



Northern Border  
Regional Commission

# 2024 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## FALL ROUND

Andrea K. Smith, Program Director: [asmith@nbrc.gov](mailto:asmith@nbrc.gov)

Sarah Demers, Program Coordinator: [sdemers@nbrc.gov](mailto:sdemers@nbrc.gov)

Marina Bowie, Program Manager, Forest Economy and Timber For Transit: [mbowie@nbrc.gov](mailto:mbowie@nbrc.gov)

Adrienne Harrison, Program Manager, Catalyst: [aharrison@nbrc.gov](mailto:aharrison@nbrc.gov)



# Overview Session Topics:

- 2024 Program Funding Rounds, Timeline & Key Dates
- NBRC policies and requirements that cross all programs
- Pre-Application Process Overview
- Overview of the three funding programs available in 2024:
  - Catalyst
  - Forest Economy
  - Timber for Transit



# Overview Session Will NOT Cover:

- Pre-application details
- In depth scoring and evaluation details
- Grants Management System details
- Program specific information sessions from the Spring Round are recorded and available on the program specific pages of NBRC's website <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/program-areas>
- Grants Management System guidance and instructions and recorded information sessions from the Spring Round are available on NBRC's website at <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/administration>



# About NBRC & Partnerships

## **NBRC Overview – Mission and Authority**

- The mission of the Northern Border Regional Commission is to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity in the northern border region with flexible funding and strategic support.
- The Commission was enacted by Congress through the 2008 Farm Bill which amended 40 US Code to include the creation of the NBRC
- The statutory authority is based on one vote of the Federal Co-Chair and the collective votes of the four Governors



# About NBRC & Partnerships

## Federal-State Partnership

- States partner with NBRC to focus funding strategies and prioritize investments.
- **The Commission:** The decision-making process of the Commission is comprised of five voting members: Federal Co-Chair and the Governors of ME, NH, VT, and NY
- **Governor's Alternates:** Governors are represented on the NBRC by their chosen alternate
- **State Program Managers:** Governor's Alternates assign NBRC partnership duties to a State Program Manager.



# 2024 Program Overview – Funding Rounds

## **NEW!!** Two funding rounds in 2024

- Spring and Fall funding rounds coordinated across three programs
- Pre-application and application due dates
- More time for project development



# 2024 Program Overview Fall Timeline

## Program Information Sessions (Recorded)

- Catalyst Program/Resources Section [www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst)
- Forest Economy Program/Resources section [www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP)
- Timber for Transit/Resources section [www.nbrc.gov/content/T4T](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/T4T)



# 2024 Program Overview Fall Timeline

## Program Information Sessions (Recorded)

- **Pre-Applications Due (Required)** by 5:00 pm September 6, 2024
- All applicable waivers due with pre-application by 5:00 pm September 6, 2024

## Pre-application Review

September 9-18, 2024

- Pre-application responses/including Invitations to apply Week of September 23<sup>rd</sup>
- **Applications Due (by Invitation Only)** by 5:00 pm October 18, 2024
- NBRC Commission Meeting January 2025
- NBRC Notification of awards & to unsuccessful applications January 2025
- New Grantee Training February 2025





# NBRC Policies & Requirements

**The NBRC policies and requirements are the same across programs.**

- Eligibility & Waivers
- Match, Cost Share, and Federal Funding Ceiling
- Ineligible Costs
- Period of Performance
- Use of Funds

**The focus areas, priorities and scoring process are different for each program.**



# Eligibility & Waivers

## **Determining Eligible Project Locations:**

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

## **Eligible Applicants & Co-Applicants:**

- 75% Expenditure Waiver
- LDD Waiver (Catalyst only)



# NBRC Service Area

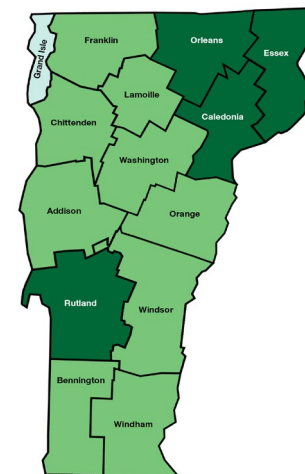
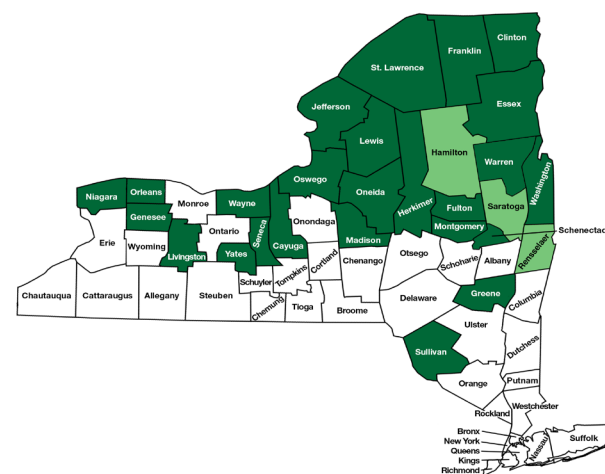
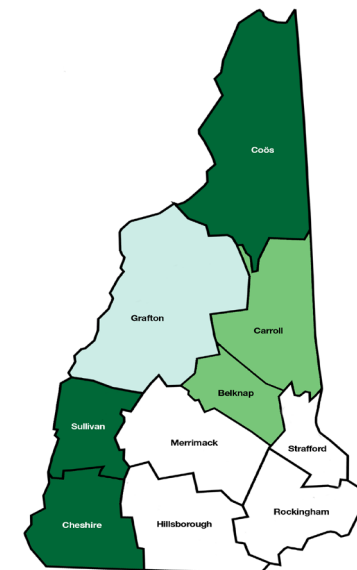
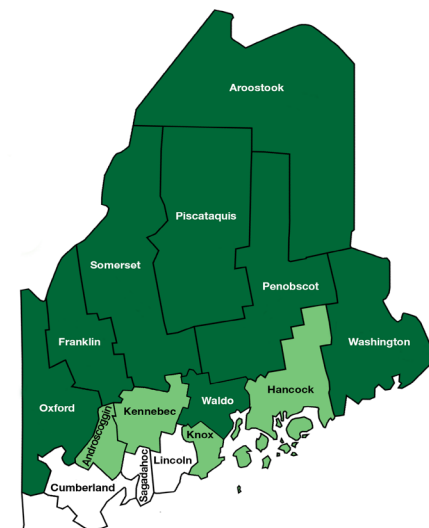
**Commission Service Area** - Only projects within the NBRC's service area are eligible for funding

**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, requires **Significant Benefits Waiver**
- 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 Benefit Waiver is required.
3. Identify reimbursement and match rate associated with location.

## Resources:

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

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 who are located outside of the NBRC service territory are not eligible



# Significant Benefit Waiver

- An exception to programmatic eligibility exists for an applicant and/or co-applicant who meets one of the eligible entity criteria but whose primary place of business is located outside of the NBRC Service Area but within a member state at time of application.
- An applicant and/or co-applicant who can demonstrate their project will result in a direct investment of NBRC funds and have a significant economic benefit to a Distressed County, may request a Significant Benefit Waiver.



# Significant Benefit Waiver

- The Significant Benefit Waiver, together with documentation to support the project's economic investment, is required at time of preapplication submission.
- A Significant Benefit Waiver request requires approval by NBRC's Governing body and must be approved for an entity to be considered eligible for funding consideration.
- If a Significant Benefit Waiver is required and is not submitted with the preapplication, the project will be deemed ineligible at the preapplication phase of the process.

## **Resources:**

- Program User Manual and Significant Benefit Waiver





## **Previous Award Recipients/75% Expenditure Waiver**

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:

- Program User Manual and 75% Expenditure Waiver



# LDD Waiver (Catalyst Only)

- All Catalyst Program awards require the use of a Local Development District for grant administration.
  - ✓ 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 grant administration. The **LDD Waiver** must be submitted together with the pre-application.

## Resources:

- **Catalyst Program User Manual**
- **LDD Waiver**



# NBRC Policies & Requirements

- Match and Cost Share
- Federal Funding Ceiling
- Period of Performance
- Ineligible Purpose
- Program Income
- Use of Funds
- Ineligible Costs
- Notice to Proceed

## **NBRC funding comes with specific requirements**

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



# Match and Cost Share

## 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 and NBRC funds cannot be committed or expended before receiving a 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



# 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 as a subaward
- 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
  - Additional information on NBRC's NEPA process available on [NBRC website](#)





# Catalyst Program Overview

- **Purpose**
- **Funds Available**
- **Program Eligible Purposes & Priorities**
- **Pre-Application Process & Evaluation**
- **Catalyst Program Information Sessions**



# 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.



# 2024 Funds Available

## **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
- Distributed equally across 4 states

## **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
- All awards are subject to availability of funds



# Program Eligible Purposes

**Proposed projects must fit one of 7 project categories:**

Infrastructure:

- Basic Public Infrastructure, Transportation, Renewable Energy, and Telecommunications

Non-Infrastructure:

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

Resources: Catalyst Program User Manual



# Catalyst 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



# Program Priorities

All projects must be consistent with the economic development goals of the region and advance a combination of NBRC and member state investment priorities.

## **Understanding State Program Priorities:**

- Review State Scoring Criteria in the Catalyst Program User Manual
- Self-evaluate proposed project against scoring criteria
- Discuss project with State Program Manager



# Program Priorities

## **Understanding NBRC Agency Investment Priorities:**

- Review NBRC Scoring Criteria in the Catalyst Program User Manual
  - Identify opportunities to address NBRC Agency Investment Priorities in project
1. Projects that provide direct benefits to communities that have been underrepresented in past NBRC investments.
  2. Projects that address multiple needs across eligible infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories.
  3. Projects that adapt to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events.



# Pre-Application Process & Evaluation

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

- Required to receive invitation to apply
- Due by 5:00pm on September 6<sup>th</sup> for the Fall Round
- Must be submitted using NBRC's online grants management system
- **NEW!** All waiver requests must be submitted with pre-applications

## **Evaluation**

- Reviewed by NBRC for eligibility
- Reviewed by state programs for alignment with state priorities
- Invitations to apply are issued by the state programs





# Catalyst Program Information Sessions

## Recorded Sessions from Spring Round by State:

Resources section: [www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst)

- New Hampshire: Feb 6, 2024
- Vermont: February 7, 2024
- Maine: February 8, 2024
- New York: February 9, 2024

The recorded webinar, slides and Chat Q&A from these sessions are available at [www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst) (**Resources section**)



# Forest Economy Program Overview

- **Purpose**
- **Funds Available**
- **Program Eligible Purposes & Priorities**
- **Pre-Application Process & Evaluation**
- **Forest Economy Program Information Sessions**



# Forest Economy Program Overview

The Forest Economy Program is designed ***to support the forest-based economy, and to assist in the industry's evolution to include new technologies and viable business models*** across the four-state NBRC region.



# 2024 Funds Available

**An estimated \$4 million was made available for the 2024 Forest Economy Program. \$3 million remains available for the Fall Round.** Any selection and award under this Forest Economy Program are subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

**As in 2023, Forest Economy funding to be competitively awarded in two funding rounds**

- Forest Economy projects are eligible for an award up to \$1,000,000
- All awards are subject to availability of funds



# Program Eligible Purposes

**Proposed projects must address one or more of the following project categories:**

- 1. Community development projects** that support the diversified use of forests within the Northern Border Regional Commission's service area for economic activity to include wood products and advanced materials manufacturing, as well as for other economic activity that utilizes northern border forests sustainably and demonstrates planning for climate resiliency.
- 2. Workforce [re] training and development projects** for the purpose of building the skills and recruiting and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses.
- 3. Business planning and technical assistance projects** that enhance the viability and sustainability of new and existing forest businesses
- 4. Marketing/communication and education work** must be paired with one or more of the above project priorities (#'s 1-3).
- 5. Public infrastructure projects** (defined by Congress in NBRC's authorizing language to be inclusive of transportation, water and wastewater, telecommunications, and energy)\* must directly support the forest industry, and/or demonstrate the use of wood products in public infrastructure

Resources: [Forest Economy Program User Manual](#)



# Program Priorities

## 2024 Agency Investment Priorities

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create and grow needed markets for low-grade forest harvest residuals.
- Invest in workforce recruitment, development, and training to increase job placement across the forest product continuum.
- Help to sustain and grow existing forest industry businesses and operations, such as through technical assistance.
- Aid in the revitalization of rural communities through the diversified use of northern border forests for economic activity to include wood products and advanced 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.
- 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.

Resources: Forest Economy Program User Manual



# Pre-Application Process & Evaluation

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

- Required to receive invitation to apply
- Due by 5:00pm on September 6<sup>th</sup> for the Fall round
- Must be submitted using NBRC's online grants management system
- **NEW!** All waiver requests must be submitted with pre-applications

## **Evaluation**

- A 9-member Advisory Board will review applications and provide feedback to applicants and States. NBRC and States review all eligible applications received independently, utilizing the scoring criteria provided within the program manual.

Resources: [Forest Economy Program User Manual](#)



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# Forest Economy Program Information Sessions

## Recorded Session from Spring Round

- February 13, 2024

The recorded webinar, slides and Chat Q&A from these sessions are available at [www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/FEP) (**Resources section**)





# Timber for Transit Program Overview

- **Purpose**
- **Funds Available**
- **Program Eligible Purposes & Priorities**
- **Pre-Application Process & Evaluation**
- **Timber for Transit Program Information Sessions**



# Timber for Transit Program Overview

## NEW PROGRAM!

The Timber for Transit Program is designed ***to advance the use of domestic forest products in transportation infrastructure*** projects across Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont ***to showcase the capabilities of wood*** in these applications.



# 2024 Funds Available

**The Northern Border Regional Commission may award up to \$25,000,000 over the next three years for projects that demonstrate the capabilities of wood in transportation infrastructure\*. Approximately \$2.6MM was awarded in the 2024 Spring Round.**

**Timber for Transit funding to be competitively awarded in two funding rounds**

- All awards are subject to availability of funds

Resources: [Timber for Transit Program User Manual](#)



# Program Eligible Purposes

**Proposed projects must fit one or address both of the following categories:**

## Feasibility:

- Such as inventory assessments, architectural and engineering designs, cost analyses, permitting, etc.

## Implementation:

- Construction of transportation infrastructure to include: permanent vehicular and pedestrian bridges, railway structures and rail bridges, trail bridges, covered bridges, wildlife crossings, etc.
- Construction of transportation-adjacent infrastructure to include: highway rest stops, ferry terminals, train stations, outdoor recreation transportation infrastructure, highway sound barriers, etc.

Resources: [Timber for Transit Program User Manual](#)



# Program Priorities

- 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).

Resources: [Timber for Transit Program User Manual](#)



# Pre-Application Process & Evaluation

## Pre-application process

- Required to receive invitation to apply
- Due by 5:00pm on September 6<sup>th</sup> for the Fall Round
- Must be submitted using NBRC's online grants management system
- All waiver requests must be submitted with pre-applications

## Evaluation

- NBRC and member states review and score project proposals based on 5 categories, which are further described in the [Timber for Transit Program User Manual](#)



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# Timber for Transit Program Information Sessions

## Recorded Session from Spring Round

- February 13, 2024

The recorded webinar, slides and Chat Q&A from these sessions are available at [www.nbrc.gov/content/t4t](http://www.nbrc.gov/content/t4t) (**Resources section**)



# What's Next

## Project Development

- Determine eligibility: eligible location, reimbursement/match ratio, eligible applicant/co-applicant
- Determine which funding program best applies to proposed project
- Review Program User Manuals – Catalyst online; Forest Economy and Timber for Transit
- Watch recorded program specific information sessions from Spring Round

## Grants Management System Information

- **NEW!!** System will be used for pre-applications for all 3 programs
- Information about accessing system available

<https://www.nbrc.gov/content/resources>





# QUESTIONS?

- Send future questions to [admin@nbrc.gov](mailto:admin@nbrc.gov)



# NBRC Programs – Points of Contact

All questions related to eligibility, timelines, NBRC policies and funding requirements should be directed to [Admin@NBRC.gov](mailto:Admin@NBRC.gov)

## NBRC Staff:

- Andrea Smith, NBRC Program Director: [asmith@nbrc.gov](mailto:asmith@nbrc.gov)
- Marina Bowie, Program Manager, Forest Economy and Timber for Transit: [mbowie@nbrc.gov](mailto:mbowie@nbrc.gov)
- Adrienne Harrison, Program Manager, Catalyst: [aharrison@nbrc.gov](mailto:aharrison@nbrc.gov)

## State Program Managers:

- Maine: Charlotte Mace, [charlotte.mace@maine.gov](mailto:charlotte.mace@maine.gov)
- New Hampshire: Steve Fortier, [steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov](mailto:steven.j.fortier@livefree.nh.gov) and Ian Davis, [ian.m.davis@livefree.nh.gov](mailto:ian.m.davis@livefree.nh.gov)
- Vermont: Kristie Farnham, [Kristie.Farnham@vermont.gov](mailto:Kristie.Farnham@vermont.gov)
- New York: Kyle Wilber, [kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov](mailto:kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov)