

Nationally Competitive Grant Programs

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Funding Example



Source: NPS

BUILD Grant: Tamiami Trail Replacement

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) was awarded a \$20 million BUILD grant (previously called a TIGER grant) in 2014 to go toward replacing the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) with an elevated 2.6-mile bridge that will help restore water flow into Everglades National Park and Northeast Shark River Slough. Planning for this project and the BUILD application involved collaboration between the NPS and FDOT, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior.



Source: NPS

Published: June 2018

To fund large-scale, nationally or regionally significant transportation projects, national parks can collaborate with state and local partners to apply for nationally competitive funding programs, including the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program, the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program, and the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) program. These programs offer tens of millions of dollars in funding and are highly competitive, often receiving requests that greatly exceed available funding. Applying for these programs is a major undertaking, which should be coordinated with NPS Washington Support Office (WASO) and regional transportation staff. Grant recipients are selected by USDOT.

The BUILD program funds capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure projects that generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation for communities, both urban and rural. The INFRA Grant Program offers funding for projects of national or regional significance that address major issues on highways and bridges. The NSFLTP program provides funding for construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of nationally significant projects on federal or tribal lands.

How can parks access nationally competitive program funding?

For BUILD and INFRA grants, federal land management agencies are not eligible to apply on their own. Parks must partner with a state, local, or tribal government, including U.S. territories, transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations, and other political subdivisions of state or local governments. Parks can apply for NSFLTP funds directly.

Each program holds an application period approximately once per year, which will be announced by a Notice of Funding Opportunity.

What projects are eligible?

Projects funded with BUILD grants are capital projects that will have significant economic generating impacts on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region. Various modes are eligible for funding, including highways, public transportation, rail, port infrastructure, and intermodal projects. Projects eligible for INFRA funding must be located on the National Highway System and include highway freight projects; highway or bridge projects that improve mobility or are located in scenic areas; railway-highway grade crossing or separation projects; and certain types of freight projects. For NSFLTP funding, projects must be located on federal or tribal lands or on transportation facilities that provide access to or are adjacent to federal lands. Projects eligible for NSFLTP funding also must have completed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Each Notice of Funding Opportunity will also list selection criteria that make projects more competitive for funding. For example, in 2016 the BUILD program (previously called the TIGER program) sought projects that demonstrated significant benefits to safety, state of good repair, economic competitiveness, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. Applicants should pay close attention to the selection criteria, as successful applicants must demonstrate how their proposed project meets the selection criteria.

Nationally Competitive Grant Programs

Funding Example



Source: Connect Historic Boston

BUILD grant: Connect Historic Boston Initiative

In 2013 the City of Boston and the National Park Service were selected to receive a \$15.5 million BUILD grant (previously called the TIGER grant) to fund alternative transportation projects under the “Connect Historic Boston” initiative. The initiative will create pedestrian and bicycle connections between Boston’s public transit system and historic sites. The NPS and the Boston Transportation Department worked together on the development of the Connect Historic Boston initiative, including designs for four major projects, as well as on the BUILD grant application.

Key Resources and Contacts

- [NPS Transportation Branch and regional transportation coordinators](#)
- [USDOT BUILD grant program information](#)
- [USDOT INFRA grant program information](#)
- [FHWA NSFLTP program information](#)

Program Details

How much funding is available?

Program funding availability and funding award amounts for each project varies, but is typically in the multi-million dollar range. BUILD grants have a minimum award amount of \$5 million for urban areas and \$1 million for rural areas; in past rounds the average award size was \$14.5 million. INFRA has a minimum award size of \$25 million for large projects and \$5 million for small projects. NSFLTP projects must have total project cost of at least \$25 million, with priority given to projects that cost over \$50 million.

These programs also have cost share requirements, with the grant program covering 60-90 percent of project costs (depending on the program) and a local match or other federal assistance covering the remainder of project costs.

NEXT STEPS

Build relationships with state DOTs and local governments

Parks are not eligible to apply to BUILD or FASTLANE on their own. Therefore, it is essential that park staff collaborate with state and local partners and NPS WASO and regional staff to develop an application. Parks should meet early and often with local stakeholders to build trust and a shared understanding of needs. These meetings are also an opportunity to ensure that NPS projects are incorporated into the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning process. Local support is a critical component to the success of nationally significant projects.

Prepare to act quickly when funding notices become available

The funding application period for these nationally competitive programs is typically only a few weeks or months, and application requirements for these programs tend to be complex. By collaborating with state and local partners to prepare information ahead of time, parks will be well-positioned to pursue funding when the time comes. In most cases, projects should be complete or substantially underway, meaning that planning and compliance should be completed before application submission. Since program criteria do not change significantly from year to year, much of the application information can be prepared ahead of time, including a project description, cost estimates, project schedule, and a description of the significance of the project.

Discuss programs with the NPS regional transportation coordinator

Each NPS region has a regional transportation coordinator who helps prioritize transportation projects in the region. They are responsible for coordination between the NPS WASO and their region’s parks on transportation-related topics. The coordinators can provide insight into the nationally competitive funding programs, advise parks on how to work with state and local partners to apply to these programs, and connect parks to technical resources.