

ACTION TRANSMITTAL No. 2021-27

DATE: August 25, 2021

TO: Technical Advisory Committee

FROM: TAC Funding and Programming Committee

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SUBJECT: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Unique Projects Category Details

REQUESTED ACTION: Approval of the Unique Projects category details for the 2022 Regional Solicitation.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That TAC recommended that the Transportation Advisory Board adopt the Unique Projects category details and evaluation criteria for inclusion in the 2022 Regional Solicitation package.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: A project application during the 2018 Regional Solicitation from the City of Saint Paul for electric vehicle charging and car share created a desire for the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) to explore ways to allow projects that do not fit the Regional Solicitation application categories to still submit applications for funding. In 2019, a Regional Solicitation Policy Workgroup met and recommended the creation of a Unique Projects application category for the 2020 Regional Solicitation. The TAB set aside 2.5% of the total available funding in 2020 Regional Solicitation but deferred the project selection until the 2022 Regional Solicitation to allow time to develop an evaluation process for applications.

From April 23 to July 9, 2021, a 14-member Regional Solicitation Unique Projects Policy Workgroup comprised of TAB members met five times to provide policy direction on the Unique Projects application category. The Workgroup discussed the following items related to the Unique Projects application category, most of which are addressed in the attached document:

- Purpose
- Goals and outcomes (basis of the evaluation criteria)
- Evaluation criteria and weighting
- Evaluation measures
- Application process and timeline
- Minimum and maximum award amounts
- Match expectations
- Relation to TDM Innovation application category (no change recommended)

A technical committee also met twice to provide recommendations on evaluation measures. The Workgroup reviewed recommendations at their final meeting on July 9 and confirmed the recommendations that would go to TAB and its technical committees for review and comment.

The Unique Projects application category recommendations were presented to TAB in July and August for discussion. The recommendations were also presented to TAC Funding and Programming in July and TAC in August. Staff produced the necessary Regional Solicitation documents for the Unique Projects application category based on the recommendations from the Workgroup and Unique Projects technical committee. The Attachment to this Action Transmittal reflects the work of these groups and how the Unique Projects application category will appear in the overall Regional Solicitation. Comments on the recommendations from TAB and its technical committees were incorporated into the document (pending final TAB information item on August 18).

This action sets in place the various elements of the Unique Projects categories that will be included in the 2022 Regional Solicitation release and these elements will be reflected in the final Regional Solicitation package as released for public comment.

RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL POLICY: TAB develops and issues a Regional Solicitation for federal funding. The Unique Projects application category was created by TAB action in September 2019 and the development of the category details were deferred until the 2022 Regional Solicitation development process.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND ACTION: At its August 19, 2021, meeting the TAC Funding and Programming Committee unanimously recommended adoption of the Unique Projects category details and evaluation criteria for inclusion in the 2022 Regional Solicitation package.

ROUTING

TO	ACTION REQUESTED	DATE SCHEDULED / COMPLETED
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	8/19/2021
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	9/1/2021
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Adopt	9/15/2021

UNIQUE PROJECTS FUNDING CATEGORY

Unique Projects is a separate application category in the 2022 Regional Solicitation.

Funding Availability, Minimums, and Maximums

Approximately \$4 million is available for Unique Projects after funding for the Travel Behavior Inventory/Regional Travel Model. TAB may elect to fund Unique Projects at an amount lower than \$4 million, depending on the amount of funding requested and quality of the submittals.

The table below shows the minimum and maximum federal award for the Unique Projects application category that applicants can apply for as part of the Regional Solicitation. The values do not account for the required minimum 20 percent local match that applicants must contribute to the project.

Modal Application Categories	Minimum Federal Award	Maximum Federal Award
Unique Projects	\$500,000	\$4,000,000

General Process and Rules

The following rules are specific to the Unique Projects application process:

1. Unique Project applicants may submit an application of interest as part of a two-step application process. This first step is optional for applicants. Materials submitted will be kept confidential among staff reviewing the submittals. The second step is to fill out the actual application. The timeline for the Unique Projects application of interest is as follows:

Unique Projects Application of Interest	Timeframe
Release Application of Interest Form	October 1, 2021
Application of Interest Form Due	November 19, 2021
Consultation with Applicants	Nov. 19, 2021 - January 31, 2022

2. The Unique Projects application category is primarily focused on projects that would not otherwise be eligible in other funding categories. However, any project can apply in the Unique Projects category if the applicant believes the project is truly unique and would receive a positive evaluation based on the category criteria. This is up to the applicant's discretion to determine. The Transportation Advisory Board reserves the right to disqualify projects that it does not believe fit the intent of Unique Projects. All projects must be eligible for federal funding under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program or Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program
3. Unique Projects must agree to all of the qualifying requirements of the Regional Solicitation unless stated otherwise in the qualifying requirements.

Application: Regional Solicitation for Transportation Projects

Unique Projects should select program year(s) 2024 and/or 2025.

Unique Projects applicants should submit the following materials as appropriate for their proposals:

- Supporting technical documentation (up to six pages) for metrics or data referenced in their criteria evaluation responses.
- A letter of commitment from any private service, vendor, or non-profit proposed to be included in the project. If letters of commitment are not included, please attach a description of how private services, vendors, or non-profits will be selected as part of the project delivery process.
- Upload project budget (budget should include applicable costs, such as salary, fringe benefits, overhead expenses, marketing, materials, etc.).
- If a project application includes any information that is considered confidential for competitive reasons, please indicate which sections are confidential on the attached materials.

Unique Projects – Application of Interest Form

PROJECT INFORMATION

1. PROJECT TITLE:
2. PROJECT LOCATION (limit 100 words):
3. BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Include types of improvements – limit to 300 words):
4. PROJECT BUDGET AND SOURCES (Provide a general budget for the project and budget description; at a minimum, include anticipated total budget and federal request figures – limit to 100 words):

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Describe how the project will be innovative by using new approaches to existing or emerging challenges.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

2. Describe how the project will reduce the adverse environmental impacts of transportation.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

3. Describe how the project will directly improve racial equity, particularly for black, indigenous, and people of color.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

4. Describe how the project supports multimodal communities.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

5. Describe how the project will have a regional impact or how it could be expanded to more of the region.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

6. Describe how the project will build partnerships or collaboration.

RESPONSE: (Limit 1,400 characters; approximately 200 words)

UNIQUE PROJECTS

Prioritizing Criteria and Measures

September 15, 2021

Definition: An innovative project that would not be eligible or competitive in other application categories and that reduces adverse environmental impacts, improves racial equity, and supports multimodal communities.

Scoring:

Projects will be evaluated on a five-point scale for each of the six criteria listed below. Each measure will be given equal weight within the criteria and averaged to get the criteria value. Criteria values will be calculated to 1 decimal points (e.g., 4.2 or 3.1). The total score will be a weighted average of the criteria values. If projects are deemed to have not addressed a specific criteria or measure at all, zero points can be awarded.

Criteria and Measures	% of Total	Excellent (5 pts)	Very Good (4 pts)	Good (3 pts)	Fair (2 pts)	Poor (1 pt)
1. Innovation	28%					
Measure A – New approach to existing and/or emerging challenge(s)						
2. Environmental Impacts	21%					
Measure A – Improve air quality Measure B – Contribution to climate change improvement Measure C – Improve surface or ground water quality and management Measure D – Other environmental improvements						
3. Racial Equity	17%					
Measure A – Improve connectivity and access to places and opportunity for BIPOC communities Measure B – Removing barriers Measure C – Contributions to quality-of-life improvements						
4. Multimodal Communities	13%					
Measure A – Improve multiple non-single-occupant vehicle (SOV) modes within the system (e.g., transit, biking, walking) Measure B – Land use and development strategies that support walkable, bikeable, transit-friendly communities						

Measure C – Support first- and last-mile solutions for people connecting to places they need to go

5. Regional Impact/Scalability	11%
Measure A – Regional impact Measure B – Expandability	
6. Partnerships	9%
Measure A – Stakeholder groups involved in project development Measure B – Match contribution	
Total	100%

1. Innovation (28% of Total)

This criterion measures how a project uses new approaches to address existing or emerging challenges in transportation for the region.

- A. **MEASURE:** Describe the new approach of the project to address existing and/or emerging challenge(s). Identify the challenge(s) that the approach is trying to address and discuss how the approach was developed (e.g., replicated from another region, created a new technology/idea). Also briefly describe the risk assessment of the innovation, any mitigation strategies to manage risks, and who will mitigate the risk, if needed.

Examples of challenges include:

- Problems that have been a long-term issue where progress has been limited
- Lack of opportunity for an emerging technology or innovation to penetrate the Twin Cities market
- Leveraging connected and automated (CAV) vehicle technology and infrastructure
- Outdated function or effectiveness of existing infrastructure

RESPONSE: (Limit 4,200 characters; approximately 600 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that effectively describe how their project will address existing and/or emerging challenge(s) will receive high scores. Scorers will consider the level of innovation proposed, the clarity of the link between the innovation and the challenge(s) identified by the applicant, and the risk assessment of the innovation.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

1. Environmental Impact (21% of Total)

This criterion estimates the reduction of adverse environmental impacts of transportation.

A. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will improve regional air quality.

Applicants must describe their methodology for determining the project impact. Also, provide a description of the people/groups that will receive either direct or indirect benefits from the project. Examples of benefits include:

- Reduction of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips
- Access to electric vehicle charging stations
- Reduction of peak-hour auto trips
- Increase in non-motorized trips
- Increase in multiple-occupant vehicle trips

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describes how their project will improve air quality, along with provision of the most effective benefits, will receive high scores.

Applicants that provide an unclear or unreasonable methodology will receive a score of zero.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

B. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will contribute to climate change improvement. Explain how the project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will contribute to climate change improvement, along with provision of the most effective benefits, will receive high scores.

Applicants that provide an unclear or unreasonable methodology will receive a score of zero.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

C. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will improve surface or ground water quality and management. Examples of improvements include:

- Reduction of stormwater runoff and improvements to on-site stormwater management
- Improvements to the resiliency of infrastructure in response to stormwater events

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will contribute to improved surface or ground water quality and management, along with provision of the most effective benefits, will receive high scores.

Applicants that provide an unclear or unreasonable methodology will receive a score of zero.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

D. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will make other environmental improvements.

Examples of other environmental elements include:

- Protection of or enhancement to wildlife habitat or movement
- Protection of or enhancement to natural vegetation, particularly native vegetation
- Reductions in or mitigation of noise or light pollution

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will contribute to environmental improvements, along with the most provision of the most effective benefits, will receive high scores.

Applicants that provide an unclear or unreasonable methodology will receive a score of zero.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

3. Racial Equity (17% of Total)

This criterion addresses the [Council's role in advancing equity](#) by examining how a project directly improves racial equity.

- A. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will improve connectivity and access to places and opportunity for black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. Examples of improvements include:
- Better connecting people to places, but also demonstrating an understanding of the places people want to go
 - Connecting communities where known gaps exist (document why connection is needed and where that documentation was sourced from)
 - Outreach to, and involvement from, BIPOC communities in project selection, development, or delivery

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will contribute to improve connectivity and access to places and opportunity for BIPOC communities will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- B. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will remove or lessen barriers to movement, participation, or cultural recognition. Examples of improvements include:
- Physical barriers being addressed (directly or indirectly)
 - Cultural barriers being addressed (language, etc.)
 - Engagement barrier being addressed (improving systemic outreach issues)

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will remove or lessen barriers, along with provision of the most effective benefits, will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- C. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project will contribute to quality-of-life improvements for BIPOC communities. Examples of improvements include:
- Placemaking or strengthening a sense of place
 - A sense of safety or security
 - Job creation, increased economic development
 - Access to green space and recreation
 - Improved public health (excluding environmental impacts discussed in criterion two)

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will contribute to quality-of-life benefits will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

4. *Multimodal Communities (13% of Total)*

This criterion measures how the project supports multimodal communities.

- A. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project improves multiple non-single-occupant vehicle (SOV) modes within the system (e.g., transit, biking, walking, carpooling). Examples of improvements include:

- Creating interconnectivity between modes
- Creating structures or facilities that serve multiple modes
- Improvements to multimodal trip planning or ease of use

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project improve non-SOV modes within the system will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- B. **MEASURE:** Describe the land use and development strategies that the project directly influences or supports that help create walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly communities. Examples of strategies include:

- Contributing to the growth of dense, mixed-use communities or neighborhoods
- Addressing the outcomes and goals in Thrive MSP 2040 and the 2040 TPP
- Reducing demand or need for automobile parking infrastructure (e.g., shared parking arrangements, parking management techniques)

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will support walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly communities will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- C. **MEASURE:** Describe how the project supports first- and last-mile solutions for people connecting to places they need to go. Describe the destinations the project will connect and their level of demand. Examples of strategies include.

- Mobility hubs and centralized connections for multiple modes
- Increasing shared trips/shared mobility
- Access to job centers not located on fixed transit routes

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe how their project will support first- and last-mile solutions will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

5. Regional Impact/Scalability (11% of Total)

This criterion measures the regional impact of the project or how it could be expanded to more of the region.

- A. **MEASURE:** Describe the regional impact of the project. In the response, consider the following:
- How many people does the project directly impact?
 - What percent of the people (in a given community/area) are directly impacted?
 - What is the project's geographic reach?

RESPONSE (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe the largest extent of regional impact will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- B. **MEASURE:** Describe the expandability of the project. If the project requires an adequate private market response, describe the characteristics of the market it could serve beyond the initial project. In the response, consider the following:
- How can the idea be used regionwide?
 - If not regionwide, is it a replicable project (i.e., could it be adapted elsewhere)? Describe the extent of the potential locations.

RESPONSE (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Any project that covers the whole region will receive the highest score. Remaining projects will receive a share of the full score relative to the highest score.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

6. Partnerships (9% of Total)

This criterion measures how the project builds partnerships or collaboration.

- A. **MEASURE:** Describe the number of stakeholder groups that have helped or will help develop the project and their role in the project's delivery. In the response, consider the following:
- How many partners will be involved in the project?
 - Will there be public/private partnerships (or 4P; Public, Private, Philanthropic, and People)
 - What percent or number of partners are small or minority-owned businesses (e.g., disadvantaged business enterprise [DBE], targeted group business [TGB], Met Council underutilized business [MCUB])
 - Are businesses or partners locally owned or run?

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the quality of the response. Applicants that most effectively describe their collaboration will receive high scores.

The applicants will receive higher scores if elements of their response are quantitative using proven methodologies. Applicants should provide appropriate justification of their quantitative methodologies.

- B. **MEASURE:** Identify the funding partners and amounts of local match provided.

RESPONSE: (Limit 2,800 characters; approximately 400 words):

SCORING GUIDANCE

The applicant will receive a score based on the percentage of local match provided for the project by the applicant and its funding partners. The project(s) providing the highest local match percentage will be awarded the highest score. The remaining scores will be awarded proportionally to the highest score.