

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Solicitation of Project Proposals for the Rural and Small Urban Transit Applied Technology Technical Assistance Center

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT

ACTION: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

SUMMARY:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is soliciting proposals under FTA's Technical Assistance and Workforce Development Program (CFDA#20.531) to fund the Rural and Small Urban Transit Applied Technology Technical Assistance Center (RSU-TAT). The RSU-TAT will carry out technical assistance activities to assist small urban, rural, tribal public transit recipients, and planning organizations with applied innovation and capacity-building. The activities and assistance provided by the RSU-TAT will not duplicate the activities of the National Rural Transportation Assistance Program (National RTAP), the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), or the National Aging and Disabilities Transportation Center (NADTC).

DATES:

Online Submission: Complete proposals for funding opportunity [FTA-2019-011-RSUTAT](#) must be submitted electronically through GRANTS.GOV. All applications must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern time on August 9, 2019. Prospective applicants should initiate the process by promptly registering and establishing an account in GRANTS.GOV to ensure completion of the application process before the submission deadline.

The funding opportunity ID is FTA-2019-011-RSUTAT. Applications must be submitted online. Mail or Fax submissions will not be accepted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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A. Program Description

FTA's Technical Assistance and Workforce Development Program (49 U.S.C. § 5314) authorizes technical assistance activities. Further, the 2019 Appropriations Act provides \$1,500,000 for a cooperative agreement through which FTA will assist small-urban, rural and tribal public transit recipients and planning organizations with applied innovation and capacity-building. FTA is therefore establishing the Rural and Small Urban Transit Applied Technology Technical Assistance Center (RSU-TAT).

Subsequent funding from FTA will depend upon program priorities established by the Secretary of Transportation, future appropriations, and annual performance reviews.

The mission of the RSU-TAT will be to deliver expert focused technical assistance directly to rural and small urban areas to make public transportation more cost-effective and efficient. The four main objectives of the RSU-TAT are:

1. Develop resources to help rural and small urban areas understand the benefits of emerging transit technology and innovation, investment and partnership opportunities, and the impacts of federal, state and legislative changes.
2. Identify and disseminate promising practices at the federal, state and local levels that are replicable and have broad impact beyond any one community.
3. Research and produce reports and white papers to promote an understanding of the emerging transit technologies and innovations and how they can be applied in rural and small urban areas.
4. Provide expert technical assistance at the local level to find customized approaches that deliver the desired transit results to communities in need.

Incorporate the development of promising practices and peer-to-peer approaches into this effort.

The RSU-TAT will provide technical assistance to small urban and rural communities to help them take advantage of new technologies that could include: ride-hailing applications, autonomous shuttles, and micro-transit innovations that are transforming how Americans use public transportation.

B. Federal Award Information

FTA is announcing the availability of approximately \$1,500,000 as a cooperative agreement. FTA will fund the cooperative agreement over a period of up to five (5) years, subject to the availability of funds, with up to \$1,500,000 available for the first year of activities. The first year of funding must be obligated before September 30, 2019.

Subsequent funding will depend upon: 1) future appropriations; 2) decisions and program priorities established by the Secretary of Transportation related to the implementation of provisions set forth in 49 U.S.C. § 5314; and, 3) annual performance reviews.

C. Eligibility Information

Only national non-profit organizations are eligible to submit a proposal in response to this notice. Organizations must have transportation experience and the capacity to provide public transportation-related technical assistance, and the ability to deliver a national technical assistance and training program. A single lead organization must be designated in the proposal. Other organizations may participate as subcontractors or sub recipients.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Applications must be submitted electronically through GRANTS.GOV, as described above. General information for registering and submitting applications through GRANTS.GOV can be found at <https://www.GRANTS.GOV/web/grants/applicants.html> along with specific instructions for the forms and attachments required for submission. Mail and fax submissions will not be accepted. A complete proposal submission will consist of at least two files: (1) the SF-424 Mandatory form (downloaded from GRANTS.GOV and (2) a narrative application document in Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat or compatible file format. The narrative application should be in the format outlined in section 2 below. Once completed, the narrative application must be placed in the attachments section of the SF-424 Mandatory form. Proposers must attach the narrative application file to their submission in GRANTS.GOV to successfully complete the proposal process. A proposal submission may contain additional supporting documentation as attachments.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals shall be submitted in a Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat or compatible file format, double-spaced using Times New Roman, 12-point font. The proposal must contain the following components and adhere to the specified maximum lengths:

1. Cover sheet (1 page): The cover sheet must include: the name of the entity submitting the proposal, the principal investigator's name, title, and contact information (e.g., address, phone, fax, and email), and the name and contact information for the key point of contact for all five activities (if different from principle investigator).

2. Abstract (not to exceed 4 pages): The abstract must include the following sections: background, purpose, methodology, intended outcomes, and plan for evaluation.
3. Detailed budget proposal and budget narrative (not to exceed 3 pages):
4. Project narrative (not to exceed 25 pages): The project narrative must include the following information:
 - a. The methodology for addressing the goals and objectives.
 - b. Objectives, activities, deliverables, milestones, timeline and intended outcomes for achieving the goals outlined in the scope for the first year;
 - c. The existing and future capacity of organization to address the issues outlined in the proposal and ability to implement goals and objectives;
 - d. A detailed plan for communication, technical assistance and outreach at the state and local levels;
 - e. A plan to work with stakeholders and build partnerships at the national level; and,
 - f. Staff qualifications, including: (1) prior experience providing technical assistance, especially related to new transit technology and innovation, (2) prior experience implementing the other tasks outlined in this solicitation, (3) staff members' knowledge of matters related to transit technology, innovation and institutional issues, and (4) a one page biographical sketch for each staff member.

5. Plan for evaluation of RSU-TAT activities and performance measures (not to exceed 5 pages).
6. Supplemental materials, such as bios, and letters of support can be included in an appendices section that is beyond the page limit above (not to exceed 15 pages, but will not count against the 25-page limit).

3. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to: (1) register in SAM before applying; (2) provide a valid unique SAM entity identifier in its application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information always during which the applicant has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by FTA. FTA may not make an award 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 FTA is ready to make an award, FTA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. Registration in SAM may take as little as 3-5 business days, but since there could be unexpected steps or delays (for example, if you need to obtain an Employer Identification Number), FTA recommends allowing ample time, up to several weeks, for completion of all steps. For additional information on obtaining a unique entity identifier, please visit www.sam.gov.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Project proposals must be submitted electronically through GRANTS.GOV and must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern time on August 9, 2019. GRANTS.GOV attaches a time stamp to each application at the time of submission. Proposals submitted after the

deadline will only be considered under extraordinary circumstances not under the applicant's control. Mail and fax submissions will not be accepted.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by GRANTS.GOV. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by GRANTS.GOV. The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from GRANTS.GOV with the successful transmission of their application. This applicant with the AOR role will also receive the official date/time stamp and GRANTS.GOV tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When FTA successfully retrieves the application from GRANTS.GOV, and acknowledges the download of submissions, GRANTS.GOV will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that GRANTS.GOV receives your application. Applications received by GRANTS.GOV after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by FTA.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before GRANTS.GOV receives your application. Again, GRANTS.GOV will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role attempting to submit the application. The GRANTS.GOV Support Center reports that some applicants

end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

If confirmations are not received or a notice of failed validation or incomplete materials is received, the applicant must address the reason for the failed validation, described in the email notice, and resubmit to GRANTS.GOV before the submission deadline.

FTA urges proposers to submit applications at least 72 hours prior to the due date to allow time to receive the validation messages and to correct any problems that may have caused a rejection notification. GRANTS.GOV scheduled maintenance and outage times are announced on the GRANTS.GOV website. Deadlines will not be extended due to scheduled website maintenance.

Proposers are encouraged to begin the process of registration on the GRANTS.GOV site well in advance of the submission deadline. Registration is a multi-step process, which may take several weeks to complete before an application can be submitted. Registered proposers may still be required to take steps to keep their registration up to date before submissions can be made successfully: (1) registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) is renewed annually; and (2) persons making submissions on behalf of the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) must be authorized in GRANTS.GOV by the AOR to make submissions.

How to Register to Apply through GRANTS.GOV. To register and for detailed instructions, please see “APPLICANTS” tab in GRANTS.GOV (<https://www.GRANTS.GOV/web/grants/applicants.html>). To be eligible to apply for this opportunity, organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)

Number, active System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and an established GRANTS.GOV account.

Creating a GRANTS.GOV account can be completed online in minutes, but DUNS and SAM registrations may take several weeks. Therefore, an organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entity's ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Complete organization instructions can be found on GRANTS.GOV:

<https://www.GRANTS.GOV/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

E. Application Review

Proposals will be evaluated by a review team based on the proposals: 1) ability to meet the goals of the RSU-TAT; 2) qualifications of key personnel, experience and knowledge; 3) communication, technical assistance and outreach strategy; 4) research and demonstration capacity; and 5) management approach. The criteria are detailed below:

1. Ability to Meet the Goals of the RSU-TAT: Proposals will be evaluated based on the planned approach and activities identified that will assist the industry in applying emerging transit technologies and innovation in rural communities and small urban areas. FTA is seeking innovative and effective approaches and strategies to accomplish the project objectives.
2. Qualifications of Key Personnel, Experience and Knowledge: The proposal should demonstrate that key personnel have the appropriate skills and experience to carry out the activities. FTA will evaluate the qualifications and experience of the key staff detailed in the proposal for their:

- a. Prior experience providing technical assistance, especially related to new transit technology and innovation;
 - b. Prior experience implementing the other tasks outlined in this solicitation; and
 - c. Knowledge of matters related to transit technology, innovation, and institutional issues.
- 3. Communication, Technical Assistance and Outreach Strategy: The proposal should demonstrate the ability to execute a technical assistance program with a national scope, as well as strategies for delivering targeted assistance to state, regional, and local stakeholders. Proposing organizations are encouraged to think innovatively about this technical assistance delivery. The proposal should also demonstrate the ability to carry out outreach, dissemination and information management activities. These activities will include capturing and sharing useful and best practices in transit technology and innovation and how it effects rural, tribal and small urban areas across America. The proposal should demonstrate innovative approaches, such as the use of social media and other information technologies, to accomplish this strategy.
- 4. Research and Demonstration Capacity: The proposal should demonstrate the applicant's capability and capacity (either internally or through external sources) to conduct research, analysis, and demonstration projects related to transit technology in rural and small urban areas.

5. Management Approach: The proposal must include an effective management plan to administer and manage the RSU-TAT and must demonstrate that the applicant has the technical capacity to carry out the plan. FTA will evaluate the applicant's:

- a. Technical capacity to administer and manage the services proposed;
- b. Total budget and staffing;
- c. Evidence of understanding of the RSU-TAT mission and comprehensive technical approach to delivering the RSU-TAT;
- d. Plan for evaluation and data collection; and,
- e. A plan for coordinating with FTA.

F. Federal Award Administration

1. Federal Award Notices

Final award decisions will be made by the Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. In making these decisions, the Administrator will take into consideration: recommendations of the review panel; past performance of the applicant regarding programmatic and grants management compliance; the reasonableness of the estimated cost to the government considering the available funding and anticipated results; and the likelihood that the proposed project will result in the benefits expected.

FTA will notify the successful organization and may announce the selection on its website <https://www.transit.dot.gov>. Following notification, the successful entity will be required to submit its application through the FTA Transit Award Management System (TRAMS). FTA will work with the successful applicant to develop a detailed

cooperative agreement and FY 2019 funds must be obligated by September 30, 2019. FTA will award and manage a cooperative agreement through TRAMS.

2. Award Administration

A. Grant Requirements: The successful proposer will apply for a cooperative agreement through TRAMS and adhere to the customary FTA grant requirements of Section 5314, Technical Assistance and Workforce Development. There is no pre-award authority for this project.

B. Discretionary grants and cooperative agreements greater than \$500,000 will go through the Congressional notification and release process. Assistance regarding these requirements is available from FTA.

C. Standard Assurances: The applicant assures that it will comply with all applicable Federal statutes, regulations, executive orders, FTA circulars, and other Federal administrative requirements in carrying out any project supported by the FTA grant. The proposer acknowledges that it is under a continuing obligation to comply with the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement issued for its project with FTA. The proposer understands that Federal laws, regulations, policies, and administrative practices might be modified from time to time and that modifications may affect the implementation of the project. The proposer agrees that the most recent Federal requirements will apply to the project, unless FTA issues a written determination otherwise. The proposer must submit the Certifications and Assurances before receiving a cooperative agreement if it does not have current certifications on file.

3. Reporting

Post-award reporting requirements include submission of Federal Financial Reports and Milestone Progress Reports in TRAMS on a quarterly basis. Documentation is required for payment. Additional reporting may be required specific to the Rural and Small Urban Transit Applied Technology Technical Assistance Center and the recipient may be expected to participate in events or peer networks related to the goals and objectives of RSU-TAT. The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires data entry at the FFATA Sub Award Reporting System (<http://www.FSRS.gov>) for all sub-awards and sub-contracts issued for \$25,000 or more, as well as addressing executive compensation for both grantee and sub-award organizations.

Additionally, it is required that FTA report on the value of Section 5314 investments every year to Congress. Applicants will be required to provide details indicating the need, problem, or opportunity addressed by activities of the program. The national significance and relevance to the public transportation industry must also be clearly detailed.

4. Legal Capacity

Proposers must certify that there are no legal issues which would impact their eligibility and authority to apply for, or prevent acceptance of FTA funds.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For further information concerning this notice, please contact the Technical Assistance program manager Kelly Tyler by phone at 202-366-3102, or by e-mail at

Kelly.Tyler@dot.gov. A TDD is available for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing at 800-877-8339.