



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

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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:

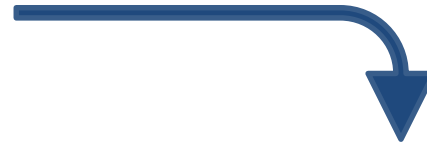
<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L05286>

Application Review Information

Application Review

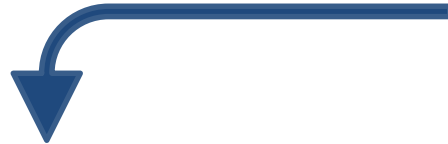
1. Intake and Eligibility

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

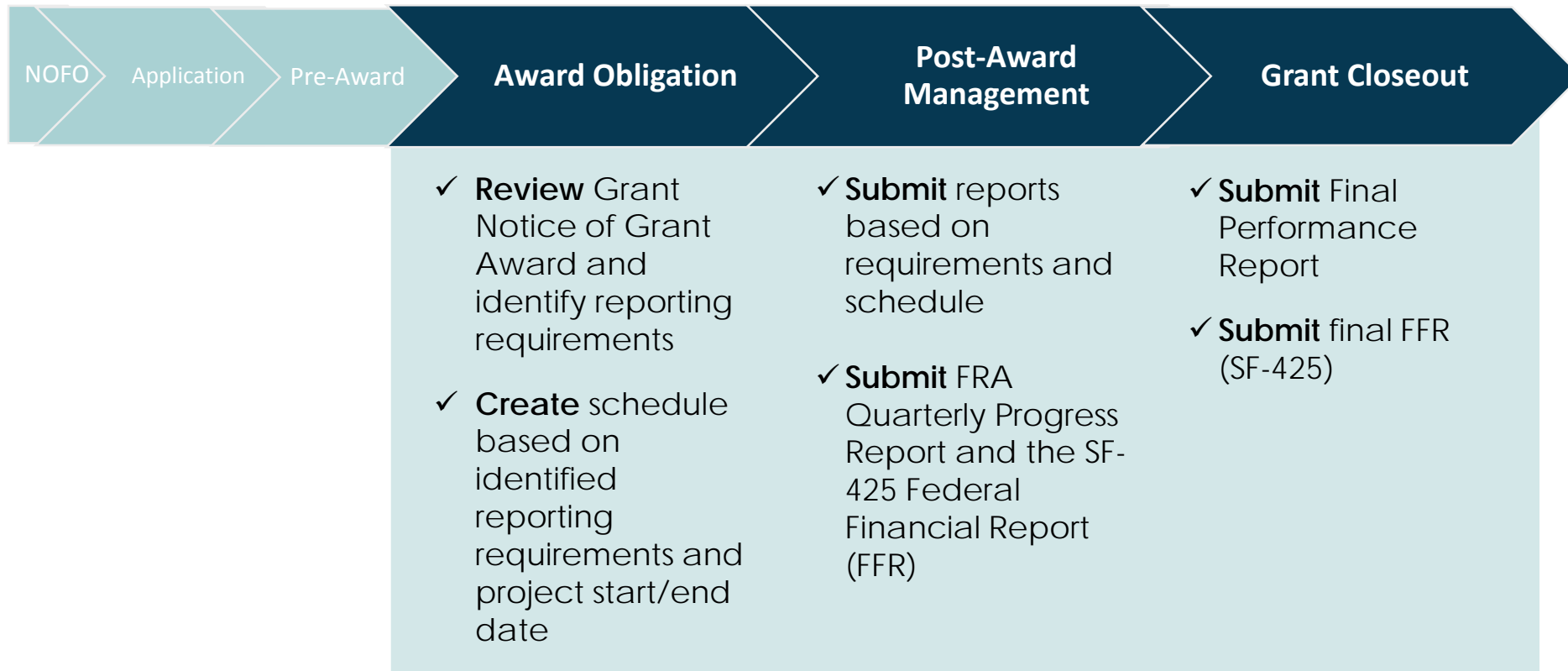
FRA Grant Award and Requirements

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

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- ▶ 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!



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