SMART Grants Stage Two Notice of Funding Opportunity

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

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

SUMMARY: The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for Stage Two Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) grants. Funds for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 SMART Grants Program are to be awarded on a competitive basis to prior 2022 Stage One recipients in order to implement the plans and prototypes previously developed in Stage One that will advance smart city or community technologies and systems to improve transportation efficiency and safety.

Only recipients of SMART Stage One Planning and Prototyping Grants, or eligible entities designated by Stage One SMART recipients, awarded under the FY22 SMART Stage One NOFO, may apply for this Stage Two Implementation Grants.

For this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the Draft Implementation Report completed by each Stage One Recipient will be assessed. Any applicant that is not required to submit a Draft Implementation Report between July-September 2024, as their period of performance began after October 1, 2023, will not be eligible to respond to this Notice of Funding Opportunity. 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.

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF KEY INFORMATION: Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Stage Two Implementation Grant Opportunity	
Program Overview	The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications for Stage Two Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) grants. Funds for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 SMART Grants Program are to be awarded on a competitive basis to Stage Two awardees in order to implement the plans and prototypes previously developed in Stage One that will advance smart city or community technologies and systems to improve transportation efficiency and safety.
Goals and Objectives	• As established in Sec. 25005 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL; P.L. 117-58), projects funded by the SMART Grants Program use advanced data, technology, and applications to provide significant benefits to a local area, a State, a region, or the United States. These benefits are identified in BIL and align to the following categories: • **Safety and reliability:** Improve the safety of systems for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the broader traveling public. Improve emergency response.

	• **Resiliency:** Increase the reliability and resiliency of the transportation system, including cybersecurity and adaptation to climate change effects. • **Equity and access:** Connect or expand access for underserved or disadvantaged populations. Improve access to jobs, education, and essential services. • **Climate:** Reduce pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions. Improve energy efficiency. • **Partnerships:** Contribute to economic competitiveness and incentivize private sector investments or partnerships, including technical and financial commitments on the proposed solution. Demonstrate committed leadership and capacity from the applicant, partners, and community. • **Integration:** Improve integration of systems and promote connectivity of infrastructure, connected vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and the broader traveling public. The Department will prioritize SMART Grant funding applications that demonstrate the following characteristics, as identified in BIL: • **Fit, scale, and adoption:** Right-size the proposed solution to population density and demographics, the physical attributes of the community and transportation system, and the transportation needs of the community. Confirm technologies are capable of being integrated with existing transportation systems, including transit. Leverage technologies in repeatable ways that can be scaled and adopted by communities. • **Data sharing, cybersecurity, and privacy:** Promote public and private sharing of data and best practices and the use of open platforms, open data formats, technology-neutral requirements, and interoperability. Promote industry best practices regarding cybersecurity and technology standards. Safeguard individual privacy. • **Workforce development:** Promote a skilled and inclusive workforce. Support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and the incorporation of strong labor standards and training and placement programs, especially registered apprenticeships, in project planning stages. • **Measurement and validation:** Allow for the measurement and validation of the cost savings and performance improvements associated with the installation and use of smart city or community technologies and practices. Note that the SMART Grants Program is a demonstration program. Proposals seeking funding for systems and technologies that are already well-established and broadly adopted will be less competitive.
Eligible Applicants	Eligible applicants for the SMART Grants Program include: A. a State;

	B. a political subdivision of a State; C. a federally recognized Tribal government; D. a public transit agency or authority; E. a public toll authority; F. a metropolitan planning organization; or G. a group of two or more eligible entities applying through a single lead applicant (Group Application). Only recipients of SMART Stage One Planning and Prototyping Grants, or eligible entities designated by Stage One SMART recipients, are eligible for Stage Two Implementation Grants. Stage One recipients that began their period of performance after October 1, 2023, are not eligible to respond to this NOFO, but are eligible for future Stage Two NOFOs. Section C.1 provides additional applicant eligibility information.
Eligible Projects	The SMART Grants Program funds multiple technology areas, as listed below. Projects must demonstrate at least one technology area and may demonstrate more than one technology area. USDOT will assess each application on its merits, and there is no expectation that applications demonstrate more than one technology area. • 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 Section C.3 provides additional project eligibility information.
Funding Amount	This Notice makes available approximately $50,000,000 for Stage Two grants under the SMART Grants Program. USDOT expects to award approximately 3-5 Stage Two grants of up to $15,000,000 per award. There is an anticipated minimum award size of $2,000,000.
Cost Share	Not applicable.
Deadlines	• Monday, July 29, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET: Deadline to submit technical questions to smart@dot.gov • Wednesday August 14, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET: Application due

DUE DATES: Applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET during the submission window dates below. Late applications will not be accepted.

- Submission Window: July 15, 2024 – August 14, 2024

ADDRESSES: Applications must be submitted via Valid Eval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT, at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup. USDOT will not accept or review application materials submitted via Grants.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Please contact SMART Grants Program staff via email at smart@dot.gov or call Madeline Zhu (202-961-9598). A telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) is available at 202-366-3993. In addition, USDOT may post answers to questions and requests for clarifications, as well as schedule information regarding webinars providing additional guidance, on the SMART Grants website at https://www.transportation.gov/smart.

The deadline to submit technical questions is 5:00PM ET on Monday, July 29, 2024.

A webinar describing how to apply will be held at 1:00pm ET on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Register for the webinar here: https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_N2I3NM78Qsy7wEKuraruFQ#/registration

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

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R), USDOT. Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program

A. Program Description

1. Overview

Section 25005 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117–58, November 15, 2021; also referred to as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law" or "BIL") authorized and appropriated $100 million to the Department of Transportation (USDOT) each year for FY2022-FY2026 for the SMART Grants Program. This NOFO solicits applications for activities to be funded under the SMART Grants Program. The funding will be implemented, as appropriate and consistent with law, in alignment with the priorities in Executive Order 14052, Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (86 FR 64355)[1].

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

2. Program Structure

The SMART Grants Program includes two stages: Stage One Planning and Prototyping Grants (Stage One grants) and Stage Two Implementation Grants (Stage Two grants). The program structure is based on a belief that planning, prototyping, and partnership are critical to advancing the state of the practice for data and technology projects in the public sector. **Only recipients of SMART Stage One Planning and Prototyping Grants, or their designee, are eligible for Stage Two Implementation Grants. For this NOFO, only recipients of FY22 Stage One Grants, whose periods of performance began prior to October 1, 2023, are eligible. Proposers must have received a SMART Stage One Award, or have been designated by a Stage One recipient, to be eligible to submit a SMART Stage Two proposal.**

Other SMART Stage One Recipients will be eligible for future Stage Two NOFOs in 2025 and 2026.

The Stage Two Applicant must have been either the lead applicant of a Stage One grant or a partner on the Stage One project team. In order for a Stage One partner to apply for a Stage Two grant as the lead applicant, the partner must be an eligible applicant listed in C.1 and provide a written designation from the Stage One lead. Each original Stage One project may submit only one Stage Two application for each Stage Two NOFO. Further details about Letters of Designation may be found in Section D.

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

[2] For more information and illustrative use cases, please see www.transportation.gov/SMART.

USDOT anticipates awarding up to $15,000,000 per project for Stage Two. The anticipated minimum award size is $2,000,000 though USDOT reserves the right to alter the award amount depending on the quantity and quality of applications.

Stage Two implementation projects should result in an at-scale deployment of the Stage One concept, integrating it with the existing transportation system and refining the concept such that it could be replicated by others.

3. Departmental Priorities

The Department seeks to fund projects that advance the Departmental priorities of safety, equity, transformation, climate and sustainability, and workforce development, job quality, and wealth creation as described in the USDOT Strategic Plan, Research, Development and Technology Strategic Plan, and in executive orders.[4] The USDOT Innovation Principles guide Departmental actions related to innovation generally as well as the transformation strategic goal.[5] Applicants are encouraged to review the Innovation Principles, along with other resources accessible on the SMART Grants website[6] and to incorporate them into the design of applications for the SMART Grants Program.

4. SMART Grants Program Priorities:

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

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

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

- **Fit, scale, and adoption:** Right-size the proposed solution to population density and demographics, the physical attributes of the community and transportation system, and the transportation needs of the community. Confirm technologies are capable of being integrated with existing transportation systems, including transit. Leverage technologies in repeatable ways that can be scaled and adopted by communities.
- **Data sharing, cybersecurity, and privacy:** Promote public and private sharing of data and best practices and the use of open platforms, open data formats, technology-neutral

requirements, and interoperability. Promote industry best practices regarding cybersecurity and technology standards. Safeguard individual privacy.

- **Workforce development:** Promote a skilled and inclusive workforce. Support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and the incorporation of strong labor standards and training and placement programs, especially registered apprenticeships.
- **Measurement and validation:** Allow for the measurement and validation of the cost savings and performance improvements associated with the installation and use of smart city or community technologies and practices.

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

Note that the SMART Grants Program is a demonstration program. Proposals seeking funding for systems and technologies that are already well-established and broadly adopted will be less competitive. Successful Stage Two projects will build sustainable partnerships across sectors and levels of government identified in Stage One as well as collaborate with industry, academia, nonprofits, and other traditional and non-traditional partners. Successful projects will also support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union. They will be real word deployments based on the concepts, plans and prototypes that were developed in Stage One.

For more information about Departmental priorities, technical resources, and FAQs for Stage Two, please refer to the SMART Grants Stage Two page:
www.transportation.gov/gov/grants/smart/smart-grants-stage-2.

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

B. Federal Award Information

1. Total Funding Available

The BIL established the SMART Grants Program with $500,000,000 in advanced appropriations, including $100,000,000 each for FY22, FY23 and FY24. Therefore, this Notice makes available approximately $50,000,000 (reserved from FY23 appropriations) in grants under the SMART Grants Program. USDOT anticipates using up to 2 percent of this funding for administrative costs. Refer to Section D for greater detail on additional funding considerations and Section D.5 for funding restrictions.

2. Availability of Funds

Grant funding obligation occurs when a selected applicant and USDOT enter into a written grant agreement after the applicant has satisfied applicable administrative requirements. SMART funding is provided via reimbursement. Any costs incurred prior to USDOT's obligation of funds for activities ("pre-award costs") are ineligible for reimbursement. SMART Grant funds are available during the period of performance of the project (36 months).

3. Award Size and Anticipated Quantity

USDOT expects to award between three and five Stage Two grants of up to $15,000,000 per award. There is an anticipated minimum award size of $2,000,000. The Department reserves the right to make more, or fewer, awards. USDOT also reserves the discretion to alter minimum and maximum award sizes upon receiving the full pool of applications and assessing the needs of the program in relation to the priorities in Section A.3 and A.4. Moreover, USDOT reserves the right not to award the full funding amount requested by an applicant.

4. Start Dates and Period of Performance

USDOT expects to obligate SMART award funding via a signed grant agreement between the Department and the recipient as flexibly and expeditiously as possible. USDOT expects that recipients will be ready for a signed grant agreement no later than six (6) months after the announcement of awards, and recipients must fully liquidate grant funds by the end of the project's Period of Performance. If a recipient is unable to meet either of these deadlines, USDOT may de-obligate and/or reallocate any such funds. The expected period of performance for Stage 2 SMART grant agreements is up to 36 months.

5. Data Collection Requirements

i. Data Management

To fulfill the reporting requirements and in accordance with the Public Access Plan (https://doi.org/10.21949/1520559), award recipients must consider, budget for, and implement appropriate data management for data and corresponding outputs acquired or generated during the grant. Applicants are expected to account for data and performance reporting in their budget submission. Requirements include a project:

- Providing at a minimum the data and corresponding outputs to: (1) reproduce significant results (whether positive or negative); (2) measure the outcomes or objectives of the project, as well as the NOFO; and, (3) add potential value to future deployments or research and to support evidence-based policy or actions;

- Defaulting to open access when appropriate (exceptions include protecting personally identifiable information [PII], Indigenous data sovereignty (https://www.gida-global.org/care), or confidential business information [CBI]);
- Protecting PII, intellectual property rights, and CBI;
- Utilizing, when possible, open licenses and protecting USDOT's non-exclusive copyright to data and corresponding outputs (https://doi.org/10.21949/1520564);
- Making the source code or tools necessary to analyze the data available to the public, if relevant;
- Developing an expanded data management plan, providing relevant metadata (in a DCAT-US https://resources.data.gov/resources/dcat-us/ file, and, optionally, a discipline-appropriate metadata standard file), and data documentation (README.txt files, data dictionaries, code books, supporting files, imputation tables, etc.); and
- Where applicable, considering contributing data to voluntary resources such as NHTSA's AV TEST Initiative.

Projects should implement data management best practices including, but not limited to, implementation of published data specifications and standards (formal and informal); increasing data discoverability and data sharing; posting data in a timely fashion on publicly accessible resources; and enabling interaction of systems, interoperability, and integration of data systems. Award recipients can use the data management plans developed in Stage One as the basis for the expanded Stage Two plan, which should include robust performance metrics and targets for the at-scale implementation and an overview of data sharing opportunities. The updated plan must also provide more detailed information on the types of data being collected and how that data will be managed and stored (e.g., cybersecurity practices, how privacy is protected, entities that have access to the data).

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for the SMART Grants Program include:

A. a State[3];
B. a political subdivision of a State[4];
C. a federally recognized Tribal government;
D. a public transit agency or authority;
E. a public toll authority;
F. a metropolitan planning organization; or
G. a group of two or more eligible entities listed above in Section C.1 applying through a single lead applicant (Group Application).

Only Eligible applicants that have either received a Stage One SMART Grant Award, or been designated as the lead applicant by a Stage One SMART recipient, are eligible to apply for the Stage Two SMART Grants through this NOFO.
For this NOFO, only recipients of FY22 Stage One Grants, whose periods of performance began prior to October 1, 2023, are eligible.

Other SMART Stage One Recipients will be eligible for future Stage Two NOFOs in 2025 and 2026.

Designating a Lead Applicant
Every Stage One SMART recipient is eligible to apply for a Stage Two SMART Grant. In the event that a 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 recipient must designate the new lead applicant. Designated lead applicants must still be eligible based on the eligibility criteria above. The Stage One SMART recipient must provide a Letter of Designation, endorsing the new lead applicant as the appropriate party to take over the project in Stage Two, and stating the Stage One lead's continued support and involvement in the project as it is deployed. More details on Letters of Designation are provided in Section D and at www.transportation.gov/gov/grants/smart/smart-grants-stage-2.

Only one Stage Two application may be submitted per Stage Two NOFO to expand and deploy a solution prototyped or planned in Stage One. The Stage Two SMART application must demonstrate that it continues the work of the designated Stage One project. Stage One projects not awarded in this or future Stage Two SMART NOFOs may reapply to another Stage Two SMART NOFO.

For this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the Draft Implementation Report completed by each Stage One Recipient will be assessed. Any applicant that is not required to submit a Draft Implementation Report between July-September 2024, as their period of performance began after

[3] U.S. territories are eligible applicants.
[4] For the purposes of the SMART Grants Program Notice of Funding Opportunity, a political subdivision of a State is defined as a unit of government created under the authority of State law. This includes cities, towns, counties, special districts, and similar units of local government, such as public port or airport authorities, if created under State law.

October 1, 2023, will not be eligible to respond to this Notice of Funding Opportunity but may apply to another Stage Two SMART NOFO.

1. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required for Stage Two Grants.

2. Eligible Activities

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

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

Technology Area	Definition
Coordinated Automation	Use of automated transportation and autonomous vehicles while working to minimize the impact on the accessibility of any other user group or mode of travel.
Connected Vehicles	Vehicles that send and receive information regarding vehicle movements in the network and use vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-everything communications to provide advanced and reliable connectivity.
Intelligent, Sensor-Based Infrastructure	Deployment and use of a collective intelligent infrastructure that allows sensors to collect and report real-time data to inform everyday transportation-related operations and performance.
Systems Integration	Integration of intelligent transportation systems with other existing systems and other advanced transportation technologies.
Commerce Delivery and Logistics	Innovative data and technological solutions supporting efficient goods movement, such as connected vehicle probe data, road weather data, or global positioning data to improve on-time pickup and delivery, improved travel time reliability, reduced fuel consumption and emissions, and reduced labor and vehicle maintenance costs.
Leveraging Use of Innovative Aviation Technology	Leveraging the use of innovative aviation technologies, such as unmanned aircraft systems, to support transportation safety and efficiencies, including traffic monitoring and infrastructure inspection.
Smart Grid	Developing a programmable and efficient energy transmission and distribution system to support the adoption or expansion of energy capture, electric vehicle deployment, or freight or commercial fleet fuel efficiency.
Smart Technology Traffic Signals	Improving the active management and functioning of traffic signals, including through: • Use of automated traffic signal performance measures; • Implementing strategies, activities, and projects that support active management of traffic signal operations, including through optimization of corridor timing; improved vehicle,

	pedestrian, and bicycle detection at traffic signals; or the use of connected vehicle technologies; • Replacement of outdated traffic signals; or • For an eligible applicant serving a population of less than 500,000, paying the costs of temporary staffing hours dedicated to updating traffic signal technology.

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

Innovative aviation projects must show understanding and awareness of, and comply with, all FAA and other Federal, state, and local regulations relevant to the technologies and usages thereof. For instance, in the case of innovative aviation projects involving small, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), applicants are responsible for complying with regulations which may include, and are not limited to the following, as necessary to achieve desired outcomes:[5]

- 14 CFR Part 91 General Operating and Flight Rules[6]
- 14 CFR Part 107 small UAS rule; Small UAS[7]
- UAS Operations over People rule; Operations Over People General Overview [8]
- UAS Remote identification rule; UAS Remote Identification Overview[9]

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

- FAA DroneZone, used to register UAS[10]
- FAA Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC), used to obtain airspace authorization to fly in controlled airspace[11]
- Part 107 Waiver Resources,[12] used to enable more complex UAS operations[13]

Projects that use communications technologies must either 1) use Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) services that utilize Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything (C-V2X) based technology designed to operate within the 30 MHz of spectrum (5.895-5.925 GHz) that are consistent with the rules established in waivers associated with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ET Docket No. 19-138 and future Report and Orders effective at the time when the Department selects

[5] Other terminologies exist, using the FAA terminology "unmanned aircraft systems" for simplicity;
[6] 14 CFR Part 91 https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-91.
[7] 14 CFR Part 107 https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-107
[8] FAA Operations Over People General Overview
https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/operations_over_people. Last updated November 10, 2022.
[9] FAA Final Rule on Remote ID https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/remoteid-final-rule. Last updated April 21, 2021.
[10] FAA DroneZone; https://faadronezone.faa.gov/.
[11] FAA UAS Data Exchange (LAANC); https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/data_exchange.
[12] Part 107 Waiver resources; https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/part_107_waivers.
[13] For additional questions or information, please contact the FAA UAS Support Center at
https://www.faa.gov/uas/contact_us.

projects for funding under the FY 2024 SMART Grants Program, or 2) leverage other communications technologies that can support V2X services and operate in spectrum outside of the 5.895-5.925 GHz range. USDOT will assess FY 2024 Stage Two proposals according to this language.

Projects that involve equipping or retrofitting motor vehicles with additional technologies are only eligible if the vehicles are publicly owned, leased or used in a contracted service; equipping privately owned and operated vehicles outside of a leased or contracted service is not an eligible activity. Projects involving motor vehicles must involve only vehicles and operations that comply with all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSSs) and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), or vehicles that are exempt from the requirements in a manner that allows for the legal acquisition and operation of the vehicles in the proposed project.

Stage Two applicants are required to identify all necessary exemptions, waivers, permits, or special permissions in their Stage Two application. Applications will be assessed on the readiness and feasibility of the project with regard to legal, policy, and regulatory requirements (e.g., environmental permits and reviews; public outreach; State and local approvals; equity and accessibility requirements). It will strengthen a Stage Two application if the applicant can affirm that it has already received such permissions. See section E for detailed assessment criteria. Selection for NOFO funds does not guarantee that an exemption or waiver will be granted or otherwise impact the exemption or waiver review processes.

2. Costs

USDOT reserves the right to make cost eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis. Eligible development and construction activities for grant funding are the following:

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

The following are <u>not</u> eligible costs for SMART Grants Program funding:

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

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

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

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

Broadly, allowable activity costs must comply with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E (i.e., 2 CFR § 200.403 and § 200.405).

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

All grant application materials can be accessed at grants.gov under the Notice of Funding Opportunity Number DOT-SMART-FY24-02. However, applications should not be submitted on Grants.gov, and USDOT will not review any applications submitted via Grants.gov. Applicants must submit their applications via Valid Eval at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup.

Potential applicants may also request paper copies of materials at:

Telephone: 202-774-8003
Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
E37-303
Washington, DC 20590

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

The application must include the following: Standard Forms (SF); Key Information Questions; and Project Narrative, including the required Appendices. This information must be submitted via Valid Eval at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup. More detailed information about each application material is provided below. Nothing should be submitted on Grants.gov, and USDOT will not review any applications submitted via Grants.gov.

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

   Regarding signatures, we ask that authorized representatives either:

   1. Print the appropriate documents, physically sign the documents in ink, and re-upload the documents to Valid Eval OR
   2. Download the appropriate documents, provide a digital signature/digital certificate, and re-upload the documents to Valid Eval.

ii. **Key Information Questions:** This is a preview list of the questions that are asked on USDOT's automated proposal website at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup. After registering in the system, the applicant will be prompted to answer the following questions on the website:

Title	Instructions
1. Stage Two Project Name	Enter a concise, descriptive title for the project. This should be the same title used in the Grants.gov SF-424 submission and the application narrative. The SMART Grants Program recommends a unique title of 100 characters or less. Do not title your project 'SMART Grant' or similar.
2. Lead Applicant Name	This should be consistent with Q. 8.a. of the SF-424.
3. Lead Applicant Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	See Section D.3 for more information about obtaining a UEI from SAM.gov. The UEI must be current and not expired. The UEI must be in an "active" status, not "assigned."
4. Eligible Applicant Type	Indicate the eligible applicant type for your application: A. a State; B. a political subdivision of a State; C. a federally recognized Tribal government; D. a public transit agency or authority; E. a public toll authority; F. a metropolitan planning organization. If this is a group application, please identify the eligible applicant type of the lead applicant.
5. Is this the same lead applicant as the corresponding Stage One Application?	If No, list the new name of the lead applicant of the corresponding Stage One project.
6. Was a similar application submitted in the past two years, or do you anticipate a similar application will be submitted for funding in the coming year for this project under **any other USDOT discretionary grant programs** (not including the SMART Grants Program)?	If yes, please include the name of the discretionary grant program, the project title of the similar grant application, and the name of the lead applicant. Please also indicate the application status (Planned, Submitted, Selected, or Not Selected).
7. Other than the SMART Grants Stage One award, was any other Federal funding previously received for this project? This may include funding received from USDOT as well as other Federal agencies.	If yes, indicate the amount of Federal funding received and the relevant grant number.
8. What organizations will be considered partners on this project?	List all critical project partners. This could include other eligible applicant types (e.g., States, a political subdivision of a State, etc.) as well as those in

	industry, academia, nonprofits, and other traditional and non-traditional partners).[14]
9. One Sentence Description of Stage Two project	Describe your Stage Two project in one sentence using the following format: "This project will use X (technology(ies) to address Y (problem(s) to be solved) in Z (context or project area)." The sentence should describe the full implementation of the project as described in the Stage Two application. The One Sentence Description of successful applicants may be published by USDOT and, therefore, must not contain classified, proprietary, or confidential information.
10. Brief Project Description	Describe the project in plain language, using no more than 200 words. It is recommended that applicants use the following format: • One sentence on the problem to be solved. • One sentence on the anticipated or known impact of the Stage One project that received SMART funding. • One sentence describing the anticipated Stage Two activities and how these activities will build on success from Stage One. • One sentence describing the anticipated impacts of the Stage Two project. Please do not describe the project's benefits, background, or alignment with the selection criteria in this description field. A longer, narrative description will be provided in the Project Narrative. The Brief Project Description of successful applicants may be published by USDOT and, therefore, must not contain classified, proprietary or confidential information.
11. Primary Project Location	Identify the primary location where the project will take place. If more than one location, please list additional locations in the next question. 1. If your project will be conducted in a specific city, cities, or town(s), indicate the primary location at which the project will take place using [City, State] as the format. 2. If your project will be conducted at the county, regional, or MPO-level, please note the closest or most relevant [City, State] location for the project

[14] Letters of Commitment should be written for critical partners only. For a Letter of Commitment template, see www.transportation.gov/SMART.

	and indicate if this location represents a "county," "region," or "MPO." This information will be used for mapping purposes. 3. If your project will be conducted Statewide, please indicate the name of the State. 4. If your project will be conducted in a tribal community, please note the closest or most relevant [City, State] location for the project. This information will be used for mapping purposes.
12. Other Project Locations	Identify additional project locations, if applicable, using the same instructions as the previous question. All additional locations should be in [City, State] format.
13. What congressional district(s) is your project located in?	Use the following format: StateAbbrv.-DistrictNumber (e.g., CA-1 , CA-ALL)
14. Size of Community Receiving Benefits	Indicate the size of the community (large community; midsized community; regional partnership; or rural community) that will primarily benefit from the project. • Large Community: A community with a population of not less than 400,000 individuals, as determined under the most recent annual estimate of the Bureau of the Census. • Midsized Community: Any community that is not a large community or a rural community. • Rural Community: The term "rural community" means a community that is located in an area that is outside of an urbanized area (as defined in section 5302 of title 49, United States Code, which defines "urbanized area" as an area encompassing a population of not less than 50,000 people that has been defined and designated in the most recent decennial census as an "urbanized area" by the Secretary of Commerce. Please use 87 FR 80114 to confirm that your project location is not delineated by the Census Bureau as a 2020 urbanized area based on 2020 Census of Population and Housing counts and density calculations. • Regional Partnership: A partnership composed of two or more eligible applicants located in jurisdictions with a combined population that is equal to or greater than the population of any midsized community.

15. Is the project located (entirely or partially) in a Disadvantaged Community based on its location in a census tract identified as "disadvantaged" in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)?	Indicate Yes, No, or Statewide Project. Only select "Statewide Project" if the project will not have specific project sites within a State.
16. If you responded "Yes" to Question 15, please identify the relevant census tract(s) that contribute to this designation. Be sure to use the full census tract number identified in the CEJST tool.	
17. Project Cost: Amount Requested	Total dollar amount requested (rounded to the nearest dollar).
18. Project Cost: Total Project Cost	Total project cost requested for Stage Two, including dollar amount requested and other funding contributions (rounded to the nearest dollar).
19. Proposed Duration of Stage Two Project (in months)	May be up to 36 months.
20. Primary Technology Area	Select the primary technology area with which your project aligns: A. coordinated automation; B. connected vehicles; C. intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure; D. systems integration; E. commerce delivery and logistics; F. leveraging use of innovative aviation technology; G. smart grid; or H. smart technology traffic signals
21. Secondary Technology Area(s) (if applicable)	Select the secondary technology area(s) with which your project aligns: A. coordinated automation; B. connected vehicles; C. intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure; D. systems integration; E. commerce delivery and logistics; F. leveraging use of innovative aviation technology; G. smart grid; or H. smart technology traffic signals I. N/A Note that applications are not rated on the number of technology areas indicated, so it is important to only select the area(s) with which your project aligns.

22. Does this project relate to traffic or parking enforcement; or license plate reader activities?	Indicate "Yes" or "No." Note that SMART grants shall not be used for any current or future traffic or parking enforcement activity, or to purchase or lease a license plate reader.
23. Is an exemption, waiver, permit, or special permission required to conduct the proposed project?	If yes, indicate the exemption, waiver, permit, or special permission obtained. If a waiver has not been obtained, please indicate the plan or process for obtaining it in your Project Narrative.
24. Jobs / Workforce Assessment	Do you anticipate that the technologies introduced in your project will affect the number and quality of jobs in your agency or organization or in industries impacted by your project? If yes, please provide a thorough response of how technology may impact the quantity and quality of jobs and your plans to address potential changes. These plans may include collective bargaining agreements, restructuring of jobs, and additional training for the workforce. If no, please explain why it would not affect the number and quality of jobs. The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.
25. Were workforce representatives consulted on the information provided on job impacts of the project?	Indicate "Yes" or "No."
26. Are workforce representatives supportive of this project?	The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.
27. Anticipated Stage Two NEPA Class of Action and Requirements	Referencing the SMART NEPA Readiness Guidance https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-environmental-review-readiness-guidance, state the anticipated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) class of action for your Stage Two project as well as any anticipated environmental approvals and permits you have already acquired, or which will be needed for the proposed project. If you are unsure, please explain your expected coordination to determine this. The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 200 words or less.
28. What environmental risks or concerns (e.g. historical structures, environmental justice, local traffic / work zone impacts, floodplain encroachment) do you expect during project implementation? How are you	Refer to the SMART NEPA Readiness Guidance (https://www.transportation.gov/grants/smart/smart-environmental-review-readiness-guidance) to complete this answer.

planning to mitigate the risks / concerns?	The SMART Grants Program recommends that this section be 300 words or less.

iii. **Project Narrative:** The primary purpose of the Narrative is for the applicant to state their case for meeting the merit criteria laid out in Section E. The Narrative should not exceed ten pages; this does not include the required appendices. A cover page and table of contents are not required but would not count toward the ten- page narrative if included. Figures are considered part of the ten- page narrative.

The Narrative and Appendices I-III should be in PDF format, with a font size of no less than 12-point Times New Roman, single-spaced, minimum 1-inch margins on all sides, and page numbers. Appendix IV should be uploaded to the application in Valid Eval as a Shapefile, GEOJSON, or KML/KMZ file. Suggested approximate lengths for each subsection of the Narrative are noted in parentheses.

Note: Each Stage Two proposal will also be assessed on the quality and content of the associated Stage One Draft Implementation Report which is submitted separately from this NOFO. The Draft Implementation Report must be submitted to the SMART Grants Inbox (smart@dot.gov) by the designated deadline of one year from the execution of the SMART Grant Agreement of the Stage One project associated with each Stage Two proposal. In addition to information provided by the applicant in response to this NOFO, reviewers will take into consideration findings and lessons learned from Stage One, as described in the Draft Implementation Report, to determine feasibility and applicability of the technology solution proposed at-scale for Stage Two.

a. Overview/Project Description (suggested 2-3 pages)

This section should provide a clear, concise description of the project, the real-world issues and challenges to be addressed, and the proposed technology(ies) to be used. This should include a discussion of the activities and outcomes of Stage One, but focus on the anticipated outcomes for a potential Stage Two grant. Applicants should also briefly discuss how the proposed project addresses the goals of the SMART Grants Program and how the project plans to improve upon the status quo of the transportation system. This section should address the Technical Merit Criteria: Identification and Understanding of the Problem to Be Solved (see Section E).

b. Project Location (suggested 1-2 paragraphs)

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

(a); whether the project is located (entirely or partially) in a disadvantaged community[15] based on the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). Applicants are also encouraged to use the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer to understand how transportation disadvantage is affecting the project location(s).

[15] In support of Executive Order 14008, USDOT has been developing a geographic definition of Disadvantaged Communities as part of its implementation of the Justice40 Initiative. Consistent with OMB's Interim Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, Disadvantaged Communities include (a) certain qualifying Census tracts, (b) any Tribal land, or (c) any territory or possession of the United States.

If applicable, the narrative must identify the relevant census tract(s) that contribute to this designation, as stated in Key Information Question #16. If the proposed project is Statewide and will not have specific sites within a State, please note this instead of listing all of the State's disadvantaged Census tracts.
(b) the 2020 Census-designated urban area(s) where the project is located, if relevant. Please refer to 87 FR 80114 for a list of Census-designated urban areas.

Note that applicants are asked to provide precise locations for each project in the Key Information Questions Table. It is expected that by the time the applicant submits the Stage Two proposal precise location(s) for the demonstration will be known. However, if this is not the case, this section should explain and identify which geographic locations are under consideration for project to be implemented and what analysis will be used in a final determination.

c. Technical Merit Overview (suggested 2-3 pages)

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

- Appropriateness of Proposed Solution
- Expected Benefits

Applicants should describe the assessed benefits of the Stage One activities, and learnings from Stage One as to whether the planned or prototyped solution(s) proved appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to expand on lessons learned that are described in their Draft Implementation Reports.

d. Project Readiness Overview (suggested 3 pages)

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

- Feasibility of Workplan
    - Applicants should include reflection on learnings from the Stage One activities and how they inform the workplan for Stage Two, including awareness of relevant legal, policy, and regulatory requirements associated with the project activities; their Stage One timeline feasibility learnings; and the feasibility of completing the Stage Two activities within the anticipated timeline, including and potential impacts due to supply chain and purchasing delays. This section should also cover the applicant's plans for cybersecurity and protecting the privacy and physical safety of the public.
- Workforce Assessment
    - Applicants should describe how the project will create good-paying, safe jobs with free and fair choice to join a union including through the use of a project labor agreement, as applicable.
    - Applicants should describe how the project will promote investments in high-quality workforce development programs with supportive services to help train, place, and retain people in good-paying jobs or registered apprenticeships. These programs should have a focus on women, people of color, and others that are

underrepresented in infrastructure jobs (people with disabilities, people with convictions, etc.), as applicable.
    - Applicants should describe how the project will adopt local and economic hiring preferences for the project workforce or include other changes to hiring policies and workplace cultures to promote the entry and retention of underrepresented populations, as applicable.
    - Applicants should describe how the project will promote local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship, such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms, as applicable.
    - Applicants should discuss whether the proposed activities will affect the number and quality of jobs in the applicant agency or organization and impacted industries, and describe how the results of their consultation with directly impacted workers were incorporated into the proposed activities, as applicable.
- Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Leadership and Qualifications.
    - In the event that a Stage Two application is submitted by a designated lead applicant that is not the Stage One recipient, the Stage One recipient should remain involved in the Stage Two project. Stage Two project leadership should include at least 1 representative of the Stage One recipient organization.

iv. Appendices

a. Appendix I: Resumes – maximum 3 pages or less

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

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

Applicants shall provide a summary budget narrative that corresponds to and describes information contained in the applicant's SF-424A and/or SF-424C. The narrative should describe all planned project costs for Stage Two (e.g.., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, and other) and how these planned costs relate to the project scope. Note that the SF-424A and the budget narrative should include travel costs that assumes three in-person meetings in Washington, D.C. or Cambridge MA (one annually for the period of the grant).

The information needed in the budget narrative is as follows and directly corresponds with the format of the SF-424A or SF-424C. Applicants shall use the below categories as headings in their budget narrative but are encouraged to explain in detail how funds will be used in support of the project goals:

1. **Personnel** – Provide the cost breakdown of how this figure was calculated (e.g., hours/position/rate).
2. **Fringe Benefits** – Provide the fringe benefits rate.
3. **Travel** – Provide a cost breakdown of the number of trips, location, number of personnel, etc., if applicable. Please include travel costs which assume three in-person meetings in Washington, D.C. or Cambridge MA for up to four people.

4. **Equipment** – Provide a detailed estimate of tangible personal property costs as described in 2 CFR § 200.33. This should include items with a per-unit acquisition cost of $5,000 or more (including information technology systems). If your agency has a different threshold for equipment purchases, please provide information about your agency's equipment threshold policy.
5. **Supplies** – Please provide an estimate of tangible personal property costs that have a unit cost of less than $5,000.
6. **Contractual** – Provide the cost of any contractual support, if applicable.
7. **Construction** – Describe construction activities as listed on an SF-424C, if applicable.
8. **Other** – Provide a description of any costs listed as "other." This could include training or other expenses that the applicant wishes to include separately.
9. **Indirect Charges** – Provide the indirect cost calculations, including a description of the base (i.e., Personnel & Fringe or Modified Total Direct Cost).

The summary budget narrative must be sufficiently clear, concise, and detailed to describe how funds will be spent on the project. Applicants are expected to account for data and performance reporting in their budget submission, consistent with section B.5.i of this NOFO. Additionally, project budgets should show how different funding sources will share in each activity and present those data in dollars and percentages. The budget should identify other Federal funds the applicant is applying for or has been awarded, if any, that the applicant intends to use. Funding sources should be grouped into three categories: non-Federal, SMART Grants Program, and other Federal with specific amounts from each funding source. The Department may share application information within the Department or with other Federal agencies if the Department determines that sharing is relevant to the respective program's objectives.

c. Appendix III: Letter of Designation– no more than two pages per letter; no more than one letter per application

If a Stage One recipient determines a partner organization is better positioned to be the lead applicant for a Stage Two application, the Stage One recipient must provide a Letter of Designation as part of the Stage Two application. The Letter of Designation must identify the Stage One project and recipient that is designating the new lead applicant, should describe why the designated entity is the correct lead applicant for Stage Two, and how the Stage One recipient will remain involved in the Stage Two activities. No Stage Two applicant that is not either 1) a Stage One recipient OR 2) includes a Letter of Designation in their Stage Two application, will be considered eligible for a Stage Two SMART Grant.

All applicants must be eligible entities per section C1 of this NOFO. A template for Letters of Designation is available on the SMART Grants website at www.transportation.gov/gov/grants/smart/smart-grants-stage-2.

d. Appendix IV: Letters of Commitment – no more than two pages per letter; no more than 10 pages for the complete Appendix IV.

Applicants should submit letters of commitment for **critical partners involved in the project.** This appendix should be no more than 10 pages, and each letter should be no more than 2 pages. For the purposes of the SMART Grants Program, critical partners are organizations that will not

directly apply to the program as an eligible applicant but are committed to supporting a SMART Grants proposal in a meaningful way.

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

Letters of Support include letters from members of Congress. To reduce the burden for applicants, the Stage Two: Implementation Grants application does not request Letters of Support. However, a member of Congress may email a Letter of Support to **USDOT's Office of Government Affairs at OSTGovAffairs@dot.gov. The sender should copy smart@dot.gov on the email.** The letter should be addressed to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Please note that Letters of Support are not required by the SMART Grants Program.

e. Appendix V: Project Location File

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

The project location file is designed to help the SMART Grants Program review the location(s) of the proposed project as well as understand the disadvantaged community designations described in the Key Information Questions and Project Narrative. The project area(s) identified in the project location file should be as specific as is possible at the time of application submittal. The SMART Grants Program recognizes that not all projects will be able to identify exact project sites. The project location file should represent all geographic locations under consideration for the project.

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

1. Use GIS software, or open a publicly available online mapping tool, for example, Google Earth or GEOJSON. USDOT does not endorse any particular software or online mapping tool.
2. Identify the project location(s). Use the tools to add a polygon to represent the project area(s).
3. Export, save, and upload the attachment to the application on Valid Eval in one of the acceptable formats (zipped shapefile, GEOJSON, KML/KMZ).

Please refer to the job aid(s) on the SMART Grants Website for additional guidance on how to develop a project location file.

Additional appendices will not be reviewed.

v. Identifying Private Vendors

Applicants are welcome to identify private sector vendors in the application but are not required to select vendors in advance. The SMART Grants Program does not require any particular procurement process beyond compliance with the requirements of 2 CFR Part 200.

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

vi. Sharing of Application Information

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

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

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

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

4. Submission Date and Time

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET on Wednesday, August 14th, 2024.

5. Funding Restrictions

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

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

6. Other Submission Requirements

The complete application must be submitted via Valid Eval, an online submission proposal system used by USDOT at https://usg.valideval.com/teams/usdot_smart_stage_2/signup.

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

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

i. Technical Merit Selection Criteria

Stage Two Grants will be assessed against three technical merit criteria:

- **Technical Merit Criterion #1: Identification and Understanding of the Problem to Be Solved**
  - The applicant demonstrates a thorough understanding of existing conditions, which includes baseline data collected in Stage One to illustrate the need for an at-scale implementation. This could include the current or historic levels of performance for key goal areas (e.g. safety goals, mobility goals, etc).
  - The proposed solution addresses a documented and critical problem or need.
  - The applicant describes the Stage One activities and the preliminary evidence around how those activities affected the problem(s), making the case that expanding the project as described will continue to impact the problem(s) positively.
- **Technical Merit Criterion #2: Appropriateness of Proposed Solution**
  - Technologies proposed are sufficiently developed such that there is good reason to anticipate public benefits from their use, and that they can be repeated and scaled.
  - The applicant describes lessons learned from the Stage One activities that illustrate the appropriateness of the proposed solution (e.g. selecting a specific equipment model after testing several in local conditions).
  - The proposed solution represents a demonstrable improvement over the status quo, and evidence is provided from Stage One to support this claim.
  - The proposed solution is appropriate for the location's population density and existing transportation system, including public transportation.
- **Technical Merit Criterion #3: Expected Benefits**
  - The application clearly explains the rationale for expecting that the proposed project will use advanced data, technology, and applications to provide significant benefits in alignment with Departmental Priorities and Program Priorities in Section A.3 and A.4.
  - The rationale is accompanied by preliminary findings from the assessment of the Stage One activities and material presented in the Draft Implementation Report, as applicable.
  - The application identifies several robust performance metrics that align with the project's expected benefits and community impacts (as well as performance improvements and cost savings) and could be used to assess whether full scale implementation of the project would advance Departmental and Program Priorities.
    - The application includes reflection on the performance metrics proposed and used for Stage One assessment, including whether they are

appropriate for monitoring and evaluating the Stage Two activities, or if other metrics are identified as more appropriate.

ii. Project Readiness Selection Criteria

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 Stage Two Grant application within 36 months of when the grant is executed.

- **Project Readiness Criterion #1: Feasibility of Workplan**
  - The application clearly describes a thorough and realistic workplan and timeline. The application should also demonstrate the ability to complete the project in the proposed period of performance, and includes learnings from the Stage One activities that may inform or impact the feasibility of the Stage Two timeline.
  - The application identifies and understands the legal, policy, and regulatory requirements and identifies and accounts for any relevant exemptions, waivers, permits, or special permissions required to conduct the proposed project. The applicant provides a clear plan to acquire any necessary exemptions, waivers, permits, or special permissions if they have not already been acquired in the course of the Stage One activities, and presents a realistic approach to overcoming any such challenges as identified in the Draft Implementation Plan, part 5.
  - The application adequately accounts for relevant cybersecurity and privacy concerns, particularly as pertains to personal privacy and data of members of the public.
- **Project Readiness Criterion #2: Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation:**
  - The application describes how the project will create good-paying, safe jobs with free and fair choice to join a union including through the use of a project labor agreement;
  - The application describes how the project will promote investments in high-quality workforce development programs with supportive services to help train, place, and retain people in good-paying jobs or registered apprenticeships. These programs should have a focus on women, people of color, and others that are underrepresented in infrastructure jobs (people with disabilities, people with convictions, etc.)
  - The application describes how the project will adopt local and economic hiring preferences for the project workforce or include other changes to hiring policies and workplace cultures to promote the entry and retention of underrepresented populations; and
  - The application describes how the project will promote local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship, such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms.
- **Project Readiness Criterion #3: Community Engagement and Partnerships**
  - The application provides a description of how the project will provide and measure benefits to the communities detailed in the Project Location Section (if applicable), with special attention to the communities designated as

disadvantaged. The application cites examples, learnings, and data from Stage One activities. The application also discusses potential negative externalities of the proposed projects, who would experience them, and how they might be measured over time.
    - The application demonstrates a community-centered approach that includes meaningful, continuous, accessible engagement with a diverse group of public and private stakeholders. The application articulates strategies to provide access to persons with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals. The applicants will conduct meaningful public involvement, inclusive of underserved communities throughout the project lifecycle[16].
    - The application shows plans to build sustainable partnerships across sectors and governmental jurisdictions and collaborate with industry, academia, and nonprofits, such as community, workforce development, and labor organizations.
    - The applicant engages relevant private sector stakeholders and technical experts and elicits their perspective on the implementation of the proposed solution.
    - The application establishes commitment partner(s), if relevant, as identified in the project narrative. This should be demonstrated by a Letter of Commitment submitted as an attachment to the proposal. A key partner may be a public agency, utility company, private sector company, or some other entity that is central, and critical to the project.
- **Project Readiness Criterion #4: Leadership and Qualifications**
    - The application demonstrates relevant and necessary technical expertise of the project team.
    - The application details relevant experience of leadership in managing multi-stakeholder projects.
    - The application shows continuity of committed leadership and the applicant's functional capacity to carry out the proposed project and, where applicable, to maintain and operate the project after the conclusion of Stage Two.
    - If the lead applicant is not a Stage One recipient, the application establishes clear reasoning and line of succession for the designation of the Stage Two Applicant organization through the Letter of Designation as described in Section D. If lead applicant is the Stage One recipient, this criterion does not apply.

iii. Selection Considerations

Among projects of similar merit, DOT will prioritize projects that have strong benefits in the following areas:

(a) **Safety:** Applicants will be rated higher on this consideration if they can clearly demonstrate that the project:
- provides substantial safety benefits (to commuters, workers, etc.) compared to existing conditions;
- mitigate to the extent practicable any significant safety risks that could result after the project's completion;
- does not negatively impact the safety of the traveling public, and any relevant group applicable to the program.

[16] Applicants should refer to the Department of Transportation's Meaningful Public Involvement Guide: https://www.transportation.gov/public-involvement

(b) Equity and Justice40: Applicants will be rated higher on this consideration if they can clearly demonstrate that the project will:

- Create positive outcomes that will reduce, mitigate, or reverse how a community is experiencing disadvantage through increasing affordable transportation options, improving health or safety, reducing pollution, connecting Americans to good-paying jobs, fighting climate change, and/or improving access to nature, resources, transportation or mobility, and quality of life. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer to understand how their project area is experiencing disadvantage in any of five areas that transportation projects with a direct relationship.
- Identify and implement programs and policies that ensure the benefits of investments while mitigating economic displacement economically susceptible residents and businesses. Some examples include the preservation and/or production of affordable housing; expanding affordable, safe transportation and mobility options to areas where good jobs are concentrated; and supporting entrepreneurship, small business growth, tourism and access to capital through local hiring.
- Engage the public, including disadvantaged communities, during all phases of the project, including planning, design, construction, and implementation. Three Major Components of DOT's Justice40 Initiative | US Department of Transportation

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

(c) **Climate Change and Sustainability:** The applications that rate highest on this consideration will be those for which reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving climate resilience are a primary project purpose. Applicants are encouraged to use the **DOT Navigator Climate checklist** in developing their proposals Applications that are rated highly on this consideration will be those that use data-driven and evidence-based methods to demonstrate that the project will:

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

More details on each aspect of the consideration are provided below.

"Significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector":

Projects that typically reduce GHG emissions include:

- community design and land-use planning that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips;
- increasing the use of energy efficient modes of transportation like public transportation, rail, and active transportation, including walking, biking, and rolling;
- signal timing, traffic management, freight logistics, and other operational improvements the improve efficiency;
- transitioning to clean vehicles and fuels, including electrification;
- using project materials and construction methods that have lower embodied GHG emissions (especially if emissions benefits are documented in Environmental Product Declarations); and
- incorporating carbon-reducing uses of the rights-of-way, such as solar arrays, transmission of electricity from renewables, or vegetation management.

Projects that typically increase GHG emissions, such as roadway expansion, will not score highly on the GHG reduction aspect of this consideration, though they may rate highly on other aspects.

Applicants will rate more highly on this consideration if they can demonstrate that:

- they are making progress towards transportation GHG reduction targets;
- the project would significantly reduce transportation GHG emissions, as shown through analysis with USDOT tools or similar;
- the project is part of a State Carbon Reduction Strategy, State Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plan, or other State, local, or tribal GHG reduction plan;
- the project aligns with the U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization; and
- the applicant has a plan to monitor the impact of the project on GHG emissions.

"Incorporate evidence-based climate resilience and adaptation measures or features:"

Applicants will rate more highly on this consideration if they can demonstrate that the project:

- uses best-available climate data sets, information resources, and decision-support tools (including USDOT and other federal resources) to assess the climate-related vulnerability and risk of the project;
- develops and deploys solutions that reduce climate change risks;
- Advances objectives in the National Climate Resilience Framework.
- incorporates nature-based solutions / natural infrastructure, including use of native plants, and, as applicable, avoids fragmenting lands with high conservation value, avoids barriers to fish and wildlife migration, and incorporate mitigation measures to address unavoidable impacts;
- 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;
- follows the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, consistent with current law; and
- includes plans to monitor performance of climate resilience and adaptation measures.

2. Review and Selection Process

This section addresses the BIL requirement to include a full description in the NOFO of the method by which applicants will be assessed. The SMART grant program review and selection process consists of intake, draft implementation report review, merit criteria review, optional oral presentations, senior review, and selection and award. The Secretary, or their designee, makes the final selections.

i. Eligibility Review

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

ii. Draft Implementation Reports

When a Stage One recipient applies for a Stage Two award, the Draft Implementation Report that is required as part of Stage One reporting, along with the Subject Matter Expert (SME) assessment of the Draft Implementation Report, will be provided to the assessment team for inclusion in the Stage Two assessment.

SMART Draft Implementation Reports are due between July 15, 2024 – September 15, 2024, depending on when Stage One recipients began their period of performance. All recipients have twelve months to submit their Draft Implementation Reports. If the twelve month deadline for the Draft Implementation Report occurs after the deadline for applications to this NOFO, the Draft Implementation Report will be assessed and forwarded to the assessment team once it is received on its twelve month due date.

Draft Implementation Reports must be received by the SMART Program Office by their due date in order to be assessed and included in the 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. **The Draft Implementation Report is not required to be submitted through Valid Eval as part of the Stage Two application package, but to the SMART inbox at smartreports@dot.gov no later than one year after execution of the Stage One grant. SMART program staff will confirm receipt and include the assessment of the Draft Implementation Report by the SMEs in the materials provided to Stage Two reviewers.**

Any applicant that is not required to submit a Draft Implementation Report between July-September 2024, as their period of performance began after October 1, 2023, will not be eligible to respond to this Notice of Funding Opportunity.

iii. Technical Merit and Project Readiness Criteria Ratings

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

Rating Scale	**Superior**	**Satisfactory**	**Marginal**	**Unsatisfactory**
Description	The application is substantively and comprehensively responsive to the criterion. It makes a strong case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is moderately responsive to the criterion. It makes a moderate case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is minimally responsive to the criterion. It makes a weak case about advancing the program goals as described in the criterion descriptions.	The application is counter to the criterion or does not contain sufficient information. It does not advance or may negatively impact criterion goals.

After the individual assessments are completed, the assessment team will come to an overall consensus rating of 'Highly Recommended,' 'Recommended,' 'Not Recommended,' or 'Ineligible' for each application. The overall consensus rating will be assigned based on the individual criteria ratings, and will include consideration of the SME assessment of the Draft Implementation Report,

Subject to application volume and assessment team capacity constraints, the assessment team may request oral presentations. In the event that there is sufficient capacity to request oral presentations, all applicants rated 'highly recommended' and 'recommended' will be invited to present. If there is not sufficient capacity and/or the volume of applicants is too high, no oral presentations will be given, and the assessment team will proceed to Senior Review Team List Preparation with the rankings determined in the consensus meetings.

Applications determined to be 'not recommended' will receive no further consideration for award.

a. Oral Presentations

If oral presentations are requested by the assessment team, a virtual call will be scheduled for a brief presentation by each applicant and Q&A by the reviewers. Applicants will be provided with additional guidance in preparing their presentations. Assessment teams will attend and assess the

oral presentations of the applicants for which they reviewed written proposals. Oral presentations will be organized and facilitated by DOT SMART Program staff.

After each oral presentation, reviewers will review their final ratings and each application will be assigned an overall recommendation of "Highly Recommended," "Recommended," or "Not Recommended."

iv. Senior Review Team (SRT) Phase

Once every eligible and complete application has been assigned an overall rating based on the methodology above, all "Highly Recommended" and selected "Recommended" applications will be included in a list of Applications for Consideration. The SRT will review whether the list of "Highly Recommended" applications is sufficient to ensure that of the funds awarded each fiscal year for the SMART Grants Program, not more than forty percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit large communities; not more than thirty percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit midsized communities; and not more than thirty percent will be used to provide SMART grants for eligible projects that primarily benefit rural communities or regional partnerships. "Recommended" applications may be added to the proposed list of Applications for Consideration until a sufficient number of applications are on the list to ensure that all legislative requirements as well as program objectives can be met. Among projects of similar merit, DOT will prioritize projects that have strong benefits in the Selection Consideration areas. To ensure the funding awards align, to the extent practical, to the departmental goals of equitable, safe investments that also lower greenhouse gas emissions, the SRT may review "Recommended" applications and prioritize applications that spend funds, and provide safety benefits to, locations within disadvantaged communities. The Department will also consider the diversity of technology areas across all applications when reviewing recommendations.

iv. Applications for USDOT Secretary's Review

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

3. Additional Information

Prior to entering into a grant agreement, each selected applicant will be subject to a risk assessment as required by 2 CFR § 200.206. The Department must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System [FAPIIS]). An applicant may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Department will

consider comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants. Because award recipients under this program may be first-time recipients of Federal funding, USDOT is committed to implementing the program as flexibly as permitted by statute and to providing assistance to help award recipients through the process of securing a grant agreement and delivering SMART Grant projects. Award recipients are encouraged to identify any needs for assistance in delivering the projects and strategies so that USDOT can provide directly, or through a third party, sufficient support and technical assistance to mitigate potential execution risks.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

1. Federal Award Notices

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

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

i. Critical Infrastructure Security, Cybersecurity, and Resilience

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

ii. Prohibited Telecommunications Equipment and Services

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

iii. Domestic Preference Requirements

As expressed in Executive Order 14005, Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers (86 FR 7475)[23], the Executive Branch should maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States. SMART Grants projects that are considered "projects for infrastructure" will be subject to

the domestic preference requirements at § 70914(a) of the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, div. G, tit. IX, subtit. A, 135 Stat. 429, 1294 (2021) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-22-11, "Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure."[24] Projects that are not considered "projects for infrastructure" will be subject to requirements of the Buy American Act, Pub. L. No. 72–428, as codified at 41 U.S.C. §§ 8301–8303. Note that when using SMART Grants funds, Buy America (49 U.S.C. 5323(j) (formerly sec. 165 of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-424)) provisions do not apply. After funding decisions are made by the Department, the SMART Grants Program Office will coordinate with grant recipients on whether their projects are designated as "projects for infrastructure."

For additional information, please see the SMART Grant Recipient Domestic Preference Requirements Guidance. The Department expects all applicants to comply with these requirements.

iv. Civil Rights and Title VI

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

v. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)

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

vi. Federal Contract Compliance

As a condition of grant award and consistent with EO 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity (30 FR 12319, and as amended), all Federally assisted contractors are required to make good faith efforts to meet the goals of 6.9 percent of construction project hours being performed by women, in addition to goals that vary based on geography for construction work hours and for work being performed by people of color. Under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations, affirmative action obligations for certain contractors include an aspirational employment goal of 7 percent workers with disabilities.

3. Reporting

This section discusses reporting requirements for SMART[17]. USDOT will provide additional information and detail regarding reporting requirements and formats to recipients. All final reports under this agreement will be made publicly available. All publications resulting from this program shall follow USDOT publication guidelines and comply with the current USDOT Public Access Plan. In addition, data from these efforts are expected to be made widely available where appropriate, also in accordance with the USDOT Public Access Plan[18].

i. Progress Reporting on Grant Activities

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

ii. Assessment and Data Management Plans

To meaningfully document and measure their progress towards agency priority goals, recipients and subrecipients are required to incorporate program assessment from the outset of program design. This should include associated data collection activities[19]. Each applicant selected for a Stage Two Grant must submit an assessment plan and data management plan no later than three months after receiving the grant that provides an overview of how the project will be assessed, and how the data being collected will be managed and stored[20].

The assessment plan must describe the anticipated impact areas (i.e., goals) of the project as it is implemented at scale and the methods that will be used to estimate the anticipated benefits and costs associated with implementation. Based on these project goals, the plan must include robust performance metrics and measurable targets based on the project goals to provide continuous assessment of the deployment. These assessment plans should build on the assessment plans developed for Stage One.

Data management plans must describe the data to be collected, format and metadata standards to be employed, policies for access, (re)use and derivatives, and plan for archiving and preservation of the data generated by the project, and an overview of data sharing opportunities[21]. This plan should build off the data management plans developed for Stage One. The updated plans must also provide more detailed information on the types of data being collected and how that data will be managed and stored (e.g., cybersecurity practices, how privacy is protected, entities that have access to the data).

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

[18] https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/Official%20DOT%20Public%20Access%20Plan.pdf

[19] Assessment means "an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency." 5 U.S.C. § 311.

[20] Credible program assessment activities are implemented with relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency, and ethics (OMB Circular A-11, Part 6 Section 290).

[21] Data sharing opportunities may include either interagency data sharing or open data sharing with the public.

iii. Implementation Report

Each applicant selected for a Stage Two Grant must submit an annual implementation report that assesses the anticipated costs and benefits of the project and demonstrates the feasibility of at-scale implementation. The first report must be submitted 12 months after the Stage Two grant begins and then annually thereafter. Per BIL requirements, grant recipients must submit implementation reports that describe the deployment and operational costs of each project as compared to the benefits and savings from the project. The reports must also describe:

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

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

1. Data on the performance metrics for the deployment, so progress can be regularly assessed ;
2. Baseline data for assessment of the deployment, which may have been generated during Stage One activities or be updated since Stage One;
3. Anticipated and/or estimated impact and effectiveness of the project based on the performance metrics;
4. Identification of challenges, opportunities, or best practices learned as the project progresses that related to the replicability of the project to other regions, including identifying additional partners or areas where the recipient would consider supporting further replication.

During Stage Two, grant recipients may uncover previously unknown institutional barriers or technical limitations. In the implementation reports, recipients will describe the requirements for successful deployment and assess impact on the at-scale implementation. The assessment will include identified strategies or demonstrated progress in addressing the following implementation feasibility and readiness factors for consideration by others seeking to replicate the project elsewhere:

a. Legal, Policy, and Regulatory Requirements (e.g., environmental permits and reviews; public outreach; State and local approvals; equity and accessibility requirements)
b. Procurement and Budget (e.g., availability of suppliers and equipment; an analysis of the cost differential to comply with Build America Buy America and/or Buy American Act; reliability of cost estimates; critical property acquisition)
c. Partnerships (e.g., MOUs for stakeholder coordination; private sector and user adoption and acceptance)

d. Technology Suitability (e.g., systems engineering including Concept of Operations [ConOps] and Detailed Design; reliability and maturity of technology; compatibility with existing infrastructure, procurement processes)
e. Data Governance (e.g., storage capability; database analytic capability; integration requirements; sharing agreements; cybersecurity and privacy protocols)
f. Workforce Capacity (e.g., availability of workers for development, installation, operations and maintenance; availability of workforce training; agency capacity for deployment, operation, and assessment); and an assessment of how full implementation at the conclusion of Stage Two will harness beneficial impacts and mitigate negative impacts of new technologies on the availability of good-paying jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union)
g. Internal Project Coordination (e.g., agency/institutional capacity for continued operations following the grant funded period; revenue needs for continued operations)
h. Community Impact (e.g., distribution of benefits and negative impacts across the community, including disadvantaged communities; meaningful community engagement efforts, including strategies to provide access to persons with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals)
i. Other Relevant Factors.

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

iv. Performance and Program Assessment

As a condition of grant award, grant recipients may be required to participate in an assessment undertaken by USDOT or another agency or partner. The assessment may take different forms such as an implementation assessment across grant recipients, an impact and/or outcomes analysis of all or selected sites within or across grant recipients, or a benefit/cost analysis or assessment of return on investment. USDOT may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the assessment and/or use information available through other reporting. As a part of the assessment, as a condition of award, grant recipients must agree to: (1) make records available to the assessment contractor or USDOT staff; (2) provide access to program records, and any other relevant documents to calculate costs and benefits; (3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the access to relevant information as requested; and (4) follow assessment procedures as specified by the assessment contractor or USDOT staff.

Recipients and subrecipients are also encouraged to incorporate program assessment including associated data collection activities from the outset of their program design and implementation to meaningfully document and measure their progress towards meeting an agency priority goal(s). Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), Pub. L. No. 115-435 (2019) urges Federal awarding agencies and Federal assistance recipients and subrecipients to use program assessment as a critical tool to learn, to improve equitable delivery, and to elevate program service and delivery across the program lifecycle. Assessment means “an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more

programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency" per 5 U.S.C. § 311. Credible program assessment activities are implemented with relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency, and ethics (OMB Circular A-11, Part 6 Section 290).

v. Reporting of Matters Related to Recipient Integrity and Performance

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

4. Other Activities and Acknowledgements

vi. Knowledge Transfer Activities

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

vii. Project Signage and Public Acknowledgements

Recipients are encouraged for construction and non-construction projects to post project signage and to include public acknowledgments in published and other collateral materials (e.g., press releases, marketing materials, website, etc.) satisfactory in form and substance to DOT, that identifies the nature of the project and indicates that "the project is funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law". In addition, recipients employing project signage are required to use the official Investing in America emblem in accordance with the Official Investing in America Emblem Style Guide. Costs associated with signage and public acknowledgments must be reasonable and limited. Signs or public acknowledgments should not be produced, displayed, or published if doing so results in unreasonable cost, expense, or recipient burden. The Recipient is encouraged to use recycled or recovered materials when procuring signs.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For further information concerning this notice, please contact the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology via email at smart@dot.gov no later than 05:00PM ET on Monday, July 29, 2024. In addition, up to the application deadline, the Department may post answers to common questions and requests for clarifications on the Department's website at www.transportation.gov/smart. To ensure applicants receive accurate information about eligibility or the program, the applicant is encouraged to contact the Department directly with questions, rather than through intermediaries or third parties. Department staff may also conduct briefings on the SMART grant selection and award process upon request. On request of an eligible applicant that submitted an application per Section D with respect to a project that is not selected for a SMART grant, Department staff will provide to the eligible applicant technical assistance and briefings relating to the project application.

H. Other Information

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

1. Definitions

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

2. Protection of Confidential Business Information

All information submitted as part of or in support of any application shall use publicly available data or data that can be made public and methodologies that are accepted by industry practice and standards, to the extent possible. If the applicant submits information that the applicant considers to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, the applicant must provide that information in a separate document, which the applicant may cross-reference from the application narrative or other portions of the application. For the separate document containing confidential information, the applicant must do the following: (1) state on the cover of that document that it "Contains Confidential Business Information (CBI);" (2) mark each page that contains confidential information with "CBI;" (3) highlight or otherwise denote the confidential content on each page; and (4) at the end of the document, explain how disclosure of

the confidential information would cause substantial competitive harm. DOT will protect confidential information complying with these requirements to the extent required under 51 applicable law. If DOT receives a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the information that the applicant has marked in accordance with this section, DOT will follow the procedures described in its FOIA regulations at 49 CFR § 7.29. Only information that is in the separate document, marked in accordance with this section, and ultimately determined to be confidential under § 7.29 will be exempt from disclosure under FOIA.