



Request for Proposals

Community Mobility Design Challenge 2021

Information and Application Package

Applications for this opportunity are due July 12, 2021

A vibrant community is one where all residents are empowered to pursue economic, health, and social well being. The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) (NCMM) recognizes the vital role transportation plays in all activities that support the empowerment of individuals in each of these areas. Yet often community transportation systems lack the resources and/or strategies to provide the level of mobility to residents that they would like.

NCMM’s [Community Mobility Design Challenge 2021 grants](#), with funding from the Federal Transit Administration, will support communities in seeking innovative ways to address the personal well-being of community members who face transportation barriers to recreation and physical activities, healthy food, personal safety, economic opportunity, or community and peer support opportunities.

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1. About this Grant Opportunity

1A. Quick Look

Who is eligible?

The applicant organization must be a non-profit organization or a government agency that is able to receive, or be a subrecipient of, federal funding. Teams who have previously received an NCM Design Challenge grant are not eligible to apply for this opportunity.

Do we need to suggest a solution in our application?

No, in fact applicants who suggest a specific solution **will not be considered** for this opportunity. The grant process will facilitate teams in analyzing their pre-application research and designing solutions based on that analysis.

What is the application deadline?

July 12, 2021, 11:59 PM ET

How much is the grant for?

Up to \$25,000

How many grants will be awarded?

Four communities will be selected.

1B. Goals

The goal of the NCMM Community Mobility Design Challenge 2021 is to enable multi-sector community teams to develop promising mobility solutions that are inspired and informed by the results of community research. Communities should be entering the Design Challenge with a clear, well-researched understanding of the needs in their community, *not a proposed solution*. Once the work of this Design Challenge 2021 is complete, teams will have designed and tested a solution that is feasible, effective, and sustainable.

The Design Challenge 2021 is designed to:

- Support communities in creating mobility solutions for community members who face transportation barriers in advancing their personal well-being. Teams will address populations that currently do not have access to equitable transportation because of income status, minority status, location, a pre-existing condition, or other reason.
- Support the development of cross-sector partnerships that work together on transportation solutions for their community.
- Prepare communities to apply for funding opportunities to implement community transportation solutions, such as federal transit funding, as well as other types of federal, state, and local funding for which the solutions they create may be eligible.

The funding through this program is for design and planning purposes, but applicants should be well positioned to seek implementation funding after completing the Design Challenge 2021 activities. They will also be eligible to apply for Phase 2 (Learning Launch grant) and Phase 3 (Pilot grant) funding from NCMM.

1C. Approach

For the Design Challenge 2021, applicant teams will use several activities and tools from the human-centered design approach to create a sustainable, customer-responsive solution to a

transportation issue in their communities. Human-centered design is grounded in the exploration of a problem from multiple customers’ perspectives. For the purposes of the Design Challenge 2021, “customers” will include community members who face transportation barriers in advancing their personal well-being as well as other stakeholders whose services to the community are impacted by a lack of transportation resources (e.g., human service agencies) or who can impact the availability of transportation (e.g., funders, community partners).

The human-centered design approach values consideration of a wide range of innovative solutions, as well as the testing and iterating of those solutions. This approach can be divided into these phases:

- Phase 1: Examining the question and planning the research
- Phase 2: Conducting the research and uncovering insights
- Phase 3: Generating ideas and concepts for prospective solutions
- Phase 4: Testing assumptions about the prospective solutions
- Phase 5: Preparing a limited launch of the single chosen solution

Teams will receive training, facilitation, and direct technical assistance throughout the project for the effective use of this approach; the Design Challenge grants will take communities through the first four phases listed above.

Applicant teams are encouraged to learn more about human-centered design through the National Center for Mobility Management’s free [Creating Innovative Transportation Solutions](#) e-learning course. NCMM highly recommends using the e-learning course as a guide for conducting pre-application work as well as the grant activities.

1D. Challenge Areas and Focus Question

Each team will indicate in its application which of the challenge areas listed below it has chosen. Examples of each have been given, but these are in no way intended to limit a community’s interpretation of a challenge area; in fact, these challenge areas are intentionally broad to allow communities to match their project with one of their top priorities.

“Our team will address community members who face transportation barriers in advancing their personal well-being as they attempt to . . . [choose one area from the six options below]

1. Access economic opportunity (e.g., training, education, jobs)
2. Access health care–related destinations
3. Access community and peer support opportunities (e.g., substance use peer recovery groups, behavioral health peer groups)
4. Address other social determinants of health
(<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>)
not listed above

Teams will also be asked to create a one-sentence focus question on their issue. The focus question should clearly and succinctly outline the specific opportunity the applicant is looking to

address within the chosen challenge area. The focus question should be more specific than just a re-statement of the team’s challenge area and should reflect the target population, the target community, and the specific problem to be addressed (e.g., “How can we improve access to behavioral health services for Medicaid-eligible residents in El Paso County?”). The focus question should also be narrow enough in scope and specific enough that it provides the team with a direction for research and potential action.

1E. Define the Target Population and Target Community

Applicant teams will choose a specific target population of community members who face transportation barriers in advancing their personal well-being. Teams will address populations that currently do not have access to equitable transportation because of income status, minority status, location, a pre-existing condition, or other reason. Teams are encouraged to be as specific as possible in defining their target population; as applicable, include information about age, disability status, ethnicity, and income status, as well as how the target population’s needs relate to the chosen challenge area.

Teams will also define the “community” they will be addressing. “Community” may include, but not be limited to, a formal or informally defined region, tribal nation, multi-county region, single county, city/town, neighborhood, or corridor. Note that the chosen community should present a manageable scope for the project. Applicants should take into consideration the feasibility of gathering representative primary data (interviews, observations) and defining how their solution would have a measurable impact in that community; for very large geographic areas (e.g., states), this may be more difficult, thus a statewide project is not optimal for the Design Challenge opportunity.

2. Team Composition and Eligibility

2A. Lead Organization

The lead organization will submit the application on behalf of its multi-sector community team and, if selected, will ensure the timely completion of all grant activities and requirements.

Lead organizations must be eligible recipients or subrecipients for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds under 49 U.S.C. Sections 5307, 5310, or 5311. Eligible subrecipients include state or local government authorities, nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transportation. The applicant must have the capacity to successfully execute the project, and its partners should have the capacity to execute their roles successfully. The applicant should have no outstanding legal, technical, or financial issues that would make this a high-risk project. In the application, the lead organization and its partners must indicate that they have the capacity to successfully execute the project.

Lead organizations must provide a DUNS number (<https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/>) and be registered in the federal System for Award Management database (<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/pages/public/index.jsf>).

2B. Team Lead

The team lead must be a staff member of the lead organization. The team lead will convene the team and maintain the team's momentum during the duration of the project, as well as serve as the main point of contact with NCMM staff. All teams are encouraged to have a co-lead from another organization. In particular, if the lead organization is not a transportation entity, we encourage the inclusion of a co-lead who is a transportation professional.

2C. Team Composition

The team must consist of a multi-sector partnership, with membership drawn from organizations most relevant to the focus question the team will address. Each team should have a minimum of five and a maximum of ten members from a diverse group of partner organizations.

At a minimum, your team must be comprised of:

- At least one transportation professional (e.g., public transportation provider of bus, van, vanpool, carpool, or bike-sharing services; mobility manager; transportation management association; volunteer transportation program; rideshare coordinator; transportation planner)
- At least two individual customers from the target population (e.g., end user)
- At least two members drawn from a community-based organization relevant to the mobility challenge to be addressed. For example, applicants proposing to improve mobility access for individuals seeking access to peer support group must include a representative from a related provider or case management organization; likewise, applicants proposing to improve access to healthy food must include a representative from a food access program.

Additional team members may be drawn from the following:

- Case management services (e.g., social worker, care coordinator, community health worker, education advisor)
- Local advocates
- Local elected or public agency officials
- City or county departments
- Technology sector
- Others who would round out team experience, networks, and skills

2D. Time Commitment by Team Members

Teams should expect to make a significant time contribution to this project. The payoff is that the teams will emerge with a solution to their identified challenge that is closely tied to the community and has a high potential for success. The following is an estimate of the time commitment:

- Phase 1 (pre-application): Attending the pre-application webinar, gathering the team, choosing the focus area, creating the challenge question, and planning the research – 5 hours (each team member)
- Phase 2, Part A (pre-application): Conducting primary research (10-12 interviews/observations), gathering secondary data, developing the application – 20 hours across all team members
- Phase 2, Part B (post-application): “Sensemaking” workshop to understand the data – 8 hours (each team member)
- Phase 3: “Idea generation” workshop to develop prospective solutions – 8 hours (each team member)
- Phase 4: Testing assumptions embedded in the prospective solutions – 20 hours across all team members
- Phase 5: Preparing a project plan and project pitch for the chosen solution – 20 hours across all team members

3. Grant Activities and Details

3A. Grant Timeline

May 17	Request for proposals (RFP) announced
May 27	Webinar for potential applicants (1:00 PM ET)
July 12	Applications due by 11:59 pm ET
October & November	On-site & virtual workshops take place
March 2022	Projects completed

3B. Pre-Application Activities

Before submitting an application, team members will complete the following activities:

- Assemble a coalition (see 2C)
- Choose a challenge area (see 1D)
- Create a focus question (see 1D)

- Identify needed research. As a team, identify the primary research (e.g., interviews, observations, other original research) needed to gain a deep understanding of the experience of the target population and those organizations that serve them. This primary research will be supplemented by secondary research the team has gathered (e.g., Census data, other existing data sources).
- Conduct primary research. Before submitting its application, applicant teams will plan and implement primary research by engaging with “customers” who have direct experience with the focus question. Examples of customer types should always include end users, but may also include caregivers, community-based organizations, transportation providers, funders, and other relevant individuals. This research involves conducting 8–10 (total per team) one-on-one interviews/observations with individuals in your community to learn about how they are affected by the mobility challenge, what their current workarounds are, and how they would address the problem, among other input. Best practice is for each interview/observation to be conducted by at least two team members.

While the one-on-one interviews work best in-person, the situation regarding COVID-19 may not allow in-person interviews. Other forms of interviewing will be accepted, including virtual interviews. Reach out to NCMM if you have any questions regarding the primary research. Teams are encouraged to use human-centered design interviewing and research techniques to deeply understand different types of customers’ experiences. (Tips for this style of interviewing will be provided in the pre-application webinar and are included in the free “Creating Innovative Transportation Solutions — Phase 2: Discovering “What Is” video available at nc4mm.org/module2). **Surveys are not as effective in collecting this type of primary qualitative data, and as such will not be accepted for this requirement.** Likewise, data from projects that are over a year old will not be accepted.

- Gather secondary research. Applicant teams will also gather secondary research related to the focus question. This will include data from community assessment, surveys, reports, studies, and other data sources.
- Attend pre-application webinar. Team lead(s) (and preferably other team members) will participate in a pre-application webinar conducted by NCMM. We will cover the key activities of the grant, review the application process, and discuss key elements of human-centered design and ethnographic interviewing. [Register here.](#)

Questions during the pre-application period can be addressed to Kirby Wilhelm, wilhelm@ctaa.org, 202-489-6020; answers will be posted on the [NCMM website](#).

3C. Grant Activities

Accepted grantees will be paired with an NCMM facilitator, who will conduct the in-person activities and host monthly phone calls with the team. NCMM will also host periodic webinars to introduce teams to the various grant activities.

The following are key milestones in the teams' projects:

- Sensemaking session. The team's NCMM facilitator will conduct an on-site, one-day "sensemaking" session, in which the team explores the data it gathered, discusses insights from the research phase, and develops conditions that a solution must meet to be successful. These conditions become the team's "design criteria" for the rest of the phases of the grant. (If COVID-19 conditions prohibit in-person meetings, this meeting will be conducted remotely over 4 two-hour sessions.)
- Idea generation session. The team's NCMM facilitator will conduct an on-site, one-day "idea generation" session using the team's design criteria, culminating in the team's development of 2-3 concepts for prospective solutions. The facilitator will also help the team plan how it will test their assumptions embedded in those concepts. (If COVID-19 conditions prohibit in-person meetings, this meeting will be conducted remotely over 4 two-hour sessions.)
- Assumption testing. Teams will begin to vet each concept by identifying and testing the make-or-break assumptions it has in three areas: 1) customer desirability, 2) operational feasibility, and 3) financial viability. Based on findings in the assumption-testing phase, teams will modify their concepts for solutions and eventually narrow down to the most promising concept.
- Project plan and pitch. Teams will develop a project pitch describing their journey as they developed the solution. Pitches will be delivered remotely or, as COVID-19 restrictions allow, in person in Washington, DC. If travel is allowed, travel expenses for up to two members per team will be paid by NCMM funds outside of the grant funds provided to the team.

All activities must be completed by March 31, 2022 with final invoices provided to NCMM by April 15, 2022.

3D. Grantee Reporting Requirements

Applicants must commit to implementing, tracking, and reporting on their learning about their proposed concepts and progress in meeting overall performance measures.

- Monthly reports. Teams will complete a short report every month to accompany their reimbursement requests. Templates will be provided.
- Monthly activities. Teams will participate in monthly phone calls with their NCMM facilitator, as well as participate in periodic webinars hosted by NCMM.
- Participation in post-grant interview with NCMM's evaluator

3E. Funding for Successful Applicants

Each of the four chosen teams will receive up to \$25,000, to be paid to the lead organization, to be used in conjunction with any of the aforementioned grant activities. All anticipated expenses are to be laid out specifically in your application.

Expenses relating to the NCMM's [Community Mobility Design Challenge 2021 grants](#) include the following:

- Team member travel for participatory design/co-design sessions and additional research with individuals, stakeholder meetings, and other post-application data-gathering activities
- Personnel costs related to project activities
- Expenses related to convening the team and/or larger groups of partners
- Development of prototypes, or low-cost visual representations of concepts, to share with partners and customers. This activity may include the cost of consultants and vendors. The funds cannot be used for marketing purposes.
- Production of the final presentation for the team pitch session

Note that the funds **cannot be used to purchase consultant services** to fully implement the work of the Design Challenge project; applications that propose such a use of funding will not be selected. There is no substitute for the knowledge, experience, and mutual support team members receive when they work together to solve issues of mutual importance. Consultants can be used for activities such as conducting secondary research and creating visual prototypes of potential concepts.

4. Application Evaluation Criteria

4A. Review Process

- Screening. All applications received will be screened to determine that the minimum requirements noted below have been met. Only those applications that meet the minimum requirements will be forwarded for review.
- Review Process. Awards will be made through a competitive review process by a review committee, drawn primarily from outside reviewers with relevant expertise. NCMM will choose those projects receiving the highest recommendations by its review committee. NCMM will also strive to ensure diversity among the chosen applicants.

4B. Screening Requirements

In order to be considered, applications must meet the following criteria:

- Complete application is received by email by the deadline.
- The application is submitted as single PDF document.
- The application addresses all required elements.

- The lead organization meets eligibility requirements and the lead organization or similarly composed team has not previously received an NCMM Design Challenge grant.
- Total grant funds requested do not exceed \$25,000.
- The team has not already designed or implemented a solution for the need identified in the application.

Only the applications meeting these requirements will be sent to the review committee.

4C. Application Scoring

Applications will be rated by the review committee on the basis of highly recommended (HR), recommended (R), and not recommended (NR) in the following areas:

1. Team leadership:
 - a. The proposed lead organization submitted a letter with all required elements, and has provided evidence of its capacity to undertake this project and lead the team in completing all required deliverables within the grant period.
 - b. The applicant has designated a team lead or co-lead that is a transportation professional.
2. Commitment of Core Team Members.
 - a. The team members represent the key partners related to the mobility challenge to be addressed, and include two customers from the target group and at least one nonprofit or public transportation provider.
 - b. Each individual team member has provided a personalized statement indicating his/her interest in and commitment to solving this chosen mobility challenge.
 - c. Each individual team member articulates a role for themselves (e.g., bringing their network to the table, offering unique skills and experiences) in participating with this project.
3. Understanding of the mobility challenge and the target population to be addressed. The team has demonstrated its understanding of the challenge through the following components in its application:
 - a. An actionable focus question to direct the team's work
 - b. A well-defined target population
 - c. A well-defined community
 - d. Demonstration that the team has a solid understanding of the mobility challenge to be addressed
 - e. Demonstration that the team has engaged in primary research to the extent necessary to inform the team about the mobility challenge to be addressed
 - f. Demonstration that the team engaged in secondary research to the extent necessary to inform the team about the mobility challenge to be addressed
4. Scope of the Project and Target Outcomes. The proposed scope of the project (e.g., target population, potential impact), as described in the application narrative, will address a

significant mobility challenge in terms of the total numbers or percentage of the target population that would be impacted by the implementation of the project.

5. Budget.
 - a. The projected costs and rationale for those costs are clearly explained.
 - b. Projected budget is reasonable for the proposed scope of activities.
 - c. The applicant has not included a significant amount of funding for consultant activities that would substitute for the team members' participation in all key activities of the project.

4D. Selection

The review committee will make its recommendations based on the following guidelines:

- Applications rated as highly recommended (HR) will be those that receive “HR” in at least four categories, and receive no “NR” ratings.
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will be those that receive “R” in three or fewer categories, and receive no “NR” ratings.
- Applications rated as not recommended (NR) will be those that receive “NR” in one or more categories.

5. Application Instructions

5A. Application Instructions

Deadline for receipt of application. July 12, 2021, 11:59 PM ET.

Directions for submitting application. A complete application will be a single PDF document, combining all of the above components. Application packages should be emailed to wilhelm@ctaa.org by the submittal deadline. Applications submitted via other methods will not be considered. Questions during the pre-application period can be addressed to Kirby Wilhelm, wilhelm@ctaa.org, 202-489-6020; answers will be posted on the [NCMM website](http://nc4mm.org/challenge-2021) [nc4mm.org/challenge-2021].

5B. Minimum requirements.

All of the requirements listed below must be met in order for an application to be forwarded to the review committee for consideration:

- Complete application is received by email by the deadline.
- The application is submitted as single PDF document.
- The application addresses all required elements.
- The lead organization meets eligibility requirements and the lead organization or similarly composed team has not previously received an NCMM Design Challenge grant.

- Total grant funds requested do not exceed \$25,000.
- The team has not already designed or implemented a solution for the need identified in the application..

6. Application Package

After completing the pre-application activities, please complete the following application. The application package includes three sections:

- A. The grant application proposal narrative
- B. The grant budget form and accompanying budget narrative
- C. Lead organization commitment letter

6A. Proposal Narrative

Applicants who wish to have their proposal considered must follow the exact outline below and include all elements in the outline. Applicable sections of the application information included above are noted in parentheses.

1. Name your community (e.g., northwest Florida, Johnson City, Washington & Lee Counties)
2. Total funds requested. Total amount of NCMC project funds requested (maximum \$25,000). No local match dollars or in-kind contributions are required apart from the team members' time, effort, and commitment to the project
3. Lead organization. The official legal name, DUNS number (<https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/>), address, and telephone number of the organization that is submitting the application and would be contracting for the grant.
4. Person submitting the application. Name of the person legally authorized to submit the application, answer questions about the application, and negotiate for and contractually bind the organization. Must be employed by the lead organization. Include address, phone, and email.
5. State the challenge area your team has chosen from the list provided in section 1D. If teams are interested in applying for more than one challenge area, they may submit an additional application. However, each selected applicant will be funded to respond to only one challenge area. (Section 1D)
6. Describe your focus question and indicate how you feel the scope of the focus question is actionable. (150 words or less; Section 1D)
7. Describe your target community in detail. (150 words or less; Section 1E)
8. Describe target population in detail. (150 words or less; Section 1E)
9. What were the results of your primary research? (750 words or less; Section 3B) Describe the knowledge team members have gained through these conversations and observations by answering the following questions:
 - Who conducted the research?

- What customers/potential customers did they meet with and/or observe, and what did they learn about those customers' mobility needs, goals, and wants? What surprises or "aha" moments did they have about what would be most valuable for these customers?
 - What other stakeholders did the team members meet with and/or observe, and what did they learn about their mobility-related access needs, goals, and wants? What surprises or "aha" moments did they have about what would be most valuable for these stakeholders?
- 10.** What were the results of your secondary research? (500 words or less; Section 3B) Describe the major findings that team members have gained through secondary research from existing surveys, reports, studies, and other data sources.
- 11.** Who are your team members? (Section 2C). Please list team lead[s] first and designate them as such. For each team member, please include the following:
- Name
 - Title and Organization
 - City and State
 - Phone number and email
 - A personalized statement of
 - A personalized brief statement (no more than 150 words each) from each team member that explains why the member wants to participate in the project; indicates their commitment working with the team on its chosen mobility challenge for the *entire* planning grant process and participate in all activities; describes the team member's expertise, experience, and/or insights related to the team's chosen community mobility challenge the member will bring to the team; and identifies the personal and professional strengths the member will bring to the team's project. This statement should be written by each individual. ***Statements that have been clearly duplicated and simply signed by team members will not be accepted.***
- 12.** Preferred on-site dates for two in-person workshops. The team will designate three choices of dates (1st, 2nd, and 3rd preferences) for both the Sensemaking and Idea Generation on-site workshops. Those dates must fall between October 1 and November 30, 2021 (travel restrictions permitting). NCMM prefers these dates occur within a consecutive three-day period (e.g., Oct. 7-9, with Sensemaking workshop on Nov. 7, NCMM staff work day to process sensemaking on Nov. 8, and Nov. 9 for Idea Generation workshop). However, if teams need to choose dates during different weeks (e.g., Oct. 10 and Nov. 15), NCMM will consider their request.

B. Proposed Budget

1. Grant budget form

An overall project budget should be provided that gives, at a minimum, the breakdown of proposed expenses. Please use the following table for creating your own proposed budget form.

Each budget item proposed must be described in the accompanying budget narrative. Not all applicants will have expenses in each line item; simply enter a zero in items that will not be used. All contracts entered into as a result of this solicitation will be required to comply with all standard federal accounting requirements.

Item	Grant Funds	In-kind Funds (optional)	Total Project Funds
1. Direct labor salaries or wages			
2. Fringe benefits			
3. Contracted/consultant services			
4. Travel			
5. Meeting costs			
6. Other direct costs (specify)			
7. Indirect costs			
8. TOTAL GRANT BUDGET (requested funds not to exceed \$25,000)			

2. Grant budget narrative.

Provide justification for each of the budget categories above. Please note the following:

- Consultant services may include artistic/graphic illustration, prototype design, and secondary research.
- Other direct costs may include local travel, teleconference, telephone/fax, printing, office space, among other costs.
- Indirect costs. Please provide documentation regarding the indirect rate.
- If *optional* in-kind support will be provided by the applicant organization (e.g., supplementing project staff salaries) and/or key partners, please provide details on this type of support. In-kind support may include providing staff support, free meeting space, meeting refreshments, postage, etc. In-kind support is encouraged but not required.
- Grant funds are provided to support planning and development activities. Direct services may not be supported with grant funds. In addition, vehicles or equipment of any kind may not be purchased; however, leasing vehicles and equipment for the purposes of testing a service solution in the marketplace may be paid for with grant funds. Leasing permitted with prior approval only.

C. Commitment Letter

Please submit a one-page letter with your application on behalf of the lead organization, signed by an official or officer who is legally authorized to answer questions about the application, as well as negotiate for and contractually bind the organization. The purpose of this letter is to assure application reviewers that key staff will have adequate time to support the project and assure its success.

The letter should briefly describe the applicant's organizational staffing plan for the project, including the name and title of the person who will have overall day-to-day responsibility for the project and for coordination and contact with the NCMM. The letter must also state that the application is valid as submitted for a period of up to 180 days from the submittal due date.

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) is a national technical assistance center created to facilitate communities in adopting mobility management strategies. The NCMM is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, and is operated through a consortium of three national organizations— the Community Transportation Association of America (lead), Easterseals Inc., and the American Public Transportation Association. Learn more at: www.nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org or www.nc4mm.org.