

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program

PCFO IGAP Grant Snapshot

August 9, 2023

Agency: Department of Transportation	Bureau: Office of the Secretary of Transportation
Application Deadline: September 28, 2023	Max Award: Varies by award type (see below)

Description

The Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program (RCN) is the joint name for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) and Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Programs. If applicants meet the requirements for both programs, they are encouraged to submit one application for both funding opportunities. The RCN Program aims to advance community-centered transportation connection projects and to provide technical assistance to further these goals.

Eligible Recipients

The table below lists the eligible applicants for each grant program type.

RCP Community Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State • Unit of local government • Tribal government • Metropolitan Planning Organization • Non-profit organization
RCP Capital Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner(s) of the eligible facility proposed in the project for which all necessary feasibility studies and other planning activities have been completed; or • A partnership between a facility owner (#1 above) and any eligible RCP Community Planning Grant applicant
NAE Community Planning, Capital Construction, and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State or territory of the United States • Unit of local government • Political subdivision of a State • Tribal government • Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function • Metropolitan Planning Organization • Nonprofit organization or institution of higher education that has entered into a partnership with an above eligible entity and is applying for a grant for planning and capacity building activities in disadvantage or underserved communities

*Note: For Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with construction activities, **all lead applicants must be the owner of the facility proposed in the project or, if the lead applicant is another eligible entity, the applicant must demonstrate a partnership with the Facility Owner.** For Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with planning activities, DOT encourages but does not require the same.

Eligible Projects

There are three RCN grant types:

- **Community Planning:** Projects including planning activities for future construction projects
- **Capital Construction:** Projects for removing, retrofitting, mitigating, or replacing an existing eligible dividing transportation facility with a new facility that reconnects communities, mitigates a burdening transportation facility that is a source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, heat, or other burdens; or implements a strategy to reduce environmental harm and/or improve access through transportation improvements
- **Regional Partnerships Challenge:** Projects led by two or more eligible applicants that include the same activities as those under Capital Construction and Community Planning Grants but must have a regional focus, and clearly demonstrate regional coordination and leveraging of local, State, and Federal resources and policies

The table below outlines eligible activities under each grant type.

Community Planning Grants	
<i>Both RCP and NAE</i>	<i>NAE Only</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting public engagement activities • Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible dividing facility to reconnect communities • Other planning activities in support of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and capacity-building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities to identify, monitor or assess air quality, emissions, hot spot areas or extreme heat, gaps in tree canopy coverage, or flood-prone transportation infrastructure • Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible burdening facility, and predevelopment activities for eligible NAE Capital Construction projects • Assess transportation equity or pollution impacts • Administer or obtain technical assistance related to other eligible planning activities

Capital Construction Grants

<i>Both RCP and NAE</i>	<i>NAE Only</i>
<p>Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies; predevelopment/preconstruction; or permitting activities, including completion of NEPA process, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible dividing facility • Replacement of an eligible dividing facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity • Delivering community benefits and the mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the construction project 	<p>Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies; predevelopment/preconstruction; or permitting activities, including completion of NEPA process, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reuse of a facility to improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access through projects that are context sensitive • Projects to mitigate or remediate negative impacts on the human or natural environment resulting from a burdening facility • Building or improving complete streets, multiuse trails, regional greenways, or active transportation networks and spines • Providing affordable access to essential destinations, such as through transit, to public spaces, or transportation links and hubs

Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants

<i>Both RCP and NAE</i>	<i>NAE Only</i>
N/A	Activities under Community Planning Grants and Capital Construction Grants through partnerships of at least two eligible entities to tackle persistent, regional equitable access and mobility challenges

The table below shows the maximum award and total funding available for each grant type.

	Max Award	Total Funding Available
Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP)		\$198 million
Community Planning	\$2 million	\$50 million
Capital Construction	\$5 million	\$148 million
Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE)		\$3.155 billion
Community Planning	No max	\$135 million
Capital Construction	No max	Up to \$2.57 billion
Regional Partnerships	3-5 grants	Up to \$450 million

Match Requirements

RCP – Community Planning	20% matching requirement
RCP – Capital Construction	20% matching requirement RCP funds may be used for 50% of the project costs. Other federal funds may be used to increase the total federal share to 80%.
NAE – Community Planning, Capital Construction, and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants	20% matching requirement Projects in a disadvantaged or underserved community do not require a local match

New or Existing Program

RCP is existing and was created in 2021 with the passing of the BIL. NAE is new and was created in 2022 with the passing of the IRA. RCP and NAE are being combined into one 2023 NOFO called RCN.

Examples of Prior Award Recipients

In 2022, the City of Akron, Ohio received a \$960,000 planning grant through the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant Program. Funds will be used to create a community-based master plan to guide the transformation of a vacated mile-long section of Akron's Innerbelt (State Route 59) into an asset that benefits all Akron residents. The application describes multiple ways to improve the mobility and community connectivity in the area, including reconnecting the street grid, promoting multi-modal transportation, providing infill housing on the site, removing roadways, and calming traffic on frontage roads. The project intends to create a master plan rooted in community visioning to promote equitable development, possibly including infill development on the vacated highway, including affordable housing and local business development with attention to the area's history. The full list of 2022 RCP Awardees is available [here](#).

Tips for Being Competitive

Competitive applicants will be responsive to the merit criteria, which include:

- **Equity and Environmental Justice:** Address harmful historic or current policies, existing socioeconomic disparities, environmental disparities, the needs of the surrounding community, and how proposed solutions equitably distribute benefits and mitigate impacts
- **Access:** Address new or improved, context-sensitive, affordable transportation options, safe accommodation for all users and seamless integration with the surrounding factors, and encouraging thriving communities with transportation choices that don't require a car
- **Facility Suitability:** Remove barriers to access, mobility and economic development, address environmental burdens on communities, and/or address current and projected vulnerabilities

- **Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships:** Facilitate meaningful engagement, use a community-centered approach, establish formal partnerships, and/or defer to a representative community advisory group
- **Equitable Development:** Prioritize community restoration, stabilization, and anti-displacement, creative place-making, and/or a local/regional/state equitable development plan
- **Climate and Environment:** Reduce transportation-related pollution, provide high-quality low-carbon travel choices, and/or support a Climate Action Plan for lower greenhouse gas emissions
- **Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity:** Address local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship and support good-paying jobs and high-quality workforce development programs

For a full description of application criteria, review and selection process, see pages 25-35 of the [FY23 RCN Final NOFO document](#).

Labor Requirements

Each applicant selected for Capital Construction funding, and Regional Partnerships Challenge funding with construction activities, must demonstrate, to the full extent possible consistent with the law, an effort to create good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and incorporation of high labor standards. If applicants have not sufficiently considered job quality and labor rights in their planning, they will be required to do so before receiving funds.

Partners Required

Partnerships are not required but are encouraged and are included in the merit criteria, especially for the Regional Partnerships Challenge grants.

Agency Contact

- ReconnectingCommunities@dot.gov
 - Andrew Emanuele at andrew.emanuele@dot.gov and Tameka MaconRyan at tameka.maconryan@dot.gov
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Upcoming Events

- [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods - Rural/Nonprofit Focus](#): Tuesday, August 15 from 1:30 – 3:30PM ET
- [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods - Capital Construction](#): Thursday, August 24 from 1:30 – 3:30PM ET

There are additional webinar recordings and presentation slides for past webinars available [here](#).

Anticipated Award Date

Awarded projects are expected to obligate funds by September 30, 2026.

How To Apply

- Ensure you have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) with SAM.gov.
 - Register with Valid Eval, the third-party platform used by USDOT.
 - For Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with planning activities:
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_planning/signup
 - For Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with construction activities:
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_capitalconstruction/signup
 - Submit Application via Valid Eval by Thursday, September 28, 2023. **Do not apply through Grants.gov.**
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Resources

- [RCN Grant Program Page - DOT](#)
- [FY23 RCN NOFO - DOT](#)
- [RCN FAQs - DOT](#)
- [RCN How to Apply - DOT](#)