TrAMS TIPs for GRANTEES

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (REGION III), March 4, 2016

The FTA Region III Office has prepared these eight TIPs to assist our grantees in the early stages of processing grants in the new TrAMS system. Please note that these TIPs do not include instructions on how to take every action in TrAMS. Please consult the *TrAMS User Guide* for complete information: http://www.fta.dot.gov/16260_15774.html

TIP #1 – User Manager Roles

In TrAMS, FTA grantees must designate an internal staff member as the User Manager. The User Manager is empowered to manage grantee staff access in TrAMS and has the authority to: a) set up, modify or deactivate users, and b) set up a user with Official, Submitter, and Attorney roles (PIN functions).

The User Manager also serves as liaison to the FTA Local Security Manager (LSM). In order to avoid improper use of the system, User Managers must understand FTA's User Access policies and procedures and the User Manager's responsibilities in the system, and are therefore encouraged to review the *Recipient User Manager Handbook.*

Once a grantee has identified a staff member to serve as their User Manager, they must submit the "Delegation of Authority for FTA Systems User Manager" Form to the FTA LSM so that the LSM can add this role to the TrAMS user's profile.

For TrAMS users requiring a PIN: upload the "Designation of Authority" letter when prompted during setup. Your FTA LSM will be tasked for final approval.

- For the above-referenced forms, Frequently Asked Questions, and *Recipient User Manager Handbook*, see the TrAMS HELP and Guidance website: http://www.fta.dot.gov/16260_15774.html

If the Recipient User Manager is unavailable, please contact the FTA LSM for assistance:

- ✓ Cathy Githens – (215) 656-7252, Catharine.Githens@dot.gov
- ✓ Ann Dolecki – (215) 656-7001, Ann.Dolecki@dot.gov
- ✓ Sheila Byrne – (215) 656-7256, Sheila.Byrne@dot.gov

For Technical Assistance – contact the TrAMS Help Desk FTA.TrAMS.Help@dot.gov Tel: (877) 561-7466

TIP #2 – Setting Up & Managing PIN Numbers

Unlike the User Roles, User PINs did not carryover from TEAM to TrAMS. However, TrAMS users can use their TEAM PIN by adding it to their User Profile. New PIN Users will set up their PIN after the User Manager has assigned the appropriate roles and the FTA LSM has approved the task.

- To add/change a PIN: a) Under Records, click the down arrow next to your name on the top section of the screen and click on profile, b) click "Related Actions" on the left navigation screen, and c) click on "TrAMS Manage User PIN".

TIP #3 – Registering in SAM.gov

Recipient information in TrAMS is obtained from the System of Award Management (SAM). TrAMS performs a nightly update and syncs any organizational information such as name, address, phone numbers, emails, DUNS, TIN, Cage Numbers, and organization contact information with the information in SAM.

NOTE: Changes to organizational information must therefore be made in SAM, not in TrAMS.

REMINDER: Please access your Sam.gov account to ensure that your account is active.

TIP #4 – Adding an *Application* in TrAMS

The first step in adding an application in TrAMS is to provide a name for your overall application.

TRY THIS: Craft your application name according to the following: a) the Federal Fiscal Year of the funds, b) the Section of funds, and c) the type(s) of activities applied in the grant. For example, FY 15 - 5307 – Operating/ Capital

In TrAMS, the application *Executive Summary* field serves the same purpose as the *Project Description/Details* field in TEAM. So, in TrAMS, the overall application summary should be included in the Executive Summary field. In addition, TrAMS, unlike TEAM, does not contain Start/End Date fields, so please include project Start and End dates in the Executive Summary field in TrAMS.

TrAMS also introduces a new way to organize an application's budget with the concept of *Application Projects*:

In TEAM*,* grants were structured simply by Scope Codes and Activity Line Item (ALI) Codes:

- **[Grant Application > Scope Code > ALI Code]**

In TrAMS, the use of *Application Projects* allows grantees to organize applications by another sub structure:

- **[Grant Application > *Application Projects* > Scope Code >ALI Code]**

Grantees may now be able to group Scope Codes and ALIs by discrete projects, which will assist TrAMS users in organizing a grant's budget structure. For example, a TrAMS grant application could have:

a) 2 ALIs for buses (each ALI a different type but one procurement),
b) 3 separate station renovation projects,
c) 1 Preventive Maintenance ALI
d) 1 Track Lease ALI

Separate Project Method: In the above TrAMS application, the grantee could organize the grant budget as six different *Application Projects*: one *Application Project* for the buses, three separate *Application Projects* for each station renovation project, one *Application Project* for Preventive Maintenance, and one *Application Project* for the track lease. Some of the larger grantees with large grant applications with dozens of ALIs may prefer to structure their grants in this manner so that the overall grant application budgets are more readable.

Program of Projects Method: Alternatively, for grants with a limited number of ALIs, only one *Application Project* can be entered as a Program of Projects, and the Scope Codes and ALIs would be entered under the single *Application Project.* For instance, all of the above elements (buses, stations, etc.) could be included under one *Application Project.* This would allow a grantee to enter in Scope Codes and ALIs in a similar fashion as TEAM had always allowed. Creating at least one *Application Project* is mandatory in TrAMS, and this method may allow grantees to build grant budgets in a familiar TEAM structure.

NOTE: While TEAM asked for project information in two places (in *Project Description/Details* and the *Extended Budget Description* for each ALI), TrAMS introduces a third area requiring a project description – **at the new *Application Project* level.** As before in TEAM, duplicative information should not be entered, and **the new project description at the *Application Project* level should be limited to only a sentence or two.** This will depend on whether the Separate Project Method or the Program of Projects Method is used.

- **Project Benefits:** TrAMS introduces another required field at the Application Project level, *Project Benefits*. Only a simple entry is needed in this field. For grant applications using Discretionary Funds, some information for the original project selection (e.g. under TIGER or Bus Livability) may be entered. However, the information provided in this field will not impact the grant award or timing in any way.

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TIP #5 – Selecting Environmental Findings in TrAMS

Grantees can select Environment Findings in TrAMS according to which application method is used:

Separate Project Method – one NEPA finding can be selected for the entire project. So for a station rehabilitation project with multiple ALIs (such as construction, force account, and administration), only one NEPA finding is necessary at the *Application Project* level.

Program of Projects Method – NEPA findings must be selected at the ALI level, as previously done in TEAM.

OTHER TIDBITS:

- In whichever method you choose for selecting CE findings, TrAMS asks for a CE date to be included.
- For projects that have a prior CE finding by FTA (via letter or email), please include the CE finding date in TrAMS (such as for a maintenance facility construction project).
- For projects in which FTA has made a CE finding in a previous grant award but not via a formal review, please include the date of obligation as the CE finding date. For example, a grantee is applying for the second installment of funding of a bus purchase program in TrAMS, and the first installment was awarded in TEAM on August 31, 2015. The grantee should use August 31, 2015 as the CE finding date in TrAMS.
- For projects that have not been funded by FTA, and require a CE(c) finding without a separate formal review (such as purchase of radios, equipment, buses, operations, planning activities, etc.), please leave the CE finding date blank, as the finding will be made along with the grant award.
- TrAMS only allows one NEPA finding per ALI. So for the rare occasions where FTA has made two environmental findings for one ALI, only one CE finding should be included (such as for a Preventive Maintenance ALI for both vehicles and facilities).

TIP #6 – Transmitting Grants in TrAMS

TrAMS introduces a new function – ***transmit*** - into the FTA grant making process. Once the grantee enters complete information into TrAMS and validates the application, the application is ready for FTA review. At that time, the grantee may then *transmit* the application to FTA.

NEW! This *transmit* function now allows for the time period between *transmittal* and *submittal* to be tracked.

HOWEVER, once the grantee *transmits* a grant to FTA, *the grantee is then locked out of making any changes to the grant application.* The FTA Pre-Award Manager can edit the grant at this point, but the grantee cannot.

If the FTA Pre-Award Manager deems that the grant application needs significant revisions, the grant will be *formally* returned to the grantee, and the *transmit* cycle will be restarted. The grantee may *informally* notify their Pre-Award Manager that a grant is ready to be reviewed, prior to *transmittal*. By doing so, the grantee will maintain editing capabilities to the grant application.

CONTACT: Your FTA grant representative to discuss which method you wish to use for each grant application.

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TIP #7 – FTA's Grant Review Process – What Happens After I Hit "Transmit"?

QUESTION: What happens now that I have transmitted my grant application to FTA? And (most importantly) when will my agency receive a grant award?

ANSWER: It's complicated! But here's a summary of FTA's internal review process for TrAMS applications:

Initial Review – After the grantee *transmits* the grant, the FTA Pre-Award Manager will review the grant in its entirety. At this stage, the FTA Pre-Award Manager will communicate with the grantee whether all of the information is sufficient for further review or if changes are required.

1st Level Technical Review- After the initial review is complete; the FTA Pre-Award Manager then advances the grant to the 1st Level Technical Review. At this stage, the FTA *Post*-Award Manager and FTA Financial Analyst will review and sign off on the grant application. Additionally, grants with construction projects will also be reviewed (in parallel) by the FTA Regional Engineer and Civil Rights. Based on this review, the FTA Pre-Award Manager may send the grant back to the grantee for changes.

2nd Level Executive Review- After the 1st Level Review is complete; the FTA Pre-Award Manager then advances the grant to the 2nd Level Executive Review. At this stage, FTA senior staff will review and approve the grant application. Similar to the 1st Level Technical Review, these individual reviews are done in parallel.

Submission – After the 2nd Level Review is complete, the FTA Pre-Award Manager *assigns* the Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN), at which point no additional changes can be made to the grant application. TrAMS then forwards a task to the grantee that indicates that the grant may now be submitted. Once the grantee *submits* the grant, the grant application is sent to Department of Labor (DOL) (if required). Once the DOL certification is received, the grant will be awarded within a few business days.

TIP #8 – Applying Flex Funds in TrAMS

In TrAMS, the process for applying "Flex" funds (e.g., CMAQ, STP, TAP etc.) in grant applications has been modified slightly from the process used in TEAM grants:

Step 1 - *Project Selection* - Identify flex funds (to be used for projects) in the final Program of Projects (POP).

Step 2 - *Local Adoption* - Program the Flex amounts (by program type and purpose) in the approved TIP/STIP.

Step 3 - *Grant Creation* – Grantee develops a new application, at which time TrAMS will assign a temporary number. This number will stay as the reference in the grant application forever.

IMPORTANT! Grantees should notify FTA at this time via email instead of "transmitting" the grant in TrAMS.

Step 4 - *FTA Validation* – FTA will assess: a) whether the projects are eligible, b) the type of flexible funds, c) the amount, d) the purpose for which the funds are to be used, and e) whether they are included in the STIP.

Step 5 - *Transfer Approval* - The grantee informs the state transportation agency that a grant application is in development for the use of Flex funds and requests that the state inform the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the need to transfer the funds to FTA for obligation. Once the state determines that the funding is available, it notifies FHWA that the agency will use the funds for public transportation purposes and requests that FHWA transfer funds to FTA. FHWA then requests a FTA project number to finalize request of funds transfer.

Step 6 - *FTA Approval* – FTA will complete the application review, and once internal FTA reviews are completed, the FAIN is assigned and the grantee submits the application to DOL prior to award.