

**Fiscal Years 2023 through 2026
National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and
Restoration (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage)
Competitive Grant Program
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Application Opening Date: June 2, 2026

Application Closing Date: July 20, 2026

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

Fiscal Years 2023 through 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program

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A. BASIC INFORMATION

The applicant should read this notice in its entirety for the information necessary to submit eligible and competitive applications.	
Federal Agency Name¹	U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Funding Opportunity Title	National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (Culvert AOP)) Competitive Grant Program
Announcement Type	This is a new Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), replacing the NOFO published on June 25, 2024.
Funding Opportunity Number	XXXXXX (Will be generated by Grant Solutions)
Assistance Listing Number(s)	20.276
Funding Details	This NOFO will award up to \$800 million in Fiscal Years (FY) 2023 through 2026 funding via cost reimbursable grants. DOT may also award any remaining and available funds from FY 2022 under this opportunity. The actual amount available to be awarded under this notice will be subject to the availability of funds. There is no minimum or maximum award amount for the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program awards.
Key Dates	Application Due Date: 07/20/2026 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time. FHWA anticipates announcing award selections under this NOFO the last week of August, 2026. For information on upcoming NOFO webinars please visit the Culvert AOP Program Website.

¹ The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) may also award and administer projects selected for funding under this opportunity. Procedures for grant administration may vary based on the DOT Operating Administration administering the grant.

Executive Summary	The purpose of the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program is to provide funding to eligible entities for the replacement, removal, and repair of culverts or weirs that meaningfully improve or restore fish passage for anadromous fish. Anadromous fish are born in freshwater and spend most of their lives in saltwater, returning to freshwater to spawn. Salmon are a well-known example of anadromous fish. Eligible applicants under the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program are: • States² • Units of local government³ • Indian Tribes⁴ Projects eligible for funding are projects for the replacement, removal, or repair of culverts or weirs that: (1) would meaningfully improve or restore fish passage for anadromous fish; and (2) with respect to weirs, may include (A) infrastructure to facilitate fish passage around or over the weir; and (B) weir improvements (49 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 6703(b)). Eligible applicants may bundle two or more eligible projects; however, each project in the bundle must individually meet the eligibility criteria detailed in the NOFO. The Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program requires a minimum cost share of 20% except for federally recognized Tribes, which are not required to provide a cost share. States and units of local government who do not provide at least the minimum non-Federal cost share will be classified as ineligible.
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² This NOFO uses the definition of “State” at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

³ This NOFO uses the definition of “unit of local government” at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

⁴ For the purpose of this program and as defined in Section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304), Indian Tribe means any Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians [49 U.S.C. § 6703(a)].

Agency Contact Information	U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Office of Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E. Mail Stop: W53-481 Washington, D.C. 20590 Attn: Gregory Danis Email: culvertaop@dot.gov
Changes from Prior NOFO	• Removed references to rescinded Executive orders (E.O.). • Aligned the NOFO with current E.O.s and current administration priorities. • Updated application evaluation criteria. • Changed the use of the application template from optional to mandatory. • Opens a new application period for FYs 2023 through 2026 funding. Applicants who applied for FY 2023 funding under the FY 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program NOFO published on June 25, 2024, must update and resubmit their application using the NOFO Application Template associated with this NOFO to be considered for funding. Awards will not be made under the previous NOFO.

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

See [Section A](#) for a list of eligible applicants.

Multiple entities submitting 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. The lead applicant must be an eligible entity. 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 projects must have a surface transportation nexus⁵ (e.g., involve, relate to, or be situated in close proximity to a road/rail crossing, pipeline, highway, or other surface transportation infrastructure).

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

3. COST SHARING

See [Section A](#) for applications that do not provide at least the minimum non-Federal cost share of 20 percent will be determined ineligible.

Cost sharing means the portion of the project's cost not paid for with Federal funds. Non-Federal sources of income include State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue or local revenue funding programs, or private funds. DOT will not consider previously incurred costs or previously expended or encumbered funds toward the matching requirements for any project. Additional information on non-Federal matching requirements can be found at: <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 applications will not be reviewed under this funding opportunity.

Project sponsors who deliver projects below the grant agreement's budget amount should be rewarded for their effective management of taxpayer funds. Therefore, projects delivered as defined in a grant agreement with project cost savings (actual incurred costs below the approved grant agreement budget) may use project cost savings, with FHWA approval:

- to fund eligible project elements within the scope of the project defined in the grant agreement that were not funded through the award, up to the allowable Federal share, or
- to fund "Bonus Activities", which are construction activities outside the scope of the project defined in the grant agreement. These construction activities must be related to the awarded project, must be eligible for the program, and must result in a usable transportation product that complies with all applicable Federal regulations.

⁵ A project involves, is related to, or is situated in close proximity to a road/rail crossing, pipeline, highway, or other transportation infrastructure (see NOFO [Section B.4](#)). Generally, the transportation nexus should be a part of a public or Tribal transportation network.

“Bonus Activities” must be briefly summarized in the project application. FHWA will preliminarily review the eligibility of “Bonus Activities” during application evaluations, but they will not be factored into the award selection process.

FHWA will determine, upon written request of the recipient, whether project cost savings may be used by the applicant, the amount that may be used, and the eligibility of “Bonus Activities” when construction of the awarded project is substantially complete. The written request must provide sufficient detail for FHWA to consider the eligibility of “Bonus Activities” and must include the scope, schedule and budget for the work. Recipients must receive FHWA authorization to proceed before starting any additional work with project cost savings.

5. APPLICATION LIMIT

There is no limitation on the number of applications an applicant may submit. If submitting more than one application, indicate the funding priority of each application on the application cover page. DOT is not required to consider the applicant’s funding priority when making selections.

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. PROGRAM PURPOSE

The purpose of the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program is to fund surface transportation culvert and weir projects that will meaningfully improve or restore passage for anadromous fish.

2. PROGRAM GOALS AND ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIES

The primary goal of the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program is to improve or restore anadromous⁶ fish passage through the replacement, removal, repair, or improvement of culverts or weirs. The grant program prioritizes projects that would improve fish passage for: (A) anadromous fish stocks listed as an endangered species or a threatened species under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) (16 U.S.C. § 1533); (B) anadromous fish stocks identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that could reasonably become listed⁷ as an endangered species or a threatened species under Section 4 of the ESA; (C) anadromous fish stocks identified by the NMFS or the USFWS as prey for endangered species, threatened species, or protected species⁸, including southern resident orcas (*Orcinus orca*); or (D) anadromous fish stocks identified by the NMFS or

⁶ Anadromous describes fish born in freshwater who spend most of their lives in saltwater and return to freshwater to spawn. Target fish species under this funding opportunity are those native species that spend a portion of their lives in the ocean or estuaries and migrate to their freshwater spawning habitats to reproduce. Species of anadromous fish include salmon, steelhead trout, shad, river herring, lamprey, and sturgeon, among others. These species may also be referred to as sea-run. See: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/node/8071

⁷ Species proposed for listing under Section 4 of the ESA or are a candidate for listing under Section 4 of the ESA.

⁸ A protected species under Federal statute or regulation.

the USFWS as climate resilient stocks⁹ (49 U.S.C. § 6703(e)(1)). The program also prioritizes projects that would open up more than 200 meters of upstream (anadromous) habitat (49 U.S.C. § 6703(e)(2)).

Applicants are encouraged to visit this website for key program definitions and terms: [Culvert AOP Definitions](#)

DOT seeks to fund projects advancing the priorities of the Trump Administration as described in DOT's mission statement and across E.O.s. 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. Such principles include maximizing, to the extent practicable, relevant, appropriate, and consistent with law, benefits for families and communities. These benefits may include, but are not limited to, economic opportunities, increased access to jobs and commercial activities; or project components that alleviate poverty, enhance safety, and primarily benefit families and communities by improving their quality of life, raising standards of living, or enabling full participation in our economy. DOT will prioritize projects that mitigate the unique impacts of DOT programs, policies, and activities on families and communities.

[Section F](#) of this NOFO describes the process for selecting projects furthering the goals and priorities for this program and the administration. [Section H](#) describes progress and performance reporting requirements for selected projects, including the relationship between reporting and the program's selection criteria.

3. PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION AND FUNDING

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58, November 15, 2021) appropriated \$200 million annually for FY 2022 through 2026 to be awarded under the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program.

This NOFO includes funding of up to \$800 million in FYs 2023 through 2026 funding. DOT may also award any remaining and available funds from FY 2022 under this opportunity.

Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program funds are available until expended. This program does not have an obligation deadline nor an expenditure deadline.

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

4. AWARD SIZE

⁹ Fish stocks capable of resisting, recovering, and adapting to changes in environmental conditions such as increases in stream temperature or changes in flow.

There is no minimum or maximum award amount for the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program awards.

5. TYPE OF AWARD

The anticipated award(s) will be cost-reimbursable grant agreements. See [Section G](#) for additional information on cost reimbursement.

6. PERFORMANCE GOALS

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

7. PREVIOUS AWARDS

Previous program awards can be reviewed at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/engineering/hydraulics/culverthyd/aquatic/culvertaop_archival-materials.cfm.

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 (BABA) requirements.

D. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMAT

1. APPLICATION FORMAT

All applications must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov.

Application files should be single-spaced, 12-point standard font (*e.g.*, Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. Files should be in PDF unless otherwise specified (*e.g.*, Excel based forms and location files such as Shapefile or KML/KMZ).

DOT recommends applicants use a file naming format of: “[Applicant organization#]-2026-Culvert AOP” 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](#).

The application package must consist of the following:

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

This notice contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. This information collection is pending review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The use of SFs 424, 424A, 424B, 424C, 424D, and SF-LLL has been approved by OMB.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless the collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

2. APPLICATION CONTENT

Standard Forms

All mandatory SFs 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: [Culvert AOP Program information on Standard Forms](#).

The Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program Application Template

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

DOT 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.

Specific to bundled projects, applicants should indicate within their response to readiness criteria the potential impacts to delivery timeframes if the projects were unbundled.

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 percent 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).

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.

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINE

1. ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants may obtain application forms, including the Application Template, on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under the Funding Opportunity Number under [Section A](#).

Once at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), select the Search Grants tab. Then enter one of the following:

- Opportunity Number: **XXXXX (Will be generated by Grant Solutions);**
- Opportunity Name: Fiscal Years 2023 through 2026 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration (Culvert AOP) Competitive Grant Program; and
- Assistance Listing Number: 20.276.

Select the opportunity option, which will open to a page with several tabs. The first tab is a synopsis of the Opportunity. Select the Application Package tab to download the forms needed to submit FYs 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP 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).

Should applicants have any difficulties in accessing any SFs and require paper copies, please contact the Agency Contact provided in [Section A](#) of this NOFO.

2. UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

Each applicant must:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at [SAM.gov](https://www.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://www.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, if not longer**.

3. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

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

4. SUBMISSION DEADLINE

FYs 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM ET on July 20, 2026. [Grants.gov](https://www.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://www.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, contact applicants for the purpose of clarifying application information. DOT will not request additional information for applications submitted in an incomplete form.

6. SUBMISSION ISSUES

For information on submission issues and more information on late applications, please see: [Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program submission issues information](#).

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

8. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 508 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

DOT encourages applicants to submit documents compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see [Section 508 guidelines](#)).

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. MERIT CRITERIA

DOT will evaluate applications submitted in response to this notice using the following merit criteria: Conservation Benefits to Anadromous Fish, Regional & Watershed Benefits Supporting American Families & Economy, Ecosystem Benefits, and Project Design and Performance

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

Criterion #1: Conservation Benefits to Anadromous Fish. DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project will meaningfully benefit anadromous fish as described in the table below. The applicant should provide available data (qualitative or quantitative) or evidence supporting the proposed project’s conservation benefits.

Merit Criteria	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
Criterion 1: Conservation Benefits to Anadromous Fish. Objectives: A. The project contributes to the recovery or sustainability of federally protected or at-risk anadromous species and habitats including anadromous species representing an important resource for other federally protected species. B. The project conforms with a written recovery, management, or State or Tribal planning or prioritization document. C. The project improves habitat availability for the target anadromous species by increasing the extent and quality of accessible spawning, rearing, and migratory habitats.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet all three objectives of this criterion.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet at least two of the three objectives of this criterion.	The application meets one or none of the objectives.

Criterion #2: Regional & Watershed Benefits Supporting American Families & Economy. DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project advances regional and watershed-scale priorities for anadromous fish. DOT will also evaluate the extent to which the project bolsters local and regional economic competitiveness, enhances recreational harvest opportunities and related tourism, and delivers benefits to American families. The application should describe how the proposed project contributes to a holistic watershed conservation or recovery strategy; aligns with any Federal, State, local, or Tribal watershed or fish and wildlife plans or prioritization efforts; and, where applicable, its priority within those plans.

Although inclusion in an existing watershed plan or prioritization list can help demonstrate regional alignment, it is not required. If the project is not part of an existing plan, the applicant should provide qualitative or quantitative data or other evidence demonstrating the project’s value within the broader regional or watershed context, including how anticipated ecological improvements support economic opportunity and reinvestment in American families.

Merit Criteria	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
Criterion 2: Regional & Watershed Benefits Supporting American Families & Economy Objectives: A. The application demonstrates the project's importance to a regional watershed or the project's support of anadromous fish conservation and restoration strategies. B. The application describes how the project fits within and will advance an existing watershed strategy, including any regional watershed plan or prioritization established by a Federal, State, local, or Tribal fish and wildlife agency. C. The project promotes Economic Competitiveness through the restoration of anadromous fish stocks supporting commercial or tourism through improving or restoring recreational harvest or sustaining regional economic activity tied to healthy fisheries. D. The project expands access to traditional food sources or reducing food insecurity for rural and Tribal communities.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet three of the four objectives of this criterion.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet objectives either A or B and either C or D.	The application does not demonstrate how the project will meet objectives either A or B and either C or D.

Criterion #3: Ecosystem Benefits. DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project will benefit the ecosystem in support of anadromous fish species. The application should describe how the proposed project would improve key physical, chemical, and biological processes responsible for sustaining riverine and floodplain ecosystems (*e.g.*, sediment transport, woody debris movement, floodplain connectivity, plant growth and succession, nutrient and thermal dynamics, and nutrient cycling in the aquatic food web), and benefits other native aquatic and terrestrial species beyond anadromous fish, as other species may act as a food source for anadromous species or may be indicators of the overall health of anadromous fish habitats. Applicants should provide available data or evidence (qualitative or quantitative) supporting the proposed ecosystem benefits.

Merit Criteria	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
Criterion 3: Ecosystem Benefits Objectives: A. The project improves key physical, chemical, and biological riverine and floodplain ecosystem processes.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet both objectives of this criterion.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet one of the two objectives of this criterion.	The application does not demonstrate how the project will meet either objective.

B. The project benefits other native aquatic and terrestrial species, in addition to anadromous fish.			
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Criterion #4: Project Design, Performance, and Addressing Core Infrastructure.

DOT will evaluate the extent to which the proposed project's design, monitoring, and evaluation will improve anadromous fish passage while maintaining public safety and strengthening core infrastructure. Applications should clearly state the project goals in support of anadromous fish passage, should describe how the methodologies are sound for supporting anadromous fish passage, and should describe how the completed project will deliver technically sound, lasting and significant anadromous fish passage benefits.

In alignment with the Administration's priority to address core infrastructure needs, the application should demonstrate how the project would improve the condition, safety, and resiliency of the transportation facility.

The application should describe the design standards to be used, anticipated performance over the transportation infrastructure's service life, and any resiliency benefits that may be gained. The application should also present an adequate monitoring and evaluation plan with measurable goals and objectives to assess project performance. Those projects not proceeding to construction will be evaluated on a monitoring and evaluation approach commensurate with their delivery phase.

Merit Criteria	Highly Responsive	Responsive	Non-Responsive
Criterion 4: Project Design, Performance, and Addressing Core Infrastructure. Objectives: A. Anadromous fish passage project goals are included in the application, and the application describes sound methodologies that support anadromous fish passage. B. The project will include a technically adequate monitoring and evaluation approach. C. The project improves or plans to improve the condition, safety, and resiliency of the transportation facility.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet all three objectives of this criterion.	The application demonstrates how the project will meet at least one objective of this criterion.	The application does not demonstrate how the project will meet at least one objective of this criterion.

MERIT CRITERIA RATINGS

Based on the assessment described in [Section F.1](#) above, DOT will assign a merit criteria rating as shown in the table below.

Merit Criteria Rating	Description
High	At least three of four merit criteria are rated Highly Responsive, and one merit criterion is rated Responsive
Medium	All merit criteria are rated at least Responsive
Low	Any of the merit criteria are rated Non-Responsive

PROJECT READINESS ASSESSMENT

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 criterion 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 will 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 to timely project delivery, as demonstrated by the schedule information in the application. 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 currently have the resources to deliver the project but will obtain the 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 currently have 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 includes complete funding estimates based on recent stages of design (or for non-construction projects, proposal development). B. The application includes a plan to address potential cost overruns.	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet Financial Completeness Elements A, B, and C; and for construction projects, will also meet Element D.	The application demonstrates that the applicant and project will meet Financial Completeness 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	The application does not demonstrate that the applicant or project will meet Financial Completeness Elements A or C; or the application does not demonstrate that the applicant or project will meet Elements B or D, or the methods or funding sources for B or D, are not reasonably assumed

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.		applicant; or for construction projects, the funding described for future operation, maintenance, or preservation costs is not reasonably assumed available to the applicant.	available to the applicant.
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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 that other necessary approvals, permits, or public engagement will affect the project obligation. The applicant must also disclose if there is open litigation concerning the project, or if there is a 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: A. The National Environmental 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.	The application demonstrates that the project will meet Permitting Risk Elements A, B, and C, but does not have any known unmitigated risks to project delivery as shown in Element D.	The application demonstrates that the project will meet Permitting Risk Elements A, B, and C, but there is a risk of schedule delay because either: • an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed, and the NEPA document has not been released for public review; • permit work has not started, and	The application indicates risk as described in Permitting Risk Element D; or the application does not meet Elements A, B, or C.

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.		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; and • the project or program does not have any known unmitigated risks to project delivery as shown in Element D.	
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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	At least two 3s, one 2
Medium	One 3, two 2s
Low	All 2s or any 1s

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 an application that:

- Received no less than a High rating for both merit criteria and project readiness.

A rating of **Recommended** will be assigned to an application that:

- Received no less than a Medium rating for both merit criteria and project readiness.

A rating of **Not Recommended** will be assigned to an application that:

- Received a Low rating for either merit criteria or project readiness.

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:

Based on 49 U.S.C. § 6703(e), in making grants, DOT shall give priority to the following for applications of like rating:

- Projects that would improve fish passage for:
 - Anadromous fish stocks listed as an endangered species or a threatened species under Section 4 of the [ESA \(16 U.S.C. § 1533\)](#);
 - Anadromous fish stocks identified by the Undersecretary or the Director that could reasonably become listed as an endangered species or a threatened species under Section 4 of the [ESA \(16 U.S.C. § 1533\)](#);
 - Anadromous fish stocks identified by the [Undersecretary](#) or the [Director](#) as prey for endangered species, threatened species, or protected species, including Southern resident orcas (*Orcinus orcas*); or
 - Anadromous fish stocks identified by the [Undersecretary](#) or the [Director](#) as climate resilient stocks.
- Projects that would open up more than 200 meters of upstream habitat before the end of the natural habitat.

DOT Priority Considerations:

After completing the merit criteria review, project readiness assessment, and applying the statutory priority considerations among projects of similar merit, DOT may prioritize selections based on one or more of the considerations described below.

- DOT may provide awards to applications receiving a high readiness rating.
- DOT may prioritize projects meeting both of the statutory prioritization criteria noted above.
- DOT may provide awards to projects supporting the Administration's focus on Reinvesting in the American Family by expanding access to traditional food sources or reducing food insecurity for rural and Tribal communities.
- DOT may provide awards to projects supporting the Administration's Economic Competitiveness priority by promoting the productive harvest of our seafood resources.
- DOT may provide awards to projects supporting the Administration's Innovation and Core Infrastructure policy priorities through deployment of innovative and emerging technologies enhancing or maintaining the safety of the travelling public.
- DOT may provide awards to a broad range of eligible recipients rather than to a select group of repeat players.

The applicant should support how the project may meet these selection considerations within their application.

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 the 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, comprised of DOT and interagency staff, including FHWA employees from divisions and Headquarters, other DOT modal administration staff, or contractors. In alignment with 49 U.S.C. § 6703(d-e), staff from USFWS and NMFS may also serve on the TRT and assist in application evaluations. The TRT will evaluate each application passing the initial intake and eligibility review against the merit criteria in [Section F](#). The TRT will also determine whether the project would meaningfully improve or restore anadromous fish passage as required by 49 U.S.C. § 6703(b)(1) based on responses to the merit criteria. 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 statutory priority considerations and the DOT priority considerations. The TRT will send the FHWA SRT information on all eligible applications, including the rating for each merit criterion, the project readiness assessment rating, and the evaluation of responsiveness to the Statutory Priority Considerations and the DOT priority consideration.

Senior Review

FHWA SRT may consist of officials from the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST), the FHWA Administrator, and others in senior leadership positions requested to serve by the FHWA Administrator. FHWA SRT will determine which projects advance to DOT Leadership for final selection. DOT Leadership has the discretion to determine which applications best address the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program merit criteria, project readiness assessment, and selection 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.

6. APPLICANT RISK ASSESSMENT

Prior to award, each selected applicant will be subject to a risk assessment required by 2 Code of Federal Regulation (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 — The 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](#), DOT will announce awarded projects by posting a list of selected projects at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/engineering/hydraulics/culverthyd/aquatic/2022recipients.cfm>. Notice of selection is not authorization to begin performance or to incur costs for the proposed project. Following the announcement, DOT will contact the POC listed in the SF-424 to initiate negotiation of the project agreement for authorization.

The Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program will be awarded upon the execution of a grant agreement between DOT and the recipient. The determination of which DOT modal administration will administer the grant will occur after selections are announced.

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 culvertaop@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 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP 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 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 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 United States critical infrastructure. Each applicant selected for Federal funding must demonstrate, prior to the signing of the grant agreement, an 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.s 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 Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program funding must submit semi-annual progress reports and semi-annual Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) to monitor project progress and ensure accountability and financial transparency in the program. The recipient's final progress and Federal Financial Reports shall be submitted within 120 days after the termination or expiration of the grant agreement between DOT and the recipient of the Culvert AOP grant funds.

Each Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program awardee must collect and report to DOT information on performance measures. The performance measure for the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program will be the anticipated length of habitat upstream from the project(s) that will become available after completion of the project and grant activities.

[Per the Performance and Program Evaluation statement on the FHWA Website](#), 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 grant funds. The successful applicant also agrees to allow periodic project inspections and DOT will provide notice for such inspections.

**Fiscal Years 2023 through 2026
National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program
Application Template**

This is the Application Template for Fiscal Years (FY) 2023 through 2026 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (Culvert AOP)).

Submission of this Application Template is required as part of a complete application package. The Application Template, in conjunction with the allowable attachments and standard forms, should provide all information necessary for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration to determine if the project satisfies the eligibility requirements described in NOFO [Section B](#) and to evaluate the criteria specified in NOFO [Section F](#). DOT will consider applications submitted without the completed template as incomplete and will not review the submission. DOT encourages applicants to review the NOFO in its entirety to verify their project is eligible and includes all required information is provided with their application.

I. SUMMARY

Project Name:	
Eligible Entity Applying to Receive Federal Funding:	
Entity Type:	☐ State ☐ Unit of local Government ☐ Indian Tribe
Project Scale:	☐ Local ☐ Regional ☐ Statewide ☐ Multi-State
Total Project Cost: (from all sources)	\$
Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program funding request:	\$
State(s) in which the project is located:	
Lead Applicant Point of Contact information:	
Project Abstract: <i>Summarize project work to be completed under the project and succinctly describe how the Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program funds would be used to complete the project.</i>	
Attachments: <i>Please list any attachments to this form, including letters of support.</i>	

II. Project Information

Expand the response blocks as necessary but limit the Project Information section of the application to a total of three pages. [*Applicants: delete instructions shown below in italic prior to submittal*]

1	Project Name:	
2	Location of facility and project area:	<i>[Instructions: Provide State and county, name of the city, town, or jurisdiction.]</i>
3	Waterway and watershed:	<i>[Instructions: Provide the waterway and watershed name and description.]</i>
4	Project Coordinates:	<i>[Instructions: Provide Latitude/Longitude. Bundled projects should provide the coordinates of each eligible facility in the bundle.]</i>
5	Tribal Consideration	Is any part of the proposed project area(s) located on federally recognized Indian Tribe lands? ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, provide the name of the Tribal lands:
6	Public or Private Parties:	<i>[Instructions: If other parties are involved in delivering the project, disclose those entities and describe their role in the project. Also state whether a private or non-private entity will receive a direct and predictable financial benefit if the project is selected for award.]</i>
7	Lead Applicant Point(s) of Contact:	<i>[Instructions: Name and contact information for the State, unit of local government, or Tribal applicant (or Lead Applicant where multiple entities are partnering for the project)]</i>
8	Eligible Facility Type:	☐ Culvert ☐ Weir ☐ Both
9	Anadromous Species/Stocks:	<i>[Instructions: Provide common name(s) and scientific name(s), if available, of the anadromous species and stocks your project proposes to benefit by meaningfully improving or restoring fish passage]</i>
10	Project Background	<i>[Instructions: Provide a concise overview of the project scope including the broad conservation context. Also note any key project planning and design activities that have occurred, and a description of any previously incurred costs.]</i>

III. Budget and Funding

1	Program Request Amount:	Exact Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program request amount in year-of-expenditure dollars: \$ _____
2	Other Federal Funding:	Estimated total of other Federal funding, excluding Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program requested funding, in year-of-expenditure dollars: \$ _____ Other Federal programs and estimated amounts: <i>(add lines as needed)</i> Program: _____ Amount: _____
3	Future Project Cost:	Provide the sum of Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program request, other Federal funds, and non-Federal funds as an estimate in year-of-expenditure dollars: \$ _____
4	Previously incurred project costs:	<i>[Instruction: If costs have already been incurred for the project, such as planning or design costs, provide the total here]</i> Amount: \$ _____
5	Total Project Cost:	Estimate in year-of-expenditure dollars (sum of previously incurred project costs' and 'future project cost): \$ _____
6	Statement of Work:	<i>[Instruction: Include a detailed Statement of Work (SOW) for the project in sufficient detail to demonstrate the project budget is reasonable. In addition, include a project schedule demonstrating project delivery milestones through project close-out. As an option, the detailed SOW and schedule can be attached, in which case note such in this block and provide the file name].</i>
7	Bonus Activities [Optional: See NOFO Section B for more information.]	Will the applicant request approval of “Bonus Activities”, if there are project cost savings? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, describe the proposed “Bonus Activities” below: <i>[Instruction: Briefly summarize, in a maximum of 500 words, the “Bonus Activities” the applicant proposes to fund if there are project cost savings. Summarizing bonus activities is optional but required if an applicant wishes to use this possible eligibility.]</i>

Criterion #3: Ecosystem Benefits	

Criterion #4: Project Design and Performance Prioritizing Core Infrastructure	

V. Project Readiness

In the space below, describe how the project will meet the Readiness Considerations and the associated elements as found in Section F of the FYs 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program NOFO. Where appropriate, reference attachments or other sections of the application. Expand the response blocks as needed but limit the length of the project readiness section of the application to three total pages in length.

Readiness: Technical Assessment	

Readiness: Financial Completeness Assessment	

Readiness: Permitting Risk Assessment

VI. Statutory and DOT Selection Priorities

In the space below, describe how the project will meet the selection priorities in Section F of the FYs 2023 through 2026 Culvert AOP Competitive Grant Program NOFO. Where appropriate, reference attachments or other sections of the application. Expand the response blocks, as needed, but limit the length of the Statutory and DOT Selection Priorities section of the application to three total pages in length.

Statutory Selection Priorities	DOT Selection Priorities
<i>Check all that apply to the project:</i> The project would improve fish passage for: ☐ Anadromous fish listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. ☐ Anadromous fish identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that could reasonably become listed as a federally endangered species or a threatened species. ☐ Anadromous fish identified by NMFS or USFWS as prey for endangered species, threatened species, or protected species, including Southern resident orcas (<i>Orcinus orcas</i>). ☐ Anadromous fish identified by NMFS or USFWS as climate resilient stock. See Section H. ☐ The project opens up more than 200 meters of upstream habitat for anadromous fish before the end of the natural habitat. ☐ None of the above apply to the project.	<i>Check all that apply to the project (DOT will utilize information in other portions of the application to determine responsiveness to the other Selection Priorities listed in the NOFO):</i> ☐ The project focuses on Reinvesting in the American Family by expanding access to traditional food sources or reducing food insecurity for rural and Tribal communities. ☐ The project promotes the productive harvest of our seafood resources. ☐ The project deploys innovative and emerging technologies that also enhance or maintain the safety of the travelling public. ☐ None of the above apply to the project.

Statutory Selection Priorities: Briefly describe below how the project meets the checked statutory priorities and also provide the estimated length of upstream habitat that would be opened to Anadromous fish from the project.

DOT Selection Priorities: Briefly describe below how the project meets the checked DOT priorities.

