US Department of Transportation

FY 2025 RAISE - Round 2 How to Compete

December 2, 2024

Agenda

- Webinar logistics and introductions
- Overview of FY 2025 RAISE
- Evaluation Process
  - Tier 1: Merit Review
  - Tier 2: Project Readiness
  - Tier 2: Benefit-Cost Analysis
- What to Expect After Awards are Announced
- Resources and Q & A

Webinar Information

All participants automatically join on mute, with cameras off

Audio

- Select “Computer Audio” or
- Call: 669-254-5252
  - Webinar ID: 161 251 9409
  - Passcode: 545192

Closed Captioning

- Available during the webinar

Technical Support

- Email: webconference@dot.gov

Questions?

- Please email RAISEgrants@dot.gov

More Information

- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the RAISE Grants website: https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants

RAISE Team Introductions

Andrea Jacobson

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Tony Mattingly

FY 2025 RAISE NOFO

Notice of Funding Opportunity is **OPEN**

Grants.gov Opportunity Number: DTOS59-25-RA-RAISE

Assistance Listing: 20.933

APPLY by **January 30, 2025**, at 11:59 pm Eastern

Submit on grants.gov

No late applications accepted

Additional resources at www.transportation.gov/raisegrants

Subscribe for email updates!

Upcoming RAISE Webinars

1. *Round 1 – FY 2024 Projects of Merit*
   - *November 7, 2024*
2. **Round 2 - How to Compete**
   - December 2, 2024
3. **Round 2 - Location Designations**
   - December 12, 2024
4. **How to Prepare A Benefit-Cost Analysis for RAISE Grants**
   - December 17, 2024
5. **Benefit-Cost Analysis Spreadsheet Template and Office Hours**
   - December 19, 2024

Overview of FY 2025 RAISE

FY 2025 RAISE - Round 1 and Round 2

FY 2025 RAISE	Round 1	Round 2
Who Can Apply:	Only FY 2024 Projects of Merit	New applications
Available Funding:	A portion of the $1.5 billion	A portion of the $1.5 billion and potential FY 2025 Appropriations
Deadline:	December 2, 2024 at 11:59 pm	January 30, 2025 at 11:59 pm EST
Submission Process:	Reply to email from RAISEgrants@dot.gov	Grants.gov*
Award Announcement:	By January 13, 2025	By June 28, 2025

* See https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/apply for information on how to apply.

FY 2025 RAISE – Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants:

- States & DC
- Territories or Possession of the United States
- Unit of Local Government
- Public agency or publicly chartered authority established by 1+ states
- Federally recognized Tribe or consortium of Tribes
- Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, such as a port authority
- Transit Agency
- A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities that are separately eligible

Ineligible Applicants:

- Federal agencies, non-profits, private entities, individuals

See RAISE NOFO page 7

FY 2025 RAISE – Eligible Projects

- Highway, Bridge, or Road
- Public Transportation
- Passenger and Freight Rail
- Intermodal Projects
- Transportation Projects on Tribal Lands
- Surface Transportation Components of an Airport
  Eligible under part B of subtitle VII of title 49 USC
- Port Infrastructure
  Including Inland Ports and Land Points of Entry
- Culvert Replacement and Rehabilitation
  to Prevent Stormwater Runoff to Improve the Habitat for Aquatic Species
- Planning and Pre-Construction Activities

See RAISE NOFO page 10

FY 2025 RAISE – Capital vs. Planning

Capital Grants

- Surface transportation infrastructure capital construction or vehicle and equipment procurement.
- Projects that include right-of-way acquisition.

Planning Grants

- Planning, preparation, or design of eligible surface transportation capital projects.
- Examples: environmental analysis, equity analysis, community engagement, feasibility studies, benefit-cost analysis, and other pre-construction activities.

See RAISE NOFO page 10

FY 2025 RAISE – Award Size

Funding

- $1.5 billion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

Minimum Award Size

- Capital Projects - $1 million Rural / $5 million Urban
- Planning Projects – No Minimum Award Size

Maximum Award Size

- $25 million BIL

See RAISE NOFO pages 4 and 7

FY 2025 RAISE – Funding Restrictions

Planning Grant Set Aside

- The Department must award at least $75 million (5%) in planning grants

APP / HDC Set Aside

- The Department must award at least $15 million (1%) to projects located in Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP) and/or Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC)

Urban / Rural

- The Department must award 50% ($750 million) of funds to projects located in rural areas and 50% ($750 million) to projects located in urban areas.

Per State

- No more than 15% ($225 million) per state

Attend the **Round 2: Location Designation webinar** on **December 12, 2024** for more information

See RAISE NOFO page 15

FY 2025 RAISE – Cost Share

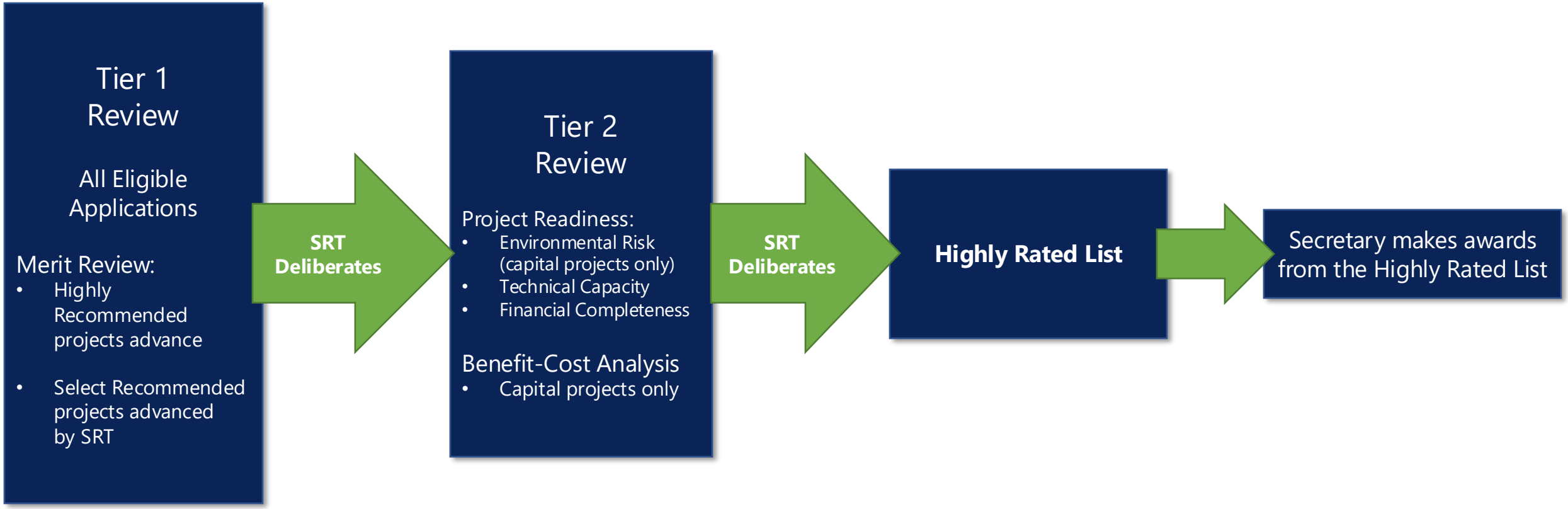
- Cost share refers to the portion of a project's cost that is not covered by Federal funds. Cost share funds are typically stated as a percentage of the total project cost. The Federal share calculation is only used to confirm eligibility.
- The Federal share for RAISE grant projects **shall not exceed 80 percent** unless the project receives one of the following location designations:
  - **Rural, Area of Persistent Poverty, Historically Disadvantaged Community**
- For each project that receives a RAISE grant award, the terms of the award will require the recipient to complete the project using at least the level of non-Federal funding that was specified in the application.

Project Location	Cost Share Requirement
Urban	Up to 80% Federal funding
Rural	Up to 100% Federal funding
Area of Persistent Poverty	
Historically Disadvantaged Community	

See RAISE NOFO page 8

Evaluation Process

Evaluation Process



- The Senior Review Team (SRT) consists of Department leadership.
- SRT considers the Tier 1 and Tier 2 ratings to compile a Highly Rated List of applications that the Secretary then considers for award.

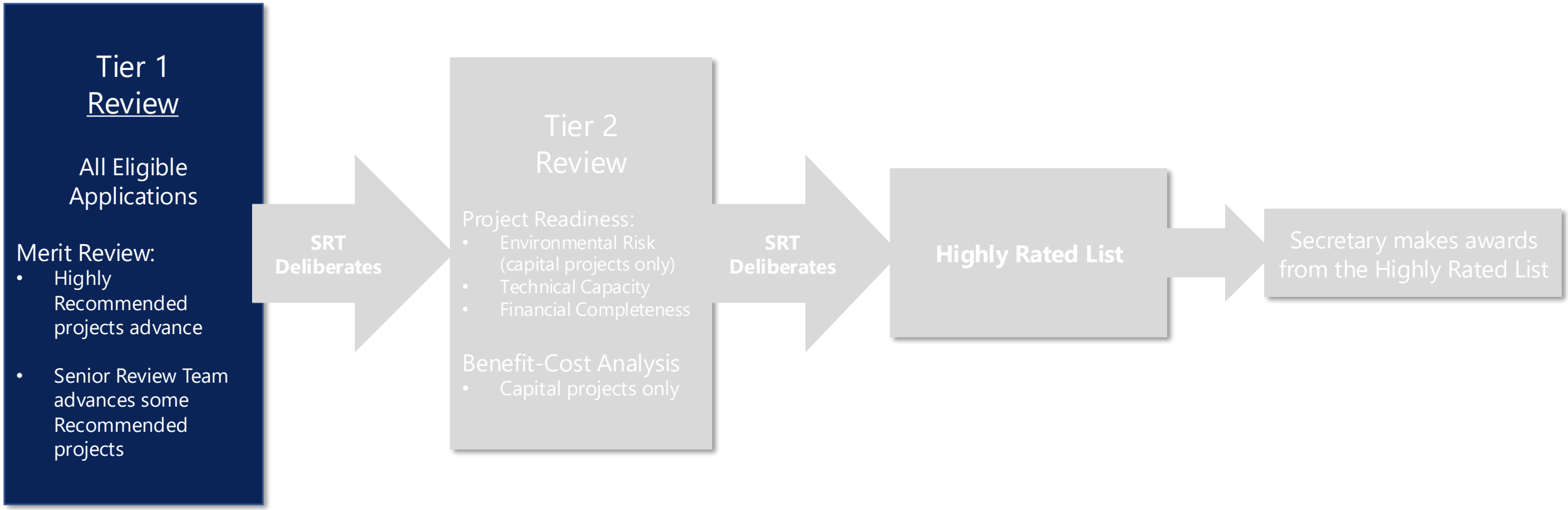
Application Content

Information	File Name	NOFO Section	Page Limit
SF-424	SF-424	D.1	N/A
Project Information Form (Excel file)	FY 2025 RAISE Project Information Form	D.2	N/A
Project Description	Project Description	D.3	5 pages
Project Location File	Project Location File	D.4	N/A
Project Budget	Project Budget	D.5	5 pages
Funding Commitment Documentation	Funding Commitments	D.5	N/A
Merit Criteria	Merit Criteria Narrative	D.6	15 pages
Project Readiness	Project Readiness	D.7	5 pages
Benefit-Cost Analysis Narrative (capital projects only)	BCA Narrative	D.8	N/A
Benefit-Cost Analysis Calculations (capital projects only, unlocked Excel file)	BCA Calculations	D.8	N/A
Letters of Support (Optional)	Letters Of Support	D.7	N/A

See RAISE NOFO page 17

Evaluation Process: Tier 1 Merit Review

Tier 1 - Merit Review



Relevant Files:
- Merit Criteria Narrative
- Project Description

Merit Review Criteria

Statutorily required merit criteria:

Priority Criteria

1. **Safety**
2. **Environmental Sustainability**
3. **Quality of Life**
4. **Mobility and Community Connectivity**
5. Economic Competitiveness
6. State of Good Repair
7. Partnership and Collaboration
8. Innovation

See RAISE NOFO page 29

Merit Review Rubric

For each merit criterion, the Department will evaluate whether the application uses **data-driven and evidence-based methods** to demonstrate that the project will provide the anticipated benefits, which will result in a rating of "high, "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" as described in the rubric below.

Example:

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
Safety	Application did not address the Safety criterion OR Project negatively affects safety	Application contains insufficient information to assess safety benefit	The project has one or more of the following safety benefits, but safety may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a 'high' rating: • Protect non-motorized or motorized travelers from safety risks; or • Reduce any number of fatalities and/or serious injuries	Safety is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, **data-driven** (for capital projects only), and significant benefits that targets a known, documented safety problem, by doing one or more of the following: • Protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks; or • Reduce fatalities and/or serious injuries in underserved communities to bring them below the state-wide average; or • Incorporate and cite specific actions and activities identified in the Department's National Roadway Safety Strategy plan or Improving Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists Accessing Transit report, or FTA's Safety Advisory 23-1: Bus-to-Person Collisions; or • Incorporate specific safety improvements that are part of a documented risk reduction mitigation strategy and that have, for example, port-wide or transit system impact.

The narrative only needs to address **one point** under a rating to receive that rating.

See RAISE NOFO page 31

Merit Criteria Narrative File

Tips for Writing Your Merit Criteria Narrative

- Create a separate section for each merit criterion (8 sections in total).
- Justify why the criterion is considered a **Primary Project Purpose**.
- Clearly **identify the rubric discussion point(s)** each section addresses.
- **Fully address all aspects of the relevant discussion point** (partial coverage won't qualify for that rating).
- Provide clear, direct, **data-driven benefits** (specifically for capital projects).
- Explain why benefits are **significant** (define what "significant" means in the context of your project).

Data-driven benefits use **data and analysis to show the level of benefit** relative to the existing condition.

Overall Merit Review Rating

The combination of individual criterion ratings will inform **one overall rating**:

Highly Recommended	Recommended	Acceptable	Unacceptable
• At least 6 of the 8 merit criteria ratings are "high" and • none of the merit criteria ratings are "non-responsive."	• 1 to 5 of the merit criteria ratings are "high", • no more than 3 of the merit criteria ratings are "low", and • none are "non-responsive."	• Combination of "high," "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" ratings that do not fit within the definitions of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Unacceptable.	• Three or more are "non-responsive".
Advances to Tier 2	**SRT advances some projects**	**Do not advance**	**Do not advance**

Evaluation Process: Tier 2 Project Readiness

Tier 2 – Project Readiness Review

Tier 1 Review

All Eligible Applications

Merit Review:
- Highly Recommended projects advance
- Select Recommended projects advance (per SRT)

SRT Deliberates

Tier 2 Review

Project Readiness:
- Environmental Risk (capital projects only)
- Technical Capacity
- Financial Completeness

Benefit-Cost Analysis
- Capital projects only

SRT Deliberates

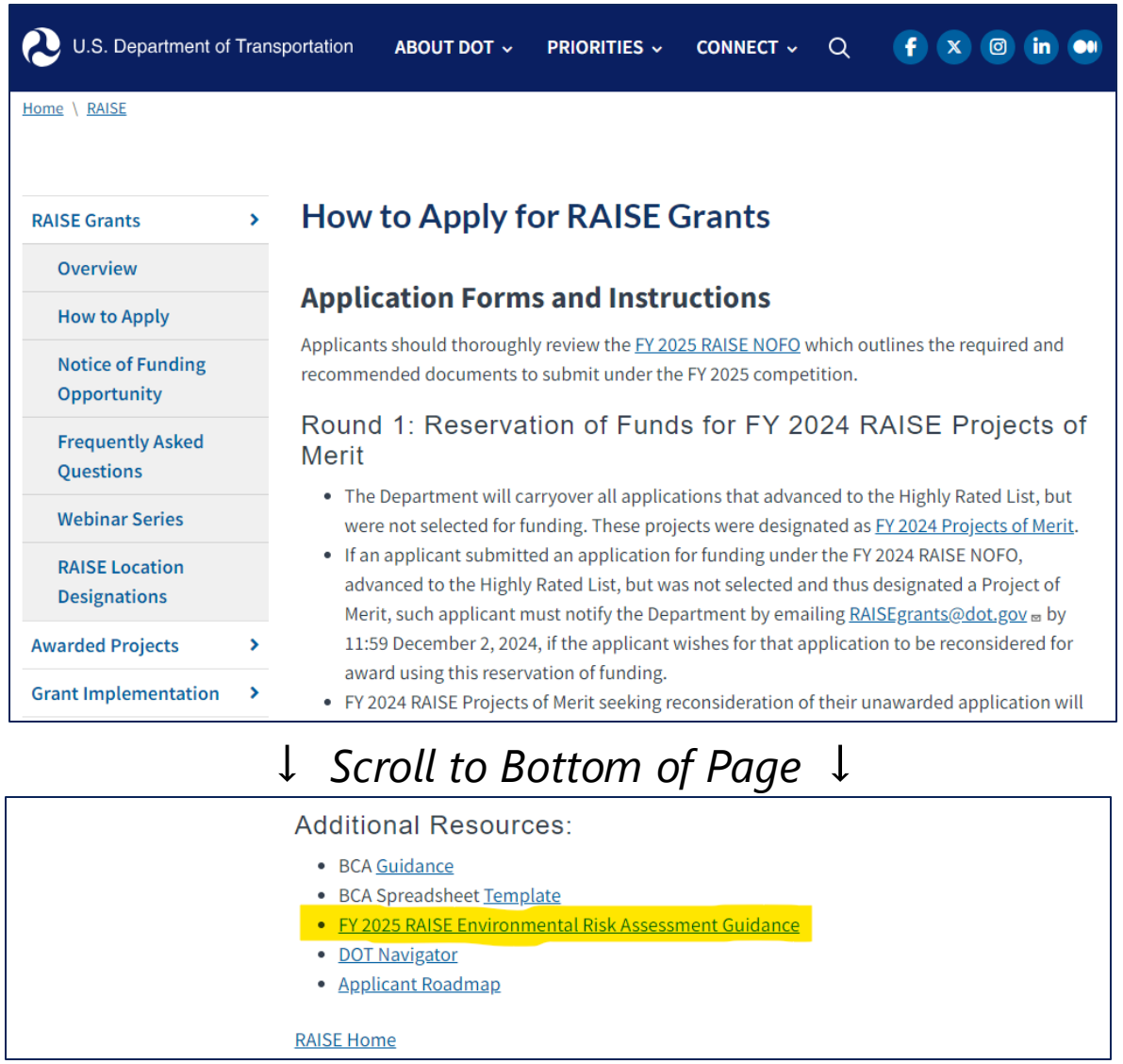
Highly Rated List

Secretary makes awards from the Highly Rated List

Relevant Files:
- Project Readiness
- Project Budget
- Funding Commitments
- Project Description

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

- Required for Capital Construction applications (not for Planning).
- Primary focus: describe status of design, environmental review & permitting, right-of-way, and project's ability to meet the recommended obligation deadline of 9/30/29.
- Project Readiness file is limited to 5 pages.
- Project Description, Project Budget, Letters of Support, and other attachments / appendices support evaluation of environmental risk.
- New guidance document available on RAISE "How to Apply" webpage and NOFO pg. 21-25.
  https://www.transportation.gov/grants/raise/fy-2025-raise-environmental-risk-assessment-guidance



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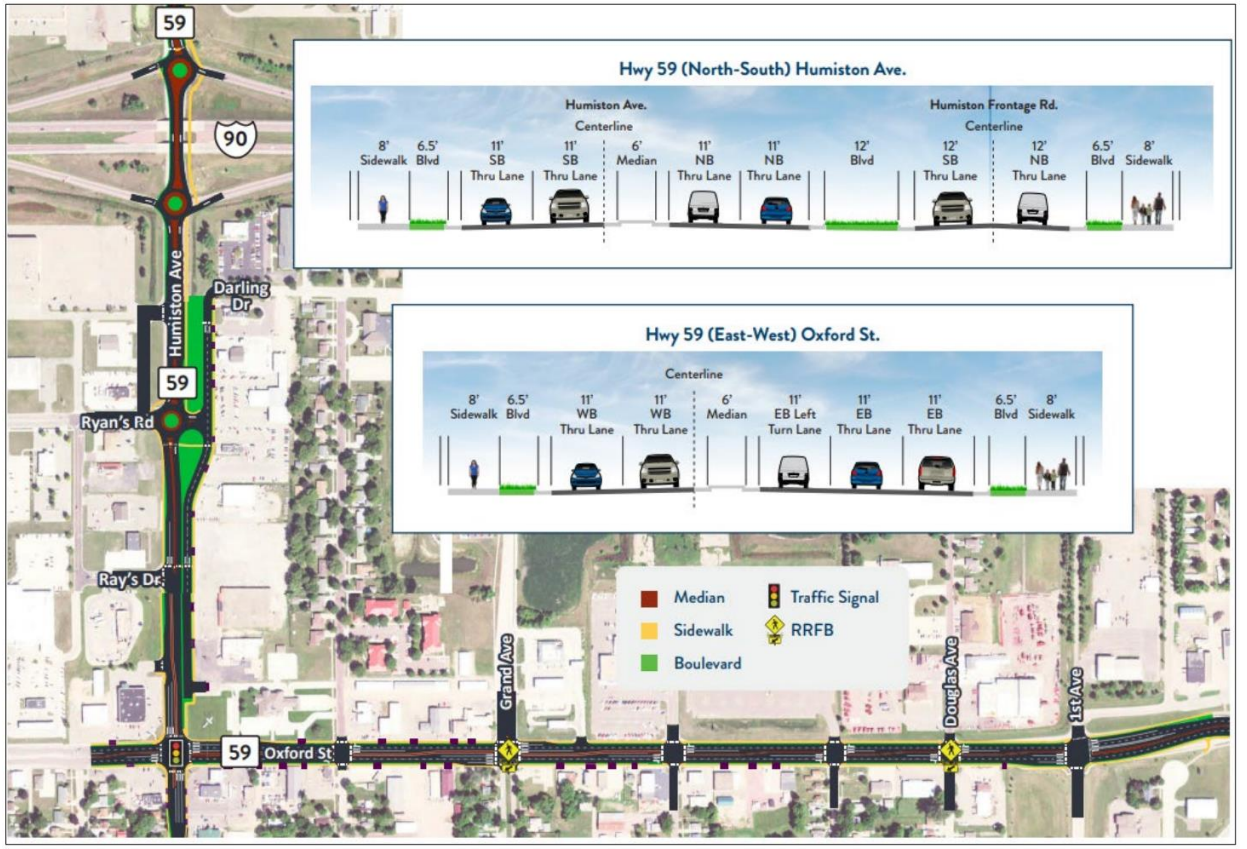
USDOT

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

Importance of the Project Description file for the Environmental Risk Assessment

- Project and applicant(s) history / background
- Detailed project statement of work:
  - Transportation challenges/needs and solutions
  - Technical and engineering aspects of project
  - Current design status
- Narrative description of project location with supporting maps and figures
  - Project area and existing facilities
  - Proposed improvements
  - Logical termini / independent utility
  - Related projects / connected actions (as applicable)



FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

Outline for the Environmental Risk Assessment section in the Project Readiness file:

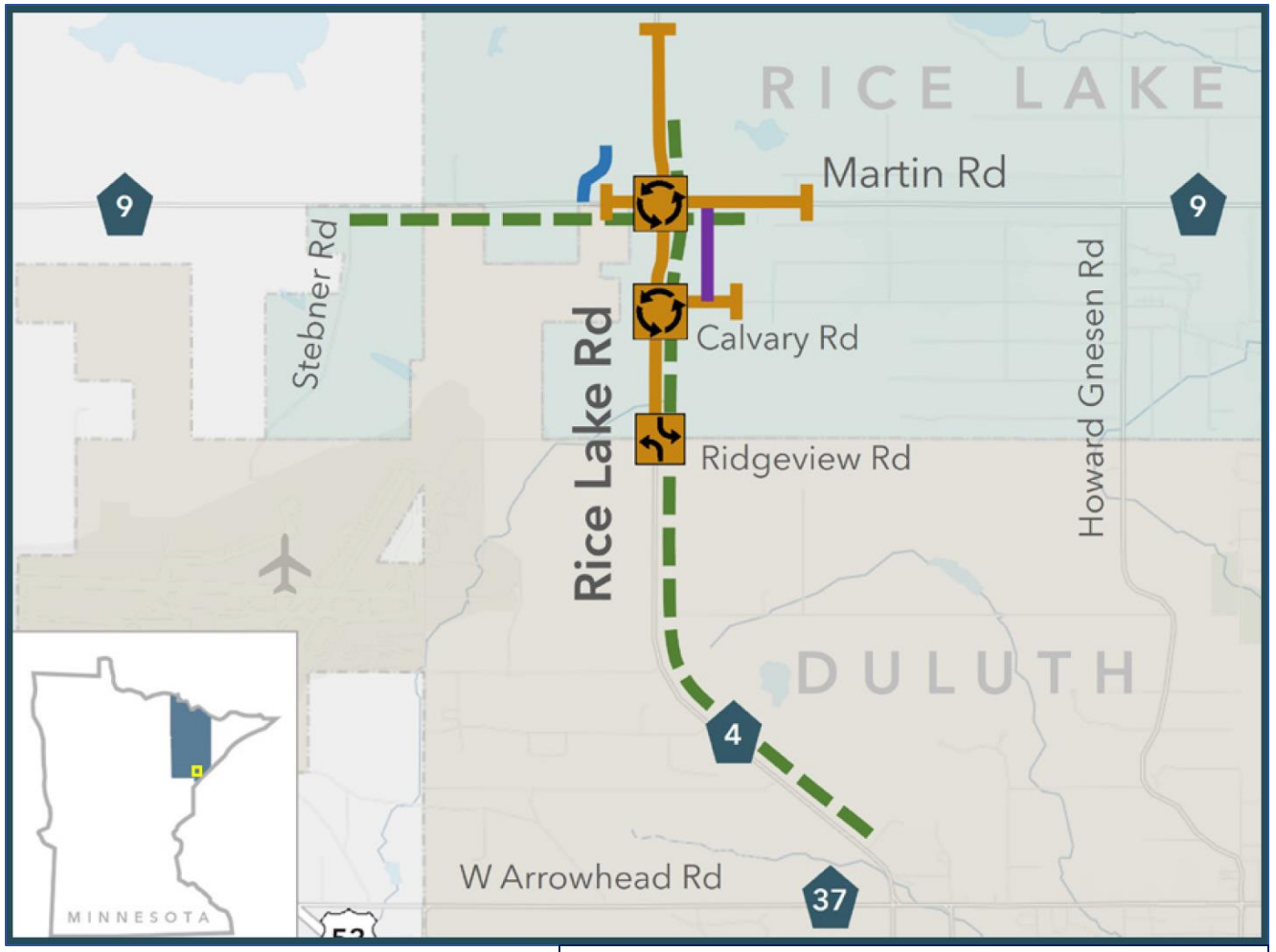
A. Planning and Constructability

B. Proposed Schedule

C. NEPA and Permitting

D. Project Support

E. Risk and Mitigation



FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

A. Planning and Constructability

B. Proposed Schedule

C. NEPA and Permitting

D. Project Support

E. Risk and Mitigation

FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

- Project listed in STIP / TIP / TTIP / TAM Plan as applicable (*statutory requirement*)
  - Yes: link or attach relevant pages
  - No: describe plans and schedule for adding project
- Consistency with other plans (local, regional, statewide, etc.)
- Status of design (as a percent)
- Status of right-of-way acquisition (if ROW is required)
- Unique project delivery or construction methods?
- Multiple project phases or related projects? Other USDOT funding?

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

A. Planning and Constructability

B. Proposed Schedule

C. NEPA and Permitting

D. Project Support

E. Risk and Mitigation

- List achieved or anticipated completion dates (month and calendar year) for the following milestones:
  - Preliminary design (start & end)
  - NEPA process (start & end)
  - Permits/approvals (start & end)
  - Project listing in STIP / TIP/ TTIP/ TAM Plan
  - Final design (start & end)
  - ROW acquisition (start & end)
  - Finalization of grant agreement
  - Obligation of grant funds
  - Construction (start & end)
- **Obligation deadline for FY 2025 RAISE funds is September 30, 2029**

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

A. Planning and Constructability

B. Proposed Schedule

C. NEPA and Permitting

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E. Risk and Mitigation

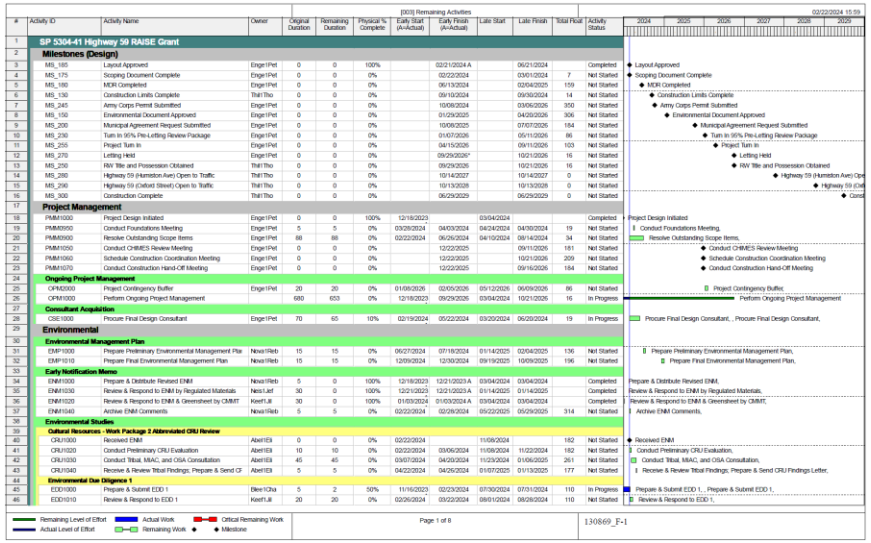


Table 1. Project Schedule[1]

Activity or Milestone	Start Date	Completion Date
Public Engagement	August 2016	June 2029
Corridor Study Final Report		December 2018
STIP Approval		November 9, 2023
Geometric Layout	August 2023	February 2024
Municipal Consent	April 2024	June 2024
Section 106 Determination of Effect	December 2023	January 2025
Section 7 Determination	December 2023	January 2025
Categorical Exclusion	December 2023	May 2025
Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination	December 2023	May 2025
Final Design	July 2024	May 2026
Right-of-way Acquisition	November 2024	August 2026
Section 404 Permit	June 2025	August 2026
Section 401 Certification	June 2025	August 2026
NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit	June 2026	June 2026
State and Local Environmental Permits	June 2025	August 2026
Jurisdictional Transfer Agreement	October 2024	July 2026
Cooperative Construction Agreement	October 2024	September 2026
RAISE Grant Agreement	September 2025	September 2026
PS&E	June 2026	September 2026
Project Letting		October 21, 2026
Construction	April 2027	June 2029
Open to Traffic		October 2027

FY 2024 RAISE Application

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

A. Planning and Constructability
B. Proposed Schedule
C. NEPA and Permitting
D. Project Support
E. Risk and Mitigation

FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance details including:
  - Class of action (CE, EA, or EIS)
  - Brief summary of impacts and proposed mitigation
  - Status, anticipated completion date, and foreseeable challenges
  - Attach, append, or link NEPA documentation (if available)
- Local, state, and/or federal permits or approvals: status, anticipated completion dates, and any foreseeable challenges
- Summarize coordination with DOT and other agencies relevant to NEPA and permitting
- If NEPA is complete, is a reevaluation needed due to project changes and/or the passage of time?

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

A. Planning and Constructability

B. Proposed Schedule

C. NEPA and Permitting

D. Project Support

E. Risk and Mitigation

FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

- Summarize public and agency involvement process during project development.
- Highlight efforts to engage disadvantaged communities & affected communities.
- Summarize key feedback from stakeholders, including:
  - The public and affected communities
  - Elected officials and bodies
  - Other entities (businesses, community organizations, advocacy groups, etc.)
  - Federal, state, or local agencies
- Attach documentation of support (letters of support or commitment, resolutions, etc.).
- Summarize key risks and mitigation strategies; describe effects on project schedule.

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

Application review and evaluation:

- DOT reviewers evaluate each application for completeness and consistency relative to the recommended outline.
- Environmental risk ratings are based on an application's likelihood of obligating grant funds before the obligation deadline of 9/30/29.
  - Low Risk
  - Medium Risk
  - High Risk

FY 2024 RAISE Fact Sheets

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

Common Mistakes:

- Proposed improvements are not clearly described (especially in proposals with connected actions or multiple phases).
- NEPA and permitting information is missing, lacks detail, or is inconsistent.
- Schedule lacks detail, omits key steps (e.g., NEPA and permitting, grant fund obligation), or includes unrealistically short timeframes.
- No plan or schedule is presented for addressing incomplete requirements.
- Detailed risk assessment and mitigation strategies are not provided.
- Application lacks evidence of support from key partners (e.g., agencies with funding commitments or required approvals).
- Applicant does not describe experience working with federal funding and requirements.
- Referenced attachments are missing or incomplete.

Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)

Best Practices:

- ✓Follow the recommended narrative outline.
- ✓Update application materials used in prior years or for other programs.
- ✓Upload final versions of narrative and supporting documents.
- ✓Clearly label maps and figures, and reference them in the narrative.
- ✓Ensure that hyperlinks work and that referenced attachments are included (*specific to Enviro. Risk*)
- ✓Ensure consistency of dates and other key information throughout the application.
- ✓Summarize and append or attach information that exceeds page limits.
- ✓Attach evidence of coordination with partner agencies and key stakeholders.
- ✓If a key requirement (e.g., NEPA process, permitting) is not complete, describe your plans and schedule for completion.

Technical Capacity Assessment

Assesses the applicant's capacity to successfully deliver the project in compliance with applicable Federal requirements as well as the recipient's experience working with Federal funds, civil rights compliance, and previous experience delivering infrastructure projects.

The *Project Readiness* file should include a section that addresses:

- **Federal Funding Experience**– experience implementing federally funded transportation projects.
- **Federal Regulations** – understanding of federal contract and procurement requirements, Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, Davis Bacon Act, etc.
- **Project Planning** – practice incorporating the project into long-range development plans or adding the project into the TIP/STIP through the MPO and/or State DOT planning process.
- **Project Delivery** - examples of successfully delivered projects of similar size, scope, and complexity.

Technical Capacity Assessment Ratings:

- Certain, Somewhat Certain, Uncertain

See RAISE NOFO pages 24 and 47

Financial Completeness Assessment

The *Project Budget* file should include these **tables**:

Funding Source	[Component 1]	[Component 2]	Total Funding
RAISE Funds:	[$XXX]	[$XXX]	[$XXX]
Other Federal Funds:	[$XXX]	[$XXX]	[$XXX]
Non-Federal Funds:	[$XXX]	[$XXX]	[$XXX]
Total Project Cost:	[$XXX]	[$XXX]	[$XXX]

Note: If there is only a single component, remove "Component 2" column. If there are more than 2 components, add columns.

2020 Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
	Total Project Cost: $

Note: Please reference the Census Tracts (2020 Census) layer in the RAISE Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool. Additional rows may be added if necessary.

2010 Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
[XX.XX]	$
	Total Project Cost: $

Note: Please reference the Census Tracts (2010 Census) layer in the RAISE Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool. Additional rows may be added if necessary.

Urban and Rural	Project Costs
Urban (2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	$
Rural (Located outside of a 2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	$
	Total Project Cost: $

Note: Please reference the Census Designated Urban Areas with Population Greater Than 200,000 (2020 Census) layer in the RAISE Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool.

See RAISE NOFO pages 19 and 47

Financial Completeness Assessment

The *Project Budget* file should include a **narrative** that identifies the following:

- **Sources, Uses, and Availability** – identify and confirm EVERY and ALL non-federal and other-federal sources which are available. Provide funding commitment documentation for each funding source identified. Provide official funding documentation in the *Funding Commitment* file to confirm the funding source's availability for the project.
- **Contingency Amount and Plan** – indicate the contingency amount included in the budget (capital projects only) **and** a plan to cover potential cost overruns.
- **Level of Design** – indicate the degree of design completion upon which the cost estimate is based (capital projects only)
- **Cost Estimates** – indicate how, when, and by whom project costs were estimated. Should not be older than one year or note the added inflation factor.
- **Cost Share** – explain how the project budget satisfies the statutory non-federal funds matching requirements, if applicable.

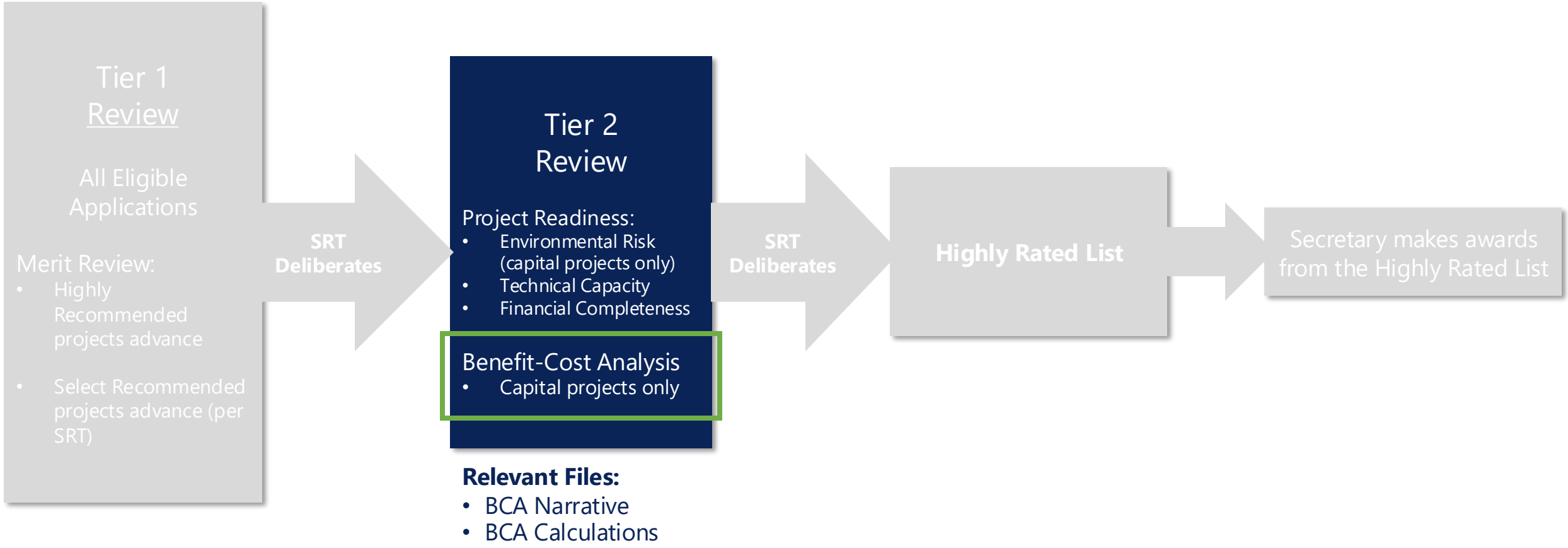
Financial Completeness Assessment Ratings:

- Complete, Partially Complete, or Incomplete

See RAISE NOFO pages 19 and 47

Evaluation Process: Tier 2 BCA (capital projects only)

Tier 2 – Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)



Relevant Files:
- BCA Narrative
- BCA Calculations

Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)

- The purpose of the Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) is to enable the Department to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project by comparing its expected benefits to its expected costs relative to the current transportation problem.

- **Benefit-Cost Analysis Ratings:**
  - **Positive** = benefits are estimated to exceed costs.
  - **Negative** = costs estimated to exceed benefits.

- Projects with costs exceeding benefits will not be selected for an award unless it is determined that the project has unquantified benefits for underserved communities.

See RAISE NOFO pages 25 and 48

Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)

Files to Submit:

- **BCA Narrative:** describe the current baseline, document sources of data used to estimate the benefits of the project, and explain as well as justify assumptions.
- **BCA Calculations:** present the calculations in detail to allow the analysis to be reproduced by Department evaluators. Be sure to only include benefits supported in your BCA narrative.
  - BCA Spreadsheet Template

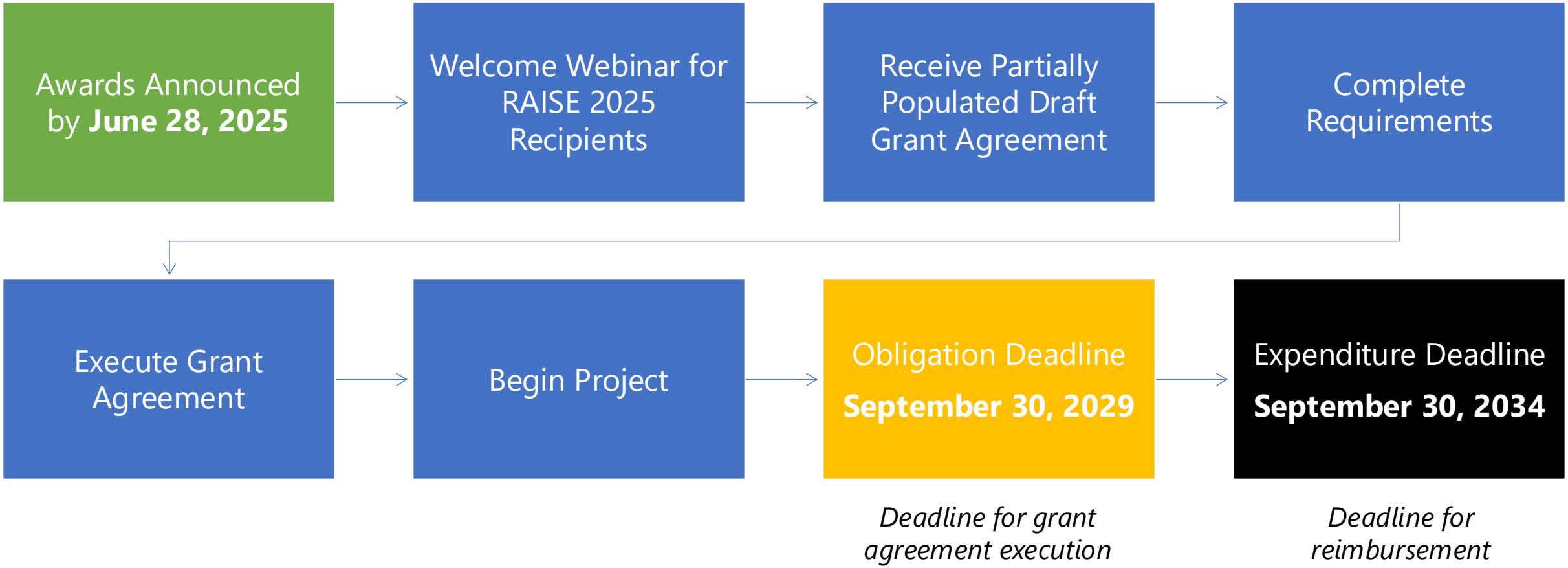
Upcoming BCA Webinars*:

- *How to Prepare A Benefit-Cost Analysis for RAISE Grants*
  - December 17, 2024
- *Benefit-Cost Analysis Spreadsheet Template and Office Hours*
  - December 19, 2024

* Register for webinars at: https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach

What to Expect After Awards are Announced

Timeline and Actions Post-Award Announcement



Executing a Grant Agreement

A grant agreement must be executed prior to beginning your project.

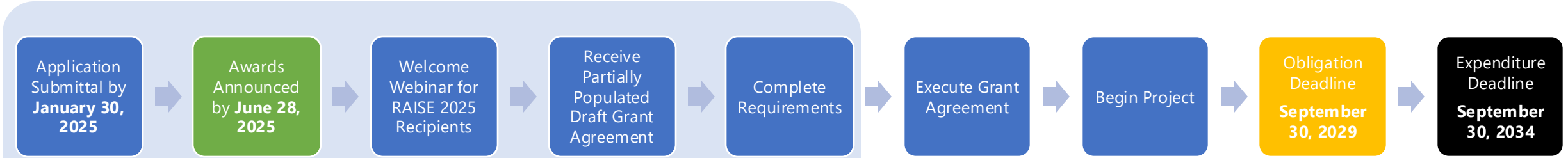
What is a grant agreement?

- A written agreement between the recipient and the Department that outlines item such as the award amount, scope, schedule, budget, requirements, and other terms and conditions. **The scope, schedule, and budget that is included in your grant agreement should match what was described in the application.**

Drafting the Grant Agreement

- The RAISE team will email you a partially populated draft of the grant agreement.
- USDOT Operating Administrations will then work with you to satisfy applicable requirements.

Tips to Remember Prior to Executing a Grant Agreement



Incurring Costs

- Unless authorized by the Department in writing after announcement of FY 2025 RAISE awards, **any costs incurred prior to the Department's obligation of funds for a project ("pre-award costs") are ineligible for reimbursement and are ineligible for cost share/matching**.
  - Ensure that any costs that your project will incur between the submittal of your application and the execution of your grant agreement are not included in your RAISE Total Project Cost.

Non-Federal Funding

- The terms of the award will require the recipient to complete the project using at least the level of non-Federal funding that was specified in the application.

Resources and Q & A

Resources

- Additional resources found on the RAISE website:
  - BCA Guidance
  - BCA Spreadsheet Template
  - FY 2025 RAISE Environmental Risk Assessment Guidance
  - DOT Navigator
  - Applicant Roadmap

- Past webinars:
  - Completing the SF 424 and RAISE Project Information Form
  - How to Draft Merit Criteria Narrative for a RAISE Application
  - How to Compete for RAISE Grants: Rural and Tribal Applicants
  - What Happens After Being Selected for Award?
  - And more!

Q & A

Please type your questions in the **Q&A box**

- Email future questions to us at raisegrants@dot.gov
- See the frequently asked questions on our website for more answers