Rural and Tribal Assistance (RTA) Pilot Program
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Will the webinar slides and recording be available after this presentation?**
   Yes. The webinar slides and recording are available on the Rural and Tribal Assistance (RTA) Pilot Program website: https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/RuralandTribalGrants

2. **When does the application portal open?**
   2:00 PM ET on September 8, 2025. The application questions and its application question instructions are now available on the program website.

3. **When does the application period close?**
   Applications for this program are reviewed on a first-come, first-serve, rolling basis. The application portal will close 30 days after the application period opens *or* once funding is exhausted.

4. **How much funding is available for this round of the program?**
   This round of the program combines funding for FY2024 and FY2025, making the total funding available $54,200,000.

   Funding for awarded projects to any individual state is capped at 20% of available funding per round. $20,000,000 of the total funding available is set aside for eligible tribal applicants; however, if qualified tribal applications fall below this amount after 30 days of the application close date, the funding will be awarded to any type of qualified applicant under the grant program based on the order in which applications were received.

5. **How many projects will be awarded this round?**
   The number of projects awarded ranges between 21 and 216, and will depend on the requested amounts. The total amount of funding available for this round of the program is $54,200,000.

6. **Is there a minimum/maximum grant amount?**
   The minimum and maximum dollar amount of individual awards is $250,000 up to $2,500,000.

7. **Are we able to submit an application for a bundle of bridges?**
   The bundling of projects is considered an eligible single project under the RTA program, as it is treated as such under other DOT programs, including BUILD and MPDG programs.

8. **Are there two grant type options applicants can apply for?**
   No, this round of the program only includes the Single Project grant type. This round of the program does not include the Multi-Community grant type option. All applications submitted must be for single projects.

9. **Is there a required state/local match to the grant award? Are there any criteria that must be met for the federal cost share to be 100% of the total project cost?**
   No, there is no match or cost share required or criteria to be met, the federal share can be 100%.

10. **Does this grant reimburse awardees for project costs for grant eligible activities incurred prior to the grant award?**
No, RTA does not reimburse entities for project costs that occurred prior to grant selection. Unless, authorized by the RTA program, in writing, after the announcement of RTA selections, any costs incurred prior to grant execution are ineligible for reimbursement.

11. **Are grantees able to request advanced payment?**
Recipients of RTA Program grant awards do not receive lump-sum cash disbursements of their awarded amount of grant funding. Instead, RTA funds will reimburse recipients only after a grant agreement has been executed, allowable expenses are incurred, and valid requests for reimbursement are submitted and reviewed by the Bureau.

12. **If my project is selected, what is the award period for the funding?**
The award period (aka the period of performance) is to be determined. The grant period for current recipients is 24 months.

13. **How do I know if I am eligible to apply for this program?**
This program is open to (1) Federally-recognized Tribes, (2) Department of Hawaiian Homelands, (3) units of local government or political subdivision outside urban areas of more than 150,000 residents, and (4) states/territory/possession of the U.S. sponsoring projects located outside an urban area of more than 150,000 residents.

Units of local government or political subdivision include: county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish (under the state of Louisiana); local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937; special district; school district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; or any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-, regional, or intra-State or local government.

14. **How do I know if my project is rural?**
The NOFO determines a "rural area" as located outside an urbanized area that has a population of more than 150,000 residents as determined by the Bureau of the Census.

In other words, the project is rural if the project is **not** in a Census Bureau 2020 designated urban area, *or* the project is in a Census Bureau 2020 designated urban area with a population of 150,000 or less. Projects are **not** eligible if it is in a Census Bureau 2020 designated urban area that has a population of more than 150,000 people.

For more resources, go to https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/RuralandTribalGrants

15. **What types of activities are eligible for funding?**
This program funds transportation infrastructure projects early in the project development phase. This may include hiring staff or procurement of services from expert firms to provide technical, legal, or financial assistance with the planning and design phase of project development. See Section II. D of the NOFO for specific examples of eligible activities.

16. **Is grant writing an eligible expense for this program?**
    Yes, this is an eligible expense as part of the larger project. In other words, you cannot cover expenses for applying to this program, but you may use these funds for activities that happen after award.

17. **Is construction an eligible expense for this program?**
    No, this program funds transportation infrastructure projects early in the project development phase. This may include hiring staff or procurement of services from expert firms to provide technical, legal, or financial assistance with the planning and design phase of project development. See Section II. D of the NOFO for specific examples of eligible activities.

18. **For this program, is transportation infrastructure considered only physical infrastructure, or does this include technology, training, and human infrastructure?**
    This program can fund capacity building resources that can include technology, trainings, and/or human infrastructure that helps further a transportation project. This can include funds to support public engagement, grant application assistance, procurement support, and more.

19. **If I receive funding through this program, am I required to apply for other DOT funding programs in the future?**
    To be considered eligible for program funding, a project must be expected to be eligible for federal funding for its development and construction phase in the future; *however,* there is no requirement for grantees to apply for other DOT funding programs in the future. More information on applicable DOT funding programs, including brief program descriptions and examples of eligible projects for each, is included in Appendix A of the NOFO.

20. **Are only the six funding programs considered for project eligibility? What about PROTECT or another U.S. DOT program?**
    Yes, only the six funding programs listed in the NOFO are considered for project eligibility. These six were listed in the statute.

21. **If an applicant was awarded funding from the previous FY 2022/2023 NOFO, can they apply for funding for the same project but a different activity?**
    No, FY 2022/2023 grant recipients may not apply for funding for the same project under the FY 2024/2025 NOFO.

22. **Can an applicant submit more than one application for different projects?**
    Yes, the maximum number of applications that can be submitted is two. The total maximum number for grant awards an applicant can receive is two.

23. **Do applicants that submitted applications in March 2025 need to resubmit an application in August 2025?**
    Due to U.S. DOT IT technical issues with the application portal, applicants were not able to access and submit their applications as the portal opened. Because the program's authorization statute requires applications to be reviewed on a first-come, first-serve, rolling basis, the applicant submission order is important when awarding funds. With the issuance of NOFO Amendment #2, previous applications from March 2025 will not be considered, and applicants will need to submit a new application in September 2025.

24. **Are applicants able to submit attachments or letters of support to supplement their application?**
No, applicants should only provide responses to the questions on the application portal. Attachments and letters of support will not be accepted or considered in determining grant awards.

25. **If funds are awarded to a Tribe, can they request a State DOT/FHWA administer funds or does it have to go through the Bureau of Indian Affairs?**
Yes, a State may act as a subrecipient for a Tribe for an RTA grant that is awarded to a Tribe. However, the Tribe would still need to meet the Recipient requirements that are outlined in 2 CFR 200. This is distinction from other DOT programs, such as the BUILD program because FHWA assists in administering projects in that program. Whereas for RTA is administered wholly through the Build America Bureau.

26. **In the last cycle that was cancelled, there were issues that limited the type of browser that could be used to apply in the portal. Are there specific browsers that have to be used in order to submit an application on the RTA platform?**
Most, if not all, browsers such as Chrome, Edge, Safari, etc., will work with our updated application portal.

27. **For Question 9a (Estimated Total Project Cost), should include costs related to planning, design, and construction, even though construction costs will not be funded by RTA? Is that correct?**
Yes, estimated total project cost should include construction costs even though it will not be funded by RTA.

28. **Regarding Question 9a (Estimated Total Project Cost), if we won't know what the construction costs will be until we complete our feasibility study and determine the best solution for moving forward, how would you like us to estimate those costs?**
We would suggest making an educated guess on how much construction costs could be for your project.

29. **If a firm assists a Tribe in preparing a grant application, could that firm also prepare the planning study funded by that grant?**
A firm wouldn't necessarily be barred firm from preparing the planning study. However, the federal grant procurement standards in 2 CFR 200 will apply. 2 CFR 200.317 requires a Tribe to follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements with non- Federal funds.

30. **Do applicants need to pre-register or set up a log-in before the application portal opens on September 8th at 2:00PM ET?**
Applicants do not need to be registered or have a log in to access the online application portal. The online application portal will be accessible via a link on the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program webpage on September 8th at 2:00PM ET.

31. **If a jurisdiction has received federal funds for another portion of a project, can they still apply for funds through this program if it's eligible? For a different phase or portion of the project?**

Yes, the jurisdiction may still apply for this program for a different phase or portion of the project as long as it meets the RTA eligibility requirements.

32. **Are public-private partnerships eligible to apply for the RTA Program? For example, can a city apply for the grant on behalf of a privately-owned and operated river port? Therefore, the city is a pass-through agency?**
Yes, the City is an eligible applicant and may apply for the RTA grant. However, the City will have the responsibility of carrying out the Federal award and must adhere to the Recipient responsibilities included within 2 CFR 200. DOT would not have a direct relationship with any project partner. The determination of whether the project partner under the grant is a subrecipient or contractor is governed by 2 CFR 200.331.

33. **Where are the word count limits for the application questions listed?**
The word count limits are listed in the Application Questions and Instructions for the Application Questions listed on the program's webpage. Application Questions that have word count limits are Questions 9, 11a, 11d, and 12a.

34. **When "first-come, first-serve" is said, does that simply mean awards will be reviewed in that order or does that mean funds will be disbursed to applicants based on that order?**
"First-come, first-serve" means eligible applications will be reviewed and awarded in the order they are received.

35. **Can applicants procure advisory services and hire staff under the RTA program?**
No, applicants can either procure advisory services _or_ hire staff under the RTA program.

36. **How should applicants list their project location if there is more than one location?**
Realizing that some projects have multiple locations, provide a single location that best represents the project (an example might be the midpoint longitude/latitude of a street for a project with several connected streets, a single bridge for a project with several bridges, etc.). Please include some clarifying information about the project's location in Question 9 when describing the overall project.

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