

Webinar Transcript: FTA Enhancing Mobility Innovation FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Webinar Date and Time: Thursday, August 1, 2024 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

Funding Opportunity Webpage: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/notices-funding/fiscal-year-2024-enhancing-mobility-innovation-notice-funding>

Gwo-Wei Torng (00:00:02 – 00:01:13)

Happy. Thursday, everyone. We're in the transit industry. So we start the webinar on time. We will conclude the webinar on time hopefully. If you have some creative ideas to accelerate mobility innovations for transit and enhance traveler experience, this is the webinar for you. If you're interested in opportunities to partner with FTA (Federal Transit Administration) to demonstrate solutions, to remove stress, anxiety or uncertainty from our day-to-day travel, you are at the right place.

My name is Gwo-Wei Torng. I am the director for the Federal Transit Administration's Mobility Innovation Office. Welcome to the Enhancing Mobility Innovation Competitive Funding Opportunity Webinar.

Joining us today from the FTA executive team is Molly King. Molly is our Deputy Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration, and Innovation. Molly, the floor is yours.

Molly King (00:01:13 – 00:03:14)

Thank you so much, Gwo-Wei, and hello to everyone. My name is Molly King, and as Gwo-Wei shared, I'm the Deputy Associate Administrator in FTA's office of Research Demonstration and Innovation. We're so excited to see your interest in this funding opportunity. Thank you for taking time out of your day to be here and to learn more about this program.

A little bit about our team. We are one of the FTA offices based in our headquarters in Washington, DC. Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation which includes the Office of Mobility Innovation, which is where Gwo-Wei and his team sit.

Our mission at FTA's research office is to enhance America's communities through public transportation, and our team is dedicated to accelerating innovations that improve safety, promote equitable mobility, refine transit operations, and support clean energy initiatives.

Investing in research and demonstration programs such as this program, the Enhancing Mobility Innovation program, is crucial for advancing and transforming transit and mobility, supporting riders nationwide, and the agencies and organizations that serve them.

Over the past 8 years, the FTA has committed more than 46 million dollars to mobility innovation through various research and demonstration projects across the US.

These efforts have led to significant advancements and technologies and solutions that benefit both transit systems and communities, and we have high expectations for this program as well.

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We're excited to announce that this funding round for the Enhancing Mobility Innovation program will allocate an additional 1.6, excuse me, 1.96 million dollars towards public transportation innovation. Again, that's an additional 1.96 million dollars.

We hope this webinar will help you in developing thoughtful proposals that drive industry progress and benefit our communities. We look forward to reviewing your applications and wish you the best of luck.

I'll pass it back to Gwo-Wei. Thank you.

Gwo-Wei Torng (00:03:14 - 00:09:09)

Thank you, Molly. Before we dive into the specifics of this Enhancing Mobility Innovation funding opportunity, let's briefly touch on a broader view of the Federal Transit Administration to provide some context. Hopefully the information is useful, in particular for those of us who are less familiar with FTA to better understand this competitive research funding opportunity.

Next slide. It's good. Excuse me, I need to be able to verify which slide I'm looking at. Can you turn to the previous? Okay. Sorry, Natalie.

FTA mission vision and values. At FTA, we have a mission is to improve America's communities through public transportation. With that we establish our vision to be a better quality of life for all built on public transportation excellence. With the mission and values, we develop our core values to be the 5: service, integrity, innovation, sustainability, and equity. Next slide, please.

When we translate FTA's mission, vision and values to our research portfolio, FTA's mobility innovation research portfolio strives to support a vision for carefree mobility for all. As I mentioned at the beginning, the stress, the anxiety, and uncertainty. We don't want any of those, therefore, we shoot for carefree mobility for all, and safe, reliable, equitable, and accessible mobility systems that support complete trips for all travelers everywhere.

With that in mind. Our research effort collectively seeks to foster innovative transit technologies, practices, and solutions. We strive to support research of national significance that advances the state of the practice. We leverage private sector innovation, and we want to ensure all travelers and communities can benefit. Next slide, please.

Here's some highlights and evolution of recent FTA investment in mobility innovation demonstrations to continue to push the envelope and accelerate transformation in public transportation. Starting with MOD (Mobility on Demand) Sandbox in 2016, with IMI, Integrated Mobility Innovation, AIM, Accelerating Innovative Mobility, and now, Enhancing Mobility Innovation.

Many of us in the audience are probably our partners in one or more of this demonstration programs. Let's also be clear, FTA's mobility innovation research portfolio expands beyond just demonstrations. Examples include foundational research, development of metrics, independent evaluations, stakeholder engagement, knowledge transfer and technical assistance. Next slide, please.

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On August 9th, 2022, FTA announced project selections of nine projects totaling 4 million dollars for the previous round of Enhancing Mobility Innovation competitive funding opportunity. For your reference, this slide shows the distributions of award sizes and recipient organizations. You can find more information about this previous round of EMI, again, Enhancing Mobility Innovation, on the FTA website. And I will add that link to the chat room shortly.

Next slide, please. With that I will turn the floor to my teammate, Natalie Covill-Fontaine, who manages this EMI program, and she will go through this EMI NOFO, Notice of Funding Opportunity, in greater detail.

Natalie, please take it away.

Natalie Covill-Fontaine (00:09:09 - 00:19:39)

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Thanks, Gwo-Wei, and thank you everybody for being here today. As Gwo-Wei said, my name is Natalie Covill-Fontaine from FTA's research office. Today I'm going to highlight some key information from the Enhancing Mobility Innovation funding opportunity.

So the Enhancing Mobility Innovation competitive funding opportunity was published on July 1st in the Federal Register. And highlighted here we see the submission deadline is on August 30th, 2024. So please get your applications in by that deadline.

There is a total of \$1,936,000 available in two project areas. The first project area is concept development and/or demonstration projects that accelerate mobility innovation. And the second available area is software development projects that facilitate demand response public transportation.

This program implements two provisions of the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act that directs FTA to fund projects in these two areas.

We are seeking projects that require a minimum of \$400,000 in Federal funding to ensure the most impactful projects, and the maximum award that one project may receive is \$968,000.

For more information on the NOFO, please see our website that's linked here, and we'll pop it in the chat as well for you.

So that first area I talked about, \$968,000 is available for concept development and/or demonstration projects. And here we're looking for projects that improve mobility and enhance the rider experience with a focus on innovative service delivery models, creative financing, novel partnerships, and integrated payment solutions.

And these funding, funding proposals for this project area can be for concept development and/or demonstrations of innovative mobility ideas.

The second project area under this NOFO is software development projects and \$968,000 is available for this program area, for projects that facilitate integrated demand response public transportation services, that dispatch public transportation fleet vehicles through riders' mobile devices or other advanced means.

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And here we're looking for software products that are interoperable, that support open standards, and can be shared with other transit providers. And the software should be adaptable, secure, and able to be integrated into other transportation and transit management systems.

So who is eligible to apply for this NOFO? Providers of public transportation, including transit agencies, state or local government departments of transportation, and federally recognized Indian tribes. State, city or local government entities, including multi-jurisdictional partnerships and metropolitan planning organizations. Private for-profit organizations. Not for profit organizations, and other institutions and organizations, such as research consortia and institutions of higher education, including large research universities and those with minority serving institution status.

We encourage partners. Applicants may identify one or more project partners with a substantial interest and involvement in the project. And if an application with a partnership is selected for funding, the competitive selection process will be deemed to satisfy the requirements of the Federal competitive procurement process for any named partners on the application.

So what can you do with this funding? Some eligible activities may include, but are not limited to, concept development and/or demonstration project activities can be project planning activities, equipment and services, modeling such as climate and equity impacts of innovation, and engagement and outreach activities.

For the software development projects, eligible activities may include determining user needs, defining system requirements, developing, validating and verifying the tools, and pilot implementation of the software.

A bit more about the types of projects that we're seeking with the Enhancing Mobility Innovation notice of funding opportunity. We are seeking innovative projects that are traveler focused, that support evolving mobility needs, that advance equitable and climate-smart transportation, that contribute to knowledge of national significance, that improve public transportation service, and that advance the vision of carefree mobility for all.

Some examples of potential projects include those on screen here. And I'll tell you a little bit about these. Data tools to enable climate smart-choices. So this idea is data driven strategies or tools that balance mobility options available to travelers with climate-smart choices. Payment integration projects, seamless payment systems and solutions that can enhance integrated mobility management and operations across a variety of modes.

Novel partnerships, collaboration between transit partners and non-traditional partners, focused on new or better ways of supporting how transportation is delivered and consumed. New, smarter business models for providing more effective transportation and enhanced mobility in underserved communities, and artificial intelligence tools to personalize mobility options to travelers or predict traveler behavior.

These examples are illustrative and not meant to limit you exploring other fresh, innovative approaches.

And we're looking for any project idea that advances the objectives of this funding opportunity mentioned earlier, that is, projects that will advance the rider experience, help agencies meet evolving

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mobility needs, advance equitable and climate-smart transportation, and advance carefree mobility for all.

It's up to the applicants to look at what areas can and be enhanced, what novel partnerships are possible, and what insights your project can deliver to advance mobility.

So how are the projects going to be structured. There is a 20% local cost share minimum. The Federal share of the total project cost cannot exceed 80%, and projects are structured on a cost-reimbursable basis. In terms of partners, as we said earlier, project partners may be named in the application, and we do encourage that.

And in terms of implementation, FTA will award cooperative agreements to successful applicants that will be managed as FTA research grants. We ask that project teams support and coordinate with FTA's independent evaluation efforts to maximize learning from these projects.

We do not prescribe a project implementation timeline, and nor is one specified in the NOFO. The timeline of your projects should reflect the complexity and urgency of the proposed research effort, and we recognize that project timelines will look different across different types of projects. For more information about project implementation. Please see FTA research circular 6100.1E, that has all the information about project implementation.

So how are we going to evaluate your projects? Here are the 6 categories that are equally weighted criteria for evaluation for the technical evaluation. All 6 of these criteria are detailed in the notice of funding opportunity, and I encourage all applicants to thoughtfully consider the evaluation criteria language listed in the NOFO when you're crafting your proposals.

These 6 areas are: demonstration of innovation, demonstration of benefit, project team and partners, local financial commitment, project implementation strategy, and technical, legal, and financial capacity.

Technical evaluation review teams will be composed to Federal staff and will evaluate your proposals based on the published evaluation criteria mentioned previously, that's identified in the NOFO, and then we'll provide technical recommendations to leadership based on those criteria.

FTA may also consider the extent to which applications promote key priorities of executive order 13990, which aims to promote clean energy, conservation and environmental justice, emphasize scientific integrity and evidence-based decision making and mitigate climate change and prioritize environmental sustainability.

FTA may also consider applicants' geographic diversity, diversity of recipient type or size, and may cap the amount a single applicant may receive.

So we will talk a little bit more about application documents shortly, but I want to call attention to the fact that your application will primarily be evaluated based on two documents. Screenshots of them are shown on screen. First, and most importantly, the supplemental form. This is the basis for rating the six technical evaluation criteria. That's a screenshot on the bottom.

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And, secondly, the project overview, which is a one-page document with key project information on the following areas: innovation, benefits, team and partners, and approach. And that's the screenshot on the top.

Please ensure that you thoughtfully and thoroughly complete these documents, and that you consult the previously mentioned evaluation criteria language as you complete your proposal.

And we'll soon go over where to find these documents and instructions for submitting them.

With that I will turn it over to my colleague, Johnita Glover, from the Office of Program Management to tell us more about the application process.

Johnita Glover (00:19:39 - 00:29:12)

Thank you, Natalie. All right. So this portion of the webinar will provide an orientation on the resources available to you, the applicant, on FTA website, grants.gov website, and on the application process. Next slide, please.

Okay, so FTA funded opportunities are published on the FTA website, the Federal Register, and on the grants.gov website. And we recommend you begin your search on the FTA notice of funding opportunities webpage. Using the NOFO page as your start will provide links to related information, websites, and other resources that will assist you in the application process.

And you can locate the NOFO page by visiting the FTA homepage, which is at fta.dot.gov. And once you are there you can select funding, which is at the top of the page, and then select applying. You will then see the notice of funding link on the left side of the page. The notice of funding page will provide links to all the current or active FTA opportunities available. And the opportunity ID is hyperlinked to the FTA NOFO webpage.

And if you click on a grant program link, that will bring you to the program page, which is sponsoring the discretionary funding. Next slide, please.

Okay. So as mentioned. The FTA NOFO page contains a summary of the opportunity announcement, important dates such as the application deadline, a brief explanation of eligibility requirements, and the link to grants.gov. Additionally, it has the FTA supplemental form, Federal register notice, and any other relevant information about FTA programs.

You can navigate directly to the grants.gov site by selecting a blue hyperlink opportunity ID. Next slide, please.

So once you select the blue hyperlink opportunity ID, you will be taken to the grants.gov site. The grants.gov grant opportunity page contains 4 tabs, and those tabs are the synopsis, version history, related documents, and a package tab that I'll go over briefly.

And this is also the location where you can begin to apply for the funding opportunity.

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Okay, so the synopsis tab provides similar information which we publish on the FTA website, and it also provides key dates and related regulatory references. The version history tab will show a history of any changes made since the original announcement.

And the related documents tab will lead you to a folder which contains documents related to that funded opportunity, and it includes such items as the Federal Register notice, the FTA supplemental form, or any other related documents.

And last, the package tab contains the references and links to download and apply for the opportunity. And I will just note that anyone can download the application package, but only those individuals who have been designated in grants.gov as the Authorized Organizational Representative can submit the application. Next slide, please.

So this slide just shows the contents of the application package in grants.gov. Which includes the mandatory SF-424, the lobbying form, and the attachment form used to attach supporting materials for the application.

It does not include the FTA supplemental form. And also to note the yellow banner displayed in a screenshot is an Adobe compatibility check on the site. And that's to ensure that you are using the correct version and software packages to submit your application. And the site also provides the opportunity to download the software if needed.

So if you encounter any technical issues when submitting your application, it could be that you're just using an incorrect Adobe Acrobat software other than was specified in grants.gov. Next slide, please.

Okay, so this slide depicts a screenshot of the FTA supplemental form. Each opportunity has its own form, so the supplemental form must be downloaded separately from the FTA site or within the related documents tab. And the form is to be attached to the application or the attachment form.

The attachment form is a way for you to include documents to support your application. The supplemental form is a fillable PDF which is an FTA product, and it is used to capture the key elements of your proposal. The form contains fill-in blanks for information, which will be used by FTA to evaluate the proposed projects and funding requested. The form must be attached to the application in grants.gov in order to receive consideration.

And we ask that you do not use forms for other programs, or from prior years, or attempt to create your own PDF in lieu of the supplemental form that we provide for the opportunity. Again, please use only the current forms provided on the FTA website or what's in grants.gov. We also ask that you do not attempt to attach images or scan copies of the supplemental form.

And again, a PDF form must be completed with typed text and attached to the application in grants.gov. Next slide, please.

Okay. Another part of the application is the project overview template, and it is included in the grants.gov download package. Please fill out the template with key project information on one page, and also please attach the project overview to the attachment form shown when submitting your when submitting your application and grants.gov. Next slide.

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So applicants who have previously applied in grants.gov must visit grants.gov and select the applicants tab. The grants.gov site assists organizations with the registration process, and with the system for award management, which is SAM, and with obtaining a UEI registration which is formally the DUNS number.

And so those applicants who have previously applied, we still encourage you to review the applicants tab, and that's just to make sure that you have the latest information about the application process.

The applicants tab will walk you through the process of registering at grants.gov, as well as help to make sure you have the correct or compatible version of Adobe Acrobat. And the site also provides training on the use of grants.gov if needed. Next slide.

Okay, so during the application process, your registered organization can create a workspace in which your grant proposal team can collaborate in developing the application. And those assigned individuals can collaborate, share files, and perform various tasks to develop the application. And this is also the location where the Authorized Organization Representative can submit the completed application in grants.gov.

We ask that you please review the workspace information and identify the type of workspace and team members who will prepare your application. Also review the roles and privileges. And just remember that only the Authorized Organization Representative can submit the application.

FTA is accepting applications submitted via grants.gov from organizations only and not individuals. And again, organizations must be registered in grants.gov and all information and pertinent links are available on the applicants tab. Next slide. Next slide, please.

Okay. So lastly, if you encounter any technical issues while working on the application or submitting the application, again, please check your Adobe aAcrobat compatibility. However, if we do ask you to please address any other technical issues or concerns to grants.gov directly.

And if you have any program related questions, we ask that you address those to the FTA program manager specified. And so with that I will pass it back over to Natalie. Thank you.

Natalie Covill-Fontaine (00:29:17 -

Thank you so much, Johnita, and thanks everybody. We have now gotten to the question section of the Webinar. Thank you for your patience and listening skills going through all that other part of the webinar. Please submit your questions using the Q&A button below.

And before we start answering your questions, I'm going to introduce to you my colleague, Urvi Vallapareddy, who is going to help me go over some frequently asked questions that we've received from you all in the last month or so. And the frequently asked questions are going to be in the categories you see on the screen. So about eligibility, partnerships, review and selection process, project requirements, and about applying to the program. Kick it to you, Urvi.

(00:30:04)

Urvi Vallapareddy: Thank you, Natalie. Our first question on eligibility is, my agency has already received FTA funding from another grant program. Can we still apply for this Enhancing Mobility Innovation funding?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Yes, you are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Please note that Federal funds made available under an FTA award may not be used as the non-federal contribution towards costs under another FTA award.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our next question is, we are not an existing FTA funds recipient. Are we still eligible to apply?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Yes, you are eligible to apply. You do not need to be an existing FTA grantee to compete for this NOFO. However, please note that if you are not an existing FTA grantee, you will need to become one if selected for an award, and will be responsible for compliance with any applicable Federal requirements, as noted in the notice of funding opportunity.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our next question is, my agency service area includes both urban and rural areas. Should we apply as an urban or rural area?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: On the NOFO supplemental form, you may select multiple service area types like large urban, small urban or rural, that are appropriate for your specific project location.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our next question is on project partners. The question is, can a private company or other organization be listed as a partner on more than one application?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Yes, an organization or entity can be designated as a partner on multiple applications and may be a part of multiple successful project awards.

Urvi Vallapareddy: My company already has a transit agency partner for this funding opportunity. Which entity should submit the application?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So it's entirely up to you. It's your business decision which entity should serve as the applicant for this opportunity. So as long as the lead entity meets application eligibility criteria under the NOFO you should be good to go. Only one entity will be the lead entity that will submit the application, and if selected for the award, that entity will enter into an agreement directly with FTA and the other entity a partner under that agreement.

Urvi Vallapareddy: My company would like to participate in the program as a project partner, but we do not know who to partner with. Will FTA be able to help?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Unfortunately, FTA currently does not have a mechanism to facilitate partnering, but we encourage all potential applicants and public and private partners to reach out to each other to form teams for this competition.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Next, can my organization submit more than one application within the same project areas, such as software development?

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Natalie Covill-Fontaine: An organization may submit more than one application. Each application should be submitted individually in grants.gov as separate submissions with distinct supplemental forms. Should an organization choose to submit multiple applications, it's advised that each application has different project titles to clearly indicate they are not duplications or resubmissions.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And is it required to have a partner?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So we encourage applicants to identify one or more project partners, but we do not require it. We will also note that if you do name a project partner in your application, then that will count for the competitive procurement process for partnerships. So that's something to consider.

Urvi Vallapareddy: We are in the process of looking, or rather forming partnerships, can we indicate the types of partners we are looking for without naming partners, and can we name partners after our application is selected for funding?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So naming your partner is not required, but again encouraged. Please note that oh, I just said this, but please note that if an application that identifies a partnership is selected for funding, the competitive selection process for this NOFO will be deemed sufficient to satisfy the requirement for competitive procurement, and it will not be applicable if partners are identified after project selection.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our next question is on review and selection processes, so first, do certain review criteria receive more weight than others?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: The 6 evaluation criteria that we went over earlier are equally weighted.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And has it been determined when project selections will be announced?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: We do not unfortunately know a specific date when project selections will be announced, but based on some of our research, recent research program funding opportunities, we estimate that project selections might be announced between 4 and 6 months following the application deadline. But that timing is subject to change.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Can FTA give me feedback on my idea before I submit a proposal?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So we cannot give specific feedback about individual project ideas during the competitive application process. It's entirely your decision whether or not to apply for the funding opportunity. And as you build out your project idea, we encourage you to read the NOFO carefully and pay close attention to eligibility information and the evaluation criteria.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our next couple of questions are around project structure and requirements. So first, what is the period of performance of projects?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So the NOFO does not specify a project duration, and that's on purpose. Given that the notice seeks various project types that range from software development, to development of novel operational concepts, to mobility innovation demonstration efforts, the project durations are going to vary. But I will note that one of the 6 evaluation criteria that we use to assess proposals is the project implementation strategy.

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And this criterion considers the extent to which the applicant's proposed implementation plans are reasonable and complete, and that is going to include project milestones and the overall project timeline. So we will further consider if the project's implementation strategy addresses how the project will support FTA's independent evaluation efforts, data access, and sharing of project results.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And next, what is the expected start date of projects, if selected?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Once project selections are announced, we work with the recipient to develop the competitive, or cooperative agreement and award the funds. Typically a project will start from a few weeks to a few months following the FTA announcement of project selections. This time mostly varies due to individual recipients' conditions; for instance, a recipient that is not a current FTA recipient will have to become one first with a separate review and approval process required before project funds may be obligated.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And next, what are eligible expenses and activities under the program?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So eligible expenses for Enhancing Mobility Innovation projects are based on the program's authorizing statute, which is 49 USC 5312, and government wide cost principles for Federal awards, which are listed under 2 CFR 200.400 through 200.476. Furthermore, as Enhancing Mobility Innovation projects are research and development efforts, FTA research circular 6100.1E provides detailed guidance on administration of the program, including on eligible expenses, and we'll encourage you to look at Chapter 5. Financial management. Eligible activities include all activities leading to the development and implementation of the project, such as planning, developing business models, obtaining equipment and services, acquiring or developing software and hardware interfaces to implement the project, and other project specific expenses.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And are in kind expenses eligible to meet cost share requirements under the program?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Yes, it is possible to use local match to meet all or a portion of the cost share requirements, if the cost share meets criteria for eligible sources of non-federal match. And we detail those in that same circular FTA circular 6100.1E.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And next, how will software developed under this program be handled?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Those software products that are going to be developed under this program are subject to the provision of FTA's master agreement. And we can pop a link to that, maybe. And they may be, and the software products may be disseminated to public transit agencies for their use.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Our last questions are on applying for the funding opportunity. So first we have, can I submit my application by mail or as an email attachment?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So you cannot. You must submit your application electronically through grants.gov for the application to be considered for funding.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And what forms are required to apply? Can I include other information?

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Natalie Covill-Fontaine: Yes. So a complete proposal submission is going to consist of 3 forms: the SF 424, which is the application for Federal assistance, the Enhancing Mobility Innovation supplemental form, and the one page project overview. All of these documents can be downloaded at grants.gov, and please only use the latest version of the SF 424 that is found on grants.gov. Your complete application must include all responses to all sections of form SF 424, the application for Federal assistance, the supplemental form, and the project overview form.

You may include optional supporting information with the submission, such as letters of support, project budgets or excerpts from relevant planning documents. And if you are going to attach other forms there, we ask you to list them in the attachment form that we went over on grants.gov to attach to your application. And to apply you must submit your complete application, including all forms, through the grants.gov site, as we do not have the ability to accept proposals outside of the system.

Urvi Vallapareddy: Next, how do I access the supplemental form?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: The supplemental form is designed to be filled out digitally, and it must be opened using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader available free from adobe's website or another compatible PDF reader. The form may not load on all browser viewers, and you may receive an error message if you attempt to open the form in your browser. So, we suggest that you save the PDF onto a file on your computer. You can do that by right clicking on the supplemental form PDF link on the supplemental form page and choose, save link as, and then save it somewhere you can find it, and then open it up using Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Urvi Vallapareddy: And then next, we did not see information on the maximum or desired page length for the proposal, beyond the two fillable PDF forms and the overview template. What is the page length for the proposal?

Natalie Covill-Fontaine: So, we do not have a page limit for proposals. Along with the SF 424 form, which mostly requests administrative and organizational information, the supplemental form is the main tool we use to collect details on project proposals. It's important that you're able to meaningfully convey your proposed project through the supplemental form, as your proposed projects are primarily evaluated on responses provided in that form. You can attach, as we said, you can attach additional materials in grants.gov to your application package, like funding documents, technology brochures, maps, letters of support, etc. But these are not required elements of the application, and we ask that you please directly reference any additional documents on the supplemental form, including the file name where the additional information can be found.

Natalie Covill-Fontaine (00:42:45 – 00:43:10)

I think that's it for our prepared questions. We can take some audience questions now if we have any.

Gwo-Wei Torng (00:43:15 – 00:43:56)

And I encourage you all to continue to post your questions, and we are doing our best to answer them. And also, just up to this point I do want to share that some of the questions probably require additional

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clarification. So we can be, we can better understand and be helpful to your, to your question. So in that case we will reach out to you separately. Again, this is a time for all of you have any questions to post in the in the in the Q and A. And we have a team of colleagues to respond to those questions as fast as we can.

Natalie Covill-Fontaine (00:44:12 – 00:59:09)

I can go through and answer some of these live. Okay, let's see.

So one question is, is the US Department of Energy National Lab an eligible partner, and can we lead the application? So I'm wondering if you mean, can the DOE National Lab lead the application there? You are certainly an eligible partner. And we can get back to you on whether or not you can lead the application. Maybe send us an email. Thank you.

Okay, and we got a question, what's the timeline for a response? Is it a few weeks or months? And by that I assume you mean the timeframe for the selection. As I said a little bit ago, I think, we can't really predict what the exact timeline will be, but based on previous research programs, it's probably about 4 to 6 months following the close of the NOFO, but that timeline is subject to change.

Okay, somebody asked, how competitive is the grant application of new projects with previously awarded Enhancing Mobility Innovation projects?

I'm reading this two ways. So one way is like how competitive was the last time you did the Enhancing Mobility Innovation NOFO. The other way I can read it is like, how competitive would you be if you were a previous Enhancing Mobility Innovation applicant.

So to answer it the first way, the previous round was quite competitive. I don't remember the exact statistics of how many people applied, but I believe it was many times over the number of awards we gave. And if you are a previous Enhancing Mobility Innovation recipient, and you would like to propose a new project, that that would be wonderful. Also, if you would like to build on to a previously awarded grant, we do encourage that. That would be a competitive application.

When is the last date for submission? So the NOFO closes on August 30th at 11:59 PM Eastern time. So please take that to account if you are not in Eastern time.

We got a question, are there a minimum or maximum amount of recipients that you will grant awards to? Yes, sort of. So the maximum or the, the maximum amount of recipients that you will grant awards to that would be two. So one award under each of those funding categories. So one under the concept development and demonstration and one under the software development sections. And minimum will, the floor for funding is \$400,000, so that can give you a little insight onto how many recipients will choose.

Okay. Okay, how many awards were given out last year? So the last Enhancing Mobility Innovation NOFO, we selected projects for that in 2022, and we awarded what was it 9 awards? Yes, 9 projects for 4 million dollars in awards. And that was actually a combination of FY 21 and FY 22 funding. So that's why we were able to select so many projects.

(00:49:06)

Thank you for all your questions. Everybody. We have about 10 more minutes, so.

Okay, where can we see project examples or past projects that were awarded?

So if you go onto our website, which I think is conveniently in in the chat for everybody, you can check out our Enhancing Mobility Innovation program page. And we have a link there to previous project selections.

Okay, maximum award? So the maximum award will be \$968,000. And that would be for one of those two funding areas. So the software or the concept development and/or demonstration.

Okay. Okay, somebody asked. Can we submit one single application for both areas? So both the concept development and the software development? No, those would have to be separate applications. You're free to apply for both areas if you wish, but those will need to be separate applications.

Okay. Somebody asked. The webinar mentioned a cooperative agreement. And to kindly repeat that instruction. So I can go ahead and repeat what I said, there. Okay. So for successful applicants, FTA will award cooperative agreements. And those are managed as FTA research grants. That's just a type of agreement that we use to work with grantees. It's a little bit more involvement from the FTA staff side than a typical grant would be.

Okay. Somebody asked, can applicants apply for outreach or engagement to increase the use of an existing mobile app? And I would say that that does sound like an eligible activity based on the, what you provided here, as outreach and engagement activities are eligible activities. And if that existing mobile app is to encourage transit use or encourage mobility in some way, then I think that that sounds like an eligible project. But you can email me for specifics if you're curious for more.

Okay, are letters of support from interested government agencies who are not project partners considered favorable in evaluating applications? Those would definitely show that you have support from the community. That would probably go under the implementation plan or partnership area, in the evaluation criteria, so you could take a closer look at the evaluation criteria for what we say there. You can definitely submit them. They are not required, and you can have a successful application without those types of letters.

Okay, so there are no limits on the number of awards. It will depend on the amount of funding available. Correct? So, there is, with our current funding available, which is \$1,936,000, the limit on the number of awards is probably around 4 awards. However, if we do have extra additional funding available, there is a possibility we will make more than that. Hope that answers your question.

Okay, is there a way we can access the recording of this webinar? Yes. We intend on posting the recording of this webinar, along with the slides of the webinar, and the transcription or transcript on to our website hopefully in the next week or so. So you can check our website for updates there.

Thank you for all your questions. I think we have time for a few more.

Okay does demonstrating new models of service integration through simulation and not deployment count for the concept development or demonstration track? So, simulating new service models.

(00:55:06)

I think that that sounds like it would count for the development, that that sounds like an eligible project for the concept development demonstration track. Yeah.

Okay, what happens when your project requires more than 1.96 million. Well, that's the amount of funding we have for this funding opportunity. But, you can have more than 20% local match on your project. You can, you know, if you have funding from other sources, and only require, you know, 50 percent from Federal funding, then that's an option. We can also encourage you to look for other funding opportunities from the US Department of Transportation or other government entities that might align with your project goals.

Okay, somebody asked, the successful applicant will be reimbursed for costs. And how long will that take to receive funds after submission of documentation. So with our research recipients, they can, they can submit reimbursement requests, invoices, as often as they like. So some submit monthly. Some submit once a year. And they submit them through our invoice processing system. I'm not sure the exact timeline for reimbursement, but it's pretty quick once you're all on the system. It depends on how often you are submitting your invoices for reimbursement.

Thank you for everybody for your questions. And if we didn't get to your question live we are intending on posting some frequently asked questions online. So we hope that that'll be up soon. And you can also email us your question if we didn't get to it.

Okay, where can I find FTA research circular 6100.1E? You can find it on our FTA research and demonstration website. We can try to pop a link to that in the chat, but we are about to wrap up.

Okay. I think that we have answered as many questions as we could today. Thank you all for your time.

If we find to that research circular link before we leave, we'll pop it in the chat. If not yeah, as I said, you can find it on our FTA research and demonstration website.