

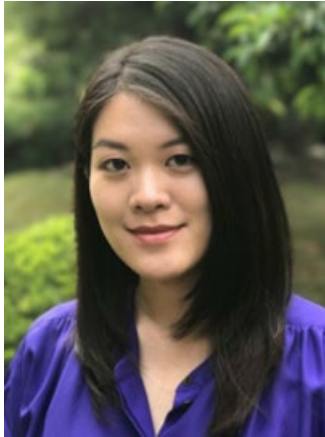
RAIL

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD



“Money, Money, Money” – FRA Grant Programs National Rail Crossing Conference 2026

Presenters



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FRA Grant Programs Overview

FRA Grant Programs Overview

Railroad Crossing Elimination

Provide funding for highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving safety and mobility of people and goods

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements

Provide funding for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail

National Railroad Partnership / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail

Improve performance
Expand or establish new intercity passenger rail
Reduce the state of good repair backlog

Restoration & Enhancement

Provide funding for initiating, enhancing, restoring intercity passenger rail service operations

Interstate Rail Compacts

Provide financial assistance to entities implementing interstate rail compacts pursuant to section 410 of the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997

FY25-26 Railroad Crossing Elimination Program Overview

FY25-26 RCE – Program Overview

Grant Purpose

- To fund highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects, including but not limited to elimination projects, that **improve safety and mobility of people and goods**

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

- Will be published on FRA's website
 - Approximately \$1 billion available in federal funding
 - Applications due by **11:59 pm Eastern Time, date to-be-announced**
 - Watch for the application window
 - Applications that are incomplete or received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding--there are no exceptions

FY25-26 RCE – Program Overview

Eligible Applicants

- States, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories and possessions
- Political subdivision of a State
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe
- A unit of local government or a group of local governments
- A public port authority
- A metropolitan planning organization
- A group of the entities described above

FY25-26 RCE – Program Overview

Eligible Projects

- **Grade separation or closure**, including through-use of a bridge, embankment, tunnel or combination thereof
- Track relocation
- Improvement or installation of protective devices, signals, signs, or other measures to improve safety, **provided that such activities are related to** a separation or relocation project
- Other means to improve the safety and mobility of people and goods at highway-rail grade crossings (including technological solutions)
- A group of related projects described above, that would collectively improve the mobility of people and goods
- The planning, environmental review, and design of an eligible project type

Non-Federal Cost Share

Requirements



Federal cost share of total costs for a project **shall not exceed 80%**



A **minimum 20% non-Federal cost share** is required. Applications failing to demonstrate sufficient non-Federal cost share are ineligible.



Source(s) of matching funds must be identified and clearly reflected in project budget tables



Cash and in-kind contributions are permitted, consistent with 2 CFR Part 200

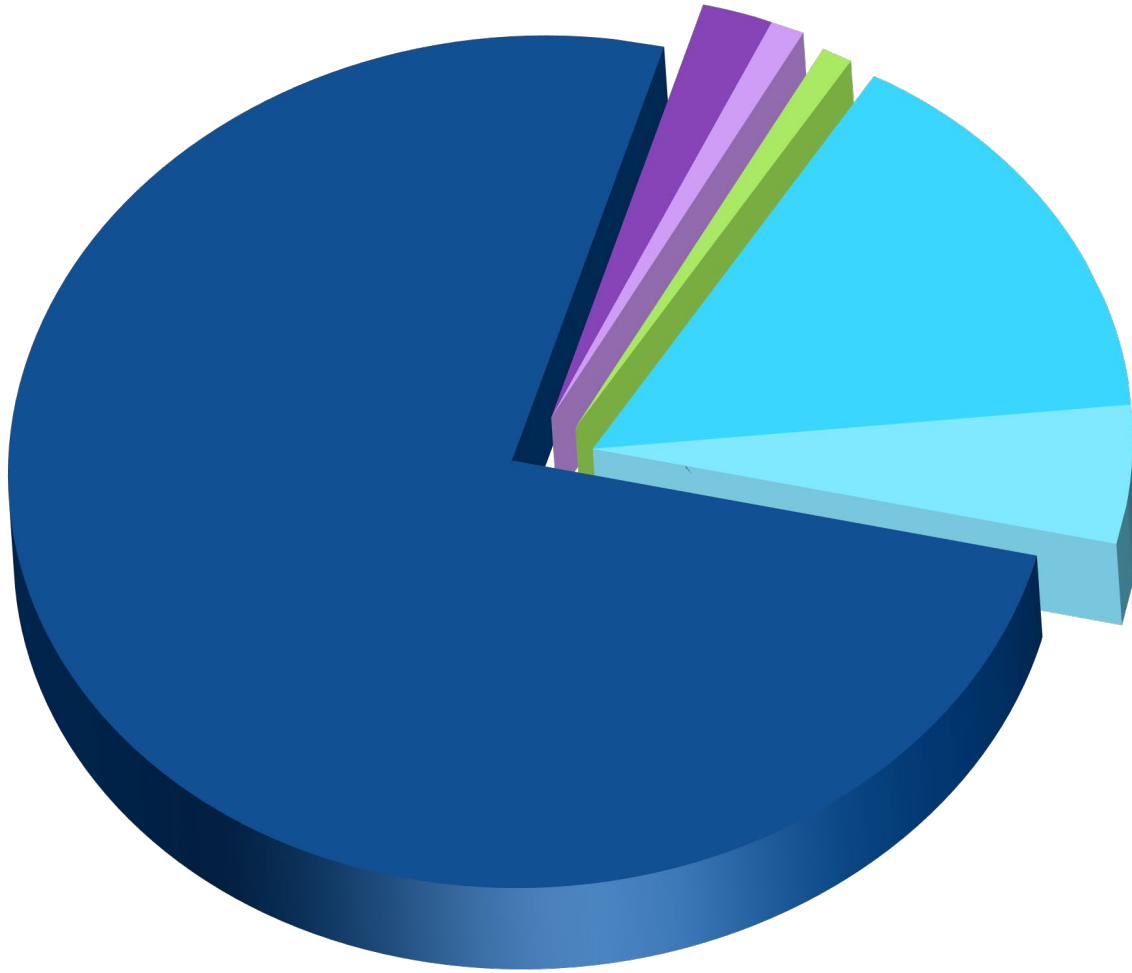


Include funding commitment letters outlining agreements as attachments or in an appendix

Applicants may count preliminary engineering costs as part of total project costs eligible as non-federal share for reimbursement if such costs were **incurred before project selection for award and no earlier than Nov. 15, 2021**. These costs must also comply with 2 CFR part 200 and RCE requirements

- **NOTE:** Please mention these costs, if any, in your Project Narrative

Key Program Conditions



Planning

- At least 3% of total funding (\$36,000,000) is reserved for planning projects
 - At least 25% of these funds (\$9,000,000) is reserved for planning projects in rural areas or on Tribal lands.

Crossing Safety Information and Education Program

- 0.25% of total funding (\$3,000,000) reserved for highway-rail grade crossing safety information and education.

Rural and Tribal Set Aside

- At least 20% of total funding (\$229,305,600) is reserved for projects located in rural areas or on Tribal lands.
 - At least 5% of these funds (\$11,465,280) is reserved for projects in counties with 20 or fewer residents per square mile

Grant Conditions

- Minimum 20% Non-Federal cost share
- No grant awarded shall be smaller than \$1 million, except for planning grants

State Limitation

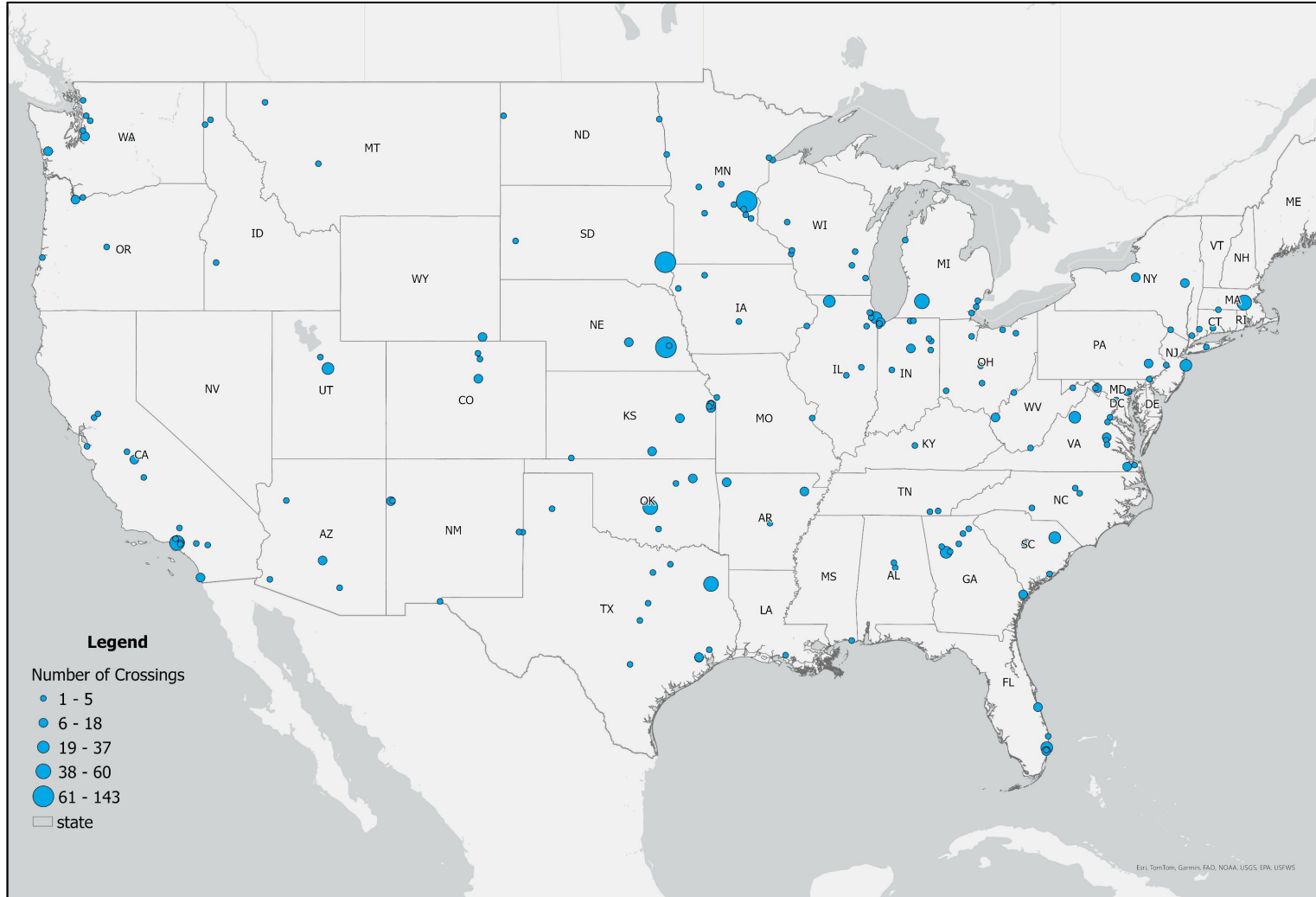
- No more than 20% of total funding (\$229,305,600) in any fiscal year may be awarded to projects in a single State.

Past RCE Selections

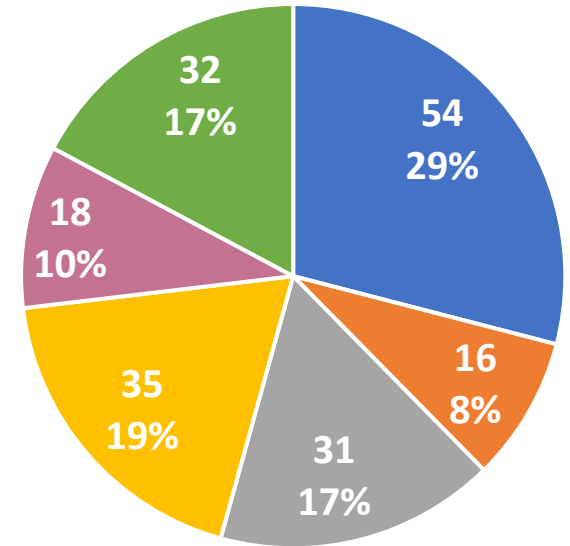
	Total Eligible Submissions	Total Selected Projects	Total Funding Awarded	Average Award Amount
FY 22	154	63	\$570.98M	\$9.06M
FY 23-24	179	123	\$1.17B	\$9.49M
<i>Remaining Funding</i>				
FY 25			\$573M*	
FY 26			\$573M*	

**IIJA advance appropriations*

Map of All RCE Selections as of July 2025



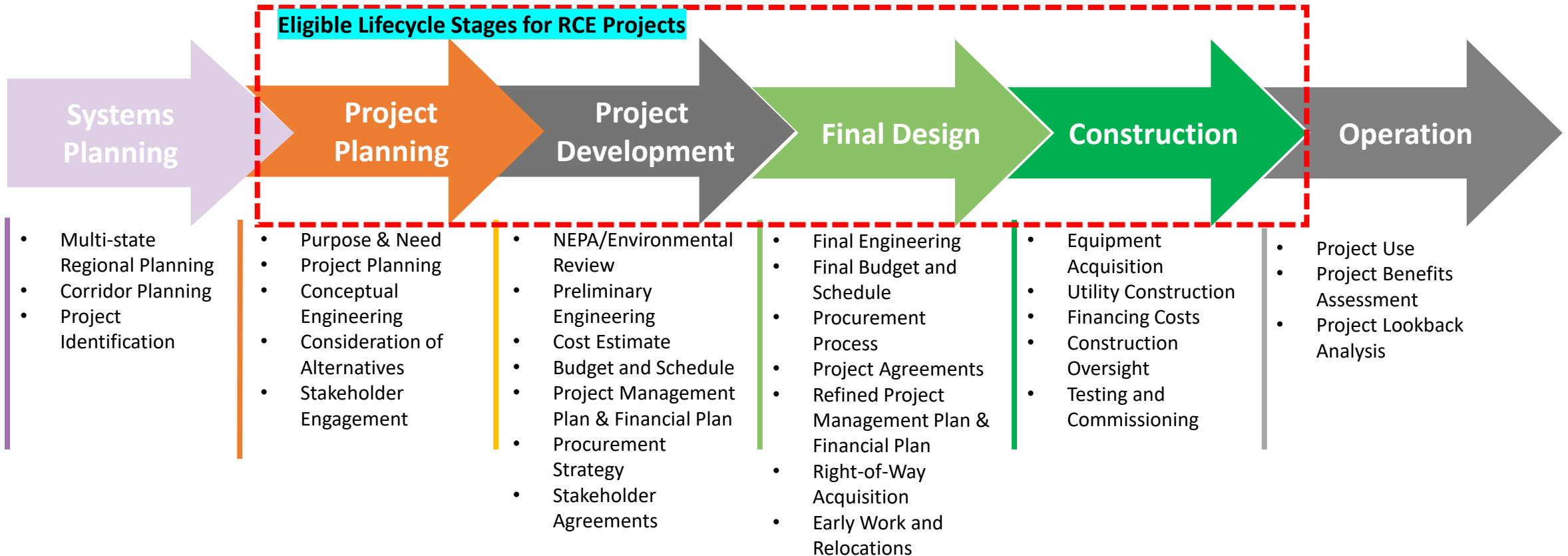
**RCE Selected Applications
by RRD Region
(FY22-24)**



■ Midwest
 ■ Northeast
 ■ Southcentral
■ Southeast
 ■ Southwest
 ■ West

Role of the Project Lifecycle in Grant Funding Opportunities

- Consider the status of activities identified in each lifecycle stage
- Project tracks have been removed to eliminate unnecessary redundancy
- FRA will consider the **readiness** of a project when evaluating a project for grant funding



Check out [FRA's Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects](#) online

Program Eligibility Issues

Common issues in previous rounds

Minimum Request Amount

- Projects requesting less than \$1,000,000 **must consist solely** of Planning activities
 - Applications requesting funding for a combination of Planning and Project Development activities must exceed \$1,000,000

Matching Funds

- Applicants do not provide a sufficient match/cost share. Note: FRA will not round up a 19.5% match

Scope

- The proposed project has previously received federal funding for a similar or the same scope of work, but applicant does not clarify how proposed work relates to the existing federally funded scope

Grade Crossing

- Grade crossing in question must be **active** and not already separated

SF 424 Federal Request

- The Federal amount should be the RCE funding request and should not include other non-RCE Federal funding

Roadwork

- If extensive roadwork is necessary, include a justification for how roadwork elements are directly related to safety at the grade crossing and identify those roadwork costs in the budget table

FY25-26 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program Overview

FY25-26 CRISI – Program Overview

Eligible Applicants

- **State(s)** *(including the District of Columbia)*
- An **Interstate Compact**
- **Public Agency or Publicly Chartered Authority**
- **Political Subdivision of a State** *(Local Governments)*
- **Amtrak** or Other Intercity Passenger Rail Carrier
- **Class II or III Railroads**
 - Association(s) representing a Class II or III Railroad
 - **Holding Companies** of Class II or III Railroads
- Rail Carrier or Equipment Manufacturer *(in partnership with Public Entity(ies))*
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe
- The Transportation Research Board (TRB) *(with any entity with which it contracts in the development of rail-related research, including cooperative research programs)*
- **University**
- A Non-Profit Labor Organization *(representing a class or craft of employees of rail carriers or rail carrier contractors)*

FY25-26 CRISI – Program Overview

Eligible Projects

- Wide Range of Rail Capital Projects
 - Congestion mitigation
 - Ridership growth facilitation
 - Enhancements to multimodal connections
 - Improvements to short-line or regional railroad infrastructure
- Railroad Safety Technology
- Track, Station, and Equipment Improvements for Intercity Passenger Rail
- **Grade Crossing Improvements**
- Rail Line Relocation and Improvement
- Regional and Corridor Service Planning and corresponding Environmental Analyses
- Safety Programs and Institutes
- Research
- Workforce Development and Training
- **Measures that prevent trespassing**
- Preparation of emergency plans for hazardous materials that are transported by rail
- Rehab or procurement of locomotives, provided that such activities result in a significant reduction of emissions*

Eligible Grade Crossing projects are encouraged to apply for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program

Key Differences between RCE and CRISI

	Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE)	Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)
Benefit- Cost Analysis (BCA)	BCA <u>not</u> required, although applicants must provide sufficient qualitative information on project benefits	BCA is <u>required</u>
Commuter Rail Projects	Commuter rail passenger transportation projects are <u>eligible</u>	No sole-benefit commuter rail projects
Eligible Applicants	Certain public entities– see NOFO	Wide range of applicants
Pathway-rail grade crossing projects	Eligible	Not eligible
Minimum Funding Request	Minimum \$1 million funding request unless a planning-only project	No minimum funding request amount

NOFO Overview & Key Changes

What information is in a NOFO?

A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):

- Announces the grant opportunity
- Contains details about the application requirements and procedures to request Federal funding for eligible projects

Key Parts of a NOFO

- Table of Contents
 - Program Description
 - **Eligibility Information**
 - **Application Contents and Format**
 - **Submission Requirements and Deadlines**
 - **Application Review Information**
 - Award Notices
 - Post Award Requirements and Administration
- Program Summary
- Key Dates
- Required Documents
- Addresses
- FRA Contact Information

Read the NOFO thoroughly and carefully to understand the criteria for eligibility and selection and what information each application must include!

RCE Program Application Materials



SF 424 Form

This form is your official funding request.



Project Narrative

- I. Cover Page
- II. Project Summary
- III. Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of Project Funds (*Budget*)
- IV. Applicant Eligibility Criteria
- V. Project Eligibility Criteria
- VI. Detailed Project Description (*Scope and Schedule*)
- VII. Project Location
- VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- IX. Project Implementation and Management



Environmental Compliance Documentation

Note: May include a draft document that requires development, review, and approval by FRA or an existing completed NEPA document approved by FRA or another Federal agency that covers the proposed project scope



Draft Use/Ownership Agreement (if applicable)

Note: FRA requires a written agreement exist between the applicant and the railroad regarding use and ownership consistent with 49 U.S.C. 22905(c)(1) for projects using rights-of-way owned by a railroad



Grade Crossing Table

USDOT Grade Crossing Inventory #	Proposed Improvement	Rail Operator(s)	Railroad Owner	Latitude Coordinates (at least five decimal places of precision)	Longitude Coordinates (at least five decimal places of precision)
	<i>(ex: Grade separation-overpass)</i>				
	<i>(ex: Safety improvements--gates and lights)</i>				

Benefit-Cost Analysis is **NOT** required for RCE;
BCAs are required for CRISI

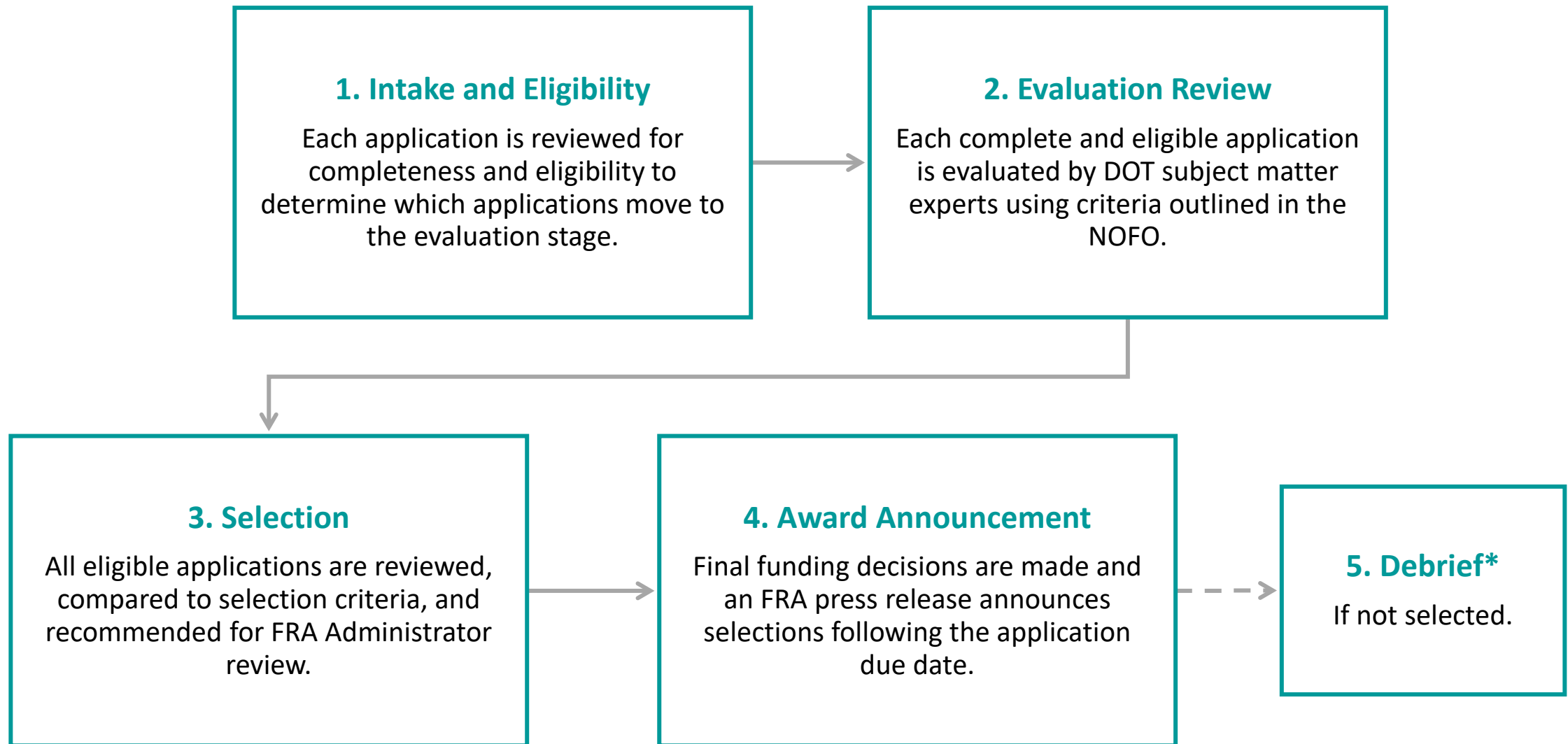


Changes from FY23-24 RCE and FY23-24 CRISI NOFOs

1. NOFO located directly on our website and on grants.gov
2. Streamlined NOFO and application requirements
 - Definitions of [Key Terms on FRA's website](#)
 - Removes certain document requirements
 - Includes updated budget table
 - Updates organization of the NOFO and references to comply with 2 CFR Part 200 Appendix I
 - Removes the use of project tracks to reduce redundancy with lifecycle stages
3. New Cover Page and Improved Functionality
 - Link to a fillable Cover Page PDF
4. New/Expanded Selection Preferences
5. Updates NOFO to align with new Executive Orders

Evaluation & Selection

General Application Review and Selection Process



**To request a debrief, email: FRA-NOFO-Support@dot.gov*

General RCE Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Evaluation Criteria



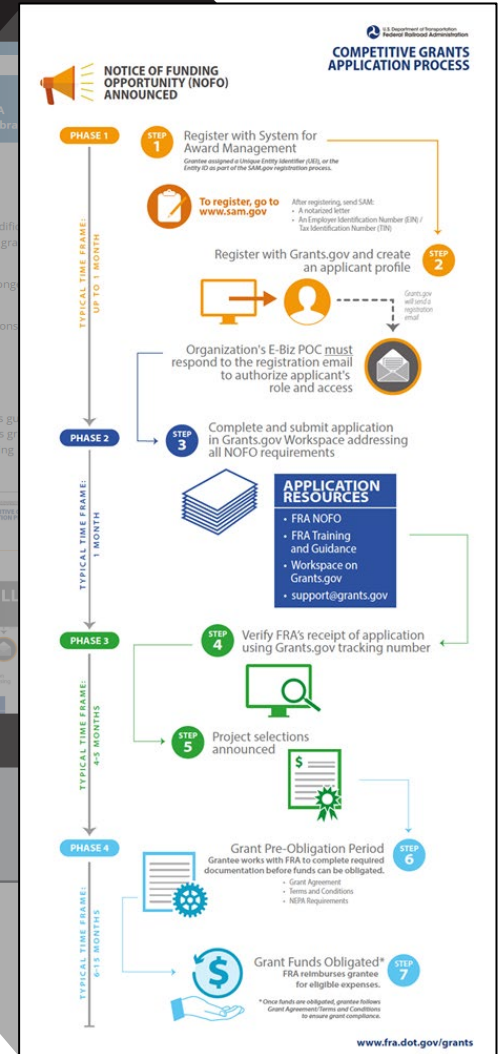
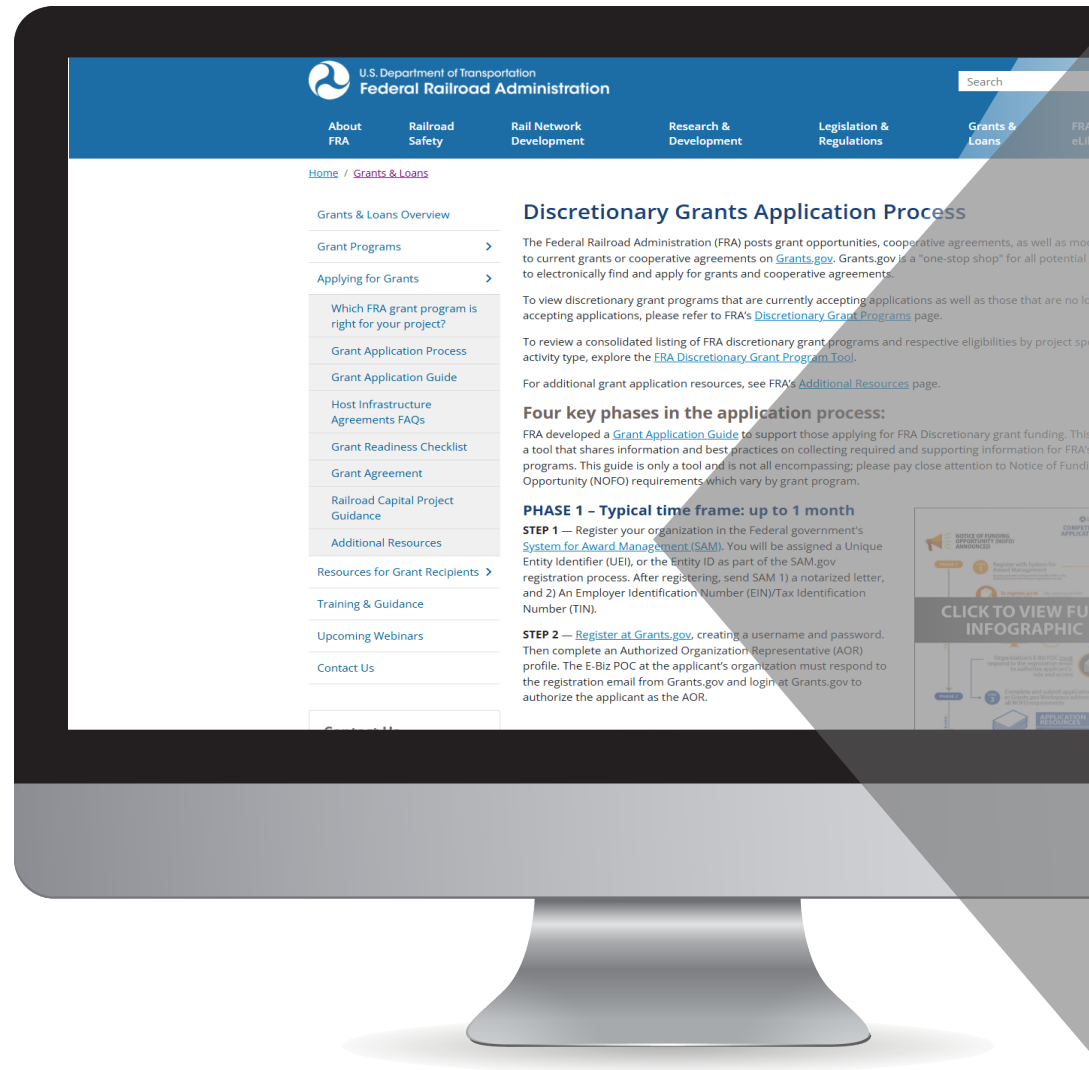
Selection Preferences

How to Apply, Recap & Reminders

Grant Application Process

A step-by-step process for applying:

- railroads.dot.gov/grants-loans/discretionary-grants-application-process



Best Practices & Helpful Hints

- ✓ Attend the FRA RCE Program Webinar once the NOFO is posted
- ✓ Never skimp on the evaluation and selection criteria
 - ✓ Repeat yourself if necessary
 - ✓ Reviewers key in on:
 - ✓ Project Readiness
 - ✓ Project Benefits
 - ✓ Technical Merit
- ✓ Plain language and layman's terms are key
 - ✓ Your reviewers are not all economists and engineers – explain benefits and project implementation in non engineering terms

- ✓ [Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Guidance](#)

- ✓ Use FRA terminology – “speak FRA”

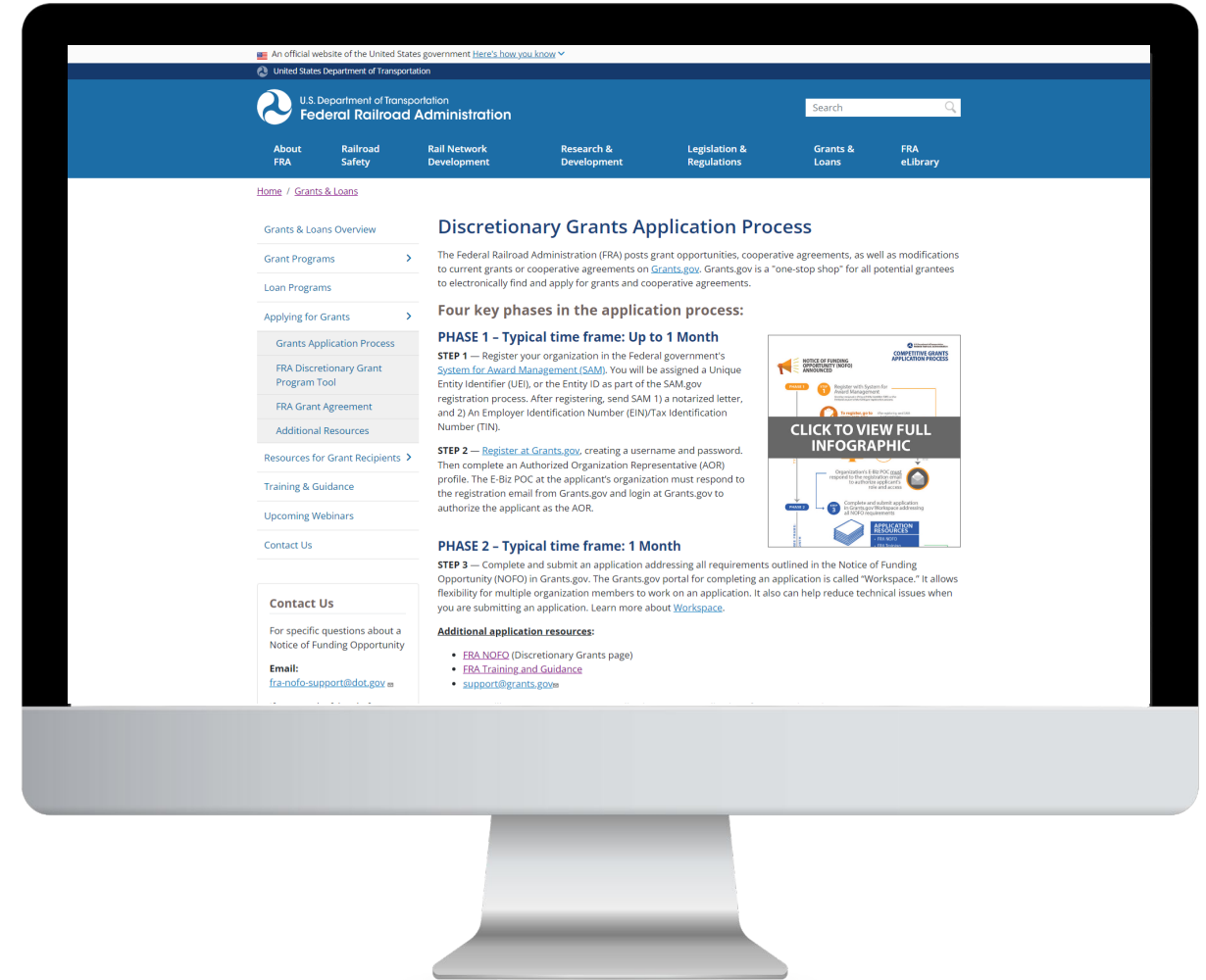


- ✓ Verify that all budget figures match corresponding figures cited in different parts of your application package
- ✓ Subscribe to FRA email updates



Resources

- [RCE FY 2023-2024 NOFO](#) *(last round's NOFO)*
- [FRA's Competitive Grants Application Process](#)
- [FRA's Discretionary Grant Agreements](#)
- [FRA & NEPA Documentation](#)
- [FRA Recommended Trainings & Environmental Resources](#)
- [FRA Guidance on Development and Implementation of Railroad Capital Projects](#)
- [FRA Grants Webinars](#)
- [FRA Grants Videos](#)



Contact Us

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Connect with us at [USDOTFRA](#)



U.S. Department of Transportation
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NOFO Questions:

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***To learn more about FRA Competitive Discretionary
Grant Programs, visit: railroads.dot.gov/grants***

QUESTIONS?