

## Request for Proposals

### 2024 Ready-to-Launch Grants

### Information and Application Package

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**Applications for this opportunity are due November 17, 2023, 11:59 pm ET**

- Has your multi-sector, community-based team developed an innovative transportation solution on behalf of community members who are currently underserved?
- Is your community's goal to help these residents become more fully engaged in economic opportunities, improve their health and well-being, and/or become more integrated into their community?
- Has your team followed the human-centered design or a similar process that in the development and testing of that solution to ensure that it will have the highest potential of success when implemented? Has it gone through a customer-inspired planning process, followed by in-depth testing of the proposed solution for feasibility, effectiveness, and financial viability?
- Does your team have a high degree of confidence that the planned solution will effectively serve customers' needs, be operationally feasible, and be financially sustainable?
- Has your team developed a detailed operations plan for its solution and now is looking for funding and guidance in further testing that solution in a real-world application?

If your community can answer yes to any of these questions, then you are invited to apply for the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)'s Ready-to-Launch Grants. Each grant of up to \$75,000 will allow the community to pilot its planned solution. NCMM staff will provide technical assistance to the grantees throughout the implementation of these grants. The Ready-to-Launch grants are supported with funding from the Federal Transit Administration.

This application packet contains the goals and activities for the 2024 Ready-to-Launch Grants, as well as the necessary materials and instructions for submitting a complete application.

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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 current subrecipient of, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. Teams who have previously received an NCMM Ready-to-Launch grant are not eligible to apply for this opportunity.

### What is the application deadline?

November 17, 2023, 11:59 PM ET

### How much is the grant for?

Up to \$75,000

### How many grants will be awarded?

NCMM plans to select up to four applicants for this opportunity.

## 1B. Goals

The goal of the NCMM's Ready-to-Launch Grants is to enable multi-sector community teams to pilot promising mobility solutions, the development of which was inspired and informed by the results of community research. Further, this opportunity is designed to

- Allow communities to pilot an innovative transportation solution that will allow underserved community members to become more fully engaged in economic opportunities, improve their health and well-being, and/or become more integrated into their community
- Guide communities in using this pilot opportunity to test and confirm the feasibility of innovative transportation solutions in real-world applications and learn where these solutions need to be further revised
- Provide communities with technical assistance throughout this pilot phase
- Assist communities in preparing to seek funding for a full-scale roll-out of their solutions
- Guide communities in gathering outcome data regarding their solution to use as they seek sustainable funding for long-term implementation

## 1C. 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 options below]

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

Teams will also explain, in a succinct sentence, the problem statement they chose to focus on in planning and testing their solution. This will be the team's "Focus Question."

## 1D. Define the Target Population and Target Community

Applicant teams will identify the specific target population of community members they are seeking to serve in their solution. The target population will be the same or similar cohort of low-income, elderly, or underserved community members that the team focused on as they designed their solution in their planning activities. Applicants should fully describe their target population, explain why they chose that population, and demonstrate how the population is currently underserved (e.g., because of income status, minority status, location, a pre-existing condition, or other reason).

Applicants will also define the "community" they addressed in their design process and will continue to address in this pilot phase. "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; very large geographic areas may make the project more difficult to manage.

## 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 current 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 be registered in the federal System for Award Management database (<https://www.sam.gov>) and provide their unique entity identifier (UEI) with their application.

## **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 NCMC staff. All applicants are encouraged to have a co-lead from another organization. In particular, if the lead organization is not a transportation entity, we require the inclusion of a co-lead who is a transportation professional.

## **2C. Advisory Committee and Essential Partners**

The applicant must provide a description of the partners essential to the implementation of the pilot, describe their role, and include a statement of them showing their commitment to the project throughout the entire Ready-to-Launch project.

The applicant must also designate and show commitment for active involvement by a multi-sector, community-based advisory group as the solution is piloted. Membership for this committee must be drawn from organizations most relevant to the focus question the team will address.

## **3. Grant Activities and Details**

### **3A. Grant Timeline**

October 5, 2023	Request for proposals (RFP) announced
November 16, 2023	Last day to submit questions
November 17, 2023	Applications due by 11:59 pm ET
December 2024	Projects completed

### **3B. Questions**

The point of contact for the Ready-to-Launch grants is Will Reckley. All questions should be submitted in writing to Will at [reckley@ctaa.org](mailto:reckley@ctaa.org); responses will be posted at [nc4mm.org/ready-to-launch-2024](https://nc4mm.org/ready-to-launch-2024).

### 3C. Pre-Application Activities

Before submitting an application, the community-based team must be able to demonstrate the following regarding the solution it is proposing:

1. It is a **pilot or demonstration** of a **new idea or service** that reflects local needs, not the expansion of an existing service. The solution also should have emerged from the human-centered design planning process or similar process (see 3D, below).
2. The solution reflects local needs **and preferences** through input from end users and other stakeholders
3. The solution clearly addresses transportation equity with regard to the effect that transportation planning, investment, and operations have for low-income, elderly, individuals with a disability, and/or underserved individuals and supports the growth of transportation options to allow low-income community members achieve one of the following goals:
  - Access economic opportunity (e.g., training, education, jobs)
  - Access destinations related to health and well-being, including peer support groups
  - Access community and social opportunities
  - Address other social determinants of health not listed above
4. The community-based team that developed the solution did so with representation from the target population and at least one mobility professional from a public or nonprofit transportation agency.
5. The team can document that it used the human-centered design (or “design thinking”) process or a similar process that involves the same activities, as outlined in the [Creating Innovative Transportation Solutions](#) course developed by NCMM. Those steps are also described further below (Section 3D)
6. The team can document the solution 1) meets the needs of customers and stakeholder agencies/organizations and has a high likelihood of being used by those for whom it was designed; 2) is operationally feasible; and 3) is financially viable.
7. The team has developed an operations plan that provides very detailed steps on exactly how the solution will be implemented. This should include details related to vehicles, operators, software and hardware, customer interfaces, funding, ride scheduling procedures, etc. A template is attached to this RFP.

### 3D. Human-Centered Design Process

Applicants must provide documentation (written description, results, images, etc.) that its team engaged in the following steps of the human-centered design process, or a similar process, in designing its solution:

- Access economic opportunity (e.g., training, education, jobs)
- Access destinations related to health and well-being, including peer support groups

- Access community and social opportunities
  - Address other social determinants of health not listed above
1. Implemented primary research with the target population related to one or more of the four focus areas for these grants: 1) access economic opportunity (e.g., training, education, jobs), 2) access destinations related to health and well-being, including peer support groups, 3) access community and social opportunities, or 4) address other social determinants of health not listed above. Primary research means research data gathered by the applicant from within the community, from the target population, and from those who serve the target population. **Data needs to be more specific than just a community survey and preferably reflects insight gathered through one-on-one interaction with end users and other stakeholders.**
  2. Gathered secondary data related to the focus area. Secondary research means information gathered from previously conducted studies.
  3. As a team, analyzed the primary and secondary data to develop insights as to the needs of the target population and what type of solutions would work best for them.
  4. Implemented one or more idea-generation sessions to create 2-3 potential solutions, using the insights for inspiration.
  5. Tested the potential solutions with members of the target audience and other stakeholders to determine if the solutions: 1) would respond to the target audience’s needs and be readily adopted by them (“customer desirability” test); 2) could be operationalized (“operational feasibility” test); and 3) could attract and retain sustainable funding (“financial viability” test). The solution being proposed for the pilot should be the best from among the 2-3 solutions tested.

### 3E. What to Expect During the Grant

#### Activities

The following are key activities in the teams’ “Ready-to-Launch” projects:

- Accepted teams are assigned an NCMM facilitator. Throughout the period of performance of the grants, NCMM will provide technical assistance, training, and support services to grantees that will enable their projects to successfully comply with human services transportation coordination requirements and to enhance the coordination of federal resources for human services transportation.
- Facilitator works with the team to review the operations plan and identify any missing information. The team shares updated versions of the plan with their facilitator each month.
- Facilitator works with the team to develop performance metrics for pilot implementation of the project.
- Team participates in monthly calls with facilitator throughout the process.

- Facilitator is available to provide technical assistance to teams as they work through any obstacles they encounter.
- Peer-sharing webinars, hosted by NCMM, are available to all teams.
- Final report by the team following template provided by NCMM.

### **Eligible grant-funded activities**

Each of the three chosen communities will receive up to \$75,000, paid to the lead applicant. Funds will be distributed on a cost reimbursement basis.

Eligible activities are those found under 49 U.S. Code § 5314 (a)(2) Technical Assistance. Applicants should keep in mind that the purpose of these grants is to pilot an on-the-ground transportation solution. Examples of those activities are listed below:

- Leasing or renting of vehicles, equipment necessary to implement the pilot. The grant funds **cannot** be used for major capital purchases, such as buying buses. These types of purchases should go through the applicable state's normal transportation grant processes.
- Personnel costs related to implementing the pilot activities, including time and travel costs for lead organization and partners
- Contracted transportation services for the duration of the pilot
- Mobility management activities
- Partnership activities that support cross-sector coordination
- Marketing of and community outreach regarding the pilot service
- Integration of technology into transportation that serves the target audience
- Miscellaneous purchases related directly to the implementation of the pilot
- Meeting/training/travel costs
- Other direct costs, including office space rental/utilities (to be calculated based on personnel costs), telephone/fax, photocopying, printing, postage, project-related supplies
- Indirect costs related to the staffing and other costs involved in testing the planned solution. Applicants should document their indirect cost rate as approved by the federal or state government in the application or if it will use a de minimus (10%) indirect rate.

### **Convening Advisory Group**

The team lead is expected to convene the advisory group at least monthly to review the progress of the pilot and provide those names with their application. They should provide input on the following:

- Establishing baseline measures and progress performance measures
- Understanding the impact on the target population
- Ways to build on relationships with non-transportation partner organizations through the pilot
- Leads on and support for sustainable funding opportunities



### 3F. Grantee Reporting Requirements

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

1. **Monthly activities.** Teams will participate in monthly phone calls with their NCMM facilitator, as well as participate in occasional peer-sharing webinars hosted by NCMM.
2. **Written reports.** Teams will complete a short report to accompany their monthly reimbursement requests, as well as a final report. Templates will be provided.
3. **Presentations.** Teams will be expected to help NCMM disseminate the results of the pilot project through virtual and (as appropriate) in-person events. However, the costs of any such in-person presentation do not need to be built into the applicant's budget, as NCMM will cover the costs of this information-sharing with the mobility management field.
4. **Tracking of performance measures and key learnings.** The team should provide baseline data that demonstrate the scope of the problem. It should also describe the team's expected outcomes from the on-the-ground testing of the solution. NCMM staff will work with the team to craft detailed performance metrics, which the team will report on a monthly basis, reflecting what the team is learning about customer adoption, operational feasibility, and financial viability of the planned solution.

## 4. Application Review

### 4A. Review Process

Ready-to-Launch grants will be awarded to qualified applicants, chosen through a competitive process and evaluated by NCMM's review committee, using the evaluation criteria specified below. NCMM will choose those projects receiving the highest recommendations by its review committee.

### 4B. Initial screening criteria

All applications received will be screened by NCMM staff to determine that the minimum requirements noted in the application have been met. Only those applications that meet the minimum requirements will be forwarded for review. Initial screening criteria include the following:

- An eligible applicant must submit the application.
- Complete application, in a single pdf document, must be received by email by the deadline of November 17, 2023, 11:59 pm Eastern time
- Total grant funds requested cannot exceed \$75,000.
- The applicant has included a detailed operations plan.
- The applicant has provided documentation that it has followed the key steps, outlined above, of the human-centered design process in developing the solution to be piloted.

## 4C. Application scoring

Applications that meet minimum requirements will be sent to the review committee. They will then be rated on the basis of highly recommended (HR), recommended (R), and not recommended (NR) in the following areas:

1. **Scope of the project and target outcomes**
  - a. The proposed scope of the project will address a significant transportation challenge related to one of the three focus areas noted above.
  - b. The extent to which the team demonstrates that it followed the human-centered design process in designing and initially testing the solution.
2. **Demonstration of how the human-centered design process, or a similar process, was used.**

The human-centered design process ensures the solution to be piloted emerged from the applicant's research in the community; that the community vetted the solution, before preparing to pilot, by surfacing and testing its assumptions regarding the solution; and that the applicant created an operations plan to guide the implementation of the pilot.
3. **Comprehensiveness of the operations plan.** The plan must include at least these elements:
  - a. Synopsis of the challenge being addressed, including a description of the target population and the geographic area
  - b. Short description of the solution, including any applicable services or products.
  - c. Detailed, step-by-step plan for implementing the solution described in the operations plan (full plan to be attached to the application)
4. **Commitment of essential partners.** The applicant provides a description of the partners who will play an essential role in piloting the solution. Each essential partner has indicated her/his commitment to fulfill the stated role, fully described in the application, throughout the entire Ready-to-Launch project
5. **Commitment of advisory committee.** The applicant lists the members of a multi-sector, community-based advisory group, membership of which is drawn from organizations most relevant to the focus question the team will address in the pilot. Each member has indicated her/his commitment to serving on the advisory committee throughout the entire Ready-to-Launch pilot project.
6. **Organizational capacity.** The applicant provides evidence of the organization's capacity to undertake this project and complete all required deliverables within the grant period.
7. **Performance measure data.** The application includes baseline data gathered during the planning/research phase as the solution was developed, the applicant's expected outcomes from on-the-ground testing of the planned solution, and a general description of how it proposes to measure those outcomes.
8. **Budget**
  - a. In applicant's budget, the projected costs and rationale for those costs are clearly explained.
  - b. Projected budget is reasonable for the proposed scope of activities.

## 4D. Selection

Project recommendations will be made based on the degree to which the applications meet each of the requirements described in Section C above. Overall ratings will be determined as follows:

- Applications rated as highly recommended (HR) will be those that receive “HR” in at least five areas noted in nos. 1–8, above, and receive no “NR” ratings.
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will be those that receive “HR” in at least three areas noted in nos. 1–8, above, and receive no “NR” ratings.
- Applications rated as not recommended (NR) will be those that receive “NR” in one or more of the areas noted in nos. 1–8, above.

In making final project selections, NCMM may also consider geographic diversity, diversity in the type of project, challenge addressed, and proposed solution, and potential that the project can serve as a model solution in the future.

## 5. Application Instructions

### 5A. General Instructions

**Deadline for receipt of application.** November 17, 2023 11:59 p.m. Eastern time

**Directions for submitting application.** Email a single pdf file of your application to Will Reckley, [reckley@ctaa.org](mailto:reckley@ctaa.org). Only e-mailed applications will be accepted.

### 5B. Minimum Requirements

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

- Complete application, in a single pdf document, must be received by email by the deadline of November 17, 2023, 11:59 pm Eastern time
- The application addresses all required elements, including a detailed operations plan, and documentation that it has followed the key steps, outlined above, of the human-centered design process in developing the planned solution
- The lead organization meets eligibility requirements and the lead organization or similarly composed team has not previously received an NCMM Ready-to-Launch grant (see 2A, above) and has provided a UEI number.
- Total grant funds requested cannot exceed \$75,000.

## 5C. Elements of the Application Package

The application package includes three sections:

1. The grant application proposal narrative
2. The grant budget form and accompanying budget narrative
3. Lead organization, partner, and advisory committee member commitment letters
4. Operations Plan

## 5D. Proposal narrative

Applicants who wish to have their proposal considered **must follow the outline below** and respond to all points.

- a. Title. Project title
- b. Community. Name of community in which the project will take place, such as northwest Florida or Johnson City. (See Section 1D, above)
- c. Challenge area and Focus question
- d. Funds requested. Total amount of NCMM project funds requested (maximum \$75,000)
- e. Lead organization. The official legal name, address, telephone number, and DUNS number of the organization that is submitting the application and would be contracting with the Community Transportation Association of America on behalf of the NCMM. (See Section 2A, above)
- f. Eligibility. A statement on how the lead organization qualifies as an eligible applicant. (See Section 2A, above)
- g. 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. Include address, phone, and email. (See Section 2B, above)
- h. Letter of commitment from the Executive Director/CEO of the applicant organization. The letter should state the agency head's opinion regarding the project's value to the organization's overall mission and a commitment to continue to support the pilot implementation project if it is funded. (Note: Applicants that are unable to obtain a letter from the CEO/Executive Director should obtain a letter of support reflecting the organization's hierarchy and explain why the attached letter shows agency commitment.)
- i. Community description (150 words or less). Brief description of the service area that will constitute the "community" for the project, including the geographic characteristics of the area, such as urban, rural, suburban, tribal, and frontier, and any other pertinent geographic characteristics (e.g., high elevations, limited access routes, remote areas, etc.). *Note*: "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; as very large geographic areas may be more difficult to manage. (See Section 1D, above)
- j. Project description. (500 words or less). An executive summary of the project that reflects the key elements of the transportation solution that will be tested.
  - k. Target population description. (150 words or less). A description of the full target population to benefit by the community's solution. (See Section 1D, above)
  - l. Description of process through which the solution was developed (500 words or less).  
Written and visual documentation that the team has followed the human-centered design process. (See Sections 3C and 3D, above.)
  - m. Partner and advisory committee member information and commitment statements (See Section 2C, above). Please list project lead[s] first and designate them as such. For the lead and each partner organization, please include the following information:
    - 1) Name of primary contact
    - 2) Title and organization
    - 3) City/State
    - 4) Telephone
    - 5) Email
    - 6) Partner or committee member's role
    - 7) Commitment letter, written by the partner explaining i) why the partner wants to participate in the project; ii) what its role will be in the project; and iii) what outcomes are most important to that partner organization. ***Statements that have been clearly duplicated and simply signed by team members will not be accepted.***
  - m. Consultants/contractors. If consultants/contractors will be used to perform any of the work to be undertaken in the proposed testing of the solution, the individual consultant and/or consultant firm should be identified in the grant application and the reason(s) for using a consultant should be specified, including the specific functions the consultant will perform. If the consultant has not yet been selected, then a plan for selecting a consultant within the first month of the grant period is required, including assurances that the process will not delay grant activities.
  - n. Performance metrics. The team should provide baseline data that demonstrate the scope of the problem as it relates to the project's focus. It should also describe the team's expected outcomes from the testing of the solution and a general description of how it proposes to measure those outcomes. Once its application has been accepted, NCMM staff will work with the team to craft detailed performance metrics that will look at what the team is learning about customer adoption, operational feasibility, and financial viability of the solution.

## 5E. Budget and Narrative

### Grant budget form

An overall project budget should be provided that gives, at a minimum, the breakdown of proposed expenses. Each budget item proposed must be described in an accompanying budget narrative. All applicants must use the format in the chart below. (Note: 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. Travel			
4. Consultant/contracted services			
5. Meeting costs			
6. Direct costs related to the implementation of the pilot (give detailed listing)			
7. Indirect costs (provide documentation of rate)			
8. TOTAL GRANT BUDGET (requested funds not to exceed \$75,000)			

**Grant budget narrative**

Provide justification for each of the budget categories above. Please note that *no in-kind support or local match is required*. However, if in-kind support will be provided by the applicant organization (e.g., supplementing project staff salaries) and/or key partners, please provide broad details on this type of support. In-kind support may include providing staff support, free meeting space, meeting refreshments, postage, etc.

**5F. Required Attachments**

- Transmittal and commitment letter from lead agency
- Commitment letters from all partners essential to the project and from advisory committee members
- Documentation of the team’s implementation of the human-centered design process in developing the transportation solution to be tested
- Operations plan for the transportation solution to be tested

The point of contact for the Ready-to-Launch grants is Will Reckley, [reckley@ctaa.org](mailto:reckley@ctaa.org). All questions should be submitted in writing to this email address; responses will be posted at [nc4mm.org/ready-to-launch-2024](http://nc4mm.org/ready-to-launch-2024).