

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Answers to questions asked during the Local Infrastructure Hub's SS4A: Equity Deep Dive webinar on July 19, 2022

Q: If a County is going to apply for an SS4A Action Plan Grant, would it be counterintuitive for a municipality within that County to also apply for an Action Plan Grant? Is it better to be co-applicants or for the municipality to be a partner?

A: The [SS4A FAQ](#) is instructive. Generally, it would make sense for them to work together versus submitting a separate application – but both paths are options.

Separate Action Plan Grant applications for similar jurisdiction areas are permitted. However, duplicative Action Plan Grant requests will be flagged during the application review process, and USDOT may decline to fund duplicative applications irrespective of their individual merits. Joint applications are encouraged but are not required.

Q: If multiple non-partnered or joint Implementation applications are submitted, would they collectively be de-prioritized by the Federal Highway Administration?

A: SS4A Implementation Grants are treated similarly based on the selection criteria irrespective of if they are joint applications or not. The Implementation Grant webinar slides go through considerations about whether it makes sense to partner or not for an Implementation Grant application.

Q: We are filing an Implementation Grant and have a list of streets along with strategies. How much detail is required in the budget section of streets, strategies, and cost centers? Note pg. 22: "The budget should provide itemized estimates of the costs of the proposed projects and strategies at the individual component level."

A: The budget section should supplement the narrative connected to the costs information provided on the SF-424C to add in any details left out of that Standard Form; sometimes it is difficult to understand the whole picture through an SF-424C. Clearly breaking down each of the key projects/strategies to complement the cost numbers provided on the SF-424C, along with where funding is expected to go (X for materials/contractors/etc.) would be helpful, for example. Table 3 delineates the estimated costs by (A), (B), and (C) eligible activity categories and is the amount of funds to underserved communities.

Questions answered live during the webinar

Q: Can community groups (nonprofits, planning organizations, etc.) join on as partners?

A: Absolutely. USDOT encourages partnerships between entities. This includes public-private, nonprofit, and other innovative partnerships. In addition, USDOT welcomes applicants who have historically been left out of the federal grant process.

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Questions answered live during the webinar (*continued*)

Q: Interesting that this is the first time "Comprehensive" has been included with "Action Plan" — what is defined as "Comprehensive?"

A: A comprehensive plan or framework should outline a community's vision, policies, and priorities to increase mobility and connectivity, create thriving and resilient communities, and redress inequities and barriers to opportunity.

Q: Can counties join as a partner?

A: Under NOFO eligibility, county governments are eligible to participate in the program and can therefore be a partner in an application.

Q: Should support letters (included in the appendices) from partners specify their financial commitment to the Implementation Grant proposal, or should this be captured in the budget worksheet?

A: An application would be strengthened by financial commitment. Applicants are encouraged to include these financial commitments in the letters.

Q: The SSS4A NOFO states that Implementation Grant awards are anticipated to be up to \$30 million. For agencies applying for both implementation funding and supplemental activities (under one application), is there an anticipated award amount for the supplemental activities?

A: There is no expected grant size. The issue at hand would be communicating the compelling nature of the problem and addressing equity on the roadways. Provided numbers are given for a frame, but each project is unique. We retain the right to fund partially.

Q: Is a \$2 million project unlikely since the average project is \$5 million?

A: No — numbers are given for reference, not as a necessity.

Q: Are we able to submit multiple applications for one intersection?

A: Applicants can make one project and roll it up into one application and rank the highest safety problems.

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Questions answered live during the webinar (*continued*)

Q: How constrained would applicants be in terms of limiting improvements to the infrastructure on the roadway? For example, we have a safety issue that has limited solutions (especially limited affordable solutions) within the road right-of-way and would be best addressed by building a trail connection that would better connect residents in our historically African-American neighborhood to jobs and mass transit. Would this be eligible?

A: Whether it's a trail, path, pass, etc. — if it addresses safety concerns, it would definitely be considered. The key to a project like that is how the project relieves pressure on the system and vulnerable users.

Q: Our City is contemplating creating an Implementation Grant proposal that includes several safety projects with technology partners who are also providing match contributions. Should we be selected for an SS4A grant award, please comment on whether our City would be required to pursue a formal procurement process for solutions we build into our proposal with technology partners.

A: Please refer to the [Match and Cost Shares Document](#) that is included in the [resources section](#) of USDOT's website. This document will outline general parameters regarding match and cost share as they relate to the SS4A program and provide examples. The quick answer is that procurement processes should follow local procurement practices and any federal requirements, particularly 2 CFR part 200. Be sure to refer to the referenced documents for more detail.

Additional questions

Q: Are projects of only \$1 to 2 million unlikely to receive funding?

A: USDOT explicitly notes that there is no funding maximum or minimum award, and they have the discretion to determine award sizes for both Action Plan and Implementation Grants. The most important thing for applicants to do is to clearly articulate why the funding level being requested is appropriate and how the funding will be used to meet the objectives of the SS4A program.

It is worth noting, however, that USDOT has provided some expected funding ranges. USDOT notes that for Action Plan Grants, award amounts will be based on estimated costs, with an expected minimum of \$200,000 for all applicants, an expected maximum of \$1 million for a political subdivision of a State or a federally recognized Tribal government, and an expected maximum of \$5 million for an MPO or a joint application comprising a multijurisdictional group of entities that is regional in scope (e.g., a multijurisdictional group of counties, a council of governments and cities within the same region, etc.).

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Additional questions *(continued)*

A: For Implementation Grants, USDOT expects the minimum award will be \$5 million and the maximum award will be \$30 million for political subdivisions of a State. For applicants who are federally recognized Tribal governments or applicants in rural areas, USDOT expects the minimum award will be \$3 million and the maximum award will be \$30 million. For an MPO or a joint application composed of a multijurisdictional group of entities that is regional in scope, the expected maximum award will be \$50 million.

Q: How much is available for (1) planning and (2) implementation? What are the timeframes/deadlines for the use of each (e.g., contracting by a certain date, work completion by a certain date)?

A: USDOT has not specified the exact breakdown between planning and Implementation Grants. A total of \$1 billion is available for the FY22 round of funding. USDOT has noted that it expects to award hundreds of Action Plan Grants and up to 100 Implementation Grants.

For the time frame, USDOT expects to obligate SS4A award funding via a signed grant agreement between the Department and the recipient within 12 months after awards have been announced. Grant funding obligation occurs when a selected applicant and USDOT enter into a written grant agreement after the applicant has satisfied applicable administrative requirements. The expected period of performance for Action Plan Grant agreements is between 12 and 24 months. The period of performance for Implementation Grant agreements may not exceed five years. Because award recipients under this program may be first-time recipients of federal funding, USDOT is committed to implementing the program as flexibly as permitted by statute and to providing assistance to help award recipients through the process of securing a grant agreement and delivering both Action Plan activities and Implementation Grant projects and strategies. However, all FY22 SS4A funds must be expended within five years after the grant agreement is executed, and USDOT obligates the funds.

Q: If the City has a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan in place, would the repair of existing sidewalks, curbs, and gutters associated with overgrown trees be eligible for funding through the Implementation Grants?

A: Any projects funded in an Implementation plan would need to be projects and strategies that were identified in the applicant's Action Plan and must be directly related to addressing the safety problem(s) identified in the application and Action Plan. Provided that an applicant can clearly demonstrate how these activities are identified in the Action plan and also relate to the evaluation criteria and metrics that USDOT has specified in the NOFO, they would be eligible. In addition, USDOT has provided some illustrative (but not exhaustive) examples of the types of projects that could be funded — provided they were also identified in the applicant's Action Plan):

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Additional questions *(continued)*

A: *Below are illustrative examples of activities that could be conducted as part of an Implementation Grant. This list is not intended to be exhaustive in nature and could include infrastructure, behavioral, and operational safety activities identified in an Action Plan:*

- ❖ Applying low-cost roadway safety treatments system-wide, such as left- and right-turn lanes at intersections, centerline and shoulder rumble strips, wider edge lines, high-friction surface treatments, road diets, and better signage along high-crash urban and rural corridors.
- ❖ Identifying and correcting common risks across a network, such as improving pedestrian crosswalks by adding high-visibility pavement markings, lighting, and signage at transit stops, in a designated neighborhood, or along a busy public transportation route.
- ❖ Transforming a roadway corridor on a High-Injury Network into a Complete Street with safety improvements to control speed, separate users, and improve visibility, along with other measures that improve safety for all users.
- ❖ Installing pedestrian safety enhancements and closing network gaps with sidewalks, rectangular rapid-flashing beacons, signal improvements, and audible pedestrian signals for people walking, rolling, or using mobility-assisted devices.
- ❖ Working with community members in an identified problem area to carry out quick-build street design changes informed by outreach and user input.
- ❖ Supporting the development of bikeway networks with bicycle lanes for different roadway volumes and speeds that are safe for people of all ages and abilities.
- ❖ Carrying out speed management strategies such as implementing traffic calming road design changes, addressing speed along key corridors through infrastructure, conducting education and outreach, setting appropriate speed limits, and making strategic use of speed safety cameras.
- ❖ Creating safe routes to school and public transit services through multiple activities that lead to people safely walking, biking, and rolling in underserved communities.
- ❖ Promoting the adoption of innovative technologies or strategies to promote safety and protect vulnerable road users in high-traffic areas where commercial motor vehicles (CMVs), pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, etc., interact.
- ❖ Conducting education campaigns to accompany new or innovative infrastructure, such as roundabouts, pedestrian hybrid beacons, or pedestrian-only zones.

Q&A: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Additional questions (*continued*)

- A:**
- ❖ Implementing standard and novel data collection and analysis technologies and strategies to better understand vulnerable road user (pedestrian/bicycle/transit rider) network gaps and to collect exposure data.
 - ❖ Deploying advanced transportation technologies, such as the installation of connected intersection-based safety solutions and vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) advisory speed limit systems (e.g., Intelligent Speed Assistance [ISA]).
 - ❖ Combating roadway departure crashes through enhanced delineation, shoulder widening, rumble strips, and roadside safety improvements.
 - ❖ Evaluating and improving the safety of intersections by considering innovative design changes, improved delineation, and advanced warning.
 - ❖ Improving first responder services with improved crash data collection, formalizing street names and addressing, and enhancing emergency vehicle warning systems.
 - ❖ Unifying and integrating safety data across jurisdictions where local agencies share their crash, roadway inventory, and traffic volume data to create an analytic data resource.

Q: The City is looking at a few options. One of the specific areas are walking/biking trail connectors. Is this a viable project?

A: Trails, paths, passes, etc., will only be viable if they address safety concerns. The key to these projects is how they relieve pressure on the system and protect vulnerable users. As previously noted, any projects funded in an Implementation Plan would need to be projects and strategies that were identified in the applicant's Action Plan and must be directly related to addressing the safety problem(s) identified in the application and Action Plan. Provided that an applicant can clearly demonstrate how these activities are identified in the Action Plan and also relate to the evaluation criteria and metrics that USDOT has specified in the NOFO, they would be eligible.

Emily Schweninger, *Senior Policy Advisor, Transportation Health and Safety, USDOT*, presented an overview of SS4A and answered questions during the webinar. Other policy experts at USDOT and Results for America also provided answers.

Visit the [Local Infrastructure Hub's website](#) for additional resources and expert advice.