

“Interested in Applying?” Rural and Nonprofit Webinar

**Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN)
Grant Program**

Overview for Prospective Applicants

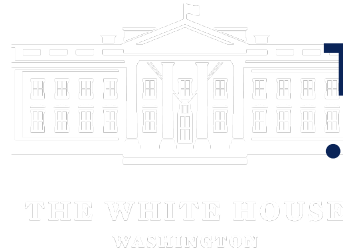
August 15th, 2023



Webinar Information

Audio

- To listen via computer:
Select "Computer Audio"
- To listen via phone:
 - Call: +1 551 285 1373
 - Webinar ID: 161 009 9861
 - Passcode: 332349
- All participants automatically join on mute, with cameras off
- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the [RCN website](#)



Technical Support

- Email: corey.martin.ctr@dot.gov

Questions for Presenters

- Please type your questions in the Q&A box
- Cannot take application-specific questions
- Question may not be addressed, but will inform our FAQ's



Agenda



- Welcome
- Opening Remarks
- NOFO Overview and Eligibility Information
- Evaluation and Selection
- How to Apply
- Technical Assistance and Resources
- Q&A



The Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program

"Transportation should never divide communities – its purpose is to connect people to jobs, schools, housing, groceries, family, places of worship, and more. That's what the Reconnecting Communities program and the Neighborhood Access and Equity program are designed to ensure."

- Secretary Buttigieg

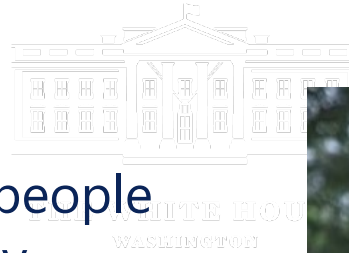


Image source: US Department of Transportation

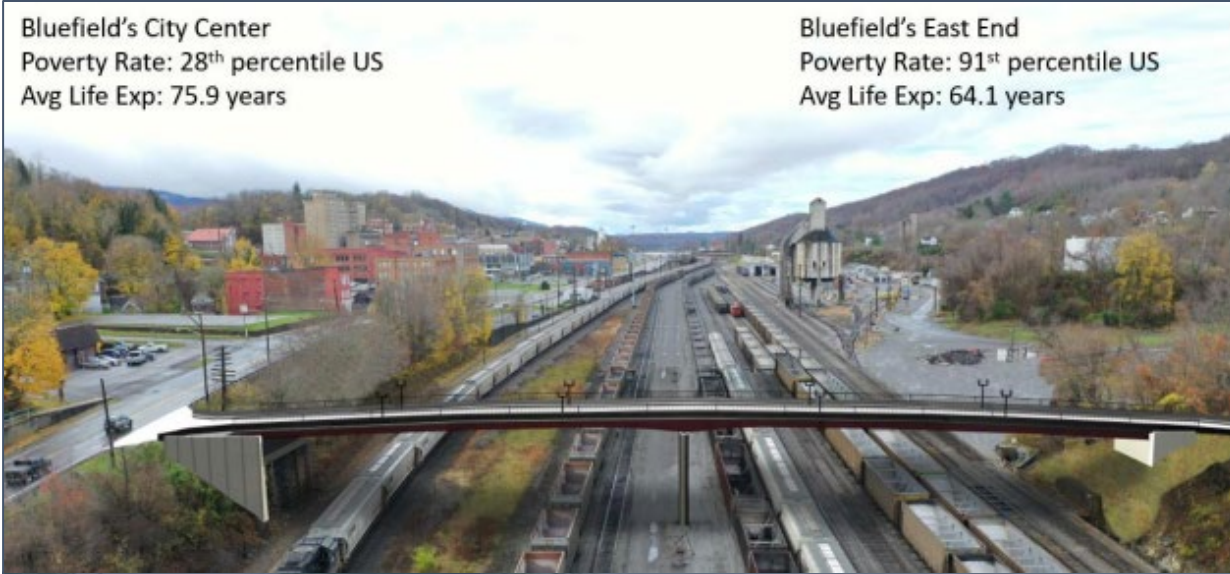


Rural Project Example – Bluefield, West Virginia

Reconnecting Bluefield

Bluefield's City Center
Poverty Rate: 28th percentile US
Avg Life Exp: 75.9 years

Bluefield's East End
Poverty Rate: 91st percentile US
Avg Life Exp: 64.1 years



RCP Award: \$1 million

The planning award allows the West Virginia Department of Transportation to examine how to improve connectivity for Bluefield's historic Black community, the "East End," currently divided from downtown Bluefield by Norfolk Southern Rail yard.

The Planning Study and Preliminary Engineering Analysis will focus on a "T" shaped corridor connecting the East End, downtown Bluefield, and local amenities



Rural Project Example – North Adams, Massachusetts

Route 2 Overpass Study (R2OS)

RCP Award: \$741,800



The City of North Adams, MA will use award this award to assess the Route 2 overpass that divides the downtown core of North Adams

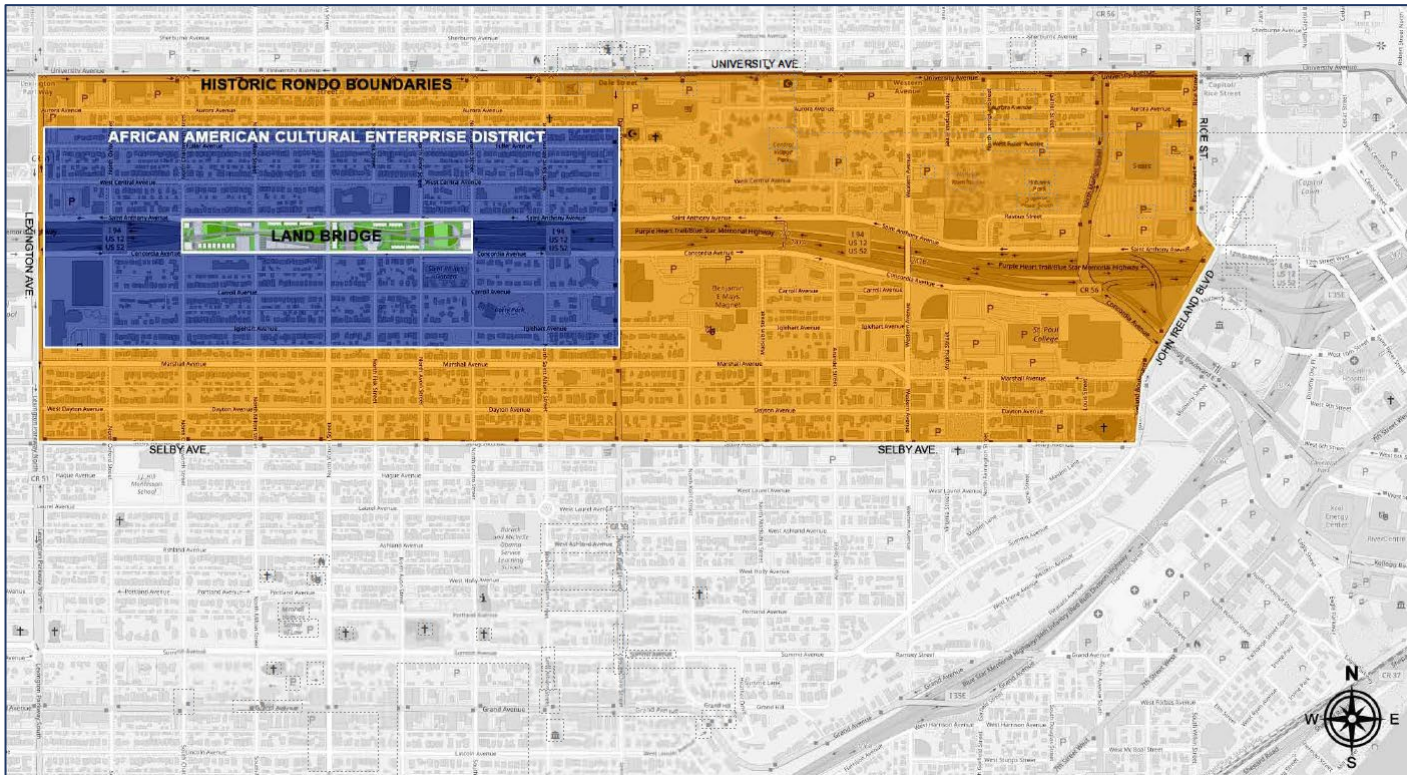
Assessing the re-integration of Route 2 into the downtown of North Adams

R2OS will involve a consolidation of past studies, commission of multiple analyses and diverse community engagement



Nonprofit Project Example – Reconnect Rondo

Rondo Land Bridge and African American Cultural Enterprise District Reconnect Rondo (St. Paul, Minnesota)



RCP Award: \$2,000,000

Construction of Interstate 94 (I-94) in Saint Paul, Minnesota destroyed a portion of the Rondo neighborhood.

This project will study the planning and development of an African American Cultural Enterprise District and associated Land Bridge to restore and reconnect this destroyed portion of the Rondo neighborhood.



Presenter Introductions



Andrew Emanuele
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



Tameka Macon-Ryan
Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation



Lily Ballengee
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



Carolyn Mulvihill
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



About the ROUTES Initiative

The Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative aims to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure and improve safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness nationwide.



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The ROUTES Office achieves this mission by:

Engaging Rural Communities to better understand their transportation needs and work together to identify solutions.


Harmonizing DOT Programs to best support rural mobility using the ROUTES Council to lead Departmental activities and better align new and existing funding, financing, and technical assistance programs with the needs of rural and Tribal communities.

Utilizing a Whole-of-Government Approach by partnering with other federal agencies, initiatives, and regional commissions to expand the Department's presence in rural America, better promote resources, and capitalize on synergies between federal funding programs.

Visit us www.transportation.gov/rural or contact us at rural@dot.gov.



One-Stop Shop for Rural Resources

**U.S. Department of Transportation**

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ROUTES

About

Statistics

Grants ▸

Electric Vehicles ▸

Modal Administrations ▸

Contact ROUTES

Related Links

- [US DOT Grant Programs and Projects](#)
- [Grant Applicant Toolkit](#)
- [Rural EV Infrastructure Toolkit](#)
- [National Center for Rural Road Safety](#)
- [Access to Intercity Transportation in Rural Areas](#)
- [Subscribe to ROUTES updates](#)

Related Documents

- [ROUTES Fact Sheet](#)

Contact Us

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Phone: 202-366-4944
Business Hours:
8:30am-5:00pm ET, M-F

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access

Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES)



Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) is an initiative to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure by developing user-friendly tools and information, aggregating DOT resources, and providing technical assistance. The ROUTES Initiative aims to ensure rural transportation infrastructure's unique challenges are considered in order to meet priority transportation goals of safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness.

Read our newly released [Rural EV Infrastructure Toolkit](#), which was developed as part of the ROUTES Initiative to help rural communities plan and fund electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.

The ROUTES Initiative is established to...

- Engage Rural Communities through a series of events to better understand their transportation needs and priorities, and to collect essential data from stakeholders representing different communities, groups, workers, and industries to identify necessary transportation solutions.
- Harmonize DOT Programs to implement rural policy by re-constituting the ROUTES Council to lead and coordinate Departmental activities to implement the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and better align new and existing funding, financing, and technical assistance programs with the needs of rural and Tribal communities.
- Utilize a Whole-of-Government Approach by partnering with other rural-focused federal agencies and regional commissions to expand DOT's presence in rural America, better promote DOT's resources to their customers, and capitalize on synergies between federal funding programs.

The Rural Transportation Network is Critical for Our Economy

- Rural transportation networks are critically important for domestic production and export of agriculture,

www.transportation.gov/rural



Webinars

- Benefit Cost Analyses for Rural Projects
- TIFIA Rural Projects Initiative
- Transit Resources
- National Roadway Safety Strategy

Tools and Toolkits

- Rural Eligibility Map
- Point of Contact Map
- Grant Applicant Toolkit [Update Coming Soon]
- Rural EV Infrastructure Toolkit [New]

Funding Opportunities

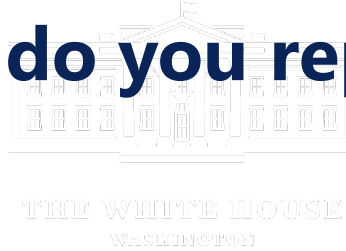
- DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard [New]
- Links to Past Awards

Modal Specific Landing Pages

Monthly Newsletters



What type of organization do you represent?



- State
- Local government
- Federally recognized Tribal government
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Nonprofit organization
- Transit Agency
- Transportation Facility Owner
- Federal government
- Consultant
- Other (insert in chat)



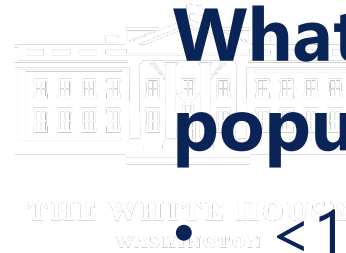
Poll Results

Geographic area

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- West
- Southwest

Community type

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- Tribal

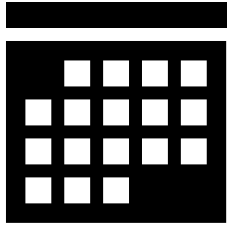


What is the approximate population of your community?

- <10,000
- 10,000-199,999
- 200,000-500,000
- >500,000



RCN NOFO Is Now Open!

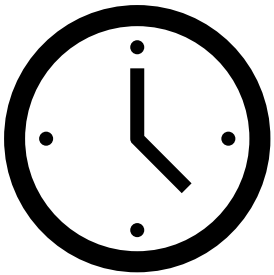


Notice of Funding Opportunity is now **OPEN**



Grants.gov Opportunity Numbers: DOT-RCP-FY23-01, DOT-NAE-FY23-01

Assistance Listing: 20.940 – Reconnecting Communities, 20.940 – Neighborhood Access & Equity



APPLY by Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 11:59 pm EDT

Submit at Valid Eval at these links:

- [Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with Planning Activities](#)
- [Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with Construction Activities](#)



Additional resources at the [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Website](#)

Subscribe for updates!



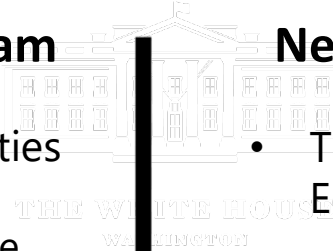
RCN Overview and Eligibility



Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program Overview

Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

- The BIL established the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant Program to provide funds for:
 - Restoring community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation or replacement of highways, roadways, or other infrastructure facilities that create barriers to mobility, access or economic development
- A total of **\$1 billion** in grant funding is available through the RCP Program for FY 2022-26 for planning, construction and technical assistance.
- The primary goal of the RCP Program is to advance and support reconnection of communities divided by transportation infrastructure – with a priority on helping disadvantaged communities improve access to daily needs (jobs, schools, healthcare, grocery stores, and recreation).



Neighborhood Access & Equity (NAE) Program

- The IRA established the Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program to provide funds for:
 - Context-sensitive projects that improve walkability, safety, and affordable access;
 - Planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or undeserved communities;
 - Mitigating or remediating negative impacts on the human or **natural environment** in disadvantaged communities from a surface transportation facility
- A total of **\$3.16 billion** in grant funding is available through the NAE Program for FY 2022-26 for planning, construction and technical assistance.
- The primary goal of the NAE Program is to assist economically disadvantaged or undeserved communities for planning and construction activities.



FY23 Combined Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

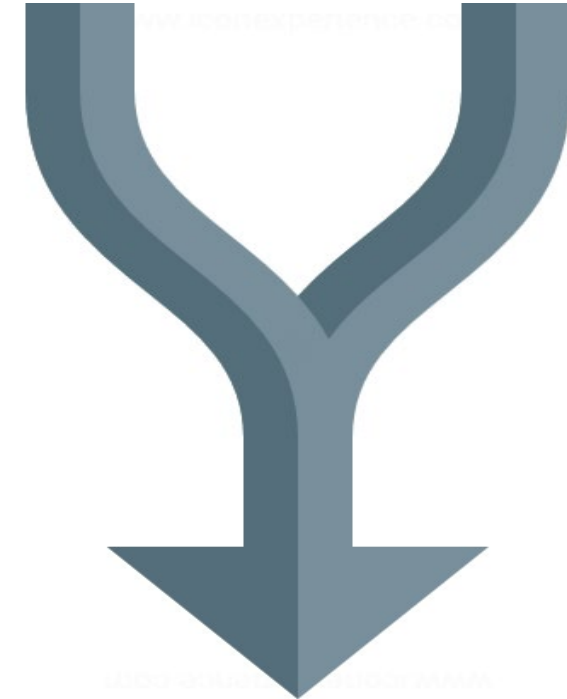
- For FY23 OST is combining the NOFO for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (**RCP**) and Neighborhood Access & Equity (**NAE**) grant programs
- USDOT has combined these two programs into a single NOFO to provide a more efficient application process. While they remain separate programs for the purposes of award, the programs share many common characteristics, including:
 - Aiming to improve access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, and recreation;
 - Fostering equitable development and restoration;
 - Reconnecting communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including to mobility, access, or economic development.
- The single NOFO will consider applicant eligibility for both programs



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RCP

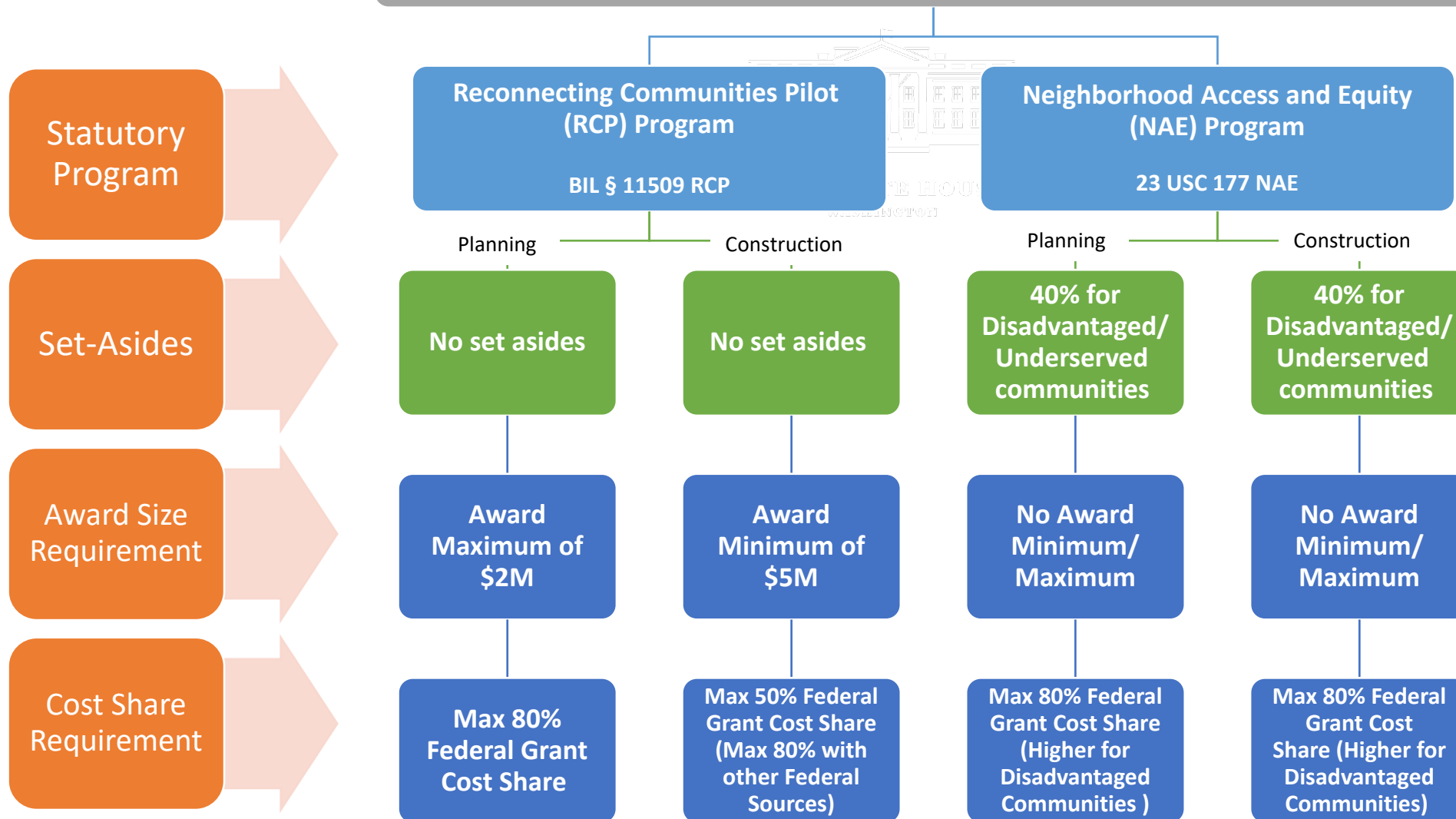
NAE



**Reconnecting
Communities and
Neighborhoods (RCN)**



Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program





Combined Program Structure

Three grant types under one combined NOFO:

Grant #1: Capital Construction Grants

- Funds for reconnecting-focused projects
- Would include funding for projects focused on reducing environmental harm and improving access

Grant #2: Community Planning Grants

- Funds for planning activities to support future construction projects
- Would allow for innovative community planning to address localized transportation challenges

Grant #3: Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants (NAE)

- Funds for projects to encourage regional collaboration and innovation among partners to address regional challenges (vs. one facility)
- Designed to collaboratively focus regions on equitable access and mobility challenges, anti-displacement and GHG reduction



Eligible Lead Applicants

The lead applicant is the entity that submits the application.

RCP Community Planning Grants:

- State
- Local government
- Tribal government
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Non-profit organization

RCP Capital Construction Grants:

- Owner(s) of the eligible facility proposed in the project for which all necessary feasibility studies and other planning activities have been completed; or
- A partnership between a facility owner and any eligible RCP Community Planning Grant applicant.



NAE Community Planning, Capital Construction, and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants:

- State or territory of the United States
- Local government
- **Political subdivision of a State**
- Tribal government
- **Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function**
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- **Nonprofit organization or institution of higher education that has entered a partnership with an eligible entity (above) and is applying for planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities**



NAE Eligible Applicants – Further Clarity

NAE Planning – Lead Applicants

- NAE encourages the lead applicant to be the facility owner OR an eligible entity in a formal partnership with the facility owner for:
 - Community Planning Grants
 - Regional Partnership Challenge Grants w/ Planning Activities

NAE Capital Construction – Lead Applicants

- NAE requires the lead applicant to be the facility owner OR an eligible entity in a formal partnership with the facility owner for:
 - Construction Grants
 - Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants w/ Construction Activities



**Formal partnerships
should be
demonstrated by an
official signed letter
or Memorandum of
Understanding (MOU)
between the parties**



RCN Combined Funding - Availability and Award Amounts



Statutory Program Elements	RCP FY23	NAE FY23
Community Planning Grants*	\$50M	\$135M
Capital Construction Funds*	\$148M	Up to \$2.57B*
Regional Partnership Challenge Grants*	N/A	Up to \$450M*

***USDOT reserves the right to not expend all funds in FY23.**



RCN Eligible Transportation Facilities

The proposed project must address an “eligible facility.”



Program	Eligible Facility	Examples
RCP & NAE	<i>“Transportation facilities” that create barriers to community connectivity”</i> due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors. This includes barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.	Highways, arterials, parkways, collectors, local roads, transit lines or rail lines, viaducts or bridges, gas pipelines, tunnels, bus depots
NAE	<i>“Burdening facility”</i> : a surface transportation facility that is a <i>source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, heat, or other burden</i> to a disadvantaged or underserved community.	Highways, arterials, parkways, collectors, local roads, viaducts or bridges, rail yards, bus depots that are the source of the burdens (not necessarily dividing facilities)

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



Examples of Barriers Created by Transportation Facilities

Eligible facilities are defined as “*transportation facilities **that creates a barrier to community connectivity***” due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors. This includes barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.

Examples of barriers created by transportation facilities may include:

- The facility's volume of traffic, high speeds, or design creates unsafe conditions or difficulty in crossing.
- Facility reduces access to everyday destinations.
- Grade separations, i.e., the facility is a structure that is above ground or below ground, creating a physical barrier.
- Facility is missing sidewalks or pedestrian crossings, creating a barrier for some users.

Application narrative should describe how the transportation facility creates a barrier. See Merit Criteria, Section E.



Examples of Burdens Created by Transportation Facilities (NAE Only)

NAE Grants define eligible facilities as “transportation facilities that are ***a source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, heat, or other burden*** to a disadvantaged or underserved community.”

Examples of burdens on disadvantaged communities created by transportation facilities include:

- The facility's volume of traffic or lack of pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure inhibits multimodal transportation options.
- The facility's volume of traffic creates noise impacts.
- The volume or type of vehicles using a facility creates air pollution "hot spots," particularly in areas close to sensitive populations
- The facility's size or extent of paved surface creates a heat island effect or stormwater runoff issues.
- The facility produces excessive noise pollution from concentrated vehicle operations.
- "Burdens" do not necessarily have to be from dividing facilities

Application narrative should describe how the transportation facility creates a burden. See Merit Criteria, Section E.



Examples of Reconnecting Solutions

Examples of removing, retrofitting, mitigating or replacing an existing, eligible facility may include:

- High-quality public transportation
- Infrastructure removal
- ADA Accessible Pedestrian walkways and overpasses
- Capping and lids
- Linear parks and trails / tree canopy cover improvement
- Roadway redesigns and complete streets conversions
- Main street revitalization
- More!



Questions? Use the Q&A box.



Eligible Activities: Planning Grants (Both Programs)*

- Public engagement activities, including community visioning or other place-based strategies.
- Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible dividing facility to reconnect communities.
- Conceptual and preliminary engineering, or design and planning studies that support the environmental review for a construction project.
- Developing anti-displacement policies and community benefit agreements.
- Associated needs such as:
 - Locally driven land use and zoning reform
 - Transit-oriented development
 - Managing gentrification and neighborhood change
 - *See NOFO Section C for more information*



Eligible Activities: NAE Planning Grants Only

- Planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities to:
 - Identify, monitor, or assess local and ambient air quality, emissions of transportation greenhouse gases, hot spot areas of extreme heat or elevated air pollution, gaps in tree canopy coverage, or flood prone transportation infrastructure
- Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible burdening or dividing facility, and predevelopment activities for eligible NAE Capital Construction projects.
- Administer or obtain technical assistance related to other eligible planning activities listed above.
- Assess transportation equity or pollution impacts.



Image source: Laura Sandt - PBIC



Eligible Activities: Capital Construction Grants (Both Programs)

- Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies;
- Predevelopment / preconstruction;
- Permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for:
 - The removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible dividing facility;
 - The replacement of an eligible dividing facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity;
 - Delivering community benefits and environmental improvements or mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the construction project.

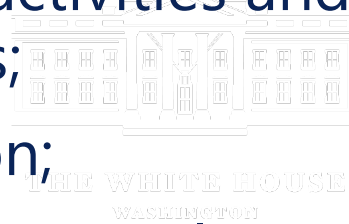
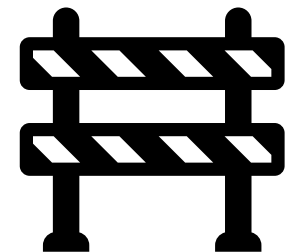


Image source: John Alphonse - stock.adobe.com



Eligible Activities: NAE Capital Construction Grants Only

- Permitting activities including the completion of the NEPA process for:
 - The reuse of a burdening facility to improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access through projects that are context sensitive.
 - Projects to mitigate or remediate negative impacts on the human or natural environment resulting from a burdening facility.
- Providing affordable access to essential destinations such as transit or transportation links and hubs.





Eligible Activities: Regional Partnerships Challenge

- Eligible activities for RCN Regional Partnership Challenge Grants may include those listed under Community Planning and Capital Construction Grants through partnerships of at least two entities from:
 - State or territory of the United States
 - Local government
 - Political subdivision of a State
 - Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function
 - Tribal government
 - Metropolitan Planning Organization
 - Nonprofit organization or institution of higher education that has entered a partnership with another eligible entity
- Eligible activities must tackle persistent, regional equitable access and mobility challenges.
- Projects must address a regional challenge, such as:
 - Extension of a transit line
 - Traffic signal coordination
 - Multi-jurisdictional trail construction
 - ADA compliance across a regional transit network
 - Fare free bus pilot on a bus line spanning multiple cities
 - Transit-oriented development
 - Rural Main Street Revitalization
 - ETC...





Short Answer Poll

Briefly describe a project your organization or community is considering developing an RCN application for.

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



RCP Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match

Award Amounts:

- Planning Grants: No more than **\$2M**
- Capital Construction Grants: No less than **\$5M**

Cost Sharing: Total Federal Assistance may not exceed 80%.

• **Planning Grants:**

- Grants may not exceed 80% of the total project cost.
- Recipients contribute 20% local matching share. There are limited exceptions. FAQ in development.

• **Capital Construction Grants:**

- Grants may not exceed 50% of total project cost.
- Applicants may use other Federal assistance to partially satisfy the match up to 80%.
- Recipients contribute 20% local matching share. There is a limited exception. FAQ in development.

Local Match

Matching funds may include non-Federal sources such as:

- State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue.
- Local funds originating from State or local revenue-funded programs.
- Philanthropic funds.
- Private funds.
- In-kind or cash contributions.

[DOT Navigator: Understanding Federal Match Requirements](https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator)

www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator

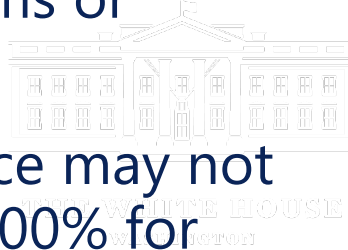
NAE Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match

Award Amounts: No grant minimums or maximums

Cost Sharing: Total Federal Assistance may not exceed 80% for standard grants and 100% for Disadvantaged Communities.

Disadvantaged Communities:

- Is economically disadvantaged, including an underserved community or a community located in an area of persistent poverty; and:
- has entered or will enter into a community benefits agreement with representatives of the community;
- has an anti-displacement policy, a community land trust, or a community advisory board in effect; or,
- has demonstrated a plan for employing local residents in the area impacted by the activity or project proposed under this section



Local Match

Matching funds may include non-Federal sources such as:

- State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue.
- Local funds originating from State or local revenue-funded programs.
- Philanthropic funds.
- Private funds.
- In-kind or cash contributions.

[DOT Navigator: Understanding Federal Match Requirements](https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator)

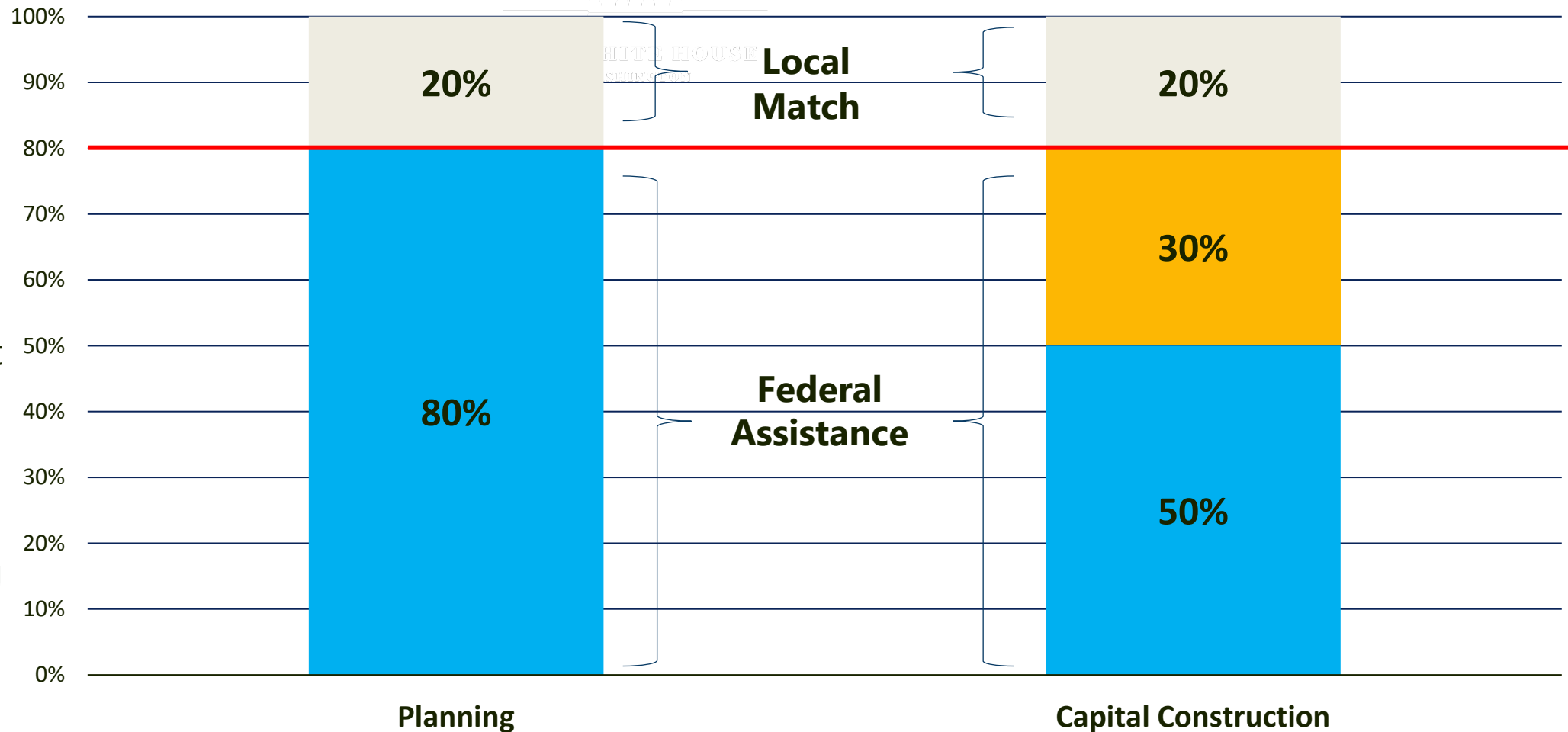
www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator



Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match (RCP)

Max. Federal Awards and Min. Local Match as a Percentage of Total Project Cost

RCP Award Other Federal Funds Local Match



NOTE:

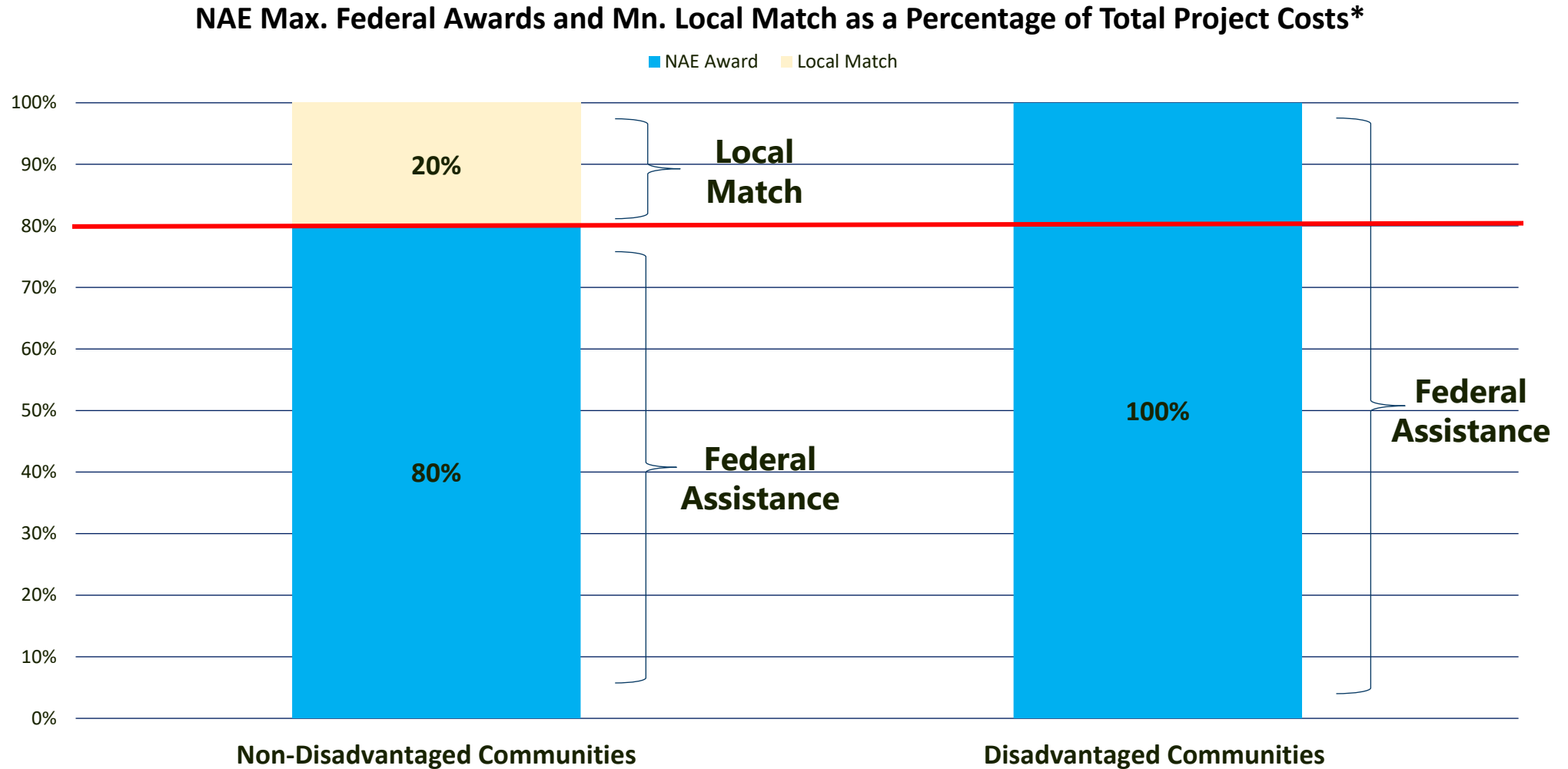
Total Federal Assistance may NOT exceed 80% of total project costs *except in limited circumstances* that differ for Planning and Construction grants.

DOT is developing an FAQ.



Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match (NAE)

NOTE:
Please See
NOFO Section
H for definition
of economically
disadvantaged
community and
FAQS for more
information.



*Applies to Planning, Capital Construction, and Regional Partnerships Challenge grants



Disadvantaged Community Designation



A project located in both (1) areas that are Disadvantaged Communities and (2) areas that are not Disadvantaged Communities will be designated as Disadvantaged Communities if the **majority the project's costs will be spent in the areas that qualify as Disadvantaged Communities.**

For the purposes of this NOFO, applicants should use the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) to identify geographically defined disadvantaged or underserved communities.



Evaluation and Selection



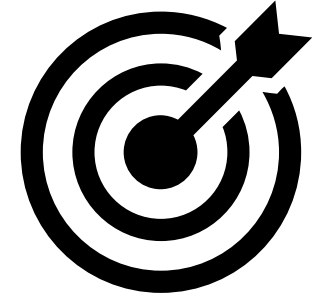
Project Evaluation and Selection

DOT will evaluate proposals on:



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- Alignment with **merit criteria:**
 - 1) Equity and Environmental Justice
 - 2) Access
 - 3) Facility Suitability
 - 4) Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships
 - 5) Equitable Development
 - 6) Climate and Environment
 - 7) Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity



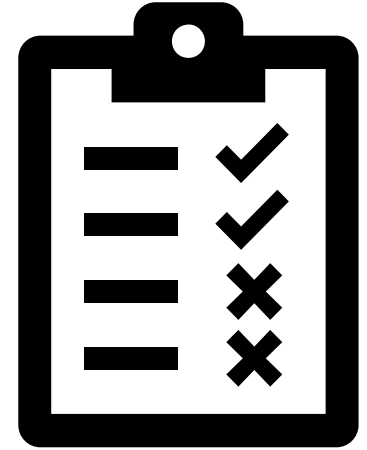
Project Evaluation and Selection Continued

DOT will evaluate proposals on:



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- **Project readiness** in terms of:
 - Technical assessment of feasibility and capacity to deliver project
 - Financial completeness
 - Environmental risk and permitting (Capital Construction only)
- **Benefit Cost Analysis** (RCP Capital Construction only)



When selecting grant awards, DOT may consider: benefits to economically disadvantaged communities; urban, rural, and Tribal balance; geographic diversity; and organizational diversity. DOT Secretary makes final selections for awards.



Economically Disadvantaged Community Determination

Applicants should use the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) to identify geographically defined disadvantaged or underserved communities.

To identify communities that are “located in an area of persistent poverty” or one of the other potential community types listed above, or to further assess burdens or assess and demonstrate benefits of a project, applicants may use the CEJST and/or one or more of the following tools:

1. EPA’s [EJSCREEN](#)
2. [Areas of Persistent Poverty table](#) for the County or Census tract level.
3. DOT’s mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities
 - See Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts in [ArcGIS Dashboards](#).
4. USDOT [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#)



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#1 Equity and Environmental Justice



#2 Access

#3 Facility Suitability

#4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

#5 Equitable Development

#6 Climate and Environment

#7 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#1 Equity and Environmental Justice



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Analysis of harmful historic or current policies, burdens, disparities, community needs and how solutions ensure equitable distribution of benefits and mitigation.

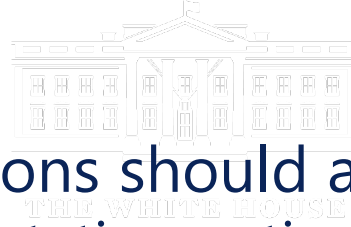
Construction and Regional Partnership applications should also address:

- Construction-related displacement and a robust mitigation plan.
- Other negative construction impacts and mitigation measures.



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#2 Access



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- New or improved affordable transportation options to increase safe mobility and connectivity for all to daily destinations (e.g. jobs, healthcare, schools, grocery stores, places of worship, recreation and parks, etc.).
- Safe accommodation for all users and seamless integration with consideration of public health, the natural environment, and the economy.
- Encourage thriving communities for individuals to work, live, and play by creating transportation choices for individuals to move freely with or without a car and have meaningful access to natural areas.

Construction applications should also address:

- Existing feasibility studies provide a basis for better access to daily destinations.



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#3 Facility Suitability



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Facility currently presents significant barriers to access, mobility, and economic development and is poorly suited to the community. Propose removal of barriers.
- The eligible facility currently creates an environmental burden on the community. Proposes solutions to address these burdens and enhance facility and community resilience.
- The project addresses current and projected vulnerabilities that, if left unimproved, will threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, public health, or economic growth.

Construction applications should also address:

- Impacts to goods movement, both regional and local, that uses the eligible facility.

Regional Partnership applicants should also address:

- The facility's regional significance and how a regional approach is best suited to address the burdens caused by the facility(ies).



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Creation of a Community Participation Plan.
- Community-centered approach.
- Formal partnerships that reflect ties to adjacent community.
- Representative place-based management: community advisory group or advisory board, community land trust, community benefits agreements.

Construction applications should also address:

- Funding and financing from partners and (non-) Federal sources.

Regional Partnership applicants should also address:

- How the partnership will engage the public effectively in various, diverse communities.



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#5 Equitable Development



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Community restoration, stabilization, and anti-displacement strategies.
- Creative place-making that celebrates local history and culture.
- Supports a Local/Regional/State Equitable Development Plan.

Construction and regional partnership grant applications should also address:

- How project will encourage public and private investment
- Support improved commercial and mixed-income residential neighborhoods near public transportation, along rural main streets, or in walkable neighborhoods.



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#6 Climate and Environment



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Expected reduction in transportation-related pollution.
- Providing high-quality choices for lower-carbon travel.
- Supports a Local/Regional/State Climate Action Plan.

Construction and regional partnership grant applications should also address:

- Incorporation of specific design elements or technologies that address climate impacts and include natural infrastructure elements.
- Improvements to air and water quality, wetlands, and endangered species, or at a minimum, avoidance of adverse impacts on them.



Merit Criteria: Planning and Capital Construction (Section E)

#7 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity



Planning and Construction applications should address:

- Local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship.

Construction and regional partnership grant applications should also address:

- Good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union, strong labor standards, pro-active anti-discrimination and anti-harassment plans, project labor agreements, workplace rights notices, training and placement programs, and local hiring and procurement preferences, particularly for underrepresented workers and individuals with convictions.
- High-quality workforce development programs.



Capital Construction Only (Section E)

Project Readiness

- A project schedule, address required approvals and permits, NEPA class of action and status, public involvement, right-of-way acquisition plans, risk and mitigation strategies.

Benefit Cost Analysis (RCP Only)

- Summary of the BCA and the technical basis of the BCA
- Many benefits of RCP Program projects may be difficult to quantify but should be explained as well as possible, whether such benefits are quantified or unquantified.



How to Apply



Application Deadline and Limit

- Applications are due by 11:59PM EST on Thursday, September 28th, 2023
 - Submit through [Valid Eval](#)
 - Late applications will not be accepted
- A lead applicant may submit no more than
 - **Three** applications for **Community Planning Grants**
 - **Two** applications for **Capital Construction Grants**, and
 - **One** application for **NAE Regional Partnership Challenge Grants**.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to make submissions in advance of the deadline.





Applications may now be submitted through **Valid Eval**.
Customer support for **Valid Eval** can be reached
at support@valideval.com.

- **Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships
Challenge Grants with planning activities:**
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_planning/signup
- **Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships
Challenge Grants with construction activities:**
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_capitalconstruction/signup.



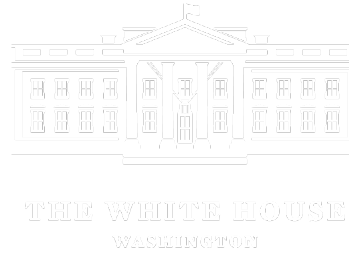
Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- All applicants **must** obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through SAM.gov to apply for RCN grant opportunities through Valid Eval.
 - Valid Eval walks you through the process
- **The process of obtaining a UEI can take up to a month, so applicants are encouraged to apply for the UEI now.**
- **If you previously had a DUNS number, your UEI has already been created and is available to view in SAM.gov.**
- For more information, see <https://sam.gov>.



Application Submission Attachments (Section D)

For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:



- Standard Forms
 - SF-424
 - Planning Grants and Regional Partnership Challenge Grant with Planning Activities: SF-424A, SF-424B
 - Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnership Challenge Grant with Construction Activities: SF-424C, SF-424D
- Key Information Table (12 questions)
- Narrative (address Merit Criteria)
- Budget w/ Identified Local Match

Suggested Narrative Structure (Section D)

For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:



- **Overview:** Introduction, describe barriers, history and character of the community, and any other background information
- **Location & Map:** Location of the facility and a description of the surrounding community
- **Response to Merit Criteria**

For Capital Construction Applications:

- Environmental Risk **Summary**
- Benefit Cost Analysis **Summary (RCP Only)**
 - [Visit here for FY22 BCA webinar/slides](#) (bottom of page)

Page Limits:
Single Spaced

- Planning:
max. **10 pages**
- Capital
Construction:
max. **20 pages**



Informal Poll Questions

Do you plan to submit an application for this round?



- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, what type of application will you submit?

- Planning Grant
- Capital Construction Grant
- Planning Grant w/ Regional Partnerships
- Capital Construction Grant w/ Regional Partnerships



Technical Assistance and Resources



Technical Assistance

- Visit [RCN Website](#) for resources, FAQs, webinars, and case studies.
- Grant recipients, with a priority for those serving economically disadvantaged communities, will have access to further technical assistance coordinated through DOT's new [Thriving Communities Program](#), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other Federal agencies, to implement their projects.
- FAQ's will be developed from this and other upcoming webinars



Grants

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program

RCN – Announcement

RCN – Notice of Funding Opportunity

RCN – Webinars

RCN – How to Apply

Reconnecting Communities Institute

Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program



RCN Combined NOFO

The Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) has released a joint Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) and [Neighborhood Access and Equity \(NAE\)](#) programs, which will combine two major discretionary grants into one NOFO. Together, this combined program will be known as the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program. While they remain separate programs for the purposes of award, the programs share many common characteristics, including:



DOT Navigator


- Check the DOT Navigator!
- The website contains general information and specific tips on applying across all DOT grant programs.
- Includes searchable databases of Federal transportation discretionary grants and of available technical assistance resources




<https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator>

Questions? Use the Q&A box.


WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?



Apply for DOT Grants
Resources to help understand the federal grant-making process and key federal requirements



Find Technical Assistance Resources
Resources available to public agencies and other transportation stakeholders



Learn About the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
Information to help access BIL funding programs

DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard

The DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard provides communities with an overview of discretionary grant opportunities that can help meet their transportation infrastructure needs. Designed with all communities in mind, the Dashboard identifies grant programs with rural and Tribal set-asides or match waivers available. The Dashboard also includes Federal grant programs outside of DOT that may be of particular interest to [rural communities](#). An updated *Rural Grant Applicant Toolkit* will soon be published to help rural communities harness the Dashboard. The Dashboard is updated weekly.

[The DOT Navigator](#) is a resource to help communities understand the best ways to apply for grants, and to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services.

 [Download CSV](#)

Eligible Activities

- Any -

Eligible Applicants

- Any -

Agency/Office

- Any -

Transportation Type

- Any -

Match Waiver

- Any -

Rural Set-Aside

- Any -

Tribal Set-Aside

- Any -

Status

- Any -

Keywords

Apply

- A technical assistance, peer learning and tool development program providing online and no-cost direct support
- Open to project sponsors pursuing funding for a reconnection project
- One-on-one technical assistance for RCN grant recipients and support for future applicants
- Launches in early September 2023

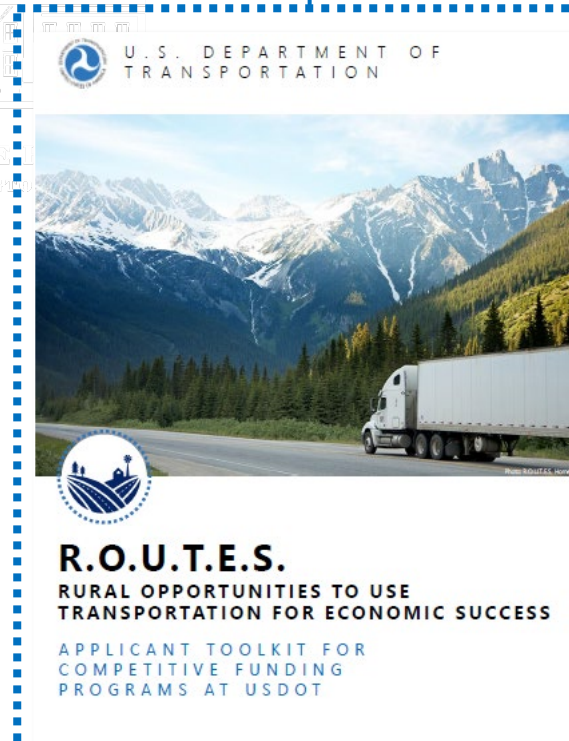
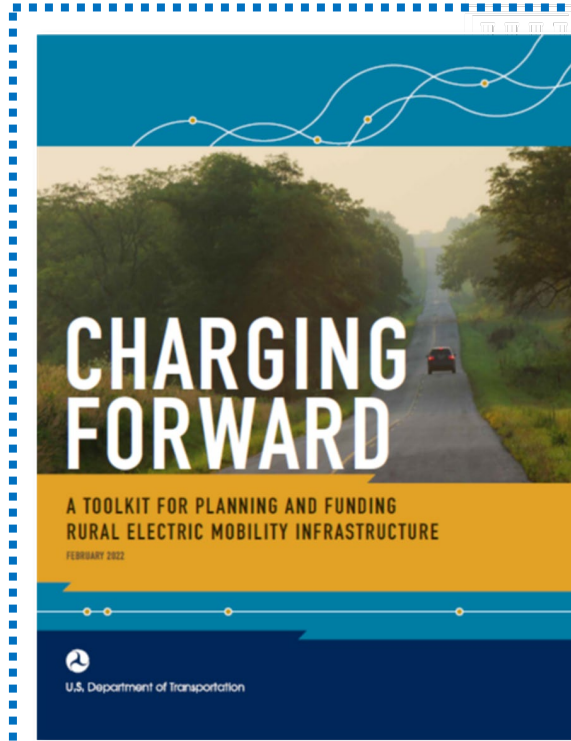




Rural Toolkits

INTERESTED IN EV INFRASTRUCTURE?

This toolkit helps rural communities scope, plan, and fund electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Rural entities can use the toolkit to identify key project partners and available funding or financing to help make their project a reality.



APPLYING FOR A GRANT FROM USDOT?

This toolkit provides user-friendly information and resources to support rural applicants' understanding of USDOT discretionary grant programs and the funding process.

Update coming soon!


Check out these toolkits and more at www.transportation.gov/rural.
Contact us at rural@dot.gov.



DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard

The DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard provides an overview of discretionary grant opportunities for transportation infrastructure.



 [Download CSV](#)

Keywords

Eligible Activities

- Any -

Eligible Applicants

- Any -

Agency/Office

- Any -

Transportation Type

- Any -

Match Waiver

- Any -

Rural Set-Aside

- Any -

Tribal Set-Aside

- Any -

Status

- Any -

Apply

HOUSE
STAFF

HIGHLIGHTS

- 90+ grant programs
- Covers DOT and Non-DOT Agencies
 - *8 DOT Agencies*
 - *10+ Non-DOT Agencies*
- Multiple search filters
- Customized features for Rural and Tribal communities
- Save results as Excel csv file

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dashboard>



Short Answer Poll



Which parts of the application should DOT address in further detail on the RCN website or a future webinar?

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



How are “economically disadvantaged communities” defined for the program?



The FY 2023 RCN Grant Opportunity includes an updated definition of an economically disadvantaged community and different tools to determine whether a project is located within an economically disadvantaged community.

The NAE Statute defines economically disadvantaged communities as a community that:

- A. is economically disadvantaged, underserved, or located in an area of persistent poverty;
- B. has entered or will enter into a community benefits agreement with representatives of the community;
- C. has an anti-displacement policy, a community land trust, or a community advisory board in effect; or
- D. has demonstrated a plan for employing local residents in the area impacted by the activity or project proposed under this section.



What proof should a nonprofit applicant provide to establish they are a nonprofit?

Nonprofit applicants should provide information describing how they are legally organized and confirming their nonprofit tax status



Do capital construction projects have to be included in the TIP/STIP or Long-Range Plans?



Eligible projects for RCN Capital Construction Grants include those for which all necessary feasibility studies and other planning activities have been completed.

Projects must be consistent with the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan, included in the Metropolitan Long-Range Plan (if applicable), and in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and/or Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) or equivalent, as applicable, prior to the obligation of the award. Transit projects must be included in the investment prioritization of the relevant Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan by the time of the obligation of the award.



Q & A



Fact Sheets with Key RCN Program Information

Fact sheets with program overviews are available at:



THE WHITE HOUSE

RCP Fact Sheet: [Reconnecting Communities Pilot \(RCP\) Program - Fact Sheets | Federal Highway Administration \(dot.gov\)](#)

NAE Fact Sheet: [NAE Fact Sheet | US Department of Transportation](#)

**Application
Deadline:**

September 28, 2023,
at 11:59 EDT



Image source: Adobe Stock



Thank You

Thank you for participating.

- We will post a recording and slides on the website soon

[RCN Program Website](#)

Includes a link to the Notice of Funding opportunity (NOFO), Frequently Asked Questions, Additional Guidance, Resources, Webinars, and more.

Application Information

- Applications are due Thursday, September 28, 2023, via Valid Eval

Contact us: ReconnectingCommunities@dot.gov



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



Image source: Hands On Atlanta



Image source: FHWA



Image source: Jstock - stock.adobe.com