

Fiscal Years 2024 through 2026
Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving
Transportation Competitive Grant Program
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Application Opening Date: 08/27/2026
Application Closing Date: 10/09/2026

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

Fiscal Years 2024 through 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

**Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving
Transportation Competitive Grant Program**

Table of Contents

A. BASIC INFORMATION.....	3
B. ELIGIBILITY.....	6
C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	12
D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT	15
E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINE.....	20
F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION	22
G. AWARD NOTICES	40
H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION	41

A. BASIC INFORMATION

The applicant should read this notice in its entirety for the information necessary to submit eligible and competitive applications.	
Federal Agency Name	U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Funding Opportunity Title	Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Competitive Grant Program
Announcement Type	This is a new Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Funding Opportunity Number	FHWA-PROT-26-001
Assistance Listing Number(s)	20.284
Funding Details	This opportunity will result in the distribution of up to \$787 million in Fiscal Years (FYs) 2024 through 2026 funding. Of this amount, up to \$79 million is available for Planning Grants; up to \$551 million is available for Resilience Improvement Grants; up to \$79 million is available for Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants; and up to \$79 million is available for At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants. FHWA may elect to also distribute any remaining and available prior FY PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds in awards under this funding opportunity. See Section C.3 for information on statutory set-asides. FHWA may elect to utilize funds from this NOFO for projects selected to receive an award under the previous PROTECT Competitive Grant Program NOFO. In this instance, previous awardees would not have to re-apply. There is no minimum or maximum award size.
Key Dates	Application Due Date: 10/09/2026 at 11:59:59 PM ET. DOT anticipates announcing awards under this NOFO the week of December 07, 2026.

Executive Summary	The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program provides funding to plan for and make surface transportation more resilient to current and future weather events, natural disasters, and changing conditions, such as severe storms, flooding, drought, levee and dam failures, wildfire, rockslides, mudslides, sea level rise, extreme weather, including extreme temperatures, and earthquakes. The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program has the following categories of funding: • Planning Grants (Title 23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 176(d)(3)). • Resilience Grants, including: ○ Resilience Improvement Grants (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(A)). ○ Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(B)). ○ At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)). Eligible applicants for the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funding are States, metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), local governments, federally recognized Indian Tribes, public transportation agencies, port authorities, and Federal Land Managing Agencies (FLMA) when applying jointly with a State or group of States. Specific to At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants, eligibility also includes U.S. territories, plus the same entities eligible for the broader program, but limited to coastal States and other specified entities within such States (see 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(i)). See Section B for more details. The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program requires a minimum non-Federal cost-share of 20 percent except for: federally recognized Indian Tribes who may request zero cost-share; Planning Grants, which do not require a cost-share; projects in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which do not require a cost-share (23 U.S.C. § 120(g)); and projects covered by an applicable Resilience Improvement Plan (RIP), which could reduce the required minimum cost-share to 17 percent, 13 percent, or 10 percent (see Section B). Where required, applicants who do not provide the minimum non-Federal cost-share will be classified as ineligible. For additional information on RIPs, please refer to Section B and 23 U.S.C. § 176(e).
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Agency Contact Information	U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E. Washington, D.C. 20590 Email: PROTECTcompetitive@dot.gov
Changes from Prior NOFO	• Removed references to rescinded Executive Orders (E.O.). • Aligned the NOFO with new E.O.s. • Updated application evaluation criteria. • Simplified and aligned with 2 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 200 criteria. • Changed the NOFO to one application period for FYs 2024, 2025, and 2026 funding. • Added a required Application Template. Applicants who applied for funding under the previous FYs 2024 through 2026 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program NOFO published in October 2024 must re-apply using the relevant NOFO Application Template associated with this NOFO to be considered for funding. Awards will not be made under the previous FYs 2024 through 2026 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program NOFO.

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

See [Section A](#) for a summary of eligible entities, which are shown in more detail below:

Planning, Resilience Improvement, and Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants	At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants
1. A State or political subdivision of a State. (State includes the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico). 2. An MPO. 3. A unit of local government. 4. A special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority.¹ 5. A federally recognized Indian Tribe (as defined in 23 U.S.C. § 207(m)(1)). 6. A FLMA that applies jointly with a State or group of States. 7. A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities described in (1) through (6) above.	1. A coastal State (i.e., a State, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) that is in or bordering on the Atlantic, Pacific or Arctic Oceans or the Gulf of America², or a coastal State that is in or bordering on the Long Island Sound or one or more of the Great Lakes. Also, within a coastal State as described above: 2. A political subdivision of a State. 3. An MPO. 4. A unit of local government. 5. A special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority. 6. A federally recognized Indian Tribe. 7. A FLMA that applies jointly with an eligible State or group of States. 8. A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities described in (1) through (7) above.

Multiple eligible entities who submit a joint application should identify a lead applicant as the primary point of contact (POC) and recipient for purposes of financial administration of the project. Joint applications should include a description of the roles and responsibilities of each applicant and should be signed by each applicant.

2. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Activities

¹A “public authority” means a Federal, State, county, town, or township, federally recognized Indian Tribe, municipal, or other local government or instrumentality with authority to finance, build, operate, or maintain toll or toll-free facilities (23 U.S.C. 101(a)(22)). If a special purpose district applies for a PROTECT Competitive Grant, it should include appropriate documentation that it was established in accordance with applicable State law.

² Title 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(i)(I) and E.O.14172.

Eligible activities are different for each of the four types of grants under the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program. The table below provides PROTECT Competitive Grant Program eligible activities:

Grant Type	Eligible Activities
Planning	1. The development of a RIP under 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2) by a State or MPO; 2. Resilience planning, predesign, design, or the development of data tools to simulate transportation disruption scenarios, including vulnerability assessments; 3. Technical capacity building by the eligible entity to facilitate the ability of the eligible entity to assess the vulnerabilities of the surface transportation assets and community response strategies of the eligible entity under current conditions and a range of potential future conditions; or 4. Evacuation planning and preparation.
Resilience Improvement	The project must include one or more construction activities to improve the ability of an existing surface transportation asset to withstand one or more elements of a weather event or natural disaster, or to increase the resilience of surface transportation infrastructure from the impacts of changing conditions, such as sea level rise, flooding, wildfires, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters including: 1. Resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, replacement, improvement, or realignment of an existing surface transportation facility eligible for assistance under Title 23; 2. The incorporation of natural infrastructure; 3. The upgrade of an existing surface transportation facility to meet or exceed a design standard adopted by FHWA; 4. The installation of mitigation measures to prevent the intrusion of floodwaters into surface transportation systems; 5. Strengthening systems to remove rainwater from surface transportation facilities; 6. Upgrades to and installation of structural stormwater controls; 7. A resilience project that addresses identified vulnerabilities described in the RIP of the eligible entity, if applicable; 8. Relocating roadways in a base floodplain to higher ground above projected flood elevation levels, or away from slide prone areas; 9. Stabilizing slide areas or slopes; 10. Installing riprap; 11. Lengthening or raising bridges to increase waterway openings, including responding to extreme weather; 12. Increasing the size or number of drainage structures; 13. Installing seismic retrofits on bridges;

	14. Adding scour protection at bridges; 15. Adding scour, stream stability, coastal, and other hydraulic countermeasures, including spur dikes; 16. Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, facilitate wildfire control, and provide erosion control; and 17. Any other protective features, including natural infrastructure, as determined by the Secretary.
Community Resilience and Evacuation Route	One or more projects that strengthen and protect evacuation routes essential for supporting emergency evacuations during emergency events, including projects: 1. Eligible as resilience improvements (see 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(A)(ii)) if the activity improves an evacuation route; 2. Ensuring the ability of an evacuation route to provide safe passage during an evacuation and reducing the risk of damage to evacuation routes as a result of future emergency events, including restoring or replacing existing evacuation routes that are in poor condition or not designed to meet the anticipated demand during an emergency event. This can include steps to protect routes from mud, rock, or other debris slides; 3. Where the eligible entity notifies³ the Secretary that existing evacuation routes are not sufficient to adequately facilitate evacuations, including the transportation of emergency responders and recovery resources, expands the capacity of evacuation routes to swiftly and safely accommodate evacuations, including installation of: (a) Communications and intelligent transportation system equipment and infrastructure; (b) Counterflow measures; or (c) Shoulders; 4. To construct new or redundant evacuation routes, if the eligible entity notifies the Secretary that existing evacuation routes are not sufficient to adequately facilitate evacuations, including the transportation of emergency responders and recovery resources; 5. For the acquisition of evacuation route or traffic incident management equipment or signage; or, 6. That ensures access or service to critical destinations, including hospitals and other medical or emergency service facilities, major employers, critical manufacturing centers, ports and intermodal facilities, utilities, and Federal facilities.

³ Data-driven evidence should be included with the application to explain why the existing route is not sufficiently adequate and how capacity expansion of the evacuation route will swiftly and safely accommodate evacuations.

At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure	Projects that strengthen, stabilize, harden, elevate, relocate, or otherwise enhance the resilience of highway and non-rail infrastructure, including bridges, roads, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle lanes, and associated infrastructure, such as culverts and tide gates to protect highways, that are subject to, or face increased long-term future risks of, a weather event, a natural disaster, or changing conditions, including coastal flooding, coastal erosion, wave action, storm surge, or sea level rise, in order to improve transportation and public safety and to reduce costs by avoiding larger future maintenance or rebuilding costs. The Secretary shall provide At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants for projects that address the risks from a current or future weather event or natural disaster including coastal flooding, coastal erosion, wave action, storm surge, or sea level change; and that reduce long-term infrastructure costs by avoiding larger future maintenance or rebuilding costs (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(iv)). FHWA will determine whether an application for an At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grant meets these requirements through merit criteria (see Section F) and by evaluating information provided in the Application Template.
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Eligible Facilities

A PROTECT Competitive Grant may be awarded only for the following facilities:

- A highway⁴ project eligible for assistance under Title 23;
- A public transportation facility or service eligible for assistance under Chapter 53 of Title 49;
- A facility or service for intercity rail passenger transportation (as defined in Section 24102 of Title 49); or
- A port facility, including a facility that:
 - Connects a port to other modes of transportation;
 - Improves the efficiency of evacuations and disaster relief; or
 - Aids transportation. (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(C)).

Statutory Requirements for Projects in Floodplains

If a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program project is proposed to be carried out, in whole or in part, within a base floodplain, under 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(B)(ii) the application *must* include the following:

⁴ The term “highway” includes a road, street, and parkway; a right-of-way, bridge, railroad-highway crossing, tunnel, drainage structure including public roads on dams, sign, guardrail, and protective structure, in connection with a highway; and a portion of any interstate or international bridge or tunnel and the approaches thereto, the cost of which is assumed by a State transportation department, including such facilities as may be required by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services in connection with the operation of an international bridge or tunnel. 23 U.S.C. § 101(a)(11).

- Identification of the floodplain in which the project is to be located and disclose that information in the application; and
- Indication, whether, if selected, the eligible entity will implement one or more components of the risk mitigation plan under Section 322 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act⁵ (42 U.S.C. § 5165) with respect to the area.

System Resilience

A PROTECT Competitive Grant *may* include the use of natural infrastructure or the construction or modification of storm surge, flood protection, or aquatic ecosystem restoration elements functionally connected to a transportation improvement, such as:

- Increasing marsh health and total area adjacent to a highway right-of-way to promote additional flood storage;
- Upgrades to and installing of culverts designed to withstand 100-year flood events;
- Upgrades to and installation of tide gates to protect highways; and
- Upgrades to and installation of flood gates to protect tunnel entrances. (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(D)).

Eligible Project Costs

PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds may only be used for activities which are primarily for the purpose of resilience or inherently resilience related. As such, only the cost associated with making assets more resilient are eligible for funding under the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program. However, to the extent that the primary purpose of a project is to address resilience, the project may be eligible for full funding (up to the applicable Federal share). (For more information, see PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Website, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/competitive>).

Eligible project costs are different for Planning Grants versus Resilience Grants.

- For Planning Grants, development phase activities, including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering and design work, other preconstruction activities, and other activities consistent with carrying out an

⁵ <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/stafford-act>.

eligible PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Planning project are eligible (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(F)(ii)).

- For Resilience Grants, the following are eligible:
 - Development phase activities, including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering and design work, and other preconstruction activities; and
 - Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and acquisition of real property (including land related to the project and improvements to land), environmental mitigation, construction contingencies, acquisition of equipment directly related to improving system performance, and operational improvements (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(F)(i)).

Limitations on Awards

- There are no award limitations for Planning Grants.
- For Resilience Grants, awards are limited as follows:
 - New Construction. No more than 40 percent of the amount of a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Resilience Grant may fund construction of new capacity (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(G)(i)(I)); and
 - Planning Activities. No more than 10 percent of the amount of a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Resilience Grant may fund eligible development phase activities, including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering and design work, and other preconstruction activities described under 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(F)(i)(I) (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(G)(i)(II)).

3. COST SHARING

Cost Share

Grant Type	Federal Share
Planning grants 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(E)(i)	The Federal share of an eligible planning activity shall be 100 percent.
Resilience Grants: • Resilience Improvement 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(E)(ii)(I) • Community Resilience and Evacuation Route 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(E)(ii)(II) • At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure 23 U.S.C. § 120(g)	Shall not exceed 80 percent of the total cost of the project.* For federally recognized Indian Tribes, the Federal share of an eligible project may be up to 100 percent.** For projects carried out in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federal share of an eligible project shall be 100 percent.

* See *Calculating Cost Share with a RIP* below for projects in States and MPOs that have a RIP.

**** Federally recognized Indian Tribes must specify in their application the Federal share amount requested for the proposed project.**

Where required, applicants who do not provide the minimum non-Federal cost-share will be ineligible for award.

Calculating Cost Share with a RIP

The non-Federal share of the cost of a project carried out using PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds may be reduced as described below. The non-Federal share has a maximum reduction of 10 percent under 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(1)(B)(iii)(I).⁶

Non-Federal share	Reduced if	Qualifiers
Reduced by 7 percent if:	The State or MPO has developed an eligible RIP and prioritized the project on that RIP (23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(1)(B)(i));	The project must be included in a RIP before the NOFO application deadline. The RIP must comply with 23 U.S.C. § 176(e) and must be provided with the grant application.
Reduced by 3 percent if:	A State or MPO RIP developed in accordance with Section 176(e) is incorporated (directly or by reference) into the metropolitan transportation plan under 23 U.S.C. § 134 or the statewide long-range transportation plan under 23 U.S.C. § 135, as applicable. (23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(1)(B)(ii)).	RIP must be incorporated in a metropolitan transportation plan or statewide long-range transportation plan before the NOFO application deadline. RIP must comply with 23 U.S.C. § 176(e) and must be provided with the grant application.

(For more information, see RIP Website at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/rip/>.)

Determining Cost Share

Non-Federal sources of income include State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue or local revenue funding programs, or private funds. Per 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(E)(iii), Federal funds other than PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds may be used to meet the non-Federal cost share for PROTECT Competitive Grant Program projects provided the requirements of those funds are met. All cost-share funds used are subject to the same Federal requirements as PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds described in [Section H](#). Unless otherwise authorized by statute, the cost-share may not be counted as non-Federal share for both

⁶ A reduction of the non-Federal share under Title 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(1)(B) shall not reduce the non-Federal share of the costs of a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Resilience Grant funded project to an amount that is less than zero. (23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(1)(E)(B)(iii)(II)).

a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program project and another Federal program. FHWA will not consider previously incurred costs, or previously expended or encumbered funds, toward the matching requirements for any project. (For more information on non-Federal matching requirements see: <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dot-navigator/understanding-non-federal-match-requirements>)

4. OTHER

Applications determined to be late, duplicates of applications submitted for the same round of applications, or incomplete will be disqualified.

Applicants are advised that FHWA will continue to screen projects for eligibility throughout the application review process described in [Section F](#).

If a non-State Department of Transportation (State DOT) applicant will use Federal-aid formula funds apportioned to a State DOT as part of the total project budget, the application must also include a supporting letter from the State DOT agreeing to administer the project with the non-State DOT applicant serving as the sub-recipient.

5. APPLICATION LIMIT

There are no limitations on the number of applications an applicant may submit, but only one application may be submitted per project. If submitting more than one application, indicate the funding priority of each application on the application cover page. FHWA is not required to consider the applicant's funding priority when making selections.

Each application may contain a project eligible for more than one PROTECT Competitive Grant category. Applicants must provide all required information for each category under which they are applying and must use the relevant Application Template for the type of grant. FHWA reserves the discretion to determine which funding category to award to a project, including a category for which the applicant did not apply.

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. PROGRAM PURPOSE

The purpose of the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program is to plan for and strengthen surface transportation to be more resilient to current and future weather events, natural disasters, and changing conditions, such as severe storms, flooding, drought, levee and dam failures, wildfire, rockslides, mudslides, sea level rise, extreme weather, including extreme temperature, and earthquakes. The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funds Planning Grants to enable communities to assess infrastructure vulnerabilities to current and future weather events and natural disasters and changing conditions, including sea level rise, and plan transportation improvements and emergency response strategies to address those vulnerabilities. The program also funds construction projects under Resilience Improvement, Community Resilience and

Evacuation Route, and At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants, which are all considered Resilience Grants.

2. PROGRAM GOALS AND ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIES

The intent of the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program is to fund projects to improve the resilience of the surface transportation system, including highways, public transportation, ports, and intercity passenger rail. Program goals include protecting: surface transportation assets by making them more resilient; communities through resilience improvements and strategies that allow for the continued operation or rapid recovery of surface transportation systems; coastal infrastructure; and natural infrastructure that protects and enhances surface transportation assets.

The Department seeks to fund projects that advance the priorities of the Trump Administration as described in DOT's mission statement and across E.O.s. The Department intends to apply principles from [DOT Order 2100.7, \(Ensuring Reliance Upon Sound Economic Analysis in DOT's Policies, Programs and Activities\)](#) when evaluating applications and making award selections. Such principles include utilizing sound economic principles and analysis supported by cost-benefit requirements and data-driven decisions and maximizing to the extent practicable, relevant, appropriate and consistent with law, benefits for families and communities. The Department will seek to fund projects that improve resilience to natural hazards and reduce potential for damage to the transportation system in support of the Department's focus on core infrastructure and projects that reinvest in the American family by preventing disruption to the traveling public and communities in vulnerable areas who rely on transportation connectivity. Further, the Department will seek to award projects that demonstrate readiness and support economic prosperity in communities and will consider projects that support the program set asides for rural communities and federally recognized Indian Tribes. See [Section D](#), Economic Analysis, for Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) requirements. The merit criteria in [Section F](#) provide information on the consideration of the reinvesting in the American families, addressing core infrastructure, economic competitiveness and innovation administration priorities.

3. PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION AND FUNDING

Section 11405 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117-58, Nov. 15, 2021), established the PROTECT Formula Program and Competitive Grant Programs, which are codified at 23 U.S.C. § 176.

This NOFO provides PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funding of up to \$787 million from FYs 2024 through 2026, plus any remaining PROTECT Competitive Grant Program funding from prior years. Different funding amounts are available for each of the four funding categories, as shown below.

Funding Category	Approximate Funding Available FYs 2024 through 2026
Planning Grants	Up to \$79 million
Resilience Improvement Grants	Up to \$551 million

Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants	Up to \$79 million
At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants	Up to \$79 million

Each fiscal year of funding has a required funding obligation deadline⁷ as noted in the table below.

Fiscal Year Funding	Funding Obligation Deadline
2024	September 30, 2027
2025	September 30, 2028
2026	September 30, 2029

The total period of performance for the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program awards are anticipated to be between 1 and 4 years.

This NOFO is subject to the availability of funding. The Government's obligation under any resulting award is contingent upon the availability of funding. There is no legal liability on the part of the Government for any payment that may arise until funds are available and obligated to an award. FHWA is not obligated to make any award as a result of this notice.

Statutory Funding Provisions

- Rural⁸ Set-Aside: Not less than 25 percent of funding each fiscal year will be awarded to projects located outside an urban area with a population over 200,000 (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(H)(ii)). A project located in both an urban and a rural area will be designated as rural if the majority of the project's footprint is in rural areas.
- Tribal Set-Aside: Not less than 2 percent of funding from each fiscal year will be awarded for grants to federally recognized Indian Tribes⁹ (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(H)(iii)).
- Unutilized Amounts: For any fiscal year, if the Secretary determines that the amount of the Rural Set-Aside or Tribal Set-Aside will not be fully utilized for PROTECT Competitive Grant Program grants, the Secretary may reallocate the unutilized funds to provide grants to other PROTECT Competitive Grant Program eligible entities. (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(H)(iv)).
- Limitation on Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation: For each fiscal year, not more than 25 percent of the total amount provided will be used for a facility or service for intercity

⁷ Obligation for a PROTECT Competitive Grant Program award occurs when a selected recipient enters into a grant agreement with FHWA for eligible work that has met all applicable requirements for the obligation of funds.

⁸ For the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program, a project is designated as rural if it is located outside a Census-designated urban area that has a population greater than 200,000 in the 2020 Census.

⁹ As defined in 23 U.S.C. § 207(m)(1).

rail passenger transportation (as defined in 49 U.S.C. § 24102). (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(G)(ii)).

- Benefit-Cost: BCA is required for certain award prioritizations under this program. See [Section D](#) for more information.

4. AWARD SIZE

There is no minimum or maximum award amount for PROTECT Competitive Grant awards.

While the Department reserves the right to make smaller or larger awards, based on the FY22-23 NOFO, the anticipated award range for Resilience Improvement, Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants, and At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants, the anticipated award range is \$500,000 to \$60,000,000. For Planning Grants, the anticipated award range is \$100,000 to \$10,000,000.

5. TYPE OF AWARD

The anticipated award(s) will be cost-reimbursable grant agreements.

6. PERFORMANCE GOALS

See [Section H](#) for details on performance reporting requirements and goals.

7. PREVIOUS AWARDS

Previous program awards can be seen on the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Website: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/competitive>.

8. BUY AMERICA REQUIREMENTS

Funds made available under this NOFO are subject to domestic preference requirements. See [Section H](#) of this NOFO for additional details. Applicants can also refer to the [FHWA Construction Program Guide](#) for more information about addressing FHWA's Buy America requirements and Build America Buy America requirements.

D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

1. APPLICATION FORMAT

All applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](#).

Application files should be single-spaced, 12-point standard font (e.g., Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. The project narrative should not exceed 25 pages in length. Files should be in PDF unless otherwise specified (e.g., Excel based forms and location files such as Shapefile or KML/KMZ).

FHWA recommends applicants use a file naming format of: “[Applicant organization#]-2026-PROTECT” where “Applicant organization” reflects the applicant’s legal name, abbreviated as appropriate, and where “#” represents the order of applicant priority for the grant, if more than one application is submitted. If necessary, the workspace title can be edited per the instructions on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

The application package must consist of the following in this order.

All Project Types	Non-Construction Projects-Only	Construction Projects-Only
Standard Form (SF) 424 (Application for Federal Assistance)	SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction Projects)	SF-424C (Budget Information for Construction Projects)
Grants.gov Lobbying Form (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs)	SF-424D (Assurances for Construction Programs)
SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form)		
PROTECT Planning Grant or Resilience Grant Application Template (see Section D.2 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Application Templates) must be added as an attachment to item 15 of the SF-424.		

2. APPLICATION CONTENT

Standard Forms

All mandatory SF of the 424 family are available for download at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-mandatory-family>.

For more information on SF, please see: <https://highways.dot.gov/resources/competitive-grants/standard-forms-1>.

PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Application Templates

Applicants must complete one of the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Application Templates (either the Planning Grant Template or Resilience Grant Template) and include it as an attachment to Item 15 of their SF-424. The Application Template should provide all information necessary for FHWA to determine that the project satisfies the eligibility requirements described in [Section B](#) and to evaluate the criteria specified in [Section F](#).

FHWA will only review the completed Application Template and the allowable supplemental documents (*e.g.*, budget, schedule, design plans, etc.) specified within the Application Template instructions.

The application must provide a budget for the project, either within the Application Template itself, or as an attachment. The budget must list the amount and percentage of both the Federal funding requested and any additional non-Federal funds, if any, to be used to pay for the project. The Application Template can be found on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

Economic Analysis

This section outlines the requirements and recommended approaches for conducting a BCA for purposes of project prioritization and other required cost information for the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program.

Economic Analysis Requirements		
PROTECT Competitive Grant Program Funding Category	Requirements	Purpose
Planning Grant 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(3)	BCA NOT required.	N/A
Resilience Improvement Grant 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(A)(iii)	BCA required unless the project is in a qualifying RIP (23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2)).	Project Prioritization
Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grant 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(B)(iii)	BCA required.	Project Prioritization
At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grant 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(iv)	BCA not required, but the applicant must demonstrate that the project would reduce long-term infrastructure costs by avoiding larger future maintenance or rebuilding costs.	Project Eligibility

The purpose of the BCA is to assess the project's cost effectiveness by comparing its expected benefits to its expected costs, relative to a no-build scenario for the purpose of project prioritization. For projects requiring a BCA (see Economic Analysis Requirements table), the applicant must provide a standalone BCA memo document that describes the methods, assumptions, and inputs used in the analysis. Applicants must also provide all relevant files used for BCA, including any spreadsheet files (unlocked) and technical memos describing the analysis. The spreadsheets and technical memos must present the calculations in sufficient detail and transparency to allow the analysis to be reproduced by FHWA evaluators.

The BCA must carefully document the assumptions and methodology used to produce the analysis, including a description of the baseline, the sources of data used to project the outcomes of the project, and the values of key input parameters. The analysis should provide present value estimates of a project's benefits and costs relative to a no-build baseline. To calculate present values, the applicant should apply a real discount rate specified in the DOT BCA Guidance (see <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/office-secretary/office-policy/transportation->

[policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance](#)) to the project's streams of benefits and costs, which should be stated in constant-dollar terms. The scope of the project's benefits must match the scope of its costs in BCA (i.e., a BCA should include the costs associated with all benefits, and vice versa). The total cost used in BCA should include previously incurred costs and future costs associated with the project, rather than just costs reimbursable by the program.

Any benefits claimed for the project must be clearly tied to the expected outcomes of the project including resilience benefits such as damages avoided by the project. Projected benefits may accrue to both users of the facility and those who are affected by its use. Usage forecasts applied in estimating future benefits should account for any additional demand. While benefits should be quantified wherever possible, applicants are encouraged to describe other categories of benefits in BCA that are more difficult to quantify or value in economic terms (e.g., benefits associated with nature-based solutions or for documenting benefit of evacuation during emergency events).

The BCA must include the full cost (including those previously incurred) of developing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed project compared to those costs for the existing facility, and the expected timing or schedule for costs in each of these categories. The BCA should include the costs that may accrue to those affected by the proposed project's construction or use. The BCA may also include the present discounted value of any remaining service life of the asset at the end of the analysis period.

Detailed guidance from DOT on estimating benefits and costs, together with recommended economic values for converting them to dollar terms and discounting to their present values, is available on the DOT Website (see <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/office-secretary/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>). Visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/resources> for additional BCA resources including, Best Practices for Resilience Investment Benefit-Cost Analysis.

Applications for At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants must demonstrate that the project will reduce long-term infrastructure costs by avoiding larger future maintenance or rebuilding costs. See the Resilience Grant Application Template for information on required documentation.

Economic Analysis Flexibility for Federally Recognized Indian Tribes

FHWA is providing additional flexibility to federally recognized Indian Tribes regarding the information required in BCA. A federally recognized Indian Tribe may elect to provide raw data with its application to support the need for a project, without additional analysis. The applicant must provide clear identification of the problem to be solved by the project (asset risk), estimate the costs of the proposed project, current and projected future asset use (e.g., vehicle miles traveled, ridership, freight movement), and projection of the expected impacts of the project. An important benefit of projects which improve the resilience of existing transportation assets is travel time savings, for example from avoiding or reducing the amount of time an asset is closed. For such projects, applicants must provide information that will enable FHWA to calculate travel time savings from a project. Such information must include the average amount of additional travel time from using the next best highway route. FHWA will use this data to develop estimates (given the data provided) of benefits and costs.

3. SHARING OF APPLICATION INFORMATION

DOT may share application information within DOT or with other Federal Agencies if DOT determines that such sharing is relevant to the respective program's goals.

For information on confidential business information please see:

<https://highways.dot.gov/resources/competitive-grants/sharing-application-information-0>.

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINE

1. ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

All application materials may be found on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

Once at Grants.gov, select the Search Grants tab. Then enter one of the following:

- Opportunity Number: FHWA-PROT-26-001; or
- Opportunity Name: Fiscal Years 2024 through 2026 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program
- Assistance Listing Number: 20.284–Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT)

Select the grant entry. This will open the grant opportunity Webpage. This Webpage has details about the grant and a link to the application. Click the “View on Grants.gov” button. This will open the grant opportunity on the Grants.gov Website. The first tab is a synopsis of the opportunity. There is also a “Package” tab which contains the application package. Select the “Package” tab to download the forms needed to submit a FYs 2024 through 2026 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program application. The applicant must complete and submit all forms included in the application package for this notice, as contained at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

If potential applicants are unable to download the application package from the internet, they may send a written request for a paper copy to the below address. Requests should be sent to:

Mailing Address:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Telephone Device for the Deaf : Please call (202) 366-3993.

Email: PROTECTcompetitive@dot.gov

Office hours are from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM, EST, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

2. UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

Each applicant must:

- Be registered in System for Award Management (SAM) at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) before submitting its application;
- Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier in its application; and
- Continue to maintain an active registration in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal Agency.

Please note the SAM registration process takes several weeks to complete.

3. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). The Department does not accept applications via mail, fax machine, email, or other means. Additional resources on applying through [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/applicants>.

4. SUBMISSION DEADLINES

FYs 2024 through 2026 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by 11:59 PM EST on October 09, 2026. Grants.gov attaches a time stamp to each application at the time submission is complete.

5. CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS

Only applicants who comply with all submission deadlines described in this notice and electronically submit valid, on-time applications through [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) will be eligible for evaluation and possible selection for award.

To the extent practicable, applicants should provide supporting data and documentation in a form directly verifiable by DOT. DOT may, but is not required to, reach back to applicants for the purpose of clarifying application information. DOT will not request additional information to perfect incomplete applications.

To the extent practicable, applicants should provide supporting data and documentation in a form that is directly verifiable by FHWA. FHWA may, but is not required to, request additional information, including additional data to clarify supporting documentation submitted in an application. To ensure a fair and unbiased evaluation of applications submitted under this notice, FHWA will not request additional information to perfect incomplete applications.

6. SUBMISSION ISSUES For information on submission issues and more information on late applications, please see: [Submission Issues | FHWA](#).

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to E.O. 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*.

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. MERIT CRITERIA

FHWA will evaluate applications submitted in response to this notice using the following merit criteria:

- For Planning Grants, the merit criteria are program alignment, planning activity approach, and innovation.
- For Resilience Grants, the merit criteria are vulnerability and risk, criticality to community, design elements, and innovation.

The ratings for each merit criteria will be assigned a label of Highly Responsive, Responsive, and Non-Responsive. These will be used at the conclusion of the merit criteria evaluation to assign the application an overall merit criteria rating.

a. Planning Grants

FHWA will assess Planning Grant applications using the following merit criteria.

Criterion #1: Program Alignment

FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the proposed Planning Grant activity aligns with the purpose of PROTECT Competitive Grant Program as described in [23 U.S.C 176\(d\)\(3\)](#). FHWA will rate this criterion as described in the table, below:

Planning Criterion 1			
Program Alignment Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The planning project would enable communities to assess vulnerabilities in current and future weather events and natural disasters and changing conditions.	The application describes how the project will meet both objectives and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives.	The application describes how the project will meet at least one objective.	The application does not describe how the project will meet at least one objective.
B. The planning project would enable communities to plan transportation improvements and emergency response strategies to address			

transportation vulnerabilities.			
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Criterion #2: Planning Activity Approach

FHWA will evaluate the planning activity approach outlined in the application against the criterion elements described below.

Planning Criterion 2			
Planning Activity Approach Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. For States or MPOs developing a RIP, the application provides information about how the resulting plan will address the contents outlined in 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2). B. For resilience planning, predesign, design or data tool projects, the application identifies data and resources that will be utilized to inform the planning process, describes how the project will utilize data on past and future conditions to address critical transportation infrastructure, including the needs of the traveling public, such as traveling families and communities in vulnerable areas. C. For technical capacity building activities, the application describes the training programs that would be implemented, how the training will facilitate the ability of the applicant to assess: the vulnerabilities of the surface transportation assets, the potential for impacts to communities and the traveling public and community response strategies under current conditions and a range of potential future conditions, and describes how such technical capacity building will provide economic opportunities or increased access to jobs.			
	The application describes how the project will meet all elements of at least one objective and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project	The application describes how the project will meet all elements of at least one objective.	The application does not describe how the project will meet all elements of at least one objective.

D. For evacuation planning and preparation activities, the application documents potential future disasters or conditions that demonstrate the need for evacuation routes, explains how the project will leverage planning information from State and local level government, such as hazard mitigation and emergency management planning, and how the evacuation planning and preparation activities considers the needs of families and persons with disabilities.	supports the objective.		
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Criterion #3: Innovation

FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the project advances DOT's innovation agenda to usher in the golden age of transportation through American innovation that leads to cost savings, efficiencies, or better or more timely information as described in the table below:

Planning Criterion 3			
Innovation Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The planning project analyzes the potential use of nature-based solutions or builds technical capacity for the use of nature-based solutions and access to nature. B. The planning project employs innovative or novel technologies and techniques that will be used to analyze risks and risk reduction strategies. C. The planning project demonstrates and documents innovative techniques and best practices that other parts of the country can consider replicating.	The application describes how the project will meet at least one of the objectives and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives.	The application describes how the project will meet at least one objective.	The application does not describe how the project will meet at least one objective.

Overall Merit Criteria Rating for Planning projects

FHWA will assign an overall merit criteria rating on the following basis:

Rating	Description
High	All merit criteria are rated Highly Responsive.
Medium-High	Two merit criteria are rated Highly Responsive, including program alignment, and none are rated Non-Responsive.
Medium	All merit criteria are rated at least Responsive.
Low	One or more merit criteria are rated Non-Responsive.

Only those applications that receive a medium rating or higher for merit criteria will receive a project readiness evaluation.

b. Resilience Grant Applications

FHWA will assess Resilience Improvements, Community Resilience and Evacuation Routes, and At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grant applications using the following merit criteria.

Criterion #1: Vulnerability and Risk

For all Resilience Grant applications, FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the project addresses the following:

Resilience Criterion 1			
Vulnerability and Risk Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The application describes the relevant current or future weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions to which the project area is exposed and that the project will address. B. The application describes how the project addresses each element, as applicable, of vulnerability-exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity (see https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/competitive).	The application describes how the project will meet all objectives and provides qualitative and quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives.	The application describes how the project will meet all objectives.	The application does not describe how the project will meet all objectives.

C. The application demonstrates that there is a high risk to the transportation asset or system from current or future weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions (risk is a function of the likelihood of negative impact and the consequence should the impact occur).			
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For At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants, FHWA will use information provided for this merit criterion to verify that proposed projects address the risks from a current or future weather event or natural disaster, including coastal flooding, coastal erosion, wave action, storm surge, or sea level change (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(iv)(I)).

Criterion #2: Criticality to American Families and Communities

Criticality focuses on the most critical elements of the transportation system. Criticality may be defined by the needs of the community, such as providing access to critical community facilities (e.g., hospitals, schools), and may include factors such as infrastructure with high cost of failure, average daily traffic, or evacuation needs. Criticality may also be defined by the impact to freight mobility, including how disruptions impact the supply chain and increase the cost of living. FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the project will address criticality to American families and communities as follows:

Resilience Criterion 2			
Criticality to American Families and Communities Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The application demonstrates that the project is critical to support continued operation or rapid recovery of crucial local, regional, or national surface transportation assets and facilities that serve families and communities, including providing for reliable access to homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, important freight routes, or other	The application describes how the project will meet objectives A, B, and C, and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives. OR The application describes how the	The application describes how the project will meet objectives A, B, and C. OR The application describes how the project will meet objective D. Projects with minimal (2-9 detour miles) or moderate impacts	The application does not describe how the project will meet any of the objectives.

critical community or business destinations. B. The application demonstrates the project would be timely to address transportation infrastructure risks to the community and that consequences are severe if resilience improvements are not made in the near term. C. The application demonstrates the project is critical to supporting community functions (such as economic activities or emergency operations during evacuations). D. The application demonstrates that the project would address an infrastructure asset along the National Highway Freight Network, draft National Multimodal Freight Network, or the National Highway System, and the failure of which would create substantial, wide-reaching impacts across supply chains. For bridges or other single-points-of-failure, the length of detour should be quantified. E. For At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants, the application identifies the extent to which the project will (1) provide access to coastal homes, businesses, communities, and other critical infrastructure, including access by first responders and other emergency personnel; or (2) provide access to a	project will meet objective D and provides qualitative or quantitative analysis to demonstrate how it supports the objective. Projects with high (25-49 detour miles) or extreme impacts (50+ detour miles) will be considered highly responsive. For At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grant applications, the application also demonstrates that the project provides access as described in (1) or (2) of objective E.	(10-24 detour miles) will be considered responsive. For At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grant applications, the project does not identify how it provides access as described in (1) or (2) of objective E.	
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designated evacuation route (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(C)(v)).			
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Criterion #3: Design Elements, including Addressing Core Infrastructure

FHWA will evaluate the extent to which proposed project design elements will reduce risks to surface transportation infrastructure from current or future weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions over the anticipated service life.

Visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/resources> for a list of resources and tools to help assess vulnerabilities, identify critical assets, and assess the resilience of projects to extreme weather and other natural hazards.

FHWA’s evaluation of design elements as described herein as part of the review and selection of projects under this NOFO is not and should not be interpreted as FHWA approval or concurrence of final project design. Approval of the final and specific design elements that will be used in the construction of the project will follow Title 23 or 2 CFR Part 200 requirements depending on the type of applicant.

FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the project will address design elements, including addressing core infrastructure as follows:

Resilience Criterion 3			
Design Elements, including Addressing Core Infrastructure Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The application identifies the anticipated service life of the facility or asset and identifies design element(s) to address current and future vulnerabilities over that service life. B. The application documents the source of relevant evidence-based data, projections, and scenarios used or proposed for use as the basis for resilience design element(s). C. The application describes how the design elements will reduce current and future vulnerabilities and risks to surface transportation	The application describes how the project will meet all objectives A through F and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives.	The application describes how the project will meet at least four of the objectives A through F.	The application does not describe how the project will meet at least four of the objectives A through F.

infrastructure identified within the application. D. The application describes how the project will improve the condition and safety of the surface transportation infrastructure by reducing current and future vulnerabilities. E. The application describes how the funded design elements will be maintained for the anticipated life of the facility, identifies which entity will be responsible for maintaining the project, and anticipated funding sources for future maintenance. F. In support of reinvesting in the American family: the project improves wayfinding (e.g., clear signage, intuitive layouts, and predictable operations for caregivers) and considers the accessibility of the transportation system for families and persons with disabilities.			
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Criterion #4: Innovation

FHWA will evaluate the extent to which the project advances the Department's innovation agenda to usher in the golden age of transportation through American innovation that leads to cost savings, efficiencies, or better or more timely information as shown below:

Resilience Criterion 4			
Innovation Objectives:	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
A. The project uses nature-based solutions to improve resilience. B. The project employs innovative or emerging technologies or techniques that will be used to mitigate risk of structural failure or increase reliability of the surface transportation asset throughout its anticipated service life, reinforcing the Nation's leadership in technology and innovation. C. The project employs innovative project delivery methods.	The application describes how the project will meet at least one of the objectives and provides qualitative or quantitative data or analysis to demonstrate how the project supports the objectives.	The application describes how the project will meet at least one of the objectives.	The application does not describe how the project will meet at least one of the objectives.

Overall Merit Criteria Rating for Resilience Projects

FHWA will assign an overall merit criteria rating on the following basis:

Rating	Description
High	At least three merit criteria are rated Highly Responsive, including vulnerability and risk.
Medium-High	Two merit criteria are rated Highly Responsive, including vulnerability and risk.
Medium	All merit criteria are rated at least Responsive.
Low	One or more merit criteria are rated Non-Responsive.

Only those applications that receive a medium or higher rating for merit criteria will receive a project readiness evaluation.

2. PROJECT READINESS RATING

To assess the likelihood of a successful project, DOT will consider project readiness for eligible applications receiving a medium or higher merit criteria rating.

For the Project Readiness Assessment, DOT will consider three evaluation ratings: Technical Assessment, Financial Completeness Assessment, and Permitting Risk Assessment. DOT will use information from the Project Readiness Assessment portion of the application as well as information contained throughout the application to complete the Project Readiness Assessment. The ratings for each Project Readiness Assessment criteria will also be assigned a numerical label. These will be used at the conclusion of the Project Readiness Assessment to assign the application an overall readiness rating.

Readiness: Technical Assessment

The Technical Assessment will evaluate the applicant's capacity to successfully deliver the project in compliance with applicable Federal requirements and also assess the technical feasibility of the project as described in the application. Technical Assessment ratings will be one of the following: Certain (3), Somewhat Certain (2) Or Unknown or Uncertain (1), as defined in the table below.

Technical Assessment ratings will be based on:

Rating	Certain (3)	Somewhat Certain (2)	Unknown or Uncertain (1)
Technical Assessment Elements: A. The applicant has the resources to deliver the project. B. The project will comply with all applicable Federal requirements. C. The applicant demonstrates a commitment for timely project delivery as demonstrated by the schedule information in the application, including meeting PROTECT Competitive Grant Program obligation deadlines. D. The applicant demonstrates the technical feasibility of the project.	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet all four Technical Assessment Elements.	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet Technical Assessment Elements B, C, and D, and may not have currently the resources to deliver the project but will obtain needed resources to deliver the project if awarded.	The application does not demonstrate that the applicant or project will meet Technical Assessment Elements B, C, and D, and may not have currently the resources to deliver the project and does not commit to obtaining the necessary resources.

Readiness: Financial Completeness Assessment

The Financial Completeness Assessment evaluates the availability of matching funds and whether the applicant presented a complete funding package and will receive a rating of Complete (3), Partially Complete (2), or Incomplete (1) as defined in the table below.

Financial completeness assessment ratings will be based on:

Rating	Complete (3)	Partially Complete (2)	Incomplete (1)
Financial Completeness Assessment Elements: A. The application demonstrates the costs in the estimate are reasonable and	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet Financial Completeness Assessment	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet Financial Completeness	The application does not demonstrate that the applicant or project will meet all Financial Completeness

necessary to complete the project. B. The application includes a plan to address potential cost overruns. C. The application demonstrates reasonable availability of all funding needed to complete the project with an award. D. For construction projects, the proposal includes information on how future operation, maintenance and preservation costs will be funded. E. For construction projects, the budget must ensure that no more than 10 percent of the grant is spent on development phase activities (23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(5)(F)(i)).	Elements A, B, and C; and for construction projects, will also meet Elements D and E.	Assessment Elements A and C. However, while a plan for cost overruns is provided, it is incomplete or based on approaches or funding sources not reasonably assumed available to the applicant. For construction projects, will meet Element E, but the funding described for future operation, maintenance or preservation costs are not reasonably assumed available to the applicant.	Assessment Elements.
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Readiness: Permitting Risk Assessment

The Permitting Risk Assessment evaluates the status of the environmental approvals required for the proposed project and the likelihood other necessary approvals, permits, or public engagement, will affect project obligation. The applicant must also disclose if there is open litigation concerning the project; or, if there is known, and difficult to resolve, public controversy, or Agency opposition to the project on environmental grounds. This assessment will result in a rating of high risk (1), moderate risk (2), or low risk (3), as defined in the table below.

Permitting ratings will be based on:

Rating	Low Risk (3)	Moderate Risk (2)	High Risk (1)
Permitting Risk Assessment Elements:	The application demonstrates the project will meet	The application discusses Permitting Risk Assessment	The application indicates risk as described in

A. The National Environment Policy Act (NEPA)* review is complete, or the application demonstrates NEPA will be complete in time to meet the project schedule. B. All necessary permits have been obtained, or the application demonstrates permits and approvals will be obtained in time to meet the project schedule. C. Public engagement has occurred or will occur, and any known public controversy has been or will be addressed or mitigated. D. The application discloses any known and unmitigated issues posing high risk to project delivery. Examples include litigation, known public controversy, or Agency opposition to the project on environmental grounds.	Permitting Risk Assessment Elements A, B, and C but does not have any known unmitigated risks to project delivery as shown in Element D.	Elements A, B, and C, but there is risk of schedule delay because either: • An environmental assessment or environmental impacts statement is needed, and the NEPA document has not been released for public review; • Permit work has not started, and the schedule does not include time for schedule delays; or • Public engagement has not started, and the schedule does not include time to address public input. • Also, the project or program does not have any known unmitigated risks to project delivery as shown in Element D.	Permitting Risk Assessment Element D, or the application does not meet Elements A, B, or C.
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* Projects that would be eligible for a categorical exclusion under 23 CFR 771.117(c), such as Planning Grants, should state such as a response to this item in their application.

The project readiness ratings described above will be translated to a high, medium, or low rating using the table below:

Project Readiness Rating	Description
High	Two readiness assessment items rated as a 3, with one readiness assessment item rated as a 2.
Medium	One readiness assessment item rated as a 3, with two readiness assessment items rated as a 2.
Low	All readiness assessment items rated as either a 2 or a 1.

3. OVERALL RATING OF THE APPLICATION

DOT will assign each eligible application an overall rating of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended. The rating will be assigned on the following basis:

- A rating of “**Highly Recommended**” will be assigned to a project that received no less than a medium-high rating for merit criteria and a medium project readiness rating.
- A rating of “**Recommended**” will be assigned to a project that received no less than a medium rating for merit criteria and project readiness rating.
- A rating of “**Not Recommended**” will be assigned to a project that is not otherwise assigned a “Highly Recommended” or “Recommended” rating.

4. THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS REVIEW FOR RESILIENCE IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EVACUATION ROUTES PROJECTS

For Resilience Improvement and Community Resilience and Evacuation Routes Projects that receive an overall rating of Highly Recommended or Recommended, FHWA will conduct an economic analysis. Only those Resilience Improvement projects which are not on an applicable RIP under 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2) will be evaluated under the economic analysis.

To the extent possible, FHWA will rely on the applicant’s submission of well-supported BCA results. The purpose of BCA is to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project by comparing its expected benefits to its expected costs relative to the current infrastructure, often referred to as the “baseline” or “no-build alternative.” The baseline defines the world without the proposed project. Any benefits claimed for the proposed project, both quantified and unquantified, should be clearly tied to the expected outcomes of the proposed project. While benefits should be quantified whenever possible, FHWA acknowledges that some aspects of calculating resilience benefits are difficult to quantify. Applicants should nonetheless discuss these types of benefits qualitatively, providing data, news reports, or other information to support the potential scale of the unquantified benefits.

BCA should account for current and future vulnerabilities from extreme weather events that may occur in the geographic area in which the project is located using the best available evidence and analysis. Sources should be provided whenever possible.

BCAs are conducted via annual costs and benefits, so applications should include justifications with sources for future annual hazard event probabilities, facility use, and development patterns. For these annual probabilities, applicants should use official sources as much as possible. Examples include Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Data and the University of California Merced's Weather Toolbox. Applicants can deviate from official sources provided that their sources are as good or better than the official sources.

For Resilience Improvement projects which are not on the applicable RIP under 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2) and Community Resilience and Evacuation Routes projects, FHWA will consider a project's benefits compared to its costs to determine whether a project is cost effective and assign an economic analysis rating. To the extent possible, FHWA will rely on quantitative, evidence-based, and data-supported analysis in this assessment. FHWA will also consider qualitative descriptions of benefits that are more difficult to quantify or value in monetary terms.

Based on FHWA's assessment, FHWA will assign an economic analysis rating of high, medium-high, medium, medium-low, or low according to the following table:

Rating	Description
High	The project's benefits will exceed its costs, with a benefit-cost ratio of at least 2.0.
Medium-High	The project's benefits will exceed its costs.
Medium	The project's benefits are likely to exceed its costs.
Medium-Low	The project's costs are likely to exceed its benefits.
Low	The project's costs will exceed its benefits.

Resilience Improvement projects that are not on the applicable RIP and receive an economic analysis rating of Medium, Medium-High, or High will receive a determination that the benefits of the eligible activity proposed to be carried out by an eligible entity exceed the cost of the activity under 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(A)(iii)(I)(aa).

Resilience Improvement projects will be given priority if they receive an economic analysis rating of Medium, Medium-High, or High and FHWA determines that there is a need to address the vulnerabilities because of the high risk of, or impacts associated with failure because of, the impacts of weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions. However, projects that receive a rating of Medium-Low or Low may be selected for an award if the project demonstrates clear potential benefits to resiliency and quality of life.

Resilience Improvement projects that are on the applicable RIP will be prioritized. Applicants should consult with their State DOT or MPO regarding applicable RIPs.

Community Resilience and Evacuation Routes Projects that receive an economic analysis rating of Medium, Medium-High, or High will receive a determination that the eligible activity is cost-effective after taking into account:

- Current and future vulnerabilities to an evacuation route because of future occurrence or recurrence of emergency events that are likely to occur in the geographic area in which the evacuation route is located; and
- Projected changes in development patterns, demographics, and extreme weather events based on the best available evidence and analysis under 23 U.S.C. § 176(d)(4)(B)(iii).

5. STATUTORY AND DOT PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS

After completing the merit criteria review and Project Readiness Assessment, among projects of similar application rating of Highly Recommended or Recommended, DOT will first prioritize projects based on the statutory priority considerations, then by one or more of the DOT priority considerations as described below:

Statutory Priority Considerations

Resilience Grants:

The Secretary shall prioritize a Resilience Improvement Grant to an eligible entity if the Secretary determines:

- The benefits of the eligible activity proposed to be carried out by the eligible entity exceed the costs of the activity (as demonstrated by the economic analysis); and
- There is a need to address the vulnerabilities of surface transportation assets of the eligible entity with a high risk of, and impacts associated with, failure due to the impacts of weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions, such as sea level rise, wildfires, and increased flood risk; or
- The eligible activity is included in a RIP as described by 23 U.S.C. § 176(e)(2).

The Secretary shall prioritize Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants for eligible activities that are cost-effective, as determined by the Secretary (by the results of the economic analysis), taking into account:

- Current and future vulnerabilities to an evacuation route due to future occurrence or recurrence of emergency events that are likely to occur in the geographic area in which the evacuation route is located; and
- Projected changes in development patterns, demographics, and extreme weather events based on the best available evidence and analysis.

Planning Grants:

There are no statutory priority considerations for Planning Grants.

DOT Priority Considerations

After applying the statutory priority considerations, DOT will provide for the Rural and Tribal set-asides (see [Section C](#)) and may prioritize selections for both Resilience and Planning Grants based on one or more of the conditions below.

- Priority may be given to projects that support critical infrastructure for industries of national interest.
- Priority may be given to applications which demonstrate that the project would contribute to promoting economic prosperity in communities, including rural areas, and Tribal communities.
- Priority may be given to applications which prioritize improvement of the condition and safety of existing transportation infrastructure, particularly infrastructure with high cost of failure, such as bridges with lengthy detours, impacts to critical corridors, or failures that will cause economic disruption.
- Priority may be given to a project that receives a high readiness rating and demonstrates an ability to meet PROTECT Competitive Grant Program obligation deadlines (see [Section C](#)). The FY 2024 funds may be prioritized for construction ready projects because of the need to be obligated before the end of FY 2027.
- Priority may be given to projects that reduce roadway traffic congestion.
- Priority may be given to projects that improve access to national security and defense facilities or facilitate movement of military cargo or personnel.
- DOT may prioritize projects that repurpose existing specialized travel lanes for bicycles, buses, or pedestrians for general purpose use by all motor vehicles, including single-occupant motor vehicles, if the applicant demonstrates the repurposing will meet the PROTECT program purpose, will reduce congestion on the facility, will utilize 40 percent or less of requested PROTECT funds for adding capacity consistent with 23 U.S.C. 176(d)(5)(G)(i)(I), will address safety consistent with the merit criteria described in Section F of this NOFO, and will comply with applicable federal requirements, including the Clean Air Act and criteria under 23 U.S.C. 217(e).

6. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

DOT will review applications received by the deadline for completeness and eligibility based on the information found in [Section B](#) of this notice. This review phase is referred to as the intake and eligibility review. Applications that pass the intake and eligibility review will be evaluated by the Technical Review Team (TRT), and once evaluated and rated, will then be evaluated by Senior Review Team (SRT), to determine which applications are presented to DOT leadership for final selection, as described below.

Technical Review

The evaluation of eligible applications will be conducted by a TRT who may consist of individuals from: (1) FHWA; (2) Federal Transit Administration; (3) Maritime Administration; (4) Federal Railroad Administration; and (5) Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST).

The TRT will assess each eligible application against the merit criteria in [Section F.1](#). The TRT will then complete the Project Readiness Assessment as described under [Section F](#) to determine which applications are rated as Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended. The TRT will then evaluate each Highly Recommended and Recommended application for its responsiveness to the priority considerations.

The economic analysis evaluation of Highly Recommended and Recommended Resilience Improvement and Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grant applications will then be conducted by the Economic Analysis Review Team. The Economic Analysis Review Team may include but is not limited to individuals from: (1) FHWA Office of Transportation Policy Studies; (2) other FHWA Headquarters and division offices; (3) and OST.

The Economic Analysis Review Team will assess the BCA of Community Resilience and Evacuation Route projects, and Resilience Improvement projects not on the applicable RIP. The BCA will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with DOT Order 2100.7, “Ensuring Reliance Upon Sound Economic Analysis in Department of Transportation Policies, Programs, and Activities.” The BCA review results will be provided to the SRT.

The TRT will send to the FHWA SRT information on all eligible applications including the rating for each merit criteria, the Project Readiness Assessment rating, the economic analysis results (for Resilience Improvement and Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grant applications), and the evaluation of responsiveness to the priority considerations.

FHWA will use not less than 2 percent for grants to federally recognized Indian Tribes and 25 percent for grants to projects located in rural areas (see [Section C](#)). The FHWA SRT may recommend for funding all Highly Recommended applications under the set-asides and then recommend for funding additional Recommended applications up to the minimum amount. Any remaining Recommended applications will be considered for funding with the remaining non-Tribal applicants and projects located in rural areas under review by the SRT.

The FHWA Administrator may consider options for reduced awards and the ability to award certain eligible applications under any of the four grant types. To the extent possible, all applications will be considered for any of the four grant programs regardless of which grant is applied for (see [Section C](#)).

Senior Review

The SRT may consist of officials from OST, the FHWA Administrator, and others in Senior leadership positions requested to serve by the FHWA Administrator. The SRT will determine which projects advance to DOT leadership for final selection. DOT leadership has the discretion to determine which applications best address the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program merit criteria, Project Readiness Assessment, and priority considerations and should be selected.

DOT is not obligated to make any award as a result of this NOFO.

DOT intends to apply principles from [DOT Order 2100.7, \(Ensuring Reliance Upon Sound Economic Analysis in DOT’s Policies, Programs and Activities\)](#) when evaluating applications

and making award selections. To the maximum extent permitted by law, DOT will prioritize projects in alignment with the principles outlined in DOT Order 2100.7.

Reduced Awards

In accordance with [Section D](#) of this NOFO, DOT may enter into discussions with an applicant to discuss, if mutually agreeable, a lesser scaled amount of a potential award. This may occur because of the quantity, size and scope of the applications received in response to this notice and the results of the application review process.

7. APPLICANT RISK ASSESSMENT

Prior to award, each selected applicant will be subject to a risk assessment required by 2 CFR § 200.206. DOT must review and consider any information about the applicant in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. An applicant may review information in SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding Agency previously entered. DOT will consider comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in SAM.gov, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the risk assessment. DOT reserves the right to deny an award based on the results of the risk assessment or include special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the Federal award in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.206.

DOT will consider the following factors in its risk assessment in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.206:

- Financial stability-the applicant's record of effectively managing financial risks, assets, and resources;
- Management systems and standards-quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in this part;
- History of performance, if applicable-the applicant's record of managing previous and current Federal awards, including compliance with reporting requirements and conformance to the terms and conditions of Federal awards, if applicable; audit reports and findings-reports and findings from audits performed under subpart F or the reports and findings of any other available audits, if applicable; and
- Ability to effectively implement requirements-the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on recipients of Federal awards.

G. AWARD NOTICES

1. HOW PROJECT SELECTIONS ARE ANNOUNCED

Following the evaluation outlined in [Section F](#), the Secretary will announce awarded projects by posting a list of selected projects at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/competitive>. Notice of selection is not authorization to begin performance or to incur costs for the proposed project. Following that announcement, FHWA will contact the POC listed in the SF-424 to initiate negotiation of the project agreement for authorization.

The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program grants will be awarded upon the execution of a grant agreement between the DOT and the recipient.

Unsuccessful applicants may request a debriefing up to 90 days after the selected funding recipients are publicly announced. The request must be submitted by the applicant identified on the SF-424. The debrief will be limited to how the application responded to the grant program evaluation criteria described in [Section F](#) of the NOFO. All debrief requests should be submitted to PROTECTcompetitive@dot.gov.

2. REIMBURSEMENTS AND COSTS INCURRED PRIOR TO AWARD AND OBLIGATION OF GRANTS

Unless authorized by DOT in writing after announcement of the FYs 2024 through 2026 PROTECT Competitive Grant Program selections, any costs incurred prior to DOT's obligation of funds for a project are ineligible for reimbursement and are ineligible for cost share requirements. DOT will primarily administer grants on a reimbursement basis. Under the reimbursement approach, DOT funds will reimburse recipients only for costs incurred after execution of a grant agreement for costs DOT determines to be allowable, reasonable, and allocable, as defined under 2 CFR Part 200, and after the recipient submits valid requests for reimbursement.

If a recipient cannot complete a project on a reimbursable basis, DOT will—on a case-by-case basis—consider recipient requests to use alternative payment methods as described under 2 CFR 200.305(b).

H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

1. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Administrative Requirements

All awards will be administered pursuant to the FHWA Competitive Grant Program general terms and conditions, and the uniform administrative requirements, cost principles and audit requirements for Federal awards found in 2 CFR Part 200, as adopted by DOT at 2 CFR Part 1201. Applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations set forth in Title 49 of the CFR, shall apply

to awards provided under this program.

In connection with any program or activity conducted with or benefiting from funds awarded under this notice, recipients of funds must comply with all applicable requirements of Federal law, including, without limitation, the Constitution of the United States; the conditions of performance, non-discrimination requirements, and other assurances made applicable to the award of funds in accordance with regulations of DOT and FHWA; and applicable Federal financial assistance and contracting principles promulgated by Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In complying with these requirements, recipients must ensure that no concession agreements are denied, or other contracting decisions made on the basis of speech or other activities protected by the First Amendment. If DOT determines a recipient has failed to comply with applicable Federal requirements, DOT may terminate the award of funds and disallow previously incurred costs, requiring the recipient to reimburse any expended award funds.

Program Requirements

Critical Infrastructure Security, Cybersecurity and Resilience

It is the policy of the United States to strengthen the security and resilience of its critical infrastructure against all threats and hazards, including physical and cyber risks, consistent with National Security Memorandum 22 to secure and enhance the resilience of U.S. Critical Infrastructure. Each applicant selected for Federal funding must demonstrate, prior to the signing of the grant agreement, effort to consider and address physical and cyber security risks relevant to the transportation mode and type and scale of the project. Projects that have not appropriately considered and addressed physical and cyber security and resilience in their planning, design, and project oversight, as determined by DOT and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, will be required to do so before receiving funds.

Domestic Preference Requirements

As expressed in E.O. 14005, *Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers* (86 FR 7475), the executive branch should maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced, and services offered in, the United States. Funds made available under this notice are subject to FHWA's steel, iron, and manufactured product domestic requirements at 23 U.S.C. 313 and 23 CFR 635.410, and the construction materials domestic preference requirement at Pub. L. No 117-58, div. G §§ 70901–70927, as implemented by OMB at 2 CFR Part 184. DOT expects all applicants to comply with those requirements.

Federal Anti-Discrimination

- Except where prohibited by court order, pursuant to E.O. 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, as a condition of grant award, each recipient must agree that its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the Government's payment decisions for purposes of Section 3729(b)(4) of Title 31, U.S.C.

- Except where prohibited by court order, pursuant to E.O. 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, as a condition of grant award, each recipient must certify that it does not operate any programs promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws.

To the extent a court order bars the implementation or enforcement of one or more of these provisions with respect to a particular applicant or recipient, DOT will not implement or enforce the relevant provision(s) against that applicant or recipient for as long as the order remains in place.

Compliance with Federal Law and Policies

Except where prohibited by court order, the applicant assures and certifies, with respect to any application and awarded project under this NOFO, it will comply with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, E.O., policies, guidelines, and requirements as they relate to the application, acceptance, and use of Federal funds.

2. REPORTING

Each applicant selected for the PROTECT Competitive Grant Program grant funding must submit semi-annual progress reports and Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) to monitor project progress and ensure accountability and financial transparency.

Each PROTECT Competitive Grant Program recipient must collect and report to DOT information on performance measures as detailed in the project grant agreement.

Per the [Performance and Program Evaluation statement on the FHWA Website](#), DOT reserves the right to request additional information, if deemed needed, to better understand the status of the project. The successful applicant will provide additional financial reporting beyond the quarterly reporting if such statements are necessary to address DOT's Stewardship and Oversight responsibility of the awarded grants funds. The successful applicant also agrees to allow periodic project inspections and DOT will provide notice for such inspections.