

New Freedom

Columbus Urbanized Area Competitive Transportation Selection Process

Overview

New Freedom (U.S.C. Section 5317) is a grant program designed to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. The New Freedom program seeks to expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Available Funding

In the Columbus Urbanized Area, there is funding for New Freedom programs available for a two-year period (2010 – 2012) based on the availability of funds. The amount of \$601,528 will be apportioned for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2008 and 2009 and is available during this application cycle.

Application Prerequisites

Eligible Applicants

- Private non-profit organizations
- State and local government authorities
- Public transportation services
- Private operators of public transportation services

Applicants must be able to ensure that they will be able to meet all federal requirements, including [FY 2010 Certifications and Assurances](#), required by FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program (Section 5307 program). Applicants are encouraged to review these requirements **prior** to applying for funds.

Eligible Geographic Area

This application is for New Freedom projects that are entirely or partially contained in the Columbus Urbanized Area. Please see Appendix A for a Franklin County map.

The Coordinated Plan

The Franklin County Transportation Coordination Plan ("Coordinated Plan") was developed to determine how existing transportation services could be better coordinated and how new funding and other resources should be used to improve transportation services in a coordinated fashion. In addition, this plan is intended to satisfy the requirements of a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan required by federal law. The Coordination Plan gives the Columbus Urbanized Area access to federal funds that can be used for the following transportation purposes:

- Access to jobs for low-income individuals (Job Access Reverse Commute, or JARC)
- Vehicles or other equipment for transporting seniors or people with disabilities (Specialized Transportation)

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- New transportation services for people with disabilities (New Freedom)

Please review the Coordinated Plan prior to completing the application. Please see Appendix A for an executive summary.

Eligible Use of Funds

New Freedom funds may be used for capital, planning, or operating projects, with the following federal and local share breakdown:

- Capital costs: 80% federal/20% local
- Planning/Mobility Management costs: 80% federal/20% local
- Operating costs: 50% federal/50% local

Depending on the type of project, the sponsor will need to contribute between 20% and 50% of the total project costs, called the local share or local match. **Fare revenue or user fees generated on the service to be supported may not be used as matching funds. New Freedom funds may not be used to pay for transit fares or passes.** There are many potential sources for the local match including any non-Department of Transportation federal funds, foundation grants, donations, and state or local funds.

Eligible Projects

Eligible projects that can be funded under the program include, but are not limited to:

- Structured transportation services that are responsive to the individual needs of people with disabilities and older adults. Program strategies should emphasize increased awareness, especially among transportation providers, about how various types of disability – cognitive, physical and visual – impact people’s ability to travel.
- Provide improved, user-friendly information to customers and social service and nonprofit agencies about the types of transportation programs available to people with disabilities and older adults.
- Develop services that increase the reliability and augment existing paratransit and fixed-route service, to ensure a back-up system for people who rely on transportation services. This strategy may emphasize the need to offer alternate services for older adults, and people with disabilities who may experience the lack of available service or reliability with their everyday transportation service provider.
- Develop and implement new programs to provide additional transportation choices for persons with disabilities, individuals with limited incomes and older adults.
- Purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and vanpooling programs; including staff training, administration, and maintenance.
- Provide paratransit services beyond minimum requirements (3/4 mile on either side of a fixed route), including routes that run less frequently.
- Make accessibility improvements to transit centers not designated as key stations.
- Support voucher programs for transportation services offered by human services providers.

Review New Freedom (U.S.C. Section 5317) grant program for a detailed listing of eligible projects.

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Grant Period

New Freedom funds available during this application cycle may be distributed over a two year period (2010 – 2012).

Technical Assistance & Questions

The Question and Answer period will be open from January 1, 2010 – January 31, 2010. All questions must be e-mailed to Tiffany Pannell, Mobility Special Programs Manager, at pannelltd@cota.com. A written response will be provided. All questions and answers will be posted on Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) website for all potential applicants to review. For technical assistance in preparing the FFY 2008 and 2009 New Freedom application for the Columbus Urbanized Area Plan, contact Tiffany Pannell, Mobility Special Programs Manager at COTA, at 614-275-5905.

Competitive Grant Selection Process

COTA is the Designated Recipient for the New Freedom Program for the Columbus Urbanized Area and is responsible for conducting a competitive selection process to award grant funds. Below is a description of the process that will be used.

Solicitation for Applications

COTA will advertise availability of New Freedom funds through the COTA website, MORPC website, e-mail and direct mail to entities that participated in development of the Coordinated Plan.

Application Timeline

The timeline below is for the proposal process (RFP) and is subject to change.

- Monday, December 28, 2009 – Distribute Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Monday, January 11, 2010, 2:00 p.m. – Proposers Conference. Those who plan to submit grant applications are strongly encouraged to attend. An overview of the grant application guidelines and expectations for grant recipients will be presented at the conference
- Monday, February 1, 2010 – Applications due to COTA by 4:00 p.m.

COTA anticipates the following schedule for presenting COTA Mobility Advisory Board recommendations for funding, COTA's approval process required before funds may be distributed.

- Friday, February 12, 2010 – COTA Mobility Advisory Board Evaluation Team review grant applications and make recommendations for funding.
- Wednesday, March 10, 2010 – Final Approval by COTA Mobility Advisory Board.

Application Review

Eligibility

COTA Mobility staff will conduct the initial application screening process to determine eligibility. The COTA Mobility Advisory Board will serve as the grant review committee. All applications will be reviewed for completeness, including submission of all necessary forms and attachments. Applications found to be incomplete will not be considered for potential funding.

The COTA Mobility Advisory Board representing many local governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations and local businesses will review, score and rank each application. The COTA Mobility Advisory Board will make the final recommendations for funded projects.

Scoring Criteria

The following criteria will be used to score and rate project applications for New Freedom funding.

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A. Project Need/Goals and Objectives20 Points

Project Need: An application will be evaluated to determine if the project identifies the specific need to resolve a transportation challenge for the region. Applications presented must describe the transportation challenge in the region. The causes of the needs or problems must be identified as well as the major unresolved or unsolved issues in this area. The problems must be measurable. Documentation to support the needs must be provided.

Project Goals: An application will be evaluated to determine if specific goals for the project are identified. The goal should be the expected outcome the organization desires to accomplish and how the outcome will solve the transportation challenges in the community. The results and benefits defined must be reasonable, specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. The results and benefits must be clearly linked to and supported by activities and project objectives.

Project Objectives: An application will be evaluated to determine specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely objectives for the project proposal. Objectives must be linked to the goals of the project and address the transportation need in the community.

B. Service Area and Target Population10 Points

Service Area: An application will be evaluated to determine if specific service area for project implementation and the target population it plans to serve are met. The application should clearly define the service area by ZIP Codes, city, county and/or physical boundaries of the service areas.

Target Population: An application will be evaluated to determine if the project clearly identifies specific target population for the project. The target population through demographic information such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic levels, legal status, sexual orientation, disability, language, family composition, etc. should be defined.

C. Organizational Profile/Management Plan10 Points

An application will be evaluated to determine if demonstrated experience in, and a proven track record of, addressing the eligible activities is provided. A history of service with the target population in the project service area must be provided. In addition, examples of services and/or programs operated should be included.

An operations plan for projects seeking funding to support program operations and an implementation plan should be included. Major project milestones and a timeline must be defined. Outline activities to be conducted to accomplish program goals/objectives. Describe methods to be used in implementing the program. Provide a brief description of any relevant experience the agency may have, including similar projects or qualifications of key personnel to be involved in the project.

D. Collaboration and Program Outreach.....15 Points

Projects will be evaluated based on the ability to coordinate with existing transportation resources, including how key stakeholders will be involved in the project. List other institutions, agencies, individuals who will contribute to the project. Three letters of support from stakeholders, elected officials, consumers, satisfied customers and family members should be attached to the grant application as "Attachment 1." Higher points will be awarded to projects and sponsors that demonstrate coordination of resources.

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E. Project Budget.....15 Points

Applications must clearly state expenses and sources of funding for the project in the attached budget sheets. The ability to certify the required local match is mandatory. An explanation of the cost-effectiveness of the project should also be included.

The applicant should include a budget that is clear, easy to understand, and that provides a detailed justification for the amount requested. Provide a budget with line-item detail and detailed calculations for each budget object class identified on the Budget Information Form. The budget should be clearly linked to all proposed project activities.

The budget justification should be in narrative form. Provide a narrative budget justification that describes how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of the proposed costs related to the proposed capacity building activities. The budget narrative should be clearly linked to all proposed project activities.

F. Project Sustainability.....10 Points

Projects that require a one-time award of funds or that have the potential to become self-sufficient will be considered first. Applications should include potential funding sources for sustaining a project beyond the grant period. Points may also be awarded to projects that are environmentally sustainable.

G. Financial Viability.....10 Points

For non-profits: Most recent 990, most recent audited financials, current income statement and balance sheet, 501 (c) 3 determination letter must be provided.
For private sector applicants: Most recent tax return, current income statement and balance sheet must be provided.

H. Program Effectiveness and Performance Indicators.....5 Points

Project sponsors must identify performance measures to track the effectiveness of the service in meeting the identified goals. A plan should be provided for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the service, along with steps to be taken if the anticipated goals of the projects are not being met.

I. Innovation.....5 Points

Points may be awarded to projects that use an innovative or new approach to expand transportation access for the target population.

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Grant Application Instructions

Applications will be mailed or e-mailed. Additional copies of the application are available upon request. In order to request an application, please contact Tiffany Pannell, Mobility Special Programs Manager, at 614-275-5905, or pannelltd@cota.com.

All information submitted in this application is a public record, and applicants should not include information that may be regarded as confidential (except financial information).

Proposer Conference

COTA will hold a New Freedom proposer conference on Monday, January 11, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. at COTA's main conference room located at 1600 McKinley Avenue, Columbus, OH 43222. Please call or e-mail Tiffany Pannell, Mobility Special Programs Manager, at 614-275-5905, or pannelltd@cota.com to register.

Application Deadline

Eight (8) applications with attachments; One (1) original plus seven (7) copies, must be **hand-delivered to COTA by 4:00 p.m. on February 1, 2010**. COTA will not accept faxed or electronic applications.

Applications should be submitted to:

Tiffany Pannell
Mobility Special Programs Manager
COTA
1600 McKinley Avenue
Columbus, OH 43222

Appendix A

1. Franklin County Coordinated Travel Plan Executive Summary
2. Federal Fiscal Year Assurances
3. Franklin County Map