FRA Goal

Shorten time between selection and obligation of a grant

Session Objectives

- Address five factors that contribute to successful project readiness
- Discuss FAQs and available resources

FRA Panelists & Moderator

Melissa Hatcher
FRA Project Management Team
(Panelist)

Matthew Mielke
FRA Project Management Team
(Panelist)

Lana Lau
FRA Environmental Policy Team
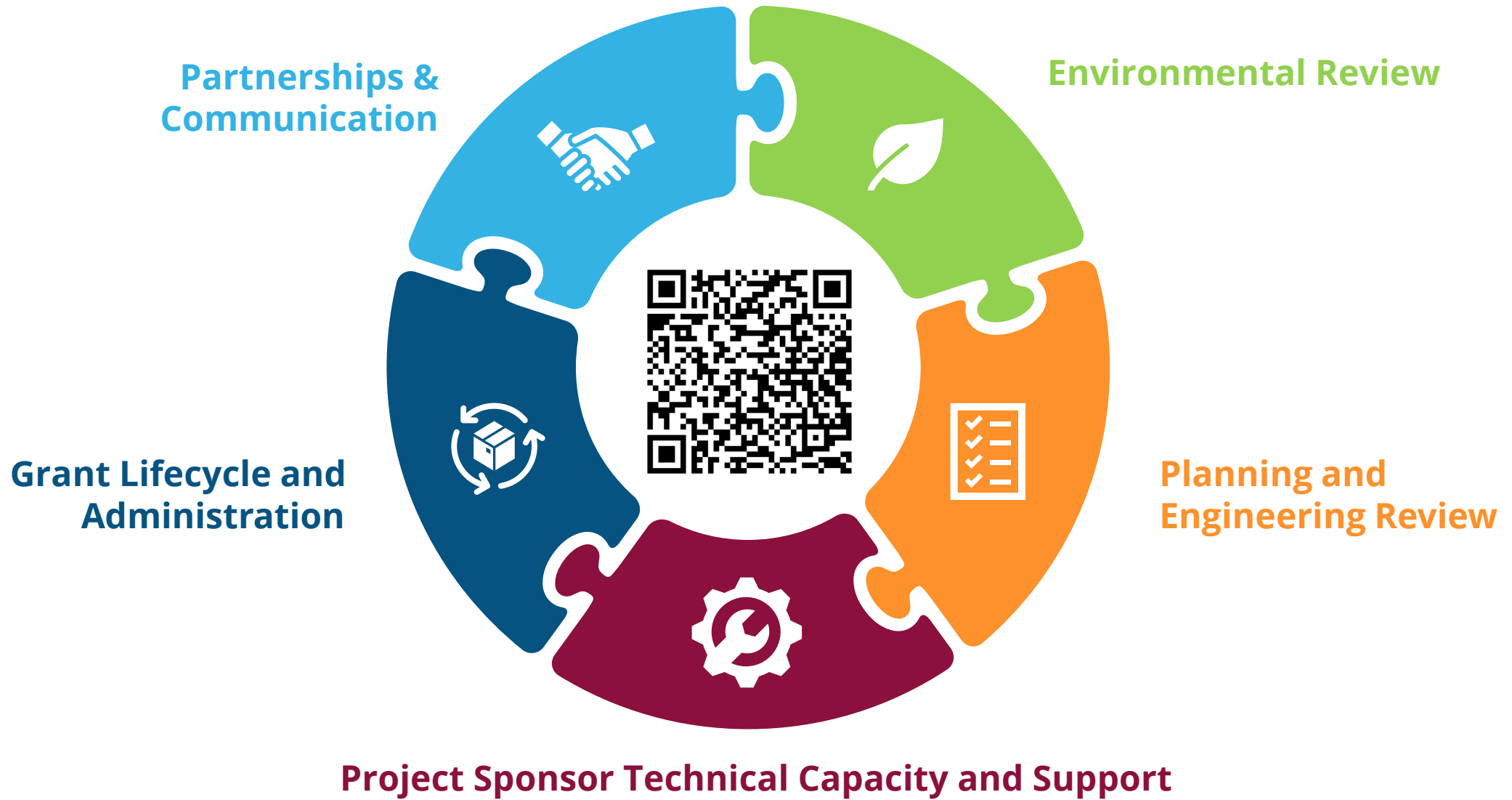(Panelist)

Amy Jackson-Grove
FRA Engineering/ Planning Team
(Panelist)

Paulo Couto
FRA Outreach Team
(Moderator)

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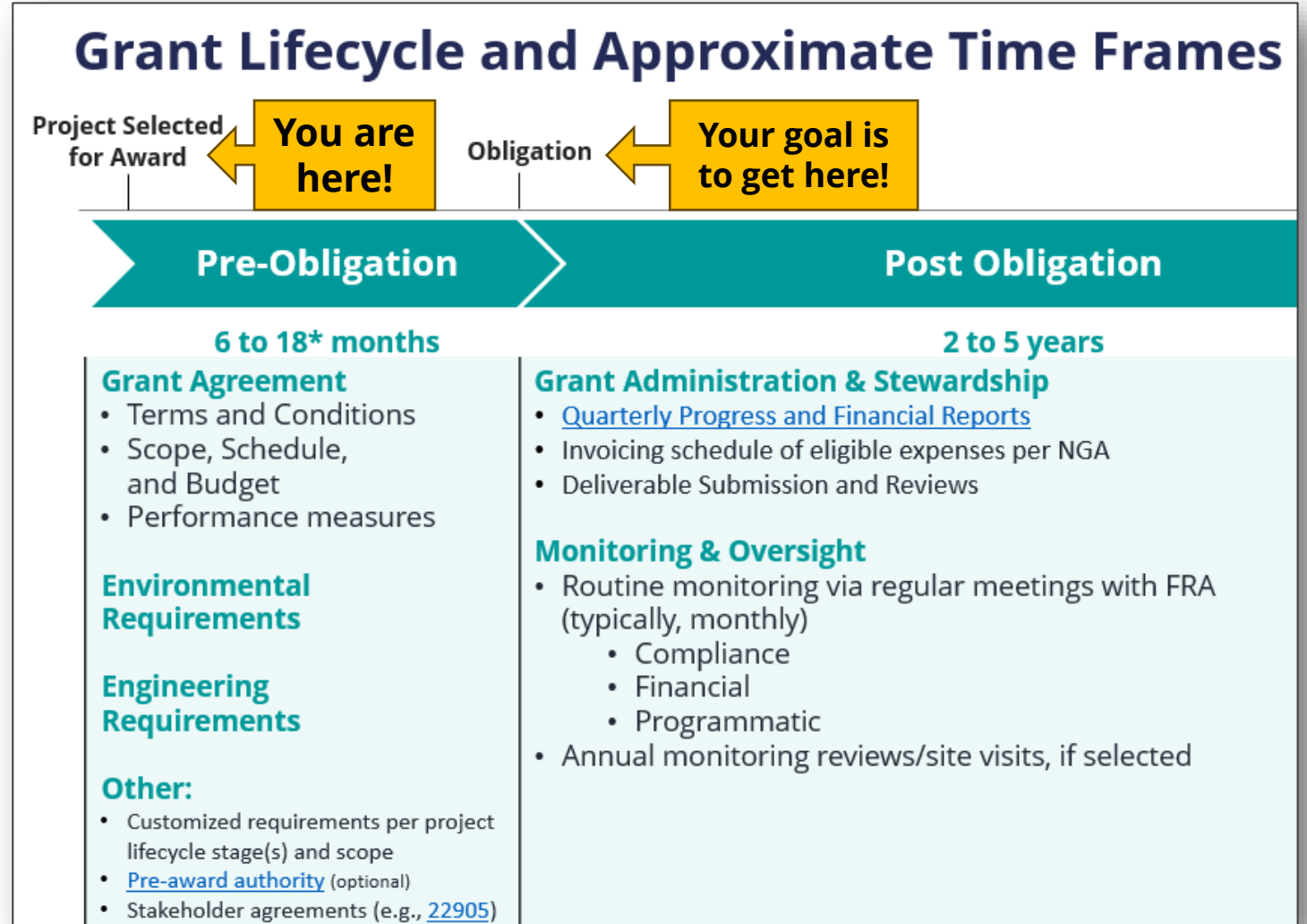Five Factors of Successful Project Readiness

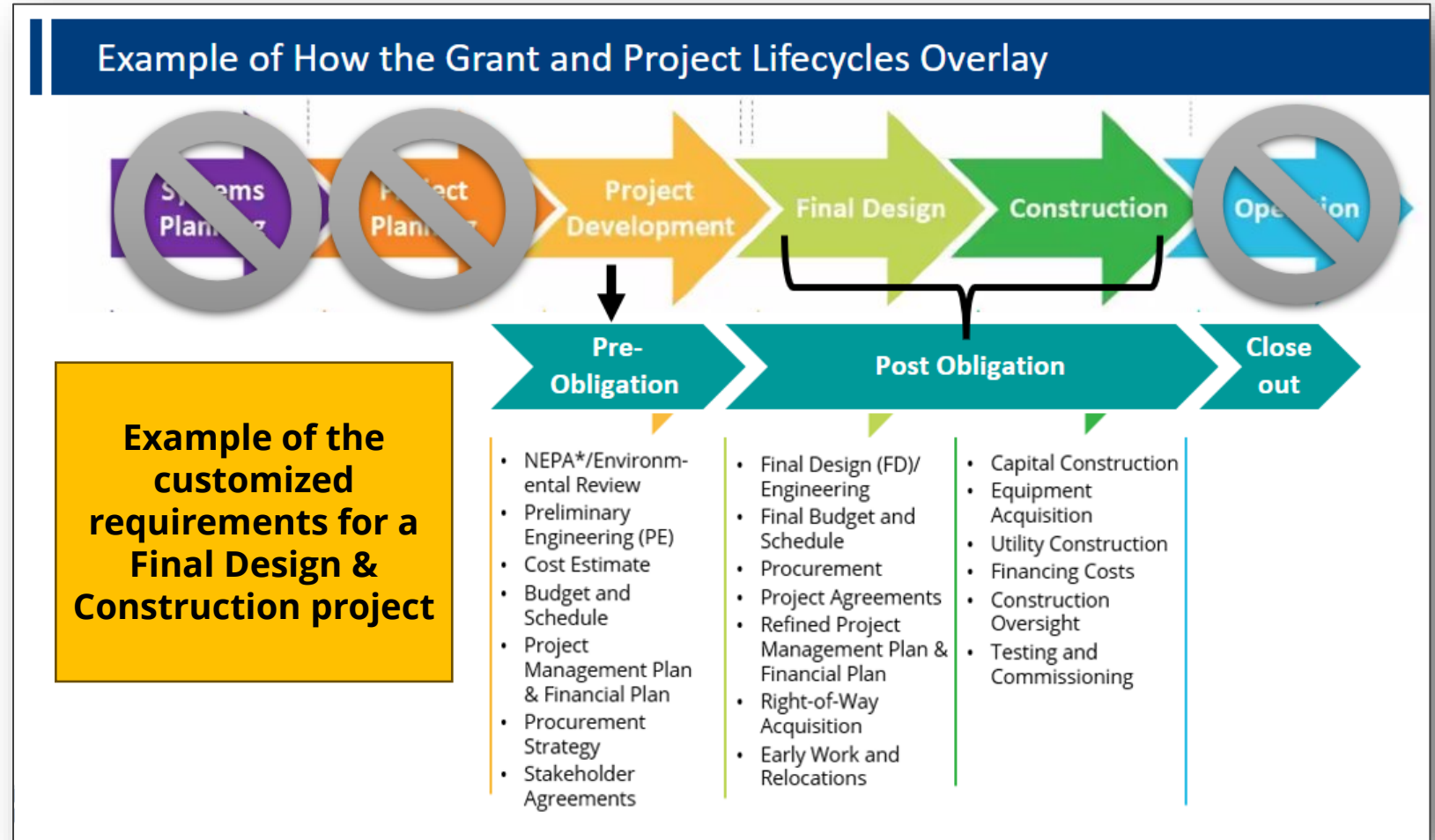# Question 1: *I've been selected, what happens now?*

FAQs:

- What is the difference between "selection" and "obligation"?

- What's my first step?

- What are the grant timelines, and how can they vary?

Grant Lifecycle and Approximate Time Frames

Project Selected for Award

You are here!

Obligation

Your goal is to get here!

Pre-Obligation	Post Obligation
6 to 18* months	2 to 5 years

Grant Agreement
- Terms and Conditions
- Scope, Schedule, and Budget
- Performance measures

Environmental Requirements

Engineering Requirements

Other:
- Customized requirements per project lifecycle stage(s) and scope
- Pre-award authority (optional)
- Stakeholder agreements (e.g., 22905)

Grant Administration & Stewardship
- Quarterly Progress and Financial Reports
- Invoicing schedule of eligible expenses per NGA
- Deliverable Submission and Reviews

Monitoring & Oversight
- Routine monitoring via regular meetings with FRA (typically, monthly)
  - Compliance
  - Financial
  - Programmatic
- Annual monitoring reviews/site visits, if selected

Question 2: *What are the prerequisites to obligation?*

Standard Prerequisites:

- **Grant Agreement:** Terms and Conditions, Scope, Schedule, Budget, Performance Measures
- **Environmental Review Requirements**
- **Planning or Engineering Review Requirements**
- **Customized requirements per project lifecycle stage(s), scope, and NOFO**
- **Other:**
  - Stakeholder agreements (e.g., 22905)

Example of How the Grant and Project Lifecycles Overlay

Systems Planning — Project Planning — Project Development — Final Design — Construction — Operation — Close out

Pre-Obligation | Post Obligation | Close out

Example of the customized requirements for a Final Design & Construction project

Pre-Obligation:
- NEPA*/Environmental Review
- Preliminary Engineering (PE)
- Cost Estimate
- Budget and Schedule
- Project Management Plan & Financial Plan
- Procurement Strategy
- Stakeholder Agreements

Post Obligation:
- Final Design (FD)/Engineering
- Final Budget and Schedule
- Procurement
- Project Agreements
- Refined Project Management Plan & Financial Plan
- Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Early Work and Relocations

- Capital Construction
- Equipment Acquisition
- Utility Construction
- Financing Costs
- Construction Oversight
- Testing and Commissioning

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Question 3: *How can I eliminate common obstacles to obligation?*

Scope, Schedule, and Budget are not well-defined	Preliminary Engineering (PE) is not at Conceptual Design level or greater	Environmental Review has not been completed
Matching funds are not in-hand	Project partners are not on board with the Project	Applicant does not own the Right-Of-Way (ROW) or property
Project Sponsor requests Project scope changes	Section 22905 Railroad Agreement is not finalized	Project Sponsor needs a Buy America waiver

Question 4: *Does my team have the technical capacity to complete an FRA project?*

FAQs:

- What applicable skills are needed to complete prerequisites to obligation and project tasks/deliverables (e.g., engineering or environmental experience)?

- What attributes should I look for in a project manager?

- Is it requirement that I use a consultant?

Question 5: *Can we talk about funding?*

FAQs:

- What is the maximum federal share?
- What entities can provide match funding?
- Do in-kind contributions count?
- How much funding should be on hand at point of selection?
- What is a reimbursement-based grant?
- When can I get reimbursed?
- What is Pre-award Authority?

Question 6: *Am I ready for a federal project?*
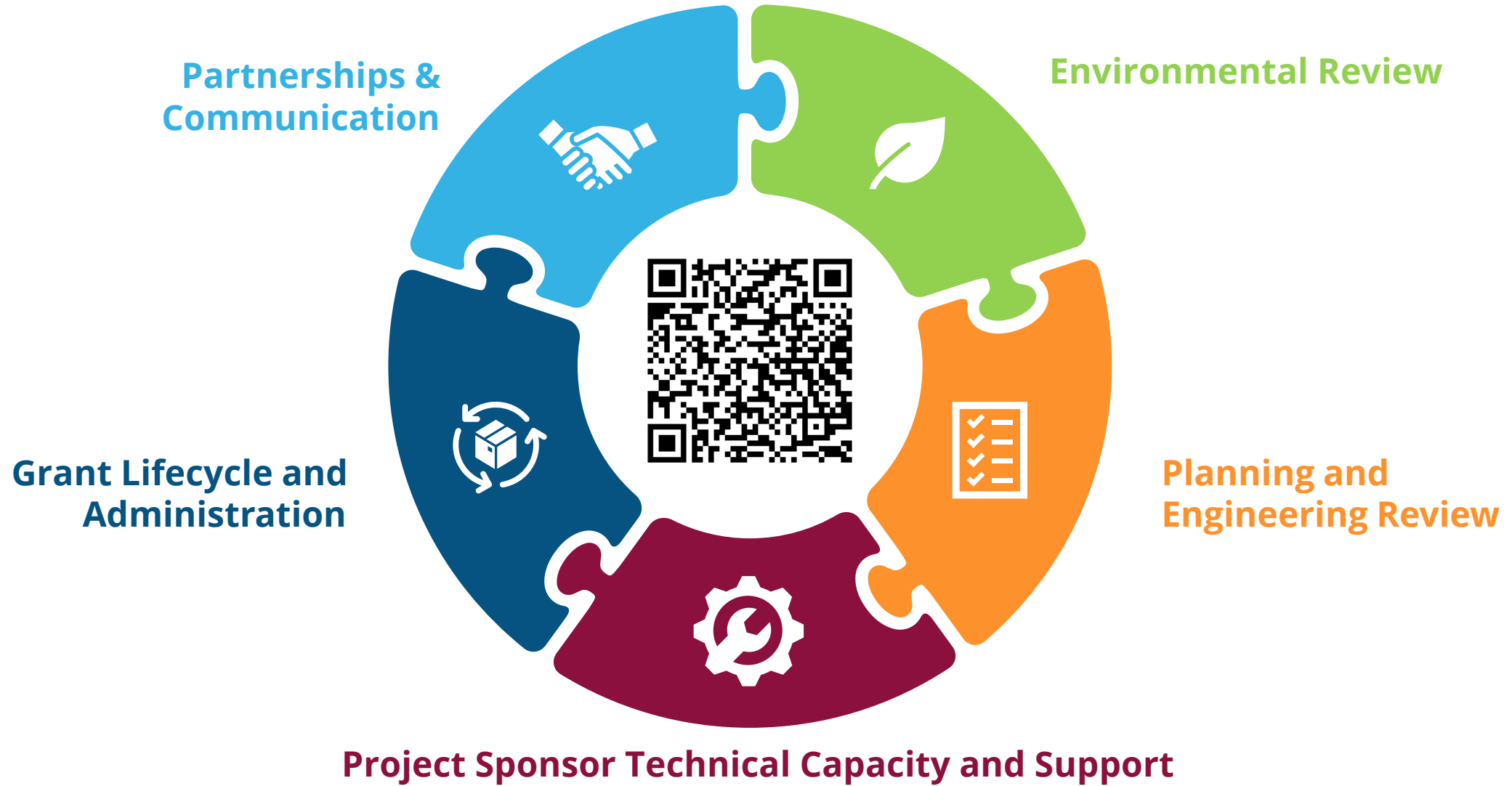
Partnerships & Communication

Environmental Review

Grant Lifecycle and Administration

Planning and Engineering Review

Project Sponsor Technical Capacity and Support

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Reference the Five Factors of Successful Project Readiness Infographic for resources, more information, and notifications of future webinars!

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JULY 2024 | WASHINGTON, DC

Contact us:

Project Delivery:
FRARailProgramDelivery@dot.gov

Environmental:
FRAEnvironment@dot.gov

Sponsor Outreach:
FRASponsorOutreach@dot.gov

Freight Railroad Outreach:
FRAFRO@dot.gov

NOFO & Application Support:
FRA-NOFO-Support@dot.gov

Detailed Reference Materials

Overarching Resources

- [FRA Grants & Loans](#)   &   [FRA Training & Guidance](#)

- [FRA Discretionary Grant Agreements](#)

- [Introduction to Terms & Conditions for Discretionary Grants Webinar](#)

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

- [FRA Webinar on "Overview: FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects](#)"

- [Subscribe to FRA's future trainings, webinars, and events!](#)

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FRA Technical Assistance for Grantees

In-Person/Virtual Training

FRA conducts workshops virtually and in-person at various industry conferences throughout the year to educate grantees about the application and program/project delivery process, including at:

- AASHTO
- ASLRRA
- APTA
- FRA Program Delivery Workshop (New in 2024)

On-Demand Training

FRA's Training and Guidance webpage has a wealth of videos and webinars on topics such as:

- Cost estimating
- Environmental streamlining
- Grade crossing project planning tools
- Grant application process

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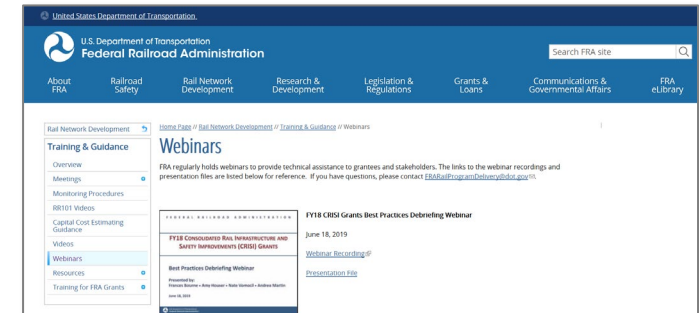
Grant Lifecycle and Administration

CY 2024 FRA Discretionary Grant Calendar

	2024												2025			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
FY23-24 CRISI				★ 60 DAYS						★						
FY23-24 RCE					★ 75 DAYS						★					
FY24 FSP-NEC				★ 60 DAYS						★						
FY24 FSP-National									★ 75 DAYS							★
FY21-24 R&E					★ 75 DAYS						★					

★ NOFO Publication   ➤ Application Period   ➤ Evaluation & Selection Period   ★ Award Announcement
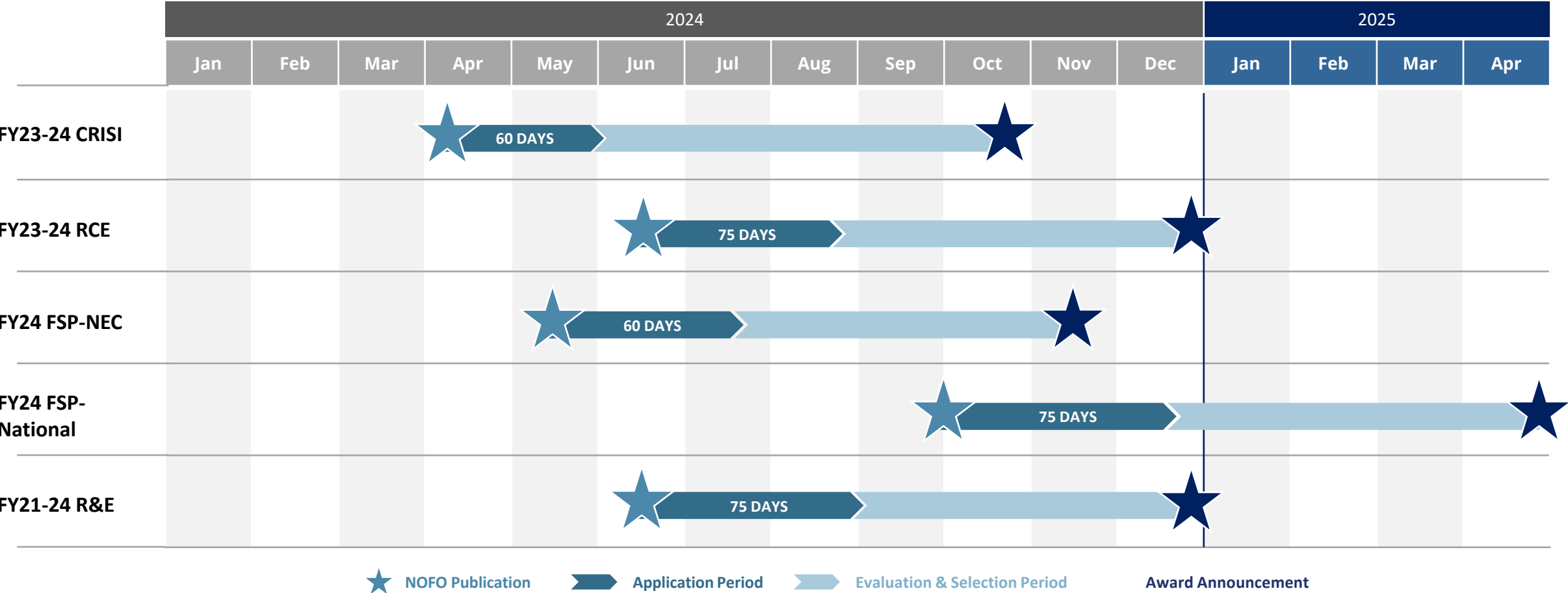
NOFO CYCLE STAGES ARE ESTIMATED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES, AND NOT EXACT DURATIONS OR DATES. CHANGES MAY OCCUR, AND FRA WILL UPDATE ACCORDINGLY.

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CY24 NOFO Calendar Website   &   FRA NOFO Webinars Registration

Grant Lifecycle and Approximate Time Frames

Project Selected for Award

Obligation

Period of Performance Ends

Closed

Pre-Obligation	Post Obligation	Closeout
6 to 18* months	**2 to 5 years**	**1 to 3 months**

Grant Agreement
- Terms and Conditions
- Scope, Schedule, and Budget
- Performance measures

Environmental Requirements

Engineering/Planning Requirements

Other:
- Customized requirements per project lifecycle stage(s) and scope
- Pre-award authority (optional)
- Stakeholder agreements (e.g., 22905)

Grant Administration & Stewardship
- Quarterly Progress and Financial Reports
- Invoicing schedule of eligible expenses per NGA
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Monitoring & Oversight
- Routine monitoring via regular meetings with FRA (typically, monthly)
  - Compliance
  - Financial
  - Programmatic
- Annual monitoring reviews/site visits, if selected

Final Invoice
- Financial reconciliation

Final Performance Report
- Documentation of results, outcomes, and public benefits

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* Pre-Obligation timeframe is dependent on project lifecycle, project readiness, and necessary obligation prerequisites

Most Common Reasons for Delay in Obligation

Scope, Schedule, and Budget are not well-defined	Preliminary Engineering (PE) is not at Conceptual Design level or greater	Environmental Review has not been completed
Matching funds are not in-hand	Project partners are not on board with the Project	Applicant does not own the Right-Of-Way (ROW) or property
Project Sponsor requests Project scope changes	Section 22905 Railroad Agreement is not finalized	Project Sponsor needs a Buy America waiver

Project Sponsor Technical Capacity and Support

Project Sponsor Team Technical Capacity

- Ensure you have a dedicated Project Manager to oversee the project's scope, schedule, and budget, submit timely deliverables and reports, and coordinate with project stakeholders (railroad, FRA, contractors, local stakeholders).

- Ensure your team has the applicable technical skills to complete the prerequisite requirements to obligation and the deliverables of the project.

FRA Resources:

- [Video: Davis Bacon Act](#)

- [Presentation on the Davis-Bacon Act](#)

Overview of Capital Project Guidance — Project Lifecycle Stages

Systems Planning

- Multistate Regional Planning
- Corridor Planning
- Project Identification

Project Planning

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

Project Development

- NEPA*/Environmental Review
- Preliminary Engineering (PE)
- Cost Estimate
- Budget and Schedule
- Project Management Plan & Financial Plan
- Procurement Strategy
- Stakeholder Agreements

Final Design

- Final Design (FD)/ Engineering
- Final Budget and Schedule
- Procurement
- Project Agreements
- Refined Project Management Plan & Financial Plan
- Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Early Work and Relocations

Construction

- Capital Construction
- Equipment Acquisition
- Utility Construction
- Financing Costs
- Construction Oversight
- Testing and Commissioning

Operation & Maintenance

- Project Use
- Project Benefits Assessments
- Project Lookback Analysis

*NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration**

January 11, 2023

Subject: FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION of RAILROAD CAPITAL PROJECTS

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

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FRA Project Lifecycle & Program Framework

Project Lifecycle Stages

Development Stages | **Implementation Stages**

Systems Planning → Project Planning → Project Development → Final Design → Construction → Operation

Primary FRA Planning & Funding Programs

Regional & State Rail Plans

Corridor Identification and Development (ID) Program

Restoration & Enhancement Program

FSP, RCE, CRISI & Other Grant Programs

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Guidance on the Development and Management of Railroad Capital Projects

Guidance on the development and implementation of capital projects that may be funded, in whole or in part, by FRA

- **Audience:** Project Sponsors, partners, and all professionals who contribute to the planning, development, and implementation of railroad capital projects

- **FRA's Goal**: To assist Project Sponsors in developing effective and complete capital projects and in enhancing project management to meet schedules and budgets

Oversight of Railroad Capital Projects:
- ***Cost*** and schedule risk reduction.
- ***Compliance*** with applicable laws and policy objectives.
- Building ***capacity*** for project sponsors to succeed.
- Giving the public ***confidence*** that public funds are used efficiently and effectively.
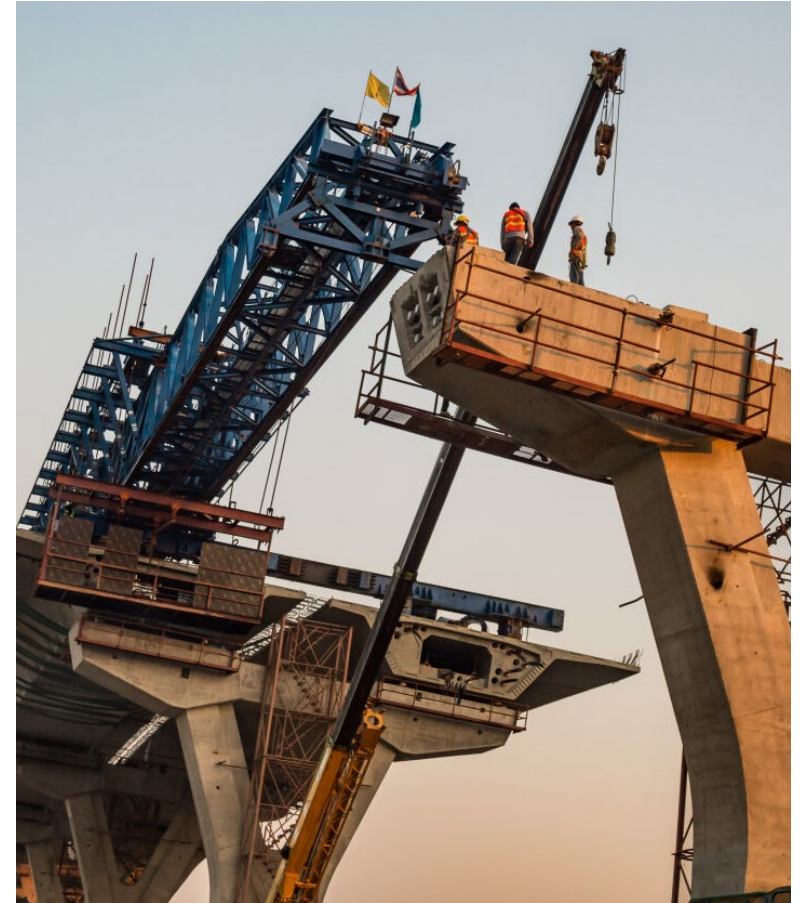
Learn more visit: Railroad Capital Project Guidance (dot.gov)

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FRA Buy America

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.

FRA encourages applicants who might seek a waiver to develop and submit a domestic sourcing plan as part of their application.

https://railroads.dot.gov/legislation-regulations/buy-america/buy-america

Environmental Review

FRA's Office of Environmental Program Management

- For rail stakeholders pursuing federal investment or project approval, the Office of Environmental Program Management:
  - **Oversees** implementation of environmental laws and regulations,
  - **Advises** on environmental policy, and
  - **Ensures integration** of project development with environmental work

Environmental Coordination & Strategy

Serves as the principal **advisory group** and provides senior-level technical assistance, strategy, and support for the office director and office staff.

Environmental Policy

Oversees the **development and implementation** of environmental policy and clear guidance including:
- Human & natural environment policy
- NEPA policy, both internally and with rail stakeholders
- Realty and real estate matters

Environmental Review

Oversees **compliance** with NEPA and other applicable environmental laws and regulations for projects with FRA funding or action.

Cultural Resources

Oversees **integration of cultural resources and historic preservation requirements** and policies into FRA projects and programs.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance is a Requirement

- FRA's Environmental Protection Specialists are responsible for **managing the environmental and cultural resources review process** for projects that receive financial assistance from FRA

- Environmental and cultural resources review is a required **part of program delivery** and a key component of the overall grant lifecycle

- The extent and timeframe for environmental and cultural resources review needed varies by project
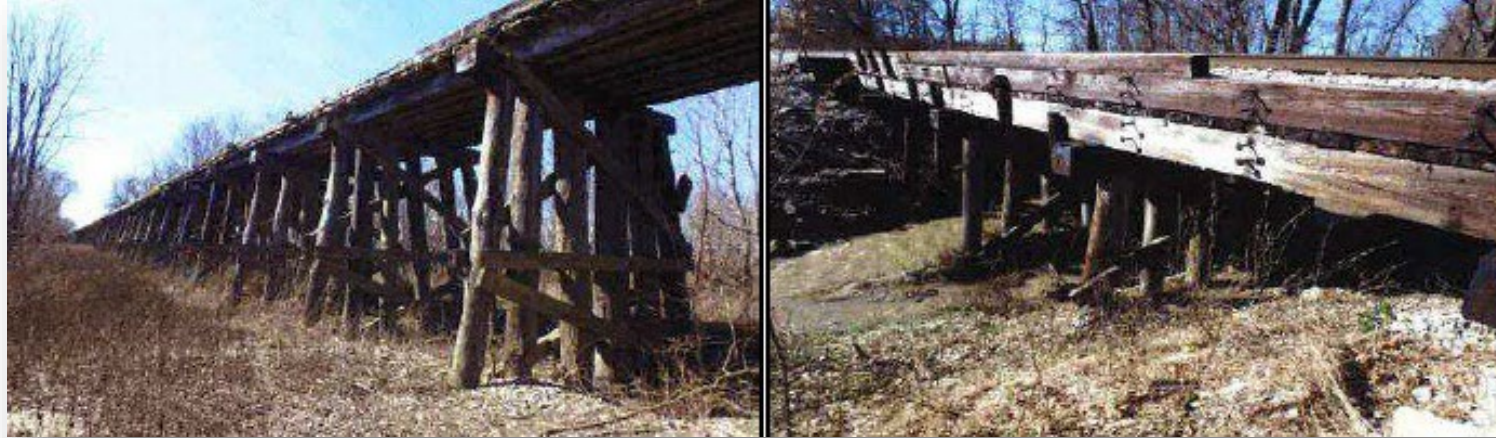
"Why does environmental review take so long?"

- The greater the complexity and degree of environmental impacts, the more time and effort needed from the grantee. Hiring a qualified consultant may be helpful, especially if the grantee does not have in-house environmental/cultural resources specialists.

- **Environmental Review Considerations:**

    - Impacts to
        - Undisturbed areas both inside and outside of existing rail ROW
        - Waters/wetlands
        - Protected species and/or their habitat
        - Communities with Environmental Justice (EJ) Concerns / Justice 40 Communities / Public Involvement / Nearby Sensitive Land Uses
        - Historic properties (built environment, archaeological, tribal)
        - Publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife refuges

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Environmental Streamlining Tips

Project Sponsors can...

- **Provide a comprehensively drafted Categorial Exclusion (CE) Worksheet**
  - Include a draft CE worksheet or detailed discussion of environmental and cultural resources and potential impacts in your application.

- **Include an accurate scope of work**
  - Provide a clear, complete scope of work in an application to help FRA environmental and cultural resources staff identify potential project impacts earlier.

- **Get the right project team**
  - Determine if the support of a consultant is needed. Projects requiring environmental and/or cultural resources field work or surveys may benefit.

- **Determine need for natural and/or cultural resources work**
  - Plan project schedules accordingly if adverse impacts to natural resources, communities, or historic properties are expected.

FRA is...

- **Working on internal policies and procedures**
  - To improve predictability for grantees across RRD grants and programs

- **Revising CE Worksheet and guidebook**

- **Developing templates for a variety of environmental review documents and consultation letters**

- **Streamlining NEPA compliance**
  - For faster obligation of grants
  - Adoption of other agencies' NEPA decisions

- **Working to reduce duplication of environmental review efforts**
  - For multi-modal projects
  - Working closely with the other DOT modes

Planning and Engineering
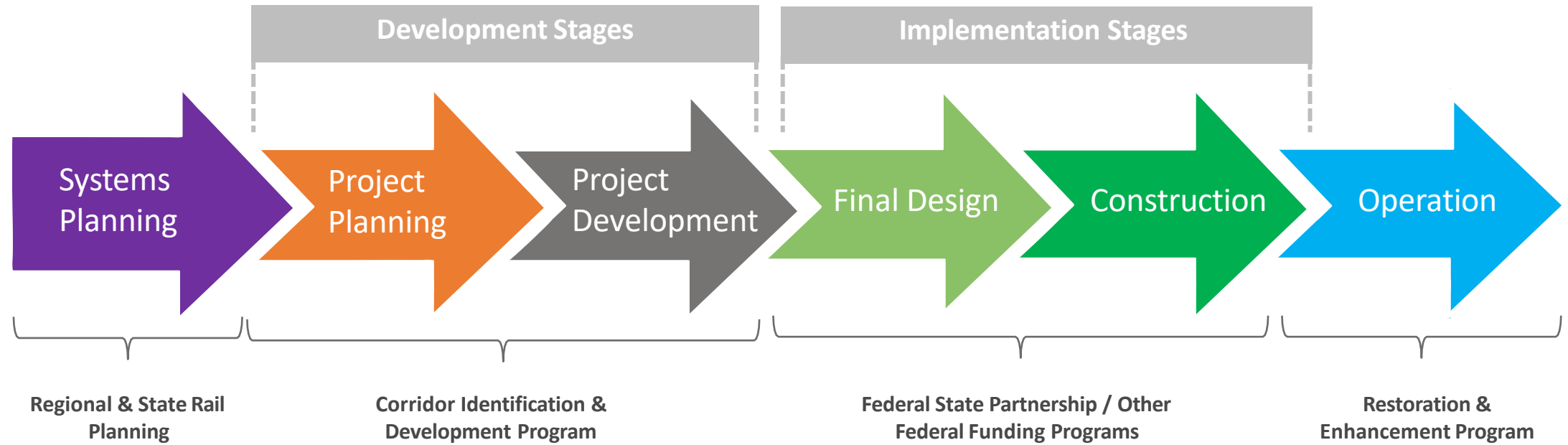
Planning and Engineering

Systems Planning → Project Planning → Project Development → Final Design

Conceptual Engineering:

Basis of Design- Operational Objectives & Functional Requirements

1 or More Alternative Meeting the Draft Purpose & Need

Feasibility & Constructability of Design

Determine Preferred Alternate

Preliminary Engineering:

Project Scope & Intent

Operational Performance

Resilient Outcomes

Construction Methods & Duration

Domestic Sourcing Strategy

Property Acquisition Needed

Utility Relocations Needed

Stakeholders' approval

Risks Influencing Schedule & Cost

Final Design:

Sponsor Secures Agreements & Funding Commitments to Start Construction

Right-of-Way Acquisition Complete

Final Engineering Plans RFC

Updated Cost Estimate

Financial Plan Updates (Major Projects Only)

Early Procurement of Long Lead Time Equipment & Materials

Updated Risk Register

Elements reviewed in all projects:

- Network/Track Configuration Plans
- Station/Platform – New or Modifications
- Constructability
- Stakeholder Impact and Approvals
- Safety Requirements
- Utility Relocations and Agreements
- NEPA
- Other Site-Specific Topics
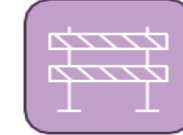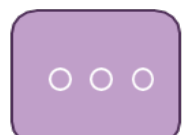
Partnerships and Communication

FRA Mission: *Enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future.*
FRA Focus Areas: Safety • Investments • Community • Workforce

Rail Safety & Resilience

Enhance community safety & rail network performance:
- Upgraded short-line railroad infrastructure
- Safer grade crossings & connected neighborhoods
- Cleaner, more efficient locomotives & rail yards
- Increased capacity on freight & shared rail lines

Passenger Rail Development

Develop world-class passenger rail service:
- New & enhanced corridors across the U.S.
- A modernized Northeast Corridor
- Renewed Amtrak fleet, facilities & assets
- Improved accessibility & customer experience

FRA'S OFFICE OF RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT (RRD)

Mission: *Partner to advance effective rail investments*

Vision: *World-class rail connects America's communities*

Program Innovation

Modernize program infrastructure and workforce:
- User-friendly program tools & guidance
- Programmatic planning & environmental processes
- Lifecycle support for efficient project delivery
- Technical assistance & workforce development
- Sound financial stewardship & oversight practices

RESPECT • COLLABORATION • INTEGRITY

Nurture Our People
Engage Our Partners
Modernize Our Processes
Advance Our Programs
RRD

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

2024
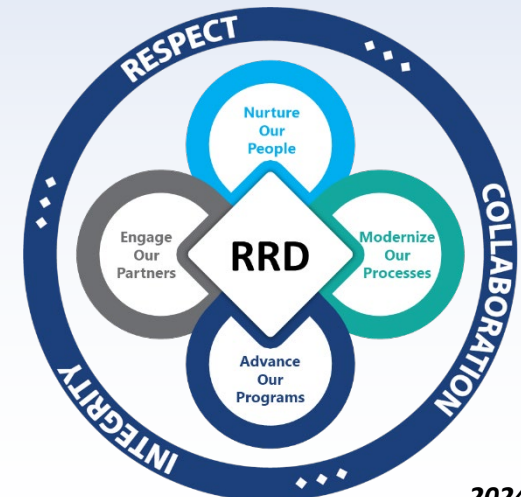
Project Delivery Team Structure: *FRA & Project Sponsor Team Partnership*

Integrated teams enable more effective customer service:

Teams that combine expertise and specialty can more effectively manage FRA grant program portfolios and establish enduring relationships.

Legend:
- Northeast (NEC) Region
- Northeast (Non-NEC) Region
- Southeast Region
- Midwest Region
- Southcentral Region
- West Region
- Southwest Region

Project Sponsor Team	Grant Manager	Legal Counsel	Rail Planner	Project Manager	Rail Engineer	Environmental Specialists	Financial Analyst	Contractor Support

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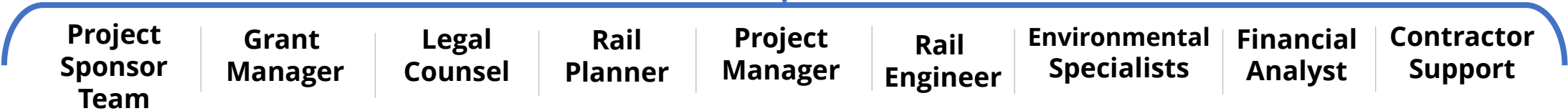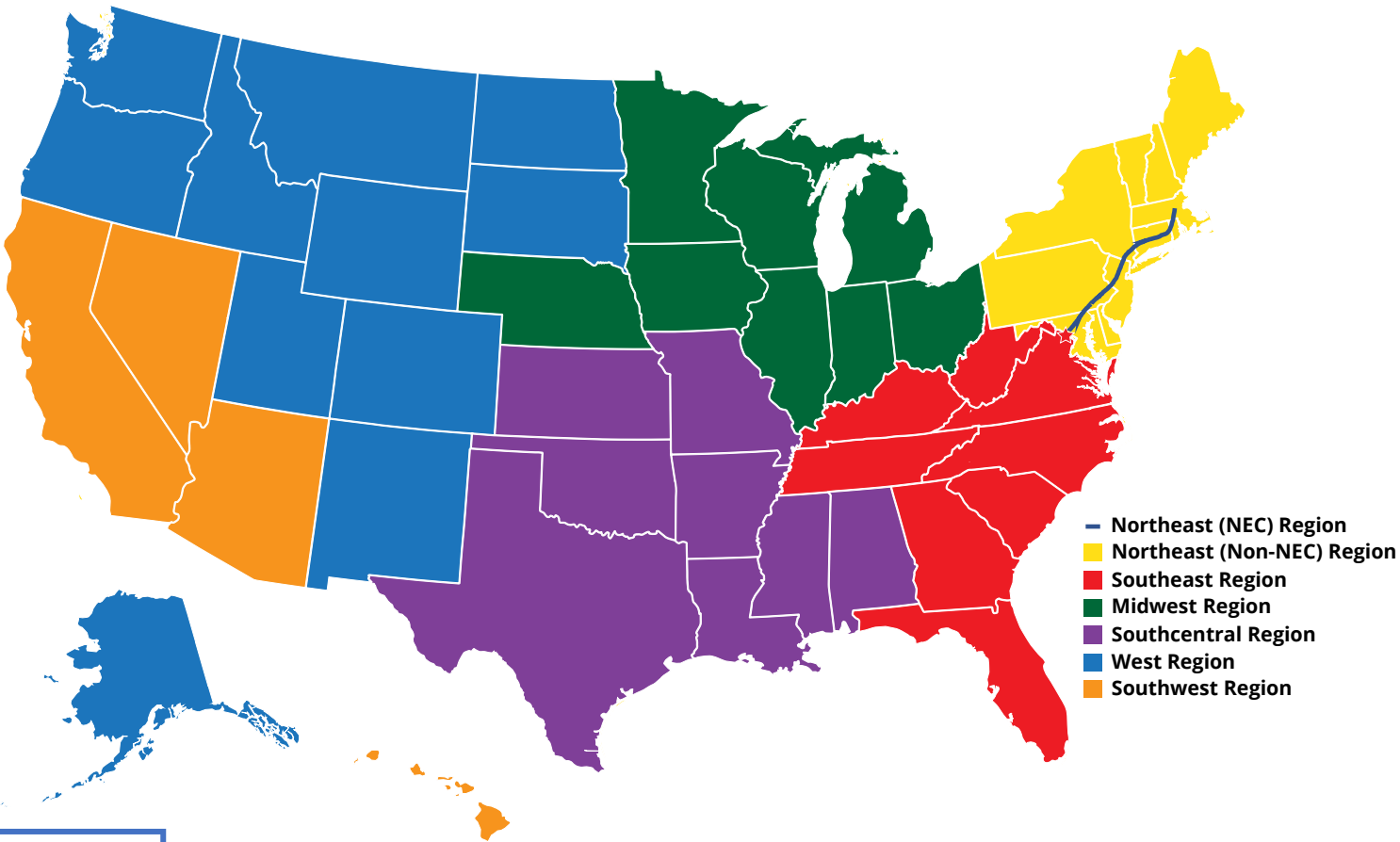
Streamlining Opportunities for Project Sponsors

Attend FRA webinars and conferences

Refer to FRA website for valuable resources

Refer to the NOFO for program and project specific pre-requisites

Submit applications with reasonable schedules, a confirmed scope, and secured funding

Partner with infrastructure owners for project support, implementation and completion of 22905 railroad agreements

Adhere to FRA and DOT project delivery guidance

Submit quality and responsive deliverables

Contact FRA with application questions or concerns: FRA-NOFO-Support@dot.gov

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Railroad Agreements

- **What is a railroad agreement?**
  - Agreement between the railroad right-of-way (ROW) owner(s) to the FRA Project Sponsor
  - "Under section 22905(c)(1), a grant applicant must have a written agreement with a railroad that owns rights-of-way to be used by the project (referred to here as the 22905 Agreement) prior to grant obligation."

- **When does the 22905 agreement apply?**
  - Check the relevant NOFO!
  - Section 22905 conditions apply to grants/projects in most FRA administered grant programs, including CRISI, RCE, FSP, R&E, IRC, etc.

- **Communication and partnership between the ROW owner(s) and FRA Project Sponsor are needed to complete this agreement**

- **FRA Resource:** [FRA 22905 Agreement FAQs](#)
  (Issuance date: March 30, 2023)

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FRA Discretionary Grant Tool

Additional FRA Webinars

https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/training-guidance/webinars-0

Follow FRA on **Linkedin** for more updates!

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