FY22 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grants NOFO Webinar

Presented by:
Deborah Kobrin • Elena Gonzalez • Mariam Ouhamou • Ryan Arbuckle • Michael Johnson • Amanda Murphy
Presenters

Deborah Kobrin
Transportation Industry Analyst

Elena Gonzalez
Grants Management Specialist

Mariam Ouhamou
Supervisory Grants Management Specialist

Ryan Arbuckle
Senior Industry Economist

Michael Johnson
Industry Economist

Amanda Murphy
Acting Federal Preservation Officer
Agenda

1. Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program Overview
2. How to Apply
3. Best Practices
   - Project Narrative
   - Statement of Work
   - Benefit-Cost Analysis
   - Environmental Readiness
4. Question & Answers
FY22 CRISI
Program Overview
CRISI – Program Overview

GRANT PURPOSE

• To fund projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and/or reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail systems

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

• Published in the Federal Register on September 2, 2022
  • Over $1.42 billion available
  • Applications due by 5 p.m. EST on December 1, 2022
• Please read the NOFO carefully and follow all instructions for completing and submitting your application
• Applications that are incomplete or received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. There are no exceptions.
**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

- A State (including the District of Columbia) or group of States
- An Interstate Compact
- Public agencies or publicly chartered authorities established by one or more States
- A political subdivision of a State
- Amtrak or other intercity passenger rail carrier
- Class II or III railroads and associations that represent a 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
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe
- The Transportation Research Board (TRB) together with any entity with which it contracts in the development of rail-related research, including cooperative research programs
- A university transportation center engaged in rail-related research
- A non-profit labor organization representing a class or craft of employees of rail carriers or rail carrier contractors
FY22 CRISI – Program Overview

ELIGIBLE PROJECT CRITERIA

• **Wide Range of Rail Capital Projects**
  • Congestion mitigation
  • Ridership growth facilitation
  • Enhancements to multimodal connections
  • Improvements to short-line or regional railroad infrastructure

• **Railroad Safety Technology**

• **Track, Station, and Equipment Improvements for Intercity Passenger Rail**

• **Grade Crossing Improvements**

• **Rail Line Relocation and Improvement**

• **Regional and Corridor Service Planning and corresponding Environmental Analyses**

• **Safety Programs and Institutes**

• **Research**

• **Workforce Development and Training**

• **New in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:**
  • Measures that prevent trespassing
  • Preparation of emergency plans for hazardous materials that are transported by rail
  • Rehab or procurement of locomotives, provided that such activities result in a significant reduction of emissions

At least 25% of funds is reserved for rural projects
FY22 CRISI – Set-Asides and Non-CRISI Funding

$150M
Set-aside for capital projects to support new intercity passenger rail service routes including alignments for existing routes

$25M
Set-aside for capital and engineering solutions targeting trespassing

$2M
For Deployment of Magnetic Levitation Transportation Projects

$5M
For preconstruction planning activities and capital costs related to development of magnetic levitation transportation projects
Federal share of total costs shall not exceed 80 percent.

20 percent minimum non-Federal match for CRISI-funded projects may consist of public sector (e.g., state or local) and/or private sector funding. FRA will not consider any Federal financial assistance, nor any non-Federal funds already expended (or otherwise encumbered), toward the matching requirement, unless compliant with 2 CFR part 200.

Applicants must identify the source(s) of their matching and other funds, and must clearly and distinctly reflect these funds as part of the total project cost.

In-kind contributions, including the donation of services, materials, and equipment, may be credited as a project cost, in a uniform manner consistent with 2 CFR 200.306.
EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Technical Merit:**
- Quality of statement of work and application materials
- Readiness and completion of prerequisites
- Applicant past performance, technical capacity, and financial contributions
- Private-sector participation
- Innovative use of technology, project delivery, and financing
- Consistency with planning documents

**Project Benefits:**
- The Benefit-Cost Analysis and project benefits of the proposed project
- Effects on system and service performance
- Effects on safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience
- Efficiencies from improved integration with other modes
- Ability to meet existing or anticipated demand
FY22 CRISI – Evaluation and Selection Criteria

DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

• Safety
• Equitable Economic Strength and Improving Core Assets
• Equity and Barriers to Opportunity
• Climate Change and Sustainability
• Transformation of Our Nation’s Transportation Infrastructure

Program Preference

• Federal share of total project costs is 50 percent or less, maximized net benefits, and projects targeting trespassing in areas with documented casualties
FRA Buy America includes **new** requirements enacted by the **Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act**

For FRA-funded Projects – the steel, iron, construction materials, and manufactured goods used in the project must be produced in the United States.

FRA Buy America applies to materials purchased with FRA funds and with non-Federal funds.

Consider FRA Buy America requirements in project planning, design, and budget.

Include FRA Buy America requirements in all procurement documents and obtain any necessary certifications to document compliance.

*Waivers are granted only in limited circumstances and can result in significant delay.*


Component List: [https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/buy-america-sample-component-list-list-illustration-purposes-only](https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/buy-america-sample-component-list-list-illustration-purposes-only)
NOFO Overview & How to Apply
A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):
- Announces the grant opportunity
- Contains details about the application requirements and procedures to request Federal funding for eligible projects
What information is in a NOFO?

**KEY PARTS OF A NOFO**

- Program Summary
- Key Dates
- Required Documents
- Addresses
- FRA Contact Information
- Table of Contents
  - Program Description
  - Federal Award Information
  - Eligibility Information
  - Application and Submission Information
  - Application Review Information
  - Federal Award Administration
  - Federal Awarding Agency Contacts
Where do I start?

Check the FRA Discretionary Competitive Grant Program webpage

- [https://railroads.dot.gov/grants-loans/competitive-discretionary-grant-programs/competitive-discretionary-grant-programs](https://railroads.dot.gov/grants-loans/competitive-discretionary-grant-programs/competitive-discretionary-grant-programs)

Click the link to access the NOFO
Where is the FY22 CRISI Program NOFO?

NOTE: Application deadline is 5 p.m. EST, Thursday, December 1, 2022
Where do I find “How to Apply” information?

Search grants on Grants.gov:

Click the **Opportunity Number** to see the Synopsis.
What is the Synopsis?

Summary information about the grant opportunity in Grants.gov:
How do I apply?

KEY STEPS

• Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
• **Register early** in the Federal government's System for Award Management (SAM)
  - NOTE: SAM registration can take up to 2 weeks (longer if you do not have an Employer Identification Number)
• 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
What do I include in my application?

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

• Project Narrative
• Statement of Work
• Benefit-Cost Analysis
• Environmental Compliance (NEPA*) Documentation
  o Note: The Applicant may include a draft document that will require development, review, and approval by FRA, or an existing completed NEPA document approved by FRA or another Federal agency that covers the proposed project scope
• Draft Use/Ownership Agreement (if applicable)
  o Note: FRA requires that a written agreement exist between the applicant and the railroad regarding use and ownership consistent with 49 U.S.C. 22905(c)(1) for projects using rights-of-way owned by a railroad that is not the applicant

*NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act
What forms are required?

REQUIRED FORMS

• SF424 (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 for Construction

• FRA’s Additional Assurances and Certifications (FRA F 30)

• FRA’s Applicant Financial Capability Questionnaire (FRA F 251)

• SF LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only required if reportable Lobbying activities exist)
Where do I find additional information and help?

Find **Additional Information** about the grant opportunity in Grants.gov at the bottom of the Synopsis page:
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Application Review and Selection Process

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.

4. Announcement
FRA press release announces selections approximately 4 to 5 months following application due date.
FRA’s Competitive Grants Application Process webpage: https://railroads.dot.gov/grant-administration/applying-grants/competitive-grants-application-process
Best Practices
• Read the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) completely and carefully to understand the criteria for eligibility and selection, and what information each application must include

• Provide a clear project title that tells us who you are and what the project is about

• FRA has identified three primary areas where applications not selected for funding typically demonstrate deficiencies:
  • Project Narrative
  • Statement of Work (SOW)
  • Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)
Best Practices – Project Narrative
Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

I. Cover Page
II. Project Summary
III. Project Funding
IV. Applicant Eligibility
V. Detailed Project Description
VI. Project Location
VII. Grade Crossing Information
VIII. Evaluation & Selection Criteria
IX. Safety Benefit
X. Project Implementation & Management
XI. Environmental Readiness

- Structure your project narrative in accordance with the outline specified in the NOFO
- Include all elements identified in the outline
- Follow the instructions for each element
- Adhere to 25-page limit
Indicate if an application for the project has been submitted previously to another Federal grant program – include the program and year
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- Briefly describe the project in 4 to 6 sentences, its anticipated benefits, and the transportation challenges the project will address.
- Think of this section of the application as your elevator pitch for the project to the DOT Secretary and FRA Administrator.
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- Only include eligible costs
- Specify each source of non-Federal match
- Provide details about in-kind match
- Indicate public- vs. private-sector match
- Describe the non-Federal funding arrangements
- Attach funding commitment letters
- Identify if the proposed match will not be available until a certain date or if funds must be spent by a deadline

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- Thoroughly discuss the transportation challenges and benefits
- Include data to support project benefits
- Describe how project components are related and will be sequenced
- Include photographs or diagrams
- Identify all host railroads, operators, and beneficiaries
Identify cities, counties, and states where project is located
Include a map of the project
Identify railroad mileposts
Geospatial data – longitude and latitude
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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☑ Cite specific DOT National Grade Crossing Inventory information, including:
  - Railroad that owns infrastructure
  - Primary railroad operator
  - DOT crossing inventory number
  - Roadway at the crossing
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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☑ Include a separate section in the project narrative focused on how the project meets each of the evaluation and selection criteria

☑ **DO NOT** rely solely on the contents of the “detailed project description” section to satisfy this requirement — it is OK to repeat key points in this section

☑ Quantify benefits whenever possible
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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Strongly encouraged to submit safety justifications for the project that rely on standardized, objective safety metrics and data.
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- Highlight applicant’s past experiences managing and overseeing similar projects, including FRA- or DOT-funded projects
- Describe expected arrangements for project contracting, contract oversight, change-order management, risk management, and conformance with Federal requirements for progress reporting
**Best Practices – Project Narrative**

**Project Narrative Outline**

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10. Project Implementation & Management
11. Environmental Readiness

*For more information on the NEPA process, access FRA’s recent webinar, *Introduction to NEPA* and FRA’s Categorical Exclusions Webinar, on FRA’s Webinars webpage.*

For FD/Construction Grant Application:

- **If NEPA is complete:** Provide copy of NEPA document or link.
- **If NEPA is not started:** Provide detailed project description and description of setting/land use, with visuals.
- **If NEPA is underway:** Provide current status, expected completion date, and type of document.
Best Practices – Project Narrative

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✔ For FD/Construction Grant Application:

- Identify any other environmental permits or approvals that may be needed.
- Provide current status, expected completion date, and/or copy of permit or approval.
Best Practices – Statement of Work
Organize the scope of work into discrete and logically sequenced tasks
Provide appropriate timing for tasks
Identify the deliverables required to communicate progress and completion of tasks to FRA
Check the budget to ensure numbers are consistent with cost information submitted in forms and other areas of the application
See FRA’s Statements of Work webpage: https://railroads.dot.gov/grants-loans/grant-administration/statements-work

Use templates for the
- SOW (Attachment 2)
- Schedule (Attachment 3)
- Budget (Attachment 4)
- Performance Measures (Attachment 5)
Best Practices — Benefit-Cost Analysis
Tracks 2 & 3

- Specify your project’s **base case, alternate case, and timeline**
- Show how your project’s **alternate case** will result in specific effects (i.e., **project benefits**)
- Break down those effects into the smallest sub-elements possible
- Assign values to the effects using USDOT’s **BCA Guidance**
- Calculate results and discount to base year

**NOTE:** Tracks 1 & 4 (regional planning, research, safety programs, non-CRISI trespassing projects) must document project benefits. Any subjective estimates of benefits and costs should be quantified whenever possible, and applicants should provide appropriate evidence to support their subjective estimates. At a minimum, qualitatively describe the project benefits. (See Section D of NOFO.)
• The base case reflects the status quo — i.e., the world as it exists today
• The alternate case (i.e., “build scenario”) is the proposed project
  • An application for final design or construction should present a single project
  • Multiple projects need multiple analyses
  • Avoided costs of alternatives not taken are NOT benefits
• The timeline must be appropriate for the proposed project
  • Match the useful life of the project, but not longer than 30 years
  • Projects with useful life beyond 30 years will have residual value (stations in particular) → Calculate with straight line depreciation
• Examine *ONLY* the differences between the **base case** and **alternate case**
• These differences should reflect realistic projections

**Examples:**

• Intercity passengers will likely change modes if their station is unavailable, while commuters are more likely to divert to another nearby station

• Host railroads will impose speed/weight restrictions before shutting down completely

• Rolling stock will have residual value at the end of its useful life
The marginal effects of the alternate case are the project benefits.

Marginal effects are sometimes undesirable consequences, which should be shown as negative dollar amounts.

The total cost of constructing the project as well as operating and maintaining (O&M) it for the full timeline are the project costs.

- O&M costs on new equipment and infrastructure are costs.
- Reductions to existing O&M costs are regarded as project benefits.
- Residual value for remaining useful life is a benefit, NOT subtracted from costs.
• Break down effects into the smallest possible sub-elements
• Provide documentation for inputs and growth rates

Example: Replacing a bridge might result in...
  • Removal of slow orders, improving travel speed (travel time savings)
  • Reduced wait time at the approaches (travel time savings and emissions)
  • Decreased delays at nearby sidings along the corridor (travel time savings and emissions)
  • Reduced O&M costs
Modal diversion is a marginal choice; ONLY count marginal benefits.

New/induced users value the service less than existing users (follow USDOT’s BCA Guidance).

Avoided rail-to-highway diversion benefits could involve:
- Increased pavement and bridge damage
- Increased harmful emissions
- Increased congestion on highways
- Decreased safety

Avoiding passenger revenue losses are transfers, NOT benefits.
For FY22 CRISI grant applications:

☑ Document your assumptions in as much detail as possible

☑ If the project has separable elements, report benefits and costs of each sub-project separately

☑ If your BCA includes modal diversion, include YOUR passenger counts and Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

☑ **Must include an unlocked Excel spreadsheet that clearly shows your calculations and discounting**

• For rail-specific examples on how to apply the BCA Guidance, refer to FRA’s BCA FAQ available at: https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/consolidated-rail-infrastructure-and-safety-improvements-crisis-and-federal-state
Best Practices – Environmental Readiness
Environmental review is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for all FRA grant-funded projects to document and substantiate our agency's decision to implement the project.

- With your CRISI grant application, submit an approved NEPA document, if available and applicable, from FRA, FTA, or FHWA
- If there is no previous NEPA documentation associated with the project, you are encouraged to consider the following in the grant application to the best of your knowledge:
  - Known project location and/or possible impacts to the human (e.g., historic, protected populations, noise and vibration) or natural (e.g., wetlands, air, species/habitat, floodplains) environment
  - Anticipated permitting needs (e.g., construction, Clean Water Act Section 404) or coordination/consultation (e.g., State Historic Preservation Officer)
Environmental Readiness – NEPA

• Rely on FRA’s experience and expertise to determine the type of NEPA review and level of documentation and coordination appropriate for your project — **contact our experts!**

  Email: FRAenvironment@dot.gov

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**Helpful Information Available on FRA’s Website**

• FRA & NEPA Documentation: [https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/environment/fra-nepa-documentation](https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/environment/fra-nepa-documentation)

• FRA Recommended Trainings & Environmental Resources: [https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/environment/fra-recommended-trainings-environmental-resources](https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/environment/fra-recommended-trainings-environmental-resources)

*This web page provides links to recorded webinars, trainings, and other resources that will be of assistance in preparing NEPA documents for rail projects*
Recap & Reminders
Recap & Reminders

• Always read the NOFO carefully
• Determine what a "successful" project will look like
• Use the application requirements checklist in the NOFO (Section D, part 2) as you complete your application
• Address all of the evaluation and selection criteria on which you will be rated
  • By clearly and directly responding to the criteria, your application will be easier to read and evaluate
  • Don’t bury key points!
Verify that all budget figures match corresponding figures cited in different parts of your application package – such as the Cover Sheet, SOW, Project Narrative, and various forms

- Numbers in columns and rows should add up properly in budget tables
- Only include project costs that are expected to be incurred after grant selection
- Name key partners, indicate in-place agreements, and include letters of support
- Have an objective “cold reader” — i.e., an individual unfamiliar with the grant application — review your final document before submission

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Recap & Reminders
Grant Lifecycle

**Pre-Obligation**
- **Grant Agreement (NGA):**
  - Scope, schedule, and budget
  - Performance measures
- **Terms and Conditions**
- **NEPA Requirements**

**Grant Administration**
- Meetings with FRA
- Quarterly Progress and Financial Reports
- Invoicing schedule of eligible expenses per NGA
- Invoice and Deliverable Reviews

**Monitoring**
- Routine monitoring
- Annual monitoring reviews/site visits

**Post Obligation**

**Closeout**
- **Final Invoice**
  - Financial reconciliation
- **Final Performance Report**
  - Documentation of results, outcomes, and public benefits

Project Selected for Award

Obligated

Period of Performance Ends

Closed
CRISI Program:
Deborah Kobrin
Deborah.Kobrin@dot.gov
Elena Gonzalez
Elena.Gonzalez@dot.gov
Natalie Williford
Natalie.Williford@dot.gov

CRISI Program and Application Process:
Mariam Ouhamou
Mariam.Ouhamou@dot.gov

Environmental Readiness:
Amanda Murphy
Amanda.Murphy2@dot.gov

Benefit-Cost Analysis:
Michael Johnson
Michael.Johnson1@dot.gov

To learn more about FRA Competitive Discretionary Grant Programs, visit: https://www.fra.dot.gov/grants