mn DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Minnesota Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance Grant Application Guide

December 2023

Contents

Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance Overview

These instructions are for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning assistance grant applications.

Through planning assistance awards, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will support SRTS plans for K-12 schools across Minnesota. Successful applicants will receive planning assistance provided by the Regional Development Organization (RDO), Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or, if their services are not available, a statewide planning consultant. Plans will include an analysis of existing conditions, public outreach and identification of potential infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions to help more children walk and bicycle safely to school. More information on the planning process and type of assistance available through this grant is available on the SRTS webpage.

Applicants for planning assistance should be prepared to support plan development by providing information, completing an online assessment tool, surveying parents and students, helping to arrange and publicize public workshops, and participating in identifying local issues and solutions that will help more children walk and bicycle to school. Applicants should also be able to demonstrate a commitment to implementing the plan once it is complete.

The most successful way to increase bicycling and walking is through a comprehensive approach that includes strategies embedded in each of the "Six E's". Learn more about the "Six E's" on the SRTS website.

- Evaluation,
- Equity,
- Education,
- Engineering,
- Encouragement, and
- Engagement

Please note: This plan is broader than engineering and infrastructure improvement identification. The SRTS Plan will include programmatic activities that a School and/or School District should engage in. Therefore, partners should be apprised of the need for both school based programs and city/county infrastructure improvements that may result from a SRTS Plan and be committed to these outcomes when applying.

Planning awards are intended to begin work in July of 2024, completing work by June 2025.

Resource: SRTS Handbook

The [Minnesota SRTS handbook](#) is a great resource for getting started with Safe Routes to School.
The handbook was created in partnership with Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Safe Routes to School Network and Minnesota Department of Transportation. We encourage you to use the handbook to assist in developing a SRTS team (required to apply) and while working your way through this application.

MDH's [Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)](#) is working on Safe Routes to School initiatives throughout the state and may be helpful partners in the SRTS Planning process and implementation.

Additional Resources: SRTS Resource Center

Looking for more information to get started? Visit [MnSRTS Resource Center](#) to find resources on SRTS [planning](#), [training](#), [education curriculum](#), [programs](#) and more.

Public Data

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. §13.599 Names and addresses of grant applicants will be public data once responses are opened. All remaining data in proposed responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed). All data created or maintained by the Minnesota Department of Transportation as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when grant agreements have been fully executed).

Record Keeping and Audit

Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) refer to a common set of accepted accounting principles, standards, and procedures that a recipient, and any third-party contractor, and their accountants must follow when they compile their financial statements. (See also Minn. Stat. section 15.17, subd. 1) The records must permit audit verification of grantee cost allocations claimed during the contract period. It is important to keep good records for all labor and material expenditures. Only reasonable costs directly related to and

necessary for conducting the business of the public transit system are allowed. A cost is considered reasonable if, in its nature or amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person as ordinary and necessary for the operations. Regardless of when an expense invoice is received or paid by the grantee, the expense must be billed to MnDOT in the grant agreement period in which the expense was incurred. If applicable, the financial records of the recipient must be audited. Audits occur by the MnDOT audit department and when applicable, as part of an independent audit.

Financial Review Process

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of $25,000 and higher. In order to comply with Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations

Please submit one of the following documents with your application, based on the following criteria:
- Grant applicants with annual income of under $50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of $50,000 or more and less than $750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over $750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

Eligible Applicants

To ensure that the SRTS program is available to a broad range of stakeholders that represent students, both public and non-profit entities may submit applications for funding. Eligible groups include (but are not limited to):
- Schools, both public and private
- School Districts
- Cities
- Counties
- Federally Recognized Tribal Nations
- Regional Development Organizations
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Applicants are encouraged to include multiple schools on an application whenever the schools can realistically coordinate on a plan by sharing one SRTS team, conducting joint public outreach meetings, developing shared assessments, and creating one completed SRTS plan to cover all of the schools in their community. It is up to each applicant to determine what will work best in the community, but effective school clusters would likely share the same city or school district and have some geographic proximity. Each school included in the plan would be expected to complete its own parent and student surveys, walking/biking assessment, and online assessment tool. Specific action steps would be identified in the plan for each school.

Funding Information

This solicitation will award up to $400,000 of federal and state Safe Routes to School funds and does not require a local match. MnDOT enters into a grant agreement directly with the Regional Development Organizations, MPO's, and a statewide planning consultant to provide planning services to the applicant.

Please note: The local community does not receive funding directly from MnDOT.

Planning Staff Support – Rural Regions

Successful applicants for SRTS planning assistance in rural regions will receive staff support from the local Regional Development Organizations (RDO) wherever RDOs are available. Schools in non-RDO areas will work with a MnDOT planning consultant.

Minnesota's RDOs have expertise in community planning, have existing relationships with important stakeholders, and have received training specifically in SRTS plans.

Schools should contact their RDO planners early in the application process to inform them of the intent to apply and ensure they are available to support the plan. RDO contact information is available online.

MnDOT will enter into a grant agreement directly with the RDO to complete a plan for each school or school cluster in the region. MnDOT will work with the RDO's to develop budgets and select SRTS planning locations for 2024-2025. Grant reporting and outcome expectations are the responsibility of the RDO.

Planning Staff Support – Metropolitan Regions

Applicants in metropolitan regions should contact MPO staff to inform them of the intent to apply for SRTS planning assistance, using the contact information available online.

If the MPO is available to support the plan, the MPO will work with MnDOT to determine the budget and selection of school locations. Grant reporting and outcome expectations are the responsibility of the MPO.

Applicants in the Twin Cities metro area should not contact the Metropolitan Council.

Schools in metropolitan areas where the MPO is not available to perform the work, including in the Twin Cities metro area, and those schools located in areas of Minnesota that do not have an RDO or MPO (Regions 10 and 7W, shown on the map) will work with a planning consultant provided by MnDOT. Grant reporting and outcome expectations are the responsibility of the planning consultant.

Additional Options for Planning Staff Support

There are other options available for planning assistance. For example, schools in an MPO area may partner with a neighboring RDO when applicable. If you have any questions about these options or working with your regional planning organization or planning consultant, contact the SRTS Program for more information.

Application Instructions and Submittal Date

Completed applications, must be submitted online by 5 p.m. on Wednesday February, 2024, and must include:

1. Completed online application form

2. Letters of support uploaded with application

The application must be completed online. If you are unable to do so, please contact SafeRoutes.DOT@state.mn.us.

Informational Webinars

Two webinars will be provided to go over SRTS application requirements. Join the meeting using the links provided on the MnSRTS Planning Assistance web page or email the SRTS coordinator for more information here. Both webinars will cover the same materials, it is not necessary to attend both.

MnSRTS Planning Grant Information Webinar #1
Tuesday, December 19th, 2023

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device
Click here to join the meeting
Meeting ID: 218 074 034 945
Passcode: X77AVi
Download Teams | Join on the web
Join with a video conferencing device
mn@m.webex.com
Video Conference ID: 113 626 007 0
Alternate VTC instructions
Or call in (audio only)
+1 651-395-7448,,268482263#   United States, St. Paul
Phone Conference ID: 268 482 263#
Find a local number | Reset PIN

MnSRTS Planning Grant Information Webinar #2
Tuesday, January 9th, 2024

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device
Click here to join the meeting
Meeting ID: 299 185 302 435
Passcode: 5bTQrs
Download Teams | Join on the web
Join with a video conferencing device

mn@m.webex.com
Video Conference ID: 113 877 356 7
[Alternate VTC instructions](#)
Or call in (audio only)
[+1 651-395-7448,,886961934#](tel:) United States, St. Paul
Phone Conference ID: 886 961 934#
[Find a local number](#) | [Reset PIN](#)

Any additional questions may be directed to Kelly.Corbin@state.mn.us

Application Notification

Awards for planning assistance will be announced in spring 2024 and implemented beginning fall of 2024. This application does not obligate MnDOT to award any grants, and MnDOT reserves the right to cancel this solicitation or any awards as it deems necessary.

Application Questions

If you have questions about the program or application please submit them to [SafeRoutes.DOT@state.mn.us.](mailto:SafeRoutes.DOT@state.mn.us) All questions and answers will be posted on to the FAQ document on the MnDOT SRTS website by Monday of the following week.

Application Guidance

The grant application is online. Use this guide to assist in answering the questions. Information on evaluation criteria will follow this section.

Part 1: Project Lead Contact Information

Please list the main applicant organization name and contact information. Please provide contact information for the main contact for the grant. This person will be notified of final decisions and will be expected to communicate award announcements to the rest of the SRTS team.

Part 2: Applicant Project Information

Please provide details on the number and type of schools that will be involved in the planning process along with corresponding address information for each school.

Part 3: Planning Assistance Type

MnDOT uses contracts with three types of organizations to provide SRTS planning assistance for schools and communities. Please select the option that applies to your community. See page 6 for planning staff support details.

Part 4: Planning Assistance Requested

Please review the planning assistance support available this year. MnDOT is asking applicants to rank the following types of planning assistance and select the planning assistance type that best suits the school and community needs.

- School or Multi-school SRTS plan
- SRTS plan update
- School district or city-wide SRTS plan

Applicants may also propose additional ideas for planning assistance if they can demonstrate that similar SRTS planning goals and outcomes will be achieved in the process.

If there are any plans, policies, or school construction that would adversely affect the progress of Safe Routes to School work in your community, please list those in the follow up questions about relocation of school buildings or policies that affect students walking/biking.

SRTS planning resources can be found at: MnSRTS Planning Resources

Part 5: School Information Sheet

A. Equity: Reaching Priority Populations

The 2020 MnSRTS Strategic Plan strives to achieve equitable outcomes by developing and distributing tools, resources, and funding that prioritize communities who are more likely to rely on walking or biking for transportation, are more vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions, or have experienced historic disinvestment.

The equity score uses seven indicators to best identify priority populations in Minnesota, providing a picture of special need for Safe Routes to School assistance, and in order to be more equitable will award application points based on these measures.

This question requires you to either search for school(s) involved on the Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations tool map or download the excel spreadsheet with school names, look up the school(s) name and enter the score associated with that school on your application. In the case of multiple schools, please enter the individual score for each school.

Learn more about equity scoring with the Student Transportation Equity for Priority Populations (STEPP) tool.

If your school is not listed on the STEPP tool:

Private Schools and Charter Schools may not have data in the STEPP score as there may not have been available data from MDE. These schools may either opt into the lowest STEPP score

available for schools or provide the data needed to develop a partial STEPP score by emailing [this completed document](#) to saferoutes.dot@state.mn.us.

- Percent of students of color
- Percent of English language learners
- Percent of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced lunch
- Percent of population of community that is age 5-17

To find out more data on eligibility requirements for Free and Reduce Lunch please visit the [MDE website on FRL.](#)

You may also provide any other information that relates to how your Private or Charter School supports students who are under resourced.

B. Opportunity to Get More Students Walking and Bicycling Safely

This section looks at the percent of students currently walking/biking, the population of the school that lives inside the walk zone and who is eligible for busing. In addition, this question needs to know what percent of the students from the school live close enough to walk but are bussed because their route to school is impeded by a "hazard" which can be a busy thoroughfare, river, railroad crossing, and/or other hazards the school district may deem unsuitable for walking or bicycling across.

Please complete the table to the best of your ability. The information can often be gathered by contacting your school district transportation director, school principal or the [Minnesota Department of Education data center](#). Please aim to be as accurate as possible.

If more than 5 schools are applying, a separate sheet may be attached with the information for all schools.

Part 6: SRTS Team Members and Local Support

A robust, well rounded and active Safe Routes to School team is critical for the successful development and implementation of a Safe Routes to School Plan. The applicant should aim to demonstrate individual commitment to the team from a variety of sectors.

A. Please provide the SRTS Team following information in the question A table:
- Provide names and/or titles of active/committed team members
- Provide their role on the team and how they will contribute to plan development and implementation. Examples of roles may include team lead, city planning support, parent outreach, etc. Consider the skills, knowledge or connections that could be valuable for during the planning process that is unique to each of these individuals. More ideas on how

various team members can contribute to a SRTS team are [available on this stakeholder list.](#)

B. Describe how this plan fits into and/or supports larger school goals?
   Applicants might consider school/student wellness goals, student transportation planning, referendum planning or other school goals.

C. Describe how this plan fits into and/or supports larger community goals?

   Applicants might consider comprehensive planning efforts, city/county transportation plans, local public health initiatives, school district wellness policies, school goals, complete streets policies and active living plans in the answer.

Part 7: Existing Conditions and Implementation Support

A. Using the 6E's- [education, encouragement, engagement, equity, engineering and evaluation](#)- briefly discuss the SRTS specific activities that currently happen in your school or community or have occurred within the last two years.

   Examples might include:

   - Walking events
   - Bike rodeos or safety courses
   - Infrastructure improvements around the school
   - Teaching Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum or components of the curriculum
   - School patrol and/or crossing guards

Visit [MnSRTS Resource Center](#) to learn about other SRTS activities.

B. What is your team's vision for a successfully implemented SRTS plan? In other words, what is the best outcome that you can imagine from a completed plan? What do you plan to accomplish after the planning process? Please consider including who will be involved and by when in your implementation.

Part 8: Letters of Support
Please attach the following letters of support:
1. Principal or school administrator letter of support for each school involved in the planning process
2. Letter of support from the local government

2024- 2025 Planning Assistance Scoring Criteria and Review Process

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- The application was submitted by the deadline
- The application is complete
- The application meets eligibility requirements

Part 5- Part 8 will be evaluated using the criteria on page 14.

Review committees include internal MnDOT staff and external stakeholders from the SRTS Statewide Steering Committee.
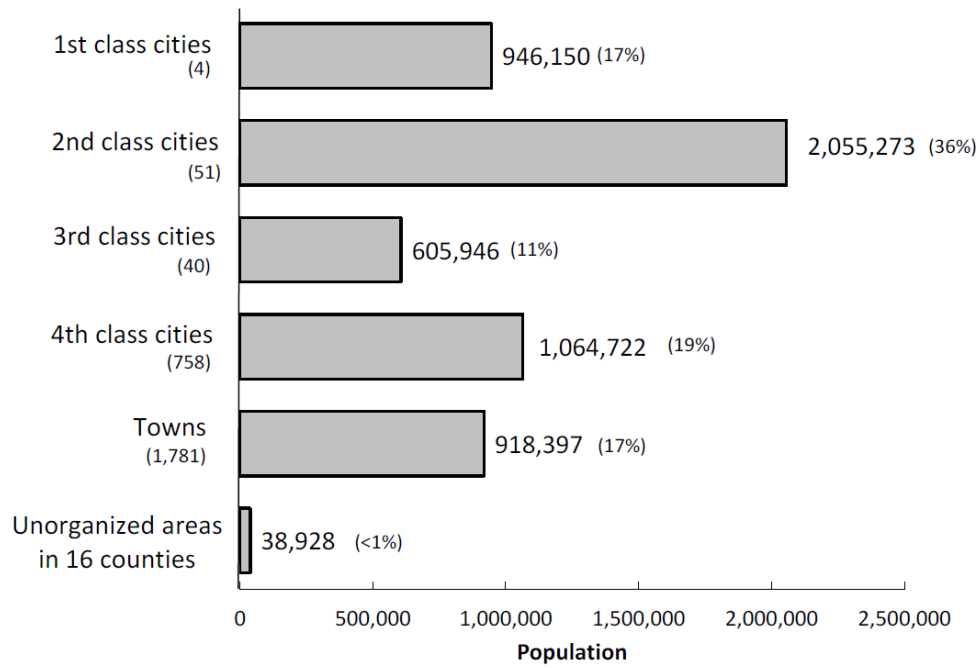
Geographic parity will be considered prior to funding the same community multiple times.

Additionally, we will be evaluating applicants by Legislative City designations so we are accurately comparing similar communities in lieu of just dividing applicants by metro and greater Minnesota.

Cities are classified by population under Minnesota Statutes, section 410.01. Cities are divided, for legislative purposes, into four classes.

1. **First class:** Cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Once a city is in the first class, it is not reclassified unless its population decreases by 25 percent from the census figures that last qualified the city as first class.
2. **Second class:** Cities with a population between 20,001 and 100,000
3. **Third class:** Cities with a population between 10,001 and 20,000
4. **Fourth class:** Cities with not more than 10,000 inhabitants

Population by Type of Local Government and Class As of the state demographer's 2018 estimates, the state's total population is 5,629,416 and is distributed among these classifications of cities, and in towns or unorganized areas as follows:

Category	Population
1st class cities (4)	946,150 (17%)
2nd class cities (51)	2,055,273 (36%)
3rd class cities (40)	605,946 (11%)
4th class cities (758)	1,064,722 (19%)
Towns (1,781)	918,397 (17%)
Unorganized areas in 16 counties	38,928 (<1%)

Note: Based on 2010 census and 2018 estimates data from the state demographer's website

2024 – 2025 SRTS Planning Assistance Scoring Criteria

QUESTIONS	In order to get points indicated, the response meets these criteria:
Part 1- 4 These sections are reviewed by the selection committee but not scored.	No points

Part 5:
The school information sheets will be ranked by the committee on the following criteria:
 	
  A) Equity Score to prioritize resources towards marginalized populations and communities
 	
  B) Potential opportunity to get more students walking and biking or increase safety for those that already are walking and biking.
	Equity: 0-40 points
	The number of points received for the equity score are a function of the school's equity score as a percentage multiplied by the number of points available.
	
	An example, if a school (or average of schools submitted in the case of multiple schools) score is 67 the score would be:
	
	.67 x 40 = 26 (with 26.8 rounded to nearest point) So for this example, the application would score 26 points for this section.
	
	Opportunity: 0-20 points
	
	0 -5 points- Student information is missing; there are few, if any, students who will benefit from this grant
	6 -15 points- Some of the information is present; there is potential to reach new students from the data provided
	16 – 20 points- The information is complete, project would have likelihood of increasing safety for existing walkers/bikers or increasing the number of students who walk and bike

Part 6: A) Provide information on the SRTS team.	**0-20 points** 0-9 points- most of the team is missing or is not yet identified 10-15 points- there is a good mix of team members, could use more support 16- 20 points- there is a good mix of team members and all the necessary partners are involved and have clear and unique roles
B) How does this plan fit into school goals?	**0-5 points** The successful applicant will clearly describe how SRTS fits into their school goals.
C) How does this plan fit into community goals?	**0-5 points** The successful applicant will clearly describe how SRTS fits into their community goals.

Part 7: A) Using the 6E's, discuss existing SRTS activities.	**0-5 points** 0 points-no SRTS work is occurring 1-3 points – some work has happened in the past or is occurring in some of the E areas 5 points- SRTS programs are happening, and clearly described in application
B) What is your team's vision for a successful SRTS plan? What do you plan to accomplish after the planning process?	**0-10 points** The successful applicant will have a clearly demonstrated vision including who will be involved and a timeline for future accomplishments are comprehensive.
Part 8: Letters of Support attached	**0-5 points –** Letters are unique in nature describing individual or organizations role in planning and implementation.
Application Total	_____points/ **110 points**