



# How to Apply for FY 2018 CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

May 21, 2018

# Objective

- ▶ Provide guidance to applicants on how to apply for FY 2018 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI)-Positive Train Control (PTC) Systems Grants
  - ▶ Grant Program Information
  - ▶ Application Content
  - ▶ Notices of Funding Opportunity
  - ▶ Application Review Information
  - ▶ Key Takeaways

# Grant Program Information

# CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

## Purpose of Program

- ▶ To fund the deployment of PTC system technology for intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and/or commuter rail passenger transportation

## Federal Funding

- ▶ \$250 M
  - ▶ At least \$62.5 M is available for rural projects

## Federal Share

- ▶ Maximum: 80%
- ▶ Statutory Preference: 50% or less

# CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

## Application Due Date

- ▶ July 2, 2018

## Eligible Applicants

- ▶ State Entities
- ▶ Public Agencies or Publicly Chartered Authority
- ▶ Local Governments
- ▶ Amtrak or other Intercity Passenger Rail Carrier
- ▶ Class II or III Railroad
- ▶ Any Rail Carrier or equipment manufacturer in partnership with at least one state entity, public agency, and/or local government
- ▶ The Transportation Research Board
- ▶ A University transportation center engaged in rail-related research
- ▶ A non-profit labor organization

# CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

## Eligible Projects

- ▶ Projects that deploy PTC systems technology for intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and/or commuter rail passenger transportation including:
  - ▶ Back office systems
  - ▶ Wayside, communications, and onboard hardware equipment
  - ▶ Software
  - ▶ Equipment installation
  - ▶ Spectrum
  - ▶ Any component, testing, and training for the implementation of PTC systems
  - ▶ Interoperability

# CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

## Evaluation Criteria

- ▶ Technical Merit:
  - ▶ Project readiness
  - ▶ Private sector participation
  - ▶ Consistent with DOT planning guidance and documents
- ▶ Project Benefits:
  - ▶ Effects on system performance, safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience
  - ▶ Integration with other modes
  - ▶ Ability to meet existing or anticipated demand

# CRISI-PTC Systems Grants

## Selection Criteria

- ▶ Preference for higher matching funds, maximized net benefits, and private sector participation
- ▶ Key departmental objectives
  - ▶ Supporting Economic Vitality
  - ▶ Leveraging Federal Funding
  - ▶ Innovative Approaches
  - ▶ Accountability



# Notice of Funding Opportunity

# What is a NOFO?

- ▶ NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity
  - ▶ Announces a grant opportunity to the public
    - ▶ Federal Register
    - ▶ Grants.gov
    - ▶ FRA Website: Discretionary Competitive Grant Programs at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0997>

# What is a NOFO?

- ▶ A NOFO consists of several parts:
  - ▶ Program Summary
  - ▶ Key Dates
  - ▶ Addresses
  - ▶ FRA Contact Info
  - ▶ Table of Contents
    - ▶ Program Description
    - ▶ Federal Award Information
    - ▶ **Eligibility Information**
    - ▶ **Application and Submission Information**
    - ▶ **Application Review Information**
    - ▶ Federal Award Administration Information
    - ▶ Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

# NOFO Best Practices

- ▶ Read the NOFO in its entirety, several times, before starting the application process
- ▶ Start early
- ▶ Apply early

# Application Content

# How to Apply

- ▶ Obtain a Dun and Bradstreet number (DUNS)
- ▶ Register in the Federal government's System for Award Management (SAM)
- ▶ For Grants.gov, complete an Authorized Organization Representative profile and create a username and password
- ▶ Submit an application addressing all requirements outlined in the NOFO

# Application Content

- ▶ Required Documents
  - ▶ Project Narrative
  - ▶ Statement of Work
  - ▶ Project Development Supporting Documentation
  - ▶ Benefit-Cost Analysis
  - ▶ Other required documents, such as NEPA documentation and planning documents

# Application Content

- ▶ Required Forms
  - ▶ SF 424 – Application for Federal Assistance
  - ▶ Either: SF 424A or 424C – Budget info for Non-Construction OR Construction
  - ▶ Either: SF 424B or 424D – Assurances for Non-Construction OR Construction
  - ▶ FRA's Additional Assurances and Certifications
  - ▶ SF LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities



# Application Content

- ▶ Applicants are expected to deliver what is proposed in the application
- ▶ FRA must uphold the competitive integrity of its grant programs

# Application Content - Project Narrative

- ▶ Cover page
- ▶ Brief summary of the project
- ▶ Project funding information
- ▶ Applicant eligibility
- ▶ Project eligibility
- ▶ Detailed project description
- ▶ Project location/map
- ▶ Evaluation and selection criteria
- ▶ Project implementation and management
- ▶ Project readiness

# Project Narrative – Best Practices

- ▶ Be sure to organize the Project Narrative headings and corresponding information exactly as specified in the NOFO
- ▶ The Project Narrative must sufficiently address the evaluation and selection criteria to be a competitive application

# Application Content – Statement of Work (SOW)

- ▶ Addresses the scope, schedule, and budget for the proposed project ***as if it was selected for award***
- ▶ A Sample SOW Template is located at:  
<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L18661>.

# Statement of Work (SOW) – Best Practices

- ▶ Organize the scope of work for the project into discrete tasks
  - ▶ Be clear regarding the work to be done in each task
- ▶ Align tasks with proposed deliverable, schedule, and budget line items
- ▶ Use the FRA Standard Cost Categories as a way to organize a SOW and Budget
  - ▶ <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Elib/Document/16647>

# Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)

- ▶ Follow the general DOT [BCA guidance](#) (for Discretionary Grant Programs)
- ▶ Refer to FRA's [BCA FAQs](#) for some rail specific examples of how to apply the BCA Guidance

# BCA Best Practices

- ▶ Document ALL assumptions (the more detail, the better)
- ▶ Clearly state your base and alternative cases
- ▶ Work from the bottom up
- ▶ Provide individual costs and benefits for all separable project elements
- ▶ If you use a consultant, double check their work for transparency
- ▶ Include an Excel spreadsheet that shows all calculations and assumptions

# Environmental Readiness

- ▶ Document NEPA completion or review underway
  - ▶ Date of actual or anticipated completion and related milestones
  - ▶ Website link to documents
- ▶ See additional FRA NEPA compliance information at:

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L05286>



# Application Review Information

# Application Review

## 1. Intake and Eligibility

Each application is reviewed for completeness and eligibility to determine which applications move to the evaluation stage



## 2. Evaluation

Each complete and eligible application is evaluated by a panel of DOT subject matter experts using criteria outlined in the NOFO



## 3. Selection

Final funding decisions are made by taking into account the evaluation and selection criteria outlined in the NOFO

# Application Review – Best Practices

- ▶ **Think like a reviewer!**
- ▶ Make a strong case for the overall significance of the proposed project
- ▶ Provide statistics, when possible
- ▶ Include project timeline information
- ▶ Describe the results/outcomes to be achieved by the end of the funding period

# Application Review – Best Practices

- ▶ In all responses, be brief, direct, and clear
  - ▶ Reviewers have many applications to go through
  - ▶ Write application in such a way that responses to the review criteria are easily identifiable
  - ▶ Do not bury responses in long-winded blocks of text
- ▶ Do not exceed page limits

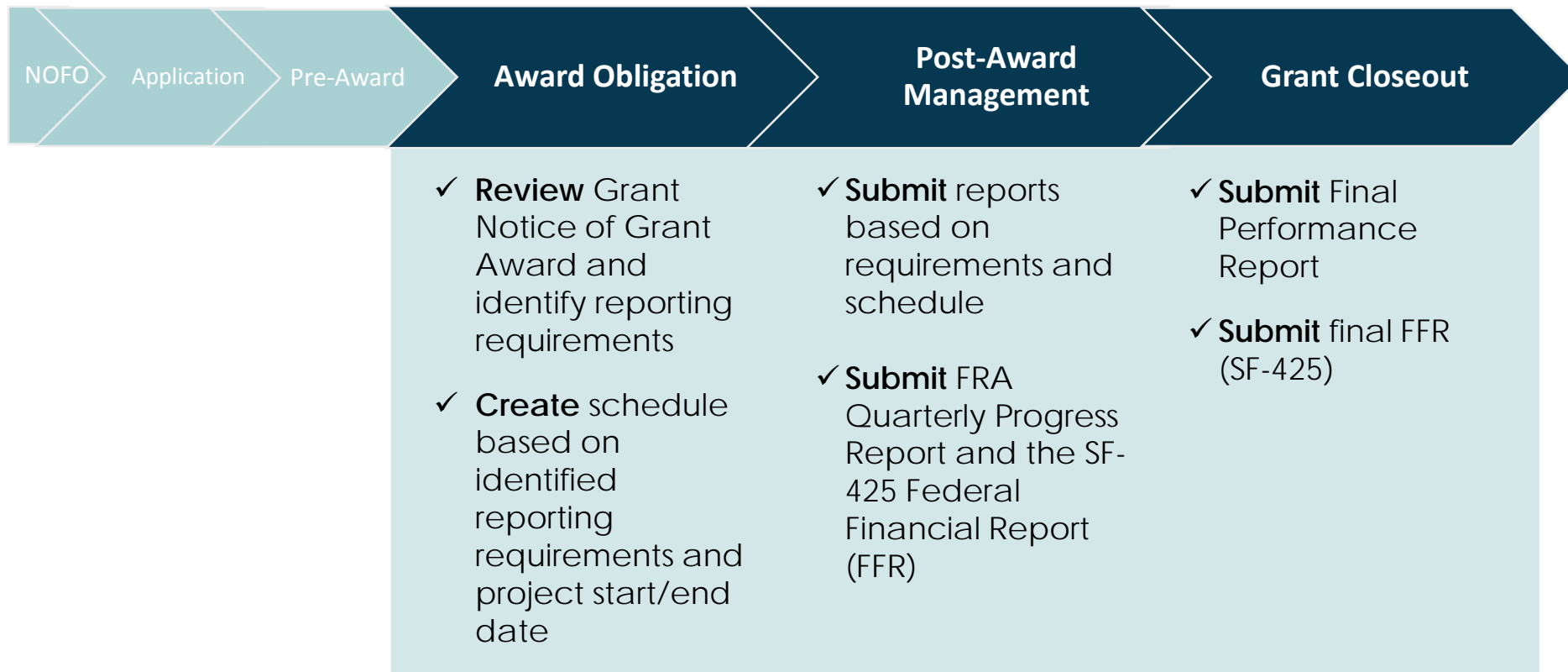
# FRA Grant Award and Requirements

# Notice of Grant Award

▶ See example at:

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L19057>

# Grant Lifecycle – Reporting Requirements



Instructions and templates can be found here: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0274>

# Reimbursement Requests

- ▶ Expenditures must comply with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200)
- ▶ FRA will only approve pre-award costs if such costs are incurred pursuant to the grant negotiation and after the announcement of selections (i.e., most previously incurred costs are not eligible)



# Key Takeaways

# Key Takeaways

- ▶ Follow the directions
- ▶ Read the NOFO carefully and use a checklist
- ▶ Indicate what "success" will look like
- ▶ Name key partners, indicate in-place agreements, and include letters of support
- ▶ Register and send in the application early
- ▶ When applying through Grants.gov, use the "Track My Application" function

# Final Check

- ▶ Are you on schedule to meet the application deadline?
- ▶ Does the project align well with the evaluation and selection criteria?
- ▶ Does the application demonstrate strong collaboration and partnerships?
- ▶ Do the project benefits exceed the costs?
- ▶ Do all budget figures match corresponding figures on the cover sheet and in the Project Narrative?
- ▶ Do numbers in columns and rows all add up properly in budget tables?
- ▶ Have you addressed all of the criteria on which you will be rated?
- ▶ Are your strategies, activities, staffing, and other application content in alignment?

# Thank you!



Amy Houser

202-493-0303

[Amy.Houser@dot.gov](mailto:Amy.Houser@dot.gov)

Frances Bourne

202-493-6366

[Frances.Bourne@dot.gov](mailto:Frances.Bourne@dot.gov)

Devin Rouse

202-493-6185

[Devin.Rouse@dot.gov](mailto:Devin.Rouse@dot.gov)

FRA Competitive Discretionary Grant Programs  
Webpage: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0997>