

U.S.DOT Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Equity

Fact Sheet for KPI:

By 2025, increase by 5% the number of U.S. DOT discretionary grant applicants from disadvantaged communities who have never applied for U.S. DOT funding before.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (“DOT” or “Department”) has identified several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor implementation of the Department’s [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) and the [Equity Action Plan](#). This KPI is included in both documents and is helping the Department understand whether more applicants from disadvantaged communities are getting in the door to access DOT funds.

Current Status of this KPI

DOT calculates this KPI using applicant data from Grants.gov. DOT set a baseline for this KPI, shown in Table 1, by calculating the percentage of unique applicants from disadvantaged communities applying to USDOT’s discretionary grant programs for the first time in 2022 and found that 28% of them were from disadvantage communities..

DOT wants to see this metric increase by 5% by 2025, as this will be an indication that DOT has lowered the barrier to participate in grant programs such that more new applicants from disadvantaged communities are applying for grants.

DOT will continue to review grant applicants to monitor progress towards the target over time.

Table 1: KPI Status Summary

KPI	Baseline (2022)	Update (2023)	Target
Percentage of New Applicants from Disadvantaged Communities	28%	TBD	33% by FY 2025 5% increase from baseline by 2025

Why it is important

DOT has traditionally played a critical role in maintaining and improving the transportation network across the Nation through Federal funding. Each year, the Department awards discretionary grants through a competitive process based on legislative and regulatory requirements, as well as published selection criteria. The discretionary grant funding process begins with Congressional legislation and concludes with the closeout of the awarded process. DOT is committed to ensuring that historically



overburdened and underserved communities in urban and rural areas benefit from access to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's (BIL) generational investment in the Nation's infrastructure and created this performance measure to help advance that goal. Barriers that currently prevent underserved communities from accessing DOT discretionary grants include lack of resources needed to develop successful discretionary grant applications and the complex environment of Federal grant opportunities.¹

How the KPI was developed

In response to the unprecedented level of discretionary funding made available through BIL, DOT sought to ensure equitable distribution of funding opportunities and to improve access for historically disadvantaged and underserved communities. DOT identified several barriers to entry for new applicants and worked to proactively support their ability to apply for discretionary grant funding. This metric tracks how successful DOT is in its mission of reaching new communities and addressing barriers to applying for funds.

How it is calculated

DOT's method for calculating this KPI is summarized as follows:

1. Gather data from Grants.gov for all applicants to DOT Discretionary Grants across all Operating Agencies from Federal fiscal years 2016 through 2022 (69 programs).
2. Identify the first time each applicant applied to a USDOT program in this time frame using SAM UEI and application time stamp submittal data provided through Grants.gov. Applicants that applied for the first time between 2016-2021 are considered "existing" and those applied for the first time in FY22 are considered "new."
3. Count how many "new" unique applicants applied for the first time in FY22.
4. Identify whether each applicant represents a disadvantaged community using the applicant's geographic location or if the applicant represents a disadvantaged population based on the "applicant type" selected in Grants.gov (see more on these definitions in next section).
5. Count how many "new" unique applicants from disadvantaged communities applied for funding in FY22.
6. Calculate the percentage of new (unique) applicants from disadvantaged communities that applied for funding for the first time in 2022 (28%, as shown in Table 1).

Please note- To identify parent/child grantees, the only data available is on awarded grants. Because there could be an inherent difference in the grantees that are awarded compared to the universe of all applicants, DOT does not believe this subset is representative of all applicants and if using this subset would introduce a bias. Therefore, parent/child grantees were not considered in the baseline calculation.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Equity Action Plan*, January 2022, <https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/actionplan>



Key Definitions

Existing Applicants: Applicants who submitted an application for any DOT-sponsored discretionary grant program on Grants.gov between 2016 and 2021.

New Applicants: Applicants who submitted an application for any DOT-sponsored discretionary grant program on Grants.gov for the first time in FY22.

Disadvantaged Communities: As set forth in Executive Order (EO) 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, disadvantaged communities are those that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. Disadvantaged individuals or groups may be more likely to experience negative outcomes such as unemployment, poor health, or reduced access to services and opportunities. In the context of transportation, disadvantaged individuals or communities may also experience negative impacts from lack of transportation sources, which can impact health, or receive fewer benefits from transportation services, which can limit their ability to access jobs, healthcare, education, and other essential services.

DOT used the following criteria to identify applicants from Disadvantaged Communities for the purposes of this KPI:

- Disadvantaged Community by Geographic Location: Over 50% of the census tracts within the zip code are identified as disadvantaged in the Equitable Transportation Community Explorer.²
- Disadvantaged Applicant by Applicant type: The population(s) served by the applicants is identified by DOT as an historically underrepresented group, including tribal governments and organizations, US territories, Hispanic institutions and historically Black colleges and universities.³

Non-Disadvantaged Communities: DOT used the following criteria to identify applicants from non-Disadvantaged Communities:

- Non-Disadvantaged applicant by Geographic Location: Applicants located in zip codes where less than 50% of the census tracts are identified as disadvantaged in the Equitable Transportation Community Explorer.
- Applicant by Applicant type: The applicant covers broad geographies such as a State DOTs or are profit generating entities, such as for-profit organizations other than small businesses, or private institutions. Certain applicant types were also excluded from the analysis, namely applicants as individuals (ineligible for USDOT programs), independent school districts, non-domestic entities, entities labeled as “other,” and entities with no label, due to difficulty determining DAC status.

Tools and Data Sources

Key tools and data sources used to calculate this KPI include:

² U.S. Department of Transportation, *US DOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer*, Updated September 6, 2023,

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0920984aa80a4362b8778d779b090723/page/Homepage/>

³ “Executive Order 14008 of Jan 27, 2021, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad”, 86 FR 7619 (2021), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/02/01/2021-02177/tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad>



- [ETC Explorer Tool](#): DOT’s Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer is an interactive web application that uses 2020 Census Tracts and data, to explore the cumulative burden communities experience, as a result of underinvestment in transportation, in the following five components: Transportation Insecurity, Climate and Disaster Risk Burden, Environmental Burden, Health Vulnerability, and Social Vulnerability. The ETC Explorer Tool is used for this KPI to identify DAC communities based on U.S. Census Bureau tract-level data.
- [GRANTS.GOV](#) application data.

How DOT is advancing this KPI

This KPI supports DOT Strategic Objective 3.4: Proactive Intervention, Planning and Capacity Building, which seeks to ensure that equity considerations for disadvantaged and underserved communities are integrated into the planning, development, and implementation of all transportation investments. DOT tracks progress toward Strategic Objectives through the [annual performance report](#).

It also supports the DOT Equity Action Plan “Proactive Intervention, Planning and Capacity Building” pillar, which aims to ensure historically overburdened and underserved communities in urban and rural areas benefit from access to generational investment in the nation’s infrastructure through direct, hands-on technical support for transportation projects with local impact. DOT tracks progress toward the Equity Action Plan through annual updates shown on the [website](#).

Other DOT efforts that support or are supported by this KPI

This KPI relates to the Justice40 and Thriving Communities initiatives and several program-specific goals including “Pilot a new approach that will reduce administrative burden for applicants considering applying for multiple discretionary grant programs.”

What DOT is doing to achieve this KPI

To encourage applicants and increase awardees from disadvantaged communities who have never applied for DOT funding before, the Department has been and will continue to provide [technical assistance](#) and planning grants to enable disadvantaged and under-resourced communities to advance infrastructure projects that will help them thrive. Currently DOT offers more than one-hundred and forty technical assistance resources including- technical assistance for grantees and potential grantees under the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program through the Reconnecting Communities Institute (RCI) starting in October 2023. Additional technical assistance activities will include publishing a Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) tool for grant applicants to use when applying for DOT grant opportunities with a BCA requirement (December 2023), conducting quarterly DOT Navigator webinars to share information on successful grant writing strategies and spotlight new resources to assist those considering applying for grants, and reducing burdens for low-capacity communities through streamlined grant application processes and match flexibility. This work will also help identify the universe of potential applicants to target technical assistance and other interventions to increase first-time applicants from disadvantaged communities and help them successfully access and complete DOT-funded work.

