

# Merit Criteria Webinar

Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

Detailed Discussion of the Merit Criteria  
for Prospective Applicants

July 23, 2024



# Webinar Information

## Audio

- To listen via computer:  
Select "Computer Audio"
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Webinar ID: 161 618 5824  
Passcode: 828027
- All participants automatically join on mute, with cameras off
- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the [RCP website](#)

## Technical Support

- Email: [webconferencing@dot.gov](mailto:webconferencing@dot.gov)

## Questions for Presenters

- Please type your questions in the Q&A box
- Cannot take application-specific questions
- Question may not be addressed, but will inform our FAQ's



# Agenda

- Welcome
- Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program Overview
- Merit Reviews and Scoring
- Evaluation and Selection
- How to Apply
- Technical Assistance and Resources
- Q&A



City of Philadelphia (2023), Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Application



# Presenter Introductions



**Andrew Emanuele**  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of  
Transportation



**Isabella Creatura**  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of  
Transportation



**Carolyn Mulvihill**  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of  
Transportation



# The Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

"Transportation should never divide communities – its purpose is to connect people to jobs, schools, housing, groceries, family, places of worship, and more. That's what the Reconnecting Communities program is designed to ensure."

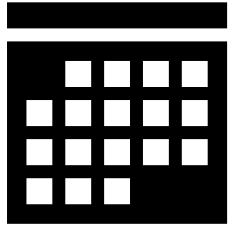
- Secretary Buttigieg



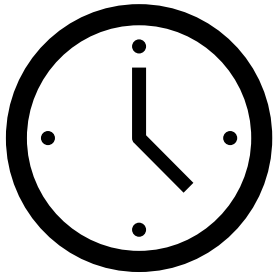
The Secretary announcing Reconnecting Communities awardees in Buffalo, NY.  
Image source: US Department of Transportation



# RCP NOFO Is Now Open!



The FY24 Reconnecting Communities Notice of Funding Opportunity is now **OPEN**



**APPLY** by Monday, September 30, 2024, at 11:59 pm EDT

Submit at Valid Eval at these links when open:

- [Community Planning Grants](#)
- [Capital Construction Grants](#)



Additional resources at the [Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program Website](#)

Subscribe for updates!



# Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program Overview



# Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

- The BIL established the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Grant Program to help reconnect communities previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure.
- Goal: Advance community-centered transportation connection projects, with a priority for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities that:
  - Improve access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, nature, and recreation, and
  - Foster equitable development and restoration.
- A total of \$1 billion in grant funding was made available through FY 2022-26 for planning, construction and technical assistance.
  - **FY 2022 Awards:** \$185 million in grant awards for 45 communities through the first round of funding
  - **FY 2023 Awards:** \$3.33 billion in grant awards for 131 projects as part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda (Combined w/ Neighborhood Equity and Access (NAE) Funding)





## Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

- All NAE funding has all been awarded. Program will be RCP only moving forward. This brings numerous changes to our FY24 NOFO.
- \$607M remaining for FY24-FY26, **all of which will be available under this NOFO.**

	Already awarded		To be awarded in FY24	
Fiscal Year	2022	2023	2024-2026	TOTAL
Planning	\$50M	\$50M	\$150M	\$250M
Capital	\$145M	\$148M	\$457M	\$750M
Total	\$195M	\$198M	\$607M	\$1B

- So, what is different this year?



# What is Different This Year? Reconnecting in FY24

## Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP)

### Program

BIL § 11509 RCP

#### Planning

No set asides

Award Maximum of  
\$2M

Max 80% federal  
grant cost share

Must address a transportation facility that  
creates a *barrier* to community connectivity.

#### Construction

No set asides

Award Minimum of  
\$5M

Max 50% federal  
grant cost share  
(max 80% with other fed  
sources)

## Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE)

### Program

23 USC 177 NAE

#### Planning

40% for  
disadvantaged  
communities

No Award  
Minimum/Maximum

Max 80% federal  
grant cost share  
(disadvantaged  
communities eligible for  
more)

Can address a facility that is a barrier to  
connectivity OR one that is an environmental  
*burden* on a disadvantaged community.

#### Construction

40% for  
disadvantaged  
communities

No Award  
Minimum/Maximum

Max 80% federal  
grant cost share  
(disadvantaged  
communities eligible for  
more)

# Merit Review and Scoring



## Suggested Narrative Structure (Section D)

### For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:

- **Overview:** Introduction, describe barrier(s), history and character of the community, and any other background information
- **Location & Map:** Location of the facility and a description of the surrounding community
- **Response to Merit Criteria:** This should be a detailed section with each merit criterion receiving its own header. Make it as easy as possible for reviewers to give you a high score!
  - Make sure to address each topic outlined in the NOFO. Don't leave any potential points on the table.



## Suggested Narrative Structure (Section D) - Construction

### For Capital Construction Applications:

- Environmental Risk **Summary**
- Benefit Cost Analysis **Summary**
- [Visit here for FY22 BCA webinar/slides](#) (bottom of page)

**Please join our August  
20<sup>th</sup> Capital Construction  
Webinar to learn  
more about Environmental  
Risk and BCA requirements!**

### Page Limits:

#### ***Single Spaced***

- Planning:  
max. **12 pages**
- Capital  
Construction:  
max. **20 pages**



# Merit Review and Scoring (Section E)

## #3: Facility Suitability

DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project will address the following:

- Eligible facility currently presents significant barriers to access, mobility, and economic development and is poorly suited to the community. Project proposes removal of barriers, including over-reliance on automobiles, to reconnect communities for people to live, work, play, and move freely and safely.
- A highway, including a high-speed roadway, street, or parkway, or other surface transportation facility, such as a rail line divides a community. Proposes to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace with a new facility that improves mobility and provides transportation options suitable to the local community.
- The project addresses current and projected obstructions or problems that, if left unimproved, will threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, public health, or economic growth.

In addition to the above, Capital Construction Grant applications should also address:

- Impacts to goods movement, both regional and local, that uses the eligible facility.

## Merit reviewers will be using a rubric to score your application.

- To ensure you receive high scores on all components of the rubric, make sure your application addresses each item outlined in the NOFO.
- For this criterion, your application should address all three bullet points. Capital construction applications should address the fourth bullet point as well.
- Giving each merit criterion its own header and section in your narrative will help merit reviewers score your application.



# Merit Review and Scoring (Section E)

Each merit criterion will receive a score of "Low," "Medium," "High," or "Non-Responsive"

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



## Merit Review and Scoring (Section E)

**Based on these ratings, each application will receive an overall Merit Rating**

Highly Recommended  
Recommended  
Acceptable  
Not Recommended

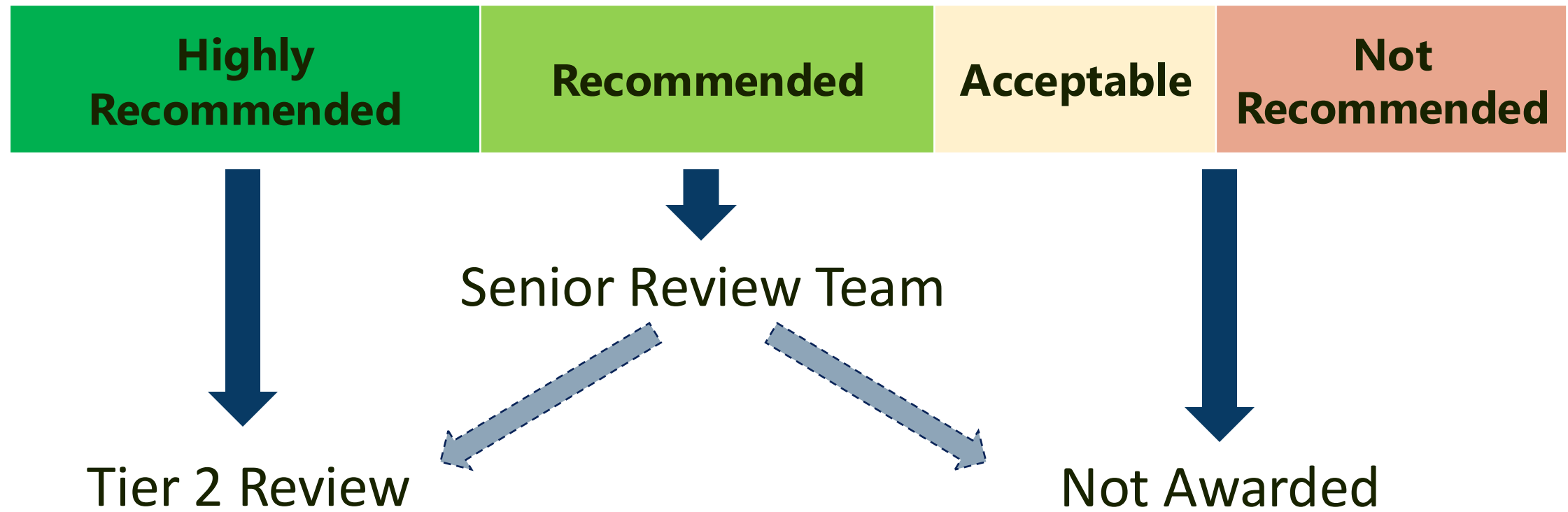
Highly Recommended	Recommended	Acceptable	Not Recommended
<b>Four or more</b> of the six merit criteria ratings are "high" and none of the merit criteria ratings are "non-responsive."	<b>At least two</b> of the merit criteria ratings are "high," no more than three of the merit criteria ratings are "low," and no more than one is "non-responsive, and it does not fit within the definition of Highly Recommended.	There is a combination of "high," "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" ratings that do not fit within the definitions of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended.	There are three or more "non-responsive" ratings.





## Merit Review and Scoring (Section E)

After this process, Highly Recommended applications move directly to Tier 2 review. Recommended applications will go to the Senior Review Team, which may select applications to move to Tier 2 review. The remainder of applications will not be awarded.





# Evaluation and Selection



# Project Evaluation and Selection

## DOT will evaluate proposals on:

- Alignment with **merit criteria**:
  1. Equity and Justice40
  2. Access
  3. Facility Suitability
  4. Community Engagement, and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships
  5. Equitable Development
  - 6.1 Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation and Resilience
  - 6.2 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity
  - 6.3 Planning Integration



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DOT will evaluate proposals on:

- **Project readiness**

	Technical Assessment	Financial Completeness	Environmental Risk
Planning Grants	X	X	
Capital Construction Grants	X	X	X

- **Benefit Cost Analysis** (RCP Capital Construction only)

*When selecting grant awards, DOT considers benefits to economically disadvantaged communities, urban, rural, and Tribal balance, geographic diversity, and organizational diversity. DOT Secretary makes final selections for awards.*



# Project Evaluation and Selection Continued

In this next section, we will discuss the text of each of the merit criteria. We will then discuss what applicants can do to score highly on each criterion, along with the goals of including each criterion in the NOFO.

As a reminder, applicants should address each sub-criterion outlined in the NOFO. Keep in mind that merit reviewers are using a rubric to score your application.

Merit Criterion

Merit Sub-Criteria

## #3: Facility Suitability

DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project will address the following:

- Eligible facility currently presents significant barriers to access, mobility, and economic development and is poorly suited to the community. Project proposes removal of barriers, including over-reliance on automobiles, to reconnect communities for people to live, work, play, and move freely and safely.
- A highway, including a high-speed roadway, street, or parkway, or other surface transportation facility, such as a rail line divides a community. Proposes to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace with a new facility that improves mobility and provides transportation options suitable to the local community.
- The project addresses current and projected obstructions or problems that, if left unimproved, will threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, public health, or economic growth.

In addition to the above, Capital Construction Grant applications should also address:

- Impacts to goods movement, both regional and local, that uses the eligible facility.



# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #1 Equity and Justice40 Initiative

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- The harmful historic or current policies (e.g., displacement, segregation, exclusionary zoning<sup>11</sup>), existing socioeconomic disparities, environmental disparities (e.g. burdens and risks, lack of access to greenspace), and the needs of the surrounding community.
- The degree to which the project will equitably distribute benefits, using tools like [EPA's EJSCREEN](#), [the DOT's Equitable Transportation Community Explorer](#), [the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#), and [FHWA's Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects](#).

Priority consideration will be given to projects that support the goals of the Justice40 initiative.

Construction applications should also address:

- Construction-related displacement and a robust mitigation plan.
- Other negative construction impacts and mitigation measures.

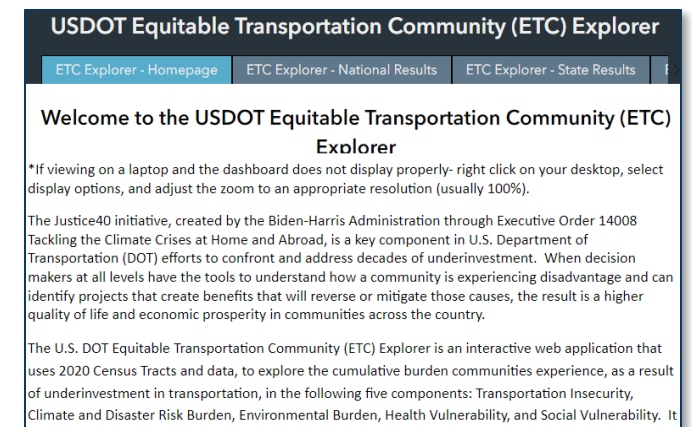
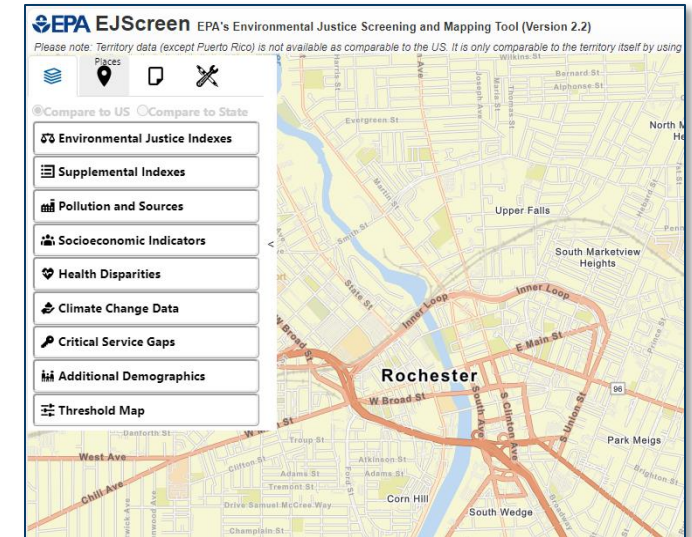


# Merit Criteria: Equity and Justice40 Initiative (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to identify projects that promote equity in their communities. Demonstrating this with hard data will help your application score highly.

## Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...

- Show how the facility in question is harmful to the community using an in-depth analysis of harmful practices (historic or current).
  - A successful applicant last year used redlining maps and quotes from elected officials to show that a highway was deliberately run through a Black community as a means of "urban renewal."
- Use geospatial tools and data to demonstrate an equitable distribution of project benefits.
  - These tools can also be used to demonstrate how the project supports the goals of the Justice40 initiative, which stipulates that 40% of a project's benefits flow to disadvantaged communities.







# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #2 Access

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Degree to which the project will improve mobility and access to restore community connectivity
- Degree to which the project will provide transportation options to increase safe mobility and connectivity for all.
- Safe accommodation for all users and seamless integration with the surrounding land use, character, and context.

Construction applications should also address:

- Existing feasibility studies provide a basis for better access to daily destinations.
- Proposed land use changes or increased density requirements are accommodated.

FHWA Guidebook for Measuring Multimodal Network Connectivity [[Multimodal Connectivity - Publications - Bicycle and Pedestrian Program - Environment - FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)] is a helpful resource to measure access benefits.



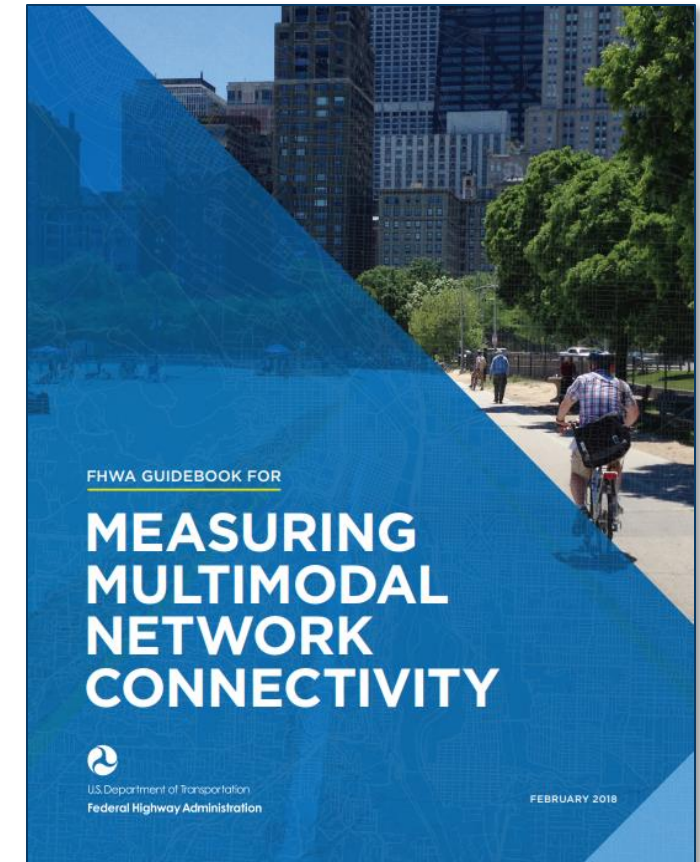


## Merit Criteria: Access (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to require that projects improve access to destinations within a community.

### **Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...**

- Demonstrate how the project will improve community connectivity.
  - Last year, one successful application demonstrated this by showing how the south side of a highway was primarily residential, while social services (including churches and community organizations) were on the north side of the highway.
- Identify how the project will accommodate all users, regardless of ability.
  - Last year, successful applicants showed how their projects complied with the ADA and accommodated multiple types of transportation (bikes, transit, pedestrians, etc.)
- Outline how the project is integrated with existing land use and character of a community. This can be demonstrated in many ways.



[\*Guidebook for Measuring Multimodal Network Connectivity - FHWA\*](#)



# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #3 Facility Suitability

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Eligible facility currently presents significant barriers to access, mobility, and economic development and is poorly suited to the community.
- A highway, including a high-speed roadway, street, or parkway, or other surface transportation facility, such as a rail line that divides a community. Proposes to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace with a new facility that improves mobility and provides transportation options suitable to the local community.
- The project addresses current and projected obstructions or problems that, if left unimproved, will threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, public health, or economic growth.

Construction applications should also address:

- Impacts to goods movement, both regional and local, that uses the eligible facility.



## Merit Criteria: Facility Suitability (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to ensure that projects funded through RCP meet the goals of the program. It is one of the most important merit criteria.

### Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...

- Use this space to argue that the facility separating their community meets the goals of RCP. Think of this section as making your case.
- Show how the transportation facility in question is a **barrier** to community connectivity.
  - Does your project address a highway that decimated an urban downtown? Does it mitigate a rail line that cuts through a rural main street?
- Make sure to explain how impacts on local goods movement will be mitigated during construction (construction applications only).
  - If your project will place a cap over a highway, how will freight that currently moves along the highway reach its destination?
- Do NOT suggest adding through lanes or widening roads.



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## Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

### #4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Creation of a Community Participation Plan.
- Community-centered approach.
- Formal partnerships that reflect ties to adjacent community.
- Representative place-based management: community advisory group or advisory board, community land trust, community benefits agreements.

*Applications from community-based organizations or non-profits from the community demonstrate community-based stewardship by their nature.*

Construction applications should also address:

- Funding and financing from partners and (non-) Federal sources.
  - This can include DOT formula funding, State or local funding, in-kind support, philanthropic contributions, public and private financing, and private sector funds.





# Merit Criteria: Community Engagement (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to right the wrongs of past infrastructure decisions, many of which ignored community preferences, by including communities in decision-making.

## Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...

- Demonstrate how their project includes voices from the community.
  - Successful applicants last year did this by showing how community involvement led to project development. For example, a survey of residents showed demand for a bike path, so the project included a bike path.
- Show concrete evidence of a plan for continued community participation and/or a community advisory group.
- Include representation from local community organizations.



City of Atlanta (2023), Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Application.



City of Portland (2023), Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Application.



# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #5 Equitable Development

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Community restoration, stabilization, and anti-displacement strategies.
- Implements or plans to implement community-supported approaches beyond the transportation infrastructure.
- Supports a Local/Regional/State Equitable Development Plan.

Construction applications should also address:

- How the proposed project will encourage public and private investments to support greater commercial and mixed-income residential development near public transportation, along rural main streets or in walkable neighborhoods.

Capital Construction applications will be evaluated on the degree to which land use policies are enacted that support development of lower-cost housing units and reduce regional displacement pressures in the local jurisdiction where the project is located. Please include information on the percent of residential land in the area that allows for ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes by right.



## Merit Criteria: Equitable Development (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to ensure projects awarded through RCP do not contribute to displacement in their communities. This criterion also seeks to increase housing supply in communities benefitting from RCP funds.

### **Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...**

- Show how their proposed project will mitigate any displacement-related impacts on the local community.
  - Successful applicants have made pledges to upzone the area surrounding a project, included affordable housing plans in their applications, demonstrated the presence of a community land trust, and more!
- Demonstrate how the project is aligned with an existing equitable development plan.
  - Does your state, city, or county have an equitable development plan? Show reviewers how your project is in line with this plan.
- Provide evidence of land use policies that will reduce pressure on the local housing market. (Construction applications only).

*If the applicant determines the regional or local displacement pressures do not apply, the applicant can still score highly on this criterion by explaining the context of the project and how these pressures are not applicable*



# Merit Criteria: Equitable Development (Section E)

## A note on land use

- The RCP NOFO includes these requirements of construction applications.
- Please provide this information by including the percentages for each bullet point.
- For example, if 25% of the land that permits residential use allows duplexes and 25% allows triplexes, please list 50% for the first bullet point and 25% for the second.
- In most places, this information can be found through municipal government, county government, etc.

For Capital Construction Grant applications only, applications will be evaluated on the degree to which the following land use policies are enacted that support development of lower-cost housing units and reduce regional displacement pressures in the local jurisdiction where the project is located:

- Of the land that permits residential use, what percentage allows higher density options such as duplexes or accessory dwelling units (or higher unit count) by right?
- Of the land that permits residential use, what percentage allows higher density options such as triplexes (or higher unit count) by right?
- Of the land that permits residential use, what percent allows higher density options such as quadruplexes (or higher unit count) by right?
- What percentage of land that permits residential use has no minimum parking requirements?

If the applicant determines the regional or local displacement pressures do not apply to the application, the applicant can explain the context of the project and acknowledge that anti-displacement considerations are not applicable.

Language from the RCP NOFO

Of the land that permits residential use in this local jurisdiction, 50% allows duplexes (or higher unit count) and ADUs by right. 25% allows triplexes (or higher unit count) by right, and 0% allows quadruplexes. 25% of the land that permits residential use has no minimum parking requirements.

Sample response to these sub-criteria





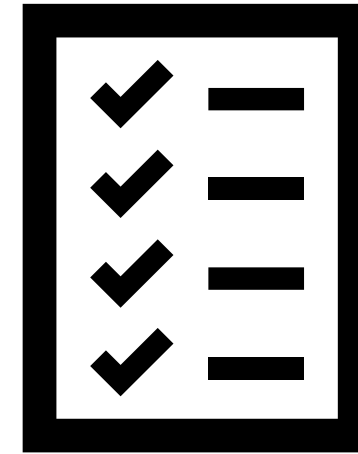
# Merit Criteria Scoring

## A Note on Scoring

The next three merit criteria will be weighted differently than the previous 5.

The first 5 merit criteria all represent 1/6 of a project's total score in the merit stage of review. The final 3 criteria each constitute approximately 5% of a project's total score.

The final 3 merit criteria have thus been assigned the numbers 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3





# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #6.1 Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation and Resilience

Planning and Construction projects should:

- Significantly reduce GHG emissions in the transportation sector; and
- Incorporate evidence-based climate resilience measures or features.

The NOFO contains much more information on how to score highly on this criterion, including by demonstrating that the project:

- Uses climate data sets, including [USDOT and other federal resources](#), to assess the climate-related vulnerability and risk of the project;
- Advances objectives in the [National Climate Resilience Framework](#);
- incorporates [nature-based solutions](#) / [natural infrastructure](#);
- is included in a [Resilience Improvement Plan](#) or similar plan;
- benefits communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as FEMA-designated [Community Disaster Resilience Zones](#)
- And more!

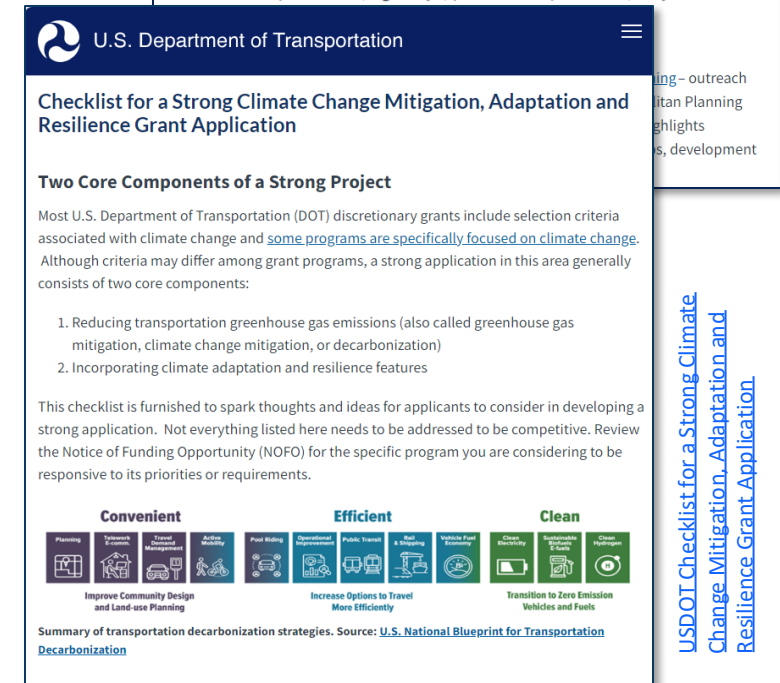
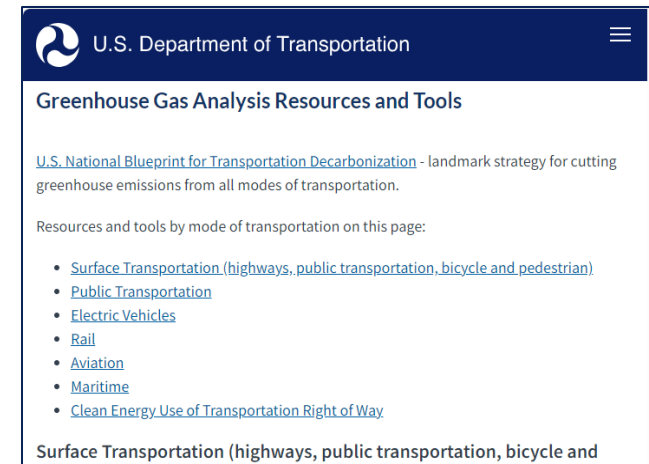
# Merit Criteria: Climate Change (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to prioritize projects that have positive impacts on the environment.

## **Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...**

- Use data to show, rather than tell, how their project will reduce emissions.
  - A successful applicant last year did this by modeling a reduction in car commuters due to a proposed bike path. The applicant estimated that X more people would bike to work, taking Y cars off the road, and reducing emissions by Z.
- Provide detailed information on climate resilience measures that will be undertaken as part of the project.
  - For example, what stormwater management design elements will be incorporated into your safe streets project?

*Please refer to the NOFO for more resources to assess the environmental impact of your project.*





# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #6.2 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity

Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms.
- The incorporation local contracting opportunities.

Construction applications should also demonstrate:

- Good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union, strong labor standards, pro-active anti-discrimination and anti-harassment plans, project labor agreements, workplace rights notices, training and placement programs, and local hiring and procurement preferences, particularly for underrepresented workers and individuals with convictions.
- High-quality workforce development programs.

*Applicants are encouraged to use [Grant Application Checklist for a Strong Transportation Workforce and Labor Plan \(PDF\) | US Department of Transportation](#) in responding to this criterion.*



# Merit Criteria: Workforce/Economic Opportunity (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to make sure awarded projects contribute to inclusive economic development and workforce opportunities.

## Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...

- Make direct pledges to contract Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms. Also pledge to contract locally.
  - If your city or municipality has requirements to contract DBEs, be sure to highlight this requirement. If it doesn't, demonstrate to reviewers that this is a priority for your project.
- (Construction applications only) Include **details** on workforce development programs undertaken as part of the project. Also provide **details** on good paying jobs associated with construction of the project.

### Grant Application Checklist for a Strong Transportation Workforce and Labor Plan

#### Three Core Components of a Strong Plan

Most U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) discretionary grants include selection criteria associated with creating good jobs and expanding workforce opportunities. Although the criteria may differ among grants, a strong job quality and workforce plan consists generally of three core components, listed below:

1. Creating good-paying jobs with free and fair choice to join a union.
2. Expanding high-quality training and education programs to help train and place people in good-paying jobs, with a focus on women, people of color, and other populations facing systemic barriers to employment such as people with disabilities and people with convictions.
3. Implementing policies both during procurement and during project implementation that will promote the hiring and retention of underrepresented workers.



Source: USDOT/Getty

[USDOT Grant Application Checklist for a Strong Transportation Workforce and Labor Plan](#)



# Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

## #6.3 Planning Integration

Planning and Construction applications should demonstrate that:

- The location is identified in a study prioritizing economic development, or mobility and access to daily destinations for economically disadvantaged communities.
- The transportation barrier or project location is identified in a transportation plan or associated planning documents.
- A State, regional, or local planning organization was consulted about the project location or study for consideration in the planning process.
- Adopted Reconnecting Communities' policies or priorities such as: expand affordable transportation options for economically disadvantaged communities.
- A MPO, State DOT, or regional planning representative endorses the application with a letter of support.



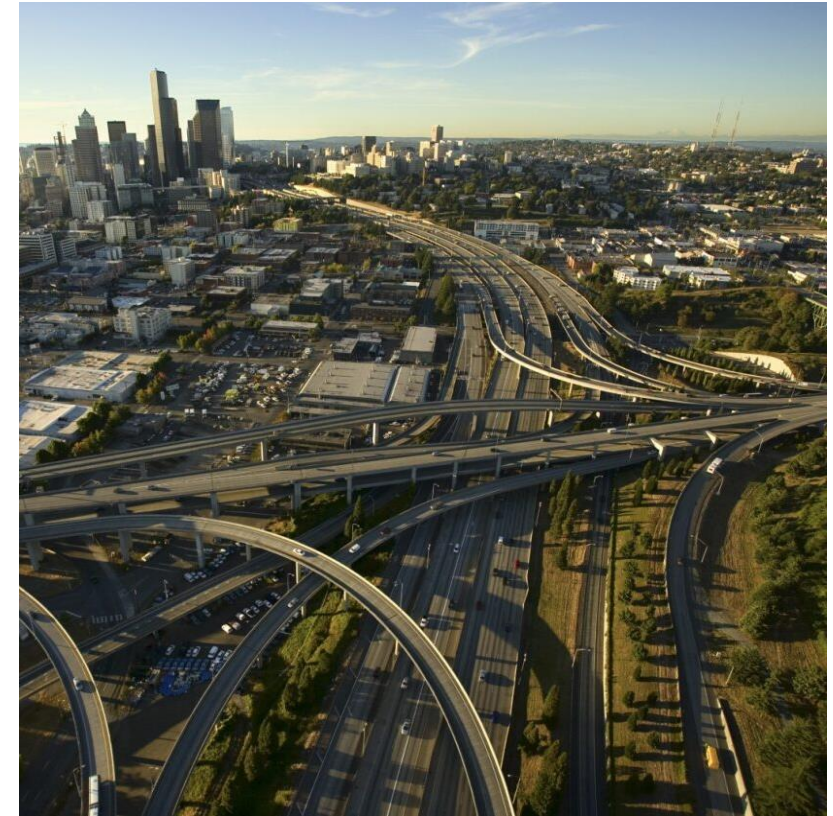


# Merit Criteria: Planning Integration (Section E)

**The goal of this criterion** is to ensure that reconnecting is more than a program. It is a principle that should be followed at all levels of government.

## **Applicants who score highly on this Criterion...**

- Demonstrate how reconnecting is a principle in their communities.
- Highlight how the project has been identified elsewhere as a priority.
- Answer all of the yes or no questions asked in the NOFO.
  - Do not give the merit reviewers a reason to lower your score!



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# How to Apply





## Application Deadline and Limit

- Applications are due by 11:59PM EST on Monday, September 30th, 2024
  - Submit through Valid Eval (expected soon, but not yet available as of 7/23)
  - Late applications will not be accepted
- A lead applicant may submit no more than **Three Total Applications**
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to make submissions in advance of the deadline.



Applications will be submitted through **Valid Eval. Links are expected to open soon, but are not yet available.**

Customer support for **Valid Eval** can be reached at [support@valideval.com](mailto:support@valideval.com).

- **Community Planning Grants:**  
[https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcp\\_community\\_planning\\_fy24/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcp_community_planning_fy24/signup)
- **Capital Construction Grants:**  
[https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcp\\_capital\\_construction\\_fy24/signup](https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcp_capital_construction_fy24/signup)



## Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- All applicants **must** obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through SAM.gov to apply for RCP grant opportunities through Valid Eval.
  - Valid Eval walks you through the process
- **The process of obtaining a UEI can take up to a month, so applicants are encouraged to apply for the UEI now.**
- **If you previously had a DUNS number, your UEI has already been created and is available to view in SAM.gov.**
- For more information, see <https://sam.gov>.



## Application Submission Attachments (Section D)

### **For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:**

- Standard Forms
  - SF-424
  - Planning Grants: SF-424A, SF-424B
  - Capital Construction Grants: SF-424C, SF-424D
- Key Information Table (completed in Valid Eval)
- Narrative (address Merit Criteria)
- Budget w/ Match

### **For Capital Construction Applications Only:**

- Environmental Risk
- Benefit Cost Analysis

# Technical Assistance and Resources



# Technical Assistance

- Visit [RCP Website](#) for resources, FAQs, webinars, and case studies.
- Technical assistance is available through DOT's new [Reconnecting Communities Institute](#).
- FAQ's will be developed from this and other upcoming webinars

## Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program

Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program FY24 NOFO is now live and is due September 30, 2024. NAE funding is not available for this funding round as all NAE funds were expended during the FY23 grant cycle. Please read refer to the FY24 NOFO for more information.

### Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program Overview

The Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) has released an FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) program. This is a continuation of two previous rounds of RCP Funding in FY22 and FY23. The RCP Program focuses on improving access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, nature, and recreation, and foster equitable development and restoration, and provide technical assistance to further these goals.

Funding for this fiscal year is a combined allocation of FY 2024, 2025, and 2026. **Up to \$607 million is available for planning, capital construction, and technical assistance.** The funding will be implemented as appropriate and consistent with the priorities in Executive Order 14052.

The Department will prioritize grant funding applications that demonstrate the following characteristics:





# Reconnecting Communities Institute



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# About the Reconnecting Communities Institute

- The Reconnecting Communities Institute (RCI) is a U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) **center for learning** to help reconnect communities that have been harmed, isolated, and cut off from opportunity by transportation infrastructure.
- Through expert guidance and technical assistance (TA), RCI supports grantees and prospective grantees of the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program in **planning and implementing innovative community reconnection projects**.
- RCI support includes **group and peer-based learning, one-on-one assistance, tool and resource creation, and more**.





# Who Can Receive Support



## Entry Level

- Are interested in applying for US DOT funding for a community reconnection project, even if they have not received a grant yet.
- Have unsuccessfully pursued an RCP grant or other federal grants.



## Planning Level

- Received an RCP Program Planning grant or are engaged in a dedicated planning study to reconnect communities.
- Have unsuccessfully pursued an RCP Capital grant.



## Capital Level

- Received an RCP Capital grant or other federal grant for a transportation reconnection project.

# Pre-Intake Technical Assistance

SUMMER 2024

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- No-cost, virtual TA will be offered in Summer 2024, before RCI begins accepting communities.
- Offerings include:
  - **Grant writing clinics.** A series of three half-day clinics designed to support communities in preparing strong RCP Program grant applications.
  - **Office hours.** Opportunities to ask experts specific questions about the RCP Program grant application.
  - **RCI Resource library.** A collection of tools and informational resources to help communities scope, address, and better define key aspects of their community reconnection project.

# Grant Writing Clinics

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## About the Grant

An overview and highlights of the RCP Program grant opportunity.



## Best Practices

A panel discussion and Q&A with successful grant recipients from previous funding cycles.



## Strategy Sessions

Breakout rooms will cover grant application topics, and subject-matter experts will answer questions.

## Schedule:

- August 16, 2024, 12:00pm-5:00pm EDT. [Register here.](#)
- September 13, 2024, 12:00pm-5:00pm EDT. [Register here.](#)

# Office Hours

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- Ask experts about the RCP Program grant application.
- Sessions will be focused on specific topics, building from discussions in the previous grant writing clinic.

## Schedule:

- July 25, 2024, 12:00pm-6:00pm EDT. [Register here.](#)
- August 22, 2024, 11:00am-6:00pm EDT. [Register here.](#)
- September 16, 2024, 11:00am-6:00pm EDT. [Register here.](#)



# Resource Library

**Access**

**Climate  
Change  
Mitigation**

**Community  
Engagement**

**Equitable  
Development**

**Equity  
and Justice40**

**Facility  
Suitability**

**Planning  
Integration**

**Workforce  
Development**



# DOT Navigator


- Check the DOT Navigator!
- The website contains general information and specific tips on applying across all DOT grant programs.
- Includes searchable databases of Federal transportation discretionary grants and of available technical assistance resources

<https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator>


Questions? Use the Q&A box.




WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?



**Apply for DOT Grants**  
Resources to help understand the federal grant-making process and key federal requirements



**Find Technical Assistance Resources**  
Resources available to public agencies and other transportation stakeholders



**Learn About the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law**  
Information to help access BIL funding programs

## DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard

The DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard provides communities with an overview of discretionary grant opportunities that can help meet their transportation infrastructure needs. Designed with all communities in mind, the Dashboard identifies grant programs with rural and Tribal set-asides or match waivers available. The Dashboard also includes Federal grant programs outside of DOT that may be of particular interest to [rural communities](#). An updated *Rural Grant Applicant Toolkit* will soon be published to help rural communities harness the Dashboard. The Dashboard is updated weekly.

[The DOT Navigator](#) is a resource to help communities understand the best ways to apply for grants, and to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services.

 [Download CSV](#)

Eligible Activities

- Any -

Eligible Applicants

- Any -

Agency/Office

- Any -

Transportation Type

- Any -

Match Waiver

- Any -

Rural Set-Aside

- Any -

Tribal Set-Aside

- Any -

Status

- Any -

Keywords

Apply

Q & A





# Thank You

## Thank you for participating.

- We will post a recording and slides on the website soon

### [RCP Program Website](#)

Includes a link to the Notice of Funding opportunity (NOFO), Frequently Asked Questions, Additional Guidance, Resources, Webinars, and more.

## Application Information

- Applications are due Monday, September 30, 2024, via Valid Eval

**Contact us:** [ReconnectingCommunities@dot.gov](mailto:ReconnectingCommunities@dot.gov)



Image source: Hands On Atlanta



Image source: FHWA



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