

2023 SMART Funding Open Until October 10, 2023: Check It Out.

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Established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Program awards grants to various public sector agencies – state, local, and tribal governments, public transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations – to execute projects that use advanced technologies to improve transportation efficiency and safety. **The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 SMART Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is now open until October 10, 2023.**

Program Background

The SMART Program supports new transportation-related applications of emerging or existing technologies, expanded or systemized usage of proven technologies, and increased integration of solutions to critical transportation challenges, among other approaches.

For example, a SMART grant may be used to carry out a project that focuses on an advanced smart community technology in at least one of the following: coordinated automation, connected vehicles, sensors, systems integration, delivery or logistics, innovative aviation, smart grid, or traffic signals.

Despite its flexibility in approach, SMART emphasizes that it is a demonstration program for innovative and experimental technologies. SMART is not designed to support fundamental research for widely adopted existing systems.

Through its FY 2022 NOFO, the Department of Transportation (DOT) awarded \$94 million in grant funding to 59 projects across 33 states for Stage 1 planning and prototyping grants. Examples of funded projects include integrating on-demand microtransit into fixed route services, utilizing drone technology for medical care and equipment delivery, implementing passive detection for cyclists and pedestrians, and installing smart traffic signals that can detect air quality and road temperatures.

Program Structure

The SMART Program is divided into two stages: Stage 1 planning and programming grants, and

Stage 2 implementation grants. Only recipients of Stage 1 grants will be eligible for Stage 2 grants. DOT expects to release the first Stage 2 NOFO in Calendar Year 2024.

Stage 1 planning and prototyping grant recipients are expected to build internal buy-in and partnerships with stakeholders to refine and prototype their concepts and report on results. At the conclusion of Stage 1, grant awardees should have gathered enough information to create a comprehensive implementation plan or make an informed decision not to proceed with the concept.

Stage 2 implementation grants will provide funding for Stage 1 projects and are expected to result in a scaled-up demonstration of the concept, integrating it with the existing transportation system, and refining it so that it can be replicated by others.

Funding Amount

The IIJA authorized and appropriated \$100 million per year for the SMART Program for FYs 2022-2026. For the FY 2023 funding opportunity, DOT will make available up to \$50 million for 20 to 30 Stage 1 planning and prototyping grants. The maximum grant award size is \$2 million, and the minimum is \$250,000.

As a new program, SMART offers state, local, and tribal governments an opportunity to implement cutting edge technology for their communities.

Josephine Magnotti also contributed to this article.

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