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Notice of Funding Opportunity Number 693JJ321NF00009

"National Center for Excellence for Rural Road Safety"

July 23, 2021

Time: 11 AM – 12:30 PM ET

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

“National Center for Excellence for Rural Road Safety”

Presenters

Ryan Buck, Office of Acquisitions and Grants Management, FHWA

Hillary Isebrands, Resource Center, Safety & Design Team, FHWA

"NATIONAL CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE FOR RURAL ROAD SAFETY" *(RURAL SAFETY CENTER)*

Hillary Isebrands,
Resource Center, Safety & Design Team,
FHWA

Agenda

- Rural Road Safety Center Overview
- Application Process
- Questions

Legislative Authority

- In 2012, Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) that required the Secretary “to make grants to establish and maintain centers for transportation excellence.”
- [Section. 52004(7) amended Section 504(h) of title 23, United States Code (U.S.C.)]. Passage of section 6002 of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST) Act continued without change program eligibilities under FHWA’s Training and Education programs, including the Centers for Surface Transportation Excellence.
- The Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (Pub. L. 116-159) extended Federal surface transportation programs through September 30, 2021.

Legislative Authority

- The goals of the Centers for Transportation Excellence established under MAP-21 and continued under the FAST Act are to promote and support strategic national surface transportation programs and activities relating to the work of State departments of transportation in the areas of environment, surface transportation safety, rural safety, and project finance.

Program Funding

- Subsection (c) of section 6002 of the FAST Act requires that a 20 percent cost share be applied to all funds authorized to be appropriated by subsection (a), to include the ***Rural Safety Center***. Therefore, a recipient of a cooperative agreement under this program would have to provide support for at least 20 percent of the Rural Safety Center's activity cost.
- Subsection (c) of section 6002 of the FAST Act reads as follows:
  - (c) Applicability of Title 23, U.S.C. - Funds authorized to be appropriated by subsection (a) shall—

    (1) be available for obligation in the same manner as if those funds were apportioned under chapter 1 of title 23, U.S.C., except that the Federal share of the cost of a project or activity carried out using those funds shall be 80 percent, unless otherwise expressly provided by this Act (including the amendments by this Act) or otherwise determined by the Secretary; and

    (2) remain available until expended and not be transferable, except as otherwise provided in this Act.

Current Award for Rural Safety Center

- In 2014, a cooperative agreement was awarded to Montana State University, Western Transportation Institute and has been operating as the Rural Safety Center.

Summary Information

- This is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity. This is not a follow-on notice.
- Up to $4,900,000.00 (across 5 years) in Federal funding to award a single cooperative agreement to an eligible entity to transition, operate, and maintain the National Center for Excellence for Rural Road Safety (Rural Safety Center).

Rural Safety Center Objective

The primary mission of the Rural Safety Center is to facilitate training and educational exchange, as well as provide technology transfer and deployment to practitioners to improve the overall understanding of roadway safety data and analysis, safety effectiveness evaluations, and investment decision-making in the areas of rural safety and surface transportation safety.

Program Vision and Focus Areas

- The focus of the Rural Safety Center is providing technical assistance, information sharing, and training on rural road safety for State, local, and Tribal road owners, and their stakeholders.
- A secondary and much smaller portion of the Rural Safety Center's mission will be to conduct research supporting rural safety and surface transportation safety.
- The Rural Safety Center should produce products and create opportunities for State, local, and Tribal transportation agencies to make better, more informed decisions about safety as it relates to the roads that they own and operate.

Program Vision and Focus Areas

The Rural Safety Center's strategic plan of activities and initiatives shall include how the Rural Safety Center will:

1. Coordinate with the FHWA safety units (Headquarters and Office of Technical Services, Resource Center) to identify what training objectives are most critical for target audiences, and design outreach activities and materials with an emphasis on improving the overall understanding of safety data, analysis, evaluations, and investment decision-making;
2. Provide training and education to support transportation professionals in the advancement of evidence-based decision-making;
3. Expand the availability, access to, and understanding of tools and information required to make data-driven safety decisions;
4. Include a significant focus on rural road safety to address the unique challenges of applying evidence-based decision-making for rural roads;

Program Vision and Focus Areas

(Cont.) The Rural Safety Center's strategic plan of activities and initiatives shall include how the Rural Safety Center will:

5. Provide for a focused and disciplined approach to address the specific safety data and information needs of State, local, and Tribal road owners. For example, access to data, better data, and balance of desired data vs. available data;
6. Provide innovative methods of delivery for training, education, technology deployment, and communication to rural safety partners;
7. Identify and engage State, local, and Tribal partners who have successful educational efforts for roadway and rural road safety to more broadly disseminate advanced transportation safety techniques and innovations in both rural safety areas and urban communities; and
8. Develop and implement a marketing and communication plan for the Rural Safety Center's transportation safety products and services.

Key Departmental Objectives

Although proposals are not limited to DOT priorities, the Department is interested in these areas:

- R.O.U.T.E.S. - https://www.transportation.gov/rural
- Complete Trip - https://www.its.dot.gov/its4us/index.htm
- Ensuring safety;
- Fostering economic strength and good-paying American Jobs;
- Creating equitable access to opportunity;
- Tackling the climate crisis;
- Making our infrastructure more resilient; and
- Modernizing our nation's infrastructure.

Statement of Work - Tasks

Task 1. Administration and Reporting

Task 2. Transition, Operate, Host and Maintain Rural Safety Center and Strategic Plan Development

Task 3. Update Synthesis of Existing Rural Safety and Surface Transportation Safety Projects

Task 4. Collaboration and Stakeholders

Statement of Work - Tasks

Task 5. Annual Project and Product Plans

Task 6. Training and Education

Task 7. Technology Transfer and Deployment

Task 8. Research Projects

Task 9. Develop and Implement a Marketing and Communication Plan

Funding

- FHWA intends to award one cooperative agreement as a result of this opportunity.
- The planned award type is a cost-reimbursable cooperative agreement.
- The period of performance will consist of one 24-month Base period, with up to three (3) 12-month Option periods. The total potential period of performance, if all option periods are exercised, is 60 months (5 years).
- The FHWA anticipates Federal funding up to a total amount of $4,900,000.00 from the Training and Education and Technology and Innovation Deployment Programs may be made available for this opportunity, subject to the availability of funding
- Currently available funding for the Base Period is currently $1,444,154.00.

Funding

	Estimated Federal Funding Availability
Base Period – Years 1 & 2 (24 months)	$ 1,876,966.42
Option Period 1 – Year 3 (12 months)	$ 980,545.42
Option Period 2 – Year 4 (12 months)	$ 1,007,409.21
Option Period 3 – Year 5 (12 months)	$ 1,035,078.95
	$ 4,900,000.00

- **NOTE:** This table only reflects FHWA's anticipated schedule for the availability of Federal funding for the duration of this requirement and is not necessarily reflective of the actual funding amounts to be obligated. Obligation of Federal funding will be based on approved budget amounts and availability of funds. Non-Federal funding amounts are not reflected in the above table.

Degree of Federal Involvement

- The FHWA will provide general direction and guidance to the Rural Safety Center to ensure all of the undertakings of the Rural Safety Center align with its Mission, the greatest needs, and gaps in the area of rural safety and surface transportation safety as well as reduce any overlap with ongoing and future FHWA and other Stakeholder efforts. Work cannot be initiated without FHWA's approval / concurrence. The FHWA anticipates substantial involvement between FHWA and the Recipient during the course of this project. FHWA anticipates the Federal involvement will include at a minimum:
  - Technical assistance and guidance to Rural Safety Center staff;
  - Collaboration with the Stakeholder Group;
  - Close monitoring of performance;
  - Involvement in technical decisions; and
  - Participation in status meetings, including the kick off meeting, and annual technical and budget reviews.

Questions?

APPLICATION PROCESS

Ryan Buck, Office of Acquisition and Grants Management

Application Process (1 of 2)

- Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov at www.grants.gov. To submit, applicants must:
  - Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number:
  - Register with the System for Award (SAM) at www.sam.gov.
  - Create a Grants.gov username and password, and
  - E-business point-of-contact (POC) at the applicant's organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login to authorize the POC as an Authorized Organization Representative.
- Applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov by submission deadline of August 18, 2021 11:59 PM ET.
- Note: The Grants.gov registration process usually takes 2-4 weeks to complete. Late applications that are the result of failure to register or comply with Grants.gov applicant requirements will not be considered.

Application Process (2 of 2)

- Applicants may obtain application forms at Grants.gov under the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) number.
- Applicant must complete and submit all forms included in the application package for this NOFO as contained at www.grants.gov.

Rural Safety Center Application

Table D.2 – Application Volumes

Volume	Section	Page Limitations
Volume I. Technical Application	Cover Page	One (1) file, 30-page limit
	I – Technical and Management Approach	
	II –Staffing Approach (resumes are not included in the page limit)	
	III – Experience	
Volume II. Budget Application	I - Application Standard Forms	One (1) file, no page limit
	II – Summary Budget Plan	
	III – Cost Share Information	
	IV - Organizational Information	

Note: Applicants shall provide résumés in Volume 1 of the application. Resumes will not count against the page limit; however, each resume must not exceed 2 pages. Applicants shall provide letters of commitment in Volume 2.

Volume I – Technical Application

Volume	Section	Page Limitations
Volume I. Technical Application	Cover Page	One (1) file, 30-page limit
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	III – Experience	

Part I - Technical & Management Approach

1.a. Understanding Problem and Need for the Center

1.b. Center's Core Tasks

- 1.b.1 Training and Education
- 1.b.2 Technology Transfer and Deployment
- 1.b.3 Leadership
- 1.c. Research
- 1.d. Collaboration
- 1.e. Marketing and Communication
- 1.f. Risk

Part II - Staffing Approach

2a. Rural Safety Center Director and Key Staff

2b. Organizational Chart

2c. Risk

Part III - Experience

A summary of the Applicant's experience relevant to this opportunity, listing projects of similar size and complexity over the past 5 years, and show which of the named key staff, were involved in those projects.

Rural Safety Center Application: Volume 2 – Budget Application

Volume II. Budget Application	I - Application Standard Forms	One (1) file, no page limit
	II – Summary Budget Plan	
	III – Cost Share Information	
	IV - Organizational Information	

Section I - Application Standard Forms (SF)

- Volume 2 of the application must include the SF 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), SF 424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs), and the Grants.gov Lobbying Form. The SF 424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs) is required if the applicant does not have an updated SAM.gov Registration as of February 1, 2019.
- The standard forms (SFs) are available online at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html.

Section I - Application Standard Forms (SF)

- On the SF-424, the information in block 8a (Applicant's "Legal Name") must be the same as entered for registration in www.SAM.gov and for the Applicant's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. The title for an applicant's workspace on www.Grants.gov is limited to 240 characters and may be different than the DUNS name.

Section I - Application Standard Forms (SF)

For applications under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the breakdown of the applicable sections of SF 424A is:

- **Section A:** Since this is an initial application, only columns (a) through (d) and (g) need to be completed. The applicant should enter the proposed project as one program or function; however, as an option, the applicant may subdivide this entry into partial programs (e.g., a Phase I and Phase II).
- **Section B** is a summary of the entire project budget across all years.
- **Section C** is the source of the non-Federal matching share.
- **Section D** is the forecasted funding needs for year one (1).
- **Section E** is the forecasted funding needs for years two (2) and after (i.e., does not include the first year's funding in Section D).

Section II - Summary Budget Plan

- The summary budget plan will consist of the following:
- Detailed excel (or compatible) workbook containing spreadsheets/tabs (formatted to be printed out) and supporting information clearly delineating and supporting all estimated costs: with columns for Federal Share, Cost Share and Total Costs (per year and in summary form) as follows:
  - Provide labor categories, labor hours (or percentage of time), labor rates.
  - Provide a description of whether proposed rates are actuals, based on those currently paid within the applicant's organization. If the rates are estimates, provide a description of how the rate was developed.
  - Provide indirect rates and bases; include any audit information to support rates.

Section II - Summary Budget Plan (Cont.)

- Provide supporting information to justify estimates for Other Direct Costs such as equipment, travel, etc.
- Provide detail and support for Cost Share as part of overall project budget.
- Clearly delineate cost share match versus Federal share.

- Provide a separate detailed budget plan for each year, and then summarized for all years per item 1 below. Spreadsheets can be formatted similarly to the format in DOT Form 4220.44 located at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/aaa/pdfs/frm4220_44.pdf

  - ***Note***: All expenditures made under the resultant award must adhere to all applicable federal requirements, to include those described under 2 CFR 200.

Cost Share Information

- The Applicant should show evidence that funding has been identified for the project that will cover the 20 percent non-Federal cost share requirement.
- The Applicant should include letters of commitment from organizations that will provide a portion of the Cost Share, and identify the source of those funds (e.g., general treasury funds, revolving loan fund, capital budget, in-kind labor, in-kind equipment, etc.).

Section IV - Organizational Information

Provide the following information in pdf format:

- Exceptions to the anticipated award terms and conditions.
- Data Universal Numbering Systems (DUNS) number.
- A-133 Single Audit.
- Conflicts of Interest.
- Audit of Applicant's financial systems.
- Terminated Contracts.
- Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation.
- Violations of Federal Criminal Law.

Questions?

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Hillary Isebrands,
Resource Center, Safety & Design Team,
FHWA

Application Review - Technical Merit Criteria

The FHWA will evaluate technical applications based on the following criteria of demonstrated capabilities of the prospective recipient in relation to the needs of the Statement of Work set forth in A.5, as well as the DOT vision, goals, focus areas, and objectives, as listed in Section A.4 of this opportunity. Each application must document the feasibility of its plan to successfully achieve the objectives of the Statement of Work.

- Transition, Operate, Host and Maintain Center
- Experience
- Staffing

Application Review - Cost & Cost Share

- In addition to the technical merit criteria listed above, relative cost will be considered in the ultimate award decision. The budget application will be analyzed to assess cost and cost share reasonableness and conformance to applicable cost principles and cost share requirements.

Review and Selection Process

- The Government will accept the application(s) that is (are) considered the most advantageous to the Government taking into account the best use of available funds to meet the objectives of the program legislation.
- The two evaluation factors are in descending order of importance:
  - Technical Merit,
  - Cost and Cost Share.
- Technical Merit is more important in the resultant selection decision than Cost and Cost Share.

Review and Selection Process

- The DOT will establish a panel of technical and professional staff with relevant experience and/or expertise to review each eligible application received by FHWA through Grants.gov, using the merit criteria above. The panel will individually evaluate the applications. The panel will then assign a rating to each eligible application using the following merit ratings: Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Marginal, Unacceptable. The evaluation team will be responsible for reviewing, evaluating, and rating the applications as well as making funding recommendations to FHWA senior leadership.
- To support Federal investment in distressed areas, including opportunity zones and rural areas, the FHWA may also consider whether a project is located in federally designated zones, to include opportunity zones designated pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 1400Z-1 or in an area that meets the criteria for the R.O.U.T.E.S. Initiative as identified in DOT Order 5050.1.
- The DOT reserves the right to use outside expertise and/or contractor support to perform application evaluation.
- The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this opportunity.

Questions?

AWARDS AND REPORTING

Ryan Buck, Office of Acquisition and Grants Management

Awards/Reporting

- FHWA anticipates but does not guarantee making one award by December 2021**.**

- Reporting Requirements Include:
  - Quarterly Progress Reports
  - Annual Budget Review & Program Plans
  - Annual Property Reports
  - Additional submissions per Section A5 of the NOFO

Timeline

- **Submission Deadline: Application**s **Due** by **August 18, 2021** at **11:59 PM Eastern Time** through www.Grants.gov

Questions

Questions may be forwarded to:

- ryan.buck@dot.gov
- hillary.isebrands@dot.gov

Slides, Questions & Answers will be posted to:

- www.Grants.gov

Thank you for joining today's webinar!