Request for Applications: Participation in Technology Summits

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Technology Summit Technical Assistance
Request for Applications
RFA Number: 387152 RFA 002

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What This Is

The Community Transportation Association of America, through its National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT), is soliciting applications from interested organizations (described below) to host one of up to three Technology Summits. N-CATT will select up to three organizations to build a Summit that helps the organization work with relevant transit providers to identify technology priorities and how to address those priorities. These summits can be held through: State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs), tribal consortiums, or other groups that are direct recipients of FTA funds.

> **Interested organizations must follow the instructions and format set forth in this Request for Applications.**

About N-CATT

The National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) operates under a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration. N-CATT's goal is to improve and make more efficient small-urban, rural and tribal transit service by assisting local systems in understanding, selecting, and otherwise planning to incorporate new technology into service. N-CATT helps transportation providers, managers, and decision-makers, such as board members or public officials, to identify promising technologies, practices, and opportunities that accomplish agencies' goals or resolve particular challenges.

The recent burst of technology-based innovations in transportation has largely focused on dense urban areas. N-CATT seeks to spread the benefits of these developments to smaller transportation providers who lack the resources and capacities of large-urban systems to research, analyze, and test new products that could enhance their services. This includes educating system managers and helping them to encourage influential stakeholders to support needed technological advancements.

To achieve this vision, N-CATT provides technical assistance and networking opportunities to transit agencies who need support in navigating the evolving technological landscape and understanding how to best improve their systems through practical applications of new technologies.

Overview of N-CATT Technology Summits

N-CATT will partner with up to three recipients and their partners to host applied technology summits for small-urban, rural, and tribal transit operators in those states. These Technology Summits ("Summits") will provide an organized forum for groups of transit agencies to collaborate on consortium-wide technology priorities, and to identify roles for addressing those priorities.

As of releasing this application, N-CATT expects to hold the Summits in person, but will monitor the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic and relevant safety advisories or regulations. With this in mind, N-CATT anticipates each Summit to involve 16 hours of presentations, activities, and discussion, but will work with each organization on the format (e.g. two straight days, three consecutive Thursdays). Building on the technology deployment goal(s) of the organization, as set forth in its application to CTAA, the Summit will bring together the recipient, its participating small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies, and N-CATT technology experts as they explore the challenges in determining short- and long-term technology strategies, identifying and selecting technologies that meet the area's goals and local transit agencies' needs and priorities, planning for the roll-out, use, and life cycle of these technologies, procurement and deployment of technology, planning for sustainability and technological change, and issues that may be specific to the state's goal for the summit and the technological strategies being adopted. As a result of the summit, the state and its participating transit agencies will have an outline of priorities to pursue and roles for leads on each priority. N-CATT will provide limited follow-up technical assistance after the summit.

Approach to be Taken

The Summit process aims to support and strengthen recipients and transit agencies through the following:

- N-CATT and the organizer will establish a date and location for the Summit. The summit must conclude before April 30, 2023. Summits may be held virtually, in conjunction with transit association conferences/annual meetings, or independently.
- N-CATT will determine and invite technology staff and outside technologists as appropriate to guide and contribute expertise at the Summit that is pertinent to establishing priorities for the group.
- Well in advance of the scheduled Summit date(s), the organizers and N-CATT will meet by conference call to review and discuss the details and intended outcome(s) of a successful Summit, considering the expected participants, whether additional participants should be invited, the technology goal(s) identified in the state's application, organizer and participant authority and capacity, and existing or expected challenges.
- State Summit Part 1: Participating agencies will discuss what they want from transit technology and identify "must-have" criteria for successful technology deployments, as well as discuss specific technology issues based on the group's goals.

- State Summit Part 2: The group will map out how to address issues identified in Part 1; prioritize outcomes and research to be done, and; assign roles for moving forward
- N-CATT staff and technologists at the Summit will be available for follow up assistance, via conference call or equivalent media following the Summit.

Logistical Arrangements and Expenses

Once chosen, CTAA will establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the selected agency, then will work with the selected agency to solicit participation from relevant staff, partners, stakeholders and/or community members, to design the details of the site visits.

CTAA will not provide any funds or compensation to selected recipients.

Applicant Eligibility

Departments of transportation in the 50 states, the District of Columbia or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Metropolitan Planning Organizations representing small-urban regions (urbanized areas of 200,000 residents or fewer); Rural Planning Organizations; tribal entities; or consortiums of other direct recipients of Federal Transit Administration funds are eligible applicants for this opportunity. Two or more contiguous states may apply as a multi-state consortium for holding a Summit, but the summit must address a common goal, priorities and strategies that are shared among the applicant states. State DOTs in partnership with metropolitan/rural planning organizations are also welcome to apply to address a common goal, priority(ies) and strategy for the state, or region. In any event, N-CATT will review the applications as detailed below and select the applicants that will convene the Summits.

Participant Eligibility

The target audience for all N-CATT activities are public transportation providers in small-urban areas (i.e., urbanized areas with populations less than 200,000), rural areas and tribal nations. Therefore, each Summit shall be designed for the benefit of small-urban, rural and tribal transit providers in the selected state. In some instances, a selected applicant may find it appropriate to include participation from larger urbanized areas' transit systems in its Summit, but only to the extent that such participation furthers the group's goals and does not detract from how the applicant and N-CATT may focus on the applicant's small- urban, rural and tribal transit agencies. All participants in a State Summit must have some programmatic relationship (e.g., grantor/grantee, contractual, or regulatory) with the selected state DOT.

Responsibilities of the organizing TA recipient

Applicants should exhibit the commitment of at least 4 transit agencies' participation in the Summit using letters of support, described below.

Once chosen, selected applicants are to solicit participation from relevant stakeholders. The applicant will propose a location and venue for the Summit. The organizer is to work collaboratively with N-CATT in setting priorities and details of the Summit's agenda.

Responsibilities of N-CATT

N-CATT has produced a meeting template, and will engage and provide all subject matter experts, technology generalists and other professional staff necessary for the Summit, including their travel expenses and their salaries or fees. Unless negotiated differently with the selected state, N-CATT will be responsible for the costs associated with the Summit's meeting space, any group meals that are part of the Summit program, and the production of any meeting materials necessary for the summit. N-CATT is not responsible for the travel costs of Summit attendees. There shall be no compensation or remuneration between CTAA and an organizer or participant in connection with any N-CATT Summit.

Application Requirements

After carefully reviewing this RFA, if you have questions please send them by email to carpenter@ctaa.org. Responses and questions will be added to the webpage where this RFA is posted as they are received. N-CATT encourages interested parties to check the page regularly before submitting their application. The webpage is: https://n-catt.org/news/n-catt-request-for-applications-2022-2023-technology-summits/

Any entity interested in hosting a Summit should apply to Andrew Carpenter of CTAA's N-CATT project staff. Applications must be submitted in one PDF document by email to carpenter@ctaa.org. Applications will be accepted until capacity is filled.

A complete application consists of:

1. Application Cover Sheet
2. Application Narrative (see word limits for each question); and
3. Letters of Support from localities indicating their commitment to participating in the Summit

Cover sheet - Please provide the following information:

1. Name of applicant entity;
2. Location of applicant – Street Address, City, State, and Zip Code;
3. Name of lead contact;
4. Title of lead contact;
5. Lead contact's email; and
6. Lead contact's phone number.
7. Preferred dates for the Summit, to be concluded prior to April 30, 2023. Please indicate your state's current travel policy or preferences, including if you prefer to hold a summit virtually. Applicants will not be penalized for preferring a virtual summit, nor for including Summits as part of local transit association conferences/annual meetings.

Application Narrative – For the Application Narrative, the word limits below are maximums and in no way reflect a requirement for a specific number of words. Please provide the following information:

1. **Clearly articulated goal (**Up to 50 words**):** State the goal in the form of an aim or overarching challenge to be solved.
2. **Vision for the State Summit** (Up to 100 words): Describe how the applicant and/or other relevant agencies in your geographic region will use a Summit to collaborate to address a statewide or regional problem, or a situation common to rural, tribal, or small-urban transit providers in applying new technologies; and a specific outcome for what you would consider the result of a successful Summit.
3. **Background** (Up to 150 words): How or why the goal was identified; Recent efforts to address the goal or overcome long-term challenges to address the goal; and any challenges confronted in identifying a solution, set of solutions, or appropriate tools or assistance to accomplish the goal.
4. **Commitment and feasibility** (Up to 150 words): Describe the ways in which rural, tribal, or small- urban transit providers and any state-level or regional agencies are currently demonstrating a commitment to accomplishing the goal, whether through funding, expertise, participation in discussions or outreach, projects or collaboration; and
5. **Capacity** (Up to 100 words): To demonstrate capacity for any necessary follow up, planning, or implementation of the articulated specific outcome for what you would consider the result of a successful State Summit.
6. **Tech landscape** (Up to 200 words): Please describe the following regarding the "landscape" of technology across the geographic area's small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies that will participate in the State Summit:
   1. Are some small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies already trying new technologies?
   2. What are the challenges that are preventing others from technology adoption?
   3. Is the applicant or other relevant agency suited to facilitating, coordinating, encouraging and/or funding planning, piloting, adoption and/or implementation of technological advancements?
   4. What is the applicant's plan, if any, for advancing technology for small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies?
   5. What interest have local or regional agencies expressed in advancing technology in their systems?
   6. Are other stakeholders, such as political leaders and advocates, influential and active in spurring technological advancement, either specifically at rural, small urban, and/or tribal transit systems, or, more generally, across the state or through state programs?
7. **Letters of support**: Please provide signed letters of support from at least four local or regional rural, small urban, and/or tribal transit agencies relevant to the vision for a Summit. Each letter should be written individually by the local agency to indicate the reason for their commitment to participating in a Summit.

Application Screening and Review Process

1. **Screening**. All applications received will be initially screened to determine that the minimum requirements, as noted in the initial screening criteria, are met. Only those applications that meet the minimum requirements of the initial screening criteria will be reviewed.

2. **Review Committee**. N-CATT staff will convene a committee to rate applications according to the criteria noted below.

3. **Review Process**. The review committee will evaluate the proposals based on the evaluation criteria specified below. N-CATT may schedule follow-up phone calls with up to five applicants to further discuss their visions for the Technology Summit, as well as potential dates and activities. Screening and review will include a determination that applicants and their expected participants are available for a Summit.

4. **Selection**. N-CATT will choose those projects receiving the highest recommendations by its review committee (see Review and Rating Criteria section below).

5. **Approval**. After consultation with FTA, N-CATT will make the final selection of successful applicants for the Tech Strike Team opportunity.

Initial Screening Criteria

- Application must be submitted by an eligible applicant.
- Complete application must be received by email by the deadline.
- Application must comply with all word limits prescribed for each section.
- Application must be submitted as a single pdf document.
- Application must include all the required elements, as noted above.
- Statement of availability for State Summit keeping in mind the Summit must be completed by April 30, 2022.

Application Review

Applications will be rated by an independent review committee on the basis of highly recommended (HR), recommended (R), and not recommended (NR) in the following areas:

1. **Clearly articulated goal.** This will be evaluated through the following:

   a) The identified goal is succinctly stated as a goal to be accomplished or as a problem to be solved; and
   b) The application explains why this goal is an important issue to be addressed
   c) The application explains how technology would contribute to addressing the goal and the impact it will have on their community.

2. **Vision for the Summit.** This will be evaluated through the following:

a) The vision aims to address Item 1 through technological applications
b) The vision justifies the need for a technological application to the applicant's goals
c) The vision describes how the applicant and relevant agencies in your geographic area will use a Summit to collaborate to address a statewide or regional problem, or a situation common to rural, tribal, or small-urban transit providers in applying new technologies; and
d) A specific outcome is articulated to state what would be considered the result of a successful Summit.

3. **Background**: This will be evaluated through the following:

a) The application provides strong background on how or why the goal was identified; Description of recent efforts to address the goal or overcome long-term challenges to address the goal; and A description of any challenges confronted in identifying a solution, set of solutions, or appropriate tools or assistance to accomplish the goal.

4. **Commitment and feasibility**: This will be evaluated through the following:

a) An explanation of the ways in which rural, tribal, or small-urban transit providers and any state-level or regional agencies are currently demonstrating a commitment to accomplishing the goal, whether through funding, expertise, participation in discussions or outreach, projects or collaboration.

5. **Capacity and Staffing**. This will be evaluated through the following:
a) The applicant provides evidence of its capacity for convening the Summit and taking the lead on follow-up items identified during the Summit.
b) The applicant provides biographical information on Summit leads

6. **Tech landscape**: This will be evaluated through the following: The application describes…

a) Whether some small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies in the geographic area are already trying new technologies;
b) Identification of the challenges that are preventing others from technology adoption;
c) Whether the applicant and/or other state-level or regional agencies are suited to facilitating, coordinating, encouraging and/or funding planning, piloting, adoption and/or implementation of technological advancements;
d) A brief statement of any relevant plan, if one exists, for advancing technology for small- urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies;
e) A brief statement of what, if any, interest local or regional agencies have expressed in advancing technology in their systems; and
f) Whether other stakeholders, such as political leaders and advocates, are influential and active in spurring technological advancement, either specifically at rural, small urban, and/or tribal transit systems, or, more generally, across the state or through state programs.

7. **Support**: At least four letters of support demonstrate the commitment of those agencies' participation in the Summit; a commitment to reach the goal identified in the application; and willingness to learn further, plan for, or adopt technology to address that goal.

8. **Suitability assessment**: The applications will be assessed to determine that applying a technology would, when implemented, significantly assist the applicant and partners to reach the goal identified or to overcome substantial challenges described to reach that goal.

The review committee will make its recommendations based on the following guidelines:
- Applications rated as highly recommended (HR) will be those that receive "HR" in all categories:
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will be those that receive "R" in at least these categories:
  - Identified Goal
  - Vision for the Summit
  - Suitability Assessment
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will have no more than one (1) "not recommended" (NR) in categories other than those identified above

Highly Recommended applications will take precedent over Recommended. If the committee chooses among multiple Recommended applications, they will be ranked based on HR ratings within their evaluations.

Submittal Instructions

Please submit your application in one document in PDF format to carpenter@ctaa.org. No calls, please.