Webinar Transcript: FTA Enhancing Mobility Innovation FY 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Webinar Date and Time: Wednesday, January 15th, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM EST

Funding Opportunity Webpage: https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/enhancing-mobility-innovation-fy-2021-notice-funding-opportunity

Torng, Gwo-Wei (FTA): (00:00:00 - 00:01:27)

Hello everyone.

Hello everyone welcome.

This webinar is for the Federal Transit Administration's Enhancing Mobility Innovation notice of funding opportunity released on November 12, 2021.

Funds will be awarded competitively for projects that advance our vision of carefree mobility for all, meaning safe, reliable, equitable and accessible services that support complete trips for all travelers.

Project proposals are due January 11, 2022.

I am Gwo-Wei Torng, Director of Mobility Innovation at the Federal Transit Administration. I'm joined today by my FTA Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration and Innovation, Karina Ricks, and several key FTA staff members for this notice of funding opportunity.

I want to thank you for your interest in shaping the future of mobility with us, and I look forward to your participation.

Now I will turn the floor over to Karina Ricks for her welcome remarks.

Ricks, Karina (FTA): (00:01:30 - 00:03:56)

Thank you.

And thank you Gwo-Wei and thank you to all the attendees. We're really enthusiastic that we've gotten the kind of robust interest in this notice of funding opportunity that we've got. This is a very exciting moment in time.

The last couple of years have been one of massive disruption on a number of levels.

We've had technological disruption, we've had public health disruption, we've had to introduce new ways for people to travel and to navigate through that.

This notice of funding availability, which is really focusing on enhancing mobility innovation is never more important than it's been in the past. This is research and demonstration that will really continually help inform and improve public transportation, really serve users of all types.

So, I just really want to thank you for your interest. We're looking forward to some creative proposals, robust proposals.

Proposals that can really help, again, continue to inform that process of continuous improvement in the provision of public transit, continue to serve and align with the strategic goals of the US Department of Transportation.

So equity, sustainability, safety, economic competitiveness, and modernization and transformation of the transportation, generally in public transit, specifically in terms of the Federal Transit Administration.

Gwo-Wei and Christina have been exceptional leaders. They're here to continue to lead through this initiative, so again, just really looking forward to the proposals that we will get and are hopeful that there will be a number of different submissions for that.

So, thank you for your interest, I'm looking forward to the questions that you'll have, so that we can make sure that we can answer those to have the most complete most informed and most competitive submissions response to this notice a funding opportunity, thank you very much.

Gwo-Wei, back to you!

Torng, Gwo-Wei (FTA): (00:03:57 - 00:09:39)

Thank you, Karina.

As Karina noted that we are looking for creative and robust ideas and proposals in this NOFO.

We need to work together to get to achieve our common interest there, so I would like to start with a couple of slides just to provide some background information and, hopefully, you will find them helpful next slide please.

About FTA mobility FTA innovation in general, so we want to at FTA research office, we want to support a vision for carefree mobility for all.

That means everyone can connect to opportunities, whether or not it's going to school, to work, to friends and family, to doctor's office, to shopping.

All this connection to opportunities without anxiety, without stress, without worry, and without a doubt, regardless whether we are lower income, whether we have disabilities, and whether we are eight years old or eighty years old. Carefree for everyone and everywhere. So are we there? No, we are not there, in many ways we probably can say we are very far away from there.

But therefore, that's our vision, we want to move closer and closer every step of the way, and that's why we want to work with you to get to that notion of carefree mobility.

And our research efforts seek to foster innovative transit technologies, practices and solutions; support research of national significance, advances the state of practice;

We want to leverage private sector innovation, as you can see, demonstrated in this NOFO; and we want to ensure all travelers' communities can benefit from our research outcome. Next slide please.

(00:06:27) Next. Probably have some little delay here all right.

So as a background information oh.

I'm going to let the slide settle. Okay, I think we're stable now. As a background information mentioned in the NOFO.

Here's a snapshot of recent FTA research investment in mobility innovation demonstrations, as you can see, to the left, back in 2016 nearly five years ago, FTA announced the Mobility on Demand Sandbox Program.

The Sandbox aimed to provide a platform where providers of public transportation across the country can explore any new ideas and strategies that they deem suited to benefit people's mobility in their communities. Since then, many innovative ideas conceived, piloted, and proven by the mobility industry in general.

And I always say our transit industry, in particular, some within the Sandbox and many more outside of the Sandbox with and without federal funding support.

In 2019, FTA launched the more targeted investment in advancing mobility innovation, which we call integrated mobility innovation or IMI. As part of IMI we selected 23 projects or 24 for a total of close to $20 million to focus on mobility payment integration and transit bus automation.

What in 2016 we called innovative is now increasingly commonplace in 2020. But accelerating innovative mobility or AIM program not only continue to seek new ideas.

And we want to focus on a wide deployment of proven practices such as first/last mile connectivity. As part of AIM, we selected 24 projects for a total of $14 million for the AIM Program.

Today, through this enhancing mobility innovation program we want to build on this momentum going forward and continue our journey toward carefree mobility for all.

Now I'm going to turn the floor over to Christina Gikakis. Christina is our manager for this enhancing mobility innovation program. Christina will now talk about this funding opportunity in greater detail, including eligibility and evaluation criteria.

Christina?

Gikakis, Christina (FTA): (00:09:45 – 00:22:44)

Thank you, Gwo-Wei.

Good afternoon, everybody and good morning to some of you. I'm Christina Gikakis, I'm from the FTA Office of Mobility Innovation and I'm going to highlight some information from this new funding opportunity.

As Gwo-Wei mentioned the funding opportunity was published last month in the Federal Register.

(00:10:15) $2 million is available under this program in two distinct program areas, one area is concept development or demonstration projects that accelerate mobility innovations, and the other area is software development projects to facilitate demand response public transportation.

This program implements two provisions of the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act that directs FTA to fund projects in these areas.

In order to ensure the most impactful projects for each area, FTA is seeking projects that require a minimum award amount of $250,000 in federal funds, and the maximum award for one project is $1 million federal.

FTA is seeking innovative projects that are traveler-focused, in other words, what is going to improve the rider experience.

Innovations that support and help meet evolving mobility needs.

Advance equitable and climate smart transportation.

Contributes to knowledge of national significance and has valuable learning outcomes for transit, improves public transportation service, and advances the vision of carefree mobility for all.

$1 million like I mentioned is available for projects that improve mobility and enhance the rider experience with a focus on innovative service delivery models, creative financing, novel partnerships, and integrated payment solutions.

For this area, projects can be for concepts development, demonstration of innovative mobility ideas or may include both development and demonstration, and this is a departure from our previous programs that we mentioned earlier, where projects had to conclude in some sort of demonstration.

$1 million is available for software development projects, projects in this area, follow the specific language from the appropriation bill directing this program, so we are seeking projects that support the development of software solutions that facilitate integrated demand response public transportation that dispatch transit vehicles through riders' mobile devices or other means.

Software should be interoperable, adoptable, secure, and able to be seamlessly integrated into other transportation and transit management systems.

Further, the project team should consider how the development effort supports open standards specifications or protocols.

FTA is also going to evaluate the potential for the software to be shared widely for use by public transportation agencies, which was also indicated in language in the appropriation bill creating this program.

For this program we've also expanded the eligibility for lead applicants.

So eligible applicants under this Notice include providers of public transportation, so transit agencies, state and local government DOTs, and federally recognized Indian tribes.

(00:14:13) Private for-profit and non-for-profit organizations, state, city or local government entities, including multi-jurisdictional partnerships and metropolitan planning organizations, and institutes of higher education, including large research, universities and those with minority-serving institutions status.

Eligible applicants are also encouraged to identify one or more project partners with substantial interest and involvement in the project, and so, if you're familiar with some of our other notices and programs, these used to be called key partners and we're calling them just partners now, but they're still very important in that naming your partner on an application.

So for applications with a partnership selected for funding with named partners, the competitive selection process what we deem to satisfy the requirements of the federal procurement process.

And that's to help step projects off to help identify and help us understand how those partnerships are put together and also it benefits the project teams in that they can work to start their projects more quickly once awarded.

So what are these, what are the eligible activities.

Now, first I want to mention on the application, you must specify if you're going to apply for the concepts development demonstration type project or software development project, it's one or the other.

Eligible activities include all stages of project implementation and depending on the type of project that you're planning to put forward, they could include planning activities, acquiring necessary equipment and services, modeling the project impacts, such as the climate or equity impacts, and stakeholder engagement and outreach, or efforts to establish usernames, defined system requirements, development, validation and verification of the software and pilot implementation.

We've provided some examples to give you an idea of the span of this particular notice so some projects may include data-driven strategies or tools that balance mobility options available to travelers with the balance with climate smart choices.

Seamless payment systems and solutions that can enhance integrated mobility management and operations across a variety of modes.

Collaboration between transit providers and nontraditional partners focused on new or better ways of supporting how transportation is delivered and consumed.

New smarter business models for providing more effective transportation and mobility options and underserved communities, or AI tools to personalize mobility options to travelers to or to predict traveler behavior.

Or any project that advances the objectives of this funding opportunity. These examples are just illustrative, and not meant to limit you exploring other fresher innovative approaches.

It's up to the project proponents to look at what areas can be enhanced what novel partnerships are possible what insights your projects can deliver to advance how mobility is provided in your community.

So how are these projects structured?

(00:18:14) Projects require a minimum of 20% cost share so the federal share of the total project cost cannot exceed 80%.

As we mentioned previously, project partners can be named in the application.

Projects that are selected will be awarded cooperative agreements and managed as FTA research grants.

So what does that mean, that speaks to how the projects will be reimbursed.

So projects are structured on a cost reimbursable basis.

Project teams will support and cooperate with FTA in independent evaluation efforts, and this is really we're looking to maximize learning on these projects, and so, so we do conduct independent evaluations.

And the timeline for these projects, again a departure from previous notices, the timeline's not prescribed.

So the timelines for projects are really going to reflect the complexity of the project.

And the urgency of the proposed research effort.

And will be assessing, and I'll speak more about the evaluation criteria in a moment, but, this is one of the things that we'll be assessing under the project implementation strategy that the timeline matches. The timeline and the strategy for implementation matches the content of the project.

Projects are competitively selected based on the six evaluation criteria.

All the criteria are equally weighted during the evaluation and they're detailed on the funding notice specifically, the six areas are demonstration of innovation, demonstration of benefits, planning and partnerships, local financial commitment, project implementation strategy, and technical, legal and financial capacity.

So I encourage all of you to review the evaluation language and the NOFO carefully when crafting your proposals.

As these are the criteria that we that we will use to determine the technical merit of the project.

So a little on the review and selection process more broadly.

Technical evaluation review teams made up the federal staff will evaluate the proposals based on these published evaluation criteria and provide technical recommendations to leadership.

FTA may also consider the extent to which applications provide air quality benefits.

Benefit environmental justice populations and promote racial equity and the removal of barriers to opportunity.

FTA may also consider geographic diversity, diversity and recipient type and size, and cap the amount a single applicant may receive.

(00:21:57) For more information on the program I encourage you to visit the FTA website, as many of you probably already have. We're going to be posting frequently asked questions on this webinar as well as the information from this webinar.

And the thing I want to want to mention, most importantly, is the submission deadline is January 11, 2022, so it is coming up.

And with that I like to turn it over to my colleague Johnita Glover from the Office of Program Management. She's going to talk to us about the process for applying through grants.gov. And I look forward to your questions at the end of this session. Johnita?

Johnita Glover (FTA): (00:22:46 – 00:32:52)

Thank you Christina.

So this portion of the webinar is to provide an orientation on the resources available to applicants on the FTA website grants.gov website and on the application process. Next slide.

Next slide please, thank you.

FTA funding opportunities are published on the FTA website, the Federal Register, and on the grants.gov website.

We recommend applicants begin their search and application process on the FTA funding opportunities web page.

Using the NOFO page as your start provides links to related information and links to the websites and resources to assist with the application process.

To locate the NOFO page, go to the FTA homepage which is fta.dot.gov, at the top of the web page click on funding and then select apply.

Click on the notice of funding on the left side of the page. The notice of funding page provides links to all the current or active FTA opportunities available.

Click on the opportunity ID, which is the hyperlink, to the FTA website NOFO summary page. If you click on a grant program, this link brings you to the program page, which is sponsoring and discretionary funded and solicited applicants. If you are searching for old or expired notices, they are available on a separate menu you directly under the notice of funding. Next slide.

So, as mentioned the FTA NOFO page contains a summary of the opportunity announcement, important dates, such as the application deadline, brief explanation of eligibility requirements, and links to the grants.gov site.

Additionally, it has the FTA supplemental form Federal Register notice and other relevant information about FTA programs, which may assist you in developing and submitting a successful proposal or application.

(00:25:14) The supplemental form is a fillable PDF, which is the FTA product, it is used to capture the key elements of your proposal. This form contains fill in blanks for information which will be used by FTA to evaluate the proposed projects and funding requested.

This form must be attached to the application in grants.gov in order to receive consideration.

Please do not use forms from prior years or attempt to create your own PDF form in lieu of the supplemental form that is provided for the opportunity, please use the current forms provided on the FTA website or in grants.gov.

Do not attach images or scan copies of the supplemental form; the PDF form must be completed with typed text and attached to the application in grants.gov. You can navigate directly to the grants.gov site by selecting the blue hyperlink opportunity ID on the NOFO page.

Next slide.

So, once you select the blue hyperlink opportunity ID you'll be taken to the grants.gov site. The grants.gov grant opportunity page contains four tabs: the synopsis, version history, related documents, and package.

This is also the page where you can begin to apply for the funding opportunity.

The synopsis tab provides similar information which we published on FTA website, but it also shows if any changes have been posted. Additionally, it provides key dates and related regulatory references.

The version history tab is just that, history of any changes made since the original announcement.

The related documents tab leads to a folder which contains documents related to the funding opportunity.

It includes items such as the Federal Register notice, the supplemental form to be used for submitting a proposal, or other related documents. The package tab contains the reference and links to download and/or apply for the opportunity.

So please note that anyone can download the application package, but only individuals who have been designated in grants.gov as the authorized organizational representatives can submit an application. Next slide.

So this slide shows the contents of the application package available in grants.gov. It includes the mandatory SF 424, the lobbying form, and that attachment form used to attach supporting materials for the application.

And the just note that the application package does not contain the FTA supplemental form.

Next slide.

So this slide depicts the screenshot of the FTA supplemental form, each opportunity has its own form.

The supplemental form must be downloaded separately from the FTA site or from within the related documents tab.

(00:28:43) The form is to be attached to the application or the attachments forms located on a screenshot. The attachment form is a way for applicants to include documents supporting your application.

As mentioned before the supplemental form is available PDF and is used to capture the information FTA needs to evaluate the proposal and, again, do not attach scan copies of the supplemental form.

It must be filled in with text, otherwise FTA will reject the application, and again do not submit forms from prior years or for other programs. Next slide.

Applicants who have not previously applied on grants.gov must visit grants.gov and select the applicants tab.

Applicants who have previously applied are still encouraged to review the applicants tab to make sure that you have the latest information about the application process.

The applicants tab will walk you through the process of registering on grants.gov as well as help you check to make sure you have to correct or compatible version of Adobe Acrobat. The site will also provide you with training on the use of grants.gov.

And please note that there is an Adobe compatibility check on the site to ensure that you're using the correct version and software packages to submit the application.

The site provides the option to download the software. If there are any instances where you run into a technical issue with submitting your application, it could be because you're using a different version of Adobe Acrobat.

Next slide.

And so, for new applicants to grants.gov or federal funds, the grants.gov site assists organizations with the registration process and a system for award management, SAM, and with obtaining a DUNS registration or UEI.

Next slide.

Registered organizations can create a workspace in which grant proposal teams can collaborate in developing the application proposal and associated documents.

The workspace and eliminates the need for emailing documents between team members.

Grants.gov has been enhanced, to allow applicant organizations, the workspace and which assigned individuals can collaborate, share files, and perform various test to develop the application.

This is also the place which the authorized organization representative can submit the completed application to grants.gov.

So please, review the workspace information and identify the type of workspace and team members who will prepare your application, review the roles and privileges, and remember only the authorized organization representative can submit the application.

(00:32:04) FTA is accepting applications submitted via grants.gov from organizations only and not individuals. Such organizations must be registered in grants.gov. All the information and pertinent links are available on the applicant tabs in the grants.gov site. Next slide.

So last, if you encounter any technical issues or problems while working on the application or submitting the application, please address those concerns to grants.gov. And any program related questions or issues should be addressed to the FTA program manager.

And so, with that I will pass it back over. Thank you.

Torng, Gwo-Wei (FTA): (00:33:00 – 00:33:44)

Thank you Johnita.

Now we are going to transition into the Q & A portion of this webinar, and joining me here is my colleague Natalie Covill-Fontaine. Natalie is a program analyst in our Office of Mobility Innovation. What Natalie will do is Natalie will kick-off this Q&A portion by reporting on some frequently asked questions that we have already received from many, many of you through emails or phone calls, inquiries from those sources. So Natalie, please take it away.

Covill-Fontaine Natalie (FTA): (00:33:47 – 00:50:19)

Thanks Gwo-Wei. Hi everyone, my name is Natalie, and as Gwo-Wei mentioned, I'll be going over some frequently asked questions today before we dive into some of the Q&A we're receiving live.

And the first questions that we received are in regards to program eligibility.

And so, one question is my agency has already received FTA funding from another grant program. Can we still apply for this enhancing mobility innovation funding.

And the answer to that is yes, you are still eligible, you can still apply for this funding opportunity, however, please note that federal funds that are available under another FTA award cannot be used as the non-federal contribution towards costs under this FTA award or vice versa.

And another question is, we are not an existing FTA funds recipient, are we eligible to apply? And yes, you are eligible to apply as Johnita showed us a few seconds ago, there is a process on grants.gov for creating an account. You do not need to be an existing grantee to compete for this NOFO. If you're not, you are going to need to become one if you are selected for this award, and you are going to be responsible for compliance with any applicable federal requirements, as noted in the NOFO.

So my agency service area includes both urban and rural areas. Should we apply as urban or rural?

And so on the NOFO supplemental form that Johnita showed us, you can select multiple service area types. So those are large urban, small urban, or rural as appropriate for your project location.

So, moving on to some questions we received regarding project partners.

(00:35:52) So first question here is, can a private company or other organization be listed as a partner on more than one application and, yes, they can. An entity can be designated as a partner on multiple applications and may be part of multiple successful project awards.

Next question here, my company already has a transit agency partner for this funding opportunity. Which entity should submit the application?

So it's entirely up to you, it's your business decision which entity should serve as the lead applicant for this opportunity.

Only one entity will be the lead entity that will submit the application, and if you are selected for the award, that entity will be the one to enter into the agreement directly with FTA and the other will be listed as a project partner under that agreement.

So what if my company wants to participate in the program as a project partner, but doesn't know who to partner with? Can we help?

Currently, unfortunately FTA does not have a mechanism to facilitate this type of partnering.

However, we do encourage all potential applicants and public and private partners to get in contact with one another and form teams for this competition.

So the next question here, can my organization submit more than one application within the same project areas such as software development.

And yes, an entity may submit more than one application for this NOFO.

Each application needs to be submitted individually in grants.gov as separate submissions with distinct supplemental forms.

If you do choose to submit multiple applications, we advise you to create different project titles on each application to clearly indicate to us that you have not accidentally duplicated your submission or resubmitted it.

Is it required to have a partner?

As Christina mentioned earlier, we do encourage applicants to identify one or more project partners that have a substantial interest and involvement in the project, but we do not require applicants to have a partner.

So we are in the process of forming a partnership. Can we indicate the types of partners we are looking for without naming the partners, or can we name partners after our application is selected for funding.

So naming the partner, the partner or partners, is not required.

But it is encouraged in the application, as we already stated. If you do not list or name the partner in your application, and that application,

Sorry, going back a second, if an application that has named a partner is selected for funding the competitive selection process of this NOFO is going to be deemed sufficient to satisfy the requirements for a competitive procurement for the named entities.

(00:39:44) And should you not include the name of the partner in your application, but you would like to add project partners later, that permission will not be applicable.

Okay.

We now have a couple questions about the review and selection process for the NOFO.

So do certain review criteria receive more weight than others? And the answer to that is no. The six evaluation criteria that Christina went over for us earlier are all equally weighted.

Another question here, has it been determined when projects selections are going to be announced?

As of now, we do not know when the project selections are going to be announced, we don't have a date. Based on some recent research program funding opportunities, we estimate that project selections might be announced four to six months following the application deadline of January 11, but the timing is at the discretion of our agency leadership.

Okay, so now we have some questions about project structure and requirements for the projects. So what is the period of performance of projects? As mentioned earlier, this NOFO is not specifying a project duration.

Given that this notice is seeking various different types of projects that range from software development to development of novel operational concepts to mobility innovation demonstration efforts, the durations of these types of projects is going to vary a lot as well.

And we would also say here that one of the six evaluation criteria that we noted earlier that we use to assess proposals is the project implementation strategy.

So this project implementation strategy considers the extent to which your proposed implementation plans are reasonable and complete, including project milestones and the overall timeline.

So FTA is going to further consider if the project implementation strategy addresses how the project will support FTA's independent evaluation efforts, data access, and sharing of project results.

So the period of performance is going to vary, but we do ask that you be clear about these implementation strategies and note your support of these other goals.

So what is the expected start date of the project if it's selected?

So once project selections are announced later next year, FTA is going to work with the recipients to develop the cooperative agreement, as we already discussed, and award the funds.

So typically, a project is going to start from a few weeks to a few months following that FTA announcement of project selections.

And this time is variable mostly due to individual conditions of the recipients. For example, if a recipient is not already an FTA recipient, they will have to become one first, and this involves a separate review and approval process before the project funds are going to be obligated.

So what are some eligible expenses and activities under the Program?

(00:43:44) Enhancing mobility innovation projects are research and development efforts and, as such, the FTA research circular 6100.1E will be used to administer the Program.

This circular provides detailed guidance on eligible expenses, based on the program's authorizing statute and government wide cost principles for federal awards.

Eligible activities include all activities leading up to the development and implementation of the project, such as planning, developing business models, obtaining equipment and services, acquiring or developing software and hardware interfaces to implement the project, and other project specific expenses.

So next we have questions about the application process for the Enhancing Mobility Innovation funding opportunity.

Can I submit my application by mail or as an email attachment?

And the answer to that is no. As Johnita explained previously, for an application to be considered for funding, it must be submitted electronically through grants.gov.

What forms are required to apply, can I include other information?

So to be a complete proposal submission, we need two forms from you: the SF 424, which is the application for federal assistance, and this should be the latest version available at grants.gov, and the enhancing mobility innovation supplemental form, which is also available at grants.gov or on our FTA website.

A complete application must include all responses, responses to all sections of SF 424, the application for federal assistance, and of the enhancing mobility innovation supplemental form.

Applicants can include optional supporting information with their submission if they wish, such as letters of support, project budgets, or excerpts from relevant planning documents.

Please note that to apply, you have to submit the SF 424 and the supplemental form through the grants.gov website, as stated earlier, as we do not have the ability to accept proposals outside of that system.

So how do I access the supplemental form?

The supplemental form is designed to be filled out digitally as we discussed earlier, and it has to be opened using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat reader, which is available for free from Adobe's website, or another compatible PDF reader.

The form may not load properly in all browser viewers and you may receive an error message if you attempt to open the form in your browser.

To view the form, right click on the PDF from the supplemental form page and choose save link as, save the file to a convenient folder location that's easy for you to access, and then open the file using Adobe Acrobat reader for it to function properly.

(00:47:22) So we did not see information on the maximum or desired page length for the proposal, beyond the two fillable PDF forms. What is the page length for the proposals beyond those two forms?

So the answer to this is a bit long. So the website for the funding opportunity, as we stated earlier, will have this information off with the supplemental form and the current program information and will be posted after this webinar.

Along with the SF 424 form, which is the application form that requests mostly administrative and organizational information, the supplemental form is the main tool that we are going to use to collect details on proposed projects.

You can attach additional materials, as I mentioned, in grants.gov to your application package that can include planning documents, technology brochures, maps, letters of support, whatever you like, but these are not required elements of application, just the supplemental form and the SF 424 are required.

We often refer to proposals as applications, since there is no formal separate proposal.

Proposed projects are going to be evaluated primarily on the responses provided in the supplemental form.

And, as I said, additional information can be provided to support those responses, but we ask you to please directly reference any additional documentation on the supplemental form, including the file name, where the additional information can be found.

And it's important that you are able to really meaningfully convey your proposed project through the supplemental form, since this is the primary tool that we are going to use to understand the details of your proposed projects.

So yes, you are welcome to attach additional narratives, charts, plans, letters of support to the application through grants.gov, and there's no specific page limit on those things, we are just really wanting to nail down the importance of the supplemental form and meaningfully conveying your project's details through it.

So that concludes the prepared frequently asked questions that we have, and I think, as noted earlier, we are going to be posting frequently asked questions, along with the recorded webinar online following this webinar. And I will now turn it back to Gwo-Wei, thank you.

Torng, Gwo-Wei (FTA): (00:50:21 – 01:00:28)

Thank you, Natalie. So we have 2:51, and I will go through some, I know Christina is answering those questions by typing the answers, so what I'm going to do is look through those remaining questions to see as many as I can answer.

So there's one question here, can I have more than one partner, I think Natalie already said yes.

There's a question about.

I heard what Natalie said about the supplemental form, but I still cannot see it, because of the error message, so what Natalie basically says, we recognize this issue, you're not alone.

(00:51:05) And we have found like you try different browsers, you try firefox, you try Microsoft edge, you try Google chrome, you try different browsers, chances are you will get one work that works.

If not, then you can right click the link that opens the file and download this file to wherever you're downloading to, and you should be able to see that.

But I do want to say that if all this fails, after you try, feel free to ask us, and we'll email you a copy.

So let's get to, two great project ideas which, can we submit more than one, yes.

Oh, Johnita, you maybe, can you answer this, like people asked which version, how do they make sure that they get the most recent version of SF 424, did they get it from grants.gov?

Johnita is not, well, I believe that you can find the SF 424 form through grants.gov and once you get to the grants.gov you just search, there's a tab somewhere that says form library or form family, one of those, and you would just type in SF 424 mandatory, that's the form that we're looking for, I believe it's version 3.0, but don't quote me on that. I think just go there and find SF 424 mandatory form and it's probably 3.0 if not, the later one.

Can we propose a multiyear project funding available in one year. Okay, yes, so the project can be multiyear, depending on the nature of the scope of what you propose.

Like Natalie said earlier, you can propose a project with a period of performance longer than one year.

The application should request funding under this NOFO that you want to make sure it's for your entire duration of your proposed project.

Don't assume availability of additional funding, so your project, maybe multiyear.

But that you should ask for the amount of money that you need for the entire period performance, whether or not that's six months, one year or two years.

There's a question about local match if we over match beyond 20%, does that make our application more competitive. Let me see, so a higher local match does not directly lead to someone that has a greater chance of being selected.

And I want to fall back on, we assess each application based on the six criteria from a technical standpoint like Christina introduced as in the NOFO.

That's the six criteria that you want to look at.

However, if that means like, if you have an over match, like this question asks, that if your overmatched leads to greater return on investment, for federal investment, from our perspective, that means like you have a tons of local match, you can do a much bigger project with a smaller federal investment and get to answer the research questions that we want to see answered for and explore ideas that we don't have enough knowledge for, then perhaps you can say greater local match leads to more competitive project,

But again, just so please don't make, there's no direct advantage just by looking at a percentage local match, says oh yeah you have, you are more competitive, the answer is no.

(00:55:05) So there's a question about the application, the application both areas. Oh well, this is an interesting question.

So if you have application that, I'm assuming when you say both areas you're talking about the concept development or demonstration being one and the software development being one, if you have applications that are applicable to both area can you submit twice of the same application, yes technically, yes there's nothing preventing you from us allowing you from doing that, I would just leave it like that.

And there's a question about given the floor, funding floor of $250,000, and I'm paraphrasing this question.

Given the floor and the ceiling of $1 million, does that mean we will have between two and eight projects funded out of this NOFO? The answer will be yes, that's the idea.

Let me see, there's one question, there's multiple questions about the software and the ownership related questions. For that I wanted to first of all relate you to, let me look at the NOFO.

There's one area that specifically addresses this, okay so under C.3. That's eligible projects, there's a provision in this one paragraph, if you look through that it says software product developed will be subject to the provision of a FTA master agreement, it gives a link, and it may be disseminated to public transit agencies for their use.

And there's a remainder of the paragraph, talking specifically about the software, and we should consider. Well, not we, the project team should consider how the development effort will support the development of the open standards specification and protocols and I suggest for those questions that relate to software ownership and what federal expectation on requirement is, and I suggest you look at the master agreement.

And if any particular part is not clear to you, I strongly suggest that you ask us specifically your question that's not clear and as specific as you can be in your question, the most specific that we can provide you useful information, so I would do that, so if you can do that, that will be helpful.

And there's a question, if a project scope is at a national level, how do we identify jurisdiction of project on the application? I'm assuming that you mean, how do you identify your service area.

Like Natalie said, you're not just limited to one and, if your project's truly national in scope, and you should just check all three, the small urban, urban or large urban, and rural. I hope that answers your question.

Let me see, oh it's two minutes, ok one more.

Is there a cost per rider that FTA is targeting when considering awards? And what we are targeting is what Karina said earlier, is that we are looking for creative, robust ideas and when we select proposals we fall back on the six selection criteria.

That's what how are we going to do a project selection. Alright, so it's almost three o'clock Eastern time, I want to keep a great tradition of transit: we always start on time, we wanted to arrive on time.

(00:59:00) So now don't worry about, if you don't, I know we have a, now it shows 30, I think Christina maybe is still answering, so we have plenty of questions that we did not answer, but don't worry, we will compile the questions we see and post a complete list of Q&A online probably about a week, I would say about a week after today and hopefully before the holidays.

We will post that, and know that we will consolidate your questions that we consider similar nature, so if you if you don't see your specific question, you may want to look for similar ones, then, to find your answer there.

And if you still have questions, you're always welcome to email us using the contact information provided in the NOFO, we will answer your question as soon as we can.

Remember, just the more specific you can, you ask us, the better we can be specific in our answers to you.

With that I'm going to end this webinar, we are one minute late, again, thank you very much for your interest in this NOFO and good luck with your application and from the Federal Transit Administration, we wish you happy holidays.

Thank you for joining today, bye.