

5 Winning Strategies for Building a Competitive RAISE Application

#1 Assess your project's readiness.

Cities should focus on submitting the highest quality Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) application possible. If your community is interested in a capital investment grant, your city should have a site identified and be able to demonstrate that you are [prepared to obligate](#)¹ all funds by the timeline required by law, and show progress toward environmental, planning, and permit approvals from federal, state and local authorities. If your project is not yet at this stage of readiness, you may consider applying for a planning grant instead, which can be used to fund pre-construction activities.

Reviewing DOT materials, including [prior awards](#), [RAISE FAQs](#), and informational webinars from the last cycle on how to create a [competitive application](#), can also help you determine your project's readiness. Additionally, see the [LIH database of winning RAISE applications](#) for a sense of what it takes to garner funding. For determining how to fund your project's local match, [this resource](#) from the National League of Cities may be helpful.

WINNING APPLICATION: Dubuque, Iowa received a \$2.3 million planning grant to design and engineer affordable, safe, and accessible non-motorized transportation options to connect residents in low-income neighborhoods to vital economic, recreational, and civic opportunities. This project will include the construction of a vehicular and pedestrian overpass enhancement aimed at increasing safety and new pedestrian and bike shared-use paths for safer and environmentally-conscious transportation choices. The application identifies key community stakeholders who will be engaged throughout the planning process, and lays out a focus on equity by committing to utilizing local hiring practices, engaging disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs), and encouraging the use of apprenticeships.

#2 Consider a regional coordination strategy.

One of the things that makes RAISE unique is that it can be used for [multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional](#) projects. While coordination among local governments can be complicated, those that are able to coordinate regionally may have stronger applications and will also avoid submitting competing applications.

WINNING APPLICATION: South Bend, Indiana received a planning grant to remove barriers, support businesses, incentivize mixed income housing, and help the Market District area convert into a thriving regional destination. The project is replacing outdated freeways with a network of complete streets; building an enhanced riverside walk and pedestrian connections; and providing a framework to allow the development of missing middle housing types. The project is a coordinated effort between the City of South Bend, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture; the architecture school developed the design concepts for this proposal.



¹ Obligation occurs when a selected applicant enters a written, project-specific agreement, such as a contract, and is generally after the applicant has satisfied applicable administrative requirements, including transportation planning and NEPA requirements.

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#3 Use data to demonstrate your project's Intended impact.

Transportation policy has wide-ranging impacts on racial equity and [economic mobility](#), including in some ways that are less obvious. For example, there are significant [health implications](#) related to a community's options for accessible, reliable, and safe transportation. A strong application will use local, regional, or even national data to explain the potential economic and broader impacts of their transportation project.

WINNING APPLICATION: New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (NORTA, p. 69) received a grant to fund construction of a Downtown Transit Center (DTC) for the (NORTA)'s bus and street-car network, including multimodal improvements to the corridor that connects to the DTC. The new facility will provide enhanced connections for transit riders while making data-driven safety improvements at targeted intersections with a history of pedestrian-involved crashes.

#4 Highlight your project's local or regional impact and proactively address racial equity AND climate resiliency.

In last year's [FY23 RAISE NOFO](#), DOT gave the highest marks for applications that had anticipated benefits that were clear, direct, data-driven, and significant on safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, mobility and community connectivity, and economic competitiveness and opportunity, among other criteria.

Applications will be most competitive if they show that these considerations have been incorporated proactively, use data to clearly document impacts and expected outcomes, and are meaningfully embedded in the entire design of the project.

WINNING APPLICATION: [Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#) received \$11.3 million to revitalize a predominantly Black and historically disinvested community, which was victimized by redlining. The project will include the reconstruction of intersections, street corridors, and the installation of traffic calming measures such as sidewalks and green infrastructure to safely connect residents to transit hubs and employment opportunities. The project will also address environmental sustainability issues by constructing new electric vehicle charging stations and low-impact stormwater infrastructure.

#5 Be explicit about how your project will create good jobs and reduce barriers to opportunity.

DOT has indicated that projects that will result in good-paying jobs will be more competitive for RAISE and other infrastructure grants. They have released a [Checklist for a Strong Workforce and Labor Plan](#) that applicants can use to strengthen the workforce development components of their application for any DOT grant program. More strategies and resources for how to use funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for workforce development can be found [here](#).

WINNING APPLICATION: [Louisville, Kentucky](#) received a \$5 million planning grant to create safer and affordable transportation options to encourage economic growth in disinvested communities. The equity focus of this project is to reconnect a historically Black underserved community to job opportunities by removing a physical barrier and improving overall poverty, education, and health outcomes.



NOFO application deadline: TBD