What Makes a Successful INFRA Application?

CAGTC Members Share Their Experiences

CAGTC members that received awards under the FASTLANE/INFRA grant program were invited to respond to a CAGTC-produced survey in October 2018. Survey responses were submitted anonymously.

<table>
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<th>180-440 hours</th>
<th>35-60%</th>
<th>1/2</th>
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<td>spent preparing a successful application</td>
<td>of total hours were spent developing the BCA</td>
<td>of respondents hired a consultant; those who did said they received a return on their investment</td>
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The INFRA award typically covered 20-30% of total project costs

Non-Federal project funds came from:
- Private companies (i.e., railroads)
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
- State Departments of Transportation (DOTs)
- Other local funds

Project application teams were made up of MPOs, city & state DOTs, chambers of commerce, and private entities

Successful projects had 12-40 letters of support

All respondents had support from their congressional delegations

3/4 of respondents had support from bordering states

Advice for future applicants?
- Reference the FHWA BCA guidance
- Start the application process early using a collaborative, multi-disciplinary grant team
- Engage a broad group of local stakeholders to encourage buy-in and support
- Consultants are valuable but project sponsors should be prepared to take the lead
Time spent preparing an application:

**80-320 hours**

Number of hours varied depending on the client’s preparedness level, the type of project, and:

- Size of project
- Available data
- Economic analyses
- BCA development
- Graphics
- Coordinated planning with stakeholders
- Feasibility studies

Before applying, projects should consider:

- Project readiness
- Matching funds
- Project definition
- Available data & analytics tools
- Performance goals
- Alignment with grant program goals
- Stakeholder support
- Partnerships
- Innovative procurement methods

All successful applications have _____ in common:

- Support from elected officials (i.e., State Governor, U.S. Senator)
- Clearly identified champions
- Early consultation among the grant writing team
- Innovative elements
- A strong, but concise, sales pitch

Project Complexity

1/2 of respondents said less complex projects are more successful under the current Administration’s INFRA grant program, especially due to the increased focus on rural grants. 1/2 of respondents said complex projects must concisely communicate project benefits and have a strong BCA; with a good write up, they can be successful.

All respondents said there is some level of politicization in the INFRA grant selection process.

- 2/3 said the politicization is getting worse
- 1/3 said it is difficult to gauge if it is getting better or worse

- 4/5 said USDOT debriefs were constructive
- 1/5 said USDOT debriefs were not constructive