



Forest Economy Program (FEP)

[Pre-Application Support: View NBRC's Spring 2025 Program Overview 7-Part Series](#)

This pre-recorded series will review the focus areas for the Catalyst Program, Forest Economy Program, and the Timber for Transit Program along with eligibility details, timeline and other information necessary for selecting the program that is right for your project.

Please go to the [NBRC Resources Page](#) for Grants Management Information.

TIMELINE & KEY DATES

Spring 2025 Timeline and Key Dates

- Pre-applications and waivers due (Required): March 7, 2025, before 5:00 pm EST
- Applications due (By invitation only): April 18, 2025 before 5:00 pm EST

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

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.

Successful projects support a broad range of forest-based economy initiatives such as, but not limited to, public infrastructure projects that directly support the forest industry; community development projects that support the diversified use of forest for economic activity; workforce training and development projects for the purpose of building the skills and recruiting and retaining the workforce needed for forest businesses; and marketing, communication and education projects that are paired with a public infrastructure, community development or workforce training or development project. Basic research projects will not be considered. Preference will be given to applied research and demonstration projects that demonstrate a strong connection to industry.

FEP will give preference to proposals that:

- Invest in the development and commercialization of technologies that create and grow new 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.

Forest Economy Program Award History

[View a summary of awards](#) that have been made through the NBRC's Forest Economy Program.

INTERESTED APPLICANTS

A pre-application is **required** to apply for FEP.

For those considering applications in 2025, complete the [PROJECT INTEREST FORM](#) and contact the NBRC Forest Economy Program Manager Marina Caceres (Bowie), the NBRC Program Manager in the State(s) where the proposed project will take place, and/or a Forest Economy Program Advisory Board member. These individuals will be happy to assist you as you develop your projects and applications:

NBRC Forest Economy Program Manager

Marina Caceres (Bowie), mcaceres@nbrc.gov 603.724.5802

NBRC State Program Managers

Maine: Charlotte Mace, charlotte.mace@maine.gov 207.624.7448

New Hampshire: Ian Davis, Ian.M.Davis@livefree.nh.gov 603.419.9709

Vermont: Kristie Farnham, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov 802.398.5268

New York: Kyle Wilber, kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov 518.473.3694

PROJECT RELEVANCE

The Forest

Economy Program will prioritize funding for projects that demonstrate both readiness and projected direct impacts on the region's forest economy and communities. Projects must be consistent with the Program investment priorities of the Forest Economy Program, and where applicable, advance local forest economy initiatives, including but not limited to the following:

[Forest Opportunity Roadmap Maine \(FOR/Maine\)](#)

[Maine Tech Hub](#)

[New Hampshire Forest Action Plan](#) (with special attention to the goals and strategies listed under Focus Area – Forest Based Economy, starting on page 149)

[Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap](#)

[New York State Forest Action Plan](#) (with special attention to the focus areas and strategies within Goal #3: Increase Forest Benefits for Humans and All Living Creatures)

APPLICATION, SCORING AND AWARD PROCESS

Pre-Application Process: FEP requires a pre-application. See the [FEP TIMELINE](#) for pre-application deadlines. The FEP USER MANUAL has detailed guidance for developing both a pre-application and application. Pre-applications will be submitted using the NBRC Grants Management System.

During the pre-application phase, projects will be evaluated for eligibility and relevance to the program. NBRC staff and an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from all four states will review pre-applications that are received on or prior to the deadline. The Advisory Board, in coordination with the NBRC State Program Managers, will prioritize the Advisory Board list and determine which projects will be invited to submit a full application.

Application Process: Projects that are deemed eligible by NBRC and invited to apply by the Advisory Board in the pre-application phase, will submit a full application. See the FEP TIMELINE for pre-application deadlines. The FEP USER MANUAL has detailed guidance for developing both a pre-application and application. Applications will be submitted using the NBRC Grants Management System.

During the application phase, each full application will be scored based on the rating criteria developed for the Forest Economy Program. Project scoring is determined by how fully and thoroughly the applicant answers each item listed in each rating criteria. The Program Managers from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont will coordinate application scoring for each of the rating criteria and present results to the Commission. The Governor's Alternates and the Federal Co-Chair will vote on the projects selected for funding. Projects that fall short of an 80-point threshold will not be considered for funding. The rating criteria is detailed in the FEP USER MANUAL.

ELIGIBILITY

Location Eligibility Guidance: The eligible NBRC service area includes 60 counties in Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. If your project is in the service area, it may be eligible for NBRC funds. Locations outside the NBRC service area are NOT eligible to receive NBRC funds.

By statute, the NBRC is required to annually assess the level of economic and demographic distress within its region (40 U.S.C, Subtitle V, §15702). Assessing distress is important as the resulting designations reflect whether the Commission can provide grants within a county as well as what level of match is required of Commission funded projects. For more details on the Annual Distress Criteria, county designations, and matching requirements, visit the NBRC's [Assessing Distress Criteria webpage](#).

NBRC funds may not be awarded to projects located within a designated Attainment County. There are three exceptions to this:

- 1. Isolated Areas of Distress**

When a county is designated as Attainment, the Commission will 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. For a listing of the Isolated Areas of Distress see the [Annual Distress Criteria](#).

If a project is located within an Isolated Areas of Distress, an application may be submitted, but the applicant must indicate the location of the isolated area in the application. The match ratio for Isolated Areas of Distress projects is 50%.

2. **Multi-County Projects**

Projects within an Attainment County may be funded if the project is part of a multi-county project that includes at least one other Distressed or Transitional County. The match ratio for multi-county projects is based on the average of the counties that make up the project.

3. **Significant Benefit Waiver**

There are two exceptions that require a Significant Benefit Waiver to allow those projects, applicants or co-applicants that fall outside of the areas that meet the Commission's [annual distress criteria](#) as designated in Table 4 to apply for NBRC funds. Those exceptions are:

- An exception exists for projects located within an Attainment County but outside of one of the identified "Isolated Areas of Distress" that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties. See significant benefit waiver requirements in Appendix E of the Catalyst Program User Manual.
- An exception exists for applicants or co-applicants with established operations located outside of the NBRC service area but within a member state when the project that will bring significant economic benefits to NBRC Distressed or Transitional counties.

See the full list of counties and designations contained in the [NBRC Distress Criteria](#).

Eligible Applicant Guidance:

- State government (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York only)
- Local governments (village, town, city and county)
- Secondary and career technical centers
- Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- Non-profit entities (see Program Manual for additional details)
- Indian Tribes (federally recognized Indian tribes, see Program Manual for additional details)

For-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c) are **NOT eligible** to apply for Forest Economy Program funding.

GET FUTURE NBRC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Help NBRC share information on funding opportunities, award announcements and other exciting news. By signing up for NBRC Announcements, you'll be sure to receive the latest information on the Forest Economy Program. **Sign up [HERE](#).**

IMPORTANT FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM RESOURCES

[FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM OVERVIEW \(2025\)](#)

[FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM TIMELINE](#)

[FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM MANUAL](#)

[FOREST ECONOMY PROGRAM FAQ](#)

[NBRC DISTRESS CRITERIA](#)

[NBRC Resources Page](#) for Grants Management Information