National Aging and Disability Transportation Center Request for Proposals
2024 Rural Community Innovations: Transportation Planning Grant

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Quick Look

Purpose

The purpose of the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center's **Rural Community Innovations: Transportation Planning Grant** is to offer funding for communities to develop a transportation plan that addresses accessibility and equity. Planning activities will identify transportation barriers, consider current and future community needs, actively engage older adults and people with disabilities in the process, and create or strengthen multi-sector collaborative partnerships. Ultimately, selected grantees are expected to develop a written plan of action to guide implementation of strategies supported by the community to increase the availability of accessible and equitable transportation services.

Who is eligible?

Eligible applicants are rural local and regional private nonprofit or government organizations, including but not limited to: public transit agencies; Councils of Government; Metropolitan or Rural Planning Organizations; Tribal agencies (e.g., Title VI Aging Programs, Tribal Transit Agencies); Area Agencies on Aging; community action agencies; Centers for Independent Living; disability service organizations; community organizations involved in the administration, delivery, or coordination of public transit, human services transportation, aging, or disability services. Applicants will not be eligible if they were recipients of the NADTC 2021 Planning and 2022 Implementation Grants.

Length of Grant

Approximately 9 months

What is the application deadline?

June 7, 2024

What is the award dollar amount?

A maximum of $35,000 per grantee will be awarded. The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center expects to award up to $420,000.

Questions and Point of Contact

The point of contact for the Rural Community Innovations: Transportation Planning Grant Program is Eileen Schroff, NADTC Program Manager. All questions should be submitted in writing to this email address: nadtcgrant@nadtc.org.

1.Table of Contents

1. About this Grant Opportunity

1A. Eligible Applicants

This grant opportunity is targeted to rural areas. Using the Federal Transit Administration's definition as a reference, rural areas are defined as non-urbanized areas with a population of less than 50,000.[1] A regional organization located outside of rural area can be the applicant for these grant funds if the project will focus on an eligible rural area.

Applications must be submitted by public transportation, aging, or disability organizations. Eligible recipients or subrecipients of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) are encouraged to apply.

Eligible applicants are local and regional private nonprofit or government organizations, including:

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Action Agencies
- Community organizations involved in the administration, delivery, or coordination of public transit, human services transportation, aging, or disability services.
- Councils of Government
- Disability service organizations
- Metropolitan or Rural Planning Organizations. A regional organization located outside of rural area can be the applicant for these grant funds if the project will focus on an eligible rural area.
- Public transit agencies
- Tribal agencies (e.g., Title VI Aging Programs, Tribal Transit Agencies)

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[1] https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311

Note: For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply; however, applicants may coordinate with all transportation providers in the community, including for-profit transportation providers.

1B. Purpose and Requirements

The purpose of the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center's Rural Community Innovations: Transportation Planning Grant is to offer funding for communities to engage in inclusive transportation planning activities that will identify transportation barriers, consider current and future community transportation needs, engage with older adults and people with disabilities, and create multi-sector collaborative partnerships. Ultimately, selected grantees are expected to develop new or improvement strategies in a written plan of action that can guide implementation of such strategies to address transportation accessibility and equity after the planning grant period ends. Should sufficient funds be available from FTA to support NADTC Community Grants in FY 2025, selected grantees will have the opportunity to receive implementation funding.

Requirements of the grant are as follows:

- Grant projects must **focus on rural communities**.

- Grant projects must **ensure the active and meaningful participation of older adults, people with disabilities, and their family caregivers,** including riders and non-users of transportation, those from underserved and marginalized communities, and the broader community to identify community transportation challenges and barriers and be involved in the inclusive planning process. Inclusive practices may include focus groups, surveys, advisory bodies, community forums and other formal and informal efforts to encourage involvement.

- Grant projects must **collect and analyze relevant data** to identify current transportation options, gaps, needs, and user demographics, preferences, and perceptions as well as develop strategies for ongoing data collection.

- Grant projects must commit to a **multi-sector collaborative process** to develop a plan that will respond to the identified barriers and challenges to expand mobility options for all older adults and people with disabilities living in the community. Multi-sector collaboration involves the active engagement and participation of community organizations relevant to transportation accessibility and equity, which must include representatives of transportation (including public transit when available), aging and disability sectors as well as others with an interest in improving community transportation accessibility and equity, such as healthcare, housing, employment programs, and educational institutions.

- Grant projects must closely coordinate with the existing **public transit-human services coordination plan and other relevant community planning efforts** to address transportation equity and accessibility.

- Grant projects must create, strengthen, or expand **committed partnerships** with local transportation, aging and disability organizations, and other key stakeholders with an interest in improving community transportation accessibility and equity, such as healthcare, housing, employment programs, and educational institutions.

- Grant projects must support an **advisory committee** comprised of these partners, as well as current riders and potential transportation users, to offer guidance throughout the grant period**.**

- Grant projects will culminate in a **written action plan** with solutions, strategies, or programs that will be ready to implement at the end of the grant**.**

- Grant managers should expect to travel to Washington, DC for a training workshop during the grant period.

1C. Deliverables

The following deliverables are a requirement of the grant project. These deliverables are essential in ensuring the project requirements (see Section 1B) are achieved:

- A **roster of committed multi-sector partners** comprised of organizational partners as well as current riders and potential transportation users that act as an advisory committee**.**

- A **summary of the activities and findings from the engagement process that identifies the community's needs and assets** and is supported with relevant data and information that has been gathered in the planning process.

- A **written plan of action**, which includes the identification of solutions and priorities that emerge from the planning process and a framework for implementation and measuring performance**.** The plan must include strategies for building support for the proposed solution/strategy/program within the applicant's organization, among transportation, aging and disability stakeholders, and from older adults, people with disabilities and their family caregivers living in the community.

1D. Outputs and Outcomes

Selected grantees will be required to identify and track performance measures, including outputs and outcomes, to demonstrate progress throughout the grant period.

Output measures are the products and services delivered and help track the volume of work accomplished.

Examples of outputs may include:

- Number of older adults involved;
- Number of people with disabilities involved;
- Number of advisory committee meetings;
- Number of focus groups.

Outcome measures represent the specific results the grant project is intended to achieve. Outcomes are measurable and identify, in precise ways, how the grant project will impact the community.

Examples of outcomes may include:

- Development of an action plan that addresses access and equity in the targeted rural area;
- Support obtained for the action plan that was created.

2. Grantee Reporting Requirements

Applicants must commit to implementing, tracking, and reporting on their progress in meeting overall performance measures. The following reporting activities will be required:

- **Monthly activities**. Grantees will participate in monthly meetings with a National Aging and Disability Transportation Center grant manager, as well as participate in peer-sharing webinars hosted by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center to address issues that impact multiple grantees and learn from the other grantees.

- **Written narrative and financial reporting**. Grantees will complete a report to accompany their monthly reimbursement requests, as well as a final report at the conclusion of the grant.

- **Tracking of performance measures and key learnings.** National Aging and Disability Transportation Center staff will work with the grantee to craft detailed performance metrics, which will be reported on a regular monthly basis, reflecting what the grantee is accomplishing.

- **Presentations.** Grantees will be expected to help the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center disseminate the results of the project through virtual and (as appropriate) in-person events. However, the costs of any such in-person presentations do not need to be built into the applicant's budget.

2A. NADTC Support and Technical Assistance

NADTC will undertake the following activities to support awarded grantees:

- Convene a training workshop with awarded applicants in Washington, DC.
- Track progress and provide reporting tools and other assistance to support grantees' reporting and documentation of their progress.
- Provide guidance on the development of the written plan of action.
- Provide opportunities to support grantees in group and in-person (i.e., site visits) settings.

3. Application Review

3A. Compliance Review

All applications received will be screened by National Aging and Disability Transportation Center staff to determine that the minimum requirements noted in the application have been met. Initial screening criteria include the following minimum requirements:

- The project must focus on a rural community.
- The application is submitted by an eligible applicant.
- The application must include three letters of commitment.
- The applicant must upload a SAM registration certificate and provide a DUNS number in the application portal.
- The project does not exceed $35,000
- Complete application must be submitted in SurveyMonkey Apply (SM Apply) by June 7, 2024, 11:59 pm Eastern time.

3B. Review Committee and Application Scoring

Applications that meet minimum requirements will be reviewed and assessed by a review committee. They will then be rated on the basis of Highly Recommended (HR), Recommended (R), and Not Recommended (NR) in the following areas:

- Community Need
- Planning Process
- Demonstration of Capacity
- Anticipated Outcomes
- Workplan

The review committee will follow these guidelines:

- Highly Recommended (HR) applications provide thorough and detailed responses to questions and offer evidence to support the likely success of the proposed project. HR applications stand out among other submissions due to their clarity, feasibility, and potential for meaningful outcomes.
- Recommended (R) applications show several major strengths, provide evidence of probable success in achieving goals, objectives, and requirements of the grant program.
- Applications rated as Not Recommended (NR) do not respond fully to all questions, leave out key information and show few strengths. An NR rating indicates significant shortcomings or weaknesses in the application, such as lack of clarity, feasibility issues, or insufficient alignment with the grant's priorities.

3C. Development of Funding Recommendations

In developing funding recommendations, NADTC staff will consider grant applications that received the highest ratings from independent reviewers as well as consideration of the following criteria established for the planning grant program:

- Geographic diversity, achieved by awarding grants in different FTA regions;
- A mix of different types of grantee organizations, including transportation, aging and disability organizations;
- Diversity in the type of project, challenge addressed, and proposed approach;
- Potential that the project can serve as a model solution in the future;
- Final assessment of the grant applicant's capacity to carry out the grant and achieve success.

4. Application Instructions

4A. General Instructions

- **Deadline for receipt of application**: June 7, 2024 11:59 p.m. Eastern time

- A **NADTC Applicant Zoom Meeting** for interested applicants will be held at May 9, 2024, 3pm Eastern. A link to the Zoom meeting will be posted on the NADTC website (www.nadtc.org). Questions can be directed to Eileen Schroff nadtcgrant@nadtc.org.

- Following the Zoom meeting, a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** page will be developed and published on the NADTC website; the FAQ will be updated as needed to reflect questions received after the teleconference.

- Applications must be submitted through the SM Apply portal. The grant application portal will reject any incomplete applications that do not meet the following minimum criteria:

    1. Application received by the deadline.

    2. Application package is complete. See Section 4B below.

4B. Elements of the Application Package

The application package includes five sections:

1. Applicant information;

2. The grant application proposal narrative questions;

3. The grant budget form and accompanying budget narrative;

4. The workplan;

5. Letters of Commitment.

4B.1 Applicant Information

1. **Applicant Name, Address, Contact Information**

    Applicant (Agency/Organization) Name

    Street Address:

    Street Address 2 (i.e., suite, building, floor):

    Telephone (###-###-####):

    Ext. (i.e., 1234):

    City:

    State:

    Zip:

    Primary Contact (Executive Director or Authorized Representative - person authorized to sign legal agreements for the organization)

    Secondary Contact (Person completing the application and/or anticipated director of the proposed project, if different than above)

2. **Agency/Lead Organization is**: Check one from the list. Applicant must fit one of the categories provided: nonprofit or government agency. Applications will not be accepted from for-profit organizations.

    o   Not-for-profit single or multipurpose organization

- o Part of tribal government
- o Part of local government
- o Part of state or regional government

3. **Agency/Organization Type**: check one from the list; if *other*, please provide specific information in the space provided.

   - o Public Transit Agency
   - o Area Agency on Aging
   - o Tribal Transit Agency
   - o Title VI Program
   - o Community Action Agency
   - o Center for Independent Living
   - o Disability Service Organizations
   - o Human Services Agency that serves Older Adults, People with Disabilities and others.
   - o Metropolitan or Regional Planning Organization
   - o Council of Governments
   - o Other
       - o Please specify (30 words or less)

4. **Grant Rural Area:** Applications **must acknowledge** their project is in a rural area. Using the Federal Transit Administration's definition as a reference, rural areas are defined as non-urbanized areas with a population of less than 50,000.[2] A regional organization located outside of rural area can be the applicant for these grant funds if the project will focus on an eligible rural area.

5. **Grant Topic Focus**: Applications **must acknowledge** that their project will address transportation accessibility and equity for older adults and people with disabilities. Transportation equity ensures access to transportation services in a systematically fair and just way for all individuals who need a ride.

6. **Provide a brief description of the area**. Your description must name the specific area to be included (i.e., counties and if applicable, the name of the area), the total population and demographic composition of the rural area to be served, square mileage, and population density. Additional descriptors should be included, such as rugged, mountain terrain, spread-out farming

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[2] https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311

area, etc. to provide reviewers with a concise picture of the area. (Limit 100 words)

7. **Target population**: Applications must focus on both older adults and people with disabilities residing in the targeted rural community. Applicants MUST specifically identify the target populations which may include, older adults with particular characteristics (e.g., physical disabilities, dementia), specific disability groups (e.g., persons with visual impairment, cognitive or intellectual disabilities) or other underserved and marginalized populations. Describe your target population. (Limit 100 words)

8. **Income of target population**: Check one or both named options. If "low-income" is checked, the definition to be followed by the project should be specified (e.g., 100% Federal Poverty Level [FPL]). If "other income range" is checked, the definition to be followed by the project should be specified.

   o Low Income. Low Income is defined as: (Limit 30 words)

   o Other Income Range. Other Income defined as: (Limit 30 words)

9. **SAM Registration:** Please upload documentation from SAM indicating you have an active SAM registration or pending documentation from SAM indicating you have applied for a SAM registration.

   Your application will not be complete or accepted for consideration without uploading evidence of an active or pending SAM registration.

10. **DUNS registration** (a DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization): Please provide your unique nine digit DUNS identification number.

4B.2 Proposal Narrative Questions

The Narrative includes the Project Summary and the Narrative Questions. Responses must adhere to the specified word limits which are incorporated into the electronic application.

1. **Project Summary:** Provide a specific and concise description of the project. Include the overall goal, significance in your community, and how you will engage targeted populations in the planning process. (Limit 100 words)

2. **Community Need**

   • Provide a picture of the current community conditions. It is understood that community needs will be identified during the grant; the information provided in this application response will serve as a starting point for that effort. (Limit 350 words)

Include the following:

- o Data currently available. Include at least 2 of the following examples of numerical and descriptive data that quantifies or approximates current need: the findings of transportation studies or surveys; demographic data for the target population that identifies underserved groups; recent (previous 12-15 months) ridership data for the target population; unmet need for rides (local, state and/or national data may be used and may include stories or anecdotes describing riders' experiences) in the community. Briefly discuss what the data shows.

- o Transportation currently available in the community to the target population (the community's current transportation and mobility options).

- o Add any relevant anecdotal information to paint a clear picture of current community conditions.

- Briefly discuss the community assets and efforts, both current and in the recent past, successful or not, that were/are intended to improve community transportation accessibility and equity for older adults and people with disabilities. (Limit 350 words)

Include the following:

- o Any work that has been done in the past 5 years to develop, improve or expand any of the following and the result of those efforts: public transit, paratransit, human services transportation, livable communities, walkability, bicycling, accessible technology, coordination, planning, mobility management, travel training in the rural areas.

- o Any recent (within the last 5 years) transportation planning efforts in the community and identify the results of those efforts. What happened as a result of those efforts?

- Provide details about the community's current use of federal, state and local funds to support transportation and describe the community's success or lack of success in obtaining funding in the past 2-3 years. Please include in your response recent efforts to access and use federal funding, particularly Section 5310 funds. (Limit 200 words)

- o Information about pending applications or other potential funding should be included.

3. **Planning Process**

   - Check all engagement/data collection methods you will utilize in your planning process and briefly describe your plans for each activity checked. (Limit 30 words)

     o Surveys

     o Focus groups

     o Community meetings

     o Analysis of existing/recently collected data

     o Other:

   - Describe how will you plan to engage your identified target populations, including riders and potential riders, and key multi-sector stakeholders in the inclusive planning process, including the **methods and processes** you will use to identify rider and potential rider preferences and perceptions about your community's current transportation options. (Limit 300 words)

   - Identify conditions in the community and other local planning efforts that will support the effort to increase transportation accessibility and equity for the target population (e.g., the local transit-human services coordinated plan, local livability, or age-friendly initiative) and discuss how the proposed planning process will respond to current and anticipated community conditions described in these plans? (Limit 300 words)

4. **Anticipated Outcomes**

   While the purpose of the planning grant is to identify transportation challenges and to develop a plan to address priority issues, please describe what a potential solution could achieve once operational, including anticipated outcomes and the impact of the planning project on the target population in your rural area. (Limit 300 words)

5. **Demonstration of Capacity**

   - List all committed multi-sector project partners (agencies and organizations). You must upload 3 letters of commitment from 3 project partners below. (Limit 50 words)

   - Briefly describe what assets and advantages each committed partner will bring to the table for developing a plan to address transportation accessibility and equity in your community. Identify and discuss any additional multi-sector partners (in addition to the 3 partners who submitted letters of commitment) that you hope to bring into the project

and describe how partners will be engaged in the project. (Limit 300 words)

- Describe your organization's capacity to manage and complete this planning grant. (Limit 500 words)

  Demonstration of capacity may include, but is not limited to, the following:

  - Previous grant management experience. Please indicate if you have been a past recipient of NADTC funding, or other technical assistance centers like NCMM or NRTAP, and in what year. Indicate any difficulty your organization has had in spending approved grant funding or instances when spending exceeded approved budgets.
  - Current and/or past experience with inclusive planning as well as other planning and engagement experience.
  - Experience engaging with the target population and community organizations that work with the target population.
  - Experience working for and/or providing accessible and equitable transportation for older adults and people with disabilities.
  - Current and/or past experience working with the target population, as well as outreach efforts directed toward older adults and people with disabilities and marginalized and underserved communities.
  - Current involvement in the coordinated transit-human services transportation planning process and/or other local or regional transportation planning experience.
  - Experience managing a Section 5310 program or other transportation programs funded with federal, state or local funds.

- Consultants: *If it is anticipated you will be using a consultant, you must respond to the following: 1) how will the consultant be procured? 2) what is the timeline for obtaining the consultant?; and 3) describe the role and responsibilities of the consultant within your proposed project.

4B.3 Budget Form and Narrative

The proposed budget must be provided on the **NADTC Grant Budget Form** available on the SM Apply grant application portal and will include the following items. In no case may the budget request exceed **$35,000**.

- **Personnel costs. Salaries** should specify salary costs, number of staff, percent of staff time (ie Full Time Equivalent [FTE] staff: for example, .60 FTE). Salary documentation will be required for selected grantees on a

monthly basis as a part of the fiscal reporting process. **Fringe benefits** to carry out project activities. Specify how fringe is calculated (e.g. 20% of salary costs). It is important to include sufficient staff time to lead and complete this planning grant.

- **Meeting/training costs. Meeting expenses** may include the costs of holding one or more community forums or other engagement activities plus costs associated with smaller collaborative meetings (costs should reflect the activities indicated in Section 4B.2, Question 3 of the application). Such costs may include space rental, food (as reasonable and necessary), copying materials, AV equipment rental, speaker fees/travel costs, accessibility accommodations including captions, language interpretation and stipends to participants.

- **Travel costs. Travel Costs** may cover staff travel for local project travel, including mileage, parking, and related costs. This should include allowances for lodging, meals and incidental funds for a two-night stay in a Washington, DC area hotel to attend the kick-off workshop.

- **Consultant fees and travel** anticipated by the applicant should be included as a separate category in the budget.

- **Other direct costs** may include office space rental/utilities (to be calculated based on personnel costs), telephone/fax, photocopying, printing, postage, project related supplies, and marketing/media/outreach costs. Computers and other equipment are not allowable expenses.

- **Indirect costs** may be included in the budget. Details regarding how indirect costs are calculated, including a copy of the organization's approved Indirect Rate, must be submitted as part of the final budget that grantees must develop within two weeks of award notification.

- **Matching funds** are not required, but applicants may consider specifying any additional staff supports (including management support) to be provided by the applicant agency, as well as other administrative costs that the applicant agency will cover. Matching funding will not impact the success of the application.

4B.4 Workplan

Identify **significant milestones** within a set timeframe. A separate 1-page (8½ x 11) workplan in 11-point Verdana font should be uploaded in the application portal (not included in the word limit). <u>Note</u>: The workplan template is posted in the NADTC Grant Application Portal and can be downloaded, completed off-line and uploaded as part of a completed application.

4B.5 Letters of Commitment

All applicants must provide 3 letters of commitment from multi-sector partner organizations. If the applicant is not the 5310 provider in the community, a letter of commitment should be included from that entity indicating willingness to participate in the project. If this letter cannot be obtained, the reason why should be stated in response to Narrative Question 5.

The letters should specifically describe the planned role of the project partner in the proposed project, anticipated support (including monetary or in-kind support) to be provided and list anticipated project activities in which the partner will be involved. Letters should be individually composed rather than standard letters. Letters of commitment must be uploaded into SM Apply.