

NCDOT Safe Routes to School Planning and Programming Grant



Frequently Asked Questions

Timeline

1. Why is the grant period 18 months?

- The 18-month grant period allows NCDOT to transition the program to a state fiscal year schedule. Projects are anticipated to run from January 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028.

2. When will the next call for projects be issued?

- NCDOT currently anticipates issuing the next call for projects in early 2028. This schedule is subject to change.

Who Can Apply

3. For a regional, multi-county project administered by a council of government, must the counties be in the same municipal planning organization (MPO) or rural planning organization (RPO)?

- No.

4. Are Safe Routes to School activities for high school students eligible?

- Yes. Programs and activities for students in grades K–12 are eligible for funding. The [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) expanded federal Safe Routes to School program eligibility from kindergarten through 8th grade to kindergarten through 12th grade.

Eligible Projects

5. Do I need an existing Safe Routes to School plan or program to apply?

- No. Applicants may propose a new program or initiative. Applicants are not required to have a pre-existing Safe Routes to School plan or program. This funding may be used to fund new or existing Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

6. Is a staff position eligible for funding?

- Yes. Funding may support part-time and/or full-time project-related staff or program coordination. Applicants are not required to request a staff position and may use existing staff, grant-funded staff, contractors, partner organizations, or another appropriate approach to provide the capacity needed to carry out the proposed work.

7. Do I need to hire a full-time Safe Routes to School coordinator?

- o No. Full-time staff are an allowable expense, but applicants are not required to hire a full-time coordinator. Projects may use existing staff, grant-funded staff, contractors, partner organizations, or another appropriate approach to provide the capacity needed to carry out the proposed work.

8. What activities related to carpool drop-off and pick-up are ineligible for funding?

- o Activities focused primarily on making drop-off or pick-up more convenient for drivers, rather than improving youth walking, biking, rolling, safety, or access, are not eligible. However, arrival/dismissal observations, surveys, and other eligible activities that identify or address barriers to safe student access may be included.

9. Are planning activities allowed?

- o Yes. Eligible planning efforts may include single-school, multi-school or cluster, districtwide, communitywide, countywide, or regional Safe Routes to School planning. If an applicant contracts with a consultant to complete the planning work, the applicant must follow applicable federal procurement requirements. An RFP is not required when eligible planning work is completed by the applicant's own staff.

10. Are studies of routes to school and future infrastructure needs eligible?

- o Yes. Safe Routes to School plans, walk/bike audits, road safety audits, and other eligible planning activities may be used to identify assets, barriers, and safety concerns along school walking, biking, and rolling routes and to identify actions that could improve safety and access.

11. Is funding a traffic garden to teach safe riding skills eligible?

- o Materials for supporting the operation of traffic garden are eligible expenses. Some materials for the creation of traffic gardens may be eligible expenses. Infrastructure or activities that break ground for a traffic garden are not eligible.

Infrastructure

12. Is infrastructure an eligible expense?

- o Infrastructure projects are not allowed as standalone projects. Small infrastructure projects can be included in the program's workplan if there is a demonstrated need and the infrastructure project will serve as a demonstration project or will be used for safety training i.e. cross walks, signs, curb bump outs, rapid flashing beacons. Please note that all infrastructure activities that require ground disturbing activities are not eligible for funding under this grant program and MUST go through the NEPA process. For other infrastructure projects, applicants are encouraged to work with the local NCDOT Division office and regional planning organization for possible funding or inclusion in an existing project.

13. Is design and engineering allowed?

- o Yes. Design and engineering are allowable expenses. The design and engineering work that is needed must be identified in a plan or be documented as a high-priority area for infrastructure enhancements. Note: Applicants will be required to issue an RFP that meets federal guidelines.

14. Are subsidized transit passes eligible?

- Transit passes are not eligible.

15. Is wayfinding signage allowed?

- Yes. Wayfinding signage may be eligible when it supports youth walking, biking, or rolling to schools or other key destinations, such as parks and libraries, within the eligible Safe Routes to School area. Signage affecting a public roadway or right-of-way may require coordination with the appropriate road authority.

16. Is the cost of paint and materials (i.e. bollards) for a demonstration project, bike parking lot, crosswalk, or other similar project an eligible expense?

- Yes. If paint is applied inside the right of way, it will require coordination with the road owner, such as the local municipality or local NCDOT Division office, prior to installation.

17. Who is the point of contact in the NCDOT Division offices? How do I know which NCDOT Division I should contact?

- Contact the division engineer for your district. You can find your district and the Division Engineer's contact information in the directory [online](#).

Budget and Match

18. Are applicants required to provide a 20% match?

- Yes. Applicants must include the full 20 percent local match in the project budget and identify its anticipated source and current status in Part I of the application. The match does not need to be formally committed when the application is submitted, but the applicant must explain the steps and anticipated timing for confirming any pending contribution(s). NCDOT does not guarantee match assistance.

19. If a partner, not the lead agency, has outside funding to support the proposed workplan, can that be considered toward the match?

- Yes. An eligible funding contribution from a project partner may count toward the required local match. The contribution must support work included in the proposed project, appear in the project budget, and be documented.

20. Are in-kind matches allowed?

- No, in-kind matches are not allowed.

21. Do Buy America requirements apply to bicycles, trailers, equipment, and other materials purchased with grant funds?

- The U.S. Department of Transportation generally waives Buy America requirements for "small projects" when the total federal financial assistance applied to a project is less than \$500,000. Because the maximum NCDOT request under this grant program is \$400,000, an award under this program will ordinarily fall below that threshold. If the same project receives other federal funding, the federal assistance must be combined when determining whether the \$500,000 threshold applies. Applicants must still follow all applicable NCDOT purchasing and procurement requirements and should confirm the eligibility of major equipment purchases with NCDOT before making a purchase.

22. Is food allowable, such as healthy snacks for events or meals for meetings?

- No. FHWA does not permit the purchase of food except as part of approved overnight travel for project staff.

Application Requirements

23. What is the purpose of the draft board resolution? If an agency does not have a governing board, what should they do to meet the requirement?

- The draft board resolution is intended to show commitment to the project's administration and provision of matching funds. If the lead agency has a governing board that would require a resolution before entering into an agreement with NCDOT, the draft resolution should be written in the name of that governing board. If the lead agency does not report to a governing board, then the lead agency's letter of commitment should be signed by the agency representative with the authority to financially commit the agency and no board resolution is needed.

24. Where can I find the application materials?

- The online application link, application worksheet, program guidance, required templates, and webinar information are available on the [NCDOT program webpage](#).

25. Should staffing documents be combined into one file?

- Yes. Applicants should combine the project lead's resume with other key staff resumes, proposed position descriptions, and contractor services or qualification descriptions into one PDF or DOCX file to be attached to the online application.

26. Can a letter from one school district cover multiple participating schools?

- Yes. One school district letter may cover multiple participating schools when it clearly demonstrates support for the proposed project. Applicants are not scored on the number of letters of support submitted. The purpose of the letters is to demonstrate support from the directly affected school(s) or district(s) and from partners with substantial financial or implementation roles.

27. What if a school is not included in the Economically Disadvantaged Student (EDS) Data Lookup spreadsheet?

- Enter the school manually in the School Information Template and provide the best available enrollment information. If comparable EDS information is unavailable, leave the EDS field blank and explain that the school is not included in the dataset. Applicants will not be penalized solely because a participating private or charter school is absent from the dataset.