

Winning Strategies for Low or No Emissions and Buses and Bus Facilities Grants

#1 Understand grant eligibility requirements

The [Low/No program](#) is partnered with the Buses and Bus Facilities program, which are both included in the same [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO). Low and no emissions bus grants can be used for purchasing or leasing qualifying buses, but can also be used for constructing, remodeling, or leasing related facilities and equipment. For example, Knoxville, Tennessee will use their [2023 Low/No grant](#) for chargers that will enable them to increase the number of battery-electric buses in their fleet.

The Buses/Bus Facilities program is smaller with \$390 million in grant funding available, compared to \$1.1 billion for Low/No, and does not have the same low/no emissions requirements (even though emissions reduction is encouraged). Communities are encouraged in the NOFO to submit their application to both grant programs to maximize their chances of receiving funds, as long as the application meets the eligibility criteria for both programs.

Another important eligibility note for small communities: Low/No projects categorized as rural, defined as any area that was not considered an “urban area” (population 50,000) as of the 2020 Census, must be submitted by the state. Small and rural communities should therefore work to coordinate with their state agency to complete an application.

#2 Provide data on how grant funds will reduce greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) intends for both the Low/No program and its companion program the Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also avoiding other adverse environmental impacts, particularly for disadvantaged communities. The FTA will therefore give priority consideration to projects in both programs that incorporate low or no emission technology or otherwise reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Low/No applications are required to demonstrate the extent to which they will reduce greenhouse gases as part of their application, but this information will be beneficial for applications to both programs.

#3 Prepare your procurement strategy in advance of your application

The [Low/No NOFO](#) discusses procurement at length and has several provisions to ensure that procurement for grant program projects is as efficient and cost-effective as possible.

These include: providing priority consideration to applicants that identify their intent to use a procurement method that reduces vehicle customization, and encouraging a cooperative procurement strategy with other transit agencies and/or applicants. And important note: in their NOFO, the FTA indicated that it intends to weigh this priority consideration more heavily than the others identified in the NOFO.

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#4 Incorporate strong workforce development plans into your application

As with other [U.S. Department of Transportation \(USDOT\) grant programs](#), priority consideration will be given for applications that describe how a project will support workforce development, job quality, and wealth creation.

For applicants proposing a project with zero-emissions vehicles or related facilities, 5% of the federal award must be spent on workforce development and training as this is an important component of fleet transition. An additional requirement for these types of projects is that they submit a [Zero-Emission Fleet Transition Plan](#) with their planned workforce development activities incorporated.

For facilities projects, applicants are encouraged to use strategies like apprenticeship utilization requirements, partnerships with workforce development programs, or Project Labor/Community Workforce Agreements for facilities construction. More ideas on how to incorporate these strategies in an infrastructure project can be found [here](#).

For the Buses and Bus facilities program, grant recipients are permitted and encouraged to use up to .5 percent of their award for workforce development activities like on-the-job training or registered apprenticeships and to develop their plans for these activities in collaboration with workforce boards, unions, and other stakeholders.

#5 Braid and blend funds to green your fleet

The Low/No and Buses and Bus facilities grant programs allow applicants to use certain other federal funds from non-USDOT grant programs as their non-federal match, sometimes termed “braiding funds.” [This guide](#) can be helpful for finding federal funding that is eligible for braiding.

**NOFO application deadline:
April 25, 2024**