



RAIL

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD

FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant Program NOFO Webinar

Presented by:

Jenny Zeng • Stefani Gaede • Jamie Larkin • Derek Piper



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

July 25, 2024



Welcome:

Office of Rail Program
Development Director
Michael Longley

Presenters



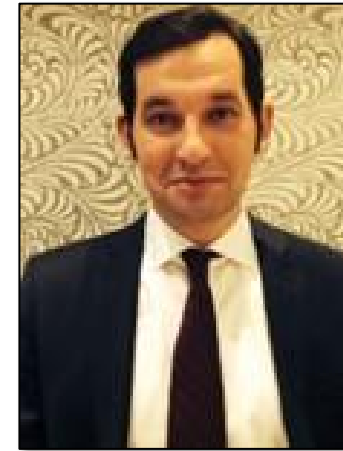
Jenny Zeng
Supervisory
Transportation
Specialist (RCE
Program Lead)



Stefani Gaede
Transportation
Industry Analyst –
Business Process
Improvements



Jamie Larkin
Environmental
Protection
Specialist



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Community
Planner

Agenda

- 1 **Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program Overview**
- 2 **Evaluation & Selection Criteria**
- 3 **NOFO Overview & How to Apply**
- 4 **Best Practices**
 - Project Narrative
 - Statement of Work, Est. Schedule, Project Budget, and Performance Measures (*Attach. 2 – Program T&Cs, Articles 4 – 7*)
 - Environmental Readiness
- 5 **Recap & Reminders**
- 6 **Question & Answers**

FY23-24 RCE Program Overview

FY23-24 RCE – Program Overview

Grant Purpose

- To fund highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on **improving the safety and mobility of people and goods**

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

- Published in the Federal Register on July 10, 2024
 - Over \$1.14 billion available
 - Applications due by **11:59 pm Eastern Time** on September 23, 2024
- 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



[FY23-24 RCE NOFO](#)

FY23-24 RCE – Program Overview

Eligible Applicants

- States, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories and possessions
- Political subdivision of a State
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe
- A unit of local government or a group of local governments
- A public port authority
- A metropolitan planning organization
- A group of the entities described above

**A note on public agencies: If you are applying as a public agency or publicly chartered authority, please include a link to your authorizing statute in your Project Narrative or include as an attachment a copy of your public charter if it isn't online*

FY23-24 RCE – Program Overview

Eligible Projects

- **Grade separation or closure**, including through-use of a bridge, embankment, tunnel or combination thereof
- Track relocation
- Improvement or installation of protective devices, signals, signs, or other measures to improve safety, **provided that such activities are related to** a separation or relocation project
- Other means to improve the safety and mobility of people and goods at highway-rail grade crossings (including technological solutions)
- A group of related projects described above, that would collectively improve the mobility of people and goods
- The planning, environmental review, and design of an eligible project type

Key Program Definitions

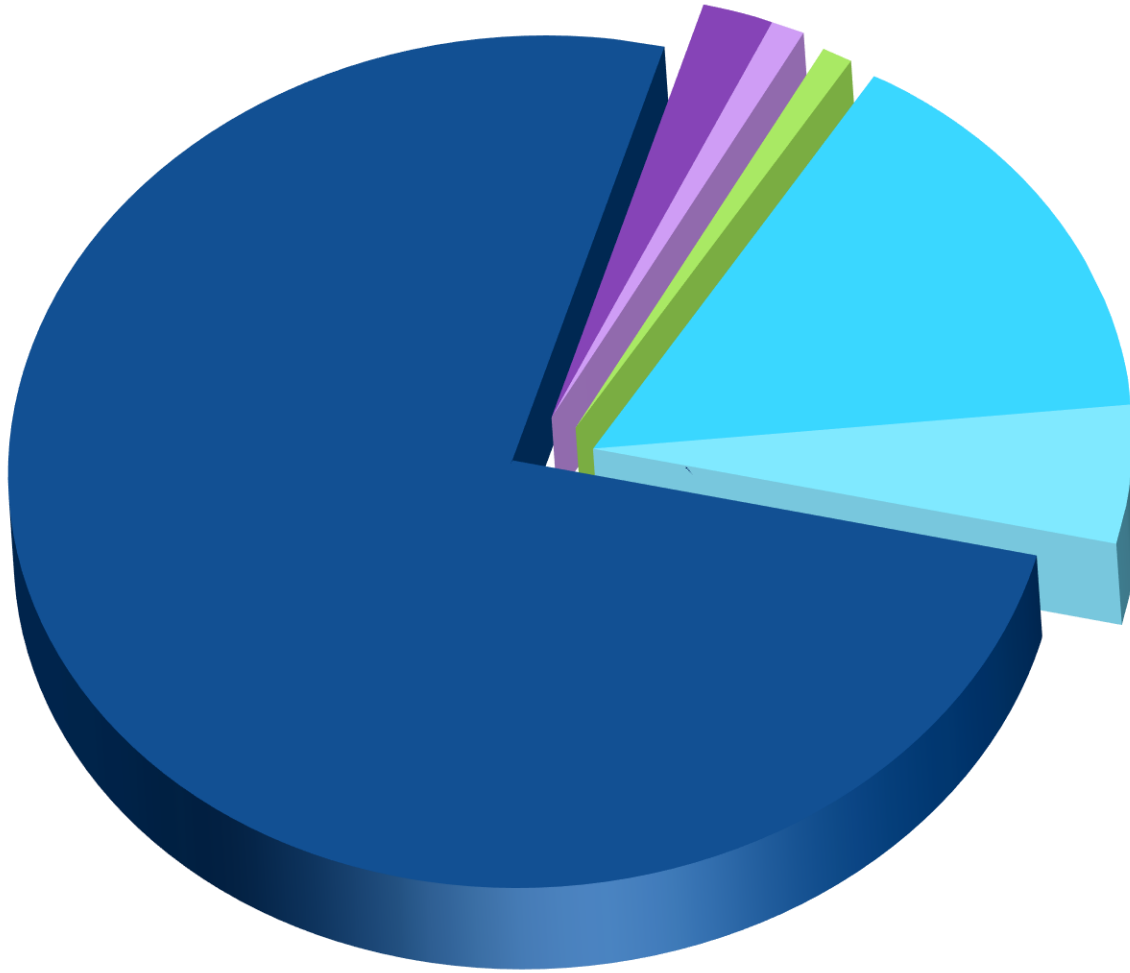
Grade Separation or Closure

- An underpass or overpass to eliminate level crossings between railroad and highway users at an existing highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing
- The closing of a highway-rail grade crossing to vehicular or pedestrian traffic

Improvement Project

- A project related to an **existing** highway or pathway-rail crossing, including:
 - Installation, repair, or improvement of crossings, grade separations, railroad crossing signals, gates, bells, audible warning devices and related technologies
 - Highway traffic signalization, lighting, crossing approach signage, and roadway improvements such as medians or other barriers
 - Pathway improvements such as bollards, railroad crossing panels and surfaces, other safety engineering improvements, or highway-rail programs to reduce risk

Key Program Conditions



Planning

- At least 3% of total funding (\$38,281,580 total for upcoming FY23-24 cycle; comprised of 36 million in FY23-24 funds + \$2.28 million in carryover from FY22) reserved for planning projects
 - At least 25% of these funds (\$10,840,000 million in total) reserved for planning projects in rural areas or on Tribal lands.

Crossing Safety Information and Education Program

- 0.25% of total funding (\$3 million) reserved for highway-rail grade crossing safety information and education.

Rural and Tribal Set Aside

- At least 20% of total funding (\$229,305,600) reserved for projects located in rural areas or on Tribal lands.
 - At least 5% of these funds (\$11,465,280) reserved for projects in counties with 20 or fewer residents per square mile

Grant Conditions

- Minimum 20% Non-Federal matching share
- No grant awarded shall be smaller than \$1 million, except for planning grants

State Limitation

- No more than 20% of total funding (\$229,761,916) in any fiscal year may be awarded to projects in a single State.

FY23-24 RCE – Program Overview

Non-Federal Match Requirements

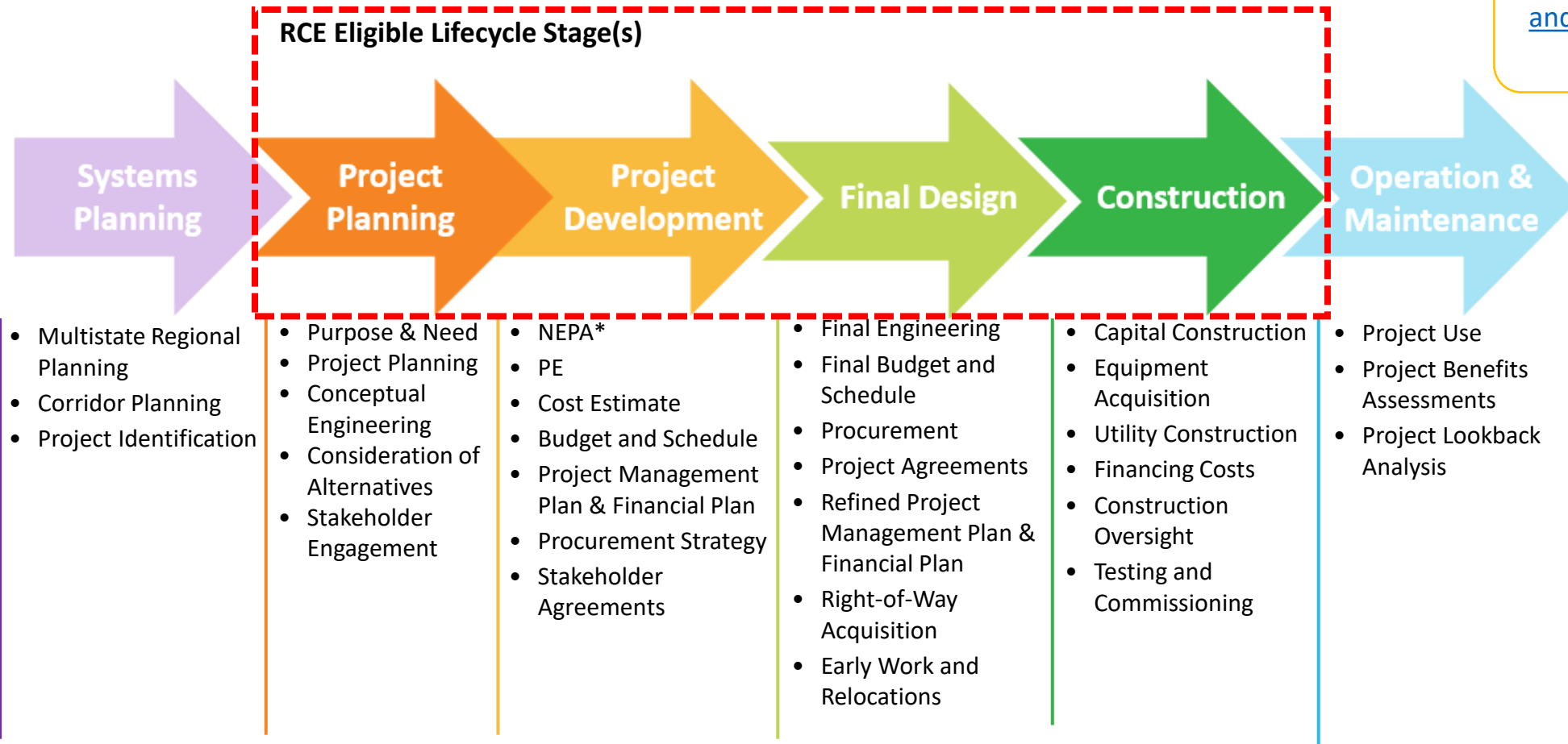
- Federal share of total costs **shall not exceed 80%**
- 20% minimum non-Federal match may include **public sector (e.g., state or local) and/or private sector funding**. FRA will not consider any Federal financial assistance, nor any non-Federal funds already expended (or otherwise encumbered), toward 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
- Applicants may count preliminary engineering costs as part of total project costs eligible as non-federal share for reimbursement if such costs were **incurred before project selection for award and no earlier than Nov. 15, 2021**. These costs must also comply with 2 CFR part 200 and RCE requirements
 - **NOTE:** Please mention these costs, if any, in your Project Narrative

Overview of Capital Project Guidance — Project Lifecycle Stages

Ensure your application accurately describes the project lifecycle stage(s) you are applying for and apply for the stage you are ready for:



[FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects](#)



FY23-24 RCE – Program Overview

Planning Projects

FRA strongly encourages Planning projects, given the RCE Grant Program's dedicated set-aside for planning activities

- Planning projects should seek to grade separate one or more existing grade crossings
- Reference the Capital Project Guidance for what qualifies as a Planning activity
 - For later lifecycle stages, check if expected planning activities are complete
- Use the [RCE Grant Program Planning-specific Statement of Work Template](#)
- Remember that projects requesting less than \$1,000,000 must consist solely of Planning activities
 - Applications requesting funding for a combination of Planning and Project Development activities must exceed \$1,000,000



Project Planning

- Purpose & Need
- Project Planning
- Conceptual Engineering
- Consideration of Alternatives
- Stakeholder Engagement

Evaluation & Selection Criteria

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

Project Readiness Criteria:

- The application demonstrates strong project readiness, evidenced by status of required NEPA actions and environmental permitting readiness (if applicable);
- The status and timeline of agreements necessary for the legal, financial, and technical capacity to complete the project as proposed, are sufficiently developed;
- Identify appropriate Lifecycle Stage(s) with demonstrated progress toward preceding Lifecycle Stage(s) and ability to complete identified Lifecycle Stage (s)
- Coordination and commitments from project partners

Project Readiness Rubric:

- Applications will be evaluated based on responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications
- Assigned a cumulative project readiness risk rating
 - Unacceptable
 - High risk
 - Medium risk
 - Low risk

❖ *Refer to section E.1.B.i of the NOFO for the complete rubric*

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Example Rubric: Project Readiness

Merit Criteria Ratings—Project Readiness

For the Project Readiness Criteria described in section E(2)(a), FRA will evaluate the application's responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications, and assign a cumulative Project Readiness risk rating.

| Unacceptable | High risk | Medium risk | Low risk |
|---|--|--|--|
| Application provides limited or no information necessary to assess the project readiness criteria; application does not demonstrate support, progress, or completion of required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites; or application contains one or more significant barriers that would prevent project delivery. | Application provides insufficient information to assess the project readiness criteria; application does not demonstrate sufficient support, progress, or completion of required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites but indicates risk to advancing the project without foreseeable delays; or application contains a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas. | Application provides sufficient information to assess the project readiness criteria; demonstrates support, progress, or completion on one or more required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites, but indicates some risk to advancing the project in a timely manner; and the application does not contain a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas. | Application provides thorough and complete information and evidence to assess the project readiness criteria, and demonstrates strong support, progress, or completion on required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites, and indicates minimal risk to advancing the project in a timely manner; and application does not contain a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas. |

Each Evaluation Criteria section has its own rubric that follows a similar rating categorization:

Low Risk: “thorough and complete information and evidence...minimal risk to advancing the project”

High Risk: “insufficient information to assess the project...indicates risk and foreseeable delays”

❖ Ensure you provide sufficient and verifiable data and justifications for your project

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

Technical Merit Criteria:

- Tasks in SOW, project budget, and estimated project schedule are appropriate to achieve outcomes
- Qualifications of key personnel and partner organizations to complete project in proposed time frame and budget
- Identified in the freight investment plan of a qualifying planning document
- Incorporates reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through technology, design and/or construction
- Use financial support from impacted rail carriers
- Improve multimodal mobility

Technical Merit Rubric:

- Applications will be evaluated based on responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications
- Assigned a cumulative technical merit risk rating:
 - Unacceptable
 - Acceptable
 - Responsive
 - Highly Responsive

❖ *Refer to section E.1.B.ii of the NOFO for the complete rubric*

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

Project Benefits Criteria:

- Improves safety at Highway-Rail or Pathway-Rail Grade Crossings
- Proposes to grade separate, eliminate, or close one or more Highway-Rail or Pathway-Rail Grade Crossings
- Improves the mobility of both people and goods
- Reduces emissions, protects the environment, and provides community benefit (including noise reduction)
- Improves access to emergency services and communities
- Provides economic benefit
- Uses contracting incentives to employ local labor, to the extent permissible under Federal law

Project Benefits Rubric:

- Applications will be evaluated based on responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications
- Assigned a cumulative technical merit risk rating:
 - Unacceptable
 - Acceptable
 - Responsive
 - Highly Responsive

❖ *Refer to section E.1.B.iii of the NOFO for the complete rubric*

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Administration Priorities

- Safety
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Equity and Justice40
- Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation

Administration Priorities Rubric:

- Applications will be evaluated based on responsiveness to one or more priorities, including an assessment of supporting justifications
- Assigned a cumulative Administrative Priorities rating:
 - Non-responsive
 - Acceptable
 - Responsive
 - Highly Responsive

❖ *Refer to section E.1.C.ii of the NOFO for the complete rubric*

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Program Preferences

FRA will give preference to eligible projects that:

- **(A)** Result in one or more grade-separated crossings
- **(B)** Close grade crossings through Track Relocation
- **(C)** Result in corridor-wide grade crossing improvements
 - **NOTE:** FRA considers corridor-wide grade crossing improvement projects that directly improve a series of linked, consecutive grade crossings.

NOFO Overview & How to Apply

What is a NOFO?

Definition

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 is the FY23-24 RCE Program NOFO?

 **FEDERAL REGISTER**
The Daily Journal of the United States Government 

Notice

Notice of Funding Opportunity for the FY 2023-FY 2024 Railroad Crossing Elimination Program

A Notice by the [Federal Railroad Administration](#) on 07/10/2024

PUBLISHED DOCUMENT

AGENCY:
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION:
Notice of funding opportunity (NOFO or Notice).

SUMMARY:
This Notice details the application requirements and procedures to obtain grant funding for eligible projects under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program for Fiscal Years (FY) 2023 and 2024. This Notice solicits applications for funds made available by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The opportunity described in this notice is made available under Assistance Listings Number 20.327, "Railroad Crossing Elimination."

DATES:
Applications for funding under this solicitation are due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, September 23, 2024. Applications that are incomplete or received after 11:59 p.m. EST, on September 23, 2024 will not be considered for funding. See section D of this notice for additional information on the application process.

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Printed version:
[PDF](#)

Publication Date:
07/10/2024

Agencies:
[Department of Transportation](#)
[Federal Railroad Administration](#)

Dates:
Applications for funding under this solicitation are due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, September 23, 2024.
Applications that are incomplete or received after 11:59 p.m. EST, on September 23, 2024 will not be considered for funding. See section D of this notice for additional information on the application process.

Document Type:
Notice

Document Citation:
89 FR 56788



[FY23-24 RCE NOFO](#)

NOTE: Application deadline is **11:59 pm** ET on **Sunday, September 23, 2024.**

Where do I start?

Check the **FRA Discretionary Competitive Grant Programs** web page:



[FRA Discretionary Grant Programs](#)

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Search

About FRA Railroad Safety Rail Network Development Research & Development Legislation & Regulations Grants & Loans FRA eLibrary

[Home](#) / [Grants & Loans](#)

Grants & Loans Overview

Grant Programs >

Discretionary Grant Programs

Directed Grant Programs

Closed Grant Programs

Legacy and Inactive Grant Programs

Research and Development Funding

Loan Programs

Applying for Grants >

Resources for Grant Recipients >

Discretionary Grant Programs

Accepting Applications

[Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program](#)

The Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program is making available \$153,845,680 in funding assistance for initiating, restoring, or enhancing intercity passenger rail transportation operations. See the [FY 2021-2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) for more information.

- [Register for the FY21-24 R&E NOFO Webinar – Wednesday, July 24, 2024](#)

[Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program](#)

The Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant Program is making available \$1,148,809,580 in funding for highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. Applications are due no later than 11:59 pm ET on September 23, 2024. See the [FY 2023-2024 RCE NOFO](#) for more information.

- [Register for the FY23-24 RCE NOFO Webinar – Thursday, July 25, 2024](#)


Click the link to access the NOFO

Where do I find “How to Apply” information?

Search grants on **Grants.gov**:



[grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

 [Help](#) | [Register](#) | [My Account](#) | [Logout](#)

Search site content

[Home](#) [Learn Grants](#) [Search Grants](#) [Applicants](#) [Grantors](#) [System-To-System](#) [Forms](#) [Connect](#) [Support](#)

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BASIC SEARCH CRITERIA:

Keyword(s):

Opportunity Number:

CFDA:

SORT BY: [Update Sort](#)

DATE RANGE: [Update Date Range](#)

[Search](#)

| Opportunity Number | Opportunity Title | Agency | Opportunity Status | Posted Date | Close Date |
|-------------------------------|---|---------|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| FR-RCE-24-001 | FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program | DOT-FRA | Posted | 07/11/2024 | 09/23/2024 |

OPPORTUNITY STATUS:

☒ Forecasted (0)

☒ Posted (1)

Click the **Opportunity Number** to see the Synopsis

What is the Synopsis?

Summary information about the grant opportunity in Grants.gov:



[grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

VIEW GRANT OPPORTUNITY

FR-RCE-24-001
FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program
Department of Transportation
DOT - Federal Railroad Administration

SYNOPSIS | VERSION HISTORY | RELATED DOCUMENTS | PACKAGE

General Information

| | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Document Type: | Grants Notice | Version: | Synopsis 1 |
| Funding Opportunity Number: | FR-RCE-24-001 | Posted Date: | Jul 11, 2024 |
| Funding Opportunity Title: | FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program | Last Updated Date: | Jul 11, 2024 |
| Opportunity Category: | Discretionary | Original Closing Date for Applications: | Sep 23, 2024 No Explanation |
| Opportunity Category Explanation: | | Current Closing Date for Applications: | Sep 23, 2024 No Explanation |
| Funding Instrument Type: | Grant | Archive Date: | Oct 23, 2024 |
| Category of Funding Activity: | Transportation | Estimated Total Program Funding: | \$ 1,148,809,580 |
| Category Explanation: | | Award Ceiling: | \$1,148,809,580 |
| Expected Number of Awards: | 80 | Award Floor: | \$0 |
| CFDA Number(s): | 20.327 -- Railroad Crossing Elimination | | |
| Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: | Yes | | |

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 4 weeks (longer if you do not have an Employer Identification Number)
- For [Grants.gov](https://www.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, Project Budget, Schedule, and Performance Measures (Use Attachment 2: Project-Specific Terms and Conditions, Articles 4-7 templates)

- **NOTE:** Be sure to fill out ALL sections for each of Articles 4-7, including Performance Measures

Environmental Compliance (NEPA) Documentation

- **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)

- **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

Benefit-Cost Analysis is **NOT** required.

What forms are required?

Required Forms

SF424 (Application for Federal Assistance)

← *The official funding request*

- *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 Additional Assurances and Certifications (FRA F 30)

FRA 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](https://www.grants.gov) at the bottom of the Synopsis page:



[grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

Additional Information

Agency Name: DOT - Federal Railroad Administration

Description: The purpose of the RCE Program is to provide funding for highway-rail and pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods.

Link to Additional Information: [FY23-24 Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program](#)

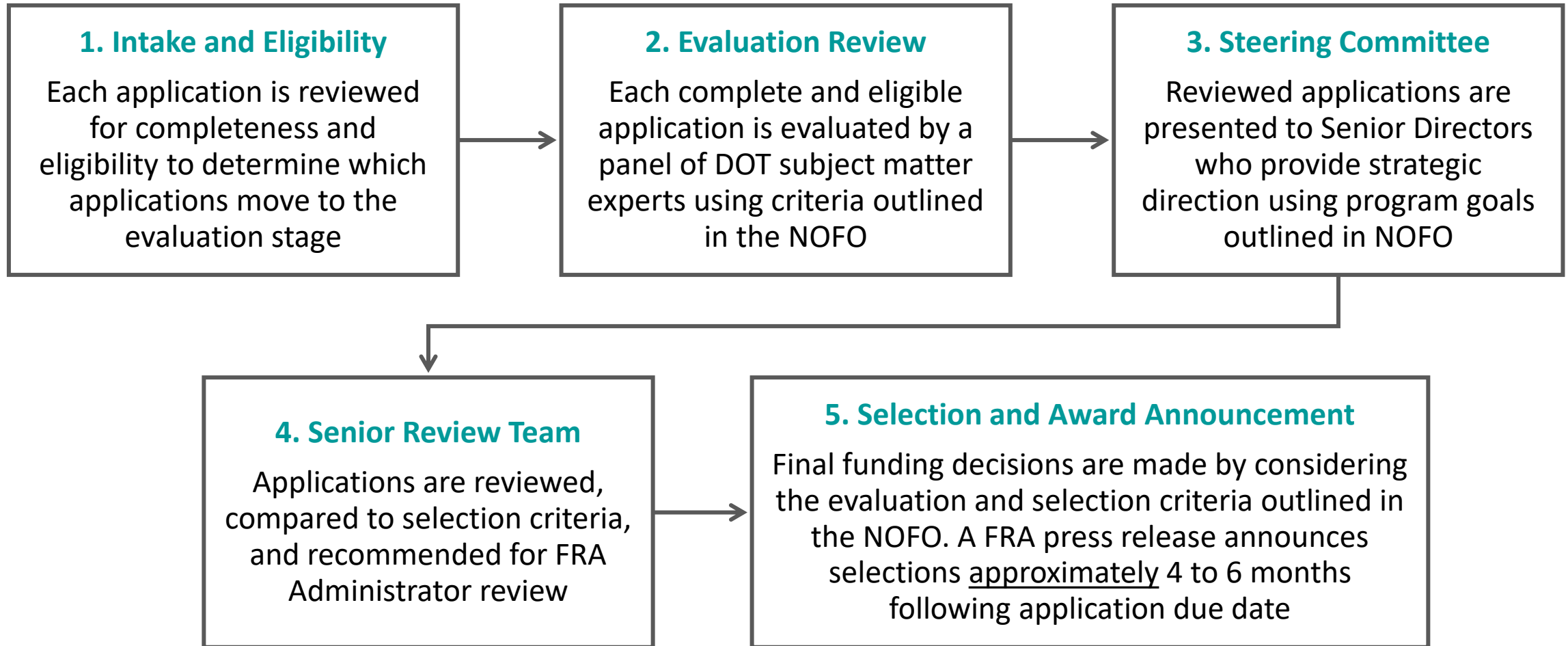
Grantor Contact Information: If you have difficulty accessing the full announcement electronically, please contact:

Grants.gov Contact Center

Phone Number: 1-800-518-4726 Hours of operation are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The contact center is closed on federal holidays.

[Grants.gov Customer Support](#)

Application Review and Selection Process



Buy America

FRA Buy America includes **new** requirements enacted by the **Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act**.

The screenshot shows the FRA website interface. At the top is the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration header with a search bar. Below the header are navigation tabs: About FRA, Railroad Safety, Rail Network Development, Research & Development, Legislation & Regulations, Grants & Loans, and FRA eLibrary. The main content area is titled "Buy America Sample Component List (List for illustration purposes only)". It includes document metadata: Document Series: Policy and Guidance; Author: Federal Railroad Administration Chief Counsel; Subject: Buy America; Keywords: Buy America, Components. A link to the PDF document is provided. The PDF preview shows a table with two columns: "System/Group" and "Components".

| System/Group | Components |
|---|------------------------------|
| Steel used in manufacture of locomotive deck, floor, shell and crashworthiness elements | Side frame structure |
| | End structure |
| | Floor structure |
| | Roof structure |
| | Integrated cab structure |
| | Carbody steel (side frame) |
| | Carbody steel (carbody skin) |
| | Deck |
| Main transformers | Transformers |
| | Inverters |
| | Converters |
| | Rectifiers |
| | Brake choppers |
| | Filter inductors |



[Buy America](#)

[Buy America Component List](#)



For FRA-funded Projects – 100% of 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

Best Practices

Best Practices – Helpful Hints

- Read the NOFO thoroughly 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 primary areas where applications not selected for funding typically demonstrate deficiencies:
 - Project Narrative
 - Statement of Work (SOW), Est. Schedule, Project Budget, and Perf. Measures (Articles 4 – 7)
 - Environmental Readiness



The screenshot shows a Federal Register page for a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) titled "Notice of Funding Opportunity for the FY 2023-FY 2024 Railroad Crossing Elimination Program". The page is published by the Federal Railroad Administration on 07/10/2024. The document is categorized as a "PUBLISHED DOCUMENT". The main content includes sections for AGENCY, ACTION, SUMMARY, and DATES. The AGENCY is the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT). The ACTION is a Notice of funding opportunity (NOFO or Notice). The SUMMARY states that the notice details application requirements and procedures for grant funding under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program for Fiscal Years (FY) 2023 and 2024. The DATES section specifies that applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, September 23, 2024. On the right side, there is a "DOCUMENT DETAILS" section with links for the printed version (PDF), publication date (07/10/2024), agencies (Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration), dates (Applications for funding under this solicitation are due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, September 23, 2024), document type (Notice), and document citation (89 FR 56788).

FEDERAL REGISTER
The Daily Journal of the United States Government

Notice

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Document Type:
Notice

Document Citation:
89 FR 56788

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

- I. Cover Page
- II. Project Summary
- III. Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of Project Funds
- IV. Applicant Eligibility
- V. Project Eligibility
- VI. Detailed Project Description
- VII. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Information and Education Programs
- VIII. Project Location
- IX. Grade Crossing Information
- X. Safety Benefit
- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ✓ 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

Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- ☑ Application Snapshot
- ☑ Note revised table
- ☑ 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

Project Narrative Outline

I. Cover Page

II. Project Summary

III. Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of Project Funds

IV. Applicant Eligibility

V. Project Eligibility

VI. Detailed Project Description

VII. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Information and Education Programs

VIII. Project Location

IX. Grade Crossing Information

X. Safety Benefit

IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Confirm funding amount matches SF-424, Article 4- SOW, and Article 6 - Award and Project Financial Information
- ✓ Specify each source of non-Federal match and provide details about in-kind match. If multiple Federal sources, clearly indicate match funds for each Federal funding source, is applicable.
- ✓ Specify source of other federal funds
- ✓ 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

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
- ✓ Grade crossing information

Best Practices – Project Narrative

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- IV. Applicant Eligibility
- V. Project Eligibility
- VI. Detailed Project Description

VII. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Information and Education Programs

- VIII. Project Location
- IX. Grade Crossing Information
- X. Safety Benefit
- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ☑ Demonstrate how activities promote further awareness of grade crossing safety
- ☑ Describe how project will be based on existing best practices
- ☑ Identify how the project will be implemented with coordination with stakeholders

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

- I. Cover Page
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- V. Project Eligibility
- VI. Detailed Project Description
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VIII. Project Location

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- X. Safety Benefit
- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ☑ Identify cities, counties, and states where project is located
- ☑ Include a map of the project
- ☑ Identify railroad mileposts
- ☑ Identify Congressional District
- ☑ Geospatial data—longitude and latitude (at least 5 decimal places)

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

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IX. Grade Crossing Information

- X. Safety Benefit
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- ✓ Cite specific [USDOT National Grade Crossing Inventory](#) information (including number) for each grade crossing
- ✓ Include latitude and longitude coordinates for each grade crossing location
- ✓ Indicate the railroad/owner of the infrastructure and crossing
- ✓ Identify the primary railroad operator and roadway at the crossing

* Example Table 1—Grade Crossing Information for Proposed Project

| US DOT Grade Crossing Inventory # | Proposed Improvement | Rail Operator(s) | Railroad Owner | Latitude Coordinates (at least five decimal places of precision) | Longitude Coordinates (at least five decimal places of precision) |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|--|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

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- X. Safety Benefit**
- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ☑ Use data and metrics, including incident history at the grade crossing from the last 5 years (2019-2023)
- ☑ [FRA Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Incidents Dashboard](#)

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

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- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria**
- XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ✓ 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

Project Narrative Outline

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- V. Project Eligibility
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- VIII. Project Location
- IX. Grade Crossing Information
- X. Safety Benefit
- IX. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

XII. Project Implementation and Management

- ☑ 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 – Statement of Work, Schedule, Project Budget, and Perf. Measures

(Attachment 2: Project-Specific
Terms and Conditions, Articles 4-7)

Best Practices – Attachment 2 (Articles 4-7)

- ☑ See the [FRA Discretionary Grant Agreements](#) web page
- ☑ SOW (Article 4)
- ☑ Award Dates & Estimated Project Schedule (Article 5)
- ☑ Award and Project Financial Information (Article 6)
- ☑ Performance Measurement Information (Article 7)

The screenshot shows the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration website. The main heading is "FRA Discretionary Grant Agreements". Below this, it states: "Effective December 11, 2023, FRA has updated the structure of grant agreements used for FRA awards of federal financial assistance." It then says: "If you have questions about FRA grant agreements, please contact your FRA Project Manager." The section "FRA Grant Agreements – Effective December 11, 2023" explains that the new FRA Grant Agreement consists of three parts:

- [Attachment 1: Standard Terms and Conditions – February 15, 2024](#)
- [Attachment 2: Project-Specific Terms and Conditions - December 11, 2023](#)
 - [Article 4 Statement of Work](#)
 - [Article 5 Award Dates and Estimated Project Schedule](#)
 - [Article 6 Award and Project Financial Information](#)
 - [Article 7 Performance Measurement Information](#)
- [Terms and Conditions Exhibits – December 11, 2023](#)

Below this, it says "Restoration & Enhancement Program Only:"

- [Attachment 2: Restoration & Enhancement Grant Program Project Specific Terms and Conditions - July 15, 2024](#)
 - [Article 4 R&E Statement of Work](#)
 - [Article 5 R&E Award Dates and Estimated Project Schedule](#)
 - [Article 6 R&E Award and Project Financial Information](#)
 - [Article 7 R&E Performance Measurement Information](#)

The section "Previous FRA Grant Agreements" lists:

- [Example General Grants - Attach 1 - Standard Terms and Conditions - August 25, 2020](#)
- [Example CRISI Grants – Attach 1A – Additional CRISI Terms and Conditions - May 30, 2023](#)

The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: Grants & Loans Overview, Grant Programs, Loan Programs, Applying for Grants, Grants Application Process, FRA Discretionary Grant Program Tool, FRA Grant Agreement, Additional Resources, Resources for Grant Recipients, Training & Guidance, Upcoming Webinars, and Contact Us.

Best Practices – Attachment 2 (Articles 4-5)

Article 4: Statement of Work

- Identifies:
 - General Project Description: a concise description of the Project funded under the agreement
 - Project Location: specific and detailed, including maps and GPS location, as applicable
 - Project Scope: lists standard FRA project tasks and deliverables defined by project lifecycle stage
 - **NOTE:** Task 1 title should remain “Project Administration and Management”
 - Clearly indicate if ROW acquisition is part of the scope. (Per NOFO, ROW acq. allowed if construction is also part of scope)
 - Required environmental commitments as applicable

Article 5: Award Dates and Estimated Project Schedule

- Identifies award dates and project schedule, which lists significant milestones in Project advancement

| Table 5-A: Estimated Project Schedule | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Milestone | Schedule Date |
| [Preliminary Engineering Completion] | [Insert Date] |
| [NEPA Completion] | [Insert Date] |
| [Final Design Completion] | [Insert Date] |
| [Construction Substantial Completion] | [Insert Date] |

Best Practices – Attachment 2 (Articles 6-7)

Article 6: Award and Project Financial Information

- Outlines the award amount, obligation, funding source and availability, project budget, and other relevant financial information for the project
 - There are several budget tables provided in Article 6; ensure the appropriate table is used based on the project
 - **NOTE:** Section 6.6 - Pre-Award Costs is N/A for the application stage

Article 7: Performance Measurement Information

- Performance measures enable FRA to assess the Recipient's progress in achieving grant program goals and objectives
- The Recipient will report on these performance measures in accordance with the frequency and duration specified (in Table 7-A)
- FRA develops the initial draft based on FRA's framework for measuring performance for certain projects as well as the information the Applicant provided in the grant application

Table 7-A: Performance Measurement Table

| Goal | Objective | Performance Measure | Description of Measure | Measurement | Reporting |
|--------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|---|------------|
| Goal 1 | | | | Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: | Frequency: |
| | | | | Expected Post-Project Performance: | Duration: |
| Goal 2 | | | | Pre-Project (Baseline) Performance as of: | Frequency: |
| | | | | Expected Post-Project Performance: | Duration: |

Best Practices – Attachment 2, Articles 4 - 7

- ☑ 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



NOT INTENDED FOR EXECUTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION

ARTICLE 4: STATEMENT OF WORK

4.1 General Project Description

Instructions: Provide a concise description of the Project funded under this Agreement. Section 4.1 should state the objective of the Project and the benefits that that the Project is intended to achieve. Project objectives and benefits inform—and should be consistent with—the Performance Measures in Article 7 of this Attachment 2, Performance Measurement Information.

4.2 Project Location

Instructions: Provide information related to the geographic scope of the Project and identify important, related intercity corridors or service. The Project location should be specific and detailed, including GPS location(s) and mileposts, where possible. Planning projects should identify the study area and provide a map identifying, at a minimum, the major markets intended to be served.

4.3 Project Scope

Instructions: In this Section, divide the Project scope into discrete and delineable tasks. If the Project funded under this Agreement is part of a larger effort, describe that larger effort, but link tasks specifically to the FRA-funded portion of the Project. Clearly define the work to be performed in each task and be sure tasks are linked to deliverables and incorporated into the Project Schedule. Use the instructions below to develop this Section.

The Recipient will notify FRA in writing of any requested changes in Project Scope and will not proceed with the changed scope unless approved by FRA in writing. If approved, changes to Project Scope may require additional environmental review or an amendment to this Agreement.

Best Practices – Environmental Readiness

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.

Environmental review work also includes compliance with other Federal laws and Executive Orders, including:

- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Clean Water Act (CWA)

The level and depth of environmental and cultural resource review varies depending on the impacts of each project.

Environmental Readiness – Complexity Factors

More **complex projects require more time and effort** for review of environmental/cultural resources.

This includes impacts to:

- Areas outside the existing railroad right-of-way or in previously undisturbed areas
- Waters/wetlands or protected species and/or their habitat (including staging, clearing, and bridge work)
- Section 4(f) resources such as publicly owned parks, recreational areas, etc.
- Listed or eligible historic properties:
 - Evaluations are generally required for properties over 45 years old
 - Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and Tribes is generally required for properties over 45 years old
 - Exceptions for projects that completely fall under the [Program Comment for Rail Rights-of-Way](#)



Environmental Readiness – Tips

- ✓ Provide a **clear, complete, and accurate scope of work** in your application
 - More complex projects (bridge bundles, grade separations) should have more detail
- ✓ With your RCE grant application, **submit an approved NEPA document, if available and applicable**, from FRA, FTA, FHWA or any other federal agency
- ✓ If there is no previous NEPA documentation associated with the project, you are encouraged to **consider and describe 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!**



- [FRA & NEPA Documentation](#)
- [FRA Recommended Trainings & Environmental Resources](#)

**NEPA
Questions:**

FRAenvironment@dot.gov

Recap & Reminders

Recap & Reminders

- ❑ Always read the NOFO carefully, including footnotes
- ❑ Use the application requirements checklist in the NOFO (Section D, part 2) as you complete your application
- ❑ Address all 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!
- ❑ FRA strongly recommends including critical letters of support with application submission to ensure they are part of the evaluation



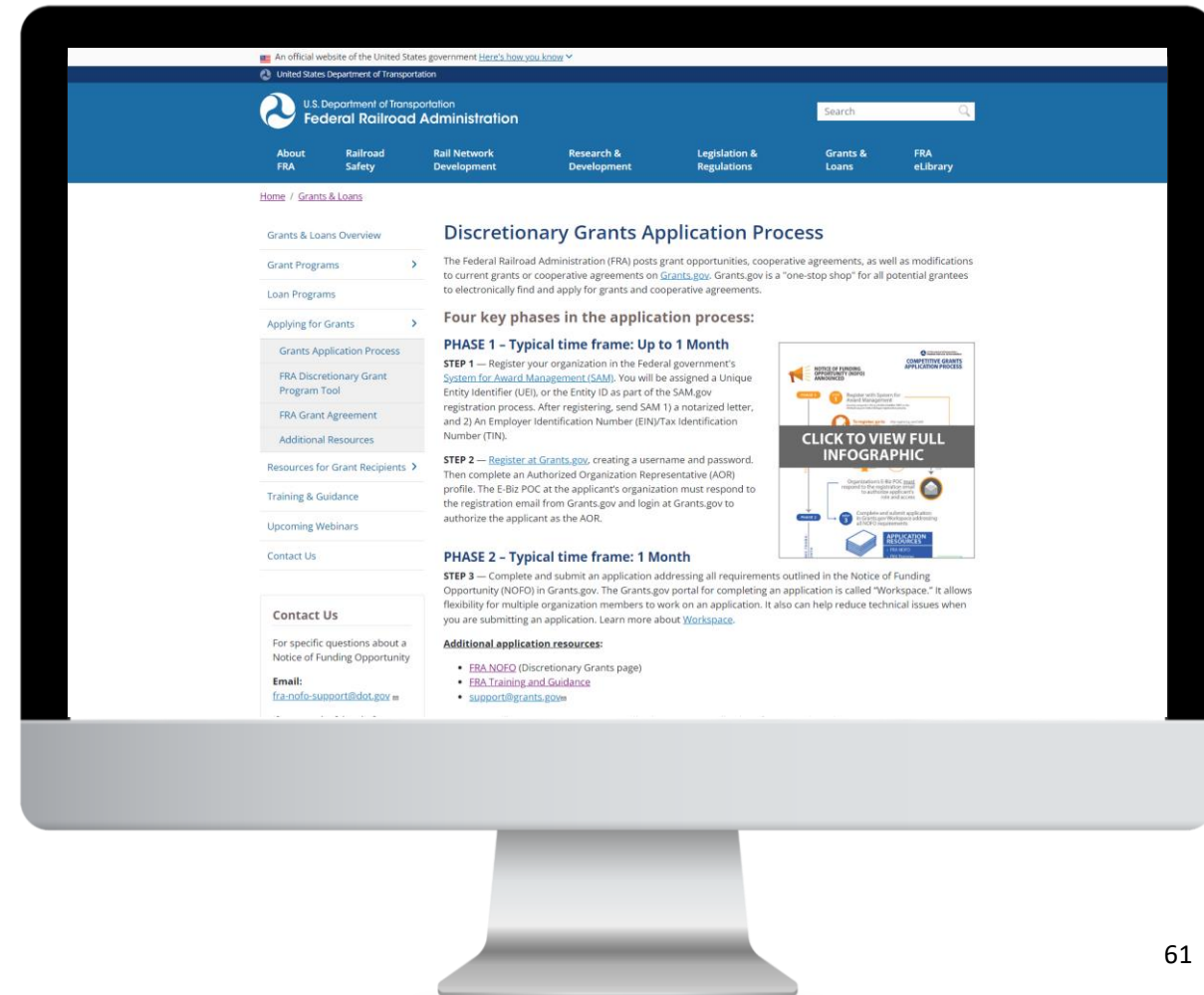
Recap & Reminders

- ❑ Verify that all budget figures match corresponding figures cited in different parts of your application package
 - Check Project Narrative (*cover sheet, funding table, etc.*), Article 6 - Project Budget, and various SF-424 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
 - The SF-424 is the official funding request
- ❑ 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



Resources

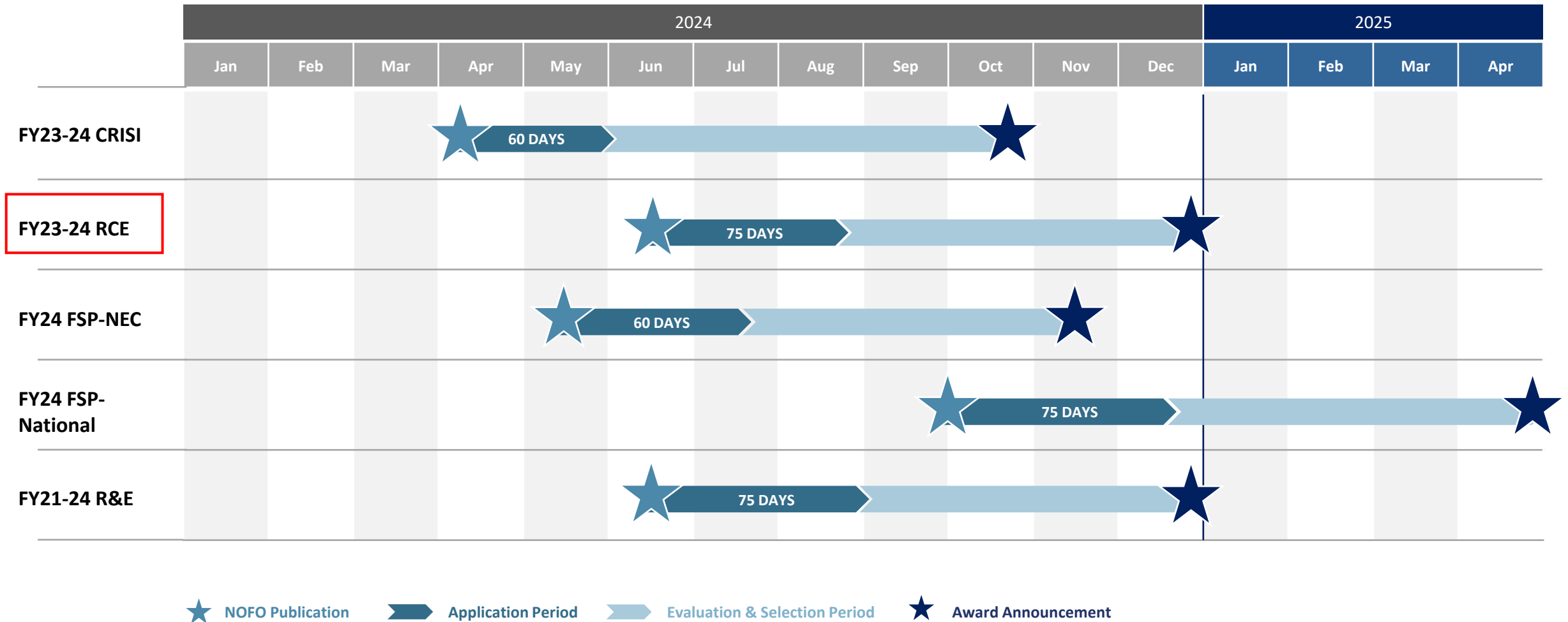
- [RCE FY 2023-2024 NOFO](#)
- [FRA's Competitive Grants Application Process](#)
- [FRA's Discretionary Grant Agreements](#)
- [FRA & NEPA Documentation](#)
- [FRA Recommended Trainings & Environmental Resources](#)
- [FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects](#)
- [FRA Grants Webinars](#)
- [FRA Grants Videos](#)



Grant Lifecycle and Approximate Time Frames



CY 2024 FRA Discretionary Grant Calendar



NOFO CYCLE STAGES ARE ESTIMATED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES, AND NOT EXACT DURATIONS OR DATES. CHANGES MAY OCCUR, AND FRA WILL UPDATE ACCORDINGLY.

Contact Us

Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590



Connect with us at [USDOTFRA](#)



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

NOFO

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***To learn more about FRA Competitive Discretionary
Grant Programs, visit: railroads.dot.gov/grants***

QUESTIONS?