

Regional Planning Affiliation 8 Transportation Alternatives Program (RPA 8 TAP)

Program Guidance



Updated July 2025

Program Purpose

The Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) from the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (23 U.S.C. 133(h)) was authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that was enacted in November 2021. With this most recent iteration of the TA Set-Aside, Congress has made additional changes to the program. Most notably to Iowa, the program now allows for the suballocation of up to 100 percent of funds for competitive selection of projects beyond what was previously allowed.

In the published program guidance, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has several aims for the program:

- To encourage the investment in projects that upgrade the condition of streets, highways and bridges and creates a modern transportation network safe for all users,
- To provide choice across all modes,
- To accommodate new and emerging technologies,
- To make the network sustainable and resilient, and
- To ensure the network is more equitable.

The FHWA encourages Iowa DOT and its partners to identify opportunities to use these resources for the repair, rehabilitation, reconstruction, replacement, and maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure, especially the incorporation of safety, accessibility, multi-modal, and resilience features. This includes projects that maximize the existing right-of-way for non-motorized modes and transit options and increase safety, accessibility, and/or connectivity. The FHWA also encourages the full consideration of the safety of all users in project development and use funds from the TA Set-Aside to address safety wherever possible. However, improvements to safety features, including traffic signs, pavement markings, and multi-modal accommodations that are routinely provided as part of a broader federal-aid highway project can and should be funded from the same source as the broader project as long as the use is eligible under that funding source rather than separating such improvements as a TA Set-Aside funded project.

Consideration should also be given to the use of TA Set-Aside funds for projects and inclusion of project elements that proactively address workforce development and economic development or removes barriers to opportunity such as automobile dependence. Funds from the TA Set-Aside that have been selected through a competitive process can be “flexed” to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to fund projects for transit agencies and used for transit projects in furtherance of the goal of providing an equitable and safe transportation network for travelers of all ages and abilities.

Implementation of the TA Set-Aside in Iowa

Since passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Iowa DOT has worked with cities and counties to develop eighteen Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs) with responsibilities similar to Iowa’s nine Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). These RPAs represent the non-metropolitan areas of the state not covered by MPOs. Over the last 30 years, the MPOs and RPAs have been successfully providing transportation planning functions including development of Transportation Planning Work Programs and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). Iowa’s MPOs and RPAs have also been entrusted by the Iowa Transportation Commission with the responsibility for selecting projects for the various iterations of the transportation enhancements or transportation alternatives programs. Faith in these processes continues through the implementation of the IIJA.

The funding level of the TA Set-Aside under the IIJA is increased over the previous version. Consequently, the funding level of the Statewide TA Set-Aside funding program has been increased to \$5 million from \$1 million per federal fiscal year apportionment for a total of \$25 million targeted over the life of the 5-year bill. All other TA Set-Aside program funds will be awarded to local project sponsors through Regional TA Set-Aside programs administered by the MPOs and RPAs.

RPA 8 Transportation Alternatives Program

RPA 8 has established a regional TA Set-Aside competitive application program as required by the Iowa DOT. The intent of the RPA 8 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) competitive application program is to make a big impact with the limited funds available. Projects likely to be competitive in the RPA 8 TAP will have an impact that extends beyond the local scale. The program emphasizes the expansion of the multi-modal trail network through the completion of trail linkages, and projects located immediately adjacent to a state-designated Iowa Byway. This document provides general information for all interested applicants about the RPA 8 TAP and specific guidance to project sponsors about how to apply for the RPA 8 TAP.

In addition to this document, applicants should also refer to the current *Iowa Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program Guidance* document for additional guidance on the Iowa DOT's TA Set-Aside program. Iowa DOT information is available at https://iowadot.gov/systems_planning/Grant-Programs/Transportation-Alternatives

Eligible Activities and Costs

Treatment of Projects as Federal-Aid Highway Projects

Projects funded by the TA Set-Aside program will be carried out under the same rules and procedures as a highway project on a federal-aid highway. This subjects all projects to, among other things, Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements and other federal-aid requirements applicable to projects on federal-aid highways (e.g., Build America, Buy America, planning, environmental review, letting, etc.). A project that may seem simple (like a simple local trail) will not necessarily be simple to complete if the project is funded through the TA Set-Aside program. Project sponsors should expect to devote considerable time and resources toward following the federal requirements necessary for their project to be successfully completed. See Section 6 of this document for more information about federal-aid highway project requirements.

Activities Eligible for TA Set-Aside Funding

A project proposed for TA Set-Aside funding must have a clear project scope that fits within one of the following categories. If a construction project, the project must be constructible as an independent project and identify a specific project location (including logical project termini where applicable). Award of funding toward a proposed project is still subject to review of project cost eligibility and allowability by Iowa DOT and does not absolve the project sponsor from its responsibility to follow all applicable local, state, and federal rules and laws. TA Set-Aside Program eligible activities are described in 23 U.S.C. 101(1)(29) or 23 U.S.C. 213, as in effect prior to the enactment of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. Those sections contained the following eligible activities:

- 1) Transportation Alternatives

- a) Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq).
 - b) Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.
 - c) Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
 - d) Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
 - e) Community improvement activities, which include but are not limited to:
 - i) Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising.
 - ii) Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.
 - iii) Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control.
 - iv) Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under this title.
 - v) Streetscaping and corridor landscaping.
 - f) Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to:
 - i) Address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff, including activities described in Title 23 sections 133(b)(11), 328(a), and 329; or
 - ii) Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.
- 2) The Recreational Trails program (RTP) under 23 U.S.C. 206. (Any project eligible under the RTP also is eligible under the TA Set-Aside).
 - 3) The Safe Routes to School program including:
 - i) Infrastructure-related projects eligible under 23 U.S.C. 208(g)(1), and
 - ii) Non-infrastructure-related activities eligible under 23 U.S.C. 208(g)(2).
 - 4) Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

Activities Ineligible for TA Set-Aside Funding

- MPO administrative activities.
- Promotional activities, except as permitted within an eligible safe routes to school project.
- Routine maintenance and operations, except trail maintenance as permitted by the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).
- General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, picnic areas and pavilions, or other facilities that do not serve an eligible TA Set-Aside, RTP, or safe routes to school purpose.
- Costs for safety features such as but not limited to traffic signs, pavement markings, and multi-modal accommodations that are routinely provided as part of a broader federal-aid highway project when a larger project scope is undertaken with federal-aid highway funding. As an

example, separating out sidewalk widening costs from a roadway construction project funded with Surface Transportation Block Grant funding is not allowed and will not be supported with TA Set-Aside funds regardless of which funding source is committed to the project first.

Eligible Applicants

Project Sponsor Responsibilities

Each application must identify an eligible project sponsor. The project sponsor is the entity that will assume all responsibility for implementing the project, guarantees the necessary funds are delivered to the project, and is accountable for the use of program funds. Projects involving more than one entity must identify a single project sponsor that will be required to enter into a project agreement with Iowa DOT and will ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. The project sponsor will also designate a full-time employee to be the Person in Responsible Charge who will supervise all project administration duties, oversee the work performed by consultants and contractors, and coordinate the development of the project with Iowa DOT. The project sponsor must also register in the System for Award Management (SAM) and provide a Uniform Entity Identifier (UEI) to Iowa DOT.

All applications must be accompanied by an official endorsement from the project sponsor. For cities, counties, or other political subdivisions, this endorsement must be in the form of a fully executed resolution by the elected body or board, as applicable. It must provide written assurance the project sponsor will adequately maintain the completed project for its intended public use following project completion (for most construction projects, this will be a minimum of 20 years) and acknowledge the intent of the project sponsor to provide all funds required to complete the project beyond any TA Set-Aside award.

Eligible Project Sponsors

IJA included a comprehensive list of entities eligible to receive TA Set-Aside funds. Neither Iowa DOT nor the MPOs or RPAs may further reduce this list and deem any category of entities as broadly ineligible; however, inclusion on this list does not guarantee funding will be awarded. Under 23 U.S.C. 133(h)(4)(A), as amended by the IJA, the entities eligible to receive TA Set-Aside funds are:

1. A local government. Local government entities include any unit of local government below a State government agency, except for an MPO representing an urbanized area with a population over 200,000. Examples include city, town, township, village, borough, parish, or county agencies.
2. A regional transportation authority. Regional transportation authorities are considered the same as the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations defined in the statewide planning section (23 U.S.C. 135(m)).
3. A transit agency. Transit agencies include any agency responsible for public transportation that is eligible for funds as determined by the Federal Transit Administration.
4. A natural resource or public land agency. Natural resource or public land agencies include any Federal, Tribal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration. Examples include:
 - State or local park or forest agencies.
 - State or local fish and game or wildlife agencies.

- Department of the Interior land management agencies.
 - U.S. Forest Service.
5. A school district, local education agency, or school. School districts, local education agencies, or schools may include any public or nonprofit private school. Projects should benefit the general public and not only a private entity.
 6. A Tribal government.
 7. A metropolitan planning organization that serves an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or fewer. MPOs representing urbanized areas over 200,000 population are not eligible entities.
 8. A nonprofit entity. The BIL removed the requirement that the nonprofit entity be responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs.
 9. Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails (other than a metropolitan planning organization that serves an urbanized area with a population of over 200,000 or a State agency) that the State determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of 23 U.S.C. 133(h).
 10. A State, at the request of an eligible entity listed above.

Ineligible Project Sponsors

MPOs representing urbanized areas over 200,000 population are not eligible entities (23 U.S.C. 133(h)(4)(A)(ix)). Iowa DOT is also not an eligible entity unless requested by another eligible entity to serve as the project sponsor (23 U.S.C. 133(h)(4)(A)(x)). Such requests may be made to the appropriate Iowa DOT District Office if the proposed project has a close association with other Iowa DOT construction work on a Primary Highway under Iowa DOT jurisdiction. Approval of such requests is not guaranteed and is separate from any consent letter provided by the Iowa DOT District Office for work to be placed in Primary Highway System right-of-way.

Projects Involving Primary Highway System Right-Of-Way

Projects that will encroach on Primary Highway System right-of-way will require review of plans, submission of all applicable permit applications, and are subject to final approval by the applicable Iowa DOT District Office staff prior to being allowed to proceed to letting. To ensure advanced collaboration between the project sponsor and the Iowa DOT District Office, all applications (whether to one of the Regional TA Set-Aside programs administered by an MPO or RPA or to the Statewide TA Set-Aside program) require a letter from the Iowa DOT District Engineer offering consent for the application to be submitted (see Section 5.2.7). All requests for such a letter should be submitted at least one month prior to the application deadline to the applicable District Transportation Planner. Receipt of a letter does not absolve the applicant from continuing to work with Iowa DOT District Office staff through design of the project up to and including possible revisions to the project concept to meet Iowa DOT requirements. To determine the appropriate Iowa DOT District Office and contact for your project, visit the Iowa DOT website: https://iowadot.gov/systems_planning/district-transportation-planners-area-of-responsibility.

Cost Reimbursement Under the TA Set-Aside Program

Funds awarded through the TA Set-Aside program are provided to project sponsors on a reimbursement basis and are not provided as a lump sum or cash payment in advance of costs being incurred. All projects require project sponsors to pay 100 percent of project costs up front and are reimbursed up to 80 percent of approved project costs after conducting the eligible project activity. After a project has

been awarded funds, a project sponsor will work with Iowa DOT to request Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) authorization of specific costs. This is also called obligation of funds. Although funds may be awarded or committed by Iowa DOT or an MPO or RPA, no costs can be incurred until after those specific costs have received FHWA authorization. Costs incurred prior to FHWA authorization are not eligible for reimbursement. Following FHWA authorization, the project sponsor will receive notice from Iowa DOT and then may begin approved project activities and incur costs. Any costs incurred prior to receipt of a notice to proceed from Iowa DOT are not eligible for reimbursement.

Project sponsors will request reimbursement from Iowa DOT at least every 6 months and must provide sufficient documentation to show that the project costs have already been paid.

Procedures for authorization of various eligible project costs are detailed in the Instructional Memorandums (IMs) referred to in Section 6 and available on the Iowa DOT website. Upon award, each project will be assigned an Iowa DOT contact person; however, it is the project sponsor's responsibility to ensure all appropriate procedures have been followed according to the executed project agreement.

Non-Federal Match Required

TA Set-Aside program funds may reimburse for up to 80 percent of eligible project costs or up to the approved grant maximum, whichever is less. A non-federal match is required to pay for a minimum of 20 percent of the remaining project costs; however, the project sponsor is ultimately responsible for all costs beyond any TA Set-Aside funds awarded to the project and for 100 percent of all costs determined to be ineligible for TA Set-Aside reimbursement. Federal funds cannot be used as matching funds, unless expressly permitted by law. Matching funds may include grants from other state agencies or programs if their laws and rules allow. Services, materials, or real property may be donated to the project sponsor for incorporation into the TA Set-Aside project by a third-party subject to Iowa DOT and FHWA approval and in accordance with the applicable IM referred to in Section 6.

Project Termination or Repayment of Funds

If a project, in full or in part, is determined to be ineligible or if required processes weren't followed, all or part of the award may be cancelled at any time or may be required to be repaid according to the executed project funding agreement.

At any time from award until the project is closed, Iowa DOT retains the right to terminate a project for any of the following reasons:

1. The project, in whole or in part, is deemed not to be an activity eligible for reimbursement of TA Set-Aside funds,
2. The project sponsor does not develop the project according to program requirements and as programmed in the TIP/STIP,
3. The federal government, legislature or governor fail to appropriate funds to Iowa DOT sufficient to meet the obligations of the award, or
4. If any funds or revenues are de-appropriated, reduced, not allocated, or delayed, for any reason.

RPA 8 TAP Process

Notice of Funding Opportunity

A notice of funding availability will be published when RPA 8 opens an application window. The deadline for submissions will be stated in the notice of funding available. A complete submission must include the completed Iowa DOT Application for Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program Funds, and all required attachments.

Applications received after the deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed. Incomplete applications may be disqualified from consideration. RPA 8 is not responsible for any errors or delays caused by technical difficulties resulting from the emailing of applications. Applicants may withdraw or amend and resubmit project applications at any time before the deadline. The amended proposal or application withdrawal must be in writing, signed by the applicant, and received by the stated deadline.

Review Of Applications

Complete applications will be evaluated and assessed based on the following criteria.

Regional Impact

How does the proposed project meet the intent of the RPA 8 TAP to make a regional impact? Upon completion, will the proposed project contribute to the quality of life, utility of the transportation system, or tourism appeal at the regional level versus a local level? What degree of regional planning has been implemented to complete the project?

Connectivity and Completion of Trail Linkages

To what degree will completion of the proposed project provide connectivity to existing facilities or develop a trail linkage? How does the proposed project tie into existing sidewalk or trail facilities? How does the proposed project contribute toward connecting residents, activity centers, cities, and regions?

Alignment with Local, Regional, or Statewide Planning Documents

What is the relationship of the proposed project to a local, regional, or statewide plan? For example, how does the proposed project align with the RPA 8 Long-Range Transportation Plan and any applicable adopted regional, county, or municipal trail plan?

Federal-aid Highway Project Development Process, Understanding and Capacity

What previous experience does existing project sponsor staff have with the federal-aid highway project development process? Has past performance resulted in successful projects that delivered the projects in a timely and compliant manner? Does existing staff have the capacity to administer the proposed project? Has the project sponsor demonstrated an understanding of the program rules? What strategies will be implemented to deliver the proposed project successfully?

Contribution Toward Safety for All Transportation Modes

How would the proposed project address the safety of all users such as those who walk, bike, drive, ride transit, or travel by other modes? To what degree will the proposed project address any existing safety needs or concerns?

Enhancement of Regional Tourism Benefits

How will the proposed project enhance tourism in the region by attracting visitors from out of the area? What are the economic benefits of the proposed project to the region?

Leverage of Non-Federal Funding Sources

Has all funding been secured? To what degree is the project leveraging non-federal and non-state funds?

Need for the Proposed Project

Why is the project needed in the area and what population will it serve? How will the proposed project satisfy that need?

Addresses High-Need Areas

How does the project impact a high need area such as low-income, transit-dependent, rural, or other areas? How will the proposed project improve the overall mobility of these areas and how has this population been engaged in the planning for the proposed project?

Improve Accessibility

What efforts have been made to go beyond compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 to ensure the proposed project will be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities?

Long-Term Maintenance Plan

What arrangements have been made to continue operation and maintenance of the proposed project after the project is complete? Has a maintenance fund or an endowment been established?

Project Readiness

How has the project sponsor demonstrated the project is ready for development? How has the project sponsor prepared for the proposed project by resolving any potential obstacles? Will the project proceed without delay upon award of funding?

Award of Funds

Projects recommended for funding will be presented to the RPA 8 Policy Board for approval. Following Policy Board action, project sponsors will be notified of their award, and details concerning initiating project development will be provided.

Award Amount

RPA 8 TAP awards are limited to a maximum of \$500,000.

RPA 8 TAP Application Requirements

Application Form

Applicants are required to submit the Iowa DOT *Application for Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program Funds* and all required attachments. The application form has 6 parts, Part A through Part F. Application parts are listed below.

Part A – Project Sponsor Information

All project sponsors are required to provide their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). A UEI is the official identifier for doing business with the federal government including via pass-through agencies like Iowa DOT. The federal government has transitioned from using the former DUNS number to the UEI created in

the federal System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://sam.gov>. A project sponsor will need to go to SAM to register and receive a UEI or view an existing registration to find the UEI that has already been assigned to it. The entity name associated with the UEI must match the entity listed in the application as the project sponsor.

Part B – Project Information

Part B includes two questions that directly relate to emphasis areas of the Statewide TA Set-Aside program: safe routes to school and Iowa Byways.

Indicating that an application is intended to be considered for funding as a safe routes to school project will result in an application being considered for the dedicated safe routes to school funding that is part of the Statewide TA Set-Aside program described in Section 4.3 of the *Iowa Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program Guidance*.

Indicating that an application is adjacent to a state-designated Iowa Byway and providing the required documentation relates to the scoring of an application by ensuring it is clear when an applicant is requesting that a Statewide TA Set-Aside program application be considered as a byways related project. These types of projects are an emphasis area for the program.

All funding sources must be identified in the application. A funding source is secured if the applicant can provide an award letter or other documentation of the award. An anticipated funding source would include grants that the applicant intends to apply for or local funds that require an action by the governing body (e.g. city council etc.) to commit funds for the project. The information shared on the application form will identify funds available for the project and the remaining funding gap and should reflect an accurate picture of the expected project budget. Funding sources identified without documentation will be classified as anticipated funds.

Part C – Project Costs and Matching Funds

There are a couple of important points to note about completion of Part C. The information listed here should tie back directly to the required itemized cost breakdown described in the Itemized Breakdown of Project Costs attachment. It is important to develop the estimate of costs based on the anticipated costs in the year the project will be executed. For example, if the project is expected to be let in 2028, effort should be made to adjust current costs to an appropriate amount such as by multiplying by an inflation factor.

Some Regional TA Set-Aside programs may limit the types of costs that may be reimbursed with TA Set-Aside funds such as limiting reimbursement to construction costs only. However, other costs such as design, right-of-way acquisition, etc. are still costs that must be borne by the project sponsor. It is important to fully understand how all parts of a project budget are being funded to ensure funding will be available to complete the project. Part C aims for transparency of how a project is being funded so that informed decisions can be made in the award of funds.

Part D – Project Development Milestones

This section will give reviewers an understanding of how a project sponsor believes their project will proceed. Most projects will follow the standard milestones provided for a construction project. When those milestones do not apply, project sponsors should provide all of the major steps they expect to achieve toward completion of their project.

Funding agreements between the Iowa DOT and the project sponsors require a project to be let (in the case of construction) within two years of funds first being programmed in the TIP/STIP in an attempt to ensure that the state's funds are obligated and disbursed in a timely manner meeting federal requirements. The information provided in Part D contributes to an assessment of project readiness, but it also provides some insight into how well the federal-aid project development process (and all of its steps and procedures) are understood by the project sponsor. A timeline that is more aggressive than procedures would allow will show a lack of understanding of the processes while a timeline that appears to show completion far in the future may not be ready to fund ahead of some other projects closer to proceeding.

Part E – Safe Routes to School Project Information (if applicable)

A safe routes to school project requires coordination with the school(s), knowledge about current student travel, and a commitment to follow-up on the project's success. Resources are available at <http://saferoutesdata.org>. Completion of this section is only required if the application is for safe routes to school project funding through the Statewide TA Set-Aside program. In order to qualify for consideration as a safe routes to school project, this information must be provided.

Part F – Narrative Questions

There are a series of question prompts aimed at assisting project sponsors to craft responses that will address the concerns of reviewers. Project sponsors should read each prompt completely and attempt to provide complete yet concise answers. A lengthy response is not always the way to get the highest score. Applicants should aim for complete and concise answers.

Required Attachments

In addition to the completed application form and all its parts, there are a number of additional information items that are required to be submitted as part of a complete application. Below is a list of attachments required to be submitted as part of a complete application for all TA Set-Aside programs. It is preferred that these additional items be submitted as pdf files and may be combined into one file for submission. Required attachments are listed below.

Detailed Map

A detailed map identifying the location of the project is required. The project scope should be clear and the map may also include other important information referred to in the narrative such as important transportation linkages, clearly marked completed or future project phases, etc. If the project is a safe routes to school project, the map shall indicate the K-12 school(s) to be served by the project, show a 2-mile radius of the school, identify neighborhoods served by the school and hazards for children to walk or bike to school. More than one map may be submitted if the scope of the project is such that the desired detail is not feasible to be included on just one map. Limit map sizes to no larger than 8.5-by-11-inches.

Sketch Plan

If the application is for a construction project, a sketch plan (including cross section for bicycle or pedestrian facilities) is required. If the cross section of your facility varies across the project (width, number of lanes, etc.) include a cross section for each situation and identify its location.

Digital Photographs

A maximum of five digital photographs that will help to explain the existing site conditions of the proposed facility are required. It is not necessary to include photographs of all aspects or the entire route of a project. The photos submitted as part of the application should be representative of the project as a whole or should support any particularly compelling or complex description that has been included in the narrative responses in the application form.

Itemized Breakdown of Project Costs

Beyond the cost table provided in the application form, an itemized breakdown of the total project costs is required. This itemized breakdown does not need to be a detailed or formal engineer's opinion of probable cost though that is preferred. It is the responsibility of the applicant to explain the rationale and source of the assumptions used to develop the cost breakdown to allow a reviewer to have confidence in their accuracy. The cost breakdown must accomplish two objectives: 1) it must show the method by which the cost estimate was prepared; and 2) it must enable a reviewer to determine if the cost estimate is reasonable. The way these objectives are achieved may vary widely depending on the type, scope, and complexity of the project. Some general guidelines for alternate methods of estimating each type of project cost include:

- Construction costs: May be based on historical costs seen for projects of similar size and scope such as cost per mile of trail; cost per square foot of bridge deck; cost per linear foot of sidewalk.
- Engineering consultant costs: May be estimated based on typical percentages for types of work (see Section 6.2 of the *Iowa Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program Guidance* and reference Instructional Memorandum 3.310) such as 8-10% of the estimated cost of construction for design activities and 12-25% for construction engineering. These estimates percentages fluctuate with the complexity of the project.
- Right-of-way acquisition costs: May be estimated based on historical costs seen for projects of similar impacts such as cost per square foot for permanent and/or temporary easements or other fee title acquisitions of similar property.

The itemized breakdown should reflect costs in the planned project execution year estimated in your time schedule provided in Part F of the application form. Do not submit today's costs for a project that will not be constructed for two or more years. If an inflation factor has been applied please be transparent in that calculation. Any contingencies included in the estimate should be identified and reasonable.

Official Endorsement (Resolution)

An official endorsement of the project from the project sponsor confirming responsibility for the project's maintenance and operation is required. For cities, counties, or other political subdivisions, this should be in the form of a fully executed resolution by the elected body or board, as applicable. The project sponsor must provide written assurance it will adequately maintain the completed project for its intended public use following project completion. For most construction projects, this will be a minimum of 20 years. The endorsement must also acknowledge the intent of the project sponsor to provide the match funds required for the project.

Byway Organization Letter of Support (if applicable)

If the project is adjacent to a state-designated Iowa Byway, a letter of support for the project from the local byway organization is required. Projects relating to the Iowa Byways program are an emphasis area

of the Statewide TA Set-Aside program. The letter should endorse the project, address the project's relationship to the byway's intrinsic qualities, and tie the project to the byway's adopted Corridor Management Plan.

Iowa DOT Letter of Consent to Submit (if applicable)

If the project will encroach on Primary highway System right-of-way, a letter of consent to submit the application from the Iowa DOT District Engineer is required.

Documentation of Secured Funding Sources

If the application identifies any funding source as secured, documentation confirming the commitment of funds by the funder must be provided for each funding source identified as secured.

Part G – Checklist and Certification

The checklist and certification is a separate item from the application form because it is intended to be signed by an authorized representative of the project sponsor and then submitted as a pdf. This checklist has been provided to assist with compiling complete applications, but the certification should be reviewed in detail prior to signature.

FORM 105101 MINORITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This form is required for all applications received and should be submitted as a pdf.

Federal Requirements

Because the TA Set-Aside program is a part of the federal-aid highway program, awarded projects are subject to certain federal laws, regulations, and procedures. Resources are provided on the Iowa DOT website. Those interested in applying to this program are encouraged to read these resources thoroughly.

Federal-Aid Project Development Guide for Local Public Agencies

The Project Development Guide provides a condensed overview of the federal-aid project development process with links to more detailed information by topic. All applicants should read and understand the content of this document and are encouraged to ask any questions ahead of submitting their application.

https://iowadot.gov/local_systems/publications/im/federal-aid-guide.pdf

Instructional Memorandums to Local Public Agencies

Instructional Memorandums (IMs) are organized by topic and provide detailed background and instruction for project sponsors. Once awarded, the project sponsor will work directly with their Iowa DOT contact to move through the processes described in the IMs and complete their federal-aid project. The applicability of an individual IM may be briefly described in the IM title and more explicitly in the contents section at the beginning of each IM.

https://www.iowadot.gov/local_systems/publications/im/imtoc.pdf

General Requirements

Applicable federal laws and regulations may include but are not limited to:

- 1) Public Involvement. Involvement of the public, including the adjacent property owners, in the development of the project.

- 2) The Uniform Act. Compliance with the Uniform Relocation Property Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (the Uniform Act) for the acquisition of easements or the purchase of land in fee simple. This includes fair treatment practices and may include the completion of an appraisal on parcels to be acquired. This requirement applies whether or not federal funds will be used for the acquisition costs.
- 3) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires verification the project is not harmful to the environment including considering the following areas:
 - a) Noise (before and after construction)
 - b) Air Quality
 - c) Cultural Resources (disturbance to resources of archaeological or historical significance)
 - d) Threatened and Endangered Species
 - e) Water Quality
 - f) Wetlands
 - g) Floodplains
 - h) Farmland Protection
 - i) Hazardous Waste Sites
- 4) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Projects must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act which allows for reasonable access to the project for persons with disabilities.
- 5) Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE). Verification must be received that efforts have been made to solicit bids from disadvantaged and minority business enterprises.
- 6) Davis-Bacon Wage Requirements. Projects must comply with Davis-Bacon wage requirements, which state that contractors will conform to federal minimum wage requirements.
- 7) Competitive bidding requirements. Construction projects are required to be let through Iowa DOT or according to procedures for a public letting as per Sections 26.3 through 26.13 of the Code of Iowa.
- 8) Build America, Buy America Act (BABA). Part of the IIJA, this legislation requires that iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in a federal-aid project are produced in the United States.
- 9) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). This legislation forms the basis for a wide array of other laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, gender, and age. It prohibits discrimination in all programs or activities of any LPA that is a recipient of any federal-aid financial assistance; even those programs or activities that do not directly benefit from such assistance.
- 10) Accounting Procedures. A project sponsor shall establish and maintain for the project either a separate set of accounts or accounts within the framework of an established accounting system, in a manner consistent with 2 C.F.R. §§200.302, 200.303, and 200.305. All costs charged to the project, including any approved services contributed by the project sponsor or others, shall be supported by properly executed payrolls, time records, invoices, contracts, or vouchers describing in detail the nature and propriety of the charges. The project sponsor shall ensure that all checks, payrolls, invoices, contracts, vouchers, orders, or other accounting documents pertaining in whole or in part to the project are clearly identified with a grant agreement number, readily accessible, and to the extent feasible, kept separate from the documents not pertaining to the project.

- 11) 11. Permits or Other Approvals. It is the project owner/sponsor's responsibility to obtain all local, state, or federal permits or other approvals that may be required as a result of the activities proposed as part of the project.

Contacts

Interested applicants should contact the Regional Planning Affiliation 8 for additional information:

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