



Northern Border
Regional Commission

2024 NBRC PREAPPLICATION WORKSHOP SERIES

Pre-Application and Project Readiness

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Topics for today's session:

1. Understanding Project Readiness
2. Overview of Pre-application
3. Critical pre-application elements that highlight project readiness (with examples and best practices)
4. Pre-application Evaluation
5. What's Next?
6. Q&A



Understanding Project Readiness

While there is not one question that addresses project readiness in the pre-application, there is an opportunity within each element of the pre-application to show project readiness, and it's an important component to consider early on.



Understanding Project Readiness

NBRC defines project readiness as an applicant's ability to:

- **perform the proposed work within the 3-year performance period**
- **begin to draw down NBRC funds within 12 months of award date**

Review NBRC's Project Readiness Scoring Criteria for other critical project readiness evaluation factors

Review State Scoring Criteria (Catalyst only) for other critical project readiness evaluation factors



Signs a project is ready for NBRC investment

The project...

- clearly describes the need for funding now
- timeline is thorough and well developed to include [NEPA considerations](#)
- makes clear connections to program priorities
- has a complete budget and clearly describes how NBRC funds will be used
- has identified sources of match, and outlined a process for applying for and obtaining all the funding necessary to complete the project
- can secure all match within one year of award



Signs project is NOT ready

The project...

- is in the early planning or exploratory stages
- cannot clearly articulate what activities NBRC funds will support in narrative or budget
- the budget and timeline are underdeveloped and do not take into consideration NEPA requirements
- does not provide estimated costs or budget narrative descriptions
- match sources have *not* been identified, or the project will not be able to secure match within one year of award



You are ready to develop your pre-application if you have:

- Viewed Workshop #1, which covered available resources and project concept development
- Identified which (if any) NBRC program is the best fit for your project
- Confirmed eligibility
- Completed the project interest form
- Connected with State and/or program contacts to solicit early feedback
- Understand the potential NEPA implications of your project

And...

- It's clear your project meets the readiness criteria for NBRC investment



Before developing your pre-application

Review NBRC materials, such as:

- [General Programs Information Session](#)
- [Program Specific Information Session](#)
- Program User Manual: [Catalyst](#), [FEP](#), [T4T](#)
- Program FAQ documents: [Catalyst](#), [FEP](#), [T4T](#)
- [Workshop sessions](#)
- [GMS guidance documents](#)



Elements of a Pre-Application

- 1. Project Title**
- 2. Project Information Narrative Questions**
- 3. Describing Benefits to Rural and Underserved Communities**
- 4. Locations**
- 5. Budget**
- 6. Waivers**

Follow the detailed guidance in your Program User Manual

View Catalyst, Forest Economy, or Timber for Transit recorded info sessions for details.



Focus on Pre-application Elements that Highlight Project Readiness

Project Narrative including

- Project Abstract, Project Goals and Outcomes, and Statement of Need

Budget Information including

- Budget Periods Table, Budget Narrative, Funding Sources Table

There is an opportunity within each element of the pre-application to show project readiness



Project Abstract

- Identify the primary purpose, project location, beneficiaries of the project and expected economic impacts of the project.
- List which NBRC Program Funding Category(ies) is most applicable for your project and briefly justify how your project aligns with the Funding Category(ies).
- Describe the project scope including what planning activities have taken place, are there components of the project already underway, what will be accomplished with NBRC funding and over what period of time the project will be completed.

The [REDACTED] seeks a non-infrastructure grant of \$500,000 from the Northern Border Regional Commission's Catalyst Program in the category of Resource Conservation, Tourism, and Recreation. The grant will be used to support the first three years of a 40% staff expansion, the purpose of which is to increase the organization's conservation impact. At present, our organization is experiencing an unprecedented demand and opportunity for more conservation in the region, so much so that our staff is stretched thin. Time is short to act to ensure these opportunities do not slip by, yet the most limiting factor in the [REDACTED]'s ability to protect and steward land is staff capacity. Accordingly, we propose to add four new full-time positions to 1) increase the pace of land protection, 2) ensure adequate oversight and management of land already protected, 3) maintain and build trails and other public access infrastructure, and 4) expand community programs and partnerships to help extend the benefits of land conservation to individuals and communities that have typically been excluded from the benefits of open space.

Project Abstract

This staff expansion, and the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] work in general, clearly align with the goals of the NBRC, the State of New Hampshire, and the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC). For example:

- New Hampshire's *Economic Recovery & Expansion Strategy* emphasizes leveraging the state's natural beauty and outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities to convert tourists into full-time residents and workers; and
- The SWRPC's *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest New Hampshire* characterizes a strong regional community as "preserving open space" and "balancing preservation, conservation, and development."



Project Goals and Outcomes

- Project goals should be specific
 - Draw a clear connection between project activities and the anticipated direct outcomes. Describe the scale of direct impact
 - Be robust yet realistic
- If goals and/or outcomes are vague or underdeveloped, this is a sign a project may ***not*** be ready for investment

Project Goals and Outcomes

With funding from NBRC, we will develop capabilities at the [REDACTED] that can be used to support companies seeking to develop new biochar production and purification processes throughout the Northern Border Region . These companies are often small operators, and as such they do not have facilities for process development. Moreover, biochar producers must currently pay to ship samples to California or to Europe for qualification of their biochar products under the guidelines of the European Biochar Certificate (EBC) and International Biochar Initiative (IBI), the current industry standards. Accordingly, we will establish accredited facilities to test biochar samples for compliance under the EBC and IBI program standards.

Project Goals:

- Develop capabilities at the [REDACTED] for biochar production, pretreatment, and testing.
- Support the growing biochar production industry throughout the Northern Border Region (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine).
- Enhance partnerships with forest bioproducts industries and accelerate technology commercialization.

Outcomes (Quantifiable Targets):

- Establish biochar production, pretreatment, and testing capabilities at the [REDACTED] [*timeframe*: months 1-18].
- Eliminate the need for biochar producers in the Northern Border Region to ship samples to California or Europe for qualification under the EBC and IBI program standards [*timeframe*: months 18-36].
- Support at least 7 companies in the Northern Border Region in certifying their biochar for their targeted commercial uses [*timeframe*: within 2-3 years of project start].
- Train at least 10 professionals in biochar preparation and testing [*timeframe*: within five years of project start].

Outputs:

- Creation of biochar pilot production, pretreatment, and testing facilities compliant with the EBC and IBI program standards at [REDACTED]
- Partnership agreements with [REDACTED].



Statement of Need

- Describe why the project is important, the challenge or problem the project seeks to address and how it relates to NBRC and State investment priorities.
- Describe the proposed solution and the opportunity gained by funding this project now and why NBRC funding is important for this project.

Statement of Need

The proposed project aims to address several key challenges:

- Aging transportation infrastructure in need of capital upgrades or replacement. For example, across ██████ County, there are 43 bridges on the state’s “red list,” a roster of structurally deficient bridges maintained by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Of these bridges, 31 are under municipal ownership, most of which are owned by towns with populations less than 5,000 people. The list has grown over recent years. In addition, state data indicates 2 closed bridges and 8 that are “bypassed.” Many of these bridges can likely be repaired or replaced utilizing timber products sourced from the NBRC service area, either now or once the value chain(s) for innovative timber products such as glue-laminated stock have been further developed—one goal of this project. The ability to repair and replace bridges with local timber products could ultimately lead to cost savings for rural municipalities, which often struggle to raise sufficient revenue for capital improvements.
- Lack of capacity among rural communities to navigate the pre-development process for transportation infrastructure projects. Most small towns have limited staff or rely entirely on volunteers to usher a project from initial need identification to a fully engineered scope of work ready for funding and implementation. This proposal seeks to resolve that lack of capacity by (1) packaging multiple location-specific projects into a regional proposal that can achieve certain efficiencies through an economy of scale and (2) creating resources and conducting outreach that will help guide municipalities across ██████ County and the NBRC service area through the feasibility assessment and project pre-development process for timber bridges and other timber-based transportation infrastructure. Through its advisory work group, this project will also assemble a wide range of expertise typically unavailable to individual rural municipalities.
- Key value chain gaps preventing or limiting the utilization of regionally sourced, innovative timber products in transportation infrastructure projects. One of these gaps is the lack of template timber bridge plans that conform with current standards and incorporate design specifications for regional tree species. This proposal aims to fill that gap directly by facilitating the development of such plans. Another missing link is the lack of glulam manufacturing capabilities in the northeastern U.S., specifically of glulam products utilizing regional tree species like eastern hemlock and domestic spruce fir. The project scope addresses this gap directly, through a proposed feasibility assessment that will build understanding regarding the necessary conditions for expanded manufacturing capabilities in the NBRC service area. It also addresses it indirectly, by demonstrating demand for glulam and other innovative wood products in the transportation sector.

Funding this project now is advantageous for several reasons. Location-specific feasibility assessments would set the stage for implementing high-visibility demonstration projects that could leverage funding from NBRC and/or other sources—an opportunity that is likely limited in duration due to finite timeline of provisions in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other recent legislation. Another reason is the increasing urgency of climate change and the project’s potential to reduce embodied carbon in the region’s transportation infrastructure and to move the transportation sector toward carbon neutrality.



Budget Periods Table

Budget Table will be used throughout the project life to track budget categories:

- Critical preapplication element for showing how funds will be used
 - Aligns with SF-424cbw Budget Details (to be submitted at application)
 - NEPA and LDD (Catalyst only) costs should go in Construction Costs, category 8a Administrative and Legal Expenses
- While budgets do not need to be finalized at time of pre-application, it should be clear how NBRC funds will be used, and costs estimated

If invited to apply, you will be asked to further develop the budget with the SF424cbw at application. For those projects invited to apply, be sure to attend Workshop Session #3 in September!



Budget Periods Table



Validations and Common Errors:



Applicant Match column must be greater than or equal to minimum required match

- $\text{NBRC request} \times \text{Eligible match rate} = \text{Minimum Applicant Match}$
- Applicant match + Other must be greater than or equal to minimum match
- Other Federal sources should be listed under "Other Federal" category
- Federal loans should be listed in the "Other" category.

Total federal funding sources must not exceed 80% of total project costs

- $\text{NBRC Request} + \text{Other Federal} = \text{Total federal funding}$

Projects in distressed counties must meet a minimum 20% match and the 80% Federal Cap



Budget Periods Table

▲ Budget Periods

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 records

Budget Period #	Start Date ↑	End Date
BP01	08/01/2024	09/30/2027

▲ Budget Categories

* Records are sorted by Focus Area ascending order, Category Name ascending order

Showing 1 to 10 of 10 records

Category Name ↑	NBRC Share	Other Federal Share	Applicant Match	Other	Total Project Cost
Construction	\$500,000.00	\$500,200.00	\$247,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,247,200.00
Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contracts and Sub-Grantees	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fringe Benefits	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Indirect Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Direct Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel (Direct Labor)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Supplies and Materials	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	\$500,000.00	\$500,200.00	\$252,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,252,200.00
Grand Total	\$500,000.00	\$500,200.00	\$252,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,252,200.00

Total Records: 10

Total Records: 1



Budget Narrative

- Cost Justifications for costs above \$5,000
- Describe how the cost estimate was determined and where possible, reference sources for cost estimates
- Provide a breakdown of expenses that make up each budget category total
- For contracts and service quotes, please note that if awarded funding, you will be required to comply with [federal procurement guidelines](#)
 - See the [NBRC Compliance Manual](#) for more information and procurement requirements.

Budget Narrative



8a. Administration & Legal expenses

Permits & Fees – estimated to cost \$18,000

8b. Land, structures, rights-of-way – estimated to cost \$170,000

Land – 0.04 acre lot, improved as described below

Structure – A vacant 3-story building occupying a commercially zoned corner lot at the intersection. The solid masonry structure with a cast iron/steel framed storefront was originally constructed in 1910 and will be completely renovated.

8d. Architectural and engineering fees

Architect fees – design and contract administration fees estimated to be \$10,000

Engineering fees – estimated to be \$10,000 for primarily structural engineering. MEP is proposed to be design-build. Limited civil engineering may be required.

8e. Other architectural and engineering fees

Appraisal – estimated to cost \$2,000

Environmental report – estimated cost \$2,700

Section 106 Review – estimated to cost \$500

Hazardous materials survey – estimated cost \$4,670

8i. Construction

Gut-renovate the entire building to house a café or other commercial entity on the 1st floor, and apartments on the 2nd and 3rd floors. New mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems, roof, windows, cabinetry, countertops, doors, frames and hardware. The 2nd and 3rd floor apartments will be reconfigured entirely with a 4th apartment added. – estimated cost \$1,660,241

Construction period insurance – estimated to be \$8,000

8k. Contingencies

Construction (10% of CM estimate) – estimated to be \$160,000

Soft cost – estimated to be 10,000

Construction example:

- Describe and break out large cost categories
- Help reviewer understand what funds will be used for
- 8a is the place to identify NEPA and any specific expected review costs such as Section 106 historical review
- 8a is the place to identify the LDD costs and expected LDD to work with

Budget Narrative

You are limited to 5,000 characters!

The proposed \$xxx,xxx budget for this project is comprised primarily of the following staff salaries and fringe benefits for three years:

1. Land protection manager
2. Conservation easement steward
3. Land & recreation manager
4. Community programs manager

Annual salaries are determined by regional and national comparables in the field and the broader non-profit field.

A 22% fringe benefit rate includes health insurance, 4% retirement plan match, life insurance, and disability insurance.

Also included is a \$10,000 fee to the local LDD.

Program example:

- Describe and break out large cost categories
- Help reviewer understand what funds will be used for
- Share how costs were determined such as comparable salaries
- Make connection between budget category number on SF-424cbw



Funding Sources Table

Sources of match and cost share.

- Funding sources and commitments table must be complete with the minimum required match
- Not all match sources must be secured at time of pre-application, but match sources should at least be identified, with a plan for securing all required match and cost share within one year of award receipt
- Do not include NBRC request amount
- Not required at pre-application, but you may begin thinking about letters of support and/or letters of commitment



Funding Sources Table

▲ Funding Sources and Commitments



* Records are sorted by Last Modified Date ascending order

Showing 1 to 8 of 8 records

Funding Source	Type of Funding ⓘ	Amount	Date of Commitment, Secured/Pending	Status
Voter allocation from taxes	Local funding	\$150,000.00	03/22/2024	Secured
VT Historic Preservation Grant	State grant	\$20,000.00	12/01/2023	Secured
South Hero Foundation	Private giving	\$40,000.00	03/22/2024	Secured
Town of South Hero	ARPA Funds	\$100,000.00	02/13/2023	Secured
Town of South Hero	Matching for state grant	\$20,000.00	12/11/2023	Secured
Preservation Trust via NPS	Paul Bruhn Historic Preservation grant	\$100,000.00	01/20/2022	Secured
Congressionally Directed Spending	Save Americas Treasure, NPS grant	\$400,000.00	03/22/2024	Pending
Planning Grant	VCDP	\$60,000.00	01/01/2018	Secured

Total Records:8



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Evaluating Pre-Applications



Eligibility Review

NBRC reviews pre-applications for eligibility, including eligible project locations, eligible applicant and co-applicant criteria, and waiver completion.

- Pre-applications that are found to be eligible will receive further review
- Pre-applications that are found to be ineligible will receive a response from NBRC that includes a description of the ineligible determination



Alignment with Program Priorities

NBRC and State Programs review pre-applications for alignment with the Program priorities. The priorities are highlighted in the NBRC (all programs) and State Program (Catalyst only) scoring criteria, available in Appendix K. Eligible preapplications will be prioritized based on alignment with both NBRC and state program priorities.



Forest Economy Program: Advisory board members review proposals against scoring criteria and provide any critical feedback to the State Program Managers for their consideration.



Additional Review Considerations

NBRC and State Programs will also consider

- the costs and expected benefits associated with the requested NBRC investment
- the benefits provided to the broader community and region
- If applicable (for Timber for Transit and Catalyst) at time of pre-application we will assess whether a project is eligible for a higher maximum award



What's Next

- Attend live **Pre-application Office Hours** scheduled for Wednesdays in August. See [Events page](#) for registration and details.
- August 15: GMS Opens for Preapplications by 8:00am
- View GMS Preapplication Guidance Document and recorded office hours
- September 6: Preapplications due by 5:00pm
- September 6: Waiver requests and documentation due with preapplication
- September 20: Responses to pre-applications
- September Workshop #3 (applicants only): Budgets, budgets, budgets!



What's Next

A few notes:

- Registration required for pre-application
- Pre-application required
- Pre-application can only be associated with one funding program at a time
- Do not wait until the last hour to submit in case there are unexpected errors encountered



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QUESTIONS?

Send questions to admin@nbrc.gov

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