

Based off denied grant debrief conversations with USDOT, the list below includes recommendations for future grant submissions. Please note that not all recommendations are applicable to each grant program. Refer to the grant program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for guidelines. Returning applications have had success in resubmission after technical revisions based on debriefs.

Financial

- Ensure funding/budget that would be used for the project is very realistic, highly credible and sufficiently detailed
- The funding commitment letters and other elements of the funding data should be reviewed to ensure the section is complete and unambiguous
- Within financial commitment letters, state that funding is set or is expected to be funded by the time the project is authorized
- Show the full picture detailing how funding will be used
- Secure competitive funding matches
- Demonstrate conditional return of funds (amount/how)
- Demonstrate sufficient documentation of the local match with a signed letter and dollar amount on official letter head

Benefit-Cost Ratio

- A benefit-cost ratio below 1 can be awarded however, there needs to be project justification to reinforce the BCA
- Provide detailed context/data for improved calculation accuracy
- Use EPA figures for emission calculations
- BCA's were somewhat deficient with the use of some elements that were not fully reflective of USDOT provided guidance. If the applicant wishes to use something other than the USDOT values or measures, a robust justification should be provided.

Data

- Information included in the narrative should include data to back it up
- Use quantitative and qualitative data for the need or benefit of the project (safety benefits, crash data to show how severe the issues are, how other communities will be protected, etc.)
- Emphasize community crash data and mobility barriers
- Include quantifiable benefits to back-up innovation benefits
- Presents evidence program has used quantitative analyses on chosen performance metrics

Partnerships

- Letters of support should include any partners noted in the narrative
- Detail outreach: completed –v– planned
- Strong community participation plan and details a convincing partnership approach
- Include performance measures for community partnerships

Merit Criteria

- Emphasize current benefits (and future goals) in merit criteria
- Safety: use most recent data available (pedestrian benefits, traffic collisions, etc.)
- Partnerships and Collaboration: highlight public feedback
- State of Good Repair: Distinguish maintenance costs before and after the project
- Economic Competitiveness & Opportunity: quantify benefits
- Environmental Sustainability: incorporate sustainable design
- Innovation: standard/non-innovative technology does not boost a score, however note if there are more innovative practices for the applicant, even if they are not necessarily highly advanced compared to agencies that are on the cutting edge for technology or other practices.
- Project Readiness: emphasize federal grant management, staffing capacity, technical expertise, etc.

Other

- Be consistent when it comes to conservative and overly generous assumptions/justification
- USDOT navigator tools for application development assistance
- Include local and regional plan components to show how the project will supplement the community plans (state asset management plan, transportation improvement plan, climate change plan, state transportation improvement plan, etc.)
- Census designated tracts with a level of disadvantage is a useful tool when applying for USDOT discretionary grant programs
- State comparisons of census tracts is a useful tool in development of formula programs/STIP
- Attachment sections are sometimes not limited in pages so provide sufficient attachments to support the project application submission
- Detail delivery methods for each project component
- Narrative should include standalone section for each criteria, even if this leads to minor redundancy
- Clarify distinction between Environmental Justice (EJ) and equity
- Specify contracting opportunities with Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program
- Clarify sourcing of project materials
- Persuasive and insightful understanding of the problem and addresses a critical problem