

RAIL

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD



FY22 CRISI Grant Program NOFO Office Hours — Project Narrative Best Practices

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Presenter

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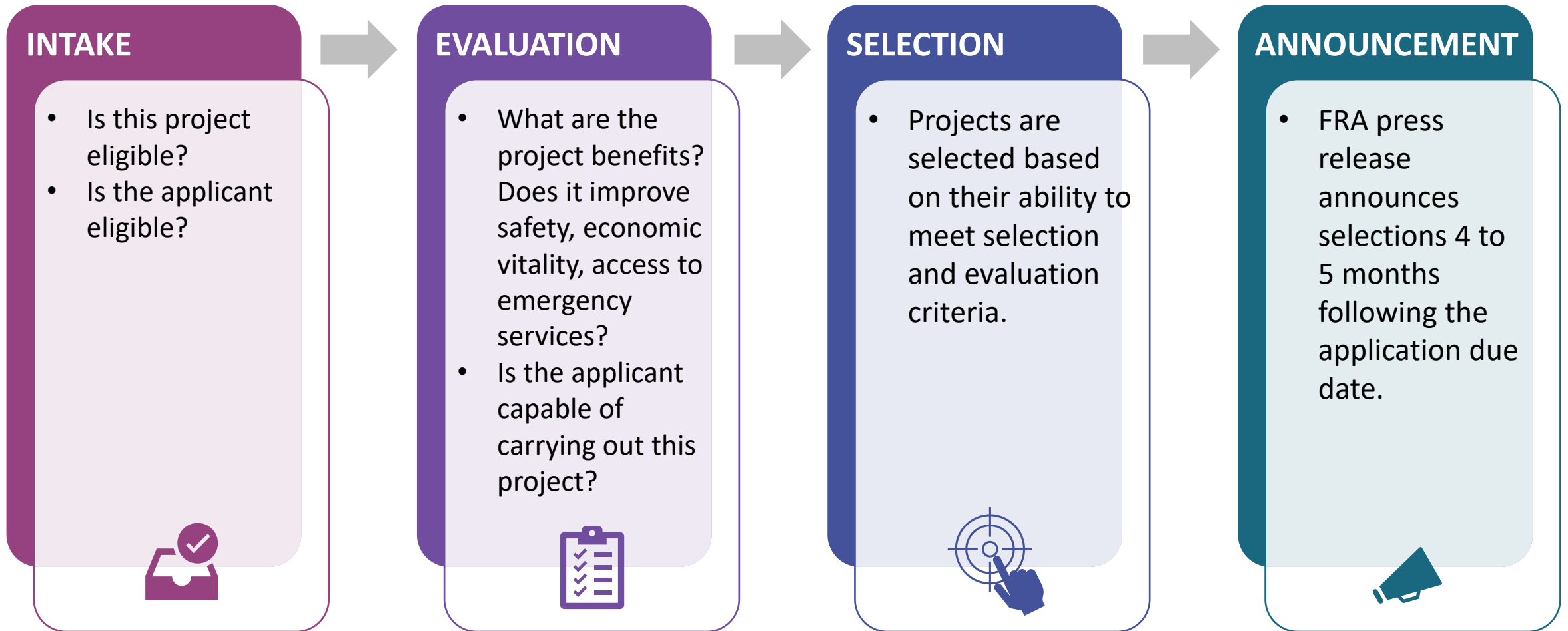


Agenda

- 1 Overview of the competitive grant process
- 2 Components of the narrative
 - Cover Page to Environmental Readiness
- 3 Tools and resources
- 4 Questions



FRA Competitive/Discretionary Grant Review Process



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Narrative Outline

- I. Cover Page
- II. Project Summary
- III. Project Funding
- IV. Applicant Eligibility
- V. Project Eligibility
- VI. Detailed Project Description
- VII. Project Location
- VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- IX. Project Implementation and Management
- X. Planning Readiness for Tracks 2 and 3
- XI. Design Readiness for Track 3
- XII. Environmental Readiness
- XIII. Strategic Goals

- ☑ Structure your project narrative in accordance with the outline specified in the NOFO
- ☑ Include all elements identified in the outline
- ☑ Follow the instructions for each element
- ☑ Adhere to 25-page limit – Cover Page does not count against limit

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Cover Page

Use a table or create a list:

- Project Title
- Funding Requested
- Proposed Match
 - Sources
 - In-kind?
- Other Federal Funding – only if it applies
- Total Project Cost
- Did you submit an application for a previous grant? Tell us which program.
- City/State Location
- Congressional District
- Planning Documents – State Rail Plan, State Action Plan, State Freight Plan, Transportation Improvement Plan, State Transportation Improvement Plan, MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, State Long Range Transportation Plan?
 - Other
- Is this a rural project? State percentage of total project cost
- Does this project support development of new intercity passenger rail services routes including alignments for existing routes?
- Does the project support development and implementation of measures to prevent trespassing and reduce associated injuries and fatalities?
 - If Yes: Is this project located in a county with the most pedestrian trespasser casualties identified in FRA's National Strategy to Prevent Trespassing on Railroad Property?
- Is project seeking funds for Maglev?

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Summary

- ✓ *Briefly describe the project in **4 to 6 sentences***
 - ✓ *Tell us what your project is, where it is, how much money you are requesting and why*
- ✓ *Keep it simple*
- ✓ *Don't frontload all your information*
- ✓ *Examples – [FY21 CRISI Press Release](#)*



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Funding

- ☑ **TABLES are always welcome**
 - ☑ Only include eligible costs
- ☑ Specify each source of non-Federal match
 - ☑ Supporting documentation
 - ☑ Provide details about in-kind match
 - ☑ Indicate public- vs. private-sector match
- ☑ Identify if the proposed match will not be available until a certain date or if funds must be spent by a deadline
 - ☑ State Competitive Funding or other competitive federal sources

Funding Source	Amount	Percentage
CRISI Grant Request	\$XX	80%
Local Funding	\$XX	10%
State Funding	\$XX	5%
Railroad Co. Funding - Private	\$XX	5%
Total Match	\$XXX	100%

Task/Component	Cost	Percentage
Preliminary Engineering	\$XX	50%
NEPA	\$XX	50%
Total Cost	\$XXX	100%

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Applicant and Project Eligibility

Look at the NOFO

- Match Project to eligible project type
- Match Applicant to eligible applicant type

Make Your Case

- Describe how your project meets the criteria and how you meet the criteria

References

- Supporting documentation
- Citations and hyperlinks

1. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible applicants under CRISI:

- a. A State (including the District of Columbia).
- b. A group of States.
- c. An Interstate Compact.
- d. A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by 1 or more States.
- e. A political subdivision of a State.
- f. Amtrak or another rail carrier that provides intercity rail passenger transportation (as rail carrier and intercity rail passenger transportation are defined in section 24102).
- g. A Class II railroad or Class III railroad, including any holdover Class II railroad or Class III railroad (as those terms are defined in section 20102).
- h. An association representing 1 or more railroads described in paragraphs (a) through (g).
- i. A federally recognized Indian Tribe.
- j. Any rail carrier or rail equipment manufacturer in partnership with the entities described in paragraphs (a) through (e).
- k. The Transportation Research Board and any entity with which the development of rail-related research, including cooperative programs.
- l. A University transportation center engaged in rail-related research.
- m. A non-profit labor organization representing a class or craft.

A. ELIGIBILITY

The following are eligible for funding under this NOFO:

- i. Deployment of railroad safety technology, including positive train control and rail integrity inspection systems. PTC examples include: Back office systems; wayside, communications and onboard hardware equipment; software; equipment installation; spectrum; any component, testing and training for the implementation of PTC systems; and interoperability. Maintenance and operating expenses incurred after a PTC system is placed in revenue service are ineligible. Railroad safety technology and rail integrity inspection system examples include: broken rail detection and warning systems; track intrusion systems; and hot box detectors, wheel impact load detectors, and other safety improvements.^[50]
- ii. A capital project as defined in section 22901(2), except that a project shall not be required to be in a State rail plan developed under chapter 227.
- iii. A capital project identified by the Secretary as being necessary to address congestion or safety challenges affecting rail service.
- iv. A capital project identified by the Secretary as being necessary to reduce congestion and facilitate ridership growth in intercity passenger rail transportation along heavily traveled rail corridors.
- v. A highway-rail grade crossing improvement project, including installation, repair, or improvement of grade separations, railroad crossing signals, gates, and related technologies, highway traffic signalization, highway lighting and crossing approach signage, roadway improvements such as medians or other barriers, railroad crossing panels and surfaces, and safety engineering improvements to reduce risk in quiet zones or potential quiet zones.
- vi. A rail line relocation or improvement project.
- vii. A capital project to improve short-line or regional railroad infrastructure.

Best Practices – Project Narrative

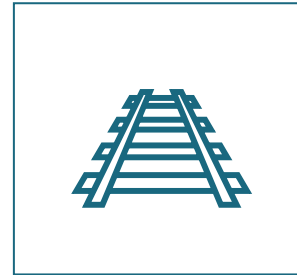
Detailed Project Description – General

- ✓ Thoroughly discuss the transportation challenges and benefits
- ✓ Include data to support project benefits
- ✓ Describe how project components are related and will be sequenced
- ✓ Include photographs or diagrams
- ✓ Identify all host railroads, operators, and beneficiaries
- ✓ Identify proposed performance measures



Don't let this be the only time you talk about project benefits

VI. Detailed Project Description



Picture of Project

Simple description of challenges and proposed solution. Relevant history of specific project.

- These XX grade crossings are dangerous, and we want to create an overpass.
- This project will improve congestion along X rail route decreasing trip time by X minutes.



Location of Project Area

Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative benefits of this project.

- XXX reduction in emissions
- How and Why

Summary of who benefits.

- Town residents
- Emergency Services
- Freight

Host Railroad – status of negotiations

- Draft negotiation document
- Summary of ongoing conversations, demonstration of support

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Detailed Project Description – Set-Aside Specifics

- ☑ Grade Crossing Information
 - ☑ Crossing #, Infrastructure Owner, State Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Action Plan reference
- ☑ Heavily Traveled Rail Corridor Information
- ☑ PTC Information
- ☑ Workforce Development and Training Information
- ☑ Trespassing and Injury and Fatality Prevention and Reduction
- ☑ Emissions Reduction Information
- ☑ Community Emergency Plans
- ☑ Maglev Grants

V. Project Description



Picture of Project



Picture of Project

Simple description of challenges and proposed solution. Relevant history **OF** project.

- Our Community Emergency plan will create a safe environment to transport hazardous materials by coordinating with X,Y,Z agencies.
- Our Workforce Program will partner with X Union and Trains USA to develop realistic training scenarios.

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Location

- ☑ Identify city, county, and state where project is located
 - ☑ Congressional district of project location
- ☑ Include a map of the project – multiple, if necessary
- ☑ Identify railroad mileposts
- ☑ Geospatial data – longitude and latitude



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Evaluation Criteria

Project Benefits

Effects on system and service performance

Effects on safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience

Efficiencies from improved integration with other modes

Technical Merits

SOW tasks and subtasks outlined are appropriate

Demonstrates strong project readiness

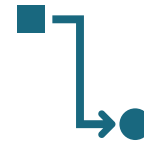
Technical qualifications and experience of personnel

Participation in the financing, construction, or operation of the proposed project.

Project will use innovative technologies, project delivery, incentivize the use of innovative financing

Legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project and satisfactory continuing control

Consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by DOT



- ☑ Quantitative and Qualitative
 - ☑ Relevant benefits only – don't digress to other projects
- ☑ Address each component
 - ☑ **Address it again!**
 - ☑ Separate out each section – don't bunch



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Additional Considerations

Selection Preferences

Proposed Federal share of total project costs does not exceed 50 percent

Net benefits of the grant funds will be maximized considering the Benefit-Cost Analysis, including anticipated private and public benefits relative to the costs of the proposed project

Projects for the development and implementation of measures to prevent trespassing and reduce associated injuries and fatalities that are located in the top 25 counties with the most pedestrian casualties – only applies to research projects – eligibility #11

DOT Strategic Goals – Section XIII

Safety

Equitable Economic Strength and Improving Core Assets

Infrastructure Investment and Job Creation

Supporting Resilient Supply Chain and Economic Opportunity

Equity and Barriers to Opportunity

Climate Change and Sustainability.

Transformation



- ☑ Quantitative and Qualitative
 - ☑ Relevant Benefits only – don't digress to other projects
- ☑ Address each component
 - ☑ **Address it again!**
 - ☑ Separate out each section – don't bunch



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Project Implementation and Management

- ✓ Highlight applicant's past experiences managing and overseeing similar projects, including FRA- or DOT-funded projects
 - ✓ RAISE (TIGER, BUILD) or CRISI
 - ✓ Federal Transit Administration or Federal Highway Administration grants
 - ✓ State grants
 - ✓ Management of local funding
- ✓ Describe expected arrangements for project contracting, contract oversight, change-order management, risk management, and conformance with Federal requirements for progress reporting
 - ✓ Status of a Project Management Plan
 - ✓ Experience counts – don't leave it out



Assume your reviewer has never heard of you!

Best Practices – Project Narrative

Planning Readiness for Tracks 2 and 3

- ✓ Provide us with information about the Systems Planning and Project Planning processes that ultimately led to the proposed capital project
 - ✓ Cite sources – Service Development Plan, State or Regional Rail Plan or similar planning document!

Design Readiness for Track 3

- ✓ Provide us with information to demonstrate the maturity of project design including completion of Preliminary Engineering
 - ✓ Cite sources – Website links or additional documentation



Best Practices – Project Narrative

Environmental Readiness for Track 3

- ☑ *If NEPA is **complete***: Provide copy of NEPA document or link
- ☑ *If NEPA is **not started***: Provide detailed project description and description of setting/land use, with visuals
- ☑ *If NEPA is **underway***: Provide current status, expected completion date, and type of document

- ☑ Provide as much known information about project description, project location, anticipated impacts, anticipated local/state/federal permits as possible
- ☑ FRA reviewers will be determining environmental readiness based only on the information provided with the application
- ☑ Provide **more** environmental information than less
- ☑ Describe project planning done to date
- ☑ Document any past or present environmental studies associated with your proposed project in the grant application, including:
 - ☑ Any previously approved FRA, FTA, or FHWA project related to the grant proposal



In summary... help your reviewer

- Keep it simple and straight forward
 - More information is good...as long as it's relevant
 - Supporting Documentation – submission vs. hyperlink
 - Repetition is key – don't sell yourself short
 - **No detective work**
 - Benefits, costs, scope, project stage
 - Qualitative and Quantitative
- **No Assumptions**
 - Location
 - Technical experience
 - Project



Narrative Tools

I. Cover Page

- NOFO

II. Project Summary

- [FY21 CRISI Press Release](#)

III. Project Funding

- NOFO
- [CFR § 200.306 on In-Kind contributions and matching](#)
- [FRA SOW – Budget Template](#)

IV. Applicant Eligibility

- NOFO

V. Project Eligibility

- NOFO

VI. Detailed Project Description

- NOFO

VII. Project Location

- [Justice40 Census Tracts](#)
- [Congressional Districts](#)
- [Rural Eligibility](#)
- [FRA Safety GIS Map](#)

VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

- [Grade Crossing Inventory](#)

IX. Project Implementation and Management

- [FRA Reporting](#)
- [FRA Statement of Work Templates](#)

Narrative Tools

X. Planning Readiness for Tracks 2 and 3

- NOFO
- Relevant Planning Documents

XI. Design Readiness for Track 3 (FD/Construction)

- NOFO

XII. Environmental Readiness

- [FRA CE Worksheet](#)
- [FRA CE Companion Guide](#)
- [FRA NEPA Procedures](#)
- [FRA YouTube Recording on NEPA and Competitive Grants](#)

XIII. Strategic Goals

XIII. NOFO

XIV. [FY2022-26 U.S DOT Strategic Plan](#)



QUESTIONS?

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