



2024 FRA Rail Program Delivery Workshop

Partnering to Advance Effective Rail Investments

The 2024 FRA Rail Program Delivery Workshop offers a venue to share technical expertise, notable practices, and lessons learned for efficient delivery of federally funded rail projects. For additional resources, visit the [2024 FRA Rail Program Delivery Workshop](#) webpage.

Workshop Sessions

Focus Area 1: Preparing for Grant Application Success

Sessions providing updates and information on FRA initiatives since the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in 2021, highlighting updates in application and grant management practices.

1. FRA Buy America and Related Requirements

REGULAR SESSION¹

This session will address the domestic preference requirements applicable to FRA's grant programs, including statutory requirements (FRA Buy America) and the new requirement for construction materials established in the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA). The waiver process will also be discussed, including how to request a waiver, due diligence, and timelines.

2. Fundamentals of a Benefit Cost Analysis

REGULAR SESSION

This session will cover the typical components of the benefit cost analysis (BCA) portion of a grant application, addressing best practices and available resources. Potential grant applicants will learn how to provide the best evidence possible to support benefits generated by their project. In addition, FRA staff will gain a better understanding of how to conduct BCA reviews.

3. Grant Pre-Application Process, New Requirements, and Tips for Competitive Grant Applications

REGULAR SESSION

This session will focus on two core elements: the pre-application process and tips for successfully developing and submitting grant applications. Presenters will review FRA's rollout of new pre-application materials as well as lessons learned from previous grant cycles. Topics will focus on grant application best practices, eligibility determination, timelines, and how applicants can best prepare for future funding opportunities.

4. Introduction to Terms and Conditions for Discretionary Grants

REGULAR SESSION

This session will provide grant applicants and recipients with an overview of the standard Terms and Conditions for FRA discretionary grant agreements. Attendees will learn how to apply for FRA discretionary grants more effectively, including tools to improve the quality of grant applications.



5. Understanding NEPA and Other Federal Environmental Review Requirements

REGULAR SESSION

This session will provide a high-level overview of the procedural requirements of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations. As NEPA is a decision-making process that functions as an “umbrella” law, the session will also briefly highlight other federal environmental requirements that are generally considered and/or addressed under NEPA. These other requirements may include the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, the Clean Water Act, and others.

Focus Area 2: Technology and Tools

Sessions and demonstrations providing attendees with insights into the use of emerging technology and tools available for project success.

6. Emerging Technologies for Project Success

INTERACTIVE SESSIONⁱⁱ

This session will highlight publicly available FRA tools that help advance rail projects. There will be demonstrations and hands-on opportunities for project sponsors to interact with and use the various technology tools, including the Justice40 Rail Explorer, GradeDec, and the Locomotive Emissions Comparison Tool (LECT).

7. Rail Application Assistance Database

REGULAR SESSION

This session will preview the Rail Application Assistance Database (RAAD) and share anticipated changes set to launch in 2025 to FRA’s discretionary grant application process. Attendees will learn how RAAD will make FRA’s pre-award process more standardized, streamlined, and efficient for applicants. Information will be shared on the opportunity for public comment on RAAD in the Federal Register.

Focus Area 3: Project Development and Delivery

Sessions focused on project lifecycle, with strategies and notable practices to advance project delivery.

8. Advancing Projects Involving Multiple USDOT Modes

REGULAR SESSION

This session will familiarize attendees with how to navigate projects involving FRA and other USDOT modes, including during the project development and implementation stages. Panelists will include FRA specialists involved in planning, environmental review, realty, law, and project management, and they will offer a comprehensive look at established procedures and best practices for engaging with FRA on projects involving multiple USDOT modes.



9. Building Partnerships with Host Railroads

PLENARY SESSIONⁱⁱⁱ

This session will showcase outreach efforts and partnerships between freight railroads and intercity passenger rail service sponsors participating in FRA programs, including state departments of transportation (DOTs) and rail authorities. Attendees will learn about best practices to fostering a successful partnership between freight railroads and project sponsors, with an emphasis on the shared goal of improved and expanded passenger rail.

10. Case Studies in Project Delivery

PLENARY SESSION

This session is an FRA-moderated roundtable about project delivery through an examination of case studies. Covering diverse projects of varying size, scope, and location, a panel of project sponsors will highlight examples of successful project delivery at key decision points and notable practices to overcome challenges during a project's lifecycle. The project sponsor panelists will discuss working with FRA and best practices for using FRA's project delivery framework.

11. Corridor Identification and Development Program

PLENARY SESSION

This session will provide a brief overview of FRA's Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program, followed by guidance on how to create a Service Development Plan (SDP) for proposed corridor improvements. This session will also address the process of transitioning between the various Corridor ID program steps and provide policy updates on the development of the SDP scope, project schedule, and budget under Step 1 of the program.

12. Engineering Task Force Workshop Session

REGULAR SESSION

This session will allow participants to preview and shape the future of improved engineering stewardship and oversight at FRA. Panelists will highlight the recent efforts and activities of the FRA Railroad Development Engineering Task Force (ETF), as well as facilitate an audience Q&A aimed at sharing insights and feedback.

13. Implementation of Railroad Capital Guidance

REGULAR SESSION

This session will provide stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the components of FRA's Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects; this session complements the "Project Readiness: What to Expect When You Are Expecting (an FRA Grant)" session. By understanding the requirements of the Guidance, project sponsors will be better prepared to partner with FRA to advance effective rail investments.



14. NEPA & Section 106 Efficiencies in Project Delivery

PLENARY SESSION

This session will focus on an overview of tools developed by FRA to expedite approval processes for the procedural requirements associated with complying with both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106). Attendees will learn about constraints, timing, programmatic tools, and streamlining opportunities for each of the NEPA and Section 106 processes and how to better anticipate facilitating compliance.

15. Project Readiness: What to Expect When You Are Expecting (an FRA Grant)

PLENARY SESSION

This session will outline FRA's post-selection processes, requirements for grant obligation, and recipient expectations. This session complements the "Implementation of Railroad Capital Guidance" session. Representatives from FRA's Rail Project Delivery offices will identify and share best practices for project delivery implementation and discuss recommended approaches to achieve project readiness.

Engagement Sessions

Establishing the US Department of Transportation Project Delivery Center of Excellence

FIRESIDE CHAT^{iv}

This session features a conversation with Cynthia Maloney, the director of the Project Delivery Center of Excellence. She is also the chief of the Systems Safety and Engineering Division in the Infrastructure Systems and Technology Technical Center at the USDOT Volpe Center. The fireside chat will be hosted by Michael W. Lestingi, FRA's Executive Director.

Customer Service Office Hours with FRA Regional Sponsor Outreach and Project Delivery Staff

INTERACTIVE SESSION

This session will kick off the "Customer Service Office Hours" series, giving attendees an opportunity to interact with the FRA staff members and ask questions.

ⁱ Multiple Regular Sessions will occur concurrently. FRA Workshop Participants can choose between several offerings.

ⁱⁱ Interactive Sessions are informal engagement sessions with an "office hours" style format. Attendees can drop in on a rolling basis during these sessions.

ⁱⁱⁱ Plenary Sessions are intended for all FRA Workshop participants. No other sessions will occur at these times.

^{iv} Fireside Chat sessions will consist of a conversation between a featured guest and a host.