

Question 1: Is there any difference between the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Programs?

The programs are likely to be quite similar and Congress created this program in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) because they were concerned that the Reconnecting Communities program had not received sufficient funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. DOT has indicated that they are looking at ways to potentially combine the Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) for these two programs next year so that the applicants won't have to submit multiple applications for the program.

Question 2: How is SCAG looking at issues such as cost-effectiveness as a measure of both project selection and evaluation? This is a challenge for us across equity programs and I was just wondering what thoughts you might have since projects that are community based may not meet this criteria but provide GHG, VMT and other needed benefits. Also, what are some of the ways state and federal funding can converge to maximize benefits of these investments?

SCAG is not the decision-making entity for grant opportunities from the IIJA and IRA. As such, we are not evaluating the effectiveness for a particular project or program in terms of its application for grant funding opportunities.

Question 3: Please discuss how the USDOT/HUD Thriving Communities program relates to both the IIJA and IRA particularly provisions providing technical assistance to both local governments and CBOs located in underserved communities?

The Thriving Communities Program (TCP) provides technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support to teams of community partners that may lack the staffing or technical expertise to scope, fund, and develop infrastructure projects that advance broader community goals.

TCP will provide two years of deep-dive assistance to selected communities to help them plan and develop a pipeline of comprehensive transportation, housing, and community revitalization activities. Support for disadvantaged communities and others that face capacity challenges will be prioritized.

Question 4: Is there a standard definition that DOT is using to define disadvantaged/underserved communities?

Yes. DOT defined it as any Tribal Land or any territory or possession of the United States, or certain census tracts in the top 50% (75% for resilience) in at least four of the following categories – transportation access, health, environmental, economic, resilience, and equity disadvantage. For more information see <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dotnavigator/federal-tools-determine-disadvantaged-community-status>

Question 5: What resources are there to know when a particular NOFO is released? Do we just frequent the DOT/Caltrans website? Is there an email list to get updates?

Yes. You can go to <https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator> to sign up for updates or to the White House's [Build.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov/build)

In addition, SCAG is sending out regular updates through its Money Mondays alert, which includes a comprehensive listing of federal and state funding opportunities. To sign up for these alerts, use the following link and click on "funding opportunities": <https://scag.ca.gov/subscribe-updates>

Question 6: Do we anticipate that these grants will require matching funds?

General, DOT grants require a 20% match for grants. However, there have been a few exceptions for some programs in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. For example, the SMART grant program did not require a local match. Applicants are advised to check the specific Notice of Funding Opportunities to determine whether a local match is needed.

Question 7: Where can we get more information regarding the IRA, especially the neighborhood access and equity grant program?

At this time, there is no centralized location for information on the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). That is expected to change in early 2023 as the White House is likely to put together a centralized resource. In the meantime, DOE and EPA have created pages dedicated to IRA and DOT is expected to release their resource guide shortly.

EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/green-power-markets/inflation-reduction-act>

DOE: <https://www.energy.gov/lpo/inflation-reduction-act-2022>

In addition, Holland & Knight has developed a summary of programs in the Inflation Reduction Act that may be of greatest interest to local governments. It can be accessed [here](#).

Question 8: Will the DOT or federal agencies be available for 1:1 meetings if we wish to discuss our projects prior to submitting applications?

Yes. And we strongly recommend reaching out to the agency to discuss projects in advance and to build a relationship with agency leaders and staff.