U.S. Department of Transportation

How to Apply for an FY24 Stage Two Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant

July 18th, 2024

SMART

General

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- Email webconference@dot.gov

Questions for Presenters

- Please type your questions into the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen. We will answer them at the end of the presentation.

Website

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

Agenda

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1. SMART Grants Program Structure
2. Applying for a Stage Two SMART Grant
3. Application Resources
4. Q&A

Today's Presenter

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Stage Two SMART Grants Program Structure

Program Structure

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

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

*This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is open to **Stage Two** applications.*

STAGE ONE:

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

STAGE TWO:

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

BEYOND:

- Plan for widespread deployment of successful demonstrations

SMART Grants Program Values

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The SMART Grants Program:

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

The goal of Stage Two is to apply learnings to realize widespread community benefits through at-scale implementation

SMART FY24 Stage Two NOFO

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This NOFO is open to Stage Two applications.

DOT anticipates selecting up to 3-5 Stage Two grants from the FY24 Stage Two NOFO for award.

The NOFO opened on July 15, 2024 and will close at 5:00PM ET on August 14, 2024.

SMART Stage Two Eligibility

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- **Only FY22 Stage One SMART recipients** are eligible to apply for the FY24 Stage Two NOFO

- US DOT anticipates **multiple additional Stage Two NOFOs** will be released in 2025 and 2026, which other SMART Stage One recipient will be eligible to apply for.

SMART Awards		
	FY22	FY23
# Awards	59 (15%)	34 (10%)
Funding Awarded	$94M (16.5%)	$54M (11%)
States Represented	33	22+ D.C., P.R.

Questions to Think About

- Did the technology prove to be a viable solution for the problem?
- What obstacles did you face in procuring, implementing, and operating the technology? How will those arise and be dealt with at scale?
- How will you maintain and operate this technology at scale, for an indefinite period of time?

- How did your Stage One partnerships go, and how would you need to adapt or expand them for Stage Two? Who was missing?
- Did your Stage One activities achieve the outcomes you anticipated? Why or why not? What outcomes are realistic for Stage Two?
- Implementing at scale and over a longer time period will require many more stakeholders. How will your Stage Two project be different as you prepare for indefinite operation?

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Applying for a Stage Two SMART Grant

SMART FY24 Stage Two NOFO

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- Only FY22 Stage One recipients are eligible to apply for Stage Two funding under this NOFO.
- The NOFO contains the instructions for developing and submitting a SMART Grant Phase Two application.
  - A copy of the NOFO can also be found at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-fy24-stage-2-nofo
  - And at Grants.gov using Opportunity Number #DOT-SMART-FY24-02.
  - Applicants are encouraged to read the NOFO in its entirety.
- Application Deadline: **5:00 PM ET on Wednesday August 14, 2024.**
- **No matching funds are required for SMART Stage Two Grants**
- **There will be several more Stage Two NOFOs in 2025 and 2026 that you will be eligible to apply for.**

Polls

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Does your organization plan on applying for a Stage Two SMART Grant under this FY24 Stage Two NOFO?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What is the primary technology area for your project?

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

Required Application Materials

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1. **Standard Forms**
   a. Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance)
   b. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A) or, if applicable, Budget Information for Construction Programs (SF-424C)
   c. Certification Regarding Lobbying
   d. If applicable, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL).
2. **Key Information Questions**
3. **Project Narrative**
   - Should not exceed 10 pages, not including optional cover page and optional table of contents
   - Sections include: Overview/Project Description, Project Location, Technical Merit Overview, Project Readiness Overview
4. **Appendices**
   - Resumes*
   - Budget Narrative*
   - Letter of Designation (if applicable)
   - Letters of Commitment
   - Project Location File**

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

*These appendices are required
**This appendix is highly encouraged

Lead Applicant Designation for Stage Two

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If the project has evolved **and a different, eligible entity is a better fit to be the lead applicant for the Stage Two** grant, the Stage One SMART grantee must designate the new lead applicant.

Designated lead applicants must be a:

- State
- Political subdivision of a State
- Federally recognized Tribal government
- Public transit agency or authority
- Public toll authority
- Metropolitan planning organization
- Group of two or more eligible entities listed above applying through a single lead applicant (Group Application).

Letter of Designation for Stage Two

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- All Stage Two applicants must either 1) be a Stage One grantee **OR** 2) include a Letter of Designation naming them as the lead applicant in their Stage Two application.
- **Original grantee must provide a signed Letter of Designation to the applicant:**
  - Endorsing new lead applicant as appropriate party to take over the project in Stage Two
  - Stating the nature of Stage One lead's continued support and involvement in project as deployed
- The letter should be included in Appendix III of a SMART Grants application and submitted via ValidEval.com.
- For more information, see the Letter of Designation job aid: https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-stage-2-letter-designation-job-aid

Polls

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Do you intend to keep the same lead applicant as Stage One?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Letters of Commitment (Optional)

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What are they?

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

Who can provide them?

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

How should they be developed?

Letters of Commitment should:

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

To reduce the burden for applicants, the SMART Stage Two Grant application does not request Letters of Support.

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

Spotlight: Evaluation Criteria Overview

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i. Technical Merit Selection Criteria

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

ii. Project Readiness Selection Criteria

- Feasibility of Workplan
- Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation
- Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Leadership and Qualifications

iii. Selection Considerations

- Safety
- Equity and Justice40
- Climate Change and Sustainability

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

Spotlight: Draft Implementation Report Review

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- Draft Implementation Reports (DIR) are required as part of Stage One reporting.
- DIRs are due between July 15, 2024 – September 15, 2024. All recipients have 12 months to submit their Draft Implementation Reports
- The DIRs should be submitted to SMART inbox at smartreports@dot.gov, **not Valid Eval**.
- DIRs should be submitted as word documents (not PDFs)

Full details can be found in Section E.2 of the NOFO.

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- DIRs should be submitted as word documents (not PDFs)
- SMART SMEs will review and assess the DIRs.
- The assessment of the DIR by the SMEs will be provided to Stage Two reviewers as part of their evaluation.
- DIRs must be received by their due date in order to be assessed and included in the Stage Two application assessment. **If the Draft Implementation Report is not received on time and therefore not reviewed by the assessment team, the application will be judged to be incomplete and ineligible for award.**

Full details can be found in Section E.2 of the NOFO.

Where to Submit the Application

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All application materials must be submitted through ValidEval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT, at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup.

Sign up and log in

Complete registration details

(project contacts, UEI, etc.)

Answer key information questions

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

Upload completed Standard Forms

(SF-424, SF-424A or SF-424C, others as applicable)

Upload the Proposal Document

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

Click submit!

Do not submit your application any other way. Only Valid Eval submissions will be reviewed. Valid Eval will open on Friday 7/19/24.

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Application Resources

SMART Resources Webpage

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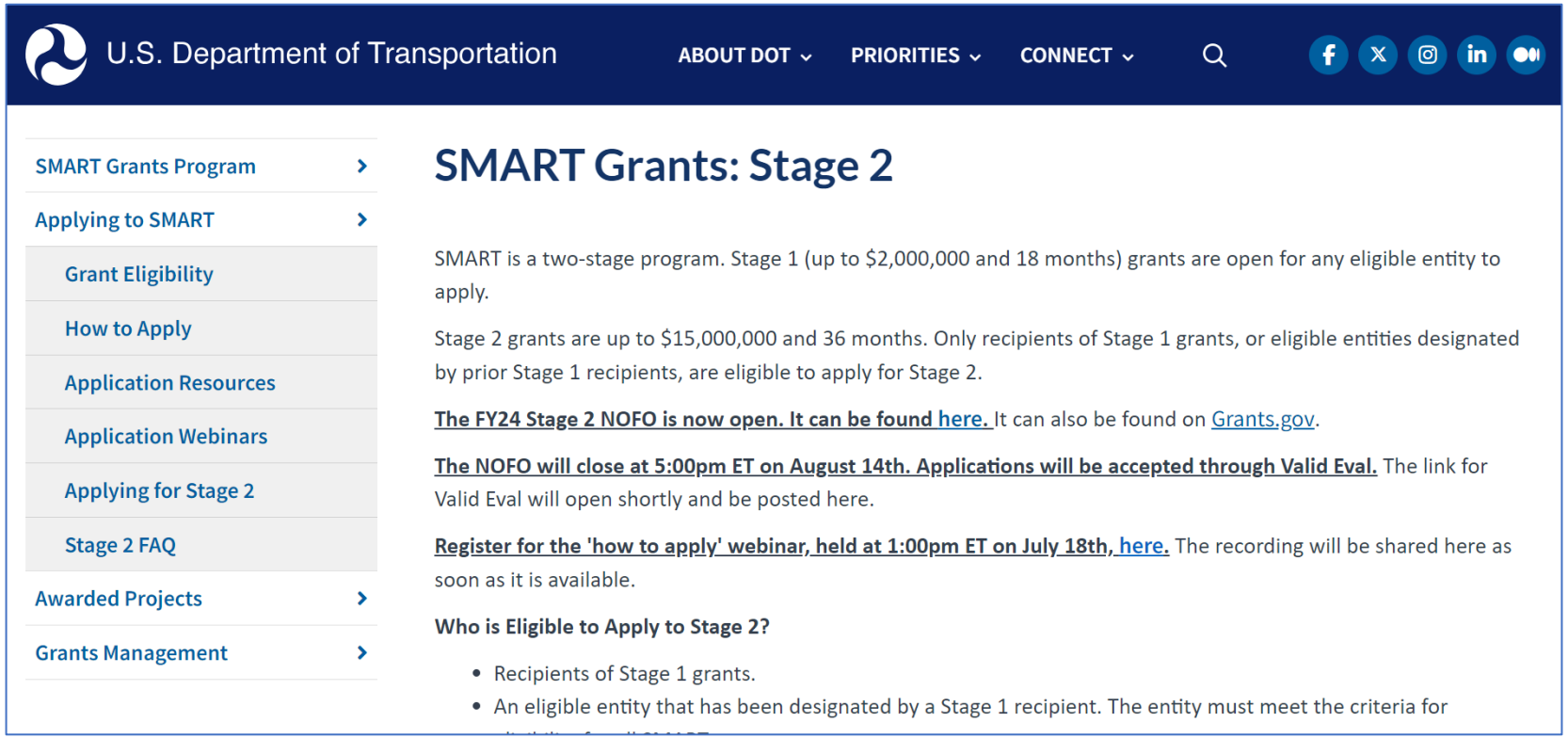

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-grants-stage-2

Project Location File Job Aid

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SMART GRANTS PROGRAM

Preparing your Project Location File

PURPOSE OF THIS JOB AID

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

REQUIREMENTS

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

ABOUT THIS JOB AID

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

1

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/preparing-your-project-location-file-job-aid

SMART NEPA Readiness Guidance

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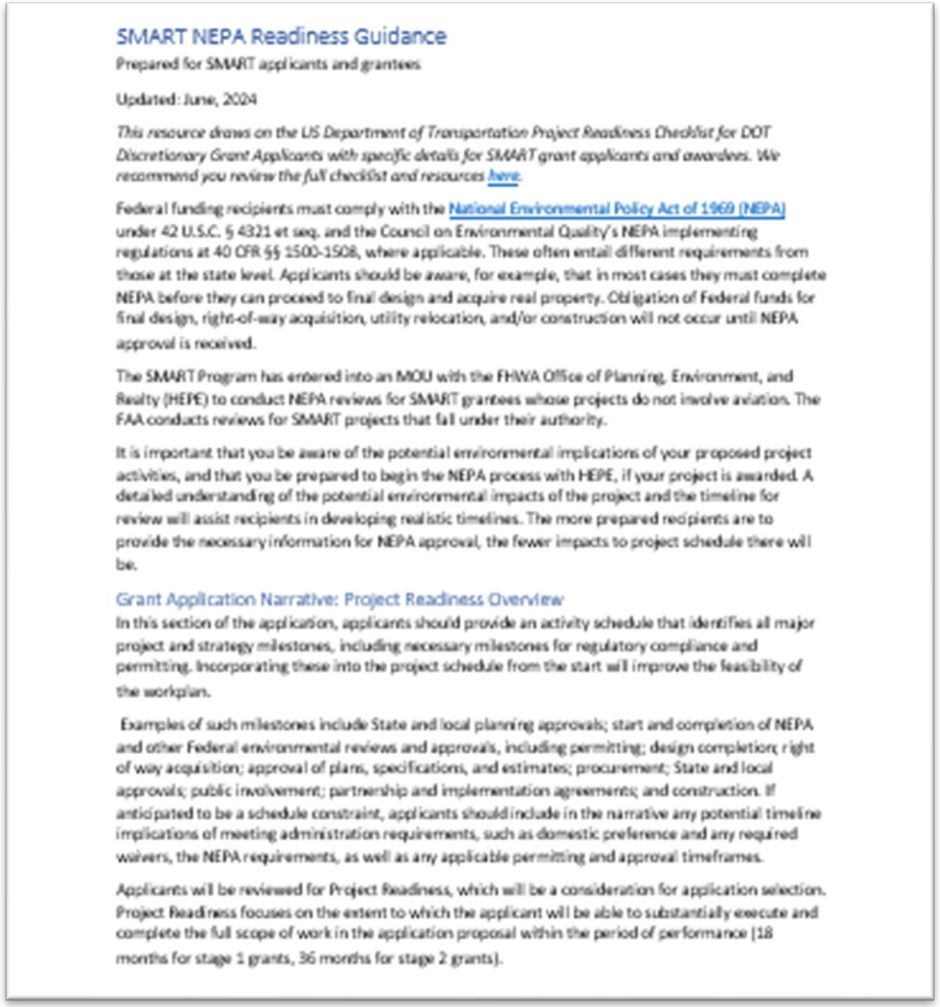
Stage Two projects will likely have greater environmental impact and require more evaluation.

The Stage Two Key Information Questions asks you to review the NEPA Readiness Guidance on the SMART website. This guidance will help you incorporate environmental review requirements into your proposal and timeline, and avoid surprises or delays.

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-environmental-review-readiness-guidance



SMART NEPA Readiness Guidance

Prepared for SMART applicants and grantees

Updated: June, 2024

This resource draws on the US Department of Transportation Project Readiness Checklist for DOT Discretionary Grant Applicants with specific details for SMART grant applicants and awardees. We recommend you review the full checklist and resources here.

Federal funding recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (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. These often entail different requirements from those at the state level. Applicants should be aware, for example, that in most cases they must complete NEPA before they can proceed to final design and acquire real property. Obligation of Federal funds for final design, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and/or construction will not occur until NEPA approval is received.

The SMART Program has entered into an MOU with the FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty (HEPE) to conduct NEPA reviews for SMART grantees whose projects do not involve aviation. The FAA conducts reviews for SMART projects that fall under their authority.

It is important that you be aware of the potential environmental implications of your proposed project activities, and that you be prepared to begin the NEPA process with HEPE, if your project is awarded. A detailed understandrg of the potential environmental impacts of the project and the timeline for review will assist recipients in developing realistic timelines. The more prepared recipients are to provide the necessary information for NEPA approval, the fewer impacts to project schedule there will be.

Grant Application Narrative: Project Readiness Overview

In this section of the application, applicants should provide an activity schedule that identifies all major project and strategy milestones, including necessary milestones for regulatory compliance and permitting. Incorporating these into the project schedule from the start will improve the feasibility of the workplan.

Examples of such milestones include State and local planning approvals; start and completion of NEPA and other Federal environmental reviews and approvals, including permitting; design completion; right of way acquisition; approval of plans, specifications, and estimates; procurement; State and local approvals; public involvement; partnership and implementation agreements; and construction. If anticipated to be a schedule constraint, applicants should include in the narrative any potential timeline implications of meeting administration requirements, such as domestic preference and any required waivers, the NEPA requirements, as well as any applicable permitting and approval timeframes.

Applicants will be reviewed for Project Readiness, which will be a consideration for application selection. Project Readiness focuses on the extent to which the applicant will be able to substantially execute and complete the full scope of work in the application proposal within the period of performance (18 months for stage 1 grants, 36 months for stage 2 grants).

Visit our Frequently Asked Questions Page

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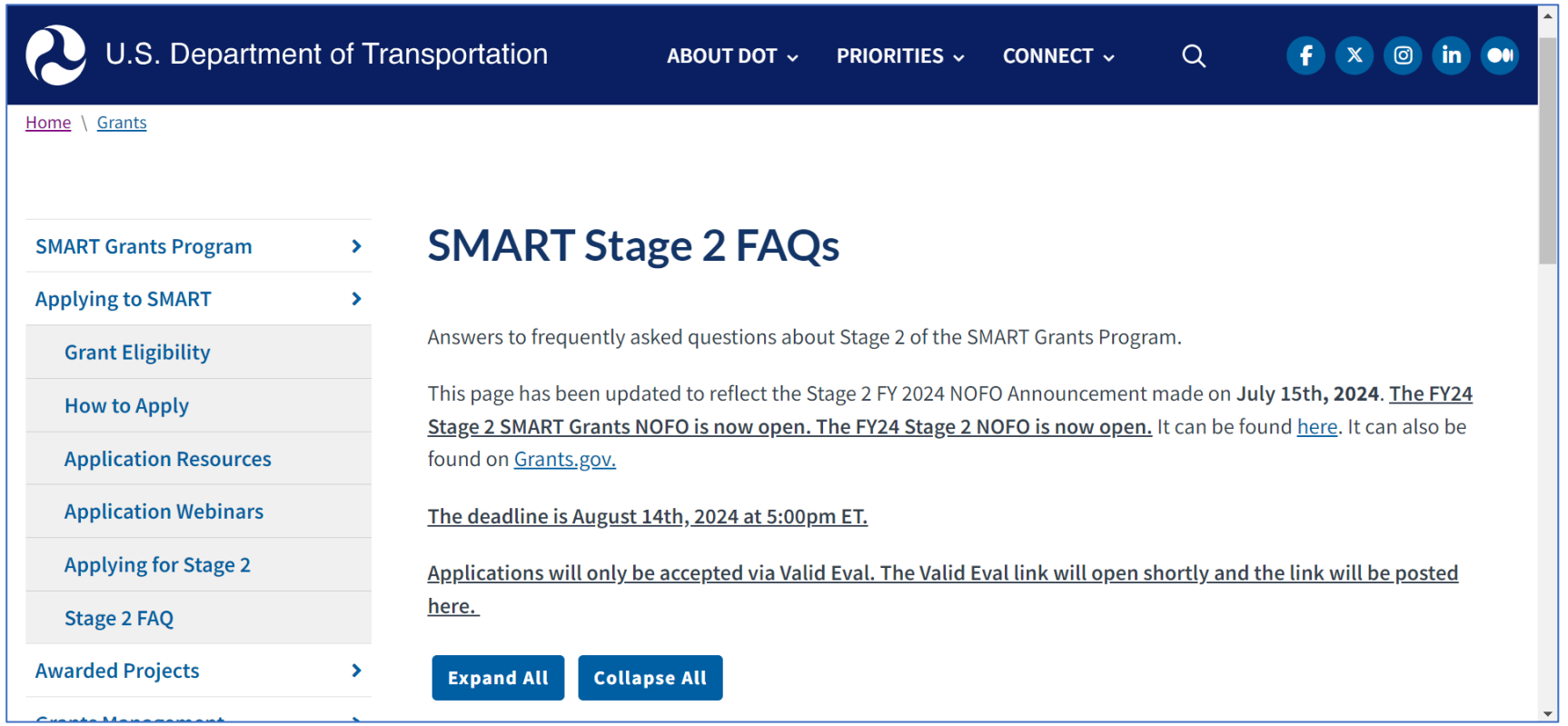

https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-stage-2-faqs

Key Dates

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- Application Deadline: **Wednesday, August 14 at 5:00PM ET**
- Deadline to Submit Technical Questions to smart@dot.gov: **Monday, July 29, 2024 at 5:00PM ET**
- **Remember: Applications must be submitted via Valid Eval. USDOT will not accept or review application materials submitted via Grants.gov, other than the Draft Implementation Report.**

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Questions and Answers

SMART

Questions & Answers

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- Please type your questions into the Q&A box
- Technical Support: webconference@dot.gov
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are posted at https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-stage-2-faqs.
- We will update the page with questions from this webinar.
- If you have additional questions after this webinar, you can email smart@dot.gov.
  - We strongly encourage you to review the NOFO and FAQs in full prior to submitting questions to the SMART inbox.
  - The deadline to submit technical questions to the SMART inbox is: July 29, 2024.