

# SMART Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity

**AGENCY:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R), U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT or the Department)

**ACTION:** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) #20.941

**SUMMARY:** The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping grants. Funds for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 SMART Grants Program are to be awarded on a competitive basis to conduct demonstration projects focused on advanced smart city or community technologies and systems to improve transportation efficiency and safety.

**DATES:** Applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET on Tuesday, October 10, 2023. Late applications will not be accepted.

**ADDRESSES:** Applications must be submitted via Valid Eval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT, at [https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT\\_SMART\\_2023/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup). USDOT will not accept or review application materials submitted via Grants.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Please contact SMART Grants Program staff via email at [smart@dot.gov](mailto:smart@dot.gov) or call Roxanne Ledesma at 202-774-8003. A telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) is available at 202-366-3993. In addition, USDOT may post answers to questions and requests for clarifications, as well as schedule information regarding webinars providing additional guidance, on the SMART Grants website at <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SMART>. The deadline to submit technical questions is 5:00PM ET on Friday, September 29, 2023.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Each section of this notice contains information and instructions relevant to the application process for SMART grants.

The FY 2023 NOFO incorporates lessons learned from the FY 2022 NOFO. It substantively differs in a few ways, as listed below.

- Section A.2 adds an anticipated minimum award size of \$250,000.
- Section C.1 clarifies the definition of a collaborative application.
- Section D.2 provides further detail on what should be included in the Brief Project Description section of the Key Information Questions (Question #10).
- Section D.2 asks applicants to provide 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 provides additional guidance on the required Budget Narrative, including a page limit.

- Section D.2 adds a Project Location File requirement as Appendix IV.
- Section E.1 adds required information about performance metrics to Technical Merit Criterion #3 and Project Readiness Criterion #1.
- Section F.2 further describes expected Build America, Buy America requirements for applicants that are awarded funding.

**This list of changes is not exhaustive. All applicants should read this notice in its entirety so that they have the information needed to submit eligible and competitive applications. All applications must be submitted on Valid Eval. USDOT will not review or accept any application materials submitted on Grants.gov.**

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## A. Program Description

### 1. Overview

Section 25005 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117–58, November 15, 2021; also referred to as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law” or “BIL”) authorized and appropriated \$100 million to the Department of Transportation (USDOT) for FY 2023 for the SMART Grants Program. This NOFO solicits applications for activities to be funded under the SMART Grants Program. The FY 2023 funding will be implemented, as appropriate and consistent with law, in alignment with the priorities in Executive Order 14052, Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (86 FR 64355).<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the SMART Grants Program is to conduct demonstration projects focused on advanced smart city or community technologies and systems in a variety of communities to improve transportation efficiency and safety. The program funds projects that are focused on using technology interventions to solve real-world challenges and build data and technology capacity and expertise in the public sector.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Program Structure

The SMART Grants Program includes two stages: *Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping Grants (Stage 1 grants)* and *Stage 2 Implementation Grants (Stage 2 grants)*. The program structure is based on a belief that *planning, prototyping, and partnership are critical* to advancing the state of the practice for data and technology projects in the public sector. USDOT anticipates that only recipients of Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping Grants will be eligible for Stage 2 Implementation Grants. USDOT anticipates funding projects of up to \$2,000,000 per project for Stage 1 and up to \$15,000,000 per project for Stage 2. The anticipated minimum award size is \$250,000 for Stage 1; USDOT reserves the right to alter the minimum award amount depending on the quantity and quality of applications.

Stage 1 recipients should build internal buy-in and partnerships with stakeholders to refine and prototype their concepts as well as to report on results. Stakeholders can include public, private, academic, and nonprofit organizations; organized labor and workforce organizations; and community organizations and networks.<sup>3</sup> At the conclusion of Stage 1, recipients should have the information needed to either create a fully realized implementation plan with robust performance metrics; or to make an informed decision not to proceed with the concept. Stage 1 results may uncover previously unknown institutional barriers, technical limitations, or poor performance relative to conventional solutions. The SMART Grants Program expects to document lessons learned from Stage 1 projects, knowing that these findings will be broadly beneficial to the transportation sector.

Stage 2 implementation projects should result in a scaled-up demonstration of the concept, integrating it with the existing transportation system and refining the concept such that it could be replicated by

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<sup>1</sup> The priorities of Executive Order 14052, “Implementation of the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act” are as follows: to invest efficiently and equitably, promote the competitiveness of the U.S. economy, improve job opportunities by focusing on high labor standards and equal employment opportunity, strengthen infrastructure resilience to hazards including climate change, and to effectively coordinate with State, local, Tribal, and territorial government partners. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/18/2021-25286/implementation-of-the-infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act>

<sup>2</sup> For more information and illustrative use cases, please see [www.transportation.gov/SMART](http://www.transportation.gov/SMART).

<sup>3</sup> Recipients must comply with 2 CFR 200 Subpart D regarding procurement standards (200.317 through .327).

others. If demonstration at scale identifies critical challenges, gaps, or negative impacts, they should be clearly stated and documented so that other communities that take on similar projects may learn from them and adapt.

*This NOFO solicits applications for Stage 1 grants only.* USDOT anticipates that separate SMART Grants Program NOFOs will solicit applications for Stage 2 grants in calendar year 2024 as well as for additional Stage 1 grants in calendar year 2024.

### 3. Departmental Priorities

The *FY 2022-2026 U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan* establishes USDOT's strategic goals: safety, economic strength and global competitiveness, equity, climate and sustainability, transformation, and organizational excellence.<sup>4</sup> The USDOT Innovation Principles guide Departmental actions related to innovation generally as well as the transformation strategic goal.<sup>5</sup> Applicants are encouraged to review the Innovation Principles, along with other resources accessible on the SMART Grants website<sup>6</sup> and to incorporate them into the design of applications for the SMART Grants Program.

Departmental priorities for the SMART Grants Program include the following:

- **Safety:** The Department is committed to advancing safe, efficient transportation, including in the SMART Grants Program. The National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS), issued January 27, 2022, commits the Department to respond to the current crisis in roadway fatalities by 'taking substantial, comprehensive action to significantly reduce serious and fatal injuries on the Nation's roadways,' in pursuit of the goal of achieving zero roadway deaths through a Safe System Approach.
- **Climate Change and Sustainability:** The Department seeks to fund projects under the SMART Grants Program that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector, incorporate evidence-based climate resilience measures and features, reduce the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from the project materials, and avoid adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species, and address the disproportionate negative environmental impacts of transportation on disadvantaged communities, consistent with Executive Orders 14008 and 14057, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (86 FR 7619).
- **Equity and the Justice40 Initiative:** The Department seeks to award projects under the SMART Grants Program that will create proportional impacts to all populations in a project area, remove transportation-related disparities to all populations in a project area, and increase equitable access to project benefits, consistent with Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (86 FR 7009), and Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (88 FR 10825). The Department also seeks to

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<sup>4</sup> See: FY 2022-26 USDOT Strategic Plan (<https://www.transportation.gov/dot-strategic-plan>), page 6. Last updated April 7, 2022.

<sup>5</sup>See: USDOT Innovation Principles (<https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/innovation/us-dot-innovation-principles>). Released January 6, 2022; last updated July 14, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Other resources can be found at [www.transportation.gov/SMART](http://www.transportation.gov/SMART) and include the USDOT Strategic Plan, the USDOT Equity Action Plan, and the National Roadway Safety Strategy.

award projects that address equity and environmental justice, particularly for communities that have experienced decades of underinvestment and are most impacted by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards, consistent with Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (86 FR 7619), and [Executive Order 14096](#), Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All (88 FR 25251). The SMART Grants Program will seek to advance the Biden-Harris Administration's [Justice40 Initiative](#). Established by [Executive Order 14008](#), the Justice40 Initiative has made it the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments, such as climate, clean energy, and other areas, flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

- **Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation:** The Department intends to use the SMART Grants program to support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and the incorporation of strong labor standards and training and placement programs, especially registered apprenticeships, in project planning stages, consistent with Executive Order 14025, Worker Organizing and Empowerment (86 FR 22829), and Executive Order 14052, Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (86 FR 64335). The Department also intends to use the SMART Grants program to support wealth creation, consistent with the Department's Equity Action Plan through the inclusion of Local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms.

#### 4. SMART Grants Program Priorities

As established in BIL, projects funded by the SMART Grants Program use advanced data, technology, and applications to provide significant benefits to a local area, a State, a region, or the United States. These benefits are identified in BIL and align to the following categories:

- **Safety and reliability:** Improve the safety of systems for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the broader traveling public. Improve emergency response.
- **Resiliency:** Increase the reliability and resiliency of the transportation system, including cybersecurity and resiliency and adaptation to climate change effects.
- **Equity and access:** Connect or expand access for underserved or disadvantaged populations. Improve access to jobs, education, and essential services.
- **Climate:** Reduce congestion and/or air pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions. Improve energy efficiency.
- **Partnerships:** Contribute to economic competitiveness and incentivize private sector investments or partnerships, including technical and financial commitments on the proposed solution. Demonstrate committed leadership and capacity from the applicant, partners, and community.
- **Integration:** Improve integration of systems and promote connectivity of infrastructure, connected vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and the broader traveling public.

The Department will prioritize SMART Grant funding applications that demonstrate the following characteristics, as identified in BIL:

- **Fit, scale, and adoption:** Right-size the proposed solution to population density and demographics, the physical attributes of the community and transportation system, and the transportation needs of the community. Confirm technologies are capable of being integrated with existing transportation systems, including transit. Leverage technologies in repeatable ways that can be scaled and adopted by communities.
- **Data sharing, cybersecurity, and privacy:** Promote public and private sharing of data and best practices and the use of open platforms, open data formats, technology-neutral requirements, and interoperability. Promote industry best practices regarding cybersecurity and technology standards. Safeguard individual privacy.
- **Workforce development:** Promote a skilled and inclusive workforce.
- **Measurement and validation:** Allow for the measurement and validation of the cost savings and performance improvements associated with the installation and use of smart city or community technologies and practices.

To accomplish these objectives, the SMART Grants Program will fund projects that focus on using technology interventions to solve real-world challenges facing communities.

The SMART Grants Program will focus on building data and technology capacity and expertise for State, local, and Tribal governments. Technology investment is most beneficial when tailored to the needs of the community. The SMART Grants Program recognizes that many public sector agencies are challenged to find the resources and personnel to engage with new technologies; this is reflected in the program design, which builds in the time and support needed for projects to succeed. The SMART Grants Program will support and grow a strong, diverse, and local workforce.

Note that the SMART Grants Program is a demonstration program. Proposals seeking funding for systems and technologies that are already well-established and broadly adopted will be less competitive. For more information about less competitive applications received for the FY 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity, please attend the August 17, 2023 SMART “How to Apply” webinar, or watch the subsequent recording posted on [www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/webinars](http://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/webinars).

Successful projects will seek to build sustainable partnerships across sectors and levels of government as well as collaborate with industry, academia, nonprofits, and other traditional and non-traditional partners. Successful projects will also support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union.

See Section E.1. for more detail on merit criteria that implement the priorities outlined above.

## B. Federal Award Information

### 1. Total Funding Available

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) established the SMART Grants Program with \$500,000,000 in advanced appropriations, including \$100,000,000 for FY 2023. This Notice makes available up to approximately \$50,000,000 for FY 2023 Stage 1 grants under the SMART Grants Program. USDOT anticipates approximately \$50,000,000 in FY 2023 funding will be awarded for Stage 2 projects in a future Notice of Funding Opportunity to be issued in calendar year 2024. USDOT anticipates using up to 2 percent of funding for administrative costs. Refer to Section D for greater detail on additional funding considerations and Section D.5 for funding restrictions.

### 2. Availability of Funds

Grant funding obligation occurs when a selected applicant and USDOT enter into a written grant agreement after the applicant has satisfied applicable administrative requirements. Any costs incurred prior to USDOT's obligation of funds for activities ("pre-award costs") are ineligible for reimbursement. SMART Grant funds are available during the period of performance of the project. USDOT retains the right to prioritize projects for selection that are most likely to achieve an efficient timeline and be completed within the expected period of performance (18 months).

### 3. Award Size and Anticipated Quantity

USDOT expects to award up to 30 Stage 1 grants of up to \$2,000,000 per award. There is an anticipated minimum award size of \$250,000. The Department reserves the right to make more, or fewer, awards. USDOT also reserves the discretion to alter minimum and maximum award sizes upon receiving the full pool of applications and assessing the needs of the program in relation to the priorities in Section A.3 and A.4. Moreover, USDOT reserves the right not to award the full funding amount requested by an applicant.

### 4. Start Dates and Period of Performance

USDOT expects to obligate SMART award funding via a signed grant agreement between the Department and the recipient as flexibly and expeditiously as possible. USDOT expects that recipients will be ready for a signed grant agreement no later than six (6) months after the announcement of awards, and recipients must fully liquidate grant funds by the end of the project's period of performance. If a recipient is unable to meet either of these deadlines, USDOT may deobligate and/or reallocate any such funds. The expected period of performance for Stage 1 SMART grant agreements is up to 18 months.

### 5. Data Collection Requirements

#### i. Data Management

To fulfill the reporting requirements and in accordance with the [Public Access Plan](#), award recipients must consider, budget for, and implement appropriate data management for data and corresponding outputs acquired or generated during the grant. Applicants are expected to account for data and performance reporting in their budget submission. Requirements include a project:

- Providing at a minimum the data and corresponding outputs to: (1) reproduce significant results (whether positive or negative); (2) measure the outcomes or objectives of the project, as well as the NOFO; and, (3) add potential value to future deployments or research and to support evidence-based policy or actions;
- Defaulting to open access when appropriate (exceptions include protecting personally identifiable information [PII], Indigenous data sovereignty (<https://www.gida-global.org/care>), and confidential business information [CBI]);
- Protecting PII, intellectual property rights, and CBI;
- Utilizing, when possible, open licenses and protecting USDOT's non-exclusive copyright to data and corresponding outputs (<https://doi.org/10.21949/1520564>);
- Making the source code or tools necessary to analyze the data available to the public, if relevant;
- Developing a data management plan, providing relevant metadata (in a DCAT-US <https://resources.data.gov/resources/dcat-us/> file, and, optionally, a discipline-appropriate metadata standard file), and data documentation (README.txt files, data dictionaries, code books, supporting files, imputation tables, etc.); and
- Where applicable, considering contributing data to voluntary resources such as [NHTSA's AV TEST Initiative](#).

Projects should implement data management best practices including, but not limited to, implementation of published data specifications and standards (formal and informal); increasing data discoverability and data sharing; posting data in a timely fashion on publicly accessible resources; and enabling interaction of systems, interoperability, and integration of data systems.



## C. Eligibility Information

### 1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for the SMART Grants Program include:

- A. a State<sup>7</sup>;
- B. a political subdivision of a State<sup>8</sup>;
- C. a federally recognized Tribal government;
- D. a public transit agency or authority;
- E. a public toll authority;
- F. a metropolitan planning organization; or
- G. a group of two or more eligible entities listed above in Section C.1 applying through a single lead applicant (Group Application).

### Collaborative Applications

Eligible entities may choose to collaborate **across different regions or geographies on similar projects** that are **submitted in separate applications by each eligible applicant**. This type of application is separate from a “Group Application,” which is listed above as eligible applicant type “G”. Collaborative 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. If these entities choose not to apply as a group with a single lead applicant, each applicant should identify their application as part of a collaborative application. There will be an option to indicate this when submitting the application in Valid Eval.

- Each organization in a collaborative application must submit an individual application.
- Each individual application in a collaborative application will be evaluated on its own merits and USDOT reserves the right to fund all, some, or none of the associated applications, with the same anticipated funding (i.e., up to \$2,000,000 per individual award).
- Collaborative applications can include any type of eligible applicant.

### 2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required for Stage I: Planning and Prototyping.

### 3. Eligible Activities

The SMART Grants Program funds multiple technology areas, as listed below. Projects *must* demonstrate at least one technology area and *may* demonstrate more than one technology area. USDOT will evaluate each application on its merits, and there is no expectation that applications demonstrate more than one technology area.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. territories are eligible applicants.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of the SMART Grants Program Notice of Funding Opportunity, a political subdivision of a State is defined as a unit of government created under the authority of State law. This includes cities, towns, counties, special districts, and similar units of local government, such as public port or airport authorities, if created under State law.

As stated in BIL Section 25005 (e)(1), the following technology areas are eligible projects under SMART.

Technology Area	Definition
<b>Coordinated Automation</b>	Use of automated transportation and autonomous vehicles while working to minimize the impact on the accessibility of any other user group or mode of travel.
<b>Connected Vehicles</b>	Vehicles that send and receive information regarding vehicle movements in the network and use vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-everything communications to provide advanced and reliable connectivity.
<b>Intelligent, Sensor-Based Infrastructure</b>	Deployment and use of a collective intelligent infrastructure that allows sensors to collect and report real-time data to inform everyday transportation-related operations and performance.
<b>Systems Integration</b>	Integration of intelligent transportation systems with other existing systems and other advanced transportation technologies.
<b>Commerce Delivery and Logistics</b>	Innovative data and technological solutions supporting efficient goods movement, such as connected vehicle probe data, road weather data, or global positioning data to improve on-time pickup and delivery, improved travel time reliability, reduced fuel consumption and emissions, and reduced labor and vehicle maintenance costs.
<b>Leveraging Use of Innovative Aviation Technology</b>	Leveraging the use of innovative aviation technologies, such as unmanned aircraft systems, to support transportation safety and efficiencies, including traffic monitoring and infrastructure inspection.
<b>Smart Grid</b>	Developing a programmable and efficient energy transmission and distribution system to support the adoption or expansion of energy capture, electric vehicle deployment, or freight or commercial fleet fuel efficiency.
<b>Smart Technology Traffic Signals</b>	<p>Improving the active management and functioning of traffic signals, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of automated traffic signal performance measures;</li> <li>• Implementing strategies, activities, and projects that support active management of traffic signal operations, including through optimization of corridor timing; improved vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle detection at traffic signals; or the use of connected vehicle technologies;</li> <li>• Replacement of outdated traffic signals; or</li> <li>• For an eligible applicant serving a population of less than 500,000, paying the costs of temporary staffing hours dedicated to updating traffic signal technology.</li> </ul>

Projects must comply with relevant Federal, state, and local laws and regulations to be eligible. These vary by technology area, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to understand the requirements for their application. This section briefly discusses a few notable examples and is not comprehensive.

Innovative aviation projects must show understanding and awareness of, and comply with, all FAA, NHTSA, and other Federal, state, and local regulations relevant to the technologies and usages thereof. For instance, in the case of innovative aviation projects involving small, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), applicants are responsible for complying with regulations which may include, and are not limited to the following, as necessary to achieve desired outcomes:<sup>9</sup>

- 14 CFR Part 91 General Operating and Flight Rules<sup>10</sup>
- 14 CFR Part 107 small UAS rule; Small UAS<sup>11</sup>
- UAS Operations over People rule; Operations Over People General Overview<sup>12</sup>
- UAS Remote identification rule; UAS Remote Identification Overview<sup>13</sup>

Proponents of innovative aviation projects are also responsible for using U.S. government tools and resources which may include, and are not limited to the following, as necessary to fulfill requirements to operate technologies and achieve desired outcomes:

- FAA DroneZone, used to register UAS<sup>14</sup>
- FAA Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC), used to obtain airspace authorization to fly in controlled airspace<sup>15</sup>
- Part 107 Waiver Resources,<sup>16</sup> used to enable more complex UAS operations<sup>17</sup>

Projects that use communications technologies must either 1) use Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) services that utilize Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything (C-V2X) based technology designed to operate within the 30 MHz of spectrum (5.895-5.925 GHz) that are consistent with the rules established in waivers associated with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ET Docket No. 19-138 and future Report and Orders effective at the time when the Department selects projects for funding under the FY 2023 SMART Grants Program, or 2) leverage other communications technologies that can support V2X services and operate in spectrum outside of the 5.895-5.925 GHz range. USDOT will evaluate FY 2023 Stage 1 proposals according to this language.

Projects that involve equipping or retrofitting motor vehicles with additional technologies are only eligible if the vehicles are publicly owned, leased or used in a contracted service; equipping privately owned and operated vehicles outside of a leased or contracted service is not an eligible activity. Projects

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<sup>9</sup> Other terminologies exist, using the FAA terminology “unmanned aircraft systems” for simplicity;

<sup>10</sup>14 CFR Part 91 <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-91>.

<sup>11</sup> 14 CFR Part 107 <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-107>

<sup>12</sup>FAA Operations Over People General Overview

[https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial\\_operators/operations\\_over\\_people](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/operations_over_people). Last updated November 10, 2022.

<sup>13</sup>FAA Final Rule on Remote ID <https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/remotoid-final-rule>. Last updated April 21, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> FAA DroneZone; <https://faadronezone.faa.gov/>.

<sup>15</sup> FAA UAS Data Exchange (LAANC); [https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs\\_partnerships/data\\_exchange](https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/data_exchange).

<sup>16</sup> Part 107 Waiver resources; [https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial\\_operators/part\\_107\\_waivers](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/part_107_waivers).

<sup>17</sup> For additional questions or information, please contact the FAA UAS Support Center at [https://www.faa.gov/uas/contact\\_us](https://www.faa.gov/uas/contact_us).

involving motor vehicles must involve only vehicles that comply with all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSSs) and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), or vehicles that are exempt from the requirements in a manner that allows for the legal acquisition and operation of the vehicles in the proposed project.

For all technology areas, if an exemption, waiver, permit, or other special permission is required in order to conduct the proposed project, it will strengthen a Stage 1 application if the applicant can affirm that it has already received such permission. If the project is selected for award, the lack of a required exemption, waiver, permit, or special permission may impact the Department's funding timeline or result in special conditions in the grant agreement. For future rounds of SMART that include Stage 2 applications, Stage 2 applicants will be required to obtain all necessary exemptions, waivers, permits, or special permissions before submitting an application and provide such affirmation. The selection of a project to receive a SMART grant is not a determination of the merit of any waiver or exemption.

#### **4. Eligible Costs**

Broadly, eligible activity costs must comply with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E (i.e., 2 CFR § 200.403 and § 200.405). USDOT reserves the right to make cost eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis. Eligible development and construction activities for grant funding are the following:

- planning;
- feasibility analyses;
- revenue forecasting;
- environmental review;
- permitting;
- preliminary engineering and design work;
- systems development or information technology work;
- acquisition of real property (including land and improvements to land relating to an eligible project);
- construction;
- reconstruction;
- rehabilitation;
- replacement;
- environmental mitigation;
- construction contingencies; and
- acquisition of equipment, including vehicles.

The following are not eligible costs for SMART Grants Program funding:

- reimbursement of any pre-award costs or application preparation costs of the SMART grant application;
- traffic or parking enforcement activity; or
- purchase or lease of a license plate reader.

If a component of the project is explicitly intended to support current or future traffic or parking enforcement activities, it is not an eligible cost for the SMART Grants Program and cannot be included in an eligible proposal.

Federal funds may not be used to support or oppose union organizing, whether directly or as an offset for other funds.

For grant recipients receiving an award, project evaluation costs are allowable costs (either as direct or indirect), and such costs may include the personnel and equipment needed for data infrastructure and expertise in data analysis, performance, and evaluation (2 CFR Part 200). For more information on required reporting, see Section F.3. Recipients may not use more than 3 percent of the amount of a SMART grant for each fiscal year to achieve compliance with applicable planning and reporting requirements.

## D. Application and Submission Information

### 1. Address to Request Application Package

All grant application materials can be accessed at grants.gov under the Notice of Funding Opportunity Number DOT-SMART-FY23-01. However, **applications should not be submitted on Grants.gov**, and USDOT will not review any applications submitted via Grants.gov. **Applicants must submit their applications via Valid Eval at [https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT SMART 2023/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup)**. Potential applicants may also request paper copies of materials at:

Telephone: 202-774-8003

Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
E37-303  
Washington, DC 20590

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission

The application must include the following: Standard Forms (SF); Key Information Questions; and Project Narrative, including the required Appendices. This information must be submitted via Valid Eval at [https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT SMART 2023/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup). More detailed information about each application material is provided below. Nothing should be submitted on Grants.gov, and USDOT will not review any applications submitted via Grants.gov.

- i. **Standard Forms:** All applicants must submit the following Standard Forms: Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424), Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A), and the Certification Regarding Lobbying form. If applicable, applicants should also complete the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL). These forms can be found on the Valid Eval application page.

Regarding signatures, we ask that authorized representatives either:

1. Print the appropriate documents, physically sign the documents in ink, and re-upload the documents to Valid Eval OR
  2. Download the appropriate documents, provide a digital signature/digital certificate, and re-upload the documents to Valid Eval.
- ii. **Key Information Questions:** This is a preview list of the questions that are asked on USDOT's automated proposal website at [https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT SMART 2023/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup). After registering in the system, the applicant will be prompted to answer the following questions on the website.

Title	Instructions
1. Project Name	Enter a concise, descriptive title for the project. This should be the same title used in the Grants.gov SF-424 submission and the application narrative. The SMART Grants Program recommends a title of 100 characters or less.

2. Lead Applicant Entity Name	This should be consistent with Q. 8.a. of the SF-424.
3. Lead Applicant Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	See Section D.3 for more information about obtaining a UEI from SAM.gov. The UEI must be current and not expired. The UEI must be in an “active” status, not “assigned.”
4. Eligible Applicant Type	<p>Indicate the eligible applicant type for your application: A. a State; B. a political subdivision of a State; C. a federally recognized Tribal government; D. a public transit agency or authority; E. a public toll authority; F. a metropolitan planning organization.</p> <p>If this is a group application, please identify the eligible applicant type of the lead applicant.</p>
5. Was a similar application submitted for the FY 2022 SMART Grants funding opportunity?	If yes, please include the project title of the similar grant application and the name of the lead applicant.
6. Was a similar application submitted in the past two years, or do you anticipate a similar application will be submitted for funding in the coming year for this project under <b>any other USDOT discretionary grant programs</b> (not including the SMART Grants Program)?	<p>If yes, please include the name of the discretionary grant program, the project title of the similar grant application, and the name of the lead applicant.</p> <p>Please also indicate the application status (Planned, Submitted, Selected, or Not Selected).</p>
7. Was Federal funding previously received for this project? This may include funding received from USDOT as well as other Federal agencies.	If yes, indicate the amount of Federal funding received and the relevant grant number.
8. What organizations will be considered partners on this project?	List all critical project partners. This could include other eligible applicant types (e.g., States, a political subdivision of a State, etc.) as well as those in industry, academia, nonprofits, and other traditional and non-traditional partners). <sup>18</sup>
9. Is this a collaborative application, with <b>each eligible applicant applying separately</b> ?	If yes, please indicate the organizational name(s) of the other <b>eligible applicant(s) with which you are collaborating across separate applications</b> . Remember, eligible applicants include States, political subdivisions of a State, Tribal governments, public transit agencies or authorities, public toll authorities, and/or metropolitan

<sup>18</sup> Letters of Commitment should be written for critical partners only. For a Letter of Commitment template, see [www.transportation.gov/SMART](http://www.transportation.gov/SMART).

	planning organizations. Please refer to Section C.1 for more information on collaborative applications.
10. Brief Project Description	<p>Describe the project in plain language, using no more than 200 words. It is recommended that applicants use the following format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One sentence on the problem to be solved.</li> <li>• One sentence describing the planning and prototyping activity.</li> <li>• One sentence on the anticipated impact of Stage 1.</li> <li>• One sentence on potential Stage 2 activities.</li> </ul> <p>Please do not describe the project’s benefits, background, or alignment with the selection criteria in this description field. A longer, narrative description will be provided in the Project Narrative.</p> <p>The Brief Project Description of successful applicants may be published by USDOT and, therefore, must not contain classified, proprietary or confidential information.</p>
11. Primary Project Location	<p>Identify the primary location where the project will take place. If more than one location, please list additional locations in the next question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If your project will be conducted in a specific city, cities, or town(s), indicate the primary location at which the project will take place using [City, State] as the format.</li> <li>2. If your project will be conducted at the county, regional, or MPO-level, please note the closest or most relevant [City, State] location for the project and indicate if this location represents a “county,” “region,” or “MPO.” This information will be used for mapping purposes.</li> <li>3. If your project will be conducted Statewide, please indicate the name of the State.</li> <li>4. If your project will be conducted in a tribal community, please note the closest or most relevant [City, State] location for the project. This information will be used for mapping purposes.</li> </ol>
12. Other Project Locations	Identify additional project locations, if applicable, using the same instructions as the previous question. All additional locations should be in [City, State] format.
13. What congressional district(s) is your project located in?	



<p>14. Size of Community Receiving Benefits</p>	<p>Indicate the size of the community (large community; midsized community; regional partnership; or rural community) that will primarily benefit from the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Community: A community with a population of not less than 400,000 individuals, as determined under the most recent annual estimate of the Bureau of the Census.</li> <li>• Midsized Community: Any community that is not a large community or a rural community.</li> <li>• Rural Community: The term “rural community” means a community that is located in an area that is outside of an urbanized area (as defined in section 5302 of title 49, United States Code, which defines “urbanized area” as an area encompassing a population of not less than 50,000 people that has been defined and designated in the most recent decennial census as an “urbanized area” by the Secretary of Commerce. Please use <a href="#">87 FR 80114</a> to confirm that your project location is not delineated by the Census Bureau as a 2020 urbanized area based on 2020 Census of Population and Housing counts and density calculations.</li> <li>• Regional Partnership: A partnership composed of two or more eligible applicants located in jurisdictions with a combined population that is equal to or greater than the population of any midsized community.</li> </ul>
<p>15. Is the project located (entirely or partially) in a Disadvantaged Community based on its location in a census tract identified as “disadvantaged” in the <a href="#">Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)</a>?</p>	<p>Indicate Yes, No, or Statewide Project. Only select “Statewide Project” if the project will not have specific project sites within a State.</p>
<p>16. If you responded “Yes” to Question 15, please identify the relevant census tract(s) that contribute to this designation. Be sure to use the full census tract number identified in the CEJST tool.</p>	
<p>17. Project Cost: Amount Requested</p>	<p>Total dollar amount requested (rounded to the nearest dollar).</p>

18. Project Cost: Total Project Cost	Total project cost, including dollar amount requested and other funding contributions (rounded to the nearest dollar).
19. Proposed Duration of Stage 1 Project (in months)	May be up to 18 months.
20. Primary Technology Area	<p>Select the primary technology area with which your project aligns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. coordinated automation;</li> <li>B. connected vehicles;</li> <li>C. intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure;</li> <li>D. systems integration;</li> <li>E. commerce delivery and logistics;</li> <li>F. leveraging use of innovative aviation technology;</li> <li>G. smart grid; or</li> <li>H. smart technology traffic signals</li> </ul>
21. Secondary Technology Area(s) (if applicable)	<p>Select the secondary technology area(s) with which your project aligns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. coordinated automation;</li> <li>B. connected vehicles;</li> <li>C. intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure;</li> <li>D. systems integration;</li> <li>E. commerce delivery and logistics;</li> <li>F. leveraging use of innovative aviation technology;</li> <li>G. smart grid; or</li> <li>H. smart technology traffic signals</li> <li>I. N/A</li> </ul> <p><i>Note that applications are not rated on the number of technology areas indicated, so it is important to only select the area(s) with which your project aligns.</i></p>
22. Does this project relate to traffic or parking enforcement; or license plate reader activities?	Indicate “Yes” or “No.” Note that SMART grants shall <u>not</u> be used for any current or future traffic or parking enforcement activity, or to purchase or lease a license plate reader.
23. Is an exemption, waiver, permit, or special permission required to conduct the proposed project?	If yes, indicate the exemption, waiver, permit, or special permission obtained. If a waiver has not been obtained, please indicate the plan or process for obtaining it in your Project Narrative.
24. Jobs / Workforce Assessment	<p>Do you anticipate that the technologies introduced in your project, if funded for a Stage 2 Implementation grant, would affect the number and quality of jobs in your agency or organization?</p> <p>If yes, please provide a thorough response of how technology may impact the quantity and quality of jobs</p>

	<p>and your plans to address potential changes. These plans may include collective bargaining agreements, restructuring of jobs, and additional training for the workforce.</p> <p>If no, please explain why it would not affect the number and quality of jobs.</p> <p>The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.</p>
25. Anticipated Stage 1 NEPA Requirements	<p>Please explain the anticipated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) class of action for your Stage 1 project as well as any anticipated environmental approvals and permits needed for the proposed project. If you are unsure, please explain your expected coordination to determine this, if selected. The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.</p>
26. Anticipated Stage 2 NEPA Requirements	<p>Please explain the anticipated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) class of action for your potential Stage 2 project as well as any anticipated environmental approvals and permits needed for the potential Stage 2 project. If you are unsure, please explain what Stage 1 actions you plan to take to better understand the environmental regulations associated with the potential Stage 2 project. The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.</p>

iii. **Project Narrative:** The primary purpose of the Narrative is for the applicant to state their case for meeting the merit criteria laid out in Section E. The Narrative should not exceed seven pages; this does not include the required appendices. A cover page and table of contents are not required but will not count toward the seven page narrative if included. Figures are considered part of the seven page narrative. The Narrative and Appendices I-III should be in PDF format, with a font size of no less than 12-point Times New Roman, single-spaced, minimum 1-inch margins on all sides, and page numbers. Appendix IV should be uploaded to the application in Valid Eval as a Shapefile, GEOJSON, or KML/KMZ file. Suggested approximate lengths for each subsection of the Narrative are noted in parentheses.

a. Overview/Project Description (1-2 pages)

This section should provide a clear, concise description of the project, the real-world issues and challenges to be addressed, and the proposed technology(ies) to be used. Include a brief discussion of desired outcomes for a potential Stage 2 grant. Applicants should also briefly discuss how the proposed project addresses the goals of the SMART Grants Program and how the project plans to improve upon the status quo of the transportation system.

b. Project Location (1 paragraph)

This section should provide a description of the geographic area or jurisdiction that the project will serve, including the community size (large, midsized, rural, or a regional partnership). The project location description should also narratively identify the following:

(a); whether the project is located (entirely or partially) in a disadvantaged community<sup>19</sup> based on the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#)<sup>20</sup>. If applicable, the narrative must identify the relevant census tract(s) that contribute to this designation, as stated in Key Information Question #16. If the proposed project is Statewide and will not have specific sites within a State, please note this instead of listing all of the State's disadvantaged Census tracts.

(b) the 2020 Census-designated urban area(s) where the project is located, if relevant. Please refer to [87 FR 80114](#) for a list of Census-designated urban areas.

Note that while applicants are asked to provide exact locations for each project in the Key Information Questions Table, if selected for an award, the exact location may be adjusted during the Stage 1 planning process; therefore, this section should explain and identify which geographic locations are under consideration for project to be implemented and what analysis will be used in a final determination.

c. Community Impact (1 paragraph)

This section should provide a description of how the project anticipates it will provide and measure benefits to the disadvantaged communities detailed in the Project Location Section (if applicable) and a description of how the project aligns with Justice 40 goals (if applicable). This section may also outline benefits that would accrue to disadvantaged communities outside of the specific project location, directly and/or indirectly. Applicants should also briefly discuss potential negative externalities of the proposed projects, who would experience them, and how they might be measured over time.

d. Technical Merit Overview (2 pages)

This section should provide an overview of the technical merit of the proposed project, responding to the criteria for evaluation and selection in Section E.1.i of this Notice and including a compelling narrative to highlight how the application addresses the following Technical Merit criteria:

- Identification and Understanding of the Problem to Be Solved
- Appropriateness of Proposed Solution
- Expected Benefits

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<sup>19</sup>OMB, CEQ, & CPO, M-23-09, Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (Jan. 27, 2023).

<sup>20</sup>[https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09\\_Signed\\_CEQ\\_CPO.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09_Signed_CEQ_CPO.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Federal Recognized Tribes and Tribal entities are considered Justice40 or disadvantaged communities whether or not they have land, per M-23-09.

e. Project Readiness Overview (2 pages)

This section should provide an overview of the project readiness, responding to the criteria for evaluation and selection in Section E.1.ii of this Notice and including a compelling narrative to highlight how the application addresses the following Project Readiness criteria:

- Feasibility of Workplan
- Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Leadership and Qualifications

**iv. Appendices**

a. Appendix I: Resumes – 3 pages or less

Applicants shall submit the abbreviated resumes of the key individuals involved in the project. This appendix should be no more than three pages.

b. Appendix II: Summary Budget Narrative – 3 pages or less

Applicants shall provide a summary budget narrative that corresponds to and describes information contained in the applicant's SF-424A. The narrative should describe all planned project costs for Stage 1 (e.g., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, and other) and how these planned costs relate to the project scope. Note that the SF-424A and the budget narrative should include travel costs that assume two in-person meetings in Washington, D.C.

The information needed in the budget narrative is as follows and directly corresponds with the format of the SF-424A. Applicants are encouraged to use these categories as headings in their budget narrative.

1. **Personnel** – Provide the cost breakdown of how this figure was calculated (e.g., hours/position/rate).
2. **Fringe Benefits** – Provide the fringe benefits rate.
3. **Travel** – Provide a cost breakdown of the number of trips, location, number of personnel, etc., if applicable. Please include travel costs which assume two in-person meetings in Washington, D.C. for up to four people.
4. **Equipment** – Provide a detailed estimate of tangible personal property costs as described in 2 CFR § 200.33. This should include items with a per-unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more (including information technology systems). If your agency has a different threshold for equipment purchases, please provide information about your agency's equipment threshold policy.
5. **Supplies** – Please provide an estimate of tangible personal property costs that have a unit cost of less than \$5,000.
6. **Contractual** – Provide the cost of any contractual support, if applicable.
7. **Construction** – Describe construction activities as listed on an SF-424C, if applicable.
8. **Other** – Provide a description of any costs listed as "other." This could include training or other expenses that the applicant wishes to include separately.
9. **Indirect Charges** – Provide the indirect cost calculations, including a description of the base (i.e., Personnel & Fringe or Modified Total Direct Cost).

The summary budget narrative must be sufficiently clear, concise, and detailed to describe how funds will be spent on the project. Applicants are expected to account for data and performance reporting in their budget submission, consistent with section B.5.i of this NOFO.

Additionally, project budgets should show how different funding sources will share in each activity and present those data in dollars and percentages. The budget should identify other Federal funds the applicant is applying for or has been awarded, if any, that the applicant intends to use. Funding sources should be grouped into three categories: non-Federal, SMART Grants Program, and other Federal with specific amounts from each funding source.

- c. Appendix III: Letters of Commitment – no more than 2 pages per letter; no more than 10 pages for the complete Appendix III.

Applicants should submit letters of commitment for **critical partners involved in the project**. This appendix should be no more than 10 pages, and each letter should be no more than 2 pages. For the purposes of the SMART Grants Program, critical partners are organizations that will not directly apply to the program as an eligible applicant but are committed to supporting a SMART Grants proposal in a meaningful way.

**Letters of Commitment that are attached to a SMART Grants application will be reviewed for the quality of their commitments, not necessarily the quantity.** A template for Letters of Commitment is available on the SMART Grants website at <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-letters-commitment-template>.

To reduce the burden for applicants, the Stage 1: Planning and Prototyping Grant application does not request Letters of Support. However, a member of Congress may email a Letter of Support to USDOT's Office of Government Affairs at [OSTGovAffairs@dot.gov](mailto:OSTGovAffairs@dot.gov). The sender should copy [smart@dot.gov](mailto:smart@dot.gov) on the email. The letter should be addressed to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Please note that Letters of Support are not required by the SMART Grants Program.

- d. Appendix IV: Project Location File

Applicants should submit one of the following file types with project location identification. Acceptable file types are Shapefile, GEOJSON, or KML/KMZ. This file will be uploaded to Valid Eval along with the other required application components.

The project location file is designed to help the SMART Grants Program review the location(s) of the proposed project as well as understand the disadvantaged community designations described in the Key Information Questions and Project Narrative. The project area(s) identified in the project location file should be as specific as is possible at the time of application submittal.

The SMART Grants Program recognizes that not all projects will be able to identify exact project sites. The project location file should represent all geographic locations under consideration for the project.

In order to prepare one of these files, these are the suggested instructions:

1. Use GIS software, or open a publicly available online mapping tool, for example, Google Earth or GEOJSON. USDOT does not endorse any particular software or online mapping tool.
2. Identify the project location(s). Use the tools to add a shape to represent the project area(s).

3. Export, save, and upload the attachment to the application on Valid Eval in one of the acceptable formats (zipped shapefile, GEOJSON, KML/KMZ).

Please refer to the job aid(s) on the SMART Grants Website for additional guidance on how to develop a project location file (available at <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/preparing-your-project-location-file-job-aid>).

Additional appendices will not be reviewed.

#### **v. Identifying Private Vendors**

Applicants are welcome to identify private sector vendors in the application but are not required to select vendors in advance. The services of any vendor to whom the applicant will provide SMART grant funding as part of the SMART project must be acquired consistent with the procurement standards under 2 CFR Part 200.

When procuring property and services under a Federal award, a State must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds. The State will comply and ensure that every purchase order or other contract includes any clauses required. All other non-Federal entities, including subrecipients of a State, must follow the procurement standards in 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart D. The non-Federal entity must have and use documented procurement procedures, consistent with State, local, and tribal laws and regulations and the standards of this section, for the acquisition of property or services required under a Federal award or subaward. The non-Federal entity's documented procurement procedures must conform to the procurement standards identified in 2 CFR Part 200.

#### **vi. Sharing of Application Information**

The Department may share application information within the Department or with other Federal agencies if the Department determines that sharing is relevant to the respective program's objectives.

### **3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Each applicant is required to: (i) be registered in SAM (<https://sam.gov/content/home>) before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The UEI must be current and not expired. The UEI must also be in an "active" status, not "assigned." To request a UEI, please visit SAM.gov. Note that this may take up to 30 days.

USDOT may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time USDOT is ready to make an award, USDOT may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

### **4. Submission Date and Time**

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET on Tuesday, October 10, 2023.

## **5. Funding Restrictions**

Per BIL requirements, of the funds awarded each fiscal year for the SMART Grants Program, not more than 40 percent shall be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit large communities; not more than 30 percent shall be provided for eligible projects that primarily benefit midsized communities; and not more than 30 percent shall be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit rural communities or regional partnerships.

In addition, an eligible applicant may not use more than three percent of the amount of a SMART grant for each fiscal year to achieve compliance with applicable planning and reporting requirements.

## **6. Other Submission Requirements**

The complete application must be submitted via Valid Eval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT at [https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT\\_SMART\\_2023/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/USDOT_SMART_2023/signup).



## E. Application Review Information

### 1. Criteria

This section specifies the criteria USDOT will use to evaluate and select applications for Stage 1 SMART grant awards. These include Technical Merit Criteria, Project Readiness and Other Considerations.

#### i. Technical Merit Selection Criteria

Stage 1 grants will be evaluated against three technical merit criteria:

- Technical Merit Criterion #1: Identification and Understanding of the Problem to Be Solved
  - The applicant demonstrates a thorough understanding of existing conditions.
  - The proposed solution addresses a documented and critical problem or need.
- Technical Merit Criterion #2: Appropriateness of Proposed Solution
  - Technologies proposed are sufficiently developed such that there is good reason to anticipate public benefits from their use.
  - The proposed solution is repeatable and could rapidly be scaled.
  - The proposed solution represents a demonstrable improvement over the status quo.
  - The proposed solution is appropriate for the location's population density and existing transportation system, including public transportation.
- Technical Merit Criterion #3: Expected Benefits
  - The application clearly explains the rationale for expecting that the proposed project will use advanced data, technology, and applications to provide significant benefits in alignment with Departmental and Program Priorities in Section A.3 and A.4. Departmental Priorities include the FY22-26 Strategic Goals and Innovation Principles, Equity Action Plan, and Justice40 initiative; and Program Priorities include safety, reliability, and resiliency; equity and access; climate; partnerships; and integration.
  - The application identifies several robust performance measures for Stage 1 of the project that align with the project's expected benefits and community impacts (as well as performance improvements and cost savings) and could be used to evaluate whether full scale implementation of the project would advance Departmental and Program Priorities.

#### ii. Project Readiness Selection Criteria

Project Readiness Selection Criteria focus on the extent to which the applicant will be able to substantially execute and complete the full scope of work in the Stage 1 grant application within 18 months of when the grant is executed.

- Project Readiness Criterion #1: Feasibility of Workplan
  - The application clearly describes a thorough and realistic workplan and timeline. The application should also demonstrate the ability to complete the project in the proposed period of performance.
  - The application identifies and understands the legal, policy, and regulatory requirements and identifies and accounts for any relevant exemptions, waivers, permits, or special permissions required to conduct the proposed project.

- The application identifies ways to measure and validate the project’s expected benefits and community impacts, as well as performance improvements and cost savings.
- The application describes how the project will use training and education programs and activities to meet workforce capacity needs and promote inclusion in the workforce.
- The application describes an appropriate and reasonable budget for the proposed solution.
- The application identifies the necessary planning and engagement activities that, as projects are fully implemented during Stage 2, will ensure high-quality job creation by supporting good-paying jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union, incorporating strong labor standards (e.g., wages and benefits at or above prevailing, use of project labor agreements, registered apprenticeship programs, pre-apprenticeships tied to registered apprenticeships, etc.), and/or providing workforce opportunities for historically underrepresented groups (e.g., workforce development program, etc.).
- The application demonstrates that the performance measures could be evaluated quantitatively to measure and validate expected benefits. The application should also describe how existing or new datasets would be used to measure and validate such benefits.
- Project Readiness Criterion #2: Community Engagement and Partnerships
  - The proposed solution demonstrates a community-centered approach that includes meaningful, continuous, accessible engagement with a diverse group of public and private stakeholders. The proposed solution articulates strategies to provide access to persons with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals. The proposed solution conducts meaningful public involvement, inclusive of underserved communities throughout the project lifecycle.
  - The application shows plans to build sustainable partnerships across sectors and governmental jurisdictions and collaborate with industry, academia, and nonprofits, such as community, workforce development, and labor organizations.
  - The applicant engages relevant private sector stakeholders and technical experts and elicits their perspective on the implementation of the proposed solution.
  - The application establishes commitment of one or more key partner(s), if relevant, as identified in the project narrative. This should be demonstrated by a Letter of Commitment submitted as an attachment to the proposal. A key partner may be a public agency, utility company, private sector company, or some other entity that is central, and critical to the project.
- Project Readiness Criterion #3: Leadership and Qualifications
  - The application demonstrates relevant and necessary technical expertise of the project team.
  - The application details relevant experience of leadership in managing multi-stakeholder projects.
  - The application shows continuity of committed leadership and the applicant’s functional capacity to carry out the proposed project and, where applicable, to maintain and operate the project after the conclusion of Stage 2.

### iii. Additional Consideration: Benefit to Disadvantaged Communities

The Department seeks to award projects under the SMART Grants Program that address environmental justice, particularly for communities that disproportionately experience climate change-related consequences. Environmental justice, as defined by EO 14096, is the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people: (i) are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and (ii) have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.<sup>21</sup> As part of the Department's implementation of Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (86 FR 7619), the Department seeks to fund projects that, to the extent possible, target at least 40 percent of resources and benefits towards disadvantaged communities, including low-income communities, communities underserved by affordable transportation, or overburdened communities, to advance the Justice40 Initiative<sup>22</sup>. Projects that have not sufficiently considered climate change and environmental justice in their planning, as determined by the Department, will be required to do so before receiving funds.

In the Key Information Questions Table (Section D.2.ii) and the Project Narrative (D.2.iii), applicants must use the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). CEJST is a tool provided by the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) that aims to help Federal agencies identify disadvantaged communities as part of the Justice40 initiative to accomplish the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits from certain federal investments reach disadvantaged communities. Applicants should use CEJST as the primary tool to identify disadvantaged communities (Justice40 communities) for their application. Applicants are also encouraged but not required to use the [USDOT Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) to support their Project Narrative and understand how their community or project area is experiencing disadvantages related to lack of transportation investments or opportunities. By understanding how a community or project area is experiencing transportation-

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<sup>21</sup>Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All (April 21, 2023). [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/26/2023-08955/revitalizing-our-nations-commitment-to-environmental-justice-for-all](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/26/2023-08955/revitalizing-our-nations-commitment-to-environmental-justice-for-all)

<sup>22</sup> Established by [Executive Order 14008](#) on *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, the Justice40 Initiative has made it the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments, such as climate, clean energy, and other areas, flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment. For more information, see <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/02/01/2021-02177/tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad>. E.O. 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (Jan. 27, 2023), ; OMB, CEQ, & CPO, M-23-09, Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (Jan. 27, 2023), [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09\\_Signed\\_CEQ\\_CPO.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09_Signed_CEQ_CPO.pdf).

related disadvantage, applicants can address how the benefits of a project will reverse or mitigate the burdens of disadvantage and demonstrate how the project will address challenges and accrued benefits.

**2. Review and Selection Process**

This section addresses the BIL requirement to include a full description in the NOFO of the method by which applicants will be evaluated. The SMART Grants Program review and selection process consists of eligibility reviews, Technical Merit and Project Readiness criteria review, and Senior Review Team review. The Secretary will make the final selections for award.

**i. Eligibility Review**

For each application, an initial review will assess whether the applicant is eligible (based on eligibility information in Section C) and contains all of the information requested in Section D for a complete application. Eligible and complete applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for their merit based on the selection criteria in Section E.1.i and E.1.ii.

**ii. Technical Merit and Project Readiness Criteria Ratings**

Teams comprising USDOT staff, Federal inter-agency partner staff, and contractor staff review all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline for a Technical Merit and Project Readiness Review and assign ratings as described in the table below. For each criterion, USDOT will consider whether the application narrative is responsive to the selection criterion focus areas which will result in a rating of ‘High,’ ‘Medium,’ ‘Low,’ or ‘Non-Responsive.’ Each of the six criteria (listed in E.1.i-ii) are weighted equally during the Technical Merit and Project Readiness Review.

Rating Scale	High	Medium	Low	Non-Responsive
Description	The application is substantively and comprehensively responsive to the criterion. It makes a strong case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is moderately responsive to the criterion. It makes a moderate case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is minimally responsive to the criterion. It makes a weak case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is counter to the criterion or does not contain sufficient information. It does not advance or may negatively impact criterion goals.

Based on the criteria ratings, an overall application merit rating of ‘Highly Recommended,’ ‘Recommended,’ ‘Not Recommended,’ or ‘Ineligible’ will be assigned as a result of evaluation team consensus discussion. Only applications rated as ‘Highly Recommended’ or ‘Recommended’ may be reviewed by a Senior Review Team (SRT). Applications rated ‘Not Recommended’ or ‘Ineligible’ will not be evaluated further and will not be considered for award.

### **iii. Senior Review Team (SRT) Phase**

Once every eligible and complete application has been assigned an overall rating based on the methodology above, all “Highly Recommended” and selected “Recommended” applications will be included in a list of Applications for Consideration. The SRT will review whether the list of “Highly Recommended” applications is sufficient to ensure that of the funds awarded each fiscal year for the SMART Grants Program, not more than 40 percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit large communities; not more than 30 percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit midsized communities; and not more than 30 percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit rural communities or regional partnerships. “Recommended” applications may be added to the proposed list of Applications for Consideration until a sufficient number of applications are on the list to ensure that all legislative requirements as well as program objectives can be met. The Department will consider the diversity of technology areas across all applications when reviewing recommendations.

### **iv. Applications for USDOT Secretary’s Review**

The SRT will present the list of Applications for Consideration to the Secretary, as well as a list of all eligible applications, either collectively or through a representative of the SRT. The SRT may advise the Secretary on any application on the list of Applications for Consideration, including options for reduced or increased awards, and the Secretary will make final selections. The Secretary’s selections identify the applications that best address program requirements and are most worthy of funding. The Secretary will consider contributions to geographic diversity among grant recipients, including the need for balancing the needs of rural communities, midsized communities, and large communities. The Secretary also may consider benefits to disadvantaged communities, including benefits to Federally Recognized Tribes, and geographic and organizational diversity when selecting SMART Grants Program awards.

## **3. Additional Information**

Prior to entering into a grant agreement, each selected applicant will be subject to a risk assessment as required by 2 CFR § 200.206. The Department must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System [FAPIIS]). An applicant may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Department will consider comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant’s integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants. Because award recipients under this program may be first-time recipients of Federal funding, USDOT is committed to implementing the program as flexibly as permitted by statute and to providing assistance to help award recipients through the process of securing a grant agreement and delivering SMART Grant projects. Award recipients are encouraged to identify any needs for assistance in delivering the projects and strategies so that USDOT can provide directly, or through a third party, sufficient support and technical assistance to mitigate potential execution risks.

## F. Federal Award Administration Information

### 1. Federal Award Notices

Following the evaluation outlined in Section E, the Secretary will announce awarded applications by posting a list of selected recipients at [www.transportation.gov/smart](http://www.transportation.gov/smart). The posting of the list of selected award recipients will not constitute an authorization to begin performance. Following the announcement, the Department will contact the point of contact listed in the applicant SF-424 to initiate the negotiation of a grant agreement.

### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

#### i. Critical Infrastructure Security, Cybersecurity, and Resilience

It is the policy of the United States to strengthen the security and resilience of its critical infrastructure against both physical and cyber threats, consistent with Presidential Policy Directive 21 - Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience and the National Security Memorandum on Improving Cybersecurity for Critical Infrastructure Control Systems. Each applicant selected for Federal funding under this notice must demonstrate, prior to the signing of the grant agreement, effort to consider and address physical and cybersecurity risks relevant to the transportation mode and type and scale of the project. Projects that have not appropriately considered and addressed physical and cyber security and resilience in their planning, design, and project oversight, as determined by the Department and the Department of Homeland Security, will be required to do so before receiving funds or will be required to complete related actions as part of the project.

#### ii. Prohibited Telecommunications Equipment and Services

Federal award recipients and sub-recipients are prohibited from obligating or expending grant funds to procure or obtain; extend or renew a contract to procure or obtain; or enter into a contract (or extend or renew a contract) to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems that use “covered telecommunications equipment or services” as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as critical technology as part of any system. “Covered telecommunications equipment or services” means telecommunications and video surveillance equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, or Dahua Technology Company (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities). “Covered telecommunications equipment or services” also includes telecommunications or video surveillance equipment or services provided by an entity that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Director of the National Intelligence or the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reasonably believes to be an entity that is owned or controlled by the government of the People’s Republic of China. Entities added to this list will be incorporated into the excluded parties list in the System for Award Management (SAM) ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). When a user conducts a search of the excluded parties list, a record will appear describing the nature of the exclusion for any entity identified as covered by this prohibition. See Section 889 of [Public Law 115-232](#) (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019) and [2 CFR 200.216](#) & [200.471](#).

### **iii. Domestic Preference Requirements**

As expressed in Executive Order 14005, Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers (86 FR 7475)<sup>23</sup>, the Executive Branch should maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States. SMART Grants projects that are considered "projects for infrastructure" will be subject to the domestic preference requirements at § 70914(a) of the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, div. G, tit. IX, subtit. A, 135 Stat. 429, 1294 (2021) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-22-11, "Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure."<sup>24</sup> Projects that are not considered "projects for infrastructure" will be subject to requirements of the Buy American Act, Pub. L. No. 72-428, as codified at 41 U.S.C. §§ 8301-8303. After funding decisions are made by the Department, the SMART Grants Program Office will coordinate with grant recipients on whether their projects are designated as "projects for infrastructure."

The Department expects all applicants to comply with these requirements.

### **iv. Civil Rights and Title VI**

SMART award recipients should demonstrate compliance with civil rights obligations and nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and implementing regulations (49 CFR § 21), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, all other civil rights requirements, and accompanying regulations. This should include a current Title VI plan, completed Community Participation Plan, and a plan to address any legacy infrastructure or facilities that are not compliant with ADA standards. Recipients of Federal transportation funding will also be required to comply fully with regulations and guidance for the ADA, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and all other civil rights requirements. The Department's and the applicable Operating Administrations' Offices of Civil Rights may work with awarded grant recipients as appropriate to ensure full compliance with Federal civil rights requirements.

### **v. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)**

Funding recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) under 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq. and the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations at 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508, where applicable. In Valid Eval, applicants will be asked to describe the project's expected NEPA impacts as part of the Key Information Questions detailed in Section D.2.ii.

### **vi. Federal Contract Compliance**

As a condition of grant award and consistent with EO 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity (30 FR 12319, and as amended), all Federally assisted contractors are required to make good faith efforts to meet the goals of 6.9 percent of construction project hours being performed by women, in addition to goals that vary based on geography for construction work hours and for work being performed by people of color. Under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations,

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/28/2021-02038/ensuring-the-future-is-made-in-all-of-america-by-all-of-americas-workers>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/M-22-11.pdf>

affirmative action obligations for certain contractors include an aspirational employment goal of 7 percent workers with disabilities.

### **3. Reporting**

This section discusses reporting requirements for SMART.<sup>25</sup> USDOT will provide additional information and detail regarding reporting requirements and formats to recipients. All final reports under this agreement will be made publicly available. All publications resulting from this program shall follow USDOT publication guidelines and comply with the current USDOT Public Access Plan. In addition, data from these efforts are expected to be made widely available where appropriate, also in accordance with the USDOT Public Access Plan.<sup>26</sup>

#### **i. Progress Reporting on Grant Activities**

Each applicant selected for a Stage 1 grant must submit quarterly progress reports and Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) to monitor project progress and ensure accountability and financial transparency in the SMART Grants Program. A standard reporting format for the quarterly progress reports will be provided for grantees to summarize status updates including activities accomplished during the quarter, financial and schedule reporting, anticipated activities for the next quarter, and a description of project challenges and lessons learned.

#### **ii. Evaluation and Data Management Plan**

Recipients and subrecipients are required to incorporate program evaluation including associated data collection activities, from the outset of their program design and implementation to meaningfully document and measure their progress towards meeting agency priority goals.<sup>27</sup>

Each applicant selected for a Stage 1 grant must submit an evaluation and data management plan no later than three months after receiving the grant that provides an overview of how the proof-of-concept or prototype will be evaluated and how the data being collected will be managed and stored.<sup>28</sup> The plan must describe the anticipated impact areas (i.e., goals) of the project if implemented at scale and the methods that will be used to estimate the anticipated benefits and costs associated with implementation. Based on these project goals, the plan must include robust performance metrics and measurable targets based on the project goals to inform whether the proof-of-concept or prototype meets expectations and whether full implementation would meet program goals. The applicants selected for a Stage 2 grant must update this evaluation and data management plan to include robust performance metrics and targets for the at-scale implementation, a detailed description of the evaluation methods that will be used to measure the anticipated impacts, and an overview of data

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<sup>25</sup> Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), Pub. L. No. 115-435 (2019) urges federal awarding agencies and federal assistance recipients and subrecipients to use program evaluation as a critical tool to learn, to improve equitable delivery, and to elevate program service and delivery across the program lifecycle.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/Official%20DOT%20Public%20Access%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Evaluation means “an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.” 5 U.S.C. § 311.

<sup>28</sup> Credible program evaluation activities are implemented with relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency, and ethics (OMB Circular A-11, Part 6 Section 290).



sharing opportunities.<sup>29</sup> The updated plan must also provide more detailed information on the types of data being collected and how that data will be managed and stored (e.g., cybersecurity practices, how privacy is protected, entities that have access to the data).

### **iii. Implementation Report**

Each applicant selected for a Stage 1 grant must submit an implementation report that assesses the anticipated costs and benefits of the project and demonstrates the feasibility of at-scale implementation. A draft report shall be submitted no later than one year after the grant award, and the final report shall be submitted by the end of the period of performance. This timeline may be adjusted for projects with a period of performance that differs from 18 months.

Per BIL requirements, grant recipients must submit implementation reports that describe the deployment and operational costs of each project as compared to the benefits and savings from the project. The reports must also describe:

1. the means by which the project has met the original expectation, as projected in the grant application, including data describing the means by which the project met the specific goals. Examples include:
  - a. reducing traffic-related fatalities and injuries;
  - b. reducing traffic congestion or improving travel-time reliability;
  - c. the effectiveness of providing to the public real-time integrated traffic, transit, and multimodal transportation information to make informed travel decisions; and
  - d. reducing barriers or improving access to jobs, education, or various essential services;
2. lessons learned and recommendations for future deployment strategies to optimize transportation efficiency and multimodal system performance.

For the implementation reports during Stage 1, grant recipients will provide an analysis of the anticipated costs and benefits and address project expectations by providing:

1. data on the performance metrics for the proof-of-concept or prototype;
2. preliminary baseline data for an evaluation of an at-scale implementation;<sup>30</sup>
3. a detailed description of the communities that would be impacted by at scale implementation; and
4. anticipated and/or estimated impact and effectiveness of the project based on the performance metrics.

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<sup>29</sup> Data sharing opportunities may include either interagency data sharing or open data sharing with the public.

<sup>30</sup> For applicants selected for a Stage 2 grant, refined or updated baseline data may be required for the project evaluation.

During Stage 1, grant recipients may uncover previously unknown institutional barriers or technical limitations. In the implementation report, grantees will describe the requirements for successful deployment and assess the feasibility of an at-scale implementation. The assessment will include identified strategies or demonstrated progress in addressing the following implementation feasibility and readiness factors by the end of the Stage 2 grant.

- a. Legal, Policy, and Regulatory Requirements (e.g., environmental permits and reviews; public outreach; State and local approvals; equity and accessibility requirements)
- b. Procurement and Budget (e.g., availability of suppliers and equipment; an analysis of the cost differential to comply with Build America Buy America; reliability of cost estimates; critical property acquisition)
- c. Partnerships (e.g., MOUs for stakeholder coordination; private sector and user adoption and acceptance)
- d. Technology Suitability (e.g., systems engineering including Concept of Operations [ConOps] and Detailed Design; reliability and maturity of technology; compatibility with existing infrastructure, procurement processes)
- e. Data Governance (e.g., storage capability; database analytic capability; integration requirements; sharing agreements; cybersecurity and privacy protocols)
- f. Workforce Capacity (e.g., availability of workers for development, installation, operations and maintenance; availability of workforce training; agency capacity for deployment, operation, and evaluation); and an assessment of how full implementation at the conclusion of Stage 2, if funded, would harness beneficial impacts and mitigate negative impacts of new technologies on the availability of good-paying jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union)
- g. Internal Project Coordination (e.g., agency/institutional capacity for continued operations following the grant funded period; revenue needs for continued operations)
- h. Community Impact (e.g., distribution of benefits and negative impacts across the community, including disadvantaged communities; meaningful community engagement efforts, including strategies to provide access to persons with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals)
- i. Other Relevant Factors.

The final implementation report must also describe initial project goals, challenges, and lessons learned related to implementation. It should include an analysis of the success, challenges, and validity of the initial approach; any changes or improvements they would make in Stage 2, if recommended for award; and any anticipated challenges to continued maintenance and operations (i.e., after the Stage 2 grant funds have been expended).

#### **iv. Performance and Program Evaluation**

As a condition of grant award, grant recipients may be required to participate in an evaluation undertaken by USDOT or another agency or partner. The evaluation may take different forms such as an implementation assessment across grant recipients, an impact and/or outcomes analysis of all or selected sites within or across grant recipients, or a benefit/cost analysis or assessment of return on investment. USDOT may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation and/or use information available through other reporting. As a part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grant recipients must agree to: (1) make records available to the evaluation contractor or USDOT staff; (2) provide access to program records, and any other relevant documents to calculate costs and benefits;

(3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the access to relevant information as requested; and (4) follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor or USDOT staff.

Recipients and subrecipients are also encouraged to incorporate program evaluation including associated data collection activities from the outset of their program design and implementation to meaningfully document and measure their progress towards meeting an agency priority goal(s). Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), Pub. L. No. 115-435 (2019) urges Federal awarding agencies and Federal assistance recipients and subrecipients to use program evaluation as a critical tool to learn, to improve equitable delivery, and to elevate program service and delivery across the program lifecycle. Evaluation means “an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency” per 5 U.S.C. § 311. Credible program evaluation activities are implemented with relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency, and ethics (OMB Circular A-11, Part 6 Section 290).

#### **v. Reporting of Matters Related to Recipient Integrity and Performance**

If the total value of a selected applicant’s currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, then the applicant during that period of time must maintain the currency of information reported to the SAM that is made available in the designated integrity and performance system (currently FAPIIS) about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings described in paragraph 2 of this award term and condition. This is a statutory requirement under section 872 of Public Law 110-417, as amended (41 U.S.C. 2313). As required by section 3010 of Public Law 111-212, all information posted in the designated integrity and performance system on or after April 15, 2011, except past performance reviews required for Federal procurement contracts, will be publicly available.

#### **vi. Knowledge Transfer Activities**

In order to disseminate lessons learned to the public and to encourage collaboration between recipients, USDOT will coordinate various knowledge transfer activities which may include webinars, peer exchanges or attendance at conferences and meetings. The activities will be tailored to address the needs and interests of the grantees and serve as a resource for connecting grantees facing similar technical and institutional challenges. Recipients will share status updates and technical knowledge, and exchange information about their progress, challenges, and lessons learned.

## G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For further information concerning this notice, please contact the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology via email at [smart@dot.gov](mailto:smart@dot.gov) no later than 05:00PM ET on September 29, 2023. In addition, up to the application deadline, the Department may post answers to common questions and requests for clarifications on the Department’s website at [www.transportation.gov/smart](http://www.transportation.gov/smart). To ensure applicants receive accurate information about eligibility or the program, the applicant is encouraged to contact the Department directly with questions, rather than through intermediaries or third parties. Department staff may also conduct briefings on the SMART grant selection and award process upon request. On request of an eligible applicant that submitted an application per Section D with respect to a project that is not selected for a SMART grant, Department staff will provide to the eligible applicant technical assistance and briefings relating to the project.

## H. Other Information

User-friendly information and resources regarding USDOT’s discretionary grant programs relevant to applicants can be found on the DOT Navigator at <https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator> and the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) website at <https://www.transportation.gov/rural>.

### 1. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Large community</b>	A community with a population of not less than 400,000 individuals, as determined under the most recent annual estimate of the Bureau of the Census.
<b>Midsized community</b>	Any community that is not a large community or a rural community.
<b>Political subdivision of a state</b>	A unit of government created under the authority of State law. This includes cities, towns, counties, special districts, and similar units of local government, such as public port or airport authorities, if created under State law.
<b>Regional partnership</b>	A partnership composed of two or more eligible entities located in jurisdictions with a combined population that is equal to or greater than the population of any midsized community.
<b>Rural community</b>	The term “rural community” means a community that is located in an area that is outside of an urbanized area (as defined in section 5302 of title 49, United States Code, which defines “urbanized area” as an area encompassing a population of not less than 50,000 people that has been defined and designated in the most recent decennial census as an “urbanized area” by the Secretary of Commerce. Please use <a href="#">87 FR 80114</a> to confirm that your project location is not delineated by the Census Bureau as a 2020 urbanized area based on 2020 Census of Population and Housing counts and density calculations.
<b>Resiliency</b>	The ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, recover, and reorganize rapidly from disruptions to a community (e.g., population, economy, etc.). Resilience includes the ability to withstand and recover from manmade and naturally occurring threats or incidents, including widespread and long-term threats or incidents.