

TCDI 2015 Grant Program

Questions Received (Pre-Application Meeting, At the Meeting, and Post-Meeting)

Updated 4/18/14 with new questions beginning at #35

- 1. Regarding PA Act 209 Transportation Impact Fee Studies, would such a study be an eligible project for TCDI funding?**

Yes, impact fee studies such as those referenced in PA Act 209 are eligible for TCDI funding.

- 2. If a Township is interested in pursuing a project involving a County road, does the County have to be the applicant or can the Township apply? If the Town applies, what sort of demonstrated support is required from the County as part of the application process?**

A Township can apply for a project involving a County Road. It is good to coordinate with the County, and a County representative will serve on the selection committee and add his or her insight on the project.

- 3. Can we make an application for a recently awarded project that is doing a multi-modal alternatives analysis? There is not a statement about current projects. Can we apply for the preliminary engineering of a selected alternative resulting from a current consultant contract? Could that application include the environmental permitting that will be needed?**

The TCDI application guide does not explicitly state you cannot apply for tasks to be completed for a recently awarded project. However, TCDI funds should be used for early stage and conceptual planning, feasibility, and design. The preliminary engineering referred to in the application is primarily for concept development or alternative analysis. Any environmental work performed through TCDI funded projects is not part of the environmental permitting that is necessary for final design and construction. In the scenario you are presenting it appears that you will have a selected alternative. In this case, the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding may be a better fit for the preliminary engineering work you will be looking to complete.

- 4. Our Township does not competitively select our Engineer. Would we be able to use that person for any work funded through TCDI?**

No. If you have not completed a competitive process in the past 5 years (with supporting documentation), you will be required to go through a competitive RFP process.

- 5. In the case of Philadelphia, do we need a resolution from Council or can we provide another article of documentation?**

Understanding the complexity of Council agendas in the City of Philadelphia, DVRPC will accept a letter via the Mayor or another local official with a signatory authority.

- 6. In the case of a county entity, we must contract with the municipality and consultant before contracting with DVRPC. Will that be a problem?**

DVRPC is instituting a streamlined scoping process for all TCDI contracts. All TCDI-awarded communities will be required to go through the RFP process within a 6-month timeframe (if necessary) and get a scope of work from the chosen consultant. This scope will be used for the contract between DVRPC and the municipality. All contracts must be executed within 9 months of the Board approval date.

7. Can you elaborate on eligible in-kind services?

There is increased scrutiny from the federal government regarding the use of federal funds. Eligible in-kind activities must be necessary and reasonable for the accomplishment of the project. Secretarial and administrative work on behalf of the receiving municipality is eligible.

8. Is professional staff and secretarial time eligible as in-kind match?

Yes. The application asks specifically what type of activities will be provided and this should be included in that section.

9. As a follow up to the previous question regarding staff time, does the staff working on the TCDI grant need to account for a full workday even if working on a different project?

Yes.

10. Is grant administration by the local government able to be used as in-kind match?

Yes.

11. What type of payroll practices do municipalities need to employ for staff rendering in-kind services?

According to the Office of Management and Budget's Standards for Documentation of Personnel Expenses, "charges to Federal awards for salaries and wages must be based on records that accurately reflect the work performed. These records must: 1) be supported by a system of internal control which provides reasonable assurance that the charges are accurate, allowable, and properly allocated; 2) be incorporated into the official records of the non-Federal entity; 3) reasonably reflect the total activity for which the employee is compensated by the non-Federal entity, not exceeding 100% of compensated activities; 4) encompass both federally assisted and all other activities compensated by the non-Federal entity on an integrated basis; 5) comply with the established accounting policies and practices of the non-Federal entity; 6) support the distribution of the employee's salary or wages among specific activities or cost objectives if the employee works on more than one Federal award; a Federal award and non-Federal award; an indirect cost activity and a direct cost activity; two or more indirect activities which are allocated using different allocation bases; or an unallowable activity and a direct or indirect cost activity."

If a local government does not feel they can meet these requirements, DVRPC encourages the use of cash match over in-kind services.

12. Does the consultant need an approved PennDOT overhead rate?

No.

13. The application mentions that a key element of TCDI projects is to enhance or build the capacity of the transportation network. Does this include bike and pedestrian facilities?

Yes. DVRPC supports non-motorized transportation projects that enhance our bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the region.

14. Can the 20% required match be a combination of in-kind services and cash?

Yes.

15. Is the development of a signage plan eligible for TCDI funds?

It depends on the activities. If you are applying for funds to develop the concept and design elements of the wayfinding plan, it is covered through the TCDI program. Manufacturing, purchasing, or installation of signs is not an eligible activity of TCDI.

16. If an applicant accidentally hits the Submit button on the application, can we go back in?

The online application system has been set up to lock all applicants out either after the Submit button is hit or May 30, 2014 at 5 pm. However, DVRPC staff will be reviewing applications for completeness prior to May 30 and will alert an applicant if there is a problem with an incomplete application.

17. Can you clarify the process for multi-municipal applications?

DVRPC encourages multi-municipal projects. We ask that one municipality serves as the lead and submits the application, and if chosen, DVRPC will contract with that lead municipality. All municipalities participating in the project must provide the required resolution of support from their respective governing bodies at the time of the application. The 20% required match should be worked out between the municipalities. If each municipality will be using in-kind services, you should detail what services will be provided by which municipalities in the application. If selected, these in-kind services will be included in the scope of work in the contract and should be supported by timesheets when invoicing.

18. If a consultant is filling out the application on behalf of a municipality, can they create the user account for the application?

Yes.

19. Under what type of scenario would a letter of support be necessary?

The application states that we do not require general letters of support. However, if the application includes a nonprofit partner or community group, a letter of support should be submitted

illustrating a commitment to the project. In addition, if a municipality is using private funds as match for the TCDI grant, a letter from the private source should be provided.

20. The application no longer requires a detailed budget? Can you confirm?

That is correct. At the application stage, the Budget tab asks for the TCDI requested amount, total project cost (includes match), the source of the matching funds, and the in-kind services that will be provided (if applicable).

21. What other items will be required after the application?

If your project is selected, you will be asked to provide a detailed scope (from the chosen consultant, if you are hiring one) and a detailed budget. This will include information such as the personnel working on the project, number of hours, overhead rate, profit, and other soft costs. DVRPC will also request a meeting with the primary municipal contact and DVRPC project managers.

22. Do consultants need to be from the local NJ/PA area?

No.

23. What is the maximum amount a community can apply for if they are submitting more than one application?

A local government can apply for a maximum of \$100,000, while a multi-municipal application can be up to \$175,000. If a community submits two applications they could apply for \$100,000 for each, totaling \$200,000. Given the interest in the TCDI program, DVRPC encourages each community to put their "best" application forth. We will not guarantee that a community will receive more than one TCDI award.

24. What type of municipal resolution are you requiring?

The resolution should come from the Governing Body and verify support of the application, matching funds, and administrative requirements of the TCDI grant. A sample resolution is included in the FY 2015 TCDI program guide.

25. If using CDBG funds for the match, will the draft plan be acceptable at the application stage?

Yes. DVRPC understands that the cycles for TCDI and CDBG are different. If your application lists CDBG funds as match and those funds fall through, we will work with the municipality/county to find a solution to the 20% match.

26. The Administrative Highlights form provided in the packet states that all consultants and subconsultants over \$10,000 must be competitively selected. Can you elaborate?

Yes. Anyone consultant or sub-consultant with a budget of \$10,000 or greater must be chosen competitively. In the case of a team of consultants being chosen from a RFP process, that team and everyone on it has obviously been chosen competitively. However, if you are going to use an

existing consultant and need to bring on an expert or subconsultant for a specific task, that subconsultant must then be competitively selected if they have a budget of \$10,000 or greater.

27. Can you use more than one consultant?

Yes.

28. Is there a benefit to showing more than the 20% required match?

No.

29. What is the normal disbursement of payment on the TCDI grant? What if your community cannot provide the 20% in-kind match? Can the municipality then withhold money from the consultant?

No, you cannot withhold money from the consultant, as you have a contract in place with them. In this case, the municipality would be required to pay the consultant their full contract amount. DVRPC pays 80% of every invoice submitted (to account for the 20% match of the total project cost), thus DVRPC will only pay 80% of whatever services are invoiced.

30. Are applicants allowed to say in the application that the project is scalable and the applicant would accept a smaller or larger grant amount?

Yes.

31. Can we use TMA dollars as a match for the TCDI grant?

TMA dollars cannot be used as the local match as those are federal dollars, and we do not allow federal dollars to be matched by federal.

32. Can DVRPC provide a list of pre-application meeting attendees?

It is DVRPC's policy not to share our meeting or contact lists. However, if you are interested, you can contact the county planner(s) to discuss who attended.

33. Can I get a paper copy or .pdf version of the application to review and pre-plan what information I need to gather and "practice" a draft form?

To get a paper copy, you must go to www.dvrpc.org/tcdi and click on Apply Online. Once you are there, you need to create an account. Our system will send you a password. Once you have the password, you can then log into the application system and see the five sections of the application. If you hit the Print button, you will be able to see the entire application and print it if you wish to prepare a draft.

34. Can a local government do the work in-house and not hire a consultant?

Yes, local government staff can do the work. DVRPC still requires a 20% cash or in-kind services match.

35. On the handout, page 5, Application Requirements, it says “Do not include general endorsement letters of support”. I have a note that I wrote which I heard at the meeting that says “unless partnering with a non-profit or a private company”. Can you define partnering for this purpose?

Municipalities may partner with a nonprofit or a community group on a study that relates to those organizations’ missions, and in that case, a letter of support from this partner would be needed. In addition, if a municipality is using private funds as match for the TCDI grant, a letter from the private source should be provided.

36. Can a municipality apply for a multi-municipal grant with a municipality that did not attend the mandatory March 18 meeting?

Yes, as long as the lead municipality that is filling out the application was at the meeting, then that is acceptable. We will however still need resolutions of support from all participating municipalities in the application.

37. On the handout, page 4, Implementing TCDI Plans, it states “Project must be completed within 24 months of the contract date”. Please define Project. Is it the planning or the actual project that is planned. For example, if our grant gets accepted for planning to build sidewalks in our municipality, is it the plan for that has to be completed in 24 months from the contract date or do the sidewalks have to be built with 24 months of the contract date?

By project, we mean the plan/study that you have received the grant for. Thus, in your example, the plan for new sidewalks would need to be completed in 24 months, not the actual construction.

38. Can a Township submit a TCDI application to fund design work related to a TAP Application? The Township recently submitted a TAP Application. I saw on the “TCDI 2015 Questions and Answers” link that federal funds matching federal funds was not permitted, but I wanted to confirm.

This approach will not work on several accounts. First, TCDI funding cannot be used for engineering work, it can only be used for planning and conceptual design type work. Second, both TCDI and TAP cannot be matched with federal funds. TCDI is federal funding, so it cannot be used as match for a TAP application, and TAP pre-construction cannot be federal dollars.

39. Can consultants enter their contact info (phone, email address) on the application or do you want a municipal staff member’s contact info?

If you are a consultant filling out the application, you should enter a municipal representative as the contact name/title/address, but can choose to enter your own phone and email contact information if you prefer to be contacted about the application directly.

40. I just want to make clear that preliminary engineering is not included as an eligible activity for TCDI but doing a feasibility study with proposed improvements is ok?

Yes, a feasibility study is allowed but not preliminary engineering.

41. I understand most of the requirements for "in Kind" match because it was discussed in depth at the March 18 meeting. Most of that discussion was about staff hours and how to record those hours for matching eligibility. Would that same type of record keeping be necessary for our consultant who is doing and will be doing the work for which we want the TCDI grant? Would he have to keep an hourly record?

Yes, when your consultant bills you as part of the project, if awarded, they would include in their invoice the numbers of hours worked and hourly payroll rate, among other things. This is covered more in-depth in the TCDI Administrative Highlights info that was passed out at the meeting.

42. I'm working on a joint TCDI application for several towns. The initial proposal was going to be three towns, but we are now considering a fourth. In your opinion, is it worth going the extra effort to co-opt another town into the application?

It is really up to you, on what you are most comfortable with, and what will make the best study. A multi-municipal application with three towns will be given priority as stated in the grant guidelines. An application with four towns would also receive priority. If obtaining support from a fourth town is difficult, it may not be worth your limited time/resources. If adding them would greatly improve the project and outcomes, then that also should be weighed. You know your local circumstances and what will work best for you.

43. If a community has received a TCDI grant in the past, does this make them less likely to receive one in this new funding round?

No. We do not use the fact that a community has received a previous TCDI grant as part of the judging criteria. We have had municipalities who have received multiple TCDI grants since the start of the program began in 2002.

44. Just wanted to confirm that the word count limit for this application is 1,700 total?

Yes, the project narrative has a limit of 1700 words. There are a few other questions about applicant capacity that are outside the 1700 word limit but those are short questions

45. If a consultant prepares the application can they still work on the project (if awarded) per federal recommendations?

If the consultant was competitively selected by the municipality, then they may work on the project if awarded. We are providing the following guidance on competitive selection to municipalities:

General Procurement Standards

The subrecipient must use its own documented procurement procedures that reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations, provided that the procurement conforms to applicable Federal law:

- a) Procurement must be conducted in a manner providing full and open competition.
- b) Requests for proposal must be publicized and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance.

- c) Proposals must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources.
- d) The subrecipient must have a written method for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for selecting recipients.
- e) Contracts must be awarded to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered.
- f) The subrecipient must maintain records sufficient to detail the history of the procurement.

The municipality will have to submit documentation supporting competitive selection. If the consultant was competitively selected you can prepare the application and do the work. If the consultant was not competitively selected and you prepare the application – then I think it comes down to the policy and procedures that the municipality will follow. Their municipal solicitor should be able to answer this part of the question.

46. Can you provide me written confirmation for a municipality that they do not need to get three full consultant RFP's for their scope of work, prior to submitting an application for TDCI funding on May 30? It is my understanding from reading the guidelines and past funding of this nature that they will need to get the RFPs only if funding is awarded in September 2014. They would then need to complete the RFP process by March 31, 2015.

Yes, you are correct that a municipality does not need RFPs before application, only if they are awarded the grant, which happens at the end of September. If they receive the grant, then they would either 1) do the project themselves, using inhouse staff or using a consultant they already have on retainer that was selected competitively to be their planner/engineer (and they can prove this competitive selection process) 2) solicit RFPs from consultants to do the work and go through a competitive selection process, whereby they would need to choose their consultant by March 31, 2015.

47. What do you mean when you say you will fund a streetscape plan? What goes into that?

TCDI will fund concept development/preliminary design for a streetscape project. Preliminary design bridges the gap between the design concept and the detailed design phase. Such a plan might show conceptual street cross-sections keyed to specific streets or street types, as well as outline various options when it comes to sidewalks, tree placement, street furniture, lighting examples, amenity areas, etc. It could include sketches or visualizations. The plan could include an analysis of these different treatments, what their feasibility is, and info on the public input process and what it revealed. Such a framework would form the basis for future decisions, and whether to advance to more detailed design and construction. What it can't do is fund construction drawings.