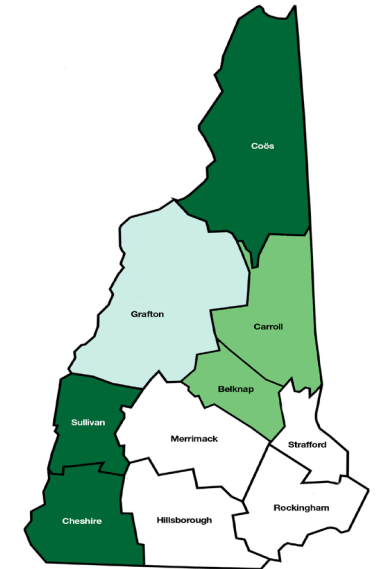
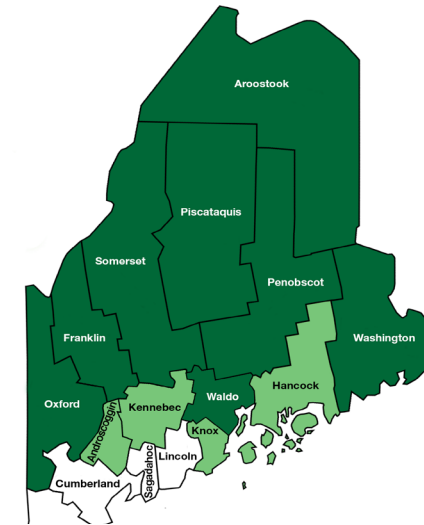
Commission Service Area - Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding

Maine: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties.

New Hampshire: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coös, Grafton, and Sullivan counties

New York: Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Seneca, Sullivan, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Yates counties.

Vermont: all counties within the State





NBRC Distress Criteria

NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress in its service area. The resulting designations reflect whether the NBRC can provide grants within a county.

Distressed: Eligible for 80% funding and require a 20% match

Transitional: Eligible for 50% funding and require a 50% match

Attainment: Ineligible for funding, unless exceptions apply:

- Isolated Areas of Distress: specific municipality designated distressed
- Significant Benefits: benefits to surrounding distressed and transitional counties (waiver required)
- Multi-county or multi-state project that includes at least one distressed or transitional county. Requires an averaged match



Determining Eligibility & Match

1. Determine if project location is in NBRC Service Area
2. Determine if project location is in distressed, transitional or attainment county. If in attainment county, determine if exceptions apply or a Significant Benefits Waiver is required.
3. Identify reimbursement and match rate associated with location.

Resources:

- Program User Manual
- [2024 Distress Criteria](#) on NBRC website

The screenshot shows the Northern Border Regional Commission website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Northern Border Region, Program Areas, Impact & Reporting, and Resources. The main content area is titled "Assessing Distress in NBRC Counties" and contains the following text:

By statute, the Commission is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress among the counties in its service area. Assessing distress is important as the resulting designations reflect whether or not the Commission can provide grants within a county as well as what level of match is required of Commission funded projects.

[Distress Criteria for 2024](#)

Counties are designated as Distressed, Transitional, or Attainment.

Distressed Counties

40 U.S.C., Subtitle V states that "distressed" counties are those that "have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration" and "are the most severely and persistently economic distressed and underdeveloped." The NBRC is required to allocate 50% of its total Appropriations to projects in counties falling within this designation. Commission grants within Distressed Counties only require a 20% match.

Transitional Counties

Counties that are "transitional" counties "have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration" or "are economically distressed and underdeveloped." Commission grants within Transitional Counties require a 50% match.

Attainment Counties

Finally, "attainment" counties are those that are neither "distressed" or "transitional." The Commission is not allowed to fund projects within an attainment county.

Exceptions to Attainment County Eligibility

In general, NBRC funds may not be provided to projects located within a designated "Attainment County." However, there are opportunities to provide funding to projects within these counties if any one of the following exceptions below is met.

- **Isolated Areas of Distress:** When a county is first designated as "Attainment" the Commission will automatically collect economic and demographic data within that county to identify "Isolated Areas of Distress." Isolated areas of distress are municipalities that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.



Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants

- **State governments:** Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont & New York
- **Local governments:** Village, town, city and county
- Other political **subdivisions of States:** regional planning commissions, authorities of the state
- **Indian Tribes:** See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services
- **Non-profit entities.** All 501(c) organizations

Ineligible Applicants & Co-Applicants:

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

Applicants
will identify
entity type in
registration
process!



Previous Award Recipients

An eligible applicant with an open or active NBRC award cannot receive an additional NBRC investment until the current award has both

- submitted reimbursement requests totaling 75% or more of the project and
- demonstrated that 75% of the cost share has been expended before the pre-application deadline

If the 75% expenditure requirement cannot be met, the applicant can apply for a waiver. The **75% Expenditure Waiver** must be submitted together with the pre-application.

Resources:

- Catalyst Program User Manual



LDD Requirement & Waiver

- All Catalyst Program awards require the use of a Local Development District for grant administration services including support with quarterly reporting, reimbursement requests, final reporting and general assistance with NBRC procurement
- Exception for state government entities and LDDs
- LDDs are compensated for administrative work at 2% of the NBRC award amount.
- A waiver may be requested by organizations with the capacity for federal grant administration. The **LDD Waiver** must be submitted together with the pre-application.

Resources:

- Catalyst Program User Manual



Eligible Purposes

Catalyst Program has 7 project categories that are eligible to receive Catalyst Program funding:

Infrastructure:

- Basic Public Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Renewable Energy
- Telecommunications

Non-Infrastructure:

- Business and Workforce Development
- Basic Healthcare
- Resource Conservation, Recreation and Tourism



Project Classification

1. Identify project as infrastructure or non-infrastructure
2. Determine if project is primarily construction or non-construction
3. Determine if special classifications apply
 - Expanded definition of basic infrastructure
 - Higher maximum infrastructure
4. Apply the appropriate maximum award size for your project
 - \$500,000 for non-infrastructure
 - \$1,000,000 for infrastructure
 - \$3,000,000 for higher maximum infrastructure

Resources: [FAQ](#) Project Classification Decision Tree

FAQ has detailed guidance on how to step through project classification determinations.



Project Classification

Infrastructure Decision Tree:

1. Does the proposed project align with an infrastructure category?
2. Is the proposed project primarily construction?

If answers to both questions are YES, the project is considered infrastructure by NBRC. The maximum award for an infrastructure project is **\$1,000,000**.

See the **Higher Maximum Infrastructure Determination** to assess eligibility for up to an additional \$2,000,000.



Project Classification

Infrastructure Decision Tree:

1. Does the proposed project align with an infrastructure category?
2. Is the proposed project primarily construction?

If the answer to one or both questions is NO, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC. The maximum award for a non-infrastructure project is **\$500,000.**



Project Classification

Higher Maximum Infrastructure Determination:

1. Does the infrastructure project include construction in 2 or more jurisdictions?
2. Does the infrastructure project include construction in support of 2 or more infrastructure categories?

If answer to one or both questions is YES, the project is eligible for the higher maximum award amount of up to \$3,000,000.

If the answer to both questions is NO, the project is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$1,000,000.



Project Classification

Non- Infrastructure Decision Tree:

1. Does the proposed project align with a non-infrastructure category?

If the answer is YES, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC. The maximum award for a non-infrastructure project is **\$500,000.**

For projects proposed under Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation, review the **Expanded Basic Public Infrastructure Determination** for eligibility as an infrastructure project.



Project Classification

Non- Infrastructure Decision Tree:

1. Does the proposed project align with a non-infrastructure category?

If the answer is NO, the project may not be eligible for a Catalyst Program award. Applicants should review NBRC's eligible purpose definitions.



Project Classification

Expanded Basic Public Infrastructure Determination for Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation:

1. Is the proposed Basic Healthcare or Outdoor Recreation project primarily construction?

If the answer is YES, the project is considered construction in support of Basic Public Infrastructure category and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$1,000,000.

If the answer is NO, the project is considered non-infrastructure by NBRC and is eligible for a maximum award of up to \$500,000.



NBRC Policies & Requirements

- Match and Cost Share
- Period of Performance
- Ineligible Purpose
- Program Income
- Use of Funds
- Notice to Proceed
- NEPA
- Federal Funding Ceiling
- BABAA/Buy American

Applicants are encouraged to review the **Program User Manual** and **NBRC Compliance Manual** to confirm all requirements will be met in the project.



Match and Cost Share

This will be
calculated
automatically
in the pre-
application!

Reimbursement / Match ratio

- 80/20 or 50/50 depending on location
- Reimbursement requires that the Match & Cost Share be spent at the applicable ratio

Calculating Match and Cost Share

- Required minimum match = NBRC Requested Funds x match rate
- Cost Share = Total Project Costs – (NBRC requested funds)
- Status of match sources will be requested at the time of pre-application.
- Match cannot be expended before receiving a Notice to Proceed



NBRC Funding Requirements Cont'd

Period of Performance:

- NBRC awards have a 3-year Performance Period
- NBRC suggests delaying the pre-application to a future funding round if the proposed project cannot be completed within the 3-year performance period

Ineligible Purpose:

- Funds cannot go to a for-profit entity, no pass throughs to for-profits
- See Program User Manual for full list of ineligible purposes

Program Income:

- Costs financed by 'program income' are treated through the deductive method as outlined in 2 CFR 200.307(e)(1)



NBRC Funding Requirements Cont'd

Use of Funds:

- NBRC funds may be used to match other federally funded projects (when both federal agencies allow) only when the total grant funds from NBRC and other federal funders does not exceed 80% of the total project budget.
- NBRC funds used to purchase or construct real property requires the federal government to maintain an interest in that property for 20 years

Ineligible Costs:

- Maintenance (routine or deferred)
- Allowance or payment of debts
- See Program User Manual for full list of ineligible costs



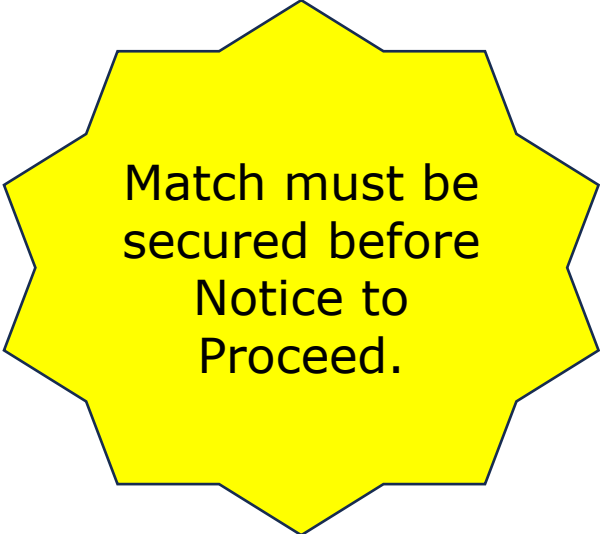
NBRC Funding Requirements Cont'd

Notice to Proceed:

- NBRC funds and match cannot be committed or expended before receiving the Notice to Proceed
- NEPA environmental review of project required before receiving Notice to Proceed

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

- Categorical Exclusions (a few weeks; no to low \$)
- Categorical Exclusions plus section 106 consultation (a few months; \$1,500-\$3,000)
- Environmental Assessment (6-12 months; \$5,000-\$10,000)



Match must be secured before Notice to Proceed.



Federal Funding Ceiling

NBRC awards have a federal funding ceiling of 80%

- If a project is utilizing multiple federal sources (including NBRC), no more than 80% of the total project costs can be comprised of federal funds.
- HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program funding from your state does not count toward the federal cap
- Loans do not count towards the federal cap
- It is important for applicants to check with other federal sources, as each federal agency may have its own restrictions



Buy American Preference

Build American, Buy American Act (BABAA) was enacted on November 15, 2021, and sets forth a domestic content procurement preference (“Buy American Preference”) for ***iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects.***

Resources: NBRC’s website for [BABAA guidance](#).




Pre-Applications

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



Pre-Application: Timeline & Key Dates

- Program Information Sessions: February 5-9 
- Online pre-application system opens: February/March
- Round 1 Pre-applications Due: **March 15 by 5:00pm EST**
 - **NEW!** All applicable waivers are due with pre-application:
 - ✓ 75% Waiver Request for Prior Award Recipients (all programs)
 - ✓ Significant Benefit Waiver Request (all programs)
 - ✓ LDD Waiver Request (Catalyst Program only)
- Round 1 Catalyst Program Pre-Application Review: March 19-22
- Responses – feedback/invitations to apply: **Week of March 25**

Pre-applications are required



Pre-Application: Process

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

- Detailed guidance will be made available for accessing system
- Requires registration
- Requires responses to pre-application questions



Pre-Application: Requirements

Applicant and Co-Applicant Information

- Applicant Organization
- Organization Type (eligible applicant type)
- Address
- EIN
- Unique Entity ID - Applicant should enter UEI if one is available. UEI is not required to submit a pre-application but will be required to receive an award.

This information will be collected during the registration process.

This information will be requested as part of the registration process and transferred to the pre-application.



Pre-Application: Requirements

Applicant characteristics

- Previous award recipient (If yes, enter NBRC award #)
- Rural community (defined as population less than 5,000)
- Underserved community (defined in Program User Manual)

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

- Address including zip code
- County

Project Title

This information will be requested as part of the pre-application.



Pre-Application: Requirements

Budget Narrative

- Description of expenses over \$5,000 by category
- Table describing match sources: source, federal v non-federal, and status of match

Budget Details

- Requested NBRC funds
- Match and Cost Share funds
- Total Project Costs

This information is submitted in the GMS. There are no additional budget documents to upload for pre-application.

Funds will need to be allocated across budget categories



Pre-Application: Requirements

Pre-application budget categories

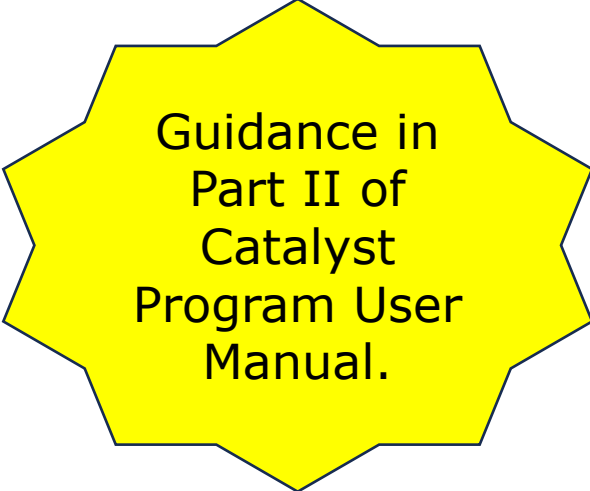
- Personnel
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Travel and Transportation
 - Equipment
 - Supplies and Materials
 - Consultants
 - Contracts and Sub-Grantees
 - Construction
 - Other Direct Costs
 - Indirect Costs
-
- These budget categories align with the SF-424cbw.
 - **NEW!!** Pre-applications DO NOT require the SF-424cbw form, but full applications (by invitation only) will.



Pre-Application: Requirements

Narrative Questions:

- Project Abstract
 - Project Goals, Outcomes and Outputs
 - Program Investment Priorities
 - Project Beneficiaries and Community Context
 - Statement of Need
-
- All narrative text boxes have a 10,000-character limit and formatting/editing capabilities.
 - Applicants encouraged to have narrative responses available in a word processing document to easily copy and paste into the pre-application.



Guidance in
Part II of
Catalyst
Program User
Manual.



Pre-Application: Requirements

Project Abstract – Narrative

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



Pre-Application: Requirements

Project goals, outcomes, and outputs - Narrative

- What are the expected economic outcomes (e.g. impacts on jobs, employment and wage growth) of this project
- Describe the scale of expected economic impacts on the community, county, or region?

Appendix G lists examples of Economic Outcomes and Outputs



Pre-Application: Requirements

Program Investment Priorities - Narrative

- Which NBRC Agency Investment Priorities best apply to this project?
- Which state program priorities best apply to this project?

Refer to the NBRC Agency Investment Priorities and State Scoring Criteria in the Catalyst Program User Manual.



Pre-Application: Requirements

Project Beneficiaries and Community Context - Narrative

- Who will benefit?
- Why does this project matter to the community?
- If applicable, how does this project serve or benefit rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 or disadvantaged communities?
- If applicable, how does this project help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters?



Pre-Application: Requirements

Statement of Need - Narrative

- What is the challenge or problem the project seeks to address?
- What is the proposed solution?
- Why is this project important?
- Describe the opportunity gained by funding this project now.
- Why is NBRC funding important for this project?

If applicable, Higher Maximum Infrastructure Request

- If applicable, describe how project meets criteria for a higher maximum infrastructure award.
- Include description of how funds will be allocated to 2 or more infrastructure categories or to 2 or more jurisdictions.



Evaluation of Pre-Applications

NBRC and the States will consider a project's alignment with the funding priorities for these program dollars when both issuing invitations to apply at the pre-application phase and in scoring projects at the application phase.

Resources:

- Catalyst Program User Manual – Scoring Criteria
- NBRC Agency Investment Priorities



Evaluation of Pre-Applications

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

- the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment, and
- the benefits provided to the broader community and region



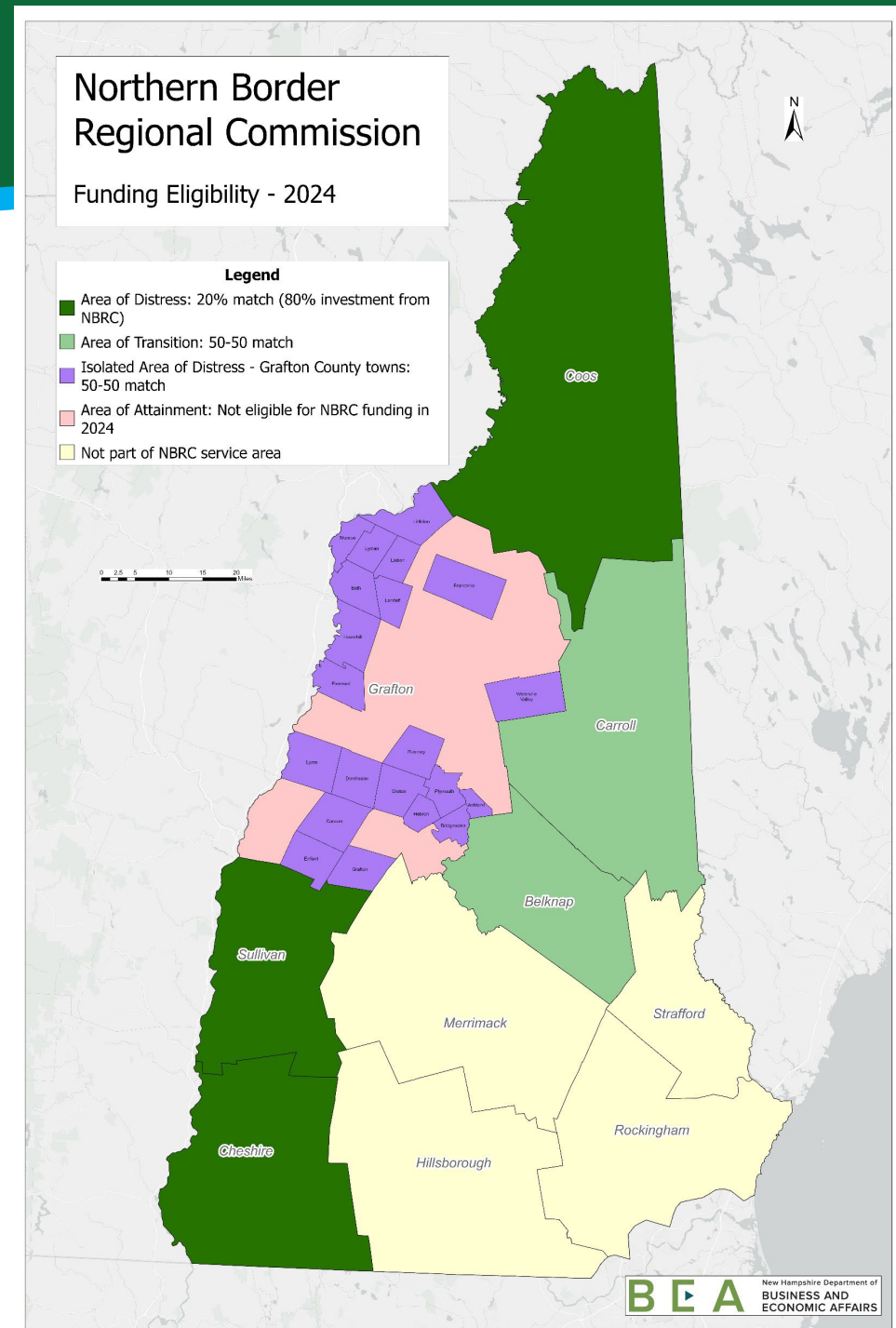
NBRC Investment Priorities

1. Projects that provide direct benefits to communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate direct benefits to rural communities with populations of less than 5,000 and underserved communities.
2. Projects that address multiple needs across eligible infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate efficiencies gained from including multiple categories in one project.
3. Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate how they help communities prevent, reduce, withstand, and/or improve recovery from climate related impacts and disasters.



State Program Role

- Project Development
- Review and assess pre-applications for alignment with Catalyst Program priorities
- Issue invitations to apply





NH Scoring Criteria

- Alignment with local, regional and/or state strategic plans
- Project aligns with one or more of NH's NBRC priorities
- Project will directly or indirectly support the creation, retention, or expansion of quality jobs in key industry clusters or emerging industry clusters in your region; or in any industry in a community or region with high unemployment
- Leverages existing local and regional resources and assets to promote economic growth
- Funding need
- Project readiness
- Demonstrates organizational capacity to implement and sustain project



What to Expect After Pre-Applications

During the week of March 25, applicants will receive notification of pre-application status along with information from NBRC.

- Invitation to Apply (if available, will include feedback)
- Recommendation to resubmit in future with feedback
- Ineligibility determination



What's Next

Project Development

- **Determine eligibility**
- **Self classify project and award maximum**
- **Self evaluate project against NBRC and State priorities and criteria**
- **Meet with State Program Manager if further discussion needed**



What's Next

Grants Management System Information

- Information about the System will be available and technical support resources will be made available

A few notes:

- Registration required for pre-application
- Pre-application required
- Pre-application can only be associated with one funding program at a time



Northern Border
Regional Commission

QUESTIONS?

Send future questions to
admin@nbrc.gov



NBRC Contacts

NBRC Staff:

- Andrea Smith, NBRC Program Director, asmith@nbrc.gov
- Sarah Demers, NBRC Program Coordinator, sdemers@nbrc.gov
- Adrienne Harrison, Infrastructure Program Manager, aharrison@nbrc.gov

State Program Managers:

- Each State has a Program Manager, who are employees of State government appointed to the role by the Governor's Alternate:
- Maine: Charlotte Mace, charlotte.mace@maine.gov
- New Hampshire: Steve Fortier, steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov
- Vermont: Kristie Farnham, Kristie.Farnham@vermont.gov
- New York: Kyle Wilber, kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov



Resources

NBRC Catalyst Program Website:

- <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/catalyst>

NBRC Distress Criteria:

- <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/distressed-counties>

Local Development Districts (LDDs):

- Each Catalyst Program award is required to utilize an LDD for grant administration unless they are an agency of State government or have requested and received LDD waiver.
- A complete list of LDDs can be found at <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/local-development-districts>