

Thriving Communities Capacity Building Listening Session Summary

On July 19, 2022, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hosted a listening session with 84 technical assistance and capacity building organizations, representing a diverse set of organizations. Attendees included those with a long history of serving as federally funded technical assistance (TA) providers; those who have not worked with federal agencies in this role; those who are more engaged in transportation issues, as well as those more experienced in housing and community development, with a significant number involved in both.

The following provides a summary of the key themes we heard during the event in response to questions eliciting input to identify specific challenges and opportunities to provide technical assistance and capacity building to specifically support disadvantaged and under-resourced communities in advancing transportation investments and community development, especially at the intersection of housing development and transportation.

Among the key challenges shared that TA providers face in either providing federally funded TA or responding to these funding opportunities:

- Burdensome, costly and complicated federal compliance and application processes or timelines.
- Insufficient grantee accountability by those receiving support.
- Federally funded TA is often focused on only one issue or project type creating a lack of information sharing across modes and between housing, transportation and other community development issues.
- Government-funded TA is typically time limited and lighter touch. Effective TA may require longer time frames to build the relationships and develop trust to show a commitment to the community as TA providers help them to build local leadership and expertise.

For local governments including rural and Tribal communities, and community organizations located in or serving disadvantaged communities, participants identified key challenges as:

- Need for more resources and capacity, particularly to meet local match requirements and up-front costs.
- Need additional capacity or expertise to support grant writing and deliver transformative projects
- Local political dynamics and lack of effective communication and education materials that resonate with different community stakeholders and decision makers to build broader community support for projects and policy changes.
- Insufficient data, mapping, or other technical expertise that may be required to successfully compete for federal funding or deliver projects.
- Capacity needs to support increased leverage of federal funding, packing financing and attracting private capital to invest in disadvantaged communities.
- Need for more support to design and implement inclusive and culturally competent engagement techniques, including strategies to overcome planning fatigue.

- Complex federal requirements and transportation funding prioritization processes combined with a multitude of new discretionary grant programs may it challenging to effectively respond and advance local projects.
- Continued limitations in coordinating housing and transportation including communication challenges, displacement of existing residents housing and businesses related to infrastructure investments, and a failure to consider access to jobs and economic opportunities.

In terms of models for helping jurisdictions integrate broader community goals such as housing, land use, workforce, healthcare, and education issues with their transportation planning, participants felt that coordinated, collaborative and cross-sector partnerships; and/or tailored community-specific strategies that promote self-agency and people-centric approaches are most effective.

Additional public input is being sought in response to a Thriving Communities Request for Information published in the Federal Register on August 5th. To access the RFI and provide comments by August 26, 2022, please visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/05/2022-16860/request-for-information-thriving-communities-initiative>