

Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program for Projects Located on the Northeast Corridor (FSP-NEC) Evaluation Criteria Rubrics

Merit Criteria Ratings

FRA will evaluate all eligible and complete applications using the evaluation merit criteria outlined in this section to determine project readiness, technical merit, and project benefits (see NOFO for further detail on criteria). For each of the merit criteria, FRA will use rubric ratings with applied criteria to evaluate whether the applications meet the defined thresholds:

Merit Criteria Ratings – Project Readiness			
For the Project Readiness Criteria described in Section 6(b)(i), FRA will evaluate the application’s responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications, and assign a cumulative Project Readiness risk rating.			
Unacceptable	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk
Application provides limited or no information necessary to assess the project readiness criteria; application does not demonstrate support, progress, or completion of required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites; or application contains one or more significant barriers that would prevent project delivery.	Application provides insufficient information to assess the project readiness criteria; application does not demonstrate sufficient support, progress, or completion of required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites but indicates risk to advancing the project without foreseeable delays; or application contains a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas.	Application provides sufficient information to assess the project readiness criteria; application demonstrates support, progress, or completion on one or more required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites but indicates some risk to advancing the project in a timely manner; and the application does not contain a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas.	Application provides thorough and complete information and evidence to assess the project readiness criteria; application demonstrates strong support, progress, or completion on required Lifecycle Stage(s) pre-requisites and indicates minimal risk to advancing the project in a timely manner; and application does not contain a barrier that would likely prevent project delivery in any of these areas.

Merit Criteria Ratings – Technical Merit

For the Technical Merit Criteria described in Section 6(b)(ii), FRA will evaluate the application’s responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications, and assign a cumulative Technical Merit rating.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Responsive	Highly Responsive
Application provides limited or no information necessary to assess the technical merit criteria, or application demonstrates one or more significant technical challenges that would prevent the applicant from delivering the project.	Application contains insufficient information to assess one or more of the technical merit criteria, or application demonstrates technical challenges that could affect project delivery, but not prevent the applicant from delivering the project.	Application provides sufficient information and evidence to assess the technical merit criteria and demonstrates that the applicant can deliver the project with minimal technical challenges.	Application provides thorough and complete information and evidence to assess the technical merit criteria, and sufficiently demonstrates that the project can be successfully delivered by the applicant.

Merit Criteria Ratings – Project Benefits/Outcomes

For the Project Benefits Criteria described in Section 6(b)(iii), FRA will evaluate the application’s responsiveness to the criteria, including an assessment of supporting justifications, and assign a cumulative Project Benefits rating.

Unacceptable	Acceptable	Responsive	Highly Responsive
Application provides insufficient information necessary to assess the project benefits criteria, and does not demonstrate that the project will achieve its intended benefits.	Application contains limited information to assess the project benefits criteria, or the project is not likely to achieve all of its intended benefits.	Application provides sufficient information to assess the project benefits criteria, and adequately demonstrates that the project will likely achieve its intended benefits.	Application provides thorough and complete information and evidence to assess the project benefits criteria, and sufficiently demonstrates that the project will achieve its intended benefits.

Upon completion of all reviews, FRA will finalize a Combined Merit Rating for each application. This rating is a combination of the results of the three Merit Criteria reviews, specifically Project Readiness, Technical Merit, and Project Benefits criteria ratings. Provided in the Combined Merit Rating Rubric below, each rating has defined parameters to which each application will be assessed:

Combined Merit Rating

Not Recommended	Acceptable	Recommended	Highly Recommended
The application received a combined score of not recommended based on Project Readiness, Technical Merit, and Project Benefits ratings.	The application received a combined score of acceptable based on Project Readiness, Technical Merit, and Project Benefits ratings.	The application received a combined score of recommended based on Project Readiness, Technical Merit, and Project Benefits ratings.	The application received a combined score of highly recommended based on Project Readiness, Technical Merit, and Project Benefits ratings.