

Complete Streets Coalition 10/4/18 meeting notes on transportation funding

The following questions were addressed by the panel which included Erin Aleman (IDOT), Tricia Hyland (CMAP), Tim Gustafson (Epstein) and Tomo Music (Cook County Dept of Highways and Transportation) – notes from the discussion are below:

- What types of projects is your agency looking to support?
- What advice do you have for people writing grants?
- What are some common mistakes you see in grant applications?
- How can applicants be more competitive?
- What advice or resources are available for low-income communities
- Successful examples
- Resources

1. What types of projects is your agency looking to support?

- IDOT
 - Projects that support our Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and that enhance economic development, quality of life, and safety
 - Focus on non-recreational transportation
 - In addition to programs covered by Doug Ferguson, IDOT has two research focused programs:
 - Physical Research: materials and applied research
 - May support complete streets innovations that need to be studied
 - Anyone can apply
 - Planning research
 - May support pre-project planning, such as Active Transportation Plans or Corridor Plans
 - 80/20 match requirement; next call in Spring 2019
- Cook County
 - Likewise, looking to fund projects that support LRTP, which prioritizes:
 - Transit and alternative transportation
 - Freight
 - Equitable distribution of capital with focus on historically divested areas (esp South/West Cook County)
 - See opportunity to tap Invest in Cook for full project cost or seed/local match money
 - With only 5% of roadways under county jurisdiction, Invest in Cook incentivizes implementation of LRTP
- Open question: While Cook County is unique, is there a chance to explore programs similar to Invest in Cook in other area counties?

2. What advice do you have for people writing grants?

- IDOT
 - Check all the boxes; make sure you complete all the requirements

- Make sure your application/project speak to the goals of the long range plan
- CMAP
 - CMAP has been working to formalize its grant application and management, which help streamline the process and control quality
 - Make sure complying with Grant Accountability and Transparency Act regulations
 - Ensure budget review is thorough and all costs are covered
 - Scope in a way that is thorough
 - CMAP has identified best practices for internal grant writing, something that could be replicated at your org
- Tim Gustafson (Epstein)
 - Each agency is looking for something slightly different, be aware of what those priorities are
 - Need to make clear statement that addresses those priorities
 - Scope your projects so they address these priorities – for example can economic development and recreation both be integrated? May perform better as a result.
 - Pre-planning and linking your project to existing plans. Good plans should have language on implementation that can be copied verbatim into project applications.
 - GATA gives contact info for grant recipients, reach out to successful applicants to ask them questions
 - Peer review can be helpful, have the community development director review the application the engineer is developing and vice versa.
- Cook County
 - Likewise, do your homework and check all the boxes.
 - Be thoughtful about how you are clearly conveying the benefits of your project.
- John O’Neal (CMAP)
 - Don’t hesitate to reach out to grant program staff early and often, their contact info is often available online.
 - Showing your municipality has ‘skin in the game’ through local match or other investments is important.
- Doug Ferguson (CMAP)
 - Planning Liaisons at Council of Mayors are a great resource – ask them to review your applications: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/committees/advisory/council-of-mayors/subregional-councils>

3. What are some common mistakes you see in grant applications?

- IDOT
 - Often unclear what phases of project have already been completed or not – make sure this is clear.
 - IDOT working to create more opportunities to have direct access to program staff to assist with application questions etc.
- Tim Gustafson (Epstein)
 - Applicants often forget to talk to the agency of jurisdiction (i.e. who owns the Right of Way); often there may already have something in the works to address same need or have an alternative path to achieving that goal.

- Important to have a conversation about general feasibility.
- What aspects of your project can you get done on your own?
- Cook County
 - Tried to make Invest in Cook application as simple as possible, but sometimes something vital is missed; often new information comes to light during interview phase of application that was not included in original application – missed opportunities and barriers alike.
- **Question: What about multi-jurisdictional projects?**
 - Cook County
 - We are in a good position to make connections between jurisdictions; often get applications that we can link together
 - These applications can be more competitive for something like Invest in Cook given regional impact; for example Des Plaines River Trail included multiple municipalities and the forest preserve
 - Tim (Epstein)
 - Councils of Mayors are a good place to vet and develop interjurisdictional project ideas so they are ready for emerging opportunities.

4. How can applicants be more competitive?

- IDOT
 - Include anything related to existing goals or local plans; we want to help advance your local priorities
 - Look at opportunities to link to IDOT Multi-Year Plan or other IDOT projects (4-6 years ahead) <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/transportation-management/transportation-improvement-programs-/multi-modal-transportation-improvement-program/index>
- Cook County
 - Likewise, community supported and strategic projects are more competitive.
 - Active Trans has done significant local bike/ped planning work and helped share that perspective in Invest in Cook review
 - Local revenue helps – especially when applicant community is wealthier (Cook County uses CMAP community need score to determine need)
- Tim (Epstein)
 - Demonstrating you've made incremental, low-cost steps (e.g. passing CS policy)
 - Seeing more communities directly investing their own resources in an Active Transportation Plan in order to unlock from state/regional/fed sources looking to support projects that align with a local plan
- CMAP
 - Shift mindset from funding filling gaps to showcasing partnerships and community support

5. What advice or resources are available for low-income communities

- Cook County

- Invest in Cook and the county more generally are interested in serving high-need areas
- No local match requirement for Invest in Cook makes it more accessible to low-income communities
- After awards are handed out, if a project is not funded county will follow up with advice on alternative sources and/or provide technical assistance or grant writing support. One common barrier is engineering estimates.
- Tim (Epstein)
 - Debriefs the county has conducted are helpful; give tangible feedback
 - Lots of intermediate support out there that can position communities to be successful
 - NPS community planning
 - Active Transportation Alliance
 - Water resources programs at Center for Neighborhood Technology
 - APA-IL reviving pro-bono planning
- IDOT
 - Does not have as many direct support resources
 - IDOT happy to vet ideas
 - Working to be more transparent and predictable to help communities prepare for when they DO have resources
- CMAP
 - Expand your idea of stakeholders – more regional focus can open up more support
 - Look into CMAP's Local Technical Assistance program: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/lta>

6. Examples of success?

- Tim (Epstein)
 - Urbana, Champaign, and Uofl partnered on bike ped safety study, which set them up to get a TIGER grant which is now funding implementation
 - East Central Wisconsin MPO
 - Made connection to tourism bureau that brought in new resources the project sponsors weren't aware of
- CMAP
 - Stormwater Management Planning Tool – private foundation grant funded work that led to community development block grant funding
- IDOT
 - Bike Ped counts via research funds
 - Ride Illinois & Active Trans identified opportunities to improve bike elements in planned IDOT projects. Conversation has helped uncover common barriers to incorporating these improvements, some of which are easily overcome and others not, but the process has been very enlightening and helpful.

Funding Resources

Ped and Bike Funding Sources in Cook County (applies to other counties as well)

This document provides a basic overview of funding sources for transportation programs in Cook County. Programs are organized by their administrator -- the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois Department of Transportation, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways and other agencies. <http://atpolicy.org/resources/implementation-steps/ped-and-bike-funding-sources-in-cook-county/>

CMAP's open Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Call for Projects:

<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/lta/call-for-projects>.

SRTS Funding: <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/safe-routes-to-school/index>

ITEP Funding: <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/funding-opportunities/ITEP>

HSIP Funding: <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/funding-opportunities/highway-safety-improvement-program>

Invest in Cook: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook>

Community Change Grant Award (America Walks): <http://americawalks.org/applications-open-for-2018-community-change-grants/>

Intermediate low cost/pro bono assistance options:

1. *National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program:* <https://www.nps.gov/orqs/rtca/index.htm>
2. *Invest in Cook:* <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook>
3. *CMAP Local Technical Assistance Program:* <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/lta>
4. *Government Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) for Illinois Portal:* <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grants/SitePages/CSFA.aspx>
5. *Active Transportation Alliance:* <http://activetrans.org/resources/planning-consulting>
6. *Ride Illinois:* <http://rideillinois.org/advocacy/>
7. *Openlands:* <https://openlands.org/advocacy/>
8. *Center for Neighborhood Technology:* <https://www.cnt.org/work-with-us>
9. *Illinois APA Pro Bono Planning Service Program:* <https://www.ilapa.org/probono>