



INVEST IN COOK

Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
FY 2018 Call for Projects

2018 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. If a bike/ped project was not selected for funding, how can the application be improved?

Projects were evaluated by mode and the bike/ped mode was the most numerous category, accounting for about half of all applications submitted in 2017. As a result, some good projects were not selected. Applicants can resubmit the same project. CCDOTH staff are available to debrief on unsuccessful applications at the applicant's request.

2. How many applications may a municipality submit?

There is a limit of one application per municipality/entity with the exception of the City of Chicago due to its size and impact on the County's transportation system. Entities that submit more than one application will be asked to prioritize them; Cook County may independently prioritize multiple applications.

3. Can an applicant request supplemental funding for a phase that is already underway?

No, applicants should be seeking funds for a future phase.

4. Is Right of Way eligible for funding?

Yes, applicants may seek funding for Right of Way acquisition.

5. What is the average local match per grant?

The Department adopted a sliding scale for local match based on CMAP's ranking of the level of need for municipalities within Cook County. The sliding scale did not establish fixed requirements for the expected match. Generally, high need communities provided the lowest (or no) matches, while low need communities were asked to contribute more.

6. Can an application be made for a sidewalk project on a County roadway?

Yes.

7. Are successful applications from 2017 available online for viewing?

No, but project summaries are.

8. Can an application be made for Phase III/Construction?

Yes, applications can be made for any phase of a project.



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9. What happens to any unused funds awarded to a grantee?

Any unused funds remain with Cook County.

10. Does *Invest in Cook* partner with private railroads for example with viaduct clearances?

While Cook County's Department of Transportation and Highways regularly partners with private railroads on projects, *Invest in Cook* did not receive any viaduct clearance applications in 2017. As such the program lacks a track record in this area.

11. Will there be technical glitches with the online portal during submittal of applications as there were last year?

While that is always a possibility, we will work through any technical issues that are brought to our attention in a timely fashion to assure successful submission of all applications.

12. What if a project is multi-modal?

That is not a problem. Applicants will be asked to categorize their projects by the dominant type under the Project Type section of the application. The project summary and the checkboxes associated with the priorities of *Connecting Cook County* afford applicants with the chance to more fully identify the modes included in their projects. Multi-modal projects will be evaluated using criteria for each of the applicable modes that are relevant.



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2017 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

13. If a project serves multiple purposes in its scope, e.g. a roadway improvement with a road diet, how would one categorize it?

Projects will be sorted by mode and, in cases where a project provides improvements in multiple categories, will be evaluated against projects in each mode category. There will be an opportunity in the quantitative section to select multiple categories, and the qualitative evaluation will also take into account multi-modal elements of projects.

14. Are the City of Chicago and Forest Preserve of Cook County eligible to apply?

Yes, both are eligible to apply and be the lead applicant on a single project application.

15. What if a project is on the border of a municipality, does it count towards the one application per municipality?

Yes, only one application per municipality. In such a case, the municipalities that share jurisdiction over the roadway should coordinate and identify the lead applicant. To strengthen their application and demonstrate collaboration, the applicant should submit letters of support from the other municipality. The lead applicant in such a situation will not be allowed to submit an application for another project.

16. Would multiple jurisdictions working together be viewed favorably?

Cook County is uniquely positioned to help these projects move forward and could potentially add more value to projects that cross multiple jurisdictions. Cross-jurisdictional work is a demonstration of broad interest in a project and can often be the most difficult to coordinate. Multi-jurisdictional projects will not receive additional points, but will prompt the County to consider how its involvement could move such a project to construction. Projects located solely within a single jurisdiction would not be at a disadvantage.

17. Could Invest in Cook funds be used to bring an existing project already in progress to completion?

Yes, IIC funds can be applied to future phases of a project that is currently in progress. IIC funds will not be awarded to phases that are already underway.

18. If all municipalities in Cook County were to receive an equal share of the \$8.5 million funding available for Invest in Cook, roughly \$65,000 would be



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available per municipality. What is the approximate of the amount one should ask for? \$100 - \$200 thousand?

Cook County is not placing limits on how much an applicant can seek because it may eliminate project proposals with strong benefits that can be funded from a broader array of fund sources. The Department has had some success advancing projects with little to no financial contribution from the County by providing engineering and grant writing assistance that have enabled the pursuit of other fund sources. In those cases the County's commitment of time and expertise brought projects to construction that might otherwise have languished. Ask for the amount needed to advance the project. However, the Department reserves the right to exercise its discretion in the funding awards.

19. If a project needed \$1-2 million, should that be the ask or should the applicant have an idea of where the rest of the money come from?

Applicants should identify their entire funding gap so Cook County has a clear idea of total need. The requested amount should subtract awarded grant sums, but expected awards should be excluded and described fully in the project description and project cost estimate. The Department reserves the right to make awards based on funding availability, but is willing to problem solve about alternative sources of funding.

20. Is there a project completion deadline?

There is no prescribed and universally applied deadline for project completion. Projects vary greatly in characteristics and will have different schedules as a result. Completion deadlines will be specific to the project and written into the agreement based on the project schedule that is provided by the applicant. Funding should be sought for the next logical project phase.

21. Are software enhancements to improve ridership via efficiency through routing, pick-up/drop-off eligible?

Yes, transit technology improvements are eligible expenses under Invest in Cook.

22. Are Phase I projects eligible unlike under CMAQ?

Yes, Phase I engineering is an eligible expense in the Invest in Cook program-- projects at all stages in development are eligible. A goal of Invest in Cook is to develop a pipeline of projects at varying stages of development that can be advanced so as to make them eligible for federal programs like CMAQ.

23. Can a project be funded for multiple years?

Applicants should apply for funding for only the next phase or stage in their project's development. This is the first year of an annual call for projects. Our aim is to develop projects and fund phases as needed. Applicants are encouraged to



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submit funding requests for subsequent phases as previous phases near completion.

24. So no multi-phase or multi-year funding?

Correct, no multi-phase awards will be given this year, but since the call for projects will be made annually, applicants can apply for follow-on funding as prior phases wrap up.

25. Is a project on a state route eligible for a municipal applicant if it is in a community that is not a priority to the state?

Yes, it does not matter who owns the asset. The Department is looking for projects that are a high priority for the municipality and that advance the priorities of *Connecting Cook County*.

26. Is land acquisition eligible for funding?

Yes, funding for Right of Way acquisition is an eligible expense under Invest in Cook.

27. How will the program be administered? Will local route projects be subject to county oversight?

Invest in Cook deviates from the strictness of other grant programs by allowing local projects to be administered and managed by the local municipality or agency without significant County oversight. Projects will have to adhere to IDOT Bureau of Local Roads and Streets manual, and provide the County with quarterly updates, but the Department will not require additional approvals or reviews. A project should follow the applicant's design requirements but will not be subject to additional checks by the county if the facility is locally owned.

28. Is a service program eligible e.g. to help people get to work?

Yes, programs like Transportation Management Associations are eligible. Funding should not be sought to support employees or operations, but should instead be sought for necessary capital requirements or for planning of such a program.

29. Could staff time be paid for as leverage to a grant?

No, local agency staff time cannot be monetized and counted as a soft match to County funding for Invest in Cook.

30. What is the county's role in reviewing design plans on local routes that are not using federal funds?

The County will not review or approve facility designs if it is not on a county route. If an awardee would like to have the Department review plans for quality control, the Department will do so depending on staff availability, but a design



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review is not required. However, awardees will need to keep the Department abreast of project progress via quarterly reports.

31. Could you explain more about the buffer?

Projects will be mapped in GIS and a buffer applied in order to score project performance relative to indicators like jobs and complimentary land uses that the project might impact. The size of the buffers will depend on the mode; a breakdown of buffer size and metrics can be found on page six of the program description. The analysis will be done by DOT staff using publicly available data, to ensure consistency across projects.

32. Can multiple phases be included on an application for smaller projects?

No, it is limited to one phase. However, applicants can consolidate a construction/construction management request.

33. Will the presentation be posted on the website?

Yes, also a copy of the FAQs.

34. Could you post an attendance list?

Yes.

35. If you submit your application early and need to make changes could you modify your application?

Yes, if this occurs please contact Tim Egan at InvestInCook.CC@cookcountyil.gov or 312-603-1534 to discuss what you would need to do in order to update and resubmit your application.

36. What is the extent of the role of a public sponsor of a private project application?

The public sponsor will need to formally endorse the project and identify it as a project that serves their public good. Sponsorship should be identified via a letter identifying the project location, the project applicant, the project benefits, and the scope of work along with language endorsing the project. It should be signed by the Mayor or Chief Executive of the public entity.

37. Is Invest in Cook going to be similar to the Aldermanic Menu program?

No, Commissioners will not evaluate and choose projects under this program. The Department will evaluate projects based on merit and recommend a program of improvements that best implement the priorities in *Connecting Cook County* to the Cook County Board of Commissioners for final approval.

38. Are there two forms that need to be filled out? How does that work?



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There is a fillable pdf application that should be downloaded, filled out, and saved. Once it's electronically signed, the application should be uploaded along with all supporting documentation through the online submission portal. One additional form must be completed at the time of application. This form repeats basic information that is already part of the application in addition to requesting a one-paragraph project description.

39. Is a local match required?

No local match is required, but applicants will score better if they propose leveraging a County award with local, state or federal funding. In 2017, the Department adopted a sliding scale for local match based on CMAP's ranking of the level of need for municipalities within Cook County. The sliding scale did not establish fixed requirements for the expected match. Generally, high need communities provided the lowest (or no) matches, while low need communities were asked to contribute more.

40. Would sponsors need to follow Phase I IDOT requirements if there is any state or federal pass through funding or would these be solely County dollars?

Invest in Cook awards will be made from the County's Motor Fuel Tax revenues. If the project is fully funded with County and Local funding then sponsors would not follow the more demanding Phase I Federal requirements. However, if any portion of the project (either the current phase or a future phase) has Federal funding, then applicants must follow typical Phase I procedures.

41. Is lighting for a trail an eligible project? Also, can we include multiple elements on a trail path to include things like lighting, benches, and other improvements?

Yes, lighting is eligible but the cost of ongoing maintenance or of electricity is not. Other improvements to the same alignment such as lighting, benches, landscaping, etc., can be packaged into a single application.