Getting Ready to Innovate Planning Grants
Summary of Informational Teleconference and FAQs

The follow includes a summary of the information and questions asked during the teleconference on May 9, 2018 as well as a number of questions that have been handled on an individual basis.

Website: nadtc.org. The easiest way to access information about the grant, including the RFP and instructions on how to apply for the grant is go to nadtc.org and click on the funding opportunity announcement on the homepage.

Background

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) is a partnership of two national leaders in accessible transportation – Easter Seals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). In its third year, this innovative technical assistance center continues to grow and evolve as it promotes the availability of accessible transportation options that serve the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and communities across the United States. Easter Seals and n4a partner with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to realize the vision of enhancing coordination in the delivery of transportation for older adults and people with disabilities and focus on developing best practices for transit providers utilizing Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities formula grants and other federal, state and local transit investments.

Overview of the RFP

The Getting Ready to Innovate grants are planning grants. They reflect some of the learning that we gleaned from our previous grant experience in that we think it is very important to devote specific time to the whole process of getting ready to innovate, getting real clarity on what the innovation is, building support for that innovation, and ensuring that all the right people in your community are engaged in the process, including older adults and people with disabilities. These projects are meant to incubate your innovation ideas to develop them, and to prepare and refine the ideas. You may propose doing a small pilot test as part of this project, but that's not the same as actual implementation because pilot tests are ways that you learn whether or not your great idea is going to work the way you think it's going to work.

And it gives you an opportunity to go back to the drawing board. And you can also begin some early innovation steps.

Expectations.

We do expect certain things from you. One is **inclusion of older adults and people with disabilities**, the people who ride vehicles and ride your transportation system, as well as people who might benefit if there are improvements in the accessibility of your transportation system. We expect these to be **collaborative processes** that engage in your community local transportation, aging organizations and disability organizations. And we expect some **coordination with that all-important local transportation planning process** and accompanying that exploration of funding options, particularly the coordinated planning process that is required to receive 5310 funds from the Federal Transit Administration. We also expect you to **collect data** on the experience as well as data about what your community needs, identifying gaps, preferences, and ensuring that even though you may begin this process with a very clear idea of the kind of innovation that you want to develop that you use the six months allowed for these grants to hone that idea so that it reflects all the players and the knowledge that you gain through this planning process. At the end of this grant, we expect that you will **have a framework for moving forward** to actually implement an innovation.

Funding and timeline.

These are not greatly generous grants. They're $20,000 per grantee. We hope to award up to ten communities. You may propose a budget of less than $20,000, but more than $20,000 is not acceptable.

And the six-month time frame is pretty rigid. We don't have flexibility on that, in part because of the way we receive as the NADTC our funding from the Federal Transit Administration. So these projects will end December 31 of 2018.

There are some key dates that are listed on Page 2 of the RFP, and I suggest that you pay close attention to them. The next couple of pages basically review some of what's said in that summary. The program goal is to set the stage for implementation. The program objective is to support the development and planning for program innovation.

And we use a very outcome-oriented process. The basic outcome that we're looking for from all of the grants that we fund will be a community-specific framework that sets the stage for full implementation of the innovation that you want to create in your community. We list on Page 4 a number of related outcomes. Again, there's a certain amount of repetition in any RFP, so pay attention to the scope.

Be aware that grant funds have to be included in your budgets for you to travel to a two-day kickoff workshop. That's at least one staff person to come to that kickoff workshop which will likely be held in early August of this year.

Eligible applicants are basically local and regional private nonprofit organizations as well as government organizations. We give a number of examples there. When in doubt, ask questions about whether or not your organization meets that criteria. But you should know whether or not you are either a private nonprofit or a government entity. Preference will be given to applicants that are either public transportation and aging organization or a disability organization. And we're not specific about what those organizations are except for saying that we will provide some preference for public transportation.

Contact us.

Melissa Gray (nadtcgrant@nadtc.org) is the contact person who will field your questions. And I think a number of folks have already sent questions to Melissa. And she has responded to a number of questions so far. Keep them coming. We will pay a lot of attention to those questions, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible.

Definitions and examples.

There are definitions that we have adopted that begin on Page 5 and end on Page 6. I suggest you pay attention to them. I was looking at this earlier this afternoon and realized that we pulled a definition from outcome measure from a previous grant opportunity, and we specifically in that grant opportunity referenced seniors but not people with disabilities. That's an error. It should say seniors as well as persons with disabilities as well as specific ethnic and cultural groups or caregivers. So all of the work of the NADTC is focused on older adults and people with disabilities of all ages. So please be aware of that error, and we will correct that in the RFP that we have posted on our Web site.

There are a number of examples of potential innovations but please be aware these are not implementation grants. And if these are - one of these is your idea, great. If your idea is something else, that's also fine. These are just examples of possible innovations that communities may want to consider. There are many, many more.

Deliverables.

There are a number of deliverables that will be expected of all grantees. The first is the **development of a partnership** with all the right agencies and organizations in your community so that if additional grant funds are not available to support actual implementation and we do not make a promise that there will be additional funds because we don't know if there will be additional funds to support further work. But if you

spend your time well during the six-month planning grant, we think you can develop a partnership that will enable or at least support the possibility of going forward to actually implement the innovation in your community.

We also expect folks to **adopt inclusive planning processes** and to recognize that including older adults and people with disabilities and caregivers and those people who are most affected by what you do to make transportation more accessible and available in your community are critical players to the success of anything that you plan to do. It's important to listen but also give folks an opportunity to actively participate in the planning process and the development of an innovation in your community.

We expect also that there will be some process -- and we're not prescriptive about this -- for **identifying community needs and gaps in services and user preferences**. You may already have a fantastic study in your community. The question is if you've got lots of data, does it relate to the idea that you want to implement?

We also expect you during this process, during the six months, to **flesh out what your innovation will be** and that you'll be able to answer some specific questions like what is the innovation. Can you describe it? Why was it selected? Who supports it within your community and how will it address the accessibility needs and preferences of your target audiences?

And finally, at the end of this grant, at the end of December of this year, we expect you as grantees to **have a framework for implementing those projects** and to assign roles to know what organizations are going to be responsible for what part of implementation, what role each partner organization is going to play, the funding sources that you hope to use to support your grant, even your innovation, even if you don't have those funding sources in place at the end of this planning grant process, any anticipated barriers and challenges that you expect, and how you intend to measure success. That is, if your great idea is innovation acts, how will you know that you succeeded in creating that?

We also hope that as you're putting together your application that you will **include the perspectives of older adults and people with disabilities** in your grant proposals and coordinate with key partners and begin making your plans now during the application process. We hope again -- as I said earlier -- that there will be as described on Page 8 -- an opportunity for sustainability.

Two-day kickoff workshop.
Page 8 does talk about the support that we provide including this two-day kickoff workshop which is really critical for helping grantees to get off on the right foot, to understand the reporting requirements that we have in place for any grantee, and to understand, to get to know one another, to understand that there are

going to be opportunities to learn from one another throughout the six-month process and that of all things that we do through the NADTC, we value the work that grantees do because we think this is really the critically important work that the NADTC was created to support.

Evaluation.

Beginning on Page 9, lay out the application evaluation criteria. We are not using numeric values to award these grants. Instead, we are using three potential ratings -- **highly rated or highly recommended, recommended, or not recommended**. And these are the ratings that our diverse review committee will be using when they review the applications. Every application that NADTC receives is reviewed independently by two reviewers. As they complete their reviews, they will be using this recommendation standard. We also expect them to look at Question 1: the significance of the planning grant's goal and its fit with this overall funding opportunity as well as major activities, how the planning grant is going to be addressing current conditions and help move the community toward accessible transportation for everyone but particularly for older adults and people with disabilities. The anticipated challenges and barriers are addressed in Question 3, the proposed output and outcome measures in Question 4, and we will be honing those and finalizing those during that two-day workshop. But we also expect applicants to propose ways in which they are going to measure the impact of these projects on their community. And finally Question 5: organizational and partner strength and the budget.

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

Q: Can you provide the award date?

We expect to announce the grants in July.

Q: Can you clarify the six months grant time frame?

The grant period will begin in mid-July. This is when we expect grantees can begin their work. The grant period will end on December 31 of this year. Grantees will have to spend and complete their work plan by the end of December. Any funding that we approve in your budget has to be spent by the end of December. On January 15, 2019, grantees will send their final report on December activities. We recognize it's a very tight time frame. That's one of the reasons these are six month small planning grants, because of the short time frame that we are operating under. In actuality, it's a little less than six months, so projects really need to be planned down to the nth degree to make it work.

Q: Will this be an annual grant?

The NADTC grant year is January through December of 2018. We are a federally funded entity that is dependent on appropriations in Congress. So we don't know that we have funding for 2019 at this point, nor the amount of funding. Our vision is that by awarding the small planning grants to up to ten organizations we hope to award a smaller number of grants from among these 10. This is contingent on a lot of different milestones and decisions as well as the Federal Transit Administration approval. So I can't say what we'll do in the coming year, but we hope and expect folks to have a plan in place and to be pretty clear on what their innovation is and to have a framework established for how they're going forward.

Q: Is the two-day kickoff workshop a required budget element and can you just expand on the cost and purpose? How many people from staff should be expected to attend?

Yes, it is required of all grantees and it will be held in Washington, DC. We expect the workshop to be held in early August. The cost is going to vary from place to place depending on where you are traveling from. Keep in mind round-trip airfare, transportation, and hotels (assume approximately $200/$250 per night). Be sure to include cost of travel to DC and participation in this meeting in your budget.

The purpose is to orient the new grantees to NADTC, FTA and the grant as a whole. You learn about our vision for the projects, become acquainted with the reporting requirements and lastly, it gives the grantees a chance to meet each other and learn about the other projects that are being supported. We expect 1 person from the grantee agency to attend the workshop.

Q: I am wondering how much funding has been allocated for my geographic area?

Grants of $20,000 each will be awarded to as many as ten communities for a six month period. The recipients of the grant will be chosen based on their alignment with our grant requirements, rather than location, so there are no pre-determined locations for the grant projects. However, it is our hope that the grantees selected will be geographically diverse, representing different regions of the country and a mix of urban, suburban, rural and Tribal areas.

Q: Do projects need to actually be implemented?

Not beyond early steps like the framework of how a program would work or something like a small pilot test. But mostly use the luxury -- and this is something that we heard from our grantees from 2017 – of having the time and energy and the luxury to really put the plan in place before you're expected to implement them because there are a lot of things that you may learn in that planning process that would cause you to make a slight change in your idea. And implementing a project within a six-month period with $20,000 may not be feasible at all.

Q: Who reviews the applications?

No one on NADTC's staff reviews applications. Our reviewers are folks from communities around the country. We have traditionally used reviewers from transit agencies, other transportation providers from aging organizations and disability organizations. And we really try to have a diverse group of people. It is important to sell folks who did not create this RFP on your idea as well as on the degree to which your idea fits what we have said in the RFP because that's what they're expected to follow.

Q. I am a travel trainer and thinking about implementing an idea that many of our riders have been demanding, but I have received some push back stating it cannot be done. Could my innovation or grant project be a demonstration of this idea in order to show this could be a success? Am I on the right track?

You are on the right track because this is a planning grant. You wouldn't implement a new idea in a planning grant, but you would use just talking about your idea about something that arose from your riders, an innovation that they'd like to see put in place. It would give you the opportunity to pull together the powers that be, the decision makers, and the riders as well as other key stakeholders in your community to begin to work through what this idea - would it be feasible for us to actually bring to fruition. That's the planning process.

Q: Regarding letters of commitment, we don't have a AAA in our state, so any funders typically have to go through the state. Would it be okay to get a letter of commitment from another prominent aging organization other than the state?

Yes. It's your community, and you have to decide what would be the most important aging organization to engage in your community. States that have Area Agencies on Aging may have a community aging organization that may be the best partner for them. We leave it up to the applicants to select the best partners and hopefully letters of commitment will reflect why those are the best partners.
Also, it does not have to be the state. It really should be an entity in your community. It could be a senior center. It could be a local nonprofit aging organization or a faith-based organization that serves older adults. It could be any number of organizations. We will provide additional clarity in the RFP.

Q: For the letter of commitment, can we have a letter from another department in our agency? For example, we are an Area Agency on Aging and have a publically funded transportation program. Can we have someone from the Transportation Program Department offer a letter of commitment?

Yes. We understand that there are agencies with multiple entities. The executive director and the Program Director will both need to sign the letter.

Q: What are some examples of data collection to identify current transportation options, gaps, needs, user preferences listed in the RFP as a deliverable?

We propose a number of different ways that you can do that. You can do a focus group or a series of focus groups. You can do a written survey. You can do a telephone survey. You can come up with what is going to be the best way for you to get the best data about the needs and preferences in your community.

Q: We have an existing program we would like to expand with this grant funding. Our program has been in existence for many years and we would like to expand our service to include more people. Does our project qualify?

You cannot use these grant funds to only expand an already existing program. Review the program goals and objectives outlined on page 2 of the RFP to view the definition of innovation. Examples of innovation are provided on page 5 of the RFP. Instead of just expanding an existing program, is there a new and creative service that you could implement to reach a broader population in the community? Think about ways to differentiate your grant project from your program already in existence or ways in which you could improve it and be sure to justify how what you're proposing to do through this project is sufficiently different.

Q: We would like to use this grant funding to support a new project, but we are already receiving 5310 funding for an existing project and therefore may not be able to receive additional 5310 money to fund the new innovation. Will this be an issue in terms of sustainability?

It may be an issue, but we don't require that grantees actually get 5310 or even that 5310 is their primary source of funding. We think that 5310 is a really great -- in some places underused --resource that is available through the Federal Transit Administration, and we encourage folks to use it. And we provide educational sessions to help folks get into that process in their communities. Using this planning grant opportunity to explore 5310 or to explore other funding options is perfectly appropriate.

Q: What documentation will need to be submitted on a monthly basis to receive the monthly reimbursement from the grant?

We have a reporting form that is modeled after the budget form that will be filled out in the application. It includes your budget and a report on a monthly basis on where you spent your money in each of those categories. There will also be a program report that is required. The program report is designed to follow the final output measures and outcome measures that get adopted in these grants. We do provide a great deal of instruction on how to fill out the form and it will be clearly laid out what we expect grantees to tell us about their spending.

Q: I am having trouble accessing the Online Application System/downloading the RFP/downloading the application. What do I do?

Contact Melissa Gray at 202-872-0888 or nadtcgrant@nadtc.org for all issues related to access of the online system or to receive help in downloading pieces of information from the website. An instructional guide on how to use the system is available on our website.

Q: Do we have to limit the mode of transportation to one mode?

No, we encourage you to consider all of the modes available in the community, including mobility management and other transportation support services. We also encourage you to think outside the box to identify innovations that enable older adults and people with disabilities make better use of all aspects of the community transportation system in place.

<p align="center">__Budget Questions__</p>

* This section includes a series of questions related to allowable expenses. Keep in mind that applicants should look at overall expenditures, the percentage of the budget that is consumed by each specific cost, and ensure that one item or activity does not consume the overall budget. Use space in the narrative of the application to document how the items and activities in your budget meet the required elements of the grant project. Keep in mind the project lasts 6 months and be sure to include information on project sustainability in your narrative, including your approach to future funding sources such as Section 5310.

Q: How is the indirect cost rate established?

Applicants would put their indirect cost rate approved by the federal or state government in the application. If your proposal is selected, we would look at the justification for the indirect rate as part of the budget negotiation.

Q: Can we use the grant money for promotional materials?

Yes, the grant money can be used for promotional materials. Please reference the budget section on pages 15 and 16 of the RFP where the allowable expenses are outlined.

Q: Is the contract cost-based or performance-based?

This grant is a reimbursement contract based on both accurate reporting of monthly expenditures following the approved budget and monthly performance reports.

Q: Does this project require a match?

No, matching dollars are not a requirement in this project. However, if the applicant organization will be contributing funds to the project, the amount of funds to be provided must be specified in the budget categories listed on the Budget Narrative Form, available on the NADTC website.

Q: Can I use these funds to purchase a vehicle?

Funds cannot be used to purchase or lease a vehicle. The grants are for planning program development.

Q: Can we use this grant to hire and fund a travel trainer/mobility manager/other staff position?

Grant funds may be used to hire a Travel Trainer or Mobility Manager. This grant must be used to support planning and program development activities and may not be used to implement a program or service or provide rides. If staff are hired to carry out allowed activities, be sure to outline how the work of the staff member is going to function in the duration of the grant funds (6 months).

Q: Will projects less than $20,000 be considered for funding?

Yes, $20,000 is the maximum amount of funding to be provided to a community and projects totaling less than $20,000 will certainly be considered.