

The Local Infrastructure Hub is an initiative to help ensure that all cities and towns can access federal Infrastructure Act funding to drive local recovery, improve communities, and deliver results for residents. The following is summary information about one of the many grants for communities.

Type

[Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation \(SMART\) Grants](#)

Agency

Department of Transportation (DOT)

Category

 Public Transportation

Total IJA Funding

\$100M annually for Fiscal Years 22–26.

Grant Funding

- Stage 1 Planning & Prototyping Grants: maximum award \$2 million over a project period of up to 18 months
- Stage 2 Implementation Grants: up to \$15 million over 36 months (not available in FY22)
- There is no minimum grant award size.
- DOT anticipates awarding between 30 to 50 Stage 1 SMART Grants in FY22.

Match Requirements

The SMART Program has not detailed a match requirement.

Key Dates

- DOT anticipates releasing the first SMART Grants NOFO in September 2022.
- Applications for FY22 SMART Grants will likely be due in November 2022.

Technical Assistance

DOT hosted a SMART [“Getting Ready”](#) webinar to help potential SMART Grant applicants prepare.

SMART was designed to put [DOT’s Innovation Principles](#) into practice.

DOT launched the [DOT Navigator website](#), a resource to help communities plan transportation projects and apply for grants.

Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Overview

The [SMART Grants Program \(SMART\)](#) is a new initiative created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to improve transportation efficiency and safety by investing in the planning and implementation of innovative technologies that have not yet been widely adopted in the public sector. SMART provides local governments with the funding and planning capacity needed to bring advanced technology demonstration projects to their local communities.

SMART Grants will be awarded for the first time in FY22. Only Stage 1 Grant recipients will be eligible to apply for Stage 2.

- [Stage 1 Planning & Prototyping Grants](#) will give communities resources to study and prepare to implement innovative technology projects in transit systems. Funds can be used to plan, refine, and prototype projects in collaboration with relevant public, private, academic, and community stakeholders. Stage 1 Grants should produce a robust implementation plan for the proposed project.
- [Stage 2 Implementation Grants](#) will fund the implementation of a Stage 1 project to provide a scaled-up demonstration of the technologies’ uses and benefits. Once Stage 2 projects are complete, the awardee should have implemented the project, integrated it within existing transit systems, refined the concept, and identified any challenges to implementation.

Recipients will detail process and progress with metrics relevant to other areas.

SMART projects must incorporate at least one of [eight technology areas](#):

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Automated transit and/or autonomous vehicles | 4. Integration of smart transportation systems with existing systems | 6. Innovative aviation technologies |
| 2. Connected vehicles or vehicle-to-vehicle communication | 5. Advanced commerce delivery & logistics technologies | 7. Smart energy grids |
| 3. Intelligent, sensor-based infrastructure | | 8. Traffic signal technology improvements |

(Applicants should not attempt to cover all technology areas in one project.)

Key Funding Criteria

SMART will fund innovative projects using advanced technologies to solve real-world challenges and improve communities. Applicants should employ creativity in local experimentation. SMART supports several approaches including:

- new transportation applications of existing and emerging technologies
- expanded and systematized use of proven technologies
- deep integration of solutions with existing transportation systems

Proposals should demonstrate that the project will use eligible technology, data, and/or applications to provide significant benefits relating to:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| • congestion | • jobs, education, and essential services access | • improved emergency response |
| • safety | • expanded access for underserved communities | • public-private partnerships and |
| • energy efficiency | | |
| • pollution reduction | | |

Eligible Applicants

[Eligible applicants](#) for SMART Grants include: local governments, public transit agencies or authorities, public toll authorities, metropolitan planning organizations, states, and Tribal governments.

Applicants may also apply as a coalition of two or more eligible entities.

Eligible Activities

[Eligible activities](#) must incorporate at least one of the [eight technology](#) areas listed in the [Grant Overview](#).

For Stage 1, eligible project costs include:

- Planning & feasibility analyses
- Revenue forecasting
- Environmental reviews
- Permitting
- Preliminary engineering and design work
- Systems and IT development
- Necessary land acquisition or improvements

Key Preparatory Activities

- Determine which [technologies suggested by DOT](#) can offer an effective solution for a pressing issue that the community faces.
- Consider projects that presented obstacles in the past that can improve climate and economic conditions for vulnerable members of the community.
- Use DOT's [Mapping Tool](#) and EPA's [EJ Screen](#) to determine areas most in need.
- Devise metrics that will best demonstrate an improvement for the community.
- Develop clear arguments for how the demonstration project can further climate, equity, and safety priorities.
- Incorporate [Buy America, Build America](#) strategies into the budget.

Projects using technology to increase the efficiency of the delivery and logistics sector can have large, positive impacts on communities of color as well. Decades of environmental injustice have made Black and brown Americans much more likely to live near busy ports, freight truck traffic, railroads, and other infrastructure that negatively impacts their health and quality of life. Communities near ports, for example, are directly harmed by [logistics inefficiencies](#). Idling cargo ships pollute the air and generate light and noise pollution, affecting residents' health, quality of life, and property values. Increasing the efficiency and safety of logistics infrastructure can deliver benefits to communities that have been long-harmed by this industry.

- resiliency
- economic competitiveness
- transit system reliability
- connected vehicles connectivity
- private investments in transit

Competitive proposals will demonstrate the community can determine strategy effectiveness, detail capacity, and prove a high likelihood of executing the project by leveraging public and private commitments. The [legislation that established the SMART Grants Program](#) directs the DOT to give priority to funding projects that will:

- Demonstrate smart city or community technologies that can be rapidly scaled
- Generate significant public benefits
- Model open data sharing, data privacy, and cybersecurity best practices
- Promote a skilled and inclusive workforce
- Include strong measurement and validation strategies to track performance and demonstrate effectiveness
- Address climate and equity priorities

Stage 1 proposals should show how SMART will build in-house technology capacity and experience. Proposals should include a detailed plan to work with community, academic, and industry leaders to refine and prototype the project concept. DOT will consider geographic diversity and balance the needs of rural, mid-size, and large communities in its evaluation.

Climate Equity Opportunity

SMART Grants can enhance transportation efficiency and fight climate change by adopting technologies that will reduce carbon emissions, increase energy and fuel efficiency, promote electric vehicles, and streamline freight delivery. They can be used to make improvements to traffic signaling, deploy intelligent infrastructure, and improve delivery logistics - all of which can relieve congestion, increase fuel efficiency, and support efficient freight movement. Grants can also be used to develop a smart energy grid for the adoption or expansion of energy capture, and for electric vehicle infrastructure and deployment.

Project proposals will receive priority if they demonstrate climate benefits are delivered to the communities that are most vulnerable to climate risks – low-income communities and people of color. DOT's [interim definition of disadvantaged communities](#) and DOT's [historically transportation-disadvantaged communities mapping tool](#) can help applicants identify high-need areas and articulate benefits.

Racial Wealth Equity Opportunity

Infrastructure Act-funded programs prioritize promoting economic opportunity. SMART Grant proposals that incorporate strategies to promote an inclusive, skilled workforce and include minority-owned businesses and contractors, as per DOT's [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#) requirements, will be more competitive. By working with minority-owned businesses, SMART Grant projects can infuse capital into historically marginalized communities, support local businesses, and keep project dollars within the communities they are designed to serve.