Winning Strategies for Planning and Demonstration Grants under Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

The SS4A program provides support for communities to plan and implement strategies to reduce traffic-related deaths and serious injuries. In addition to larger implementation grants, communities can apply for resources to develop Safety Action Plans—which assess a community's road safety and put forth recommendations for improvement—and Demonstration Projects, which inform safety action plans by piloting interventions designed to improve road safety. Below are five winning strategies for cities seeking funding for these Planning and Demonstration Grants.

Interested applicants should visit the Infrastructure Hub website for examples of [winning SS4A applications](#).

#1 Understand Safety Action Plans

Safety Action Plans are a foundational component in developing and implementing impactful projects, as they articulate well-defined and measurable strategies to prevent road injuries and fatalities within a community. They require high levels of community engagement, processes for data collection, and goal-setting. See **here** for background from the Department of Transportation on how to develop a safety action plan, as well as inventory of existing **action plans**; those developed under the SS4A program should have the following features:

- **Leadership and Commitment Goal Setting.** A public commitment from the mayor or other high-ranking official to a long-term goal of zero roadway fatalities or serious injuries.
- **Planning Structure.** A committee or similar body to handle plan development, implementation, and monitoring.
- **Safety Analysis** of existing and historical data to provide baseline levels of crash data under which future interventions will be evaluated against.
- **Engagement and Collaboration**, including with frontline community groups and the private sector, which will enable relevant input and feedback.
- **Equity Considerations** developed through data analysis that identifies underserved communities with engagement from relevant stakeholders.
- **Policy and Process Changes.** Assessment of current policies to identify opportunities to improve traffic safety.
- **Strategy and Project Selections.** Identification of projects and strategies—informed by data, evidence, stakeholder input and equity—to address safety problems articulated in the Action Plan.
- **Progress and Transparency**, including developing methods to measure progress and outcomes.

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#2 Use data to make the case that your Safety Action Plan will address road safety needs

A successful application must make a quantitative case that a Safety Action Plan is needed to address a given community's road safety concerns. Specifically, DOT requires that applicants report the total number of roadway fatalities over the past five years, as well as the average fatality rate per 100,000 people over the past five years—these data can be found in the National Highway Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System. Additionally, the NOFO requires that applicants discuss in narrative form how the Safety Action Plan will reduce fatalities, engage stakeholders, adopt innovative technologies, and use evidence-based or evidence-building practices to promote safety.

Winning Strategy:

Hundreds of applicants from communities across the county won 2023 planning grants to develop safety action plans; a winning application for developing a safety action plan for Waxhaw, North Carolina can be found here. Mesa, Arizona's winning application shows how to operationalize using data to show how a safety action plan will address community needs. Additionally, communities should look towards case studies that highlight the power of evidence-based programs to promote road safety. For example, Hoboken, New Jersey has eliminated all traffic-related deaths since 2017 as a result of implementing data-driven strategies.

#3 Detail equity impacts

Consistent with the Administration's focus on investing in underserved communities, DOT seeks to award grants that promote equitable impacts with regard to traffic safety. As such, the NOFO requires that applicants detail the percentage of their population residing in an "underserved community" census tract. To calculate this, applicants can use DOT's Equitable Transportation Community Explorer (ETCE) tool or the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

Winning Strategy:

For example, in their winning application, the City of Columbus, Ohio detailed how their proposal would benefit a historically disadvantaged community in the city by providing data that the target neighborhood has a higher proportion of low-income families, families that speak a language other than English at home, people from minoritized racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and people without a vehicle.

#4 Apply for funding for a demonstration activity

In 2023, the SS4A NOFO allowed communities to simultaneously apply for action planning and demonstration activities, which are intended to inform Safety Action Plan development by testing interventions meant to improve road safety at a small scale. Eligible activities include:

- Quick build interventions to inform permanent future projects (for example, using paint/plastic delineator posts to experiment with impermanent roadway design changes).
- Engineering studies from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices focused on safety applications (for example, high visibility crosswalk markings).
- Pilot programs for behavioral or operational activities that incorporate DOT's Safe System Approach (for example, message-testing at a small scale).
- Pilot programs demonstrating safety technologies that a community has not yet adopted (for example, variable speed limits).

Winning Strategy:

The City of Tampa, Florida is using SS4A funding to expand their quick build program, in which they prioritize low-cost safety enhancements like new roadway markings for bike lanes that can be constructed quickly to improve roadway safety as fast as possible.

#5 Forge regional partnerships

DOT encourages communities to partner with neighboring cities, metropolitan planning organizations, their county, and/or and other regional organizations, particularly since roadway jurisdiction can be variable. Taking a regional approach will allow for greater strategic alignment and will prevent duplication—if DOT flags your application as duplicative, it will deny funding.

Winning Strategy:

Many of the 2023 SS4A planning and implementation grant winners were intergovernmental partnerships, such as regional planning commissions. For an example of a winning project with a regional strategy, you can view the city of Kokomo, Indiana's full application for a $200,000 planning grant in partnership with Howard County to develop a comprehensive safety plan to reduce road injuries and fatalities.