Call for Letters of Interest to Participate in the Thriving Communities Program (FY 2022)

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) invites Letters of Interest (LOIs) from eligible organizations seeking technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support through the new Thriving Communities Program. **LOIs must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM EST on December 6, 2022,** through a fillable web-based form available on DOT's Thriving Communities Program page at https://www.transportation.gov/thriving-communities-program-letter-of-interest.

A. What is the Thriving Communities Program?

The Thriving Communities Program (TCP)—established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (P.L.-117-103 Division L, Title I)—is designed to provide technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support to advance a pipeline of transportation[1] and community revitalization activities that increase mobility, reduce pollution from transportation sources, expand affordable transportation and housing options, improve health outcomes, facilitate efficient land use, preserve or expand jobs, and enhance connections to health care, education, and food security to benefit disadvantaged populations and communities. The TCP will also support and build local capacity to improve project acceleration, access to and management of Federal funding, and deployment of local hiring, workforce development and inclusive community engagement practices. DOT is issuing a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to select Capacity Builders to provide technical assistance, which can be viewed at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/thriving-communities.

DOT is using this LOI process to select at least 30 recipients of comprehensive planning, technical assistance, and capacity building support. Recipients will be composed of coalitions of organizations from a geographic region. Selected recipients will be matched with TCP Capacity Builders to receive support over two years.

Participation in DOT's TCP is voluntary and does not obligate the awardee or recipients to apply for DOT grants or credit programs in the future, nor does participation offer preferential treatment to future applications or a guarantee of Federal funding.

B. What does the Thriving Communities Program offer?

Over a two-year period (calendar years 2023-2025), TCP recipient communities will have access to:

1. Direct, individualized deep-dive technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support including assistance with grant applications, project scoping, planning and pre-development activities, and pre-engineering studies. As applicable, assistance is also

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[1] This includes pre-application planning and technical assistance for capital projects eligible under titles 23, 46, and 49, United States Code.

provided through project development, project funding and financing, and project delivery.

2. A Community of Practice comprised of local and national partners to advance policies, practices, and projects informed by meaningful public involvement and partnership.
3. Targeted technical support as part of the national TCP capacity building network.

DOT believes that communities best know the specific challenges and opportunities they face. TCP Capacity Builders will utilize a community-centered approach to work with selected recipients and their community partners to refine areas of focus and tailor assistance.

A portion of the funding DOT is providing to TCP Capacity Builders is expected to provide direct financial, staffing, and resource support to TCP recipients and their community partners.

The TCP is one of several technical assistance programs administered through DOT's Build America Bureau. The TCP will coordinate and leverage other Federal place-based technical assistance and capacity building initiatives that align with TCP goals to provide comprehensive support to selected recipient communities. DOT staff from its regional, division, or headquarters offices will serve as Federal liaisons to recipient communities. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is funding a separate Thriving Communities technical assistance program to support communities working to increase location-efficient housing choices that will also be available to eligible DOT TCP communities. More information is available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/nofos/thriving-communities.html.

C. What Types of Communities Does the TCP Support?

Eligible applicants include local, state, or Tribal governments including pueblos or villages; United States territories; metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); transit agencies; or other political subdivisions of state or local governments. TCP will prioritize support to disadvantaged communities (see Appendix A for how DOT defines these) and others that face capacity challenges. Applicants will identify a specific geographic area of focus for TCP, described in more detail in Section E.2 below.

The TCP is focused on helping communities develop and deliver transportation projects that support and align with broader community goals. As such, the lead applicant must form Community Partnerships with other organizations working with or located in the identified focus area to collectively advance technical, organizational, and community capacity to advance a pipeline of comprehensive, community-driven infrastructure and community development projects. The composition of these Community Partnerships will be at the discretion of the lead applicant, but could include nonprofits, private sector and community-based organizations, labor unions, advocacy groups, other government entities, chambers of commerce and major employers, academic or other anchor institutions, and philanthropic organizations.

The TCP recognizes that not all communities have the same needs, and that peer learning across communities works best when there are shared challenges and goals. Accordingly, the TCP is organized into three different Communities of Practice. Each is described further in Section E.3.
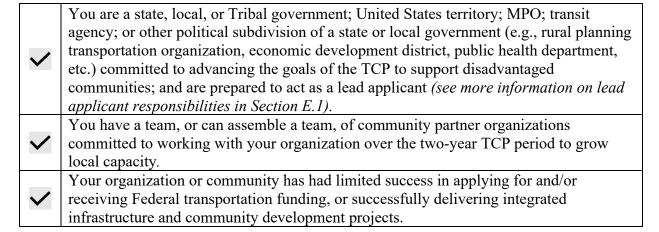
Interested TCP recipients should identify to which one (1) of the following three (3) Communities of Practice they are applying to receive support and participate:

- **Main Streets** – Focused on Tribal and rural communities and the interconnected transportation, housing, community, and economic development issues they face.
- **Complete Neighborhoods** – Focused on urban and suburban communities located within metropolitan areas working to better coordinate transportation with land use, housing, and economic development.
- **Networked Communities** – Focused on those communities located near ports, airports, freight, and rail facilities to address mobility, access, environmental justice, and economic issues including leveraging their proximity to these facilities for wealth-building and economic development opportunities.

Across all three Communities of Practice, the TCP will support selected communities and government agencies to advance projects and processes aligned with DOT's Strategic Plan and Equity Action Plan priorities for meaningful public involvement, workforce development, labor and hiring preferences, small business development and procurement, climate and decarbonization, safety, and technology transformation.

D. Who should consider applying?

Consider applying to receive planning, technical assistance, and capacity building support if:

✓	You are a state, local, or Tribal government; United States territory; MPO; transit agency; or other political subdivision of a state or local government (e.g., rural planning transportation organization, economic development district, public health department, etc.) committed to advancing the goals of the TCP to support disadvantaged communities; and are prepared to act as a lead applicant *(see more information on lead applicant responsibilities in Section E.1).*
✓	You have a team, or can assemble a team, of community partner organizations committed to working with your organization over the two-year TCP period to grow local capacity.
✓	Your organization or community has had limited success in applying for and/or receiving Federal transportation funding, or successfully delivering integrated infrastructure and community development projects.

E. How do I apply?

Those interested in receiving technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support through the TCP must submit an LOI no later than 11:59 PM EST on December 6, 2022. LOIs must be submitted by completing the fillable webform on the DOT Thriving Communities webpage: https://www.transportation.gov/thriving-communities-program-letter-of-interest.

A complete LOI responds to the following five steps outlined below. Interested applicants can prepare for online submission by utilizing the preparation worksheet (provided in Word and PDF formats) and by following the steps described below.

Form a Thriving Communities Team

- Lead applicant
- Community partners

Identify Your Community

- Identify area of focus
- Verify disadvantaged community status

Identify your Community of Practice

- Main Streets
- Complete Neighborhoods
- Networked Communities

Prepare a Needs and Vision Statement

- Key challenges
- Community and/or organizational goals
- Engage traditionally underrepresented voices and community stakeholders
- Aligned infrastructure projects or plans
- Team connections

Complete LOI Worksheet

- Draft required information

1. Form a Community Partnership Team

One of DOT's equity goals is that individuals and communities have a greater voice in transportation decisions affecting them. The TCP framework is organized around collaborative local capacity building to support comprehensive and integrated infrastructure and community development approaches. Those submitting an LOI for TCP assistance must identify a lead applicant and two key community partners. A key partner is one who can help with implementation activities and community engagement during the two-year period. For instance, this partnership could include, but is not limited to, another government agency that may have regulatory, planning, or funding tools it can contribute. Alternatively, it could be a church, local planning firm, or artist collaboration that can assist with inclusive community engagement activities. It could be a local business owner or health center from the identified focus area that will represent business and employer interests during planning processes. It may be a community

development corporation, private developer, or neighborhood advocacy group that brings community finance and housing perspectives. These are merely illustrative examples.

Applicants may assemble a team of more than two community partners if doing so supports the team's ability to meaningfully engage with the community to identify, plan, and deliver comprehensive and transformative transportation projects. For those applicants working in larger communities or metropolitan areas, DOT will view more favorably LOIs that include more than two partners and those with demonstrated skills, relationships, and experience engaging with or directly representing community interests. Applicants are **not** required to identify more than two partners in the LOI submission, and partners are **not** required to provide funding. If selected, lead applicants may also add members to their team over the two-year period.

If selected as a finalist for participation in TCP, the lead applicant will need to submit letters of commitment from its own organization and from both key community partner organizations identified in its LOI within 10 business days of notification by DOT (see Section F.1 for more details). Community partners are **not required** to make any financial commitments to participate in TCP.

Lead Applicant Role and Responsibility	Who Can be a Community Partner Organization?
• A lead applicant **must** be a state, local, or Tribal government; a United States territory; an MPO or rural transportation planning organization; a transit agency; or other political subdivision of a state or local government. • The lead applicant must have an implementation role for current or future transportation projects in the identified area that will be supported through the TCP. • The lead applicant must identify a staff person to serve as the primary point of contact to coordinate with the assigned TCP Capacity Builder, community partners, and the Bureau throughout the entire two-year period of support.	• Any entity that is eligible to be a lead applicant. • Eligible non-governmental partners include community-based organizations, business employers or labor organizations, private sector firms or developers, educational or anchor institutions, workforce development boards, faith-based organizations, community development financial institutions, philanthropic and civic organizations, nonprofits, and community advocacy groups with ties to the focus area. • Any of the above entities who will specifically provide local or regional technical assistance, planning and capacity building support.

2. Identify your community

The TCP is designed to support an identified community within which the program's activities for comprehensive community- and data-driven transformative infrastructure and community development activities shall take place. It is not intended to support an entire state, MPO, or transit service area or other similar large-scale geographies but rather those communities and

targeted geographies where technical assistance, planning, and capacity building needs are greatest. Applicants should identify the geographic area that will receive the TCP support based upon locally understood boundaries and transportation patterns and needs. For example, this could be the name of the town, pueblo, or suburb in need of basic transportation infrastructure improvements or located near a major freight facility, or it could be the specific city neighborhood(s) or area(s) of the county along a transportation corridor experiencing high rates of air pollution, or that are wanting to promote more development near transit stations, or where traffic safety and long-term community disinvestment challenges exist. The identified area is referred to as the "community" for the purposes of this program. Lead applicants who are Tribal governments or United States territories have the option to identify their entire political geography or identify a more focused area for participation in TCP.

Applicants should next verify whether the identified geographic focus area includes Federally identified disadvantaged census tracts, and whether these comprise a majority of the geographic area or not. This can be done using any one or a combination of the following:

     a. [DOT's mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities](), See Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts in ArcGIS Dashboards
     b. [Areas of Persistent Poverty table]() for the County or Census tract level

Note: All Tribal lands and United States territories receive priority under Justice40; and are therefore provided disadvantaged community status.

     c. Applicants may also indicate in their LOI form whether there are other Federally designated community development zones (for example: [Empowerment Zones](), [Promise Zones](), or [Choice Neighborhoods]()) within the identified geographic area

If selected as a finalist for TCP participation, DOT will validate disadvantaged community status, and may prioritize communities based on their disadvantaged community status.

3. Identify your Thriving Communities Community of Practice

Each lead applicant and its community partners must determine which Community of Practice it seeks to participate in based upon the community size, location, needs, and priorities. Each Community of Practice will focus on advancing equity through transportation improvements by addressing environmental injustice, mobility, housing choice, public health, pollution, workforce development, labor issues, and economic development through meaningful public involvement and other inclusive community engagement efforts. The table below summarizes the characteristics of each.

TCP Community of Practice	Target Applicants	Possible Transportation Focus Areas*
Main Streets	• Eligible applicants located in or working with Tribal lands, United States territories, rural communities, and small towns, including communities that are not covered by an MPO. Use this MPO database to identify whether your community is covered by an MPO.	• Main Street revitalization projects • Road safety and context sensitive design solutions • Rural transit and intercity passenger travel • Trails and transportation alternatives • Improving basic infrastructure conditions alongside economic and community revitalization strategies • Climate resiliency, adaptation, and decarbonization efforts including electric vehicle charging stations
Complete Neighborhoods	• Eligible applicants located in or representing metropolitan areas with an MPO. Use this MPO database to identify whether your community is covered by an MPO.	• Increasing accessibility to safe, accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation options and basic infrastructure • Transit-oriented and walkable development strategies that mitigate risk for displacement, increase affordable housing production, and/or improve access to jobs and community facilities • Transportation projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality and climate resiliency • Integrating transportation and park and recreation plans to develop complete transportation networks. • Updating plans, policies, and zoning to facilitate stronger coordination of transportation, housing, land use and economic development.

TCP Community of Practice	Target Applicants	Possible Transportation Focus Areas*
Networked Communities	• Eligible applicants in or representing communities of any size that are located near intercity transportation facilities such as ports, airports, and freight or rail facilities	• Projects that address environmental justice, pollution, and public health challenges • Improving community access and connectivity, including for bicyclists and pedestrians. • Road and railroad safety and design improvements, especially at crossing points and intersections and including the integration of paths, trails, and parks into transportation networks. • Projects that help transition to transportation decarbonization technologies and clean energy economies • New or extended passenger rail service •

* This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather illustrate possible transportation projects and issues that the specific Community of Practice may advance.

4. Prepare a Needs and Vision Statement

LOI respondents must provide a 500-word needs statement and a separate 500-word vision statement along with other requested information that will be used to evaluate and select recipients of TCP support and to appropriately match those selected for participation with the appropriate TCP Capacity Builders and Communities of Practice.

The lead applicant and its community partners should collectively develop a needs statement and a vision statement which will be submitted by the lead applicant that makes the case for seeking TCP technical assistance.

The needs statement must describe in 500 words or less:
   • Key challenges or needs (transportation, equity, environmental, health and safety, housing, and/or economic) that the identified community faces, including those caused by harmful historic or current policies (e.g., displacement, discrimination, segregation, exclusionary zoning) that could be addressed through the TCP.
   • Technical or capacity challenges the applicant or community has faced when seeking Federal funding or delivering transportation projects, or in trying to coordinate infrastructure projects with broader community and economic development efforts.

- Any infrastructure projects that may be planned or underway, and specific or anticipated challenges your team may face in funding or implementing these projects (if applicable).

The vision statement must describe in 500 words or less:
- Community and/or organizational goals to be advanced through participation in the TCP.
- Why the key community partners were chosen and how the assembled team will be able to successfully work together to meet identified goals.
- Ways in which traditionally underrepresented voices and community stakeholders, including but not limited to those with Limited English Proficiency and those with disabilities, will be engaged in the technical assistance, planning, and capacity building process throughout the two-year period.

5. **Complete LOI Worksheet**

A set of additional questions are included in the LOI submission form. To help prepare, review the LOI worksheet that includes all of the questions that will be asked of lead applicants. The worksheet is provided in Word and PDF formats and can be downloaded and saved to be used as a working draft in advance of submission of the webform.

6. **Submit your Letter of Interest Online**

The lead applicant must submit the LOI by 11:59 PM EST on December 6, 2022 via the webform available at https://www.transportation.gov/thriving-communities-program-letter-of-interest. Late submissions will not be reviewed.

Please review your LOI to ensure all fields have been completed before submitting the form. Please do not submit the webform more than once.

Potential applicants can request paper copy materials at:
        Telephone: (202) 366-2414
        Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation
        1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
        W12-412
        Washington, DC 20590

Applicants may also submit paper copy LOIs to the same mailing address listed above. Submissions must be postmarked no later than December 6, 2022.

In the event of any technical challenges, please contact ThrivingCommunities@dot.gov.

F. **Additional Program Requirements**

1. **Obtain Letters of Commitment**

DOT anticipates selection of finalists in early 2023. If selected as a finalist to participate in the TCP, DOT will notify the lead applicant and request letters of commitment from the lead applicant and the two key community partners to be submitted electronically within 10 business days of notification, as a condition of participation in the program. DOT will provide additional instructions at that time for the process to submit letters.

REQUIRED IF NOTIFIED AS A FINALIST: Lead Applicant Letter of Commitment

The lead applicant letter of commitment should be signed by the organization's senior executive committing the organization to playing the lead coordinating role for its community team if selected as a finalist. The letter should clearly demonstrate that the senior executive is aware of its commitment of staff resources for the two-year period of performance, including to:

- Coordinate with the assigned Capacity Builder and engage in the TCP Community of Practice.
- Coordinate with and meaningfully engage with the identified community partners and with other staff or departments in the lead applicant agency.
- Coordinate and submit the required reporting detailed in section F.2 of this LOI.
- Participate in annual meetings with Capacity Builders and DOT.

REQUIRED IF NOTIFIED AS A FINALIST: Community Partner Letters of Commitment

The two key community partners identified in the LOI must also submit a letter of commitment signed by the organizations' executive director, commissioner, top elected official, or equivalent if the team is selected as a finalist to participate in TCP. Letters should clearly demonstrate that the partner is aware of its commitment to participate in TCP and must clearly describe:

- The specific anticipated role of the partner organization and nature of the relationship between the lead applicant and partner organization, including a brief description of past formal or informal partnerships, if applicable.
- If applicable, indicate whether your organization may be providing technical assistance, planning or capacity building support that could be directly supported by the TCP.
- The partner organization's relationship to the identified disadvantaged community and, if applicable, its experience with engaging meaningfully with the community.

2. **Reporting and Evaluation**

As a condition of receiving technical assistance, participants are required to participate in program evaluations undertaken by DOT or by the Capacity Builders funded through this program. The evaluation may include an implementation assessment to help identify outstanding technical assistance needs, lessons learned from effective delivery models, and progress toward programmatic and community-identified goals. DOT anticipates that to meet these annual evaluation reporting requirements, community recipients should spend no more than three hours annually providing qualitative and quantitative input. The lead applicant will also be invited to

review and provide input to the final report developed by the Capacity Builder, which will be made publicly available by DOT.

DOT is interested in the opportunities for broader outreach and shared learning to inform future program design. This may include an annual 1.5-day TCP convening organized by DOT for capacity builders, recipients, and their community partners. Funding will be provided through TCP to enable up to 3 individuals from the lead applicant organization and/or community partner organizations to participate, if required.

3. Administration Priorities

It is the policy of DOT to reflect Administration priorities and incorporate criteria for selection considerations related to climate change and sustainability, racial equity including environmental justice, Title VI and Civil Rights, and barriers to opportunity, labor, and workforce in its grant programs, to the extent possible and consistent with law. Those applicants selected for participation in the TCP are expected to advance these priorities via the planning, capacity building, and technical assistance they receive during the two-year period of engagement.

G. How will Community Partners be selected?

DOT anticipates selecting at least 30 communities to receive intensive support through the program in its first year; with each community assigned to a specific Community of Practice and Capacity Builder. The exact number of communities selected will be dependent upon the LOIs received, the number of Capacity Builder teams selected, and the design of each Community of Practice.

DOT may share publicly the information submitted through the LOIs to promote broader awareness of the challenges faced by disadvantaged communities and their related technical assistance needs; and to facilitate connections with other Federal or non-governmental technical assistance resources.

1. Eligibility Review

An Eligibility Review Team comprised of DOT and contractor staff will review all LOIs to confirm eligibility. The Eligibility Review Team will disqualify from consideration any LOI that:

1. Does not identify an eligible entity as a lead applicant.
2. Does not identify two key community partners.
3. Does not identify a geographic area of focus.
4. Does not verify that it has checked for disadvantaged community designation.
5. Does not submit all required LOI information.
6. Is not submitted by 11:59 PM EST on December 6, 2022.

LOIs determined to be eligible will be advanced to a Second-Level Review Team for evaluation based on the Needs-Based Selection Criteria and Priority Considerations described below.

2. **Second-Level Review**

An Evaluation Team comprised of DOT, inter-agency Federal staff, and contractor staff will evaluate each eligible LOI based on the following evaluation criteria. Please read each criterion carefully:

Demonstration of Need and Vision
LOI submission demonstrates:
- Commitment to develop a pipeline of transformative transportation projects in selected communities that provide equity, environmental, safety, mobility and economic benefits including to disadvantaged community residents.
- Persistent challenges in accessing Federal funding to support programs and projects benefitting disadvantaged communities.
- Limited staff, budget, and/or organizational capacity or economic hardship of the lead applicant.
- A compelling case for how participation in the TCP program will support identified community and organizational goals; including to advance current or future infrastructure and community development projects.
- Community has a demonstrated history of disadvantage, poverty, disproportionate environmental and human health burdens due to harmful past or current policies; and/or a majority of the identified geographic is identified as a disadvantaged community.

Strength of Partnerships
LOI submission demonstrates:
- How the partnerships will infuse an equity lens into technical assistance, planning, and capacity building approaches that are received, developed, and utilized.
- A comprehensive and collaborative approach among partners to infrastructure, community, and economic development; including whether for lead applicants from working in and with larger communities or metropolitan areas there are more than two key partners.
- A robust partnership team that includes at least one partner with demonstrated skills and experience building relationships to meaningfully engage with or represent community interests.
- At least one partner is a minority-owned or other disadvantaged business enterprise, a Minority-Serving Institution (for example, a historically black college or university, a Hispanic-serving institution, a Tribal college or university, an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution, and others), or non-profit organization located within the disadvantaged community that is identified as playing a capacity building role.

Community Leadership

LOI submission demonstrates:

- Commitment to support community visioning and inclusive engagement strategies, including engagement with those with Limited English Proficiency and those with disabilities.
- Commitment to build and sustain partnership networks with local and/or regional transportation, economic and community development, public health and/or environmental entities, stakeholders, and civic leadership.
- Strong ties among partners to and from within the disadvantaged community that will increase potential for successful long-term implementation.

The Evaluation Team will assign a rating of 'High,' 'Medium,' 'Low,' or 'Non-Responsive' to each of the three categories of criteria described above.

Rating Scale	High	Medium	Low	Non-Responsive
Description	The LOI is substantively and comprehensively responsive to the criterion. It makes a strong case for the community need, the strength of identified partnerships, and presence of community leadership and engagement.	The LOI is moderately responsive to the criterion. It makes a moderate case for the community need, the strength of identified partnerships, and presence of community leadership and engagement.	The LOI is minimally responsive to the criterion. It makes a weak case for the community need, the strength of identified partnerships, and presence of community leadership and engagement.	The LOI does not contain sufficient information. It does not advance or may negatively impact criterion goals.

The Evaluation Team will assign an overall LOI rating based on the individual criteria category ratings. The overall LOI rating may be 'Highly Recommended,' 'Recommended,' or 'Not Recommended,'

Overall LOI Rating	Individual Criteria Ratings
Highly Recommended	- At least two 'High' ratings, - Zero 'Low' ratings, and - Zero 'Non-Responsive' ratings
Recommended	At least one 'High' rating **or** three 'Medium' ratings,

Overall LOI Rating	Individual Criteria Ratings
	• No more than one 'Low' rating, and • Zero 'Non-Responsive' ratings
Not Recommended	• Two 'Medium' and one 'Low' rating, • More than one 'Low' rating, or • One or more 'Non-Responsive' ratings

The Evaluation Team will advance Highly Recommended LOIs to the Senior Review Team (SRT), which is comprised of DOT and HUD senior leadership as determined by the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy ("Under Secretary").

3. Team and Community Verification

DOT will notify lead applicants if their team has been selected for the Senior ("final") Review Team and will request that the lead applicant submit the required letters of commitment within 10 business days of notification by DOT. DOT will provide additional instructions for the process to submit letters. If letters are not submitted as requested per DOT instructions, the team will not be selected to receive support through TCP.

DOT will also analyze the disadvantaged community status of those applicants selected for final review according to one of the tools listed in section E.1. If DOT cannot verify the information provided in the LOI, the applicant may be disqualified. DOT will also verify any final review applicants for whom a majority of the community's geographic area is identified as disadvantaged to validate this as a priority consideration by the Senior Review Team.

4. Senior Review Team

The SRT will review all eligible 'Highly Recommended' LOIs and anticipates selecting at least 30 applicants for participation in the TCP. The SRT will assign selected communities to their Community of Practice. The SRT may also elect to review and select 'Recommended' LOIs that provide exceptional benefit to economically disadvantaged communities or that support other program goals at its discretion, conducting a similar verification process as identified above. The SRT will develop a list of applicants for consideration and final selection by the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, who may consult the Secretary of Transportation on those selections.

The SRT will consider the following when making final decisions:

- Diversity of geographies, community types, and lead applicant types.
- Communities and/or lead applicants and community partners with the greatest demonstrated need and/or lowest level capacity and resources.
- Communities with the greatest history of harm (e.g., displacement, segregation, exclusionary zoning), existing socioeconomic disparities, and environmental burdens and risks.

- Communities that share similar challenges and/or goals as other applicants for technical assistance that can fit well into a specific Community of Practice.
- Alignment of the needs and challenges of the community being served with the specific technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support that will be provided through selected TCP Capacity Builders.
- The extent to which the community partners' goals support broader TCP goals and can be accomplished by receiving assistance through the TCP.
- Alignment with regions and communities identified for priority consideration through other Federal initiatives such as, but not limited to, the Department of Agriculture's Rural Partners Network, the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plan Communities and Economic Revitalization, the Economic Development Administration's Economic Recovery Corps, and the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers.
- Communities that have disproportionate rates of pollution and poor air quality; are experiencing disproportionate effects (as defined by Executive Order No. 12898); are an area of persistent poverty as defined in section 6702(a)(1) of title 49, United States Code; and/or are historically disadvantaged.

APPENDIX A. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the TCP, DOT has defined the following definitions.

Areas of Persistent Poverty: An area of persistent poverty is a county with 20 percent or more of the population living in poverty over the 30 years preceding the date of enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, November 15, 2021, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial census and the most recent Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. Alternatively, data to support eligibility may also be from any census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent as measured by the 2013-2017, five-year data series available from the American Community Survey of the Census Bureau.

Capacity Building: Activities designed to improve the ability of an organization to design and implement the necessary technical, financial, business, data analysis, and management skills of grantees to access Federal funding, meet Federal requirements, undertake statewide and metropolitan long-range planning and programming activities, and implement other activities that broadly support project development and delivery. This includes developing long-term community capacity to sustain partnerships and engage non-governmental partners, leadership and workforce development, and program evaluation.

Community-based organizations: The term "community-based organization" means a public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that (A) is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and (B) provides educational or related services to individuals in the community.

Disadvantaged Community: (1) Any Tribal land or any territory or possession of the United States and (2) those census tracts (a) experiencing disproportionate effects (as defined by Executive Order 12898); (b) that contain areas of persistent poverty as defined in 49 U.S.C. section 6702(a)(1); (c) that are historically disadvantaged as defined by DOT's mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities; or (d) other Federally designated community development zones.

Equitable development: Equitable development is a development approach for meeting the needs of all communities, including underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering livable places that are healthy and vibrant for all.

Historically Disadvantaged Community: Any Tribal land or any territory or possession of the United States, or certain census tracts in the top 50% (75% for resilience) in at least four of the following categories - transportation access, health, environmental, economic, resilience, and equity disadvantage. For more information see https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dot-navigator/federal-tools-determine-disadvantaged-community-status.

Location-efficient housing: Housing that benefits from being located in communities near work, schools, services, and amenities and has accessibility to public transportation networks.

Meaningful Public Involvement: A process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a

project, program, or plan when possible. The impact of community contributions encourages early and continuous public involvement and brings diverse viewpoints and values into the decision-making process. This process enables the community and agencies to make better-informed decisions through collaborative efforts.

Planning: Efforts that support inclusive and meaningful public participation and community engagement in developing and implementing a range of activities to identify, assess, and evaluate community needs, including but not limited to environmental reviews, data and mapping visualization, market and mobility studies, health and safety impacts, and climate vulnerability assessments. Planning assistance may involve developing or designing for a program or project that aligns with the goals of the DOT Strategic Plan: https://www.transportation.gov/dot-strategicplan.

Rural: For the purposes of this NOFO, rural jurisdictions are those outside of Urbanized Areas with populations below 50,000. See U.S. Census Bureau resources on Rural America and Maps of Urbanized Areas. A list of Urban Areas for the 2010 Census is available in the Federal Register.

Technical Assistance: Programs, processes, and resources that provide targeted support, knowledge or expertise to a community, region, organization, or other beneficiary to help them access and utilize Federal funding to develop, analyze, design, and deliver transportation plans and projects.

APPENDIX B. LOI FORM QUESTIONS

This appendix contains all of the information applicants will be required to submit through the LOI webform that can be accessed at www.transportation.gov/thriving-communities.

Key Information

Lead applicant organization name			
Lead applicant organization type (Select one)	☐ State government ☐ Local government ☐ Tribal government ☐ United States territory ☐ Metropolitan Planning Organization ☐ Transit agency ☐ Other political subdivisions of state or local governments		
Lead organization's primary staff contact (Name, email, and phone number)			
Which type of TCP Community of Practice are you seeking to apply? (see sections C and E.3) (Select one)	☐ Main Streets: Focused on Tribal and rural communities and the interconnected transportation, housing, community, and economic development issues they face. ☐ Complete Neighborhoods: Focused on urban and suburban communities located within metropolitan areas working to better coordinate transportation with land use, housing, and economic development. ☐ Networked Communities: Focused on those communities located near ports, airports, freight, and rail facilities to address mobility, access, environmental justice, and economic issues, including leveraging their proximity to these facilities for wealth-building and economic development opportunities.		
Provide organizational names of the lead applicant's two key community partners and indicate the organization types. *If applicable, note any additional organization attributes that may affect priority consideration.*	Community Partner Name	Type of Organization ☐ Government ☐ Non-profit organization ☐ Private sector ☐ Philanthropy ☐ Community-based Organization	Is this organization a (select all that apply): ☐ Minority-owned, woman-owned, or other disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) ☐ Minority-Serving Institution (for example, a historically black college or university, a Hispanic-serving institution, a Tribal college or university, an Asian American and Native American Pacific

		☐ Tribe ☐ Other (please specify:)	Islander-serving institution, and others) ☐ Non-profit organization located within the community that is identified as playing a capacity building role
If your team includes more than two community partners, please list the names and type of the additional community partners. (e.g., Acme Industries, Private Sector). *If applicable, please indicate if the organization is a minority-owned, woman-owned, or other DBE; a Minority Serving Institution; or a non-profit organization located within the community that is identified as playing a capacity building role.*			
Provide the prior fiscal year's annual budget of the lead applicant organization.			
Provide any clarification on the budget provided above (optional).			
Select the number of staff at the lead organization who work primarily on transportation planning, public engagement, and/or grant application and administration	☐ 0 staff ☐ 1-5 staff ☐ 6-30 staff ☐ 31-50 staff ☐ 51+ staff		
Describe the geographic area that will receive the TCP support (see section E.2)			

Does your defined geographic area include disadvantaged populations or census tracts? (Select one)	☐ Yes, but less than a majority of the area is disadvantaged ☐ Yes, with a majority of the area disadvantaged, ☐ No NOTE: All Tribes and United States territories qualify as Justice40 disadvantaged communities and should check "Yes, with a majority."
If geographic area that will receive the TCP support includes a disadvantaged populations or census tracts, please indicate which tool(s) used to verify.	☐ DOT mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities ☐ Areas of Persistent Poverty Table ☐ Other Federally designated community development zones (please specify):_____ ☐ I am a Tribe or United States territory and do not need to verify status ☐ N/A: The geographic area does not include a disadvantaged community
Is the lead applicant or focus of TCP support located in a rural area? See Appendix A for definitions (Select one.)	☐ Yes ☐ No
Describe the lead applicant's experience with DOT discretionary grant funding (Select one)	☐ My organization has never applied for a DOT grant ☐ My organization has applied but has been unsuccessful in obtaining a DOT grant (i.e., has never received a DOT grant) ☐ My organization has been awarded one or more DOT grants at some point in the past If yes, please list the most recent grant(s) and award year: _____
Has the lead applicant received Federally funded technical assistance in the past or is currently receiving? If yes, please indicate granting Federal agency and type of technical assistance	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please specify: _____

Needs and Vision Statement

The needs statement must describe in 500 words or less:
- Key challenges or needs (transportation, equity, environmental, health and safety, housing, and/or economic) that the identified community faces, including those caused by harmful historic or current policies (e.g., displacement, discrimination, segregation, exclusionary zoning) that could be addressed through the TCP.

- Technical or capacity challenges the applicant or community has faced when seeking Federal funding or delivering transportation projects, or in trying to coordinate infrastructure projects with broader community and economic development efforts.
- Any infrastructure projects that may be planned or underway, and specific or anticipated challenges your team may face in funding or implementing these projects (if applicable).

The vision statement must describe in 500 words or less:
- Community and/or organizational goals to be advanced through participation in the TCP.
- Why the key community partners were chosen and how the assembled team will be able to successfully work together to meet identified goals.
- Ways in which traditionally underrepresented voices and community stakeholders, including but not limited to those with Limited English Proficiency and those with disabilities, will be engaged in the technical assistance, planning, and capacity building process throughout the two-year period.

Note: Submission of this form does not commit DOT to providing technical assistance, but to reviewing the applicant's information for eligibility and potential participation in the Thriving Communities Program.