

Innovative Deployments to Enhance Arterials (IDEA) Grant Program Questions and Answers from Workshops #1 through #3

PROJECT DEFINITION AND APPLICATION

Q1: Can distinct deployments be bundled together for purposes of meeting the (\$250,000 per project) minimum MTC grant award amount and match?

A1: Yes, but only if there is a clear theme or synergy between the different projects, as well as common and compatible goals. An example of an eligible bundled project could be a citywide deployment of similar treatments and signal improvements to enhance pedestrian mobility and safety at various locations.

If an agency wanted to deploy Automated Traffic Signal Performance Measures (ATSPMs) using the same system for three different corridors, the project should be included in one unified application.

Q2: How many applications can an agency submit?

A2: MTC staff request the following:

- Each agency only submit one application per project category for a maximum of three applications. There are three project categories indicated in the guidelines: Category 1, Category 2 and Category 1+2 combinations.
- The different applications must be for distinct projects and deployments, e.g., the project identified in the Category 1-only application cannot be the same project that is identified in the Category 1+2 application.

Q3: Since the Category 1 grant awards could be approved by MTC before the Category 2 applications are due, what will happen if there are additional funds available?

A3: MTC has tentative budget targets of \$8 million for Category 1 and \$5 million for Category 2. However, this is subject to the costs and quality of the applications received. It is possible that MTC may delay award of some Category 1 projects until after the Category 2 applications are evaluated.

Q4: Will there be subsequent rounds of IDEA grant funding, or similar, from the MTC Arterial Operations Program (AOP)?

A4: No such grant program is planned at this time, as there is no designated funding for it. The IDEA grant program is funded from the One Bay Area Grant Program Cycle 2 (OBAG 2), and any possible similar grant opportunity may need to come from a successor to OBAG 2.

Please note that the [Program for Arterial System Synchronization \(PASS\)](#) will continue to be funded for the next four years.

BUDGET

Q5: Why is there a \$250,000 minimum for the MTC grant award?

A5: MTC staff will be involved in the planning, administration and delivery of the IDEA projects. To ensure the timely delivery of the arterial improvements, it is necessary to limit the overall number of projects.

Q6: Can recurring costs be included in the project budget?

A6: **Yes, but it will depend** on the type of project. MTC could cover up to three years of certain operations and maintenance (O&M) costs within an IDEA deployment.

Q7: If I have more than one project funded from different applications, does the \$3 million maximum award amount apply to each project application?

A7: No, the maximum award amount will apply per subgrantee (local agency).

Q8: Should the proposed budget in the application include a post-deployment evaluation component?

A8: No. Agencies are welcome to evaluate their own project components and encouraged to share the information, but this will not be funded within the individual project budgets. Any MTC-led evaluation effort would be conducted outside of those budgets.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Q9: When and why would a private firm be required to contribute 5% of the project cost as local cash match?

A9: As the guidelines state, projects with “private sector participation” are required to have 5% (i.e., one-third of 15%) of the project cost contributed as local cash match from that partner or partners.

This requirement is triggered when a grant applicant proposes to use local agency match funds to buy goods or services from a specific company, i.e., one of the private sector partners. *(Note that this would be considered sole-sourcing and the federal funds for IDEA projects cannot be used for such sole source contracts.)*

MTC wants to encourage agency collaboration with companies that can help plan, fund and implement Category 2 projects where industry expertise can be useful to deploy these new technologies and strategies. The intent of the 5% contribution requirement is to ensure that the private sector partners receiving project funding through sole source contracts contribute financially to the project.

Q10: What contributions would be eligible for in-kind match to meet the requirement under the IDEA grant program?

A10: As noted in the [IDEA guidelines posted on the MTC website](#), the in-kind match can include agency staff time, vendor goods and/or services (from consultants, contractors, or vendors).

A calculation of in-kind match should include a fair market value of the estimated contribution of agency staff time, as well as donated time of vendors and consultants, that would be applied to the project.

A contribution of goods to the project could include hardware, software, civil infrastructure or other tangible improvements that are both necessary to the implementation of the project and which will be implemented after project award. Hardware/software, infrastructure, and tangible improvements already in-place prior to project award cannot be counted as an in-kind contribution.

Q11: Can a private sector partner contribute more than the minimum requirement to the project?

A11: Yes, this would be acceptable.

Q12: Can cash be substituted for in-kind contributions to meet the 10% minimum in-kind match requirement?

A12: No. In-kind contributions should be in the form of goods or services, which should be described in detail and valued at a fair market value in the project application.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS/EXPENSES

Q13: What level and type of construction would be appropriate for an IDEA project?

A13: MTC's expectation is that IDEA projects primarily focus on the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) elements. Staff anticipate that federally-funded elements in particular will have a limited amount of civil construction work, preferably less than 10% of project cost. Examples of a construction expense that could be funded include: mounting appropriate hardware on poles, deploying limited signage, pavement striping changes, etc.

Q14: Why will the IDEA program only fund expansion of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption (EVP) systems rather than new TSP or EVP systems?

A14: Planning and implementing a new TSP or EVP system is likely to incur considerable expense. As a result, MTC is limiting project eligibility of these systems to expansions only. Please note that some new connected vehicle signal priority applications or similarly innovative systems could be eligible under Category 2, depending on cost. Please email the Category 2 staff contact with specific questions if this applies to your project.

Q15: My jurisdiction would like to upgrade/repair its signal controllers, existing detection equipment and communications infrastructure. Are these eligible expenses under IDEA?

A15: Only to a limited degree. The primary purpose of the IDEA program is to fund new arterial improvements and enable new innovative operational strategies.

To enable the deployment of new systems, MTC will consider funding upgrades/repairs to "fill in gaps" of enabling infrastructure at select locations and make limited improvements as necessary.

IDEA funds can be used to upgrade signal controllers along an entire corridor if, and only if, this upgrade is required as part of the deployment of an eligible project. The infrastructure upgrades or repairs should, however, be secondary to the new improvements.

Q16: Is new bicycle detection an eligible project under IDEA?

A16: Yes, new bicycle detection is an eligible project, as there is an explicit focus on all modes and accommodating active travelers (bicyclists and pedestrian) in the IDEA program. Adequate bicycle

detection is a matter of State policy addressed in [Caltrans Traffic Operations Policy Directive 09-06](#).

However, upgrading existing bicycle detection to an improved bicycle detection technology would not, in and of itself, be an eligible project.

Q17: My agency has been approached by a particular vendor or firm about the deployment of a particular system using IDEA Category 2 technology. We are interested in deploying this system. Should I identify the specific product or firm in the project application?

A17: Generally, no. MTC encourages agencies to keep their options open with regards to the pre-selection of particular products or companies. There may be additional options that emerge through a Systems Engineering or project planning process.

However, for systems using newer technologies, there may be fewer options in the market, as well as companies looking to pilot their specific solutions and/or gain experience for their teams. MTC encourages agencies to explore their options and consult with MTC staff if a good partnership opportunity emerges. MTC will not fund sole-sourced services or goods and will require some financial contributions from companies using sole-sourced local agency funds that are matching IDEA funds to deliver a project (see A9 for details).

Q18: My agency is interested in using a specific ITS system, which is an open-source product and free. Are we able to designate this system in the project application?

A18: Agencies are encouraged to cite specific examples of ITS systems in describing their project, whether or not they are proprietary or open-source. There are a variety of resources that can be found on the [Open Source Application Development Portal \(OSADP\)](#), particularly for CV and ATSPMs applications.

As indicated in A17 above, the specific features and requirements of the deployment should emerge from an organized planning and/or system engineering process that considers the needs of the corridors or transportation system. This process will involve the applicant(s), MTC and very likely external consultant support. After the requirements for the deployment are determined, it will be more clear what systems are most appropriate and what customization, integration and support would be necessary for whatever systems are used. External consultant support may also still be necessary to implement an ITS system with open-source code.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Q19: Which agency would be responsible for procurements for the project and handle federal funding and environmental review approval processes?

A19: MTC and the project sponsors will share workload, as appropriate. MTC staff plan to lead the process to receive federal and state authorization to proceed, with assistance from subgrantees (local agency).

Depending on the project and the nature of the services needed, MTC, as the grantee, will likely lead the procurement for initial consultant assistance for project planning. As appropriate, a local agency applicant (subgrantee) or project partner could lead some procurements, with MTC

involvement; this could occur where, for instance, the project entails significant changes to infrastructure that an agency owns and/or operates.

Q20: Do IDEA projects need to meet deadlines issued under [MTC Resolution 3606](#)?

A20: Yes, and MTC staff will work with subgrantees to ensure that these milestones and requirements are met.

Q21: Can IDEA-funded deployments using Category 2 (prototype or connected and automated vehicles) technologies be of limited duration?

A21: Yes, but there should be lasting and tangible value for the facility or agency that continues to improve arterial operations. IDEA is focused on the real-world deployment of technologies to improve arterials and is not primarily intended as a testing program. MTC does value the potential learning opportunity afforded with IDEA. MTC recognizes that some individual project elements in Category 2 are experimental, higher-risk and could require additional resources to operate indefinitely and so would permit a defined, limited pilot period of some features. However, significant elements of the Category 2 deployment should continue on as a demonstration of the effects of the deployment.

Q22: In what federal fiscal year would IDEA funds be programmed?

A22: Subject to state and federal approval processes, funding will be available for Category 1 projects no earlier than October 1, 2017. Some funding for Category 2 projects may be available after February 1, 2018 with increased funding guaranteed by October 1, 2018.

Q23: What is the timeline for IDEA projects to be delivered and funds expended?

A23: MTC's goal is an expeditious deployment of IDEA projects, as there are federal requirements that projects need to be completed within 4.5 years from the time grant funds are obligated. Federal obligation may occur months after grants have been awarded.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Q24: Will the extra five percentage points added to the evaluation score for additional match be weighted?

A24: Yes, MTC will assess to what degree each proposed project budget exceeds the minimum 25% local match requirement (15% cash match plus 10% in kind match) and assign up to five percentage points, based on how much the local match exceeds the requirement.

Q25: How does MTC define the project readiness?

A25: The evaluation criteria identified in the Guidelines under "Implementation" represents project readiness. MTC staff will consider the amount of local agency staff and consultant resources proposed to be available to the project. MTC agency staff will also assess the local community and agency commitment to delivering the project, by considering any Letters of Support and inclusion of the project's elements or goals in others plans or policies.

It is recommended that applicants also describe the readiness of their existing infrastructure, e.g., type and age of signal controllers, hardware and firmware, communications infrastructure, presence of adequate detection and the existence of other advanced signal systems.