

# NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND TRANSPORTATION

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

During the open competition period, this document will be updated on an ongoing basis with new questions and answers as they arise.

Last updated: 11/22/2023

### OVERARCHING QUESTIONS:

**Question: For what period of performance and what budget should the research agenda apply? (11/2/2023)**

**Answer:** The research agenda should include the work that will be performed with the initial Federal share of \$2.5 million, plus the \$1.25 million match, for a total budget of \$3.75 million. The period of performance can be up to 3 years but applicants have the flexibility to use a shorter period of performance.

**Question: Can you clarify eligibility for lead organizations and partner organizations? (11/2/2023)**

**Answer:** Only U.S.-based parties are eligible to apply. Eligible parties include institutions of higher education, public research entities (e.g., University Affiliated Research Initiatives (UARCs), Federally Funded Research and Development Initiatives (FFRDCs), national laboratories, and similar entities), and private and 501(c)3 nonprofit research entities.

Any partner, contractor, or subcontractor receiving Federal funds will need to apply for Unique Entity ID from sam.gov; however, applicants are free to partner with and provide funds to partner organizations, such as small nonprofits or community groups that do not have a UEI, if they are paid from the lead institution's cost-share contributions, which are not Federal funds.

**Question: Can you clarify cost-share details? (11/2/2023)**

**Answer:** Applicants must provide a non-federal match of no less than \$1.25 million. Cost sharing or matching means the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute). For a more complete definition, please see the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR Part 200, including section 200.306 on Cost Sharing or matching. Other Federal funds using their appropriate matching share may be leveraged for the deployment but cannot be considered as part of the recipient's matching funds, unless otherwise supported by statute. Applicants should refer to section D.2 of this opportunity for more information about

submission requirements concerning cost sharing under this program.

**Question: What should be included in the 25-page limit technical proposal?**  
(11/2/2023)

**Answer:** The Technical Proposal must be limited to 25 pages. New information presented as an attachment beyond the 25-page limited technical proposal will not be considered.

**Answer: 11/9/23 Update:** The only information acceptable beyond 25 pages are letters of support from stakeholders.

**Answer: 11/22/23 Update:** We are not asking for resumes/CVs. Hyperlinks are fine to include.

The technical proposal must include the following sections:

- **Proposal Summary:** Provide a one-page narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Activities and Deliverables:** Describe the research center activities and deliverables and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Milestones and Timeline:** Discuss and describe proposed performance metrics and milestones. Provide a table listing all proposed milestones and deliverables and estimated dates, based on time from award.
- **Introduction to the organization applying:** Provide a description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the research center, including summary information on past research work with similar requirements or activities as this funding opportunity.
- **Key Personnel:** Include the names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. Also include a brief description of proportion of key personnel time that will be devoted to this initiative.
- **Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations, universities, and sub-awardees.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Indicate how activities will be monitored to ensure they are executed in a timely manner, and how the program performance will be evaluated to make sure performance is meeting the goals of the grant, throughout the duration period of the grant.
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Describe how the results and developments in this initiative can be sustained in future efforts either by the government or by industry, by transfer to the private sector, or by other long-term outcomes.

#### **OTHER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

**Question: Are non-U.S. based universities eligible to apply?** (10/2/2023)

**Answer:** Only U.S.-based parties are eligible to apply. This competition is open to all eligible parties and their partnering organizations. Eligible parties include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education, public research entities (e.g., University Affiliated Research Initiatives (UARCs), Federally Funded Research and Development Initiatives (FFRDCs), national laboratories, and similar entities), and private and 501(c)3 nonprofit research entities.

**Are National Labs eligible to apply?** (10/2/2023)

**Answer:** Yes, National Laboratories are eligible to apply.

**Question: How do I register for the informational webinar on this funding opportunity?** (10/2/2023)

**Answer:** A webinar to provide information and answer questions on this funding opportunity will be held Friday, October 27, 2023, at 2:30 PM Eastern Time. To join the Webinar, rsvp at

[https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\\_8xEHjvy5RgabkEo5PIMQ5w](https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_8xEHjvy5RgabkEo5PIMQ5w).

Access to the audio portion of the Webinar can be accessed upon registration. The Webinar will be recorded and posted on U.S. DOT's Website at

<https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/climate-and-sustainability/dot-climate-change-center>. A Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) is available for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing at TBD.

**Question: The first-year commitment is \$2.5 M from Federal funds. The 2nd and the 3rd years will have \$2.5M each year, or just \$2.5 million for two years?** (10/2/2023)

**Answer:** Subject to availability of funds, years 2 and 3 would receive an additional \$2.5 million in Federal funds each year.

**Question: How should applicants demonstrate cost share commitments in the proposal?** (10/6/2023)

**Answer:** Proposers are expected to illustrate all cost estimates, including cost match amounts by Tasks in the Proposal and Budget summary documents; these may be refined at the time of development and establishment of the agreement document(s) stage.

**Question: Are applicants required to provide the source of cost share?** (10/6/2023)

**Answer:** No, but if necessary, during the execution of the project, USDOT has the right to request such information.

**Question: If Year 2 and Year 3 Extensions are awarded, will the same level of cost**

**share be provided for each extension, or is cost share limited to Year 1?**  
(10/6/2023)

**Answer:** Cost-share requirements are valid for the life of the award.

**Question: Are private industry and for-profit entities eligible as subrecipients or partner organizations?** (10/6/2023)

**Answer:** Applicant(s) may ‘partner’ with industry in a minor role to support the research needs that the core team may need or lack.

**Question: Do separate organizational units affiliated with my university count as a partner organization?** (10/6/2023)

**Answer:** Applicants can include any part of their institution with needed expertise as a member of the team. For the purpose of a partner organization, applicants should include an organization that is separate from their institution.

**Question: Can you clarify the performance period and tasks?** (10/6/2023)

**Answer:** Task 2 of the Workplan includes 1 year of identifying research gaps and creating a research agenda, followed by a 3-year research agenda. However, the full performance period is 3 years. We interpret this to mean that the first 4 months of the first year of the grant would be dedicated to Task 2 of defining the research agenda and having it approved by USDOT. In the remaining 8 months of Year 1, awardees would begin Task 3, with the goal of having initiated at least 2 research projects by the end of the year, for a total period of performance of 3 years. **11/2/23 Update:** See also, Overarching Questions at top of document for further performance period and budget clarifications.

**Question: Do the general format requirements (such using single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins) also apply to figures and tables?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** It is permissible to go as low as 10-point Times New Roman font for the figures, tables, and captions.

**Question: Does DOT prefer to have applicant cover broader range of climate change goals across various transportation modes/infrastructure or a narrower focus on specific transportation mode/infrastructure?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** DOT is not prescriptive about a particular research topic or a goal as long as the proposal aligns with the goals and covers at least some of priority research areas listed in the NOFO. DOT has provided latitude to the applicants to propose the best possible options to achieve goals mentioned in the NOFO.

**Question: Can applicants propose a different name than the one listed in the NOFO “Climate and Transportation Research Center”?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** Yes, applicants can propose their own name.

**Question: Are applicants required to submit separate budgets for each task and subtask including subcontractor (with DOT and cost share funds) listed in the NOFO in addition to the budget required in the grants.gov application?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** No. DOT is not prescriptive on how budget information is detailed beyond what is directed in the notice of funding opportunity and on the SF424A. Applicants should strive for clarity and conciseness.

**Question: Will receiving funds under this funding opportunity negatively impact applicant’s chances in other Federal funding opportunities?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** No. Selection of awardees for this funding opportunity is an independent process.

**Question: Where should I attach my proposal?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** Proposals should be submitted via grants.gov. Proposals and supporting information can be uploaded in field 15 of the SF424 cover page, after the title. Please refer to grants.gov support options if you have technical issues with submission.

**Question: Can a university be listed on two proposals, such being a lead on one and a partner on another?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** Yes, a university can be on two proposals, such as one proposal as a lead and a separate proposal as a partner.

**Question: What start date should be used for the grant period?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** The start date will be adjusted accordingly when the funding is awarded. DOT is not being prescriptive regarding start dates in the proposal.

**Question: Shall applicants be taking a national approach, regional, or state-specific perspective?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** DOT is not prescriptive on the scale of the approach. DOT is providing latitude to the applicants to achieve the goals mentioned in the notice of funding opportunity.

**Question: Is the intent to fund a center that can address all the priority research topics listed in the NOFO or a subset of complementary priorities?** (10/20/2023)

**Answer:** Applicants are not expected to address every priority research area listed in the notice of funding opportunity.

**Question: Is a multi-institution research center encouraged for this NOFO? Or is it more expected to be a single institution center? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** Proposals must include at least one partner.

**Question: Is it required to include a minority-serving institution in the Center? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** It is not required that proposals include a minority-serving institution

**Question: Should FFRDC partner organizations be budgeted as a subcontractor? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** Yes, FFRDC partners should be budgeted as subcontractors.

**Question: Given that at least two research projects are expected to be initiated in Year 1, should the proposal describe potential Year 1 projects and associated deliverables/milestones for consideration by USDOT? Or should we assume that specific research projects will be developed under Task 2 based on the gap analysis and in collaboration with USDOT? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** Proposals should include potential research projects and applicants should expect that collaboration with DOT may yield more or different projects beyond the first year.

**Question: Does USDOT have a preference for a research center that provides the breadth necessary to conduct research in all topics listed in the NOFO versus a center that provides greater depth in a smaller subset of topics? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** DOT is not prescriptive on the degree of breadth or depth of expertise in proposals. Applicants should refer to the goals and criteria in the notice of funding opportunity.

**Question: Where should specific costs and information be entered on the SF424A? (10/20/2023)**

**Answer:** DOT is not prescriptive on how budget information is detailed beyond what is directed in the notice of funding opportunity and on the SF424A. Applicants should strive for clarity and conciseness.