



USDOT Discretionary Grants Opportunity

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program

RAISE is a competitive discretionary grant program authorized under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to close the funding gap for surface transportation infrastructure projects with a significant regional or local impact.

The program will award at least \$1.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2023 for projects that address the following objectives:

- Improve safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Quality of life
- Mobility and community connectivity
- State of good repair
- Partnership and collaboration
- Innovation
- Economic competitiveness and opportunity including tourism

A December 14, 2022, update to the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for this program addresses funds available, qualifications and application requirements.



APPLICATION DEADLINE:

All applications are to be received no later than:

Feb. 28, 2023

11:59 p.m. EST

December 21, 2022



Changes from the FY 2022 NOFO

The program incorporates a number of changes from FY 2022:

- There are minimum award amounts for planning grants (\$1 million rural; \$5 million urban).
- The FY 2023 NOFO refines the merit criteria rating rubric to clarify differences and establish clear definitions.
- The Project Readiness area of the Technical Capacity Assessment will not be evaluated for all applicants. Instead, it will only be evaluated for applicants that advance to additional analysis after merit reviews.
- A new Reconnecting Communities Extra element is added. Its project scope will be identical to that of the FY 2022 Reconnecting Communities Program. “Reconnecting Extra” is a partially funded capital grant that may provide supplemental USDOT discretionary program funding through the RAISE program.
- Application requirements have been revised, including specific instructions for uploading 11 attachments in support of each application.



Eligible capital projects include projects or groups of related projects such as:

- Highway, bridge or other road projects
- Public transportation projects
- Passenger and freight rail transportation projects
- Port infrastructure investments (*port infrastructure and land ports of entry*)
- Surface transportation components of an airport project
- Intermodal projects
- Projects to replace or rehabilitate a culvert or prevent stormwater runoff
- Projects investing in surface transportation facilities that are located on Tribal land
- Other surface transportation infrastructure projects that are necessary to advance the goals of the program

Eligible planning projects include projects or groups of related projects such as:

- Planning, preparation or design of eligible surface transportation capital projects
- Development of master plans, comprehensive plans, transportation corridor plans and plans that integrate economic development, land use, housing and transportation
- Zero emission plans for transit fleets
- Planning activities related to the development of a multimodal freight corridor
- Planning activities related to zero emissions goods movement
- Development of port and regional port planning
- Risk assessments and planning to identify vulnerabilities (address the transportation system's ability to withstand an emergency or major disaster).

Eligible Applicants

- States and the District of Columbia
- Any territory or possession of the United States
- Unit of local government
- A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more states
- Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe or consortium of such Indian Tribes
- Transit agency
- Multi-state or multijurisdictional group of separately eligible entities



Federal Award Information

The minimum RAISE grant award is \$5 million in urban areas and \$1 million in rural areas; grants may not be greater than \$25 million. FY 2023 RAISE grant funds are available for obligation through September 30, 2027, and funds must be expended by September 30, 2032.

Grant Fund Awards Distribution and Restrictions

Half of the funds awarded (*not more than \$750 million*) will be awarded to rural projects and half to urban projects. Additionally, USDOT will award at least \$75 million for the planning, preparation or design of eligible projects. No more than 15 percent of the funds made available for RAISE grants (*or \$225 million*) may be awarded to projects in a single State.

Cost Sharing or Matching

The federal share of project costs may not exceed 80 percent unless the project is in a rural area, a Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC), or an Area of Persistent Poverty (APP). The NOFO includes a cost sharing or matching equation recommended by USDOT to determine the cost share. USDOT does not use an applicant's cost share when evaluating applications on merit.

Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Community

Federal cost share may be increased above 80 percent for projects located in APP or HDCs. USDOT must award at least \$15 million for projects located in APP or HDCs. APP is defined as any county that has consistently had greater than or equal to 20 percent of the population living in poverty during the 30 years preceding November 15, 2021. HDC will be part of the implementation of the Justice40 Initiative and will use that definition for the NOFO notice. HDCs include a certain qualifying census tract, any Tribal land, or any territory or possession of the United States.

Merit Criteria

USDOT will consider whether the anticipated benefits are clear, direct, data-driven, and significant (rating either "high", "medium", "low" or "non-responsive"):

- **Safety:** seeks to protect motorized or non-motorized travelers and communities from safety risks
- **Environmental Sustainability:** incorporates considerations of climate change and environmental justice in the project planning or delivery stage
- **Quality of Life:** increases affordable transportation choices and expands active transportation usage or significantly reduces vehicle dependence
- **Mobility and Community Connectivity:** addresses system-wide connectivity with access to transit, micro-mobility and mobility-on-demand
- **Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity:** improves intermodal or multimodal freight mobility, facilitates tourism and promotes robust job creation
- **State of Good Repair:** mitigates current or projected system vulnerabilities and restores and modernizes existing core infrastructure assets
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** collaborates with public and/or private entities and engages residents and community-based organizations to ensure equity
- **Innovation:** uses innovative technologies, innovative project delivery; or innovative financing

To receive a "high" criterion rating, the criterion must be addressed as a primary project purpose, include clear, direct, data-driven (*capital projects only*), significant benefits, and must align with at least one of the benefits described in the high column of the merit criteria rubric listed in the NOFO. A project is recommended if six or more of the eight merit criteria ratings are "high" and none of the merit criteria ratings are "non-responsive."

Application Instructions

As in previous years, applications must be submitted via Grants.gov, but other aspects of the application process have changed. USDOT directs applicants to submit the requested information in eleven different application files and in the following order, using the following file names (*documents should be submitted in PDF unless otherwise specified*):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance | 7. Merit Criteria Narrative (15-page limit) |
| 2. FY 2023 RAISE Project Information Form (<i>in Excel</i>) | 8. Project Readiness (5-page limit) |
| 3. Project Description (5-page limit) | 9. Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) Narrative |
| 4. Project Location File | 10. BCA Calculations (unlocked spreadsheet file) |
| 5. Project Budget (<i>5-page limit</i>) | 11. Letters of Support (<i>Optional</i>) |
| 6. Funding Commitments | |

Review and Selection Process

The RAISE grant program review and selection process consist of merit criteria review; project readiness review (technical capacity assessment, environmental risk assessment, and financial completeness assessment); economic analysis; and senior review. Applications selected for RAISE funding must demonstrate efforts to consider climate change and environmental justice impacts; entities are required to do so before receiving funding. USDOT will first evaluate all projects against the RAISE merit criteria. Competitive capital (construction) applications will undergo a second-tier analysis of project readiness (environmental risk assessment, financial completeness assessment, and technical capacity assessment) and their economic (benefit-cost) analysis. Second-tier analysis for planning projects consists of a financial completeness assessment and a technical capacity assessment.

Applications are due February 28, 2023, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on Grants.gov, and selections will be announced no later than June 28, 2023.



Your Infrastructure Finance and grant writing professionals stand by ready to support project sponsors applying for funding from the RAISE Grant Program.

If you need any assistance or have questions, please contact:

Nathan Macek | nathan.macek@hdrinc.com | Matthew Volz | matthew.volz@hdrinc.com | Daphne Federer | daphne.federer@hdrinc.com

hdrinc.com

We practice increased use of sustainable materials and reduction of material use.

© HDR, all rights reserved.

