



2020-2021

## Sustainable Communities Program

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



### 2020/21 Sustainable Communities Program

#### Smart Cities & Mobility Innovations (SCMI) Call for Applications

#### 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, Smart Cities & Mobility (SCMI) Innovations Call for Applications?**

There is a two-year funding commitment of approximately \$2.5 million for the SCMI Call for Applications, funded through Senate Bill 1 (SB1), and subject to funding availability. 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?**

No. The SCMI funding comes from Senate Bill 1 (SB1) as a part of the [Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program](#), and SCAG does not currently anticipate additional funding for this program to become available.

**4. How will SCMI 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. All applications will be scored according to their respective Scoring Rubric. Final awards will be based on application score 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. Resources include SCAG staff time, support, and project administration, and direct technical assistance includes procurement, wherein SCAG will procure consultants to perform the services needed and identified in each project. 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 Smart Cities & Mobility Innovations (SCMI)?**

Applications for the SCMI Call must be submitted electronically by **Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> by 5:00 p.m.**

**7. What must my agency do to ensure 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 July 2021. More information about compliance status and APRs can be found at <http://hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml>.

The Caltrans 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.

**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 Marisa Laderach at [laderach@scag.ca.gov](mailto:laderach@scag.ca.gov).

**Eligibility**

**11. Is any project eligible for the Sustainable Communities Program SCMI?**

No. The SCP SCMI Call defines four specific project types 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, utilize technology and innovation to improve the performance of the transportation system, and implement curb space management measures. The specific project types are laid out in the [SCP SCMI 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)
- 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**

**14. Are there minimum or maximum award amounts?**

No. The SCMI Call for Applications does not have minimum or maximum award amount. A cumulative total of approximately \$2.5 million is expected to be available.

**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 a consultant prepare my application?**

A consultant can prepare an agency’s application. However, for projects that are awarded, that consultant becomes ineligible 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.

**17. Is there a local match requirement?**

There are no local match requirements and there are no points awarded for providing a local match or cash commitment in any of the Smart Cities & Mobility Innovations project types.

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

In-kind commitments are not required for the SCMI application. Applicants may contribute in-kind or cash resources to augment proposed project costs, but they are not required for the SCP program and will not be considered during SCMI application evaluation.

**19. 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 (55 points); scope of work and project outcomes (30 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.

<b>Scoring Criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>Focus Area 1: Project Need</b>	55 Points
Mobility Need	25
SCS Implementation Need	15
Disadvantaged Community Need	15

<b>Focus Area 2: Scope of Work and Project Outcomes</b>	30 Points
Project Benefits and Scope of Work	15
Supports SCS Implementation	10
Use of Innovative Technology or Policy	5
<b>Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Engagement</b>	15 Points
Partnerships for Planning and Implementation	5
Inclusive Diverse and Equitable Stakeholder Engagement	10

**20. Our agency has heard about other upcoming curb space initiatives, such as the Curb Space Management Study, at SCAG. Which should we apply to?**

The Curb Space Management Study is a separate curb space initiative at SCAG, and project work is anticipated to begin prior to awarding SCMI funds. Additionally, the Curb Space Management Study, and any other curb-related initiatives at SCAG, are not competitive technical assistance funding opportunities, but rather ongoing partnerships between SCAG and cities in the region. Interested and eligible applicants should apply to the SCMI regardless of involvement or interest in other curb space initiatives.

**21. 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.

**Project Type Specific Questions**

**22. Are maps or graphics required as part of the application?**

One map is required to inventory disadvantaged communities in the project area. SCAG has an interactive reference map online, which contains several important layers such as Environmental Justice Areas, Communities of Concern, SB 535 Disadvantaged Areas, and Native American Tribal Lands, and can be viewed here: [https://bit.ly/SCP\\_EJTool](https://bit.ly/SCP_EJTool)

The map should also examine the project area’s California Healthy Places Index (HPI) score, which can be viewed here: <https://map.healthyplacesindex.org/>

Supplemental graphics or documents may be uploaded as a part of the online application process.

**23. Can SCMI fund the purchase of technologies to be implemented?**

No. The SCMI is intended to provide planning technical assistance, and the funding source (Senate Bill 1, or SB1) cannot be used to purchase implementation-related technologies. The SCMI is intended to provide planning services, or non-implementation activities, that assess pilot technology readiness or evaluate technologies that already exist within the community. Local agencies may also purchase and install or implement pilot technologies using their own local funds, and the SCMI would fund the planning technical assistance to support the pilot planning efforts for the project.

**24. Please provide examples of non-implementation activities that are eligible for technical assistance.**

Non-implementation activities include planning and development services; conceptual design up to 30 percent; research and analysis; data collection and inventory; advertising for public workshops; community surveys, meetings, and outreach; educational and encouragement programs; etc. For more information on eligible activities, please view the [Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program Guide](#) (pg. 11-12).

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

The letters of support and letters of intent 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.

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 on project tasks, distribution of educational or outreach materials, etc.

**26. 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](#).

**27. 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.

**Commencing Work**

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

SCAG anticipates that the Regional Council (RC) will consider the Project List at its July 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.

**29. 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.

**30. How long do awardees have to complete their projects?**

Projects should be completed in approximately 24 months, and work must be completed by 6/30/23. SB1 funds have a two-year timeframe per cycle.

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

**32. 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?**

Once a final project list has been approved by the SCAG Regional Council, anticipated for July 2021, SCAG will issue solicitations to competitively procure consultants for awarded projects. Once consultants are selected, SCAG will issue a Notice To Proceed (NTP) 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. SCAG anticipates procurement to take approximately 6-8 months, pending the number of projects awarded.