5 winning strategies for building competitive Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) applications

Top recommendations from the Local Infrastructure Hub, a national program to ensure all cities and towns can access funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

#1 Identify and understand the problem you are trying to solve.

The first thing your city or town <u>must</u> do is determine the problem you are trying to solve. Start by taking a broad view of how to reach your goal – then narrow down to specific steps to figure out what your SMART project should focus on. It's also important to use design thinking here: Who are your key constituents, and what are their needs and perspectives?

Once you have determined the problem you are solving for, you should then develop your **Smart City vision**. Work with a focused set of key stakeholders to identify priorities and desired outcomes for the project. This should include resiliency-focused goals such as reducing operational costs, **enhancing resident engagement**, strengthening community resilience, improving public safety, and bridging the equity gap.

#2 Put equity at the center.

Equity will be at the core of competitive SMART applications. As with many Bipartisan Infrastructure Law programs, DOT is focused on leveraging SMART to achieve its **Justice40 goal**, which aims to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.

Determine what "SMART" means for your city or town by envisioning how it will advance equity in your community. SMART is about addressing real life challenges where new technologies and approaches can create benefits. You may choose to define SMART as "how data can be used to improve outcomes for residents" or "what it will take to make a specific service more equitable." If your city or town has a Chief Equity Officer or Data Officer, be sure to enlist them to use data to drive future decision making around equity. You can also consult with your city's agency directors, who may have access to **data or ideas for innovative approaches**. It's also important to consider the workforce benefits and opportunities associated with your application – this can and should be part of your equity agenda.

#3 Incorporate sustainability, resilience, and safety into all aspects of your community's application.

Transportation is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions – so incorporating technology into your SMART planning and applications that enables sustainability is critical. Communities can commit to zero-emission fuels and renewables, as well as use technology and alternative modes of transportation to promote greenhouse gas reduction and overall sustainability. Additionally, improving safety – including personal and community safety and the **safety of your resident's data** – across all modes of transportation for all people should be a starting point for your application, and your vision for SMART.

#4 Build an operational framework – then identify tasks and processes to ensure your project will reach your goals.

An operational framework is an essential element of a successful SMART grant application. Think of your framework as a roadmap for how your project will be managed and supported. It should reflect how new capabilities will be integrated into existing systems and processes and define associated key performance indicators (KPI's). This could include incorporating a "project definition" that defines how your project will be implemented to achieve its goals, program statements, recommended solutions, high-level solution requirements, and expected benefits.

Finally, you should also develop a **Smart City Project Plan** to determine the needed tasks and processes to guide your city or town through project implementation and define governance structures.

#5 Tap into technology to solve challenges – and deliver outcomes.

Your application should demonstrate how technology can solve urgent problems. Consider partnering with the private sector to educate policymakers on the importance of emerging transportation technologies. Show how they can help communities deliver results. Help cities and towns understand tech's role in improving lives, and leverage the power of public-private partnerships, which can help communities responsibly invest in digital infrastructure and **mobility and** meet community goals.