



## 2009 FOCUS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: How does the Technical Assistance Program differ from MTC's Station Area Planning Grant Program?**
- A:** Unlike MTC's Station Area Planning Grant Program, the Technical Assistance Program is not designed to support large-scale, comprehensive planning efforts for transit station areas. The Technical Assistance Program provides discrete assistance to jurisdictions for addressing planning and development issues specific to Planned or Potential Priority Development Areas (PDAs). The funding amount per project (up to \$50,000) is small and the goal of the Program is to address barriers to implementation to help spur development within PDAs that already have a specific or neighborhood plan completed or substantially underway.
- Q: Can this Program supplement the current round of MTC Station Area Planning funding for PDAs?**
- A:** As a condition of award, MTC-funded Station Area Planning grant recipients are obligated to complete all the plan elements set forth in their respective grant agreements, and to provide the full local funding match committed for the project. Therefore, the Technical Assistance program cannot supplement or replace local funding for planning elements required by the grant agreement.
- Q: How much is funding is available for the Program and what is the source of funds? Will FOCUS continue to award funding until it runs out?**
- A:** The anticipated funding for the program's initial year is \$525,000 - \$125,000 through regional blueprint planning funds awarded to ABAG by the State, and \$400,000 through the TLC Program. Staff is working to identify a long-term funding source for the Program so that it can be maintained as an on-going program.
- Please keep in mind that awarded jurisdictions will not receive funding directly; the Program will provide consultant services to awardees.
- Q: Given that this is a rolling program, will projects be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis or will specific funding amounts be allocated and available for each evaluation round? Please explain the evaluation and award process in more detail.**
- A:** The Program is not first-come, first-served. The Program seeks to fund high-quality projects that will serve to advance implementation of PDAs. Therefore, technical

assistance will be awarded based on an evaluation of the quality and merits of individual projects.

An Advisory Committee will score applications using the evaluation criteria outlined in the Technical Assistance Program Guidelines. Regional agency staff will make the ultimate determination of awards.

Applications for Technical Assistance will be accepted on a rolling basis anytime on or after September 1. The Advisory Committee will evaluate applications as a group approximately every quarter thereafter. No specific funding limits will be set for each evaluation period.

Please note that applications must meet a minimum point threshold before being forwarded on to the Advisory Committee for review. The minimum point threshold has not yet been set.

Because this is an on-going program as well as a competitive program, we advise that jurisdictions not rush to submit an application for assistance out of concern that funding will run out. Instead, applications should be submitted when a project can be competitive in terms of advancing implementation of the PDA.

**Q: What does it mean that the Program will not support parcel-level development?**

**A:** The Technical Assistance Program is intended to deal with issues broader in scope than can be addressed through site-specific or parcel-level projects. As such, the Program seeks to avoid supporting development of a single or “one-off” project near transit that does not address the broader constraints to creating successful transit-oriented development throughout the entire PDA, and that will not serve to catalyze development of the PDA as a complete community over the long term. Thus, technical assistance projects must address issues that affect the whole PDA (or large portion thereof) and the Program will not support site-specific/parcel-level projects.

**Q: May an applicant request technical assistance services for a project that will serve a significant portion of the PDA, for example if dealing with a very large, uniform part of the PDA?**

**A:** In general, this will depend on the specific project and the PDA in question. The Program does not support parcel-level development, as explained above. The intent of the Program is to avoid supporting one small project that is near transit or one developer. However, in general, if a project addresses a significant barrier to development within a large portion of the PDA that could be considered a uniform “neighborhood,” or has the capacity to work toward building a complete community throughout the entire PDA over the long-term, it will be considered eligible. As an example, a jurisdiction might be attempting to develop reduced parking standards for a large, uniform part of the PDA. The project would serve to spur development within this specific portion of the PDA, while also serving as a test-case/pilot-project for reducing or removing parking requirements throughout the rest of the PDA or the entire community.

**Q: May an applicant request more than one type of assistance or multiple projects per application?**

**A:** Yes, applicants may request more than one type of assistance or multiple “sub-projects” per application, but the total dollar amount requested must be within the maximum technical assistance budget of \$50,000 per application. If more than one type of service is requested for a particular PDA and the total project cost does not fall within the \$50,000 limit, the jurisdiction will need to file separate applications for each project.

Please keep in mind that proposed projects will be judged based on their ability to advance implementation of the PDA in question. Therefore, a jurisdiction should prioritize multiple project requests and apply for assistance when projects can be deemed competitive. [very good point]

**Q: Will MTC retain a single consultant or multiple consultants to work on the technical assistance projects?**

**A:** Because the Program is designed to provide technical services across a wide spectrum of planning and development issues, MTC’s Request for Qualifications requires that consultants be able to provide all of the anticipated technical services that have been outlined in the Technical Assistance Program guidelines. It is unlikely that a single consultant will have all of the necessary skills; presumably consultants will form teams in order to be able to address all issue areas. MTC anticipates that multiple consultants and/or consultant teams will be retained based on their ability to provide the requested skills.

**Q: How will the consultant(s) be selected? Will awarded jurisdictions have any say in who is selected to work on their projects?**

**A:** MTC issued the RFQ for consultants on August 26, 2009. MTC will select the pool of consultants or consultant teams for the Technical Assistance Program, and awarded jurisdictions will be paired with consultants based on qualifications and availability.

ABAG and MTC staff will work with awarded jurisdictions to the extent possible to make sure that assigned consultants are a good fit for the project. Staff will not be able to guarantee a particular consultant can work on a specific project; it is likely that multiple projects will be underway at any given time, so it is possible that a jurisdiction's preferred consultant may already be assigned to another project. Ultimately, MTC will have the final say in selecting the consultants for specific projects.

**Q: Could Technical Assistance funding be used to pay consultants working on projects that are already underway?**

**A:** No, the available funding for this Program cannot be used to pay consultants that are contracting with local jurisdictions for projects already underway. No cash award will be provided to jurisdictions through this Program. Only MTC’s on-call consultants will be able to perform the technical assistance work for awarded projects.

**Q: Can the Program be adapted to allow community-based organizations (CBOs) to be lead applicants or apply on behalf of their respective jurisdictions? CBOs may have more unique or specific capabilities than the jurisdictions as well as insights into community needs that the jurisdictions may not be able to articulate or identify.**

**A:** We do encourage community-based organizations to collaborate and partner with local jurisdictions on technical assistance projects. However, because the Technical Assistance Program is focused on implementation, it is critical that the city be both the applicant & grantee to ensure that the project is supported by the jurisdiction and will help lead to implementation of a PDA-related plan. Additionally, the Program has been structured such that only MTC's on-call consultants will be able to perform the project work; we cannot directly fund CBOs through this Program.

**Q: Are jurisdictions responsible for developing a budget for proposed projects?**

**A:** The applicant should provide a reasonable estimate of the cost of the proposed project in the application. MTC, ABAG and the on-call consultants will review the proposed project scope and budget to determine whether the project can feasibly be completed within the proposed estimate, and may adjust the budget if necessary.

**Q: What will be the involvement of MTC and ABAG staff in the management of awarded technical assistance projects once consultants are assigned and projects are underway?**

**A:** We envision a one-to-one working relationship between the consultant and the applicant. MTC and ABAG will serve in an advisory role to ensure the consultant meets the deadlines and produces the deliverables specified in the project scope.