



National RTAP

Community Rides Grants

Community Rides Grant Program

Request for Proposals

Application Due Date: May 10, 2021

SUMMARY

Purpose	Funding Amount	Eligible Applicants
<p>This grant opportunity is intended to support transportation partnerships that improve social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities. Successful projects will help to reduce transportation as a barrier to independence and health at each stage of life and will increase awareness of transit's important role in the health of individuals and communities. Projects will improve access to critical needs like employment, healthcare, education, healthy food, social services, or recreation, as well as build the capacity of transit programs.</p> <p>This program will support projects that could be adapted nationwide. The projects will be shared nationally as promising practices. During the grant period of performance, technical assistance, training, and support will be provided to grantees.</p>	<p>NRTAP will award grants of up to \$100,000. There is no minimum grant award amount.</p> <p>These projects will be completed within 15 months of the grants being obligated.</p>	<p>Eligible applicants for awards are existing rural or tribal transit systems that receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) or Tribal Transit Program funding.</p> <p>Applicants must serve as the lead agency, and must have a written agreement – such as a memorandum of understanding or letter of intent – with one or more partner organizations that demonstrate their involvement in planning and implementing the proposed project.</p>

Key Dates:

- 3/11/21 Request for proposals (RFP) published
- 3/23/21 Informational webinar for interested applicants #1
- 4/7/21 SurveyMonkey Apply grant application portal opens by this date
- 4/15/21 Informational webinar for interested applicants #2
- 5/10/21 Grant application due date
- 6/18/21 Approximate date of grant award announcements
- 6/21/21 Grantees begin their work
- 9/30/22 End date of grant activity

PART I – GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Program Description:

Title 49 U.S.C. 5311(b)(3) authorizes the Secretary of Transportation “to make grants and contracts for transportation research, technical assistance, training and related support services in rural areas.” The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) provides a source of funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance projects and other support services tailored to meet the specific needs of transit operators in rural and tribal areas. The FTA is making approximately \$1.5 million in funds available, to be distributed by the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (NRTAP) as a competitive grant program. If more funding becomes available, additional projects may be selected. These funds will support projects that enhance and strengthen partnerships that increase mobility and improve social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities. Grants of up to \$100,000 each will be funded for up to fifteen (15) months.

Program Goals:

The Community Rides Grant Program goals are to:

1. Develop and strengthen partnerships between transit providers, community stakeholders and/or other agencies to increase mobility and improve the social determinants of health¹ in rural and tribal communities.
2. Fill gaps in service and reduce duplication to build transit services that are responsive to the needs and values of the community, in particular serving transportation disadvantaged populations affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency, opioid epidemic, or other economic, social, or health challenges.
3. Increase access to non-transit funding sources available to fund transportation and enhance service sustainability.
4. Document strategies for partnering and responding to community mobility needs, and share strategies and case studies nationally with rural and tribal transportation programs.

Outcomes:

Successful Community Rides projects will help to reduce transportation as a barrier to independence and health at each stage of life and will increase awareness of transit’s important role in the social determinants of health of individuals and communities. Projects will improve access to critical needs like employment, healthcare, education, healthy food, and/or recreation, as well as build the capacity of transit programs.

Project Objectives:

Proposals should demonstrate that they meet the following objectives:

¹ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion’s [Healthy People 2020 program](#) defines five main social determinants of health: “(1) Economic Stability, (2) Education, (3) Health and Health Care, (4) Neighborhood and Built Environment, and (5) Social and Community Context.”

1. **Directly linked to the health of the community.** Healthcare, housing, employment, education, healthy food, and recreation are part of a healthy life and healthy community. Your proposal needs to identify how your project improves the health of your community, the segments of the community your project is geared toward, and the community partners that support that target population.
2. **Scaled to the rural and tribal environment.** Rural, tribal, and regional strategies need to be implementable in communities with limited resources, long distances, and extremely low-population density.
3. **Innovative.** Is this a new strategy or partnership? Is it a tactic used for other purposes or populations but has not been used with rural or tribal transit programs or community partners? Is there existing documentation or would this be the first attempt to document this strategy for rural and tribal programs?
4. **Replicable.** Implementing and documenting approaches and actions can open these strategies for wider application. Every rural or tribal community is unique; however, shared strategies may be identified to meet access needs in communities facing similar challenges nationwide.
5. **Sustainable.** The proposed project should not require more resources than are available now or will be available when the project is successfully implemented. If there is an increase in service area or hours, document how this will be covered with existing grant programs or new partner programs, clients, agencies or employers.

Potential Projects:

Eligible projects under this grant program are any projects eligible under the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (49 USC Section 5311) that meet the Community Rides Grant Program goals and objectives, with the exception of vehicle purchases as well as expenses for existing transit services. Projects may range from improving existing services by adding hours, days, or modes to starting an employment transportation program or a mobility management program. Please refer to FTA Circular 9040.1G for more information about eligible projects and activities under the Section 5311 program.²

The following are additional examples of potential projects that increase mobility and improve social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities through partnerships:

- New or enhanced routes to increase access to healthcare, treatment and recovery, employment, shopping, social services, or other health-supportive destinations.
- Rural transportation management association (TMA) or employment vanpool.
- Feeder route for intercity/regional connectivity to increase access to jobs and medical care.
- Improving transportation information and trip planning capacity to increase awareness of existing transit services and improve the ease-of-use for riders.
- Implementing new technology to improve the efficiency of transit operations in order to increase or improve service.
- Consolidation of transit providers or operations to maintain/increase service capacity.

² FTA Circular 9040.1G - Formula Grants for Rural Areas: Program Guidance and Application Instructions, www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/formula-grants-rural-areas-program-guidance-and-application

Examples of identifiable project benefits are listed below. Each applicant will need to describe the benefits their project will provide and identify performance measures to be used to determine the success of the project.

- Increase in trips/ridership.
- New riders.
- Increase in travel options (times and destinations).
- Improved efficiency of transit operations and partnerships with new funding, enhancing the sustainability of services.
- More utilization of healthcare and addiction treatment, fewer missed appointments, and costs savings for healthcare providers.
- Increased access to employment and employees, less absenteeism, and increased productivity.

Eligible Applicants:

Eligible applicants for awards are existing recipients or sub-recipients under the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program ([49 U.S.C. Section 5311](#)) and Tribal Transit Program (49 USC 5311(c)).

Applicants should have no outstanding legal or financial issues. Applicants must serve as the lead agency and must have written agreements with one or more partner organizations that demonstrate their involvement in planning and implementing the proposed project. Written agreements may include memorandums of understanding (MOU) or letters of commitment. Further evidence of partnerships will be documentation of partner roles and responsibilities.

Partnerships:

The Community Rides Grant Program is focused on developing and strengthening partnerships in order to improve the availability, efficiency, and sustainability of transit services in rural and tribal communities, especially for transportation disadvantaged populations. Examples of potential partners include community stakeholders, such as employers, healthcare providers, community organizations, and chambers of commerce, as well as other transportation organizations.

In addition, the Community Rides Grant Program encourages cooperation among grantees of the 130 non-Department of Transportation (DOT) federal programs that fund human services transportation. A current list of these programs can be accessed at www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/ccam/about/ccam-program-inventory. Other partners or useful resources may be found in the Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) Rural Community Toolbox at www.ruralcommunitytoolbox.org.

Successful projects will work collaboratively to build partnerships and lasting improvements to public transit including but not limited to: formalizing relationships, convening partner agencies, planning and coordinating services, and leveraging resources with partner agencies.

Through working with community partners to assess and prioritize needs, transit programs may deploy improvements targeted by time and location to a part of the community but available to the general

public. For example, implementing increased hours or first mile/last mile strategies to increase access to healthcare or employment that focus on particular segments of the population may meet many needs in the broader community. Partners may provide vehicles but may need assistance managing vehicles and allocating capacity.

As part of the NRTAP Community Rides Grant Program, a project may include coordinating with or seeking additional funding through programs at other federal agencies or national organizations that are focused on rural health and economic development, such as those listed below. Access to transportation is critical to the success of these programs.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): State and Local Programs, such as the High Obesity Program (HOP) and Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/index.html)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Technical Assistance Programs such as Healthy Places for Healthy People and Local Foods, Local Places (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-small-towns-and-rural-communities#technicalassistanceprograms)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): Rural Development Programs (www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural Community Opioid Response Program (RCORP) (www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/rcorp) and Administration for Community Living (ACL) Grants (acl.gov/grants/open-opportunities)
- Veteran's Administration (VA): Veteran's hospital access through the Highly Rural Transportation Grants (www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vtp/highly_rural_transportation_grants.asp)
- National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) (www.nado.org/)

NRTAP encourages applicants to use a cost allocation model or methodology supported through technology (for example, the two-variable [Cost Allocation Calculator](#) developed by NRTAP or the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)'s [Cost Allocation Techniques for Community Transportation Course](#)) to identify proposed service costs and cost sharing between partners, if applicable.

NRTAP also encourages applicants to engage the appropriate State Departments of Transportation, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or other planning organizations in areas to be served by this project.

Deliverables:

1. Development and implementation of a project that improves the social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities through increased transportation access to employment, healthcare, education, healthy food, social services, and/or recreation.
2. New or stronger relationships with other transportation providers or partner organizations at the local, regional, state, and/or national level.

3. Monthly status updates, as well as a final report that documents the improvements to the transit system, the partnerships developed, the impacts on the community, and how the project has addressed the following objectives:
 - a. Directly linked to the health of the community;
 - b. Scaled to the rural and tribal environment;
 - c. Innovative;
 - d. Replicable; and
 - e. Sustainable.
4. Poster that visually summarizes the project, including the goals, community needs, partnerships, resources used, and outcomes, for presentation at a future in-person or virtual conference. (A template and technical assistance will be provided.)
5. Identification of opportunities to utilize alternative federal, state or local funding sources to sustain the innovative practices developed through this grant, as appropriate.

Project Milestones:

Applicants need to identify the milestones (key activities/achievements) appropriate to their project in the narrative section of the application form. In particular, within the first six months, projects must be able to demonstrate outcomes that support the grant program goals including, but not limited to, any of the following steps:

- Formalize community partnerships with MOUs or letters of agreement, if not already in place.
- Amend Coordinated Human Service Transportation plans.
- Integrate transportation needs into partner agency plans.
- Survey transportation needs across agencies within a community or region.
- Identify potential transportation strategies to support community needs, and share them with stakeholders.
- Finalize transportation improvement approaches ready for implementation.
- Identify communication and technology strategies to increase ease of access for travelers/community members to navigate and use transit or other modes to meet transportation needs.

Support and Technical Assistance:

NRTAP will provide support and technical assistance to grantees throughout the grant period of performance, including:

- Informational webinars during the grant application period (see below for more information).
- Provide a list of relevant resources (e.g., technical briefs, guidebooks, trainings) on the Community Rides web page to help in developing a proposal and implementing the project.
- Convene a virtual kick-off workshop for successful applicants.
- Facilitate peer exchange among grantees.

- Provide information and technical assistance to support grantees as appropriate, and make this information, including webinars, available to the public when possible.
- Track progress of grantees' work through reviews of monthly reports.
- Develop a final report for FTA that identifies how the partnerships and approaches developed by grantees through this program might be adopted by other Section 5311 recipients to achieve increased transportation access and healthier, more resilient rural and tribal communities.

Key Dates:

Applicants must submit completed proposals through the NRTAP online grant management portal at nationalrtap.smapply.io by 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time on May 10, 2021. The online grant portal will open on or before April 7, 2021. NRTAP will not accept mail or fax submissions. The approximate date for grant award announcements is June 18, 2021.

Informational Webinars:

Two webinars will be held to answer questions and provide an overview of this RFP and the online grant application portal. The webinars will also feature speakers who will share examples of transportation partnerships and lessons learned. During registration you can submit questions to be addressed during the webinar. Visit the Community Rides Grant Program page to register at www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants. Webinar recordings will be posted there also.

Webinar 1: Program Overview and Transportation Partnership Examples
March 23, 2021, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Webinar 2: Project Development, Performance Measures, and Application Portal Overview
April 15, 2021, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Contact Information:

Please visit the Community Rides Grant Program page at www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants for complete information about the program, helpful resources, and to sign up to receive updates. If you have questions about the Grant Program, please email Liz Taylor, NRTAP Assistant Director, at grants@nationalrtap.org.

Part II - Grant Award Information

Award Amounts:

There is no minimum grant award amount; however, **the maximum grant award will be \$100,000**. NRTAP intends to fund as many meritorious projects as possible.

Eligible Projects:

Eligible projects are any project eligible under the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (49 USC Section 5311), including the Tribal Transit Program (5311(c)) and Intercity Bus (5311(f)), that meets the Community Rides Grant Program goals and objectives. See above for examples of potential projects.

Funding Restrictions:

Community Rides Grant Program funds may be used for expenses eligible under FTA Section 5311, with the exception of vehicle purchases as well as expenses for existing services. Increases in hours, area, or frequency of existing services are eligible. Funds cannot be used to reimburse applicants for otherwise eligible expenses incurred prior to the selection of projects under this program, or to supplant funding for existing services.

Project Scalability:

NRTAP encourages applicants to identify scaled funding options in case insufficient funding is available to fund a project at the fully requested amount. If an applicant indicates that a project is scalable, the applicant must provide an appropriate minimum funding amount for the reduced project scope that will still achieve the grant program goals and deliverables. NRTAP may award a lesser amount regardless of whether the applicant provides a scalable option.

Cost Sharing or Matching:

Matching funds are not required, but applicants should identify any additional staff supports (including management) to be provided by the applicant/partner agencies, as well as other costs that the applicant/partner agencies will cover.

Furthermore, if additional sources of funding are essential to the success of the project, they must be identified and documentation must be provided to show that the outside funding can be used for this project. For example, if the project plans to use non-transit funding from one of the agencies listed on pages 4-5 above, the applicant must explain how they plan to secure that funding, if not currently available, and document that the funding is eligible for this purpose.

Award Information:

NRTAP will only reimburse for project costs incurred after selection and after the grant agreement is signed by both parties. NRTAP will issue specific guidance to recipients at the time of selection. Grant funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis after expenses are incurred. Monthly invoices must be submitted with proper documentation in order to be reimbursed.

Grant Management Requirements and Reporting:

Applicants must apply through NRTAP's online grant management portal (SurveyMonkey Apply) and must agree to adhere to FTA grant requirements. Grant recipients will be required to submit monthly project status updates and invoices with proper documentation of expenses in SurveyMonkey Apply. Recipients also must submit a final report to document the partnerships, planning and implementation strategies, outcomes, and lessons learned, so that others may benefit from these projects.

All applicants must identify project performance measures, and grant recipients will develop an evaluation plan in order to measure project success. An independent evaluation of the project may occur during and/or at the end of the grant program. NRTAP and FTA may request data to support

the independent evaluation and program report.

Standard Assurances:

By submitting an application, the applicant assures that it will comply with all applicable Federal statutes, regulations, executive orders, FTA circulars, and other Federal administrative requirements in carrying out any project supported by the FTA grant. The applicant acknowledges that it is under a continuing obligation to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement issued for its project. The applicant understands that Federal laws, regulations, policies, and administrative practices might be modified from time to time and may affect the implementation of the project. The applicant agrees that the most recent Federal requirements will apply to the project unless NRTAP issues a written determination otherwise. The applicant must submit the Certifications and Assurances before receiving a grant if it does not have current certifications on file with FTA.

Part III – Application Instructions

A. Application and Submission Information

Up-to-date information about this RFP, registration for the webinars, and additional resources can be obtained on the Community Rides Grant Program page at www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants. Applications must be submitted through NRTAP’s grant application and management portal at nationalrtap.smapply.io, which will open on or before April 7, 2021. Instructions for how to use the system will be provided when it opens and it will be covered in the second webinar.

A completed application consists of the following: **Grant Application Form** (Project Name, Applicant Information, Project Summary, Narrative); **Budget Forms** (Project Budget and Budget by Milestone); at least one **Partner Letter of Commitment**; a **Letter of Authorization** from the Transit Executive and/or Governing Board; and up to four **Letters of Support (optional)**. All required sections of the online application form must be completed.

Applicants may attach no more than 20 pages of additional supporting information that is directly related to the application and is referenced in the project narrative, such as excerpts of transportation plans with the relevant page number(s) noted.

All proposals must be completed and submitted online no later than 11:59pm Eastern Daylight Time on May 10, 2021. Proposals received after the due date and time, as well as those submitted by fax, mail or e-mail will be deemed non-responsive.

B. Eligibility Form

Before starting your online grant proposal, applicants will be required to answer these questions:

1. Is the lead applicant currently receiving FTA Section 5311 funding?
2. Do you have authorization from your transit agency’s executive and/or governing board to apply for this grant program and to implement the proposed project?
3. Do you have a letter or written agreement from a partner organization that commits to being

- involved in planning and implementing the proposed project?
4. Does your organization have any outstanding legal or financial issues?
 5. Does your proposal involve using these grant funds to purchase a vehicle?
 6. Will the funding from this grant supplant current funding for existing services?

C. Grant Application Form

All requested information must be provided in the online grant application portal at nationalrtpap.smapply.io, which will open on or before April 7, 2021. Below are all of the grant application questions, word limits, and other requirements that you will find in the online system.

Applicants are encouraged to provide clear and concise responses to all questions.

1. Project Name

Your application will be identified in the online system by the Project Name. You may use your agency name as the Project Name or choose a more descriptive name for your project.

2. Applicant Information

- a. Applicant Name (Agency/Organization Name), Address, Website (if applicable)
- b. Contact Information for Primary and Secondary Contacts: Name, Title, Phone, Email
- c. Agency/Organization Type: select all that apply; if Other, please provide specific information in the space provided.
 - i. Rural Transit Agency, Tribal Transit Agency, Small Urban Transit Agency, Regional Transit Authority, Transit District, Local or County Government, Community Action Program, Area Agency on Aging, State Department of Transportation, Other
- d. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- e. Congressional District, Representative, and Contact Information (Address, Phone, Email)
- f. FTA Region
- g. Service Area Geography
 - i. Brief description of the area: may include the percent urban/suburban/rural of the area, square mileage, and/or descriptors such as very spread out, rugged, mountain terrain, etc. that provides reviewers with a concise picture of the area. (30 words or less)
- h. Technical and Organizational Capacity:
 - i. How many years has the lead applicant been receiving Section 5311 funding?
 - ii. How many full-time equivalents (FTE) are employed at your organization, including drivers?
 - iii. What is the size of your fleet?
 - iv. How would you describe the applicant's technical and organizational capacity?
 - v. (Limited to 300 words)

3. Project Summary

- a. Provide a specific and concise overview of the project, the purpose (overall goal), objectives and the specific outcome(s) you expect to attain from the Community Rides Grant. Think of this as your elevator speech. (Limited to 100 words)

4. Narrative

Word limits are specified below and are incorporated in the online application.

- a. Which **project type** best describes your project? Select one or “Other.”
 - i. New or enhanced routes to increase access to healthcare, addiction treatment/recovery, employment, shopping, social services, or other health-supportive destinations.
 - ii. Transportation management association (TMA) or employment vanpool.
 - iii. Feeder route for intercity/regional connectivity to increase access to jobs and medical care.
 - iv. Improving transportation information and trip planning capacity to increase awareness of existing transit services and improve the ease-of-use for riders.
 - v. Implementing new technology to improve the efficiency of transit operations in order to increase/improve service.
 - vi. Consolidation of transit providers or operations to maintain/increase service capacity.
 - vii. Other (Please specify.)
- b. Provide a detailed **project description** that responds to the following questions:
 - i. What are the project goals and anticipated outcomes?
 - ii. What are the key project activities and milestones?
 - iii. What challenges do you expect to face with this project?
 - iv. How will you make the project successful? Be sure to identify your plans for marketing and outreach.
 - v. (Limited to 1,000 words)
- c. Provide a detailed **project timeline** by quarter (up to 15 months) for accomplishing the project goals and deliverables listed above. Be sure to address:
 - i. What will you do in the first 30 days to launch the project?
 - ii. What milestones do you plan to achieve in the first 2 quarters (6 months)?
 - iii. (Limited to 500 words)
- d. Describe the **need for the project** and the **project benefits**:
 - i. What need is the project responding to? Be specific and provide evidence if available (e.g., requests from stakeholders, rider feedback, other data).
 - ii. How will the project benefit the community? Be specific.
 - iii. Who is the target population/beneficiary for this project?
 - iv. (Limited to 500 words)
- e. Describe how the project supports the **Community Rides Grant Program goals** and how it meets the **project objectives** listed on pages 2-3 of this RFP. In particular:
 - i. How does the project improve transportation access and mobility to support the

- social determinants of health in the community?
 - ii. How is the project scaled to the rural and tribal environment?
 - iii. How is the project innovative?
 - iv. How is the project replicable?
 - v. How will the project be sustainable after this grant program is over? For example, how will ongoing costs for this project be funded in the future?
 - vi. (Limited to 1,000 words)
 - f. Identification of all **project partners** and their specific role in the project. For each committed project partner as well as potential partners, please provide:
 - i. Partner Contact Information (Organization, Staff Contact, Address, Phone, Email, Website)
 - ii. What is your current relationship with the partner?
 - iii. What is the partner's role in the project, including activities or milestones?
 - iv. (Limited to 500 words per partner)
 - g. Evidence that the project is **consistent with or coordinated with local, regional, or state plans**.
 - i. Is the project derived from a locally developed coordinated human services transportation plan and/or regional/statewide transit plan? Please explain.
 - 1. Please include links to the plan(s) or you may upload attachments
Provide direct page references whenever possible.
 - ii. If the project is not currently included in a plan, is amending the plan part of this proposed Community Rides Grant Program project? Please explain.
 - 1. Please upload a draft amendment as an attachment.
 - iii. (Limited to 400 words)
 - h. Identify specific **performance measures** the project will use to quantify actual outcomes against expected outcomes and/or to know whether the project was successful or not. (Each grantee will be required to submit reports utilizing those performance measures.)
 - i. List the performance measures you will use to evaluate the success of the project.
 - ii. List the data you will collect to measure project performance. (Examples include ridership data, data on missed appointments or employee absenteeism, etc.)
 - iii. (Limited to 500 words)
 - i. An explanation of the **scalability of the project** (if applicable)
 - i. Could the project scope be decreased in the case of insufficient funding? How?
 - ii. What is the minimum funding amount to achieve the scaled back project that still meets the program goals and deliverables?
 - iii. (Limited to 400 words)

5. Budget

- Budget Forms
 - Provide a **detailed project budget** and a **budget by milestone**, using the Budget

Forms template provided within the system. The amount of requested funding in each category must be specified on the form (see Line-Item Categories below).

- Be sure to include a description for all budget items. All expenses must be directly related to this project and cannot be used for existing services.
 - In no case may the Community Rides Grant Program budget requested exceed \$100,000
 - In the Outside Funding column, please identify any costs (e.g., personnel, office space, or other direct or indirect costs) that will be covered by the applicant and partner agency or by outside funding (e.g., additional grants or new program income). Please identify the funding sources in the Description field.
 - Budget Line-Item Categories:
 - Personnel costs should specify salary costs (hourly rate, number of staff, number of hours) and associated fringe benefits (and how fringe is calculated) to carry out project activities.
 - Travel costs are for staff travel and may include per diem for meals.
 - Consultant or contractor fees and travel anticipated by the applicant should be included as a separate category in the budget.
 - Operating costs for new or expanded service directly related to this project.
 - Capital costs directly related to this project (except vehicle purchases, which are ineligible).
 - Meeting/training costs may include the costs of holding one or more community forums plus costs associated with smaller collaborative meetings. Such costs may include space rental, copying materials, AV equipment rental, speaker fees/travel costs. Food/beverage costs associated with meetings are eligible.
 - Other direct costs may include office space rental/utilities (to be calculated based on personnel costs), telephone/fax, photocopying, printing, postage, project related supplies, computer/software/technology costs, marketing/media/outreach costs.
 - Indirect costs may be included in the budget. Details regarding how indirect costs are calculated, including a copy of the organization's approved Indirect Rate, must be submitted as part of the final budget that grantees must develop within two weeks of award notification.
- **Budget narrative** (Limited to 500 words)
 - a. How will the items in your budget (submitted using the Budget Forms) help you achieve the project goals?
 - b. If additional staff support or in-kind contributions will be provided by the applicant or partner agencies, describe them here.
 - c. If you are planning to utilize outside sources of funding for this project, in addition to the Community Rides Grant funds:
 - i. Explain the role of the outside funding in the project and how critical it is to the project's success.
 - ii. Describe the process of securing that funding, if it is not already available.

- iii. Provide documentation (may be uploaded as an attachment if necessary) that the outside funds can be used for this project.
- iv. Explain how you would adjust the project if the outside funds are not secured.

6. Letters of Commitment, Authorization, and Support

- All applicants must upload at least one letter of commitment from a key partner organization for this project.
 - The letter(s) should specifically describe the planned role of the partner in the proposed project, anticipated support (including monetary or in-kind support) to be provided, if applicable, and a list of anticipated project activities in which the partner will be involved.
 - Any changes to the proposed partnerships will require NRTAP's advance approval and must be consistent with the scope of the approved project.
- Applicants must upload a Letter of Authorization from the Transit Agency Executive and/or Governing Board (or similar) to verify that they have the authority and full support of their agency to apply for this grant and implement the proposed project.
- (Optional) Applicants may also upload up to four letters of support from other allied organizations and stakeholders, including institutions, companies, organizations, or government agencies. Although support at all levels (local to federal) is valuable, support at the local level is most important.

Part IV – Application Review

A. Incomplete Proposals

Incomplete or non-responsive proposals will not be considered. Only proposals that meet the Minimum Criteria detailed below will be reviewed.

Minimum criteria used to determine acceptability of application:

All applications received will be screened to determine acceptability. ALL of the criteria listed below must be met, or the proposal will not be considered for review.

1. Application submitted by eligible organization.
2. Application received by the deadline.
3. Application submitted electronically.
4. Application is complete (Grant Application Form, Budget Forms, at least one Partner Letter of Commitment, Letter of Authorization, and up to four Letters of Support (optional)).
5. Request for funding does not exceed \$100,000.
6. Project funding will not be directly used to purchase a vehicle.
7. Project funding will not be used to supplant current funding for existing services.

B. Explanation of Ratings and Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be rated on the basis of Highly Recommended (HR), Recommended (R) or Not Recommended (NR) in the following five areas listed below. The Review Committee will consider the following questions as part of the evaluation process, in addition to how clearly and completely the applicants respond to each question in the application.

1. Demonstration of need.

- How well does the application demonstrate a specific need?
- How well does the proposed project address the stated need?
- How significant is the need that this project aims to address?
- Whose needs are being addressed by this project?

2. Demonstration of benefits and fulfillment of the program goals and project objectives.

- How well does the application detail the benefits of the project?
- How significant are the benefits of the proposed project?
- Who will benefit from the proposed project?
- How well does the proposed project support each of the program goals?
 - Develop and strengthen partnerships between transit providers, community stakeholders and/or other agencies to increase mobility and improve the social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities.
 - Fill gaps in service and reduce duplication to build transit services that are responsive to the needs and values of the community, in particular serving transportation disadvantaged populations affected by the pandemic, opioids crisis, or other economic, social, or health challenges.
 - Increase access to non-transit funding sources that can fund transportation and support service sustainability.
 - Document strategies for partnering and responding to community mobility needs, and share strategies nationally with rural and tribal transportation programs.
- How well does the proposed project meet each of the following objectives?
 - Directly linked to the health of the community;
 - Scaled to the rural and tribal environment;
 - Innovative;
 - Replicable; and
 - Sustainable.

3. Planning, partnerships, and community support.

- How strong are the partnerships described in the application?
- How strong is the community support for the project?
- How well does the proposed project incorporate meaningful ongoing involvement from key stakeholders and the target audience of the project?
- How well does the proposed project align with existing local, regional or statewide plans?
Or if proposing a plan amendment, how well does the amendment align with existing plans?

- How inclusive is the existing or proposed planning for this project (i.e., involving diverse stakeholders, in particular from underrepresented populations)?

4. Technical and organizational capacity of the applicant.

- To what degree does the applicant have the technical capacity to implement the project?
- How feasible is the proposed project, including the goals, budget, timeline, and performance measures?
- How likely is it that the proposed project will succeed?
- How does this project support the sustainability of its goals beyond the grant term?
- Is local funding available for this project?
- If outside funding is necessary for project implementation, has that funding been secured?

5. Project readiness.

- How well does the application describe the project timeline and milestones, in particular for the first 30 days and first six months?
- How reasonable is the timeline of the proposed project?
- How well thought-out is the project? For example, how well do the goals, timeline, and budget align?
- How well did the applicant identify potential challenges and how they would respond to those challenges?

C. Review and Selection Process

A Review Committee made up of NRTAP staff will evaluate proposals based on the above evaluation criteria. Only applications that meet the minimum criteria will be reviewed. Each acceptable application will be reviewed independently by at least three members of the Review Committee. Recommendations for selection will be reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration.

The review committee will make recommendations for funding based on the following guidelines:

- Applications rated as Highly Recommended (HR) are those that receive HR on 5 out of 5 evaluation criteria and receive no NR ratings.
- Applications rated as Recommended (R) are those that receive R or HR on 4 out of 5 evaluation criteria and receive no more than 1 NR rating.
- Applications rated as Not Recommended (NR) are those that receive an NR rating in 2 or more evaluation criteria.

In determining the allocation of program funds, NRTAP may consider geographic diversity, diversity in the size of the transit systems receiving funding, and the applicant's receipt of other competitive awards.