



ASSOCIATION OF  
CENTRAL OKLAHOMA  
GOVERNMENTS



# AIR QUALITY SMALL GRANT PROGRAM



## APPLICATION GUIDEBOOK

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**CLOSE:** SEPTEMBER 29

**2023**

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For questions regarding the Air Quality Small Grant Program, please contact Hannah Nolen at [hnolen@acogok.org](mailto:hnolen@acogok.org).

## INTRODUCTION

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) Air Quality Small Grant Program funds small transportation infrastructure projects and congestion relief efforts that strive towards the reduction of transportation emissions and improvement of regional air quality. Approximately **\$4 million\*** in total grant awards will be made available to eligible applicants through a competitive grant process. Applicants are required to provide a **minimum of 20 percent in matching local funds**, and grant awards will be conferred as **reimbursement**. A variety of projects are eligible, but all must serve to address long-term reduction in transportation-related emissions that contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone.

\* Funds for the Air Quality Small Grant Program are shared with the ACOG Public Fleet Grant Program and may flex depending on demand.

## BACKGROUND

Every five years, ACOG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), completes a long-range, Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) that projects Central Oklahoma's growth over a three-decade period and identifies necessary changes to the region's transportation network. The most recent plan, [Encompass 2045](#) adopted in 2021, included a series of goals and strategies to guide transportation planning efforts into the future. Of those strategies, the ACOG Air Quality Small Grant Program has been developed to address the following:

1. Improve, enhance, and expand the ability for residents to walk, bike, or use public transportation
2. Investment in projects that enhance the efficiency of the existing transportation system
3. Provide efficient connections within and between modes and facilities
4. Encourage procedures and procedures that preserve traffic operations and safety

The implementation of these strategies is made possible by the use of funds through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program and the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP).

The goal of the Air Quality Small Grant Program is to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips and improve regional air quality. This program will accomplish that goal through two approaches:

1. Funding active transportation and transit improvement projects
  2. Funding congestion relief efforts
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## PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

First and foremost, applicants should ensure their project meets the minimum eligibility laid out in the following resources published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):

- [CMAQ Fact Sheet - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)
- [CMAQ Essentials - FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, & Realty](#)
- [Interim CMAQ Guidance - MAP-21](#)
- [Revised Interim CMAQ Guidance - MAP-21](#)
- [CRP Guidance - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)
- [CRP Fact Sheet - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)

All projects must satisfy the basic eligibility requirements under Titles 23 and 49 of the United States Code and complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

Due to requirements under the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), all projects must demonstrate the ability to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. ACOG staff will evaluate all project applications using the available tools in the [CMAQ Emissions Calculator Toolkit](#).

ACOG is required to comply with the Justice40 initiative which states that 40% of the benefits from federal investments, such as the Air Quality Small Grant program, must go towards [disadvantaged communities](#). This initiative allows ACOG to identify and prioritize projects that benefit communities facing barriers to affordable, equitable, reliable, and safe transportation. Despite the ranking of scored projects, ACOG reserves the right to prioritize projects in disadvantaged communities in order to comply with Justice40. More information on Justice40 can be found here: <https://www.transportation.gov/equity-Justice40>.

Because ACOG is permitted to further limit project and program eligibility to reflect funding limitations and regional priorities, there are additional eligibility requirements beyond those provided through CMAQ and CRP.

Applications for any project are required to be a **minimum of \$50,000** and projects can receive **no more than \$1,000,000** in federal funds. Applicants should reach out to ACOG if considering a project that is less than \$50,000.

Additionally, no single entity can receive more than 56 percent of the total available funding for the Air Quality Small Grant Program until all entities' projects have been considered. The initial threshold of 56 percent may be exceeded if there are not sufficient projects ready for obligation by other entities. Additional components may be added to projects if excess funds are available. ACOG reserves the right to negotiate grant awards.

There are three categories eligible for funding through the ACOG Air Quality Small Grant Program: active transportation infrastructure and improvements, transit improvements, and congestion reduction efforts. While similar, each category has unique and specific requirements intended to address regional air quality. In evaluation and scoring, each category will be treated equally.

Applicants are not limited to the types of projects listed. Innovation and customization to achieve the best results in reducing transportation emissions and meeting the needs of each community is encouraged. ACOG staff can work with prospective applicants to develop projects as needed.

## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Bicycle racks
- Bicycle shelters
- Bicycle lockers
- Bicycle public service/repair stations
- Bicycle signage
- Pedestrian signage

- Pedestrian lighting
- Bicycle/pedestrian pavement markings
- Sidewalks
- Bicycle lanes
- Shared micromobility, including bikeshares

Note that federal guidance specifies that fundable bicycle and pedestrian facilities and infrastructure, including support facilities such as bicycle racks, must not be exclusively recreational but rather serve to reduce vehicle trips.

## TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

- New transit facilities – lines, stations, stops, terminals, or transfer facilities – associated with new or enhanced public transit
- Transit equipment – advanced signal and communications systems
- Operating assistance for new transit service or expanding existing transit service

To be considered eligible for funding, transit-related projects must demonstrate the ability to increase transit capacity and/or transit ridership and illustrate the potential to reduce congestion.

## CONGESTION REDUCTION EFFORTS

Projects in this category should focus on easing regional congestion and/or decreasing single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips, therefore reducing transportation-related emissions and improving air quality.

### Traffic Flow Improvements

- Traffic management and control services
- Traffic signalization projects, including synchronization
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects

### Travel Demand Management

- Traveler information services
- Traffic calming measures
- Transit management systems

Note that eligibility for funding is limited to projects that explicitly aim to reduce SOV trips and related emissions.

## INELIGIBLE PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Federal guidance provides some specifications on ineligible projects and programs.

Although a broad scope of projects is eligible, the program's limited funds and administrative needs require additional ineligibility. The Air Quality Small Grant Program will not fund the following:

- Use of funds as salaries or stipends
- Use of funds to defray administrative costs
- Use of funds as a sub-grant program
- Use of funds to add new capacity for single occupancy vehicles
- Use of funds to model or monitor emissions or networks
- Use of funds for planning documents such as master plans, environmental analyses, and comprehensive plans
- Use of funds to subsidize transit fare
- Use of funds for project design
- Use of funds for routine maintenance and rehabilitation projects including road repavement, sidewalk repair, etc.

- Use of funds to purchase conventional or alternative fuel and vehicles and/or fueling/charging infrastructure
- Use of funds for residential, commercial, or industrial energy efficiency
- Use of funds for the purchase of street furniture such as waste receptacles, benches, or tables

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact Hannah Nolen at [hnolen@acogok.org](mailto:hnolen@acogok.org), with questions regarding project eligibility.

## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration and letting of all projects will be completed by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT). During project execution, regular progress reports to ACOG will be required. After the completion of the project, annual reports will be required for three years.

All funded projects will be required to use the current ACOG logo. This includes any and all collateral, digital assets, advertising, et cetera. Projects are required to address how the branding will be applied. This cost can be covered by the grant award but should be included as a line item within the proposed budget. Branding maintenance must be included in the maintenance plan. Logos and brand standards will be furnished by ACOG and executed examples available upon request.

In addition, project sponsors are required to issue a press release upon completion of project. ACOG can provide an example press release or assist in writing a press release. Project sponsors shall also announce their partnership with ACOG and project completion on social media.

### Bicycle Infrastructure

ACOG recommends using the [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#), AASHTO Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities, and the [FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide](#) when selecting, designing, and constructing bicycle facilities in the region. For intersections, it is recommended local communities use the [NACTO guide Don't Give Up at the Intersections](#). These guides are based on the experience of the top cycling cities in the world. While these designs have proven effective in many cities around the world, it is important for local officials to tailor the treatment to fit the individual situation.

### Pedestrian Infrastructure

General design standards for sidewalks are difficult, given that their construction is based on amount and location of right-of-way, though it is important to ensure all sidewalks are adequate given their situation. Below are the standards as set by FHWA and adopted by ACOG.

[FHWA Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access](#) guidelines set sidewalk requirements by roadway classification and land use type. The FHWA also promotes Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP). This program recommends several countermeasures to ensure pedestrians have safe facilities to travel. These improvements primarily focus on conflict points, such as marked and unmarked crossings.

View [the ACOG Facility and Design Guidance](#) for more recommendations for both bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

### Evaluation Metrics

ACOG requires each project sponsor to create a plan for gathering evaluation metrics to measure how successful the project is after implementation. The sponsor is expected to gather data for evaluation such as daily usage figures and estimated vehicle trips removed. For bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects, such as sidewalks and bicycle lanes, before and after counts are expected. These counts can be conducted manually, although **ACOG strongly recommends the use of automatic bicycle/pedestrian counters**. Entities may request to use an automated counter provided by ACOG. The cost of purchasing an automatic counter may also be covered by the grant award but should be included as a line item within the proposed budget.

## APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for the Air Quality Small Grant Program is limited. First and foremost, all applicants must be located within the Central Oklahoma Transportation Management Area (TMA).

(Please see [Appendix I](#))

Eligible applicants within the TMA are:

- ACOG MPO member local governments (towns, cities, and counties)
- Transit agencies
- Tribal governments
- Public school districts, public schools, or public universities (with support from local municipality)

Although organizations such as neighborhood associations, non-profits, private schools, and private universities are not eligible as applicants, these organizations are encouraged to collaborate with their ACOG MPO member local governments on project applications.

Because funds are based on reimbursement and require a minimum 20 percent match of local funds, such collaborations can benefit all parties involved. In-kind match is not allowed. All applicants are encouraged to secure partnerships to demonstrate community buy-in and benefit.

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## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applications must be completed in full, including the addition of all required attachments, to be considered.

The following items are to be submitted with each project application:

1. Project location map
  - Showing street names, project limits, and north arrow
2. Signed letter(s) of support
  - Letters should be specific to the proposed Air Quality Small Grant project
  - May be from any involved stakeholders, partners, or organizations
3. Detailed cost estimate/project budget
  - Must be no older than 6 months prior to the date of the resolution
4. Signed maintenance plan
  - Must include plan for branding maintenance
5. Detailed timeline and work plan
  - Must take into account the length of time required for ODOT to complete environmental clearance
6. Plan for gathering evaluation metrics
  - Such as details on purchasing automatic bicycle/pedestrian counters
7. Plan for applying program branding
  - Cost may be included in the overall proposed budget
  - Branding maintenance must be included in maintenance plan

**8. Adopted resolution**

- Adopted at a public meeting of its governing body
- Should describe the location of the project, type of improvement, total project cost, and source(s) of funds
- Must include original signatures or a certified copy
- Template available upon request

**9. Scoring worksheet**

- Can be downloaded from the [ACOG website](#)
- Any and all additional comments and justification must be included on the scoresheet document only
- Supplemental documentation will not be accepted or taken into consideration

Applications, including supplemental documents such as resolutions, letters of support, project budget and work plans, must be completed and submitted online through the [ACOG ProjectTracker website](#).

Instructions for creating ProjectTracker account and completing the application can be found in the [ProjectTracker Guidebook](#) and CMAQ [ProjectTracker Presentation](#).



## CALL FOR PROJECTS TIMELINE

All applications **must** be submitted no later than 4 p.m. CST on **Friday, September 29, 2023**.

DATE	ACTION
August 1, 2023	Application cycle opens
September 29, 2023	Applications due by 4:00 p.m. CST
October 2023	Project application evaluations and scoring
November 16, 2023	ACOG staff present project recommendations to committees. ACOG Board of Directors approves final project selections
November 2023	Projects passed to ODOT for administration

If you have questions regarding the Air Quality Small Grant Program, please contact Hannah Nolen at [hnolen@acogok.org](mailto:hnolen@acogok.org).

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# PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

A committee consisting of representatives from the ACOG, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, and/or other partner non-profits may be employed to evaluate and score all project applications.

Committee members will review each application and score based on a 100-point system. A PDF Scoring Worksheet should be downloaded from the [ACOG website](#), filled out, and submitted with each online application form.

CATEGORY	MAXIMUM POINTS
Pollutant Reduction	10
Cost Effectiveness	10
Transportation Impact	15
Community Involvement	5
Consistent Planning	10
Community Benefit	5
Vulnerable Populations	10
Funding	15
Project Readiness	10
Evaluation Metrics	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## 1. POLLUTANT REDUCTION

Project must demonstrate the potential to reduce ozone-forming pollutants. Primary pollutants of concern include Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC). Please provide a detailed description of how the proposed project is expected to play a role in reducing ozone-forming pollutants.

Due to requirements under the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), all projects must demonstrate the ability to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. ACOG staff will evaluate all project applications using the available tools in the [CMAQ Emissions Calculator Toolkit](#).

**How will the project contribute to a reduction in ozone-forming emissions?**  
*(10 points maximum)*

## 2. COST EFFECTIVENESS

Cost effectiveness is a measure of the project’s ability to reduce emissions per dollar invested. Funds can be used on a variety of project types. Certain project types are expected to be more cost effective and will therefore be more competitive.

<b>How cost effective in terms of pollutant removal is the proposed project?</b> <i>(10 points maximum)</i>	
Bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects, traffic management and control devices, new transit facilities	10 pts

Transit equipment, transit operating assistance, traveler information services, traffic signalization projects, transit management systems	7 pts
Traffic calming measures, eligible projects not currently addressed in the grant manual	5 pts

Note: If the project falls in two or more of the categories listed above, the points must be averaged together to get a final score.

### 3. TRANSPORTATION IMPACT

Will the project improve the transportation system?

- a. Projects that aim to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips by encouraging travel by other modes - walking, bicycling, or public transit - will be most competitive.

<b>Will the project promote multimodal options? (5 points)</b>	
Project promotes multimodal options and aims to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips	5 pts
Project does not promote multimodal options	0 pts

Note: Only answer one of the 3.b. questions, based on project type.

- b. Enhanced connectivity improves the ability to get from place to place. For example, projects that extend a current bike path or projects that improve access to public transit will be more competitive.

<b>Will the project enhance connectivity by addressing a network limitation? (5 points for bicycle/pedestrian/transit projects)</b>	
Project addresses a gap in the existing bicycle, pedestrian, or transit facilities network by creating a new connection from one existing network to another	5 pts
Project contributes to the eventual desired network by connecting an existing segment to a proposed segment	4 pts
Project expands an existing network in a new direction where no segment is existing and none is currently proposed	3 pts
Project does not connect to an existing segment but connects two segments proposed in a published plan at any level	2 pts
Project connects a proposed segment in a new direction where none is existing and none is currently proposed	0 pts

OR

- b. Projects should focus on easing regional congestion and/or decreasing single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips, therefore reducing transportation-related emissions and improving air quality. More points will be awarded if the project addresses a corridor that experiences moderate to severe a.m. or p.m. peak hour congestion.

<b>Will the project reduce congestion?</b> <i>(5 points for vehicular associated projects)</i>	
Project will reduce congestion, reduce volume, and/or improve travel time in a congested corridor	5 pts
Project will reduce congestion, reduce volume, and/or improve travel time in general	3 pts
Project is not expected to reduce congestion	0 pts

c. Projects that address an identified safety issue will be more competitive.

<b>Will the project improve vehicular, pedestrian, or bicycle safety?</b> <i>(5 points)</i>	
Project improves safety	5 pts
Project does not improve safety	0 pts

#### 4. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community support and partnership strengthens the project application.

<b>Does the project have the support of the community?</b> <i>(5 points maximum)</i>	
Applicant included 3 or more letters of support from community partners in promotion of the project	5 pts
Applicant included 1 or 2 letters of support from community partners in promotion of the project	3 pts
No letters of support included	0 pts

#### 5. CONSISTENT PLANNING

Projects that have been identified through a previous planning effort will be more competitive. The project should address an issue identified in one of the following types of plans:

Regional Plans (produced by ACOG):

- [Regional Active Transportation Plan](#)
- [Congestion Management Process \(CMP\)](#)

Local Plans:

- Comprehensive plans
- Bicycle/pedestrian plans
- ITS plans

Note: In addition to one of the plan efforts above, projects must also be included in or be consistent with the ACOG long-range transportation plan, [Encompass 2045](#).

<b>Is the project consistent with regional and/or local comprehensive land use and transportation plans?</b> <i>(10 points maximum)</i>
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Project is consistent with a published regional transportation plan	10 pts
Project is consistent with a published local transportation or trails plan	8 pts
Project is consistent with a published local comprehensive plan	5 pts
Project is consistent with unpublished general ideas of the community's future direction	3 pts
Not addressed	0 pts

## 6. COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Applicant must be able to demonstrate how the community will benefit from this project be it through increased safety, reduced congestion, and travel time, and/or greater connectivity.

<b>Does the project plan include a clear demonstration of need and indicate how the community will benefit from the project? (5 points maximum)</b>	
Applicant clearly demonstrates a need for the project and examines how the community will benefit	5 pts
Applicant briefly addresses in a limited capacity how the community will benefit	3 pts
Applicant does not address how the community will benefit from the project	0 pts

## 7. VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to ozone pollution. Projects will be most competitive if they are located near large concentrations of these populations, such as schools. Minority and low-income status also influences susceptibility to the effects of ozone pollution.

To aid in identifying areas with potential air quality related vulnerable populations, ACOG's Air Quality Small Grant Program is utilizing EPA's EJSCREEN. EJSCREEN is a screening-level Environmental Justice (EJ) tool that combines demographic indicators with environmental factors, such as ozone, to create an EJ index. More information is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>.

Please use the EJ Index Ozone map, available at <http://arcg.is/1jOD19>, to answer the following question.

<b>Does the project address the air quality near populations particularly vulnerable to poor air quality? (10 points maximum)</b>	
Project is located in an EJ Index Ozone area of the 80th percentile or higher or the project is within ¼ mile of a school	10 pts
Project is located in an EJ Index Ozone area between the 50th and 80th percentile or the project is within ½ mile of a school	5 pts
Project is located in a 50th percentile or lower EJ Index Ozone area and is not expected to impact vulnerable populations	0 pts

## 8. FUNDING

Funds are based on reimbursement and require a minimum 20 percent match of local funds. How well is the applicant financially prepared to secure local matching funds and implement the project?

- a. Project applications that can show a larger proportion of other sources of dedicated funding for the project will be the most competitive.

<b>The extent to which applicants show proof of commitment to provide funding above the minimum 20 percent matching requirement. (5 points)</b>	
Local match is 30 percent or higher	5 pts
Local match is between 21 percent and 29 percent	3 pts
Local match is 20 percent	0 pts

- b. Project applications that include a detailed and realistic cost estimate will prove project readiness and be more competitive.

<b>Does the project plan include a detailed and realistic cost estimate? (5 points)</b>	
Application includes a detailed, itemized cost estimate, showing a good faith effort to consider all elements of the project	5 pts
Application includes a summary estimate with no details	3 pts
Application does not include a cost estimate	0 pts

- c. Projects must include a maintenance plan that demonstrates applicant ownership and sustainable long-term care.

<b>Does the project include a clear plan for future maintenance costs? (5 points)</b>	
Application includes details on existing maintenance standards and how the sponsor would fund future maintenance	5 pts
Application seems to discount level of maintenance necessary and/or failed to get letters of support from entity claimed to be responsible for future maintenance	3 pts
No maintenance plan is included	0 pts

## 9. PROJECT READINESS

All projects and programs have two years upon execution of a grant award contract to be completed in full. The applicant must include a detailed timeline and clear work plan for implementation of the project.

- a. Projects have two years upon execution of a grant award to be completed in full. A detailed and realistic timeline is essential to the success of the project.

<b>Is the project schedule detailed and realistic? (5 points)</b>	
Project schedule is detailed and realistic	5 pts
Project schedule is detailed but ambitious	3 pts
Project schedule lacks sufficient detail and underestimates how long infrastructure projects take	0 pts

- b. Project application must include a description of the tasks and activities to be completed as part of the project. This shows the readiness of the project and how the project will be implemented.

<b>Has the project been conceptually designed and includes a clear and adequate project description? (5 points)</b>	
Application includes clear and adequate project descriptions	5 pts
Application includes abbreviated and/or preliminary descriptions	3 pts
Application does not include project descriptions	0 pts

## 10. EVALUATION METRICS

ACOG is required to collect data metrics to evaluate how successful the project was after implementation. The applicant is expected to gather data for evaluation such as daily usage figures and estimated vehicle trips removed.

<b>Does the applicant include a plan for gathering meaningful evaluation metrics for the project? (10 points maximum)</b>	
Applicant includes detailed plans for gathering evaluation metrics	10 pts
Applicant includes generalized plan for gathering evaluation metrics	5 pts
No plan for gathering evaluation metrics included	0 pts

# APPENDIX I

## ELIGIBLE ACOG TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AREA (TMA) COMMUNITIES

