2020/21 Sustainable Communities Program

Active Transportation & Safety (AT&S)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General

1. *What is the Sustainable Communities Program?*

   The Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) provides direct technical assistance and resources to local agencies to support local planning efforts in the areas of transportation, land use, housing, and sustainability, and enable implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), which today is called Connect SoCal.

   The SCP will provide local jurisdictions with multiple opportunities to seek funding and resources to meet the needs of their communities, address recovery and resiliency strategies considering COVID-19, and support regional goals. SCAG will release Calls for Applications throughout Fiscal Year 20/21 to select projects within different program areas and funding categories.

   The adopted Connect SoCal can be found here:
   https://www.connectsocal.org/Pages/Connect-SoCal-Final-Plan.aspx.

2. *How much funding is available through the Sustainable Communities Program, Active Transportation & Safety (AT&S)?*

   There is a multi-year funding commitment of approximately $5 million for the AT&S Call for Applications. Approximately $4.7 million is anticipated from the California Active

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Transportation Program (ATP) for SCAG's FY 20/21 AT&S program, with additional resources through Senate Bill 1 (SB1). If additional resources become available, they will be included in the budget development process in future fiscal years. Funding information regarding subsequent Calls will be released once available.

3. *Will additional funding become available for the Sustainable Communities Program?*

    A portion of the funding comes from Senate Bill 1 (SB1), the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. If additional funding does become available, it would be incorporated into SCAG's budget development process for future fiscal years. If additional funding does become available, resources will likely be allocated to applicants that submit applications for this Call for Applications based upon anticipated demand.

4. *How will AT&S projects be scored, and how will SCAG allocate funds to the different projects?*

    SCAG will coordinate an evaluation team, comprised of staff from partner agencies, nonprofit organizations, and SCAG staff. For Active Transportation & Safety project types, there will be one evaluation team per county that is comprised of staff from the county transportation commissions and SCAG. Final awards will be based on application score, requested budget provided as part of the application, and funding eligibility.

5. *What does it mean to say that successful applicants will receive "technical assistance" through the Sustainable Communities Program?*

    The Sustainable Communities Program does not provide grant funding.   Instead, the program provides resources and direct technical assistance to complete projects. SCAG staff will work with the awarded agency to complete the procurement and contracting. SCAG staff will serve as the administrative project manager, managing the contract and paying invoices. Agency staff will play a large role in the day-to-day management of the consultant.

6. *When are applications due for Active Transportation & Safety (AT&S)?*

    Applications for the AT&S Call must be submitted electronically by **Friday, December 11th by 5:00 p.m.**

7. *What must my agency do to be in compliance with the Housing Element requirement for the Sustainable Communities Program?*

Formula funds from SB1 have been allocated to SCAG through the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program. Accordingly, applicants, sub-applicants and/or jurisdictions applying for these project types are required to have a housing element in substantial compliance with State housing element law and must have submitted updated housing element Annual Progress Reports (APRs). This requirement will apply at the time SCAG announces awards, anticipated for June 2021. More information about compliance status and APRs can be found at http://hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml.

The DRAFT FY22 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Application Guide provides the following guidance for applicants:

•   The housing element must plan to meet the local government's existing and regional housing needs allocation and quantify and analyze the specific needs and resources available to address the housing needs.

•   A housing element can also provide a mechanism to adopt efficient land-use strategies, including those that address climate change and reduce greenhouse emissions. For example, strategies could include the promotion of higher density, infill development, mixed-use development, or transit-oriented development near transit stations or transit corridors.

•   Local governments are required to annually submit progress reports on the implementation of the housing element and provide a detail of production toward their projected housing needs.

Please note the FY22 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Application Guide is currently a draft and staff will post the document once available.

8. *Please clarify how the applicant is to meet this requirement listed in the Program Guidelines: Due to the inclusion of Senate Bill 1 (SB1) funding, at the time of award notice an applicant, sub-applicant, and/or jurisdiction is required to have a housing element in substantial compliance with State housing element law and must be current with submitted updated housing element Annual Progress Reports.*

There are currently six jurisdictions out of compliance in the SCAG region. In order to be eligible for any SB1 funds, the jurisdiction must comply. Check with your budget or finance department if you are unsure if your jurisdiction is eligible to receive SB1 funds.

9. *Is an agency precluded from receiving technical assistance if it has received it in a previous round?*

No. An agency is not precluded from receiving technical assistance if it has received it in a previous round, even if the previous project has not been completed. However, an agency

will score poorly if it applies for a project type of which it has already received funding to complete the same type of project.

10. *Who do I contact if I have more questions about the program?*

You can direct any questions about the program to Hannah Brunelle at brunelle@scag.ca.gov.

Eligibility

11. *Is any project eligible for the Sustainable Communities Program AT&S?*

No. The SCP AT&S Call defines four specific project types within three project applications that are eligible for technical assistance. Any project that does not fit within one of these four specific project types will not be eligible. These specific project types were identified because they provide practical and relevant strategies for supporting implementation of Connect SoCal, prioritizing equity, meeting SB 375 greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets and support jurisdictions for future funding opportunities (i.e. the State Active Transportation Program). The specific project types are laid out in the SCP AT&S Program Guidelines.

12. *Who is eligible to apply?*
- Local or Regional Agency (i.e. cities, counties, councils of government, Regional Transportation Planning Agency and County Public Health Departments)
- Transit Agencies (i.e. any agency responsible for public transportation that is eligible for funds under the Federal Transit Administration)
- Natural Resources or Public Land Agencies (i.e. Federal, Tribal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration)
- Public schools or School districts
- Native American Tribal Governments

13. *Can my agency apply for more than one project, either in the same category or in different project categories?*

Yes. Applicants may apply for more than one project type and may submit multiple proposals within a single category. Each application will ask that the applicant prioritize their applications.

Application

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14. Is there a maximum amount of funding a project can receive?

Yes. The following maximum funding amounts – as found in the Program Guidelines – can be found below:

Project Type	Maximum Award (per project)
Community-wide or Area Plans (Active Transportation Focused)	$500,000
Community-wide or Area Plans (Safety Focused)	$250,000
Quick Build Projects	$900,000
Network Visioning & Implementation	$1,250,000

15. Can a multi-jurisdictional application be submitted?

Yes. A multi-jurisdictional application can be submitted. One eligible applicant should serve as the "lead applicant" and the remaining jurisdictions or agencies should be listed as sub-applicants on the application, along with proposed role in the project.

16. Can multi-jurisdictional applications exceed the maximum project funding amount?

No. Multi-jurisdictional applications cannot exceed the maximum project funding amount.

17. Can a consultant prepare my application?

A consultant can prepare an agency's application. However, for projects that are awarded, that consultant is then not eligible to compete for the project during the competitive procurement process. The application is designed for ease of completion and for applicants to complete without consultant assistance.

18. Is there a local match requirement?

There are no local match requirements and there are no points awarded for providing a cash commitment in any of the Active Transportation & Safety project types. Applicants may provide a cash commitment if their proposed project exceeds the maximum funding amount awarded by SCAG. Each application includes a section where applicants can indicate a local cash commitment.

19. Can I provide an in-kind commitment for our application?

No. In-kind commitments will not be accepted. Applicants may only provide a cash commitment as an option as part of the application.

20. *How will applications be evaluated, and how are points awarded to each question?*

Proposals in each of the three categories will be evaluated based on project need (50 points); desired project outcomes (35 points); and partnerships and engagement (15 points). For a breakdown of the scoring criteria, please see table below. The potential points awarded for each question are noted in each application. Further clarification regarding how points are awarded to each question is also provided in each application.

Scoring Criteria	Points
Focus Area 1: Project Need	50 Points
Mobility Need	15
Safety Benefits	20
Disadvantaged Communities and Public Health	15
Focus Area 2: Desired Project Outcomes	35 Points
Safety Strategies and Scope of Work	5
Public Health Strategies	5
Community Engagement Strategies	5
Project Benefits and Scope of Work	20
Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Engagement	15 Points
Cost Effectiveness	5
Commitments, Partnerships, and Leveraging	10

21. *My agency has already submitted a non-infrastructure and/or planning application for ATP Cycle 5, and the project would also be eligible for this program. Should I also apply for SCAG's Sustainable Communities Program as well?*

As outlined in SCAG's 2021 ATP Regional Guidelines, planning and non-infrastructure applications not funded in the state call for projects will be programmed through SCAG's regional program using their statewide score. These scores will be evaluated alongside scores from the SCP to determine the final project list. This may lead to a reduction in total

ATP funding within the SCP. Applicants are encouraged to apply through SCAG's SCP in addition to the state ATP, as SCAG's application and scoring criteria is somewhat different from the state criteria. SCAG will consider the highest scored application between the statewide score and the SCP score when evaluating the regional program. However, if agency staff capacity is limited, applicants are not required to submit an additional application to the SCP.

22. *To whom should the letter of support/letters of commitment be addressed to?*

Letters should be addressed to Julia Lippe-Klein, Sustainable Communities Program Manager. All letters must be submitted electronically through the online application form.

23. *What are some examples of commitments from partners SCAG is looking for in the letters of support/letters of commitment?*

The letters of support and letters of commitment must outline specific, meaningful ways partners will be involved in the project. Letters of commitment must be specific in describing the activities the partner will carry out as part of the project. If an applicant is including a letter of commitment from a nonprofit organization, the proposed budget must also include a designated budget to compensate the organization(s) for their work.

Example commitments include the following: participating on a community advisory committee, participating in community engagement and/or leading community engagement tasks, reviewing and commenting on plans and deliverables, providing data or other resources, participation or collaboration in a temporary safety demonstration project, distribution of educational or outreach materials, etc.

Project Type Specific Questions

24. *Will SCAG's consultant provide both design and installation of quick build projects?*

Depending on the preference of the local agency, consultants that SCAG procures can provide both the design and installation of quick build projects. The consultant will be responsible for procuring and storing all project materials.

25. *How are quick build projects different from past Go Human demonstration projects?*

Quick build projects are an evolution of the *Go Human* demonstration projects, which are typically one-day infrastructure demonstrations that include a community event. Quick

builds are interim capital improvement projects focused on testing infrastructure the agency is considering for permanent installation. The commencement of the project may be coupled with an existing community event to enhance public engagement opportunities (pending public health guidance for gatherings). Projects are intended to respond to an identified safety need and implement safety treatments, enabling a community to benefit quickly from the improvements. Quick Builds facilitate opportunities for communities to provide input, refine and test the project improvements prior to full construction and include a robust evaluation period.

26. ***Please clarify the engineering expected for AT-focused plans. Should the budget include a few priority projects to receive engineering-level cost estimates and renderings, or do you expect that level of work for all proposed improvements in a plan?***

Approximately 10-15% level plans that meet the Project Study Report Equivalent are expected as the final product of the AT-Focused Plan category. The budget of the plan should correlate to the number of cut sheets prepared. As an example, applicants can approximate $100k = 5 projects, $250k = 10 projects, $500k = 35 projects. The number of corridors studied should be outlined in the scope of work and budget.

27. ***For conceptual renderings needed for Community Wide or Area Plans, can we pick a corridor in our project area and depict what the corridor might look like with the proposed improvements?***

Plans should focus on community engagement rather than community outreach. The community should be leading the identification of the corridors to be studied. The renderings will be part of the final product and are not required as part of the application process.

28. ***Our transit agency is currently constructing a transit center. However, there are currently no bike lanes on the street where the center is located. If we want to develop a bike plan, which category under this grant should we apply for?***

The applicant is encouraged to apply for an AT-Focused Plan with the implementing agency included as a partner listed on the application.

29. ***Are renderings required as part of the application?***

Renderings are not required as part of the application. They are part of the final product of the Plan.

30. Please provide examples of non-infrastructure programs mentioned in the application.

Non-infrastructure programs include educational and encouragement programs such as educational signage, safety messaging, pop-up safety demonstration projects (utilizing SCAG's Kit of Parts Lending Library), etc. See the Go Human program website as an example of an NI programs.

31. Our agency currently has a Vision Zero Plan and map that identifies priority corridors for safety improvements. We now want to start doing more detailed safety planning studies for the individual corridors identified. Are one off corridor safety studies an appropriate scale for this program?

Yes, however the level of detail is limited to only planning level concepts and cost estimates.

32. With the request for robust community engagement, how is funding allocated to community-based organizations (CBOs) for their efforts/time?

SCAG encourages the involvement of CBOs on proposed projects. CBOs are encouraged to submit a Letter of Commitment, outlining the specific commitments they will take on as part of the project. Applicants should include a line item on the proposed budget to compensate CBOs for their work. CBO procurement will be handled as either a direct MOU or as a prime or sub-consultant on a project, given that there is no competitive advantage determined. However, CBOs that aid in the development of the application would be ineligible to propose on the project during procurement.

33. How or what are the criteria that will determine which projects will receive State vs Federal (ATP) funding? If a project is funded by ATP funds, will they be Infrastructure, Non-infrastructure or a Combination of funds?

When completing allocation for ATP funds, SCAG anticipates requesting ATP state-only non-infrastructure funding.

34. Can CEQA analysis be included in the budget?

Environmental work should not be included in the project scope. SCAG will issue a Notice of Exemption (NOE) for all awarded projects at the time of allocation.

35. Are Environmental Justice Areas considered disadvantaged communities?

Yes, Environmental Justice Areas are included as disadvantaged communities. To view eligible DACs based on SCAG's definitions, please view the online mapping tool.

36. *Are translation/interpreter services an eligible cost? Or does SCAG provide those resources?*

Translation services are eligible for funding as part of SCAG's procurement or can be handled by the local jurisdiction. SCAG does not provide these resources directly to jurisdictions.

37. *The program encourages applicants to include Go Human resources as part of proposed projects scopes and budgets. Are there costs estimates applicants can reference?*

Yes, SCAG has prepared cost estimates for integrating Go Human resources, including the Kit of Parts and Go Human Safety Advertising, into your proposed budget. Information can be accessed on the program website under the "Application Resources" section.

38. *Please explain what is meant by "facility design" included in the AT-Focused Plans Scope of Work.*

AT-Focused Plans should contain a sub-task to develop facility designs for active transportation improvements. Facility design refers to identifying design types to guide the project as a "toolkit" containing types of designs that are most effective for the context of the project. These can include design types for protected bike lanes, bulb-outs, etc. The final product should include conceptual engineering drawing for community identified top priority projects. These designs should incorporate best practices in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

39. *Will there be future opportunities for nonprofits to apply directly to SCAG programs?*

Yes, SCAG anticipates additional available funding separately through its *Go Human* program that allocates mini-grants directly to community-based organizations and nonprofits. SCAG will release more information about this program once available, anticipated in Spring 2021. Please note that the mini grant implementation period does not align with the SCP implementation period.

Commencing Work

40. *When and how will applicants be notified of their award status?*

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SCAG anticipates that the Regional Council (RC) will consider the Project List at its May 2021 meeting. Project applicants will be contacted via email following the RC action regarding the status of their application and will be provided with additional information on the timing of their award and next steps for initiating the project. Projects receiving ATP funding will also be subject to approval by the SCAG Regional Council and California Transportation Commission as part of the adoption of the complete 2021 Regional ATP. SCAG Regional Council consideration is anticipated in May 2021 followed by CTC action in June 2021.

41. Will the City Council need to take action prior to beginning work on the project?

Yes, SCAG will ask awarded applicants to have their governing body (i.e. City Council, Board of Directors, etc.) adopt a resolution of support/participation prior to beginning work on the project. If it is not possible for the City Council to adopt a resolution, SCAG will ask for a letter signed by the City Manager/Executive of the Agency.

42. How long do awardees have to complete their projects?

Projects should be completed in approximately 12 to 36 months. Depending on the type of funding applied to each awarded project, deadlines will vary per funding source. For example, Active Transportation Program Cycle 5 has a three-year timeframe. SB1 funds have a two-year timeframe per cycle.

43. Can you elaborate the timing of fund disbursement? For "Projects Begin," do projects need to start after the projects are approved after Jun 2021? Can funds apply to projects that started prior Jun 2021 but still ongoing after Jun 2021?

Any activities performed prior to the allocation date are not eligible for funding. This is program is a technical assistance program, and direct funds are not distributed.

44. When a project is awarded, when will a consultant be assigned — prior to or after the applicant receives an NTP? When does SCAG anticipate having consultants on board to support applicants?

SCAG will issue RFPs to procure consultants for awarded projects. The NTP would be issued after the consultant contract is executed. Work on the project can begin once the NTP is issued. Any work completed prior to issuing an NTP to the consultant will not be reimbursed.

45. Is there a deadline that the ATP funds would need to be adopted by?

ATP funds have a 3-year window for adoption. Once the funding allocation is approved by the California Transportation Commission (CTC), SCAG has a six-month window for completing procurement to hire a consultant. Once the allocation is complete, there is a 3-year window to spend the funds that includes the procurement phase.