U.S. Department of Transportation

How to Apply for an FY23 Stage 1 Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant

August 17, 2023

SMART GRANTS PROGRAM

General

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Website

- For more information, please visit https://www.transportation.gov/SMART
- Subscribe to receive email updates on the SMART program

Agenda

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- Opening Remarks from Ben Levine, Senior Advisor
- SMART Program Overview
- Program Structure & Details
- FY22 Cohort Overview & Lessons Learned
- Applying for a SMART Grant
- Application Resources
- Q & A

Today's Presenters

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U.S. Department of Transportation

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U.S. Department of Transportation

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Opening Remarks

Benjamin Levine
Senior Advisor, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology

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SMART Grants Program Overview

Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART)

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- SMART is a grant program created under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to fund demonstration projects focused on **advanced smart city or community technologies and systems.**
- Provides up to **$100M annually** from FY22 – 26 to eligible projects in States, political subdivisions of a State (e.g., cities, counties, towns), Tribal governments, transit agencies, toll authorities, MPOs, and groups of eligible recipients.

SMART

SMART Grants Program Values

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The SMART Grants Program:

- Funds Demonstration Projects
- Addresses Real World Challenges
- Aims for Purpose Driven Innovation
- Builds Local Technology Capacity

Start with the Problem

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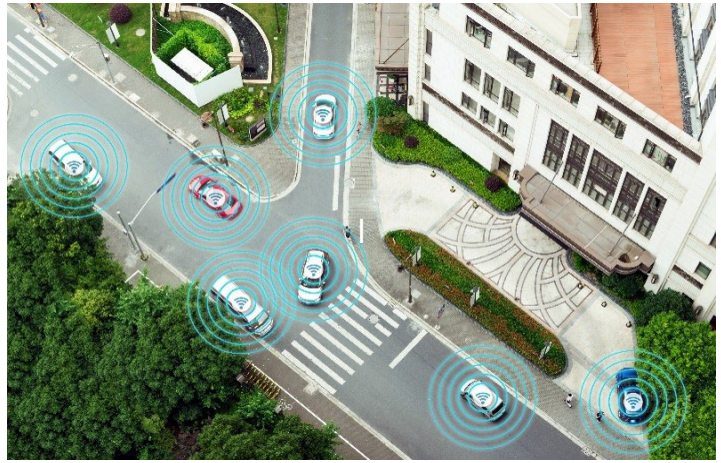

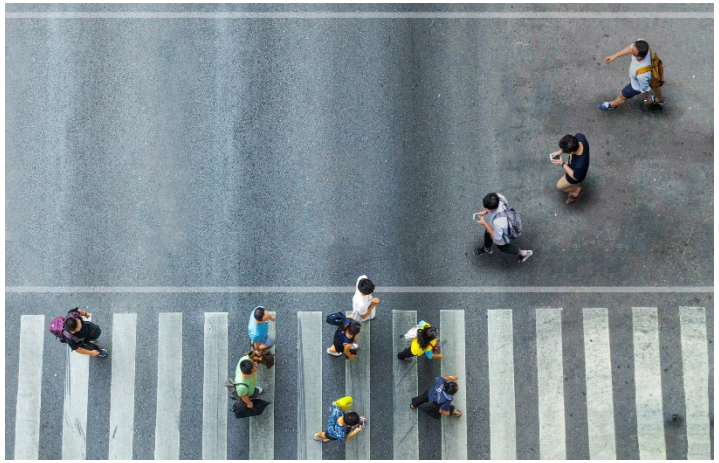

Who is Here Today?

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What type of organization do you represent?

- State government
- Local government
- Tribal government
- Federal government
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Nonprofit Organization or Academic Institution
- Public Transit Agency or Authority
- Airport or Port Authority
- Technology Vendor or Manufacturer/ Consultant
- Other

Did your organization apply for an FY22 SMART Grant last year?

- Yes, my organization was a lead applicant
- Yes, my organization was a partner on an application
- Neither

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SMART Grants Program Structure & Details

Program Details

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USDOT's SMART Grants is a two-stage program. This NOFO is open to Stage 1 applications.

DOT anticipates selecting up to 30 Stage 1 grants from the FY23 NOFO for award.

The NOFO opened on 08/08/2023 and will close at 5:00PM ET on Tuesday, 10/10/2023.

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Program Structure

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The structure is a **two-stage program.**

- Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping Grant: $250,000 to $2 million over 18 months
- Stage 2 Implementation Grant: up to $15 million over 36 months

This NOFO is open to Stage 1 applications.

STAGE 1:

- Proof-of-concept
- Build & strengthen partnerships
- Move quickly and demonstrate capacity

STAGE 2:

- Scale prototypes to demonstrate benefits to community
- Capture lessons learned
- Evaluate benefits
- Work towards key performance indicators

BEYOND:

- Plan for widespread deployment of successful demonstrations

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Overview: Eligible Entities

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Eligible entities include:

A. a State;

B. a political subdivision of a State;

C. a Tribal government;

D. a public transit agency or authority;

E. a public toll authority;

F. a metropolitan planning organization; and

G. a group of 2 or more eligible entities described above

*The NOFO includes a **Collaborative Application** option in which eligible entities may choose to collaborate across different regions or geographies on similar projects that are **submitted in separate applications by each eligible applicant.** These projects may address similar problems and with similar technologies or potentially share common resources such as partnerships with industry, nonprofits, academic institutions, or community foundations.*

Eligibility FAQs

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Are universities and academic institutions eligible applicants?

No. However, eligible applicants may choose to partner with universities and academic institutions.

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Eligibility FAQs

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What is the role of partners?

Partners are organizations that will not directly apply to the program as an eligible applicant, but they are committed to supporting a SMART Grants proposal in a meaningful way.

Who can be a partner?

Partners could include other eligible applicant types, and/or academic institutions, non-profit partners, state and local government agencies, utility providers, labor organizations, workforce organizations, or private sector organizations.

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Eligible Costs

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- Planning
- Feasibility analyses
- Revenue forecasting
- Environmental review
- Permitting
- Preliminary engineering and design work
- Systems development or information
- Technology work
- Acquisition of real property
- Construction
- Reconstruction
- Rehabilitation
- Replacement
- Environmental Mitigation
- Construction Contingencies
- Acquisition of equipment, including vehicles

Note: All of these costs are eligible for Stage 1.

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SMART Program Eligible Activities

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Eight technology areas:

- Coordinated automation
- Connected vehicles
- Sensors
- Systems integration
- Delivery / logistics
- Innovative aviation
- Smart grid
- Traffic signals

Considerations across technology areas:

- Applicants should focus on **one or two technology areas**. They should not attempt to cover all areas in their proposals.
- Applicants will be **required to comply with applicable laws and regulations**, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and FAA regulations.
- Applicants should:
  - Address identified policy barriers
  - Clearly address data requirements
  - Consider workforce capacity building

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Technology Areas

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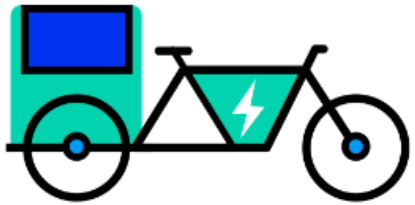
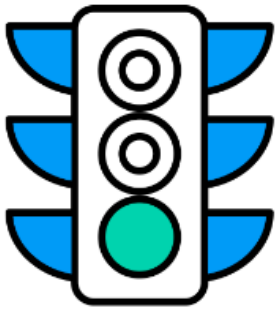
Smart Grid

Sensor-Based Infrastructure

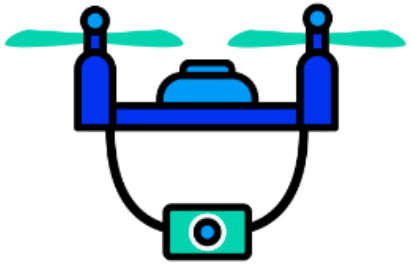


Commerce Delivery & Logistics



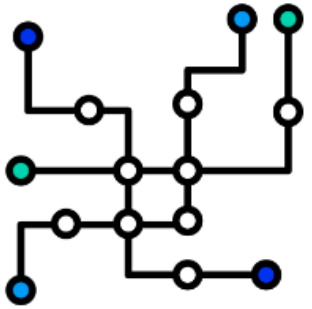
Smart Traffic Signals

Coordinated Automation



Innovative Aviation

Connected Vehicles



Systems Integration

NOFO pg. 12-13

Overview: Prohibited Uses

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A SMART grant shall **not** be used for the following:

- To reimburse any pre-award costs or application preparation costs of the SMART grant application
- For any traffic or parking enforcement activity
- To purchase or lease a license plate reader

Your Project(s)

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Do you intend to submit a SMART Grants application?

- Yes, as a lead applicant
- I plan to participate as a partner
- No
- I am not sure yet

What technology area(s) does your potential project cover?

- Coordinated automation
- Connected vehicles
- Intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure
- Systems integration
- Commerce delivery and logistics
- Leveraging use of innovative aviation technology
- Smart grid
- Smart technology traffic signals
- I am not sure yet

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FY 2022 Overview and Lessons Learned

Overview of FY22 Applications and Projects

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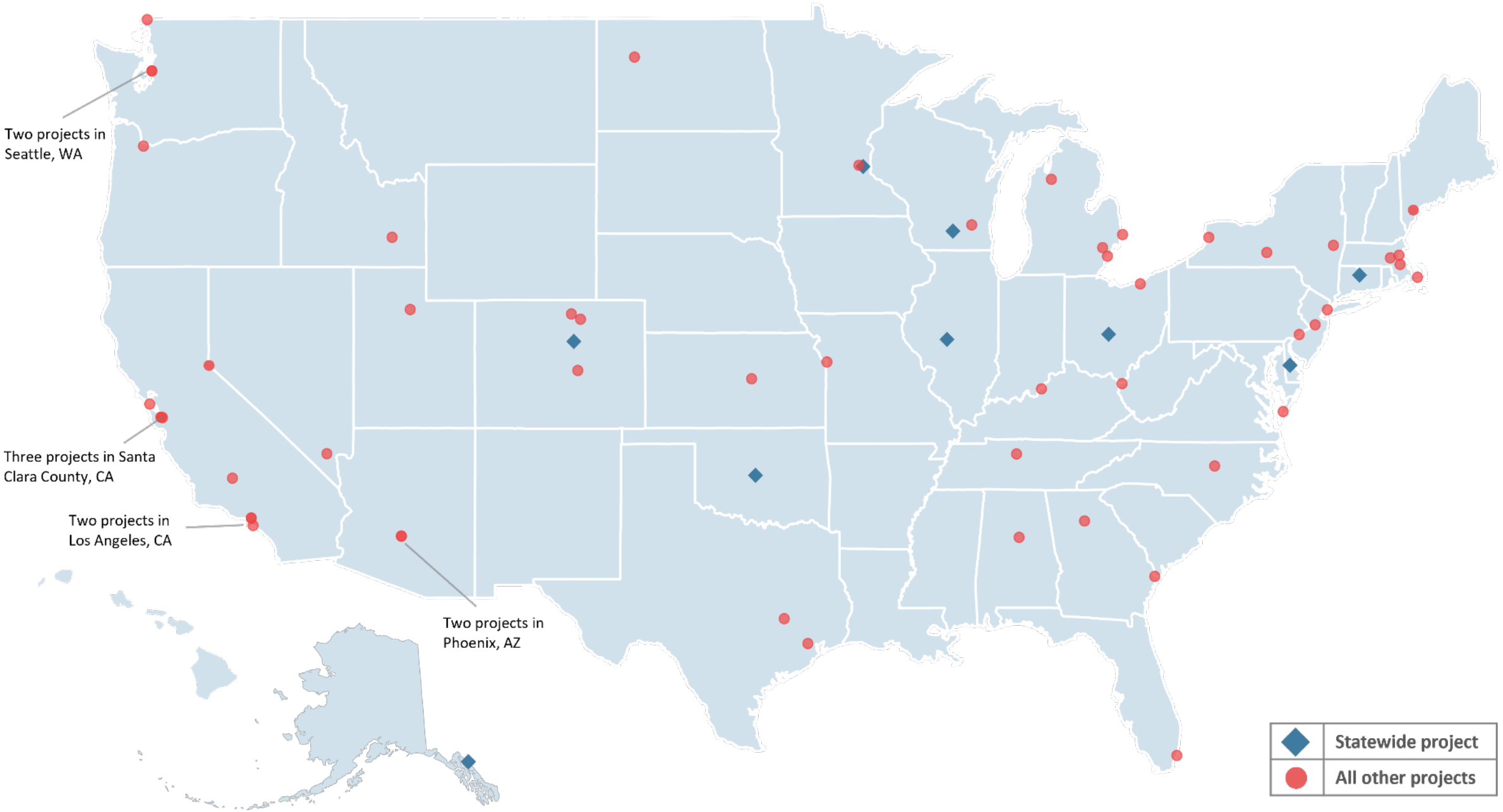
All SMART Applications:

- **389** Projects Submitted
- **$570M** Requested funding
- **49 +D.C.** States represented

FY22 SMART Recipients:

- **59** Projects
- **$94M** Requested funding
- **33** States represented

Map of 59 SMART Projects



FY22 Cohort Themes

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- The cohort themes are merely descriptive of the cohort; projects were not chosen to fulfill these themes.
- A full list of projects that were awarded FY22 Stage 1 awards can be found on the 2022 cohort page of the SMART website.
- Projects that match these use cases may not necessarily be selected to receive a SMART grant in FY23.

Additional Illustrative Use Cases

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The following use cases are illustrative examples of projects that could be eligible for the SMART Grants Program. This is not an exhaustive list, nor will projects that match these use cases necessarily be selected to receive a SMART grant.

Safety and Reliability

- **Improve state-of-good-repair, reduce costs, and improve safety** with the use of sensors, small UAS, or other technologies to enhance infrastructure inspection and asset management processes.

Climate and Resiliency

- **Reduce port gate congestion and truck-related emissions** with truck reservation systems at ports and intermodal container yards.

Equity and Access

- **Get reduced-fare transit to people who need it** by streamlining income-based transit fare programs by integrating back-end databases with other social service programs.

Integration

- **Facilitate on-demand conversion of right-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists** with adaptable smart infrastructure.

More at www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-illustrative-use-cases

Successful Applications: Lessons Learned

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Applications that were Successful in FY22 Stage 1 Grant Demonstrated the Following:

- Alignment with Program Structure: Stage 1 activities would result in a prototype or deployment. The proposal provides a vision for Stage 2.
- Purpose-Driven Innovation: The project targeted specific existing problems; there was a clear reason for using the chosen technology to solve the problem; the project accounted for equity and policy considerations.
- Transformational Approach: The project leveraged existing technology through demonstration projects and innovative approaches.
- Benefit to Community: The applications demonstrated a clear context for the type of project; the project was rooted in the vulnerabilities of the applicant's own transportation system.

Questions to Think About

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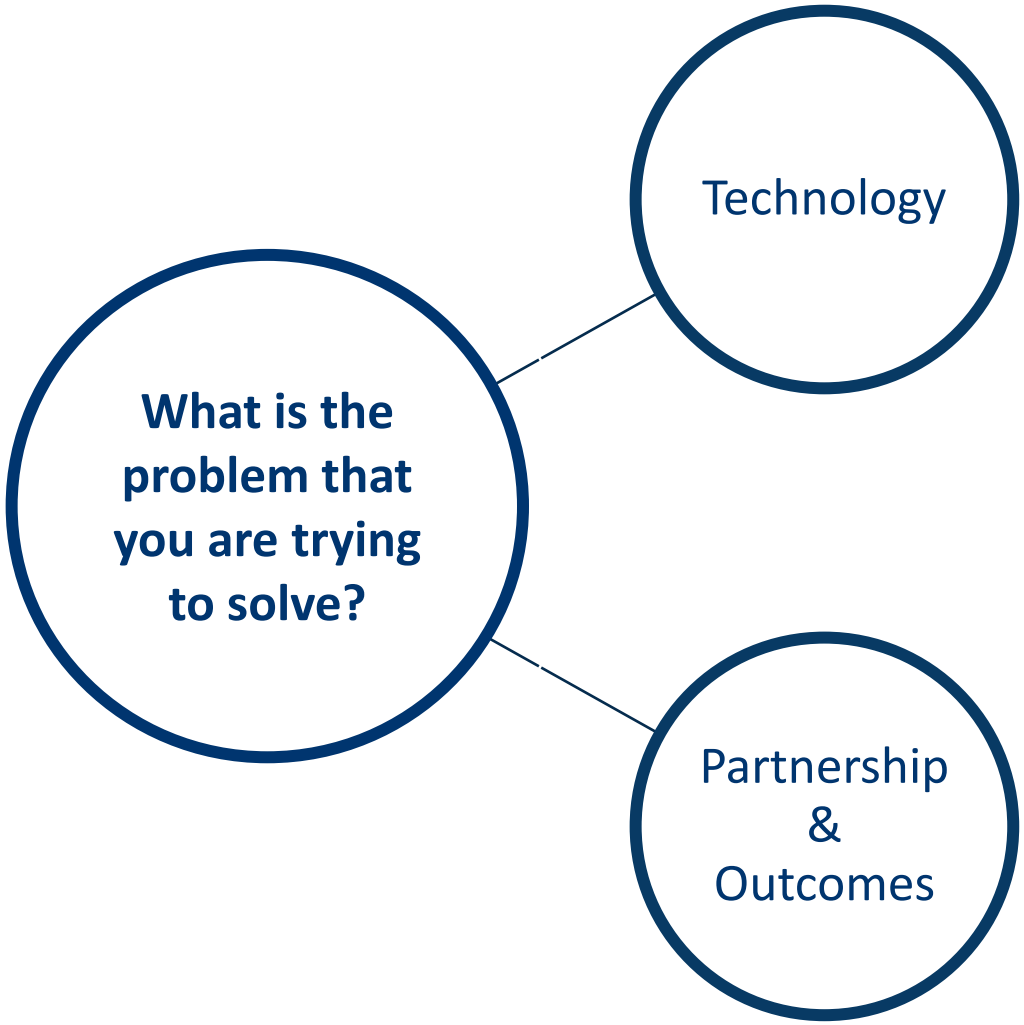

- Is this technology an effective solution for an issue that your community faces?
- Will the technology deployment address a known problem?
- Will the technology deployment lead to a significant improvement over existing conditions?
- What obstacles existed in the past to implement these technologies?

- What partnerships exist or could exist?
- Can you complete your project in a reasonable timeframe?
- Will this project generate significant public benefits, and who will benefit from this project?
- How does your project address climate, equity, and safety priorities?

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Applying for a SMART Grant

FY 2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity

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- The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) contains the instructions for developing and submitting a SMART Grant application.
- Applicants are encouraged to read the NOFO in its entirety.
- The NOFO can be found at Grants.gov using Opportunity Number #DOT-SMART-FY23-01.
- A copy of the NOFO can also be found at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/fy23-smart-stage-1-notice-funding-opportunity-nofo
- Application Deadline: 5:00 PM ET on Tuesday, October 10, 2023.

Changes from FY2022 NOFO

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- Added an anticipated **minimum award size of $250,000**. (Section B.3)
- Clarified the definition of a collaborative application. (Section C.1)
- Provided more detail on what should be included in the Brief Project Description section of the Key Information Questions (Question #10). (Section D.2)
- Asks for details on workforce impacts (Question #24). (Section D.2)
- Asks applicants to identify the project's anticipated Stage 1 and Stage 2 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements (Questions #25 and #26). (Section D.2)
- Requires a Project Location File as Appendix IV. (Section D.2)
- Provides additional guidance on the required Budget Narrative, including a page limit. (Section D.2)

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Required Application Materials

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1. Standard Forms

a. Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance)
b. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
c. Certification Regarding Lobbying
d. If applicable, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL).

Full details can be found in Section D of the NOFO.

2. Key Information Questions

3. Project Narrative

- Should not exceed 7 pages, not including optional cover page and optional table of contents
- Sections include: Overview/Project Description, Project Location, Community Impact, Technical Merit Overview, Project Readiness Overview

4. Appendices

- Resumes
- Budget Narrative
- Letters of Commitment
- Project Location File

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Spotlight: Project Narrative and Appendices

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3. Project Narrative

- Should not exceed 7 pages.
- Sections include:
  - Overview/Project Description
  - Project Location
  - Community Impact
  - Technical Merit Overview
  - Project Readiness Overview

4. Appendices

- Resumes
- Summary Budget Narrative
- Letters of Commitment- Optional
- Project Location File

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Spotlight: Evaluation Criteria Overview

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- **Technical Merit**
  - Identification and Understanding of the Problem to Be Solved
  - Appropriateness of Proposed Solution
  - Expected Benefits
- **Project Readiness**
  - Feasibility of Workplan
  - Community Engagement and Partnerships
  - Leadership and Qualifications
- **Additional Consideration: Benefit to Historically Disadvantaged Communities**

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Letters of Commitment (Optional)

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What are they?

- Statements describing commitments from a critical project partner.
- Commitments could include:
  - Financial support
  - Technical assistance
  - Independent evaluation process
  - Training programs
  - Research collaborations
  - Policy changes

Who can provide them?

- Universities and other educational institutions
- Non-profit partners
- State and local agencies
- Utility providers
- Private sector organizations

How should they be developed?

Letters of Commitment should:

- Be 2 pages or less.
- Describe specific, measurable commitments.
- Explain the tangible benefits that will be generated by the commitment.
- Focus on quality over quantity.

To reduce the burden for applicants, the Stage 1: Planning and Prototyping Grant application does not request Letters of Support.

View the Letter of Commitment Template at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-letters-commitment-template

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Where to Submit the Application

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All application materials must be submitted through ValidEval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT, at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup.

Sign up and log in

Complete registration details

(project contacts, UEI, etc.)

Answer key information questions

(project description, partners, location, costs, etc.)

Upload completed Standard Forms

(SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, others as applicable)

Upload the Proposal Document

(one .PDF that contains the Project Narrative and Required Appendices)

Click submit!

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Where to Submit the Application

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Using Valid Eval:

- Once you establish an account, you can save your progress.
- Once you have completed the entire package, **you must click submit.**
- You will receive a confirmation email.
- Draft applications will not be evaluated.
- Applications **cannot be submitted via grants.gov**. Any materials submitted there will not be accepted or evaluated.

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Unique Entity Identifiers

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- All applicants will need to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through GSA to apply for grant opportunities in grants.gov.
- On April 4, 2022 the federal government stopped using Dun & Bradstreet's proprietary Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) to identify contractors and grantees and began exclusively using the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
- The process of obtaining a UEI can take **up to a month**, so applicants are encouraged to apply for the UEI now. If you previously had a DUNS number that you used at SAM.gov, your UEI has already been created and is available to view in SAM.gov.
- For more information, see https://sam.gov/.

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Application Resources

SMART Resources Webpage

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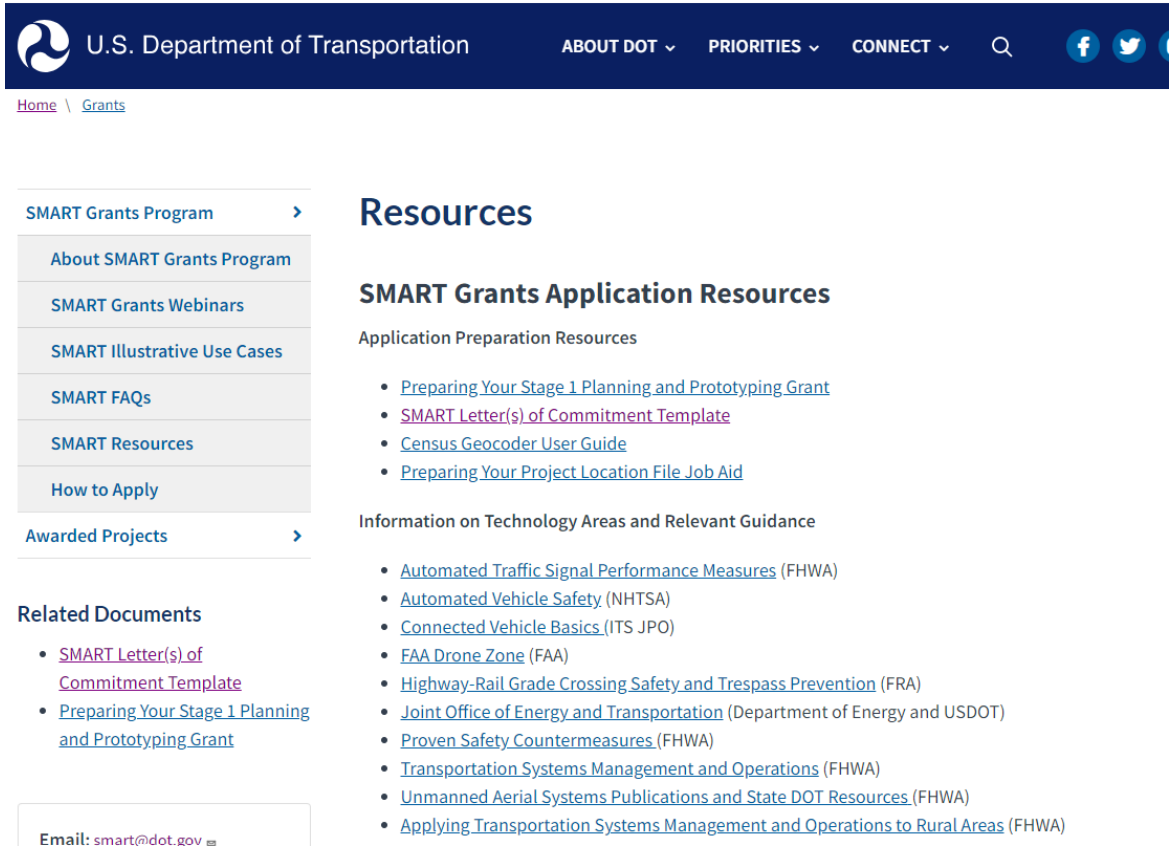

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/resources

Project Location File Job Aid

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SMART GRANTS PROGRAM

Preparing your Project Location File

PURPOSE OF THIS JOB AID

- This job aid will provide applicants with step-by-step instructions on how to create a project location file for the Appendix IV: Project Location File section of the FY2023 SMART Grants application.
- This file will be used in coordination with other parts of the SMART Grants application. It will help the SMART Grants Program team better understand the location(s) of the project as well as the disadvantaged community designations described in the Key Information Questions and Project Narrative sections of the SMART Grants application.
- Acceptable file types are Shapefile, GEOJSON, or KML/KMZ. This file must be uploaded to Valid Eval along with the other required application components.
- Applicants can only submit one project location file as part of their application. This can be a zipped file.
- Applicants may use any GIS software or a publicly available online mapping tool, for example, Google Earth or GEOJSON.

REQUIREMENTS

- Internet connection
- Internet browser (such as Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, or Firefox)
- A list of your project's location(s)
  - Please be as specific as possible about project location(s). Example scenarios are listed on Page 2 of this job aid.

ABOUT THIS JOB AID

- USDOT does not have a preferred GIS software. Applicants may use any software that can produce a Shapefile, GEOJSON, or KML/KMZ. For the purposes of this Job Aid, Google Earth and Google Chrome will be used. USDOT does not specifically endorse Google. This is just one example of how an applicant could create a project location file.
- The screenshots and icons taken from Google are for informational purposes only and are not an endorsement of Google Maps nor an indication of any partnership with Google.

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https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-08/Preparing%20your%20Project%20Location%20File.pdf

Visit our Frequently Asked Questions Page

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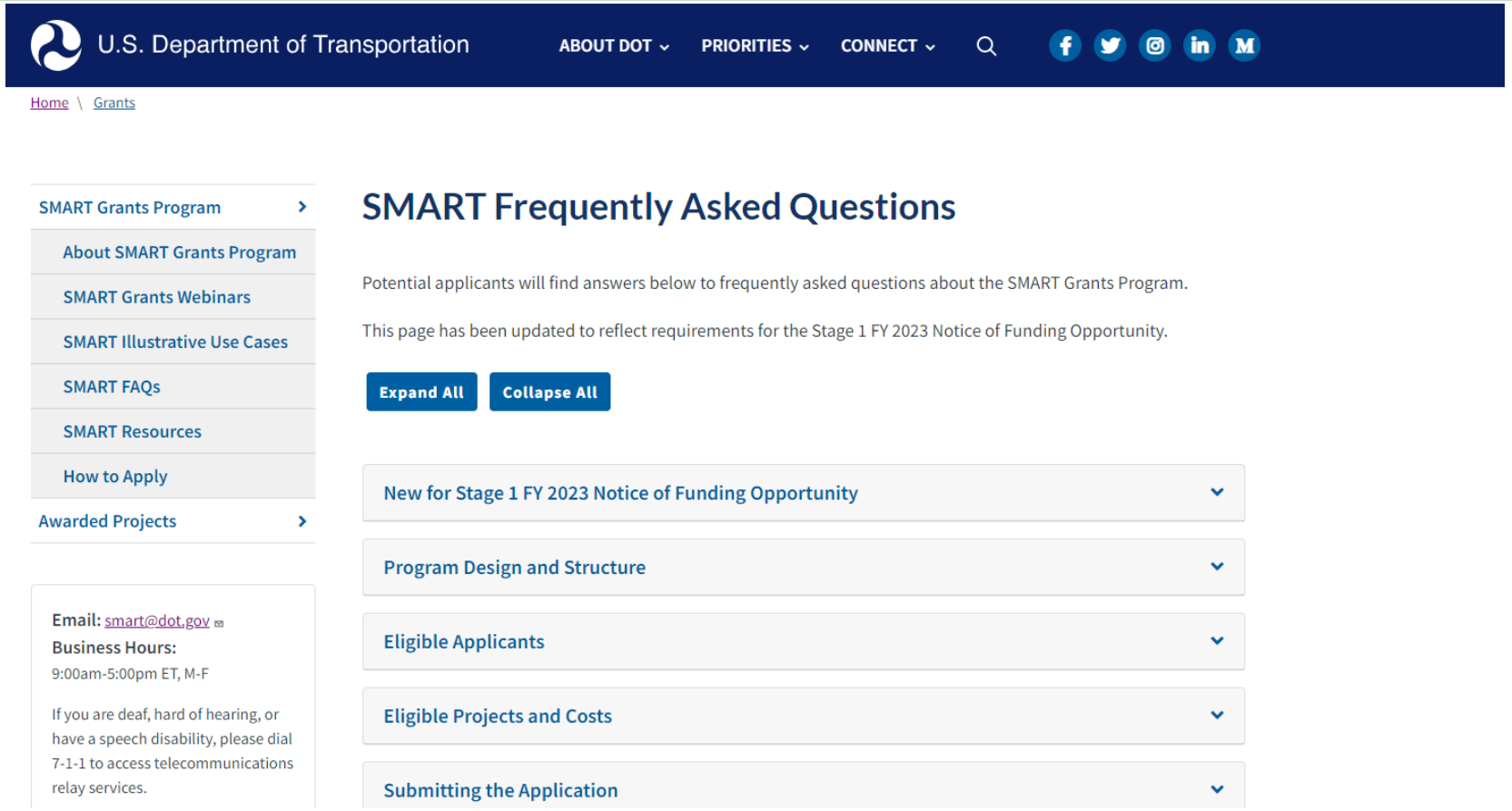

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-frequently-asked-questions

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Key Dates

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- **Application Deadline: Tuesday, 10/10/2023 at 5:00PM ET**
- **Deadline to Submit Technical Questions to smart@dot.gov: Friday 9/29/2023**
- **Remember: Applications must be submitted via Valid Eval. USDOT will not accept or review application materials submitted via Grants.gov.**

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Questions and Answers

Questions & Answers

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- Please type your questions into the Q&A box
- Technical Support: webconference@dot.gov
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are posted at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-frequently-asked-questions.
  - We will update the page with questions from this webinar.
- If you have additional questions after this webinar, you can email smart@dot.gov.
  - We strongly encourage you to review the NOFO and FAQs in full prior to submitting questions to the SMART inbox.
  - The deadline to submit technical questions to the SMART inbox is: 9/29/2023.

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Appendix