FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity: Public Transportation on Indian Reservations Program; Tribal Transit Program

Date Posted: August 15, 2024 **Date Closed**: November 13, 2024

Opportunity ID: FTA-2024-012-TPM-TRTR

Grant Program: https://www.transit.dot.gov/tribal-transit

View the full NOFO online here: https://www.transit.dot.gov/notices-funding/fy-2024-notice-funding-opportunity-public-transportation-indian-reservations

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A. Basic Information

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announces the opportunity to apply for \$9,169,076 in competitive grants for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Public Transportation on Indian Reservations (Tribal Transit) Program under Assistance Listing Number 20.509.

- This is an initial announcement for the FY 2024 round of this program.
- As required by Federal public transportation law, funds will be awarded competitively for any purpose eligible under FTA's Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311), including planning, capital, and operating assistance for tribal public transit services in rural areas.
- Planning awards are capped at \$50,000.
- If more funding becomes available for the program before projects are selected, FTA may add it to the total funding available for award under this NOFO.

Topic	Description
Prior Awards	 In FY 2023, the program received applications for 41 eligible projects requesting a total of \$19 million. Twenty-two projects were funded to 22 Tribes at a total of \$9.9 million. The funding awarded ranged from \$25,000 to over \$1,000,000.
Dates	 Complete proposals must be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov (https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056) "APPLY" function by 11:59 pm Eastern time 11/13/2024.
Eligible Activities	 Eligible activities include planning, capital, and operating assistance for tribal transit services in rural areas.
Application Instructions	 Instructions for applying can be found on FTA's website (https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/notices) and in the "FIND" module of Grants.gov. The funding opportunity ID is FTA-2024-012-TPM-TRTR. Mail and fax submissions will not be accepted.
For Further Information, Contact:	 Elan Flippin-Jones, Office of Program Management, (202) 366-3800 or email TribalTransit@dot.gov. A TDD is available at 1-800-877-8339 (TDD/FIRS).

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B. Eligibility

Topic	Description
Eligible Applicant Type	 Federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaska Native Villages, groups, or communities as identified by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The list of federally Recognized tribes can be found at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/08/2024-00109/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of.
Additional Applicant Eligibility Requirements	 To be eligible, applicants must have sufficient legal, financial, and technical capabilities to receive and administer Federal funds under this program. Additionally, applicants must provide transit service in a rural area with a population of less than 50,000. A service area can include some portions of urban areas (as identified in the 2020 census), so long as rural areas are also served. For purposes of this funding opportunity, eligible service areas are rural areas as defined under the 2020 census.

Eligible Projects	 For information and resources about rural areas defined under the 2020 census, including an interactive map, please see this webpage: https://www.transit.dot.gov/census. Any purpose eligible under FTA's Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program, 49 U.S.C. 5311 (https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311), including public transportation planning, capital, or operating expenses.
Additional Project Eligibility Information	 Public transportation includes regular, continuing shared-ride surface transportation services open to the public or open to a segment of the public defined by age, disability, or low income. Specific types of projects include: capital investment for start-ups, replacement, or expansion needs; operating assistance; and planning projects up to \$50,000. Applications that include requests for more than one project type must identify the specific funds requested for each project type (planning, capital, or operating). Indian tribes applying for capital replacement or expansion must describe the source of operating funds that will be available to support existing or expanded transit services.
Cost Sharing	 There is no local match requirement for operating, capital, or planning projects under this program. All projects are eligible to be awarded at 100 percent Federal share. However, applicants may choose to provide a local match or add non-federal funding to the project at its own discretion. If choosing to provide a local match or any non-federal funding, the proposal should include a description of the applicant's financial commitment to the proposed project. More information about eligible sources of local match can be found in FTA Circular 9040.1G

C. Program Description

Purpose, Program Goals and Objectives, and Legislative Authority

- Federal public transportation law (49 U.S.C. 5311(c)(2)(A)) authorizes FTA to award competitive grants to Indian tribes for any purpose eligible under FTA's Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program, 49 U.S.C. 5311 (https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311), including planning, capital, and operating assistance.
 - Tribes may apply for this funding directly.
- The Tribal Transit Program (TTP) supports FTA's strategic goals and objectives through investments that:
 - 1. Enhance safety,
 - 2. Renew our transit systems,
 - 3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the public transportation sector,
 - 4. Improve equity, and
 - 5. Connect communities.
- More information about these goals and objectives can be found in the Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan (https://www.transportation.gov/mission/us-dot-strategic-plan-fy-2022-2026).
- The grant awards under the program directly support public transit service on tribal lands in rural areas to accomplish these objectives.

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

- In FY 2024, there is a \$50,000 maximum cap on planning grant awards, but no minimum.
- There is no minimum or maximum grant award amount for operating and capital projects.
- Capital, operating, or planning projects may be awarded less than the amount applied for.
- Refer to the table in <u>Section B, Eligible Projects</u>, for information on activities that are allowable in this grant program.
- Allowable direct and indirect expenses must be consistent with the Governmentwide
 Uniform Administrative Requirements and Cost Principles (2 CFR 200)
 (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200) and FTA Circular
 5010.1E (https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/award-management-requirements-circular-50101e).
- Grants under this program have a cap of 10 percent for indirect cost even if a tribe has a higher approved indirect cost rate from another Federal agency.

D. Application Contents and Format

Application Package

A complete proposal submission consists of two forms and their supporting attachments:

- the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance (available at Grants.gov [https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056]) and
- the supplemental form for the FY 2024 TTP (available for download at Grants.gov [https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056] or the FTA website [https://www.transit.dot.gov/tribal-transit]).

The Tribal Transit Supplemental Form guides applicants to provide all of the information required by this NOFO.

- The Supplemental Form and any supporting documents must be attached to the "Attachments" section of the SF-424.
- All sections of the SF-424 and the Supplemental Form must be completed unless the form states a section is optional.
- The information input into the Supplemental Form will be used to evaluate the project and determine whether or not the proposal will be funded according to the selection criteria described in Section F (Application Review Information) below.

Information required on the SF-424 and Supplemental Form, as indicated on each form, includes:

- **a.** Name: Name of federally recognized tribe and, if appropriate, the specific tribal agency submitting the application
- **b. UEI:** Unique Entity ID (UEI) assigned by SAM.gov
- **c. Contact:** Contact information, including contact name, title, address, phone number, and email address
- **d. District:** Congressional district(s) where project will take place

The Supplemental Form also requires the following information:

- a. Description of Transit Service Provided and Area Served.
- b. Project Information, including the following:
 - Project Title: A brief descriptive title of the project
 - Project Executive Summary: A short paragraph describing the proposed project
 - Project Purpose: Start-up of a new transit service, expansion of existing service, replacement of equipment or assets, or planning study
 - Project type: Capital, operating, or planning
- **c. Project Budget:** Provide a detailed budget for each proposed part of the project.
 - This budget must list the amount and percent of both the Federal funding requested and any additional non-Federal funds, if any, that will be used to pay for the project.

- Applicants are encouraged to identify scaled or reduced funding options in case they are awarded a lower amount than requested.
- If an applicant indicates that a project is scalable, the applicant must include a minimum funding amount that would be required to meet the project objectives and explain how the project budget would be affected by a reduced award.
- FTA may award a lower amount of funding for any project, whether or not a scalable option is provided.
- If applying for more than one project type (planning, capital, or operating), please specify the total amount of funds requested for each project type.
- Applicants must also provide their annual operating budget as an attachment and describe it in the "Financial Commitment and Operating Capacity" section of the supplemental form.
- **d. Responses to evaluation review criteria:** The form includes text boxes for the applicant to address each of the evaluation review criteria identified in <u>Section F</u>.

Additional details about how to fill out the SF-424 and Supplemental Form are available at this link: https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056.

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E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

How to Obtain Forms

The SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance (available at Grants.gov [https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056]) and the supplemental form for the FY 2024 TTP (available for download at Grants.gov [https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356056] or the FTA website [https://www.transit.dot.gov/tribal-transit]).

Application Deadline and How to Submit

Submission Requirements

Project proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on 11/13/2024.

- Proposals submitted after the deadline will only be considered under extraordinary circumstances not under the applicant's control.
- Applications are time and date stamped by **Grants.gov** upon successful submission.
- Mail and fax submissions will not be accepted.

Submission Confirmation

Within 48 hours after submitting an electronic application, the applicant should receive an email confirmation message from <u>Grants.gov</u> that the application has been received by <u>Grants.gov</u>.

- However, if the applicant receives a notice that the application was incomplete, then the applicant must fix the application and resubmit it before the submission deadline.
- A re-submitted application must include all original attachments (even if only some of them were updated) and the applicant must check the resubmission box on the updated form.

Submission Tips

- Applicants should register on the <u>Grants.gov</u> website well before the application deadline.
- <u>Grants.gov</u> registration is a multi-step process that may take several weeks to complete.
- Applicants who have already registered in <u>Grants.gov</u> may still need to take steps update their registration before they can submit an application.
- FTA urges applicants to submit their project proposals at least 72 hours before the due date. This allows time to correct any potential problems.
- More information on how to navigate <u>Grants.gov</u> can be found on DOT Navigator (https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dot-navigator/how-navigate-grantsgov-submit-applications).

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- 1. Be registered in SAM before submitting an application;
- 2. Provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and
- 3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times when the applicant is applying for a grant or has an active grant from a Federal Agency.

SAM Tips

- SAM registration takes about 3-5 business days.
- However, FTA recommends allowing several weeks for the registration process because there could be unexpected delays (such as needing to get an Employer Identification Number).
- For additional information on obtaining a unique entity identifier, please visit <u>SAM.gov</u>.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs" (https://www.fws.gov/policy/library/rgeo12372.pdf).

F. Application Review Information

Eligibility Review

FTA will reject any applications from ineligible applicants or for ineligible projects. Also see <u>Section</u> <u>B, Eligibility Information</u>, above.

Evaluation Review Criteria

An evaluation committee will rate projects using the evaluation criteria below. Capital or operating assistance projects will be rated as Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended. Applications for planning projects are rated Pass or Fail. Applications are rated based on how they respond to evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria for Capital and Operating Assistance Projects

- Capital and operating assistance projects will be rated based on the evaluation criteria below.
- Projects will be rated based on the information provided in the supplemental form, but additional information may also be provided as attachments to support the responses in the supplemental form.
- Any additional documentation must be directly referenced on the supplemental form, including the file name and page number where the additional information can be found.

Evaluation Criteria for Capital and Operating Assistance Projects	To address each criterion, applicants should:
Planning and Local/Regional Prioritization	 a. Describe the planning document or the planning process conducted to identify the proposed project; b. Provide a detailed project description that includes the proposed service, vehicle and facility needs, and information describing the proposed or existing service; c. Describe existing transportation services in and near the proposed service area, and explain whether the proposed project will provide opportunities to coordinate service with existing transit services, including human service agencies, intercity bus services, or other public transit providers; d. Describe the level of support by the community and tribal government for the proposed project; e. Describe how the mobility and client-access needs of tribal human services agencies were considered in the planning process; f. Describe how the public or potential riders participated in the planning process;

g. Describe how the proposed service complements rather than duplicates any currently available services; h. If the tribe is already providing transit service, describe if this project is included in the tribe's transit asset management plan; and. Describe any other planning or coordination efforts not mentioned above. **Project Readiness** a. Explain whether the project is ready for implementation. For example, if the project is a facility investment, explain whether the initial design of facility is complete and project location has been determined. If it is a vehicle purchase, describe the size and type of vehicles. If it is an application for operating assistance, explain when the funds will be needed. b. Provide a detailed and reasonable schedule for the project including time periods and procurements. For example, describe the project timing of when procurement and construction phases are planned to be completed. c. Explain whether project funds can be obligated within no more than 12 months of the award announcement. d. Explain the ability to carry out the proposed project successfully (for example, state that staffing levels are adequate, or discuss similar projects that have been carried out successfully). e. For capital projects, explain whether the project meets the criteria for a Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Protection Act, or the current status and anticipated completion of required environmental work (if applicable). a. For capital replacements (such as vehicles), provide **Demonstration of** information on the age, condition, and performance of the Need asset or vehicle(s) to be replaced and/or how the replacement may be necessary to maintain the transit system in a state of good repair (for example, describe the age or mileage of the vehicle(s) to be replaced or rehabilitated so the reader can understand if it has exceeded its minimum useful life). b. For capital and/or operating expansion projects describe how current or growing demand for the service makes the expansion (and therefore, more capital) necessary and/or how the project will address a current capacity constraint or operating need. c. For all types of capital and operating projects, describe how the project will help people get to destinations and services not currently served by transit, or how it will improve existing transit service. d. Describe how the project represents a one-time or periodic need that cannot be funded from TTP formula allocations and/or other state/local resources.

e. Use demographic information or other data to explain the need for public transit access to jobs or health care; safety enhancements; special needs of elders or individuals with disabilities; behavioral health needs of youth; income-based community needs; or other mobility needs. f. If an applicant received a planning grant in a previous year, describe how the proposed project relates to the planning study. **Demonstration of** a. Describe how the proposed project will improve transit efficiency and increase or sustain ridership; **Benefits** b. Describe how the proposed project will improve or maintain mobility, increase reliability, or eliminate gaps in service; c. Describe how the proposed project will improve or maintain transit service to important destinations and services; and d. Describe how the proposed project will improve quality of life in the community or improve access to jobs, education, health care services, and environmental benefits. **Financial** a. Applications will be rated based on the applicant's financial capacity to carry out the project if it is funded. Explain how **Commitment and** Tribal Transit competitive funds work together with other Capacity existing funds, and how the TTP competitive funds will not replace other existing funding that would fund the proposed project if the Tribal Transit funding is not available. b. If the project will expand transit operations (such as by adding vehicles), include a funding plan that explains how transit service will continue during the useful life of the project. For example, a financial plan or policy can be attached, or the application can discuss the process within the local or tribal council with budgetary authority that is necessary to secure future transit funding. c. The application can identify non-financial support of the project through letters of support or other formal or informal documents that show community support. d. Demonstrate coordination of services and funding sources. For example, discuss whether Federal Highway Administration **Tribal Transportation Program** (https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/tribal) funds or other eligible Federal funds are used to provide complementary services, or whether the tribal transit system coordinates service with other area transit providers.

Evaluation Criteria for Planning Projects

Planning projects are rated differently from capital and operating projects. If an applicant is
only requesting a planning grant, the evaluation criteria for capital and operating projects
should not be addressed.

Applications for planning grants will be rated on based on:

- a. The applicant's long-term commitment to transit;
- b. The need for and a description of the proposed study; and
- c. The method used to complete the proposed study or further tribal transit.

Review and Selection Process

An FTA evaluation committee will review proposals under the project evaluation criteria.

- FTA may seek clarification about any statement in an application.
- After considering the findings of the evaluation committee, the FTA Administrator will determine the final selection and amount of funding for each project.
- Geographic diversity and the applicant's receipt and management of other Federal transit funds may be considered in FTA's award decisions.

FTA intends to fund as many projects as possible.

- Only eligible activities from eligible recipients will be considered for funding.
- Applicants may receive less than the amount originally requested.
 - In those cases, applicants must show that the proposed project or subset of proposed activities can still be completed with the amount awarded.

Risk Review

- FTA analyzes risk for all recipients through the Financial Commitment and Capacity Evaluation criterion described above.
- Additionally, before making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, FTA must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the Responsibility/Qualification records available in <u>SAM.gov</u> (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 [https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/41/2313]).
- An applicant can review and comment on any information in the Responsibility/Qualification records available in SAM.gov.
- Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206
 (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-C/section-200.206), FTA will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the Responsibility/Qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices

How Project Selections Are Announced

FTA will publish a list of the selected projects, including Federal dollar amounts, award recipients, and discretionary IDs associated with the projects, on FTA's website (https://www.transit.dot.gov/tribal-transit).

- Discretionary IDs are used to track competitive awards in FTA's grant management system.
- FTA does not notify unsuccessful applicants separately.

Pre-award Costs

If selected for award, FTA authorizes the grantee to incur pre-award costs for project expenses incurred after award announcement but before the grant is executed in FTA's Transit Award Management System (TrAMS).

- However, pre-award costs are incurred at the recipient's own risk and Federal requirements must be met for future reimbursement.
- Project costs incurred before project selections are announced may not be paid for with funds from this competition.
- Funds must be used only for the specific purposes requested in the application and described in the resulting award.
- Applicants are encouraged to discuss use of pre-award authority with their FTA Regional Office.

For more information about FTA's policy on pre-award authority, please see the most recent Apportionment Notice at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/05/31/2024-11934/fta-fiscal-year-2024-apportionments-allocations-and-program-information and Program Information.

How Funds Are Obligated

If selected, awardees will apply for a grant through TrAMS.

- Funds must be used only for the specific purposes requested in the application and described in the award announcement on FTA's website (https://www.transit.dot.gov/tribal-transit).
- The appropriate FTA Regional Office will award the grant in TrAMS obligating the funds, and the Tribal Liaison will manage project agreements.

Project recipients should contact their FTA Regional Offices and Tribal Liaison (https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/federal-transit-administrations-regional-tribal-liaisons) for information about setting up grants in FTA's TrAMS.

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

- Except as otherwise provided in this NOFO, TTP grants are subject to the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 5311(c)(1), as described in Chapter X of FTA Circular 9040.1G, as amended, for the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/formula-grants-rural-areas-program-guidance-and-application), and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR part 200.
- All recipients must also follow the Award Management Requirements (FTA Circular 5010.1E, as amended) (https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/award-management-requirements-circular-50101e).
- Grants are subject to terms of FTA's most recent Master Agreement:
 <u>https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grantee-resources/sample-fta-agreements/fta-grantagreements</u>.
- To assist tribes with understanding requirements under the TTP, FTA conducts Tribal Transit
 Technical Assistance Workshops and Assessments. Technical assistance regarding these
 requirements is available from each FTA regional office. A list of Tribal Liaisons is available
 on FTA's website at: https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/federal-transit-administrations-regional-tribal-liaisons.

Reporting Requirements

Post-award reporting requirements include submitting Federal Financial Report (FFR) and Milestone Progress Report (MPR) in TrAMS, and FTA's National Transit Database (NTD) reporting (see FTA Circular 9040.1G [https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circular-90401g-formula-grants-rural-areas-program-guidance-and]).

- Reports to TrAMS and NTD are due annually.
- Applicants should include any goals, targets, and indicators referenced in their application for the project in the Executive Summary of the TrAMS application.

As part of completing the annual certifications and assurances required of FTA grant recipients, a successful applicant must report on the suspension or debarment status of itself and its principals. If the award recipient's active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceed \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of an award made pursuant to this Notice, the recipient must ensure the information available in the responsibility/qualification records through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov), about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings is current and complete. This requirement is in addition to the requirement that an applicant maintain an active SAM registration.

For more information on these reporting requirements, please see 2 CFR Part 200, Appendix XII (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200).

Tribal Transit Self-Governance Funding Agreements

- If awarded, grant funding made available through the TTP may be included in a Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program (TTSGP) funding agreement if there is an existing Compact of Self-Governance in place between the tribe and the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- Funds administered under an executed funding agreement are subject to the agreement terms and conditions as well as the requirements and provisions of the TTSGP (23 U.S.C. § 207 [https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2023-title23/pdf/USCODE-2023-title23-chap2-sec207.pdf] and 49 CFR part 29 [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-A/part-29]) and the applicable Compact of Self-Governance, and may be used only for the purpose for which they were awarded.