Grants & Funding

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Who We Are

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Agenda

- Grants 101
- What’s Changing in 2026?
- Getting Projects Ready for Funding
  - Adjustments to Make for 2026
  - Best Practices
  - Ways to Find Funding
  - Application Components

Grants 101

Federal Funding Assistance

- Financial assistance is drawn from laws passed by Congress
  - Program statute
  - Appropriation
- Program statute defines program priorities
- Appropriation sets the amount available for each program

Grants Opportunities

SS4A → BUILD → INFRA → PIDP

Why Grants and Funding?

- To fund local projects with outside funding
- Demonstrates value in the work your agency does
- Great return on investment of time and resources
- Allows the agency to complete more projects or pilot new efforts

Grants Process Overview

1. Identify Funding and Eligibility

2. Developing the Application

3. Awarded - Execute Contract
   No Award – Request Feedback

4. Report Progress and Outcomes

https://rmphtc.org/pages/gm101/grant-writing-basics/

What’s Changing in 2026?

Changes to Federal Funding

1. Program funding amounts
2. Aligned merit criteria and stakeholder engagement
3. Program priorities and political oversight
4. Project readiness requirements

Changes to Federal Funding

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Overview of Funding Changes

Cabinet Department	Change in Billions ($)
Agriculture	-5
Commerce	-1.7
Defense	113.3
Education	-12
Energy	-4.7
Health and Human Services	-33.3
Homeland Security	42.3
Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	-33.6
Interior	-5.1
Justice	-2.7
Labor	-4.6
State and International Programs	-49.1
Transportation	1.5
Treasury	-2.7
Veterans Affairs	5.4

Changes to Key Programs

EPA

- Clean Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds - $2.4B reduction

HUD

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - $3B reduction
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program - $1.2B reduction

DOL

- Job Corps - $1.5B reduction

DOI

- National Recreation and Preservation grants - $77M reduction

USDA

- Rural Development Programs - $721M reduction

DOT

- INFRA - $770M increase
- Rail Safety and Infrastructure grants - $400M increase
- Port Infrastructure - $596M increase

Broad Changes to Merit Criteria

Less weight given to:

- Environmental benefits
- Equity

More weight given to:

- Economic development
- Safety benefits

Stakeholder Engagement

- Lobbying power
- Economic development partnerships
- Public Private Partnerships
- Higher compliance and documentation requirements

Project Readiness

- Higher compliance and documentation requirements
- Greater emphasis on projects that are fully “shovel-ready”
- Most planning work should be completed
    - NEPA needs identified and documented
    - Public engagement and stakeholder outreach underway or completed

Political Oversight

- Tighter oversight of discretionary grants
- Selective defunding and reprogramming of awards
- Shorter NOFO windows
- Discretionary funding vs. Formula funding

Getting a Project Ready

How Can We Adjust?

- Now is an ideal time for projects focused on safety, highways, freight movement, rail
- Reframe project narratives to align with new merit criteria focus
- Identifying local/state-specific funding opportunities
- Use quantifiable metrics as much as possible
- Review currently awarded grants for language that could trigger reprogramming

Best Practices for Involving Stakeholders

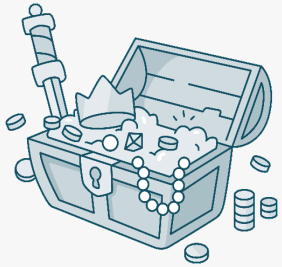
Typical Active Stakeholders

- Land/Facility Owner
- Partnering Agencies
  - City, County, & State
- Operational Partners
  - Transit, Rail, & Airport/Port

Typical Passive Stakeholders

- Adjacent Property Owners
- Local Advocacy Groups
- Elected Officials
  - City, County, & State
- Facility Users

Grant/Funding Strategies



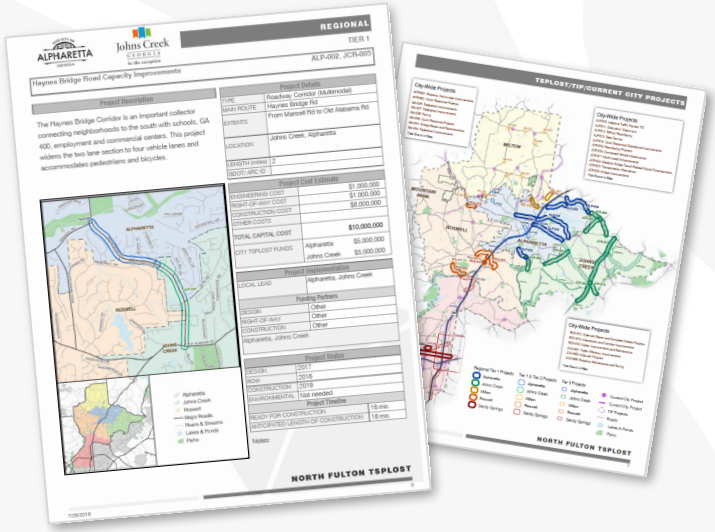
- Funding: any type, anywhere
  - Grants, Prizes, Legislative Appropriations, Loans….
- Project/Funding Alignment
- Research and Strategy
- Grant Administration

This may mean:

- Narrative and/or Technical Writing
- Peer Review
- Benefit Cost Analysis
- Agency/Stakeholder Coordination
- Community Engagement
- Response to Requests for Information
- Award Monitoring
- Client Presentation Preparation for Agency Site Visits
- Administration/Compliance
- Graphic Design

Grant Sciences

- Developing grant applications to get projects off the ground
- Creating funding strategy to position projects to win
- Identifying local/state-specific funding opportunities
- Prioritizing projects
- Performing Benefit-Cost Analysis



FUNDING SOURCES IDENTIFIED

FROM MTP AND COMP PLAN

- **Federal**
  - INFRA
  - RAISE
  - Bridge Improvement Program
  - National Infrastructure Project Assistance (MEGA)
  - Strengthening Mobility and Revolutions Transportation (SMART)
  - Congestion Relief Program
- **State/ARC**
  - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ)
  - Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)
  - Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)
  - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
  - GDOT Bridge Program
  - Local Maintenance Improvem (LMIG)
  - Georgia Transportation Infrast
  - Georgia Highway Safety Impr (HSIP)
- **Local**
  - Community Improvement Dist
  - Future TSPLOST Funds
  - Private Development Contribu
  - General Funds

NOTE: Additional identified funding opportunities include the federal PROTECT Resiliency Grants program and the State Bridge Program; no projects listed currently appear to qualify for these funding sources.

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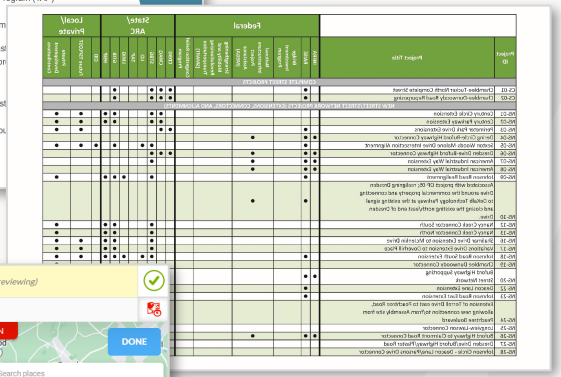
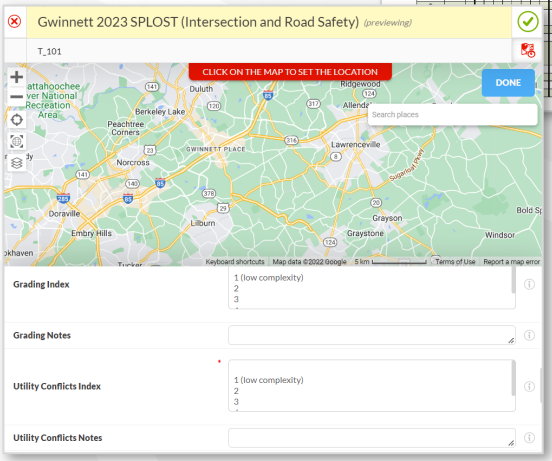
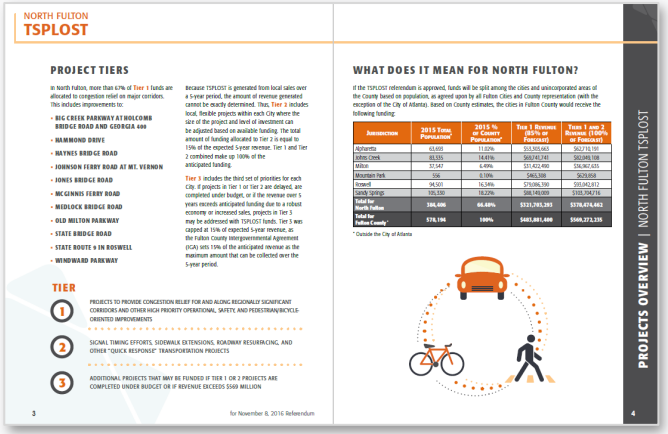






The Art of Grants

- Understand selection process
  - Technical
  - Political
- Acknowledge magnitude of process
- Determine eligibility
- Discern if project is right for the grant

- Learn about grant cycle
- QC, QC, QC
- Don’t procrastinate

Project Prioritization

- Process to pair projects with potential funding sources
- Can be used to find all possible grant sources for a list of projects or for one particular project
- Can identify ways that projects can be packaged for the best chance at receiving funding
- Goal is to identify a handful of well-matched funding sources (for one project) or a handful of high-priority projects (for multiple projects)
- Identify which projects would be available as a Local Agency Partnership (LAP)

Funding Matrix

Grant Name	Agency	Funding Max	Required Match	Date Open	Date Due	Grant Period	Priorities	Types of Projects
Urban & Community Forestry Challenge (National)	US Forest Service	Varies, on average: $80,000 - $400,000. Can request full $1,000,000 with good justification.	50%	*04/01/23*	TBD	2-3 years	**Overarching Principles:** (1) Advance Health and Wellness of Forests, Ecosystems, and People; (2) Maximize Community and Ecosystem Sustainability; (3) Build Community and Natural Ecosystem Resilience. **Goal 1**. Integrate Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) into all Scales of Planning. **Goal 2**. Promote the role of UCF in Human Health and Wellness. **Goal 3**. Culivate Diversity, Equity, and Leadership within the UCF. **Goal 4**. Strengthen UCF Health and Biodiversity for Long-Term Resilience. **Goal 5**. Improve UCF Management, Maintenance, and Stewardship. **Goal 6**. Diversify, Leverage, and Increase Funding for UCF. **Goal 7**. Increase Public Awareness and Environmental Education to Promote Stewardship.	**Planning Disaster Mitigation Strategies for Urban Forests:** innovative grant proposals for the critical management of existing and future urban and community forests to promote disaster risk reduction and community resilience and better prepare communities for the increasingly destructive impacts of climate change. **Increasing Resiliency of Urban Forests through Reforestation and Management:** innovative grant proposals for establishing climate resilient tree species in urban and community forests that are resistant to impacts of invasive pathogens, pests, and severe weather events.
Land and Water Consservation Fund	Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)	$500,000	50%	*04/13/23*	*05/25/23*	Not identified	The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Program was established by the LWCF Act of 1965 to stimulate a nationwide action program to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring to all citizens of the United States of present and future generations such quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation. The Program provides matching grants to States and through States to local units of government, for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities.	LWCF assistance can be used to acquire land and water interests for park purposes, develop new outdoor recreation facilities, and in certain instances, renovate existing recreation facilities. Virtually all public outdoor recreation activities are eligible for assistance under the Program including playgrounds, ball fields, (including lights – concrete or metal poles only), court sports, picnic areas, camping areas, trails, splash pads, etc. In addition, support facilities such as concession stands, restrooms, park access roads, parking areas, utilities, and site preparation necessary to make a recreation activity area usable may qualify for assistance. Please note, applications to develop elaborate, tournament only, or professional sports facilities are not eligible and will not be considered for funding.
Transportation Alternatives	Alabama Department of Transportation	$800,000	20%	*04/01/23*	*06/30/23*	2+ years	The following areas are considered competitive: promoting safety, increasing local transportation options, providing community enhancements, and furthering environmental justice (including ADA compliance, improves options for underrepresented communities, mitigates transportation environmental effects, or reduces automobile dependence as a barrier to opportunity). Showing a local commitment is highly favored (e.g. resolution, public involvement, community support, part of comprehensive plan, project readiness, TAP project delivery history)	**1. Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, senior adults, and individuals with disabilities.** **2. Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation.** 3. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other nonmotorized transportation users. 4. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas. 5. Community improvement activities (see guideliness) 6. Environmental mitigation activities (**stormwater management**, reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or restore / maintain habitat connectivity)

Application Process

Notice of Funding Opportunity

- Outline funding source requirements
- Define stakeholder interests
- Establish funding request parameters (what project, what amount)

Draft Content

- Define themes
- Draft exhibits and other visuals
- Conduct benefit cost analysis (BCA)
- Gather letters of support

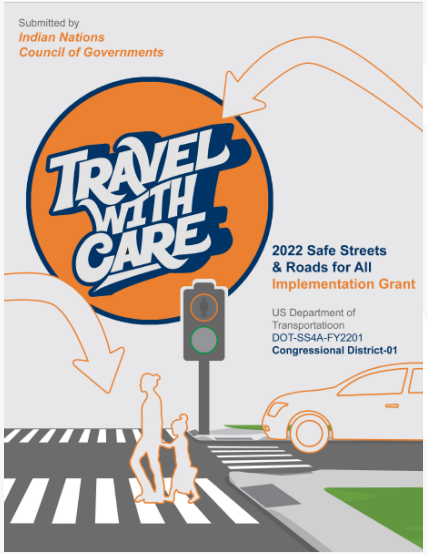
Review and Quality Control

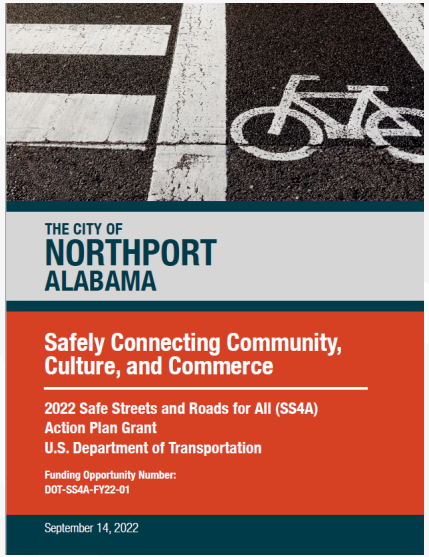
- Revise according to the City's input
- Grammar and spelling review
- Check for visual consistency and a clear story from start to finish
- Backcheck BCA calculations

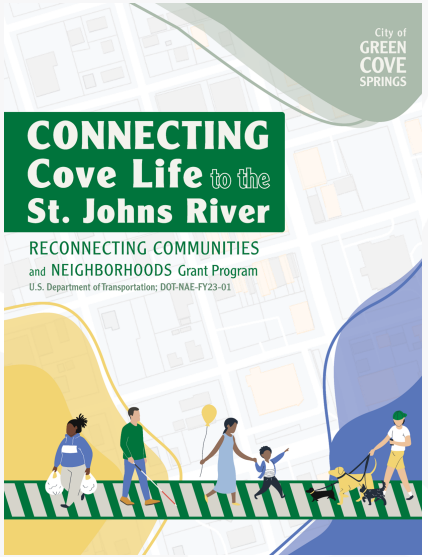
Final Submission

- Check for compliance with submission requirements
- Compile final document
- Submit according to funding source guidelines

Application Components







Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)

- Data-driven process designed to demonstrate value to the end user
- BCA is often required for many opportunities, especially large, federal grants
- Quantified benefits help tell the story of why the grant is needed
- Labor intensive process: RFI, process data, build workbook, documentation
- Highlight any quantitative benefits that could not be quantified

Would we ever advise against applying?

Yes! If:

- It is not a good fit for the grant.
- The project is not ready to move forward.
- The Client does not have enough time or capacity to do quality work.

Grants are complex and require coordination, production, reviews, and specific submittal requirements.

Grant Compliance

- Internal controls
- Reporting
- Reimbursements
- Compliance testing
- Guidance
- Statutes
- Regulations
- Audit-readiness

Summary

- Projects that prioritize highway safety, freight movement, and economic development are currently in an excellent position
- State, local, and private funding sources are an excellent and underutilized option
- Applicants will need to be prepared to highlight safety and economic benefits and downplay environmental and equity benefits
- Creating strategic partnerships and engaging key stakeholders can greatly strengthen the appeal of your projects
- We have a great deal of experience with grants and are eager to help you craft a competitive narrative

Questions?

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Expect More. Experience Better.

Thank you!

If you have any questions or would like more info, please do not hesitate to reach out!

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