

Instructions: at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=308747>, add Questions and Answers as a bullet directly below and equivalent to Funding Opportunities: Competitive Highway Bridge Program for Fiscal Year 2018. The subsequent page should display as below.

CHBP Questions and Answers (Last Updated November 7, 2018)

Q. If a partial award is made or other funds become available, can a State modify the bridges from those proposed in the application, including by proposing a smaller bundle of bridges?

A. Applications will be evaluated based on the scope of the project described in the application. A project sponsor may not use CHBP funds on bridges that are not identified in the application. The FHWA Office of Infrastructure may contact the project sponsor during the evaluation phase to discuss whether the scope of the project in the application could be delivered if CHBP funds were awarded at less than the requested amount.

Q. Can formula funds supplement a CHBP-funded project?

A. Only one of two apportioned funding categories (NHPP or STBG) may be used to supplement a CHBP funded bundled project. (23 U.S.C. 144(j)). However, applicants should keep in mind the NOFO selection criterion about innovative funding and the Department's interest in awarding projects that leverage non-Federal funding sources.

Q. What Federal-aid highway funding categories may be used for bridge projects on or off a Federal-aid highway?

A. Either NHPP (23 U.S.C. 119(i)) or STBG funds may be used for bridge projects on a Federal-aid highway. However, only STBG (23 U.S.C. 133(f)(2)) funds may be used for bridge projects off a Federal-aid highway.

Q. Will a 424C be required with each application for one form per application, or one form per bridge?

A. One form per application is required. The 424C should cover the overall application. Additional budget detail should be provided in the narrative, including a breakdown of costs per bridge.

Q. If a State is resubmitting a former BUILD grant application to this program, is that a new, continuation, or revision on the 424?

A. If a State is resubmitting a former BUILD grant application, it will submit a new application for the CHBP and it will be noted as new on the 424 form.

Q. Is the submission time EST?

A. The submission time is EST.

Q. Risk criteria—what are you expecting to see for mitigation if anything?

Answer – If a risk is identified, what activities are being taken to mitigate those risks. For instance, if there is a risk in using an innovative construction technique, a way to mitigate that risk would be to utilize a contractor familiar with the technique or to bring in experts to assist in educating personnel on the use of that technique.

Q. Is there any preference to bridges with "rural" designation?

A. There is no preference for bridges with “rural” designation.

Q. What is the structure of the review team and structure? Same as BUILD/INFRA?

A. The review team will consist of technical bridge experts and budget analysts. The technical bridge experts will perform an initial review of the applications. Projects will then be reviewed by budget analysts to analyze the benefit/cost analyst portion of the applications.

Q. At the time of application, does the proposed project need to be listed in the STIP as a bundled bridge project or can it be added post application?

A. The project does not need to be listed in the STIP as a bundled bridge project. Inclusion in the STIP or discussion on including the project in the STIP will aid in demonstrating project readiness.

Q. Is there a cap on the award amount?

A. There is not a maximum on the award amount.

Q. Are all project phases eligible?

A. Yes, all project phases are eligible. However, due to the timeframe constraints of the funding, planning and design phases and associate funding could factor into the project readiness to obligate and expend funds for construction by 2021 and 2026.

Q. When multiple bridges are bundled, do they all need to be evaluated and covered under one NEPA document or can they be done as individual documents?

A. Multiple bridges that are bundled could be covered under one NEPA document or be done as individual documents. There would be a risk in submitting the projects as individual documents in which the documents move forward at different speeds.

Q. Can an application be scalable/reducible?

A. Applications will not be reviewed as scalable or reducible. They will be reviewed as all of the proposed project(s) moving forward.

Q. Will partial awards be made, e.g., grant application \$20 million, award \$10 million?

A. It is possible that a partial award could be made.

Q. What is the timeline for award announcements?

A. Award announcements are anticipated in early 2019.

Q. Do these awards have a Congressional notification period?

A. Yes, these awards have a Congressional notification period.

Q. Would bridges on trail systems be eligible?

A. Only bridges carrying highways are eligible.

Q. Can we have access to scoring criteria and weighting?

A. The factors being considered in reviewing the applications are included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q. Do all State submissions (up to three) need to be on the same spreadsheet, if possible, or is it for each bundle?

A. The table detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity is to be submitted for each application.

Q. If all three submissions are separate and up for review, do they still need to be prioritized?

A. Yes, all submissions need to be prioritized. Prioritization will be a factor in the review process.

Q. Is there a template for BCA? This would help both the States that are applying and those who are reviewing the BCAs.

A. No. There is no template.

Q. Is partnering with other States allowed or considered an innovative approach?

A. Partnering with other States is allowed. Each State would need to submit an application and rank it. Without seeing the particulars of a proposal, we cannot make a determination if this could be considered an innovative approach.

Q. Can a proposal contain multiple project bundles (i.e., one proposal that has a bundle for two bridges, a second bundle with five bridges, and a third bundle with six bridges)?

A. Yes, a State may submit an application for Competitive Bridge Highway Program funds that contains multiple project bundles. When combining multiple activities, there must be a direct cost allocation distribution in relative proportion if the cost benefits two or more projects or activities. (2 CFR 200.405(d)) The State must have in place adequate financial management controls to assure proper and efficient administration of the Competitive Highway Bridge Program funds. A State financial management control system must have the ability to trace funds to a level of expenditure “adequate to establish that such funds have been used, according to the Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.” (2 CFR 200.302.) The State must be able to demonstrate that it has adequate accounting and financial controls which demonstrate that expenditures for “bundled” bridge projects delivered under one contract are capable of being traced to the individual project within the bundle.

Q. Can bridge or toll credits be used for the match?

A. Yes, bridge or toll credits earned in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 133(f)(3) or 23 U.S.C. 120(i) may be used for the CHBP match. If bridge or toll credit is proposed as part of the financing proposal, States may fund the credit from either NHPP or STBG funds (see Question: “Can formula funds supplement a CHBP-funded project?”). If a State proposes to use NHPP or STBG funds in addition to the amount needed for application as credit with CHBP funds, then the funds for the credit must be from the same funding category. However, applicants should keep in mind the NOFO selection criterion about innovative funding and the Department’s interest in awarding projects that leverage non-Federal funding sources.

Q. The numbering system is confusing and irregular in several places.

A. Technical corrections to the FY2018 Competitive Highway Bridge Program Notice of Funding Opportunity have been published on grants.gov and are available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=308747>.

Q. Does the State DOT (applicant) have to also be the Contracting Authority? Or if the State DOT applies on behalf of a sub-recipient, such as an LPA, can the LPA be the Contracting Authority on the bundling contract?

A. A State DOT (applicant) does not have to be the contracting agency. The State DOT may make a sub-award of the Competitive Bridge Highway Program funds to a local public agency under established FHWA locally administered project procedures.

State recipients of Competitive Bridge Highway Program funds who elect to have a local public agency deliver the project are reminded that 23 U.S.C. 106(g) makes States responsible for determining that sub-recipients of Federal-aid highway funds have adequate project delivery systems for Federal-aid projects and have sufficient accounting controls for proper management of such Federal funds. The State is responsible for ensuring that Federal-aid funds are expended in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations. The State is not relieved of this responsibility when it designates a city, county, township, municipality, or other political subdivision (e.g., State agency, LPA, metropolitan planning organization, university, or eligible non-profit entity) to administer Federal-aid funds for projects or a phase of a project. See also 23 CFR 635.105 (Supervising Agency).

Q. Does the application need to be site specific and only include proposed bridges for replacement/rehabilitation? Or can an application identify the minimum number of structures to be replaced with the award funding, and include a list of additional eligible structures? In the event a selected bridge encounters issues (such as delays in environmental review, right of way, permitting, etc.) another eligible structure can be replaced to avoid delays to get the project to a letting and construction of the bundled bridges. Some of these issues that could come up on eligible structures will not be known or foreseen by the December 4 deadline to apply for the grant.

A. An application for funding under the Competitive Highway Bridge Program must identify the specific bridges that comprise the bundle of projects for which a State seeks a grant under the program. The authority for the Competitive Highway Bridge Program makes funds available for replacement or rehabilitation projects that demonstrate cost savings by bundling multiple highway bridge projects. Because the authorizing language is specific that there must be a demonstrated cost savings, in order to make this determination, FHWA has established detailed evaluation criteria that takes into account project specific information. The NOFO requires, among other requirements, a list of the bridges and the type of work planned for each bridge; a detailed description of the location of the proposed project and geospatial data for the project, as well as a map of the project's location and its connections to existing transportation infrastructure; and an estimated cost to replace or rehabilitate each bridge as an individual project should be described, along with the total amount of all the projects, and compared with the cost of bundling the bridge projects into one project.