



Draft Requirements and Criteria for Fiscal Year 2023-24 Planning and Capacity Building Request for Applications

**Low Carbon Transportation Investments
California Climate Investments**



*DRAFT
July 30, 2025*

How to Use This Document

This document shares the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) draft requirements, eligibility criteria, and scoring approach for the upcoming Request for Applications (RFA) for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24 Planning and Capacity Building (Planning) grants.

Planning grants are meant to prepare communities across California for clean and equitable transportation, with a focus on Tribal Governments, rural areas, schools, and Community-Based Organizations that have not previously worked on State grants.

CARB is currently accepting public and Tribal Government comments on this draft through **August 29, 2025**. Your input will help ensure that the upcoming RFA is clear, practical, and responsive to community needs.

Comments may be submitted via:

- Email CleanTransportationIncentives@arb.ca.gov
- Survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/1G7V7Y1D26>

All aspects of this draft – including scoring, eligibility, and required materials – are subject to change based on feedback received.

The final RFA will include:

- Complete instructions for how to apply;
- Grant review, scoring, and selection details;
- Information on post-award support and grant requirements; and,
- Sample grant agreement.

It will be posted at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/2025-planning-and-capacity-building-request-applications>

To be notified when the final RFA is released, subscribe for updates under Clean and Sustainable Mobility Options at:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CARB/subscriber/topics>

What is Being Proposed in This Draft

To help guide your feedback, here is a quick overview of the proposed process and structure for FY 2023-24 Planning and Capacity Building grants:

- A single-step competitive application, open for eight weeks (tentatively September-November 2025);

- Funding awards of up to \$500,000 per project;
- Required partnerships (e.g., between a Community-Based Organization and a Local or Tribal Government);
- Required Project Community map, project summary, budget, and proposed deliverables;
- Projects must be completed by December 31, 2027;
- Applicants are not expected to have fully developed plans at submission. This grant is intended to support project development over time;
- A review panel will score all eligible applications, with priority for Tribal, rural, and school-based applicants; and,
- Some free technical assistance will be available to support Applicants before and after award.

For a quick overview of who can apply, how much is available, and what happens after award, see the [Summary](#) section on page 6.

Guiding Questions for Input

The following questions are intended to guide input on key areas of focus. We welcome your responses to these questions, as well as any additional feedback you may wish to provide.

- Are the eligibility requirements clear and realistic for your organization or community?
- Do the required partnerships support equitable and meaningful collaboration? What could be improved?
- Do the eligible activities reflect the kinds of work your community wants to do? Are there types of work or ideas you think should be included but are not?
- Are there any ineligible costs that you believe should be reconsidered to better support early-stage or Tribal/rural applicants?
- Are there parts within the application components that could be simplified, removed, or replaced with optional attachments (e.g., flyers, maps, photos)?
- Is it clear which parts of your project need to be figured out now vs. during the grant?
- Does this program help build community capacity over time? How could it do more to support lasting impact?
- What types of technical assistance or support would help you feel more confident in applying?
- What else would make this grant easier to apply for, or more responsive to your community's needs?

Note: This document shares draft eligibility requirements, scoring criteria, and application guidance for Fiscal Year 2023-24 Planning and Capacity Building project funding. CARB is seeking public and Tribal Government feedback to improve access, equity, and clarity before releasing the final Request for Applications.

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Background

Planning and Capacity Building (Planning) is part of the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) suite of Sustainable Community-Based Transportation Equity initiatives. This also includes Clean Mobility Options (CMO), the Clean Mobility in Schools (CMIS), and the Sustainable Transportation Equity Project (STEP). Together, these programs fund community-led planning and mobility strategies that support a statewide shift toward clean, shared, and active transportation – especially in historically under-resourced communities.

Planning provides grants to help communities across California build the foundations for clean and equitable transportation. These grants support activities like outreach, needs assessments, workforce development, local planning, and community-led coordination. Many grantees use Planning funds to get ready for future opportunities through STEP, CMIS, or CMO.

Planning prioritizes:

- Tribal Governments (federally and non-federally recognized);
- Rural communities and small towns;
- Community-based organizations in disadvantaged or low-income areas; and,
- Public schools serving under-resourced student populations.

In 2023, CARB awarded seven Planning grants totaling \$3.3 million through a joint Request for Applications (RFA) that also included CMIS and STEP. At the same time, CARB launched a new statewide support structure: the Planning and Capacity Building Project Administrator (or PCB Administrator).

The PCB Administrator, Data for Social Good – in partnership with Momentum and the Institute for Sustainable Communities – manages day-to-day implementation support for Planning grantees. This includes onboarding, grant management assistance, toolkits, reporting support, and access to a network of technical experts.

For the FY 2023-24 cycle, CARB is issuing a second competitive RFA for Planning with \$7.3 million in total funding. Grants of up to \$500,000 will be awarded to support projects such as:

- Community transportation needs assessments
- Clean mobility and land use planning
- Outreach and engagement efforts
- Local workforce development
- Partnership building and early-stage visioning

Planning is part of California Climate Investments,¹ a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Invest dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

For this round, CARB is refining Planning to:

- Streamline the application process (simplified, single-step application)
- Support applicants who are early in their planning journey
- Provide an increased focus on transportation equity, workforce readiness, and school-based planning
- Make eligibility criteria more practical and accessible
- Offer technical assistance and optional advance payment for eligible applicants

The purpose of this document is to outline the proposed requirements, application process, and scoring criteria for this funding opportunity. CARB invites feedback from the public, including community-based organizations and Tribal Governments, to help shape the final version of this solicitation.

Timeline

Table 1 provides the preliminary RFA timeline and project milestones for FY 2023-24 project funding.

Table 1: Planning and Capacity Building RFA Draft Timeline

Milestone	Date
Draft Requirements & Criteria: Public Comment Closes	August 29, 2025
Final RFA Release	September 2025
Application Q&A Sessions	September-October 2025
Application Deadline (8 weeks from Final RFA Release)	November 2025
Application Review & Preliminary Selection	November - December 2025
Grant Agreement Development	December 2025 - January 2026
Project Start Date (approximate)	January 2026
Project End Date	December 31, 2027

Summary

The following outlines key details of the upcoming Planning RFA; however, CARB encourages reviewing this entire document for a better understanding of the proposed criteria.

¹ <http://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/>

What is this grant for?

To support community-led planning projects that advance clean and equitable transportation. This includes outreach, needs assessments, planning, workforce training, and other efforts that build local capacity and move communities toward their clean transportation goals.

Who may apply?

- Community-based organizations
- Tribal Governments
- Local Governments
- Public schools (especially those serving under-resourced student populations)

Partnerships across the above groups are encouraged and in certain circumstances, required. See [Partnership Structure](#).

How much funding is available?

- Up to \$500,000 per grant
- No match or in-kind funding required
- Advance payment available for eligible organizations
- Project duration: Project must be complete by December 2027 (approximate start date is January 2026)

What support is available?

- Free technical assistance: Visioning, budget, and grant management preparation
- Training, peer learning, and workshops
- Online resources and support from the PCB Administrator

What is the application process like?

- This is a competitive grant process. All complete and eligible Applications will be reviewed and scored by CARB.
- The application period will open in September 2025 for 8 weeks.
- CARB will host at least two virtual Q&A sessions to answer Applicant questions.
- An application form will be provided with clear instructions.
- Applicants can receive free technical assistance from the PCB Administrator team during the application period.

What happens after an application is selected?

- CARB will notify selected Applicants and finalize awards in January 2026.

- Grantees will then enter into a grant agreement with the PCB Administrator.
- The PCB Administrator will:
 - Help finalize project workplans and budgets
 - Manage disbursement of funds
 - Provide ongoing implementation support, including tools, templates, and technical assistance

Program Goals and Objectives

The Planning and Capacity Building Program supports clean transportation by helping communities:

- Build readiness for transportation planning that reflects community priorities
- Engage community members – including youth, parents, and elders – in transportation decisions
- Understand community-specific mobility needs, especially in under-resourced areas
- Develop plans, partnerships, and knowledge to secure future transportation funding
- Promote safe, clean, and accessible options for students, workers, and families
- Build internal capacity through trainings, partnerships, and outreach

Projects may also help communities get ready to apply for related funding opportunities – including CMO, CMIS, STEP, or other public and private funding sources that support clean and equitable transportation.

Terms and Definitions

The following terms are capitalized throughout this document to indicate that they carry the specific meanings provided in this section.

Advance Payment: A portion of grant funds (up to 25%) that eligible grantees, such as community-based organizations who are Nonprofit Organizations, federally recognized Tribal Governments, and Local Governments can request upfront to help launch their projects. Advance payments are approved on a case-by-case basis and require a spending plan, financial documentation, and regular reporting.

Applicants: Term used to refer to the Lead Applicant and any Sub-Applicants on an application for a project funded through CARB under the upcoming RFA.

Capacity Building: The process of strengthening local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, expertise, and access to resources. For the upcoming RFA, the goal of Capacity Building is to help develop or increase the ability of disadvantaged and low-income communities, including Tribal communities, to understand and analyze transportation needs based on their own unique context and lived experiences, identify transportation priorities,

access funding, advocate for equitable planning processes, and equitably implement clean transportation projects in the future.

Clean Mobility Equity Alliance (CMEA): A peer-learning knowledge sharing network that convenes clean mobility project implementers and partners to support project implementation, advance mobility equity policy, help build collective capacity and reduce isolation across geographically and operationally diverse clean mobility projects. CMEA's goals include supporting project implementation by establishing a space for participants to share challenges and lessons learned and providing capacity-building resources to members. CMEA also creates a clean mobility equity community of practice and advances mobility justice policy solutions by identifying unique community needs and responsive policy approaches.

Community-Based Organization (CBO): A place-based Nonprofit Organization with a clear geographic focus that includes the Project Community. Ideally, staff or board members live in the Project Community, and the organization must have a proven track record of at least one year of relevant work.

Community Partner: A community group, community resident, student, parent, school staff, health-based organization, faith-based organization, small business, or other entity in the Project Community that, while not responsible for implementing funded projects, serves as a key stakeholder and representative of the Project Community during both development of the application and implementation of funded projects.

Direct Costs: Actual costs incurred that are directly tied to the implementation of the project, including, but not limited to, personnel costs (i.e., hourly wage), subcontracts, equipment costs, and travel expenses. Profits, profit sharing, shareholder interest, and taxes (real and personal) are not reimbursable as direct or indirect costs.

Disadvantaged Community: An area that experiences disproportionate amounts of pollution, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic and public health conditions, identified as disadvantaged by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) per Senate Bill 535. Disadvantaged communities include the top 25% of census tracts in CalEnviroScreen 4.0, census tracts lacking overall scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 due to data gaps but receiving the highest 5% of CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Pollution Burden composite scores, census tracts identified in 2017 as disadvantaged regardless of their scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0, and lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes.^{2,3}

² <https://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/priority-populations>

³ All federally recognized Tribal lands included in the American Indian Areas Related National Geodatabase were designated as Senate Bill 535 disadvantaged communities based on the May 2022 report found on this [webpage](#). A Tribe can establish that a particular area of land is under its control (even if not represented as such on CalEPA's disadvantaged community map) by requesting a consultation with the CalEPA Deputy Secretary for Environmental Justice, Tribal Affairs and Border Relations at TribalAffairs@calepa.ca.gov.

Displacement Prevention: Activities that prevent substantial economic, environmental, and public-health burdens that may lead to the physical or economic displacement of low-income households or small businesses. Examples of displacement prevention activities are listed in the Application Guidance developed for the FY 2022-23 Planning, Clean Mobility in Schools, and STEP RFA.⁴

Grant Term: The time period identified in the fully executed grant agreement, within which all CARB grant funds must be spent and all project activities completed.

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs are actual costs incurred for services or activities that are not directly tied to a specific grant activity but are necessary for general operations. Allowable indirect costs are a pro rata share of general management (overhead) costs for operations that support the work performed under the grant agreement, such as accounting, budgeting, payroll preparation, personnel services, utility costs, rent and centralized data processing not already identified or reimbursed as a direct cost. Profits, profit sharing, shareholder interest, and taxes (real and personal) are not reimbursable as direct or indirect costs. Indirect costs shall not exceed 30% of the total CARB grant funds awarded.

Insurance: All grantees must maintain insurance coverage for the full grant term and provide proof of coverage before any funds are disbursed. Required types of insurance may include commercial general liability, automobile, workers' compensation and employer's liability, crime (if advance payment), and (for some grantees) cyber and/or professional liability. Applicants should budget for the cost of required insurance. More detailed insurance requirements will be included as part of the upcoming RFA.

Lead Applicant: The community-based organization, Local Government, public school, or Tribal Government that is responsible for leading the development of the application and implementation of the projects funded through CARB under the upcoming RFA. The Lead Applicant becomes the Grantee if their application is selected for funding. The Lead Applicant will develop and execute written agreements with their Sub-Applicant(s).

Local Government: A local agency as defined in Government Code section 7920.510, which includes: a county; a city, whether general law or chartered; a city and county; a school district; a municipal corporation; a district; a political subdivision; any board, commission, or agency of the foregoing; another local public agency; or, an entity that is a legislative body of a local agency.

Low-Income Community: Census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80% of the statewide median income or below the threshold designated as low-income by the Department of Housing and Community Development.⁵

⁴ https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Application_Guidance.pdf

⁵ <https://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/priority-populations>

Nonprofit Organization: Any private nonprofit organization qualified pursuant to subdivision (c)(3) under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, and tax exempt under California state law. For the purposes of the upcoming RFA, nonprofit organizations must have at least one year of formation as a nonprofit organization under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, be in active/good standing with the California Secretary of State, and have an office or at least one full-time staff person based in California. Certain nonprofits that are Tribally chartered under Tribally enacted laws may be exempt from registration with the California Secretary of State.

Project Community: A geographic area where the residents who are primarily intended to benefit from the project reside. The Project Community may be represented by a contiguous or non-contiguous geographic area but must be at minimum within one county or within connected counties. To be eligible for funding, more than 50% of the geographic area of the Project Community must be within low-income or disadvantaged community census tracts.

Resource Contributions: Cash match, in-kind services, and leveraged funding from other public or private sources to contribute to the proposed projects in the application and support their quality, breadth, and longevity within and beyond the Grant Term.

School: For the purposes of the upcoming RFA, a California-based kindergarten through grade twelve or adult educational institution that complies with the laws governing, and meets the requirements for operating as, a public school in the state of California. A public school must meet the California Department of Education's definition of public school as described on their website.⁶

Sub-Applicant: An entity that enters into a partnership with the Lead Applicant for the purpose of applying for a CARB grant, and that is responsible for implementing a project or project elements funded through CARB. A Sub-Applicant will enter into a written agreement with the Lead Applicant if its application is selected for funding.

Statewide Planning and Capacity Building Administrator (PCB Administrator): The team, led by Data for Social Good and in partnership with Institute for Sustainable Communities and with Momentum, that will provide technical assistance to Planning Applicants. This team also manages each Planning grant and provides implementation support. Planning grant agreements will be executed by the PCB Administrator and the Grantee.

Transportation Equity: Occurs when the transportation system addresses unique transportation barriers; shifts decision-making power to the communities the system serves; and improves the quality of life for low-income people, people of color, and residents of communities disproportionately impacted by air pollution or who lack access to housing,

⁶ <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/dos.asp>

jobs, and services.

Tribal Government: All California Native American Tribes, either a federally-recognized California Tribal Government listed on the most recent notice of the Federal Register or a non-federally recognized California Tribal Government, including those listed on the California Tribal Consultation List maintained by the California Native American Heritage Commission.⁷

Eligible Communities, Applicants, and Partnership Structure

Eligible Communities

Each application must clearly define and describe the **Project Community** – the geographic area that will benefit from the proposed work. More than 50% of the Project Community must be within disadvantaged or low-income census tracts.

Applicants are required to:

- Submit a map clearly outlining the boundaries of the Project Community
- Describe who lives, works, or goes to school in the area
- Identify key community assets (e.g., schools, Tribal housing, job centers, or transit stops)
- Explain why this area was selected and how it reflects the needs or priorities of the community

Interested Lead Applicants may work with the PCB Administrator to create a map depicting their Project Community.

Eligible Applicants

Each application must include one Lead Applicant⁸ along with one or more Sub-Applicants and Community Partners who will work together to carry out the proposed project.

Eligible Lead Applicants include:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Tribal Governments⁹ (federally or non-federally recognized)
- Local Governments

⁷ <http://nahc.ca.gov/>

⁸ Planning, Clean Mobility in Schools, and STEP Grantees selected from any of the Fiscal Years 2018-24 solicitations are not eligible to be Lead Applicants.

⁹ To participate in the Planning, a Tribal Government must execute a limited waiver of sovereign immunity, a sample of which will be included in the upcoming RFA.

- Public schools

The Lead Applicant:

- Is the main point of contact for the application
- Signs the grant agreement (if selected)
- Oversees the project and manages funds

First-time Applicants are welcome. Projects may focus on building relationships and early planning. Not every detail needs to be finalized at the time of application. The grant is intended to help your team grow and refine the work during the grant term.

Sub-Applicants are funded partners that help carry out specific project activities. These may include:

- Local Governments, Tribal Governments, CBO, Nonprofit Organizations, schools, utilities, small businesses, air districts, etc.
- Consultants (e.g., fleet and infrastructure planners, project management firms)
- Private companies (e.g., private mobility providers, charging station providers, except private schools¹⁰)

Community Partners are local groups or individuals (e.g., students, parents, Tribal elders, faith leaders, small business owners) who help guide the project and ensure it reflects local needs. These partners may or may not be funded but should have a defined role in the application and implementation of the project. All Sub-Applicants and any compensated Community Partners must have a written, signed agreement (e.g., memorandum of understanding (MOU) or contract) with the Lead Applicant in place before implementation begins. These agreements must align with the terms of the grant agreement between the PCB Administrator and the Lead Applicant.

Members of CARB advisory groups cannot be Lead Applicants, Sub-Applicants, contractors, subcontractors, consultants, or Community Partners; cannot provide letters of support or references; cannot be signatories to the grant agreement or any other related agreements; cannot be listed as any of the persons completing tasks in the scope of work; cannot have any role in or influence over the upcoming RFA or the application review or selection process; and, cannot communicate with CARB regarding CARB's decision on the applications received. If a CARB advisory group member makes any prohibited appearance or communication subject to Government Code section 87104 as described above, the application will be disqualified and will not be eligible for an award.

Entities that are part of the PCB Administrator Team (including its consultants, affiliates, employees, representatives, officers, or other agents) or contracted to provide technical

¹⁰ No public money shall ever be appropriated for the support of any sectarian or denominational school or any school not under the exclusive control of the officers of the public schools. Cal. Const., art. IX, § 8.

assistance for the upcoming RFA are not eligible to be a Lead Applicant, Sub-Applicant, Community Partner, contractor, or subcontractor in the upcoming RFA.

Partnership Structure

A strong partnership brings together organizations with different skills and perspectives to plan and carry out the project. Each application must explain:

- Who is involved (Lead Applicant, Sub-Applicant(s), Community Partner(s))
- How decisions will be made
- How power will be shared with community members

Partnership requirements depend on who the Lead Applicant is:

- If the Lead is a local government, at least one community-based organization must be a Sub-Applicant
- If the Lead is a community-based organization, at least one local or Tribal Government must be a Sub-Applicant
- If the Lead is a Tribal Government, no specific Sub-Applicants are required

Table 2 Required Sub-Applicants and Partners by Lead Applicant Type

Lead Applicant Type	Required Sub-Applicant(s)	Required Community Partner(s)
Local Government	At least one CBO	Yes
CBO	At least one local or Tribal Government	Yes
Tribal Government	None required	Yes
Public school	At least one CBO	Yes

CARB encourages partnerships that:

- Prioritize community voices and lived experience
- Reflect the cultural and geographic context of the Project Community
- Share power and decision-making authority with Community Partners

Examples of strong partnerships can be found in the application guidance for the FY 2022–23 Planning, Clean Mobility in Schools, and STEP RFA.¹¹ Diagrams or charts may be submitted to help illustrate the partnership structure. Applicants are required to submit a letter of support and commitment with their applications.

Eligible Activities and Costs

Planning grants support a range of activities that, when combined, help advance

¹¹ https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Application_Guidance.pdf

transportation equity and support the community's long-term vision. CARB encourages Applicants to collaborate with partners across the Project Community and look for opportunities to align efforts and build on each other's strengths. (See the [Partnership Structure](#) section for more details.)

Eligible Projects

Planning and Capacity Building grants support community-led projects that prepare for long-term clean transportation investments. CARB welcomes projects at different stages – from early community visioning to more developed plans.

Eligible projects should:

- Increase transportation equity in disadvantaged or low-income communities
- Build local readiness to apply for future implementation grants
- Reflect goals and priorities identified by community members

Examples of eligible project types include:

- Community outreach and education around clean transportation options
- Transportation needs assessments (including surveys, listening sessions, and data gathering)
- Plans that connect clean mobility to housing, land use, or public health
- Workforce training programs for clean transportation careers
- School-based planning for electric school buses or student-safe routes
- Early-stage collaboration or partnership-building (e.g., developing MOUs, convening stakeholders)

Ineligible Projects

Planning and Capacity Building grants support early-stage efforts, not implementation. The following activities are not eligible and should not be the focus of the proposed projects:

- Construction or capital improvements (e.g., charging stations, sidewalks, bike lanes)
- Planning for highway or road expansion (e.g., added lanes or interchanges)
- Road maintenance planning not part of a complete streets or safety plan
- Plans that would increase vehicle miles travelled, greenhouse gases, or air pollution
- Planning for private vehicle incentives (e.g., rebates or vouchers)
- Planning for ride-hailing services unless using zero-emission vehicles
- Planning for residential or commercial development
- Environmental studies, plans, or documents required under the National Environmental Policy Act or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Lab-scale research or early-stage technology (Technology Readiness Level 4 or less)
- Planning related to manufacturing or facility operations

- Heavy rail or inter-state transit planning outside local/community scope
- Infrastructure implementation projects (e.g., energy systems, rail, roads)
- Projects already fully funded by another State program
- Activities that occur outside the Grant Term

Eligible Costs

Grant funds may be used for costs that directly support the approved project. Eligible costs include:

- **Staffing**
 - Salaries and hourly wages (including payroll taxes, benefits, and training)
 - Time for existing staff or new hires during the grant term
 - Intern and volunteer stipends
- **Community Engagement & Outreach**
 - Hosting events, workshops, or community meetings
 - Marketing, printing, interpretation, translation
 - Participant incentives¹² and public transit subsidies¹³
 - Meeting space rentals and supplies
 - Community and stakeholder advisory groups
- **Technology & Tools**
 - Software or online tools (e.g., mapping software, virtual platforms)
 - Subscriptions or broadband access related to the project
- **Travel (In-State Only)**
 - Travel to meetings, trainings, or site visits
 - Reimbursable based on State rates *established by the California Department of Human Resources*¹⁴
- **Other Eligible Costs**
 - Costs for required Insurance coverage
 - Project-specific consulting or subcontracting
 - Data collection, analysis, and reporting

Ineligible Costs

Grant funds cannot be used for:

- Ceremonial expenses (including food and beverages)
- Childcare-related costs
- Collateral on any debt or loan, payments on any debt or loan, or use of funds as an asset to secure financing, refinancing, a loan, or a line of credit

¹² Participant incentives must be in an exchange for services or information and be appropriately documented.

¹³ Public transit subsidies are intended for participants with accessibility or transportation challenges

¹⁴ <https://www.calhr.ca.gov/employees/pages/travel-reimbursements.aspx>

- Construction or capital costs
- Commissions and commission fees
- Direct lobbying or political advocacy
- Donations
- Food and beverages
- Indirect costs in excess of 30% of the total awarded funds
- Litigation costs, attorney fees, or lobbying
- Local, state, or federal taxes
- Out-of-state travel, unless pre-approved by CARB
- Payment for any civil or criminal penalties or fines or to address, correct, or mitigate any past, present, or future violations or any alleged violations of law
- Payment of liens or to satisfy a judgment
- Political campaigns or support at the local, state, or federal level
- Profit or profit-sharing
- Referral fees
- Services, materials, or equipment already paid for by another State program

Project Eligibility Requirements

For a project to be eligible, it must:

- Focus benefits within a defined Project Community
- Align with one or more Planning and Capacity Building program goals
- Include a Lead Applicant, at least one Sub-Applicant (unless a Tribal Government is Lead), and one or more Community Partners
- Include a map showing the boundaries of the Project Community
- Ensure that more than 50% of the Project Community falls within disadvantaged or low-income census tracts
- Be completed by December 31, 2027

Grant Requirements

Lead Applicants should ensure they have the necessary staff and budget to manage the grant throughout the Grant Term. Grant management responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, project and process planning, developing and managing partner contracts, handling payments, invoicing, and disbursement requests, submitting semi-annual status reports, holding monthly check-in meetings with the PCB Administrator and other partners, and collecting data, evaluating progress, and data reporting to both the PCB Administrator and the public.

Planning grants will be managed by the PCB Administrator, who is responsible for tasks such as signing the grant agreement with Planning grantees, reviewing and approving disbursement requests, reviewing and approving project plans and all other materials, providing implementation support, and overseeing fund distribution. Grantees will work

closely with the PCB Administrator throughout the Grant Term.

After grant agreements are signed, Planning grantees must establish written, signed agreements with Sub-Applicants before any costs are incurred. These agreements must include the terms of the grantee's agreement with the PCB Administrator (PCB Agreement). Grantees are encouraged to extend the Sub-Applicant agreements beyond the Grant Term of the PCB Agreement for sustainability, but all CARB funds must be spent within the Grant Term of the PCB Agreement.

Budget

Each project may request up to \$500,000 in Planning and Capacity Building funding. Applicants should request only what is needed to carry out their proposed project.

A complete budget must:

- Break down labor, materials, equipment, and indirect costs
- Include costs for grant management and required Insurance
- Allocate at least 5% of the total budget for data collection, evaluation, and reporting
- Limit indirect costs to no more than 30% of the total requested funds

Applicants must make sure the following are included in their budget:

Table 3 Required Budget Items

Item	Purpose
Insurance costs	Must reflect required coverage (e.g., general liability, workers' compensation). These costs are eligible and expected.
Onboarding and monthly check-in meetings	Time and staffing for required project management touchpoints with the PCB Administrator
Participation in the Clean Mobility Equity Alliance (CMEA)	Budget for staff time, travel, and registration for monthly virtual meetings and one annual in-person forum
Data and evaluation	At least 5% of the total budget must support data collection, community-defined metrics, and reporting
Staff or consultant time	Budget for personnel needed to complete project tasks
Translation, interpretation, printing, and outreach materials	Include any relevant expenses to support inclusive engagement

Advance Payment

Eligible Applicants who may face cash flow barriers can request an Advance Payment of up to 25% of their total grant funds, subject to CARB and/or the PCB Administrator approval after award. To prepare for this:

- Include a note in your budget if you intend to request Advance Payment
- Be ready to submit a spending plan and justification during grant agreement development
- Advance Payment is available to eligible CBOs, Local Governments, and federally recognized Tribal Governments.

Resource Contributions (Optional)

Applicants may choose to include in-kind support or leveraged resources, such as staff time or donated space. This is not required and will not affect scoring. However, they may help demonstrate how Applicants plan to meet community needs, especially for elements the grant cannot cover directly. For example, food, childcare, or ceremonial expenses may be critical to successful participation but are not eligible costs. Identifying other sources of support for these needs – such as partnerships, in-kind donations, or other funding – can strengthen the project’s implementation plan and accessibility.

Project Deliverables

Grantees are required to work with Sub-Applicants, Community Partners, and the PCB Administrator to develop a project plan that guides implementation. The project plan will outline major deliverables and serve as the foundation for tracking progress throughout the grant.

The project plan must include:

- Data collection, evaluation, and reporting plan, including:
 - Quarterly data collection in coordination with the PCB Administrator
 - Evaluation of project outcomes using both community-defined and CARB-defined metrics
 - Annual data reporting to the PCB Administrator (or more often, if requested)
- Outreach and engagement plan for inclusive community participation
- Internal communications and coordination plan
- Partnership agreement(s) describing roles and responsibilities

The full project plan will become part of the approved scope of work and must be reviewed and approved by the PCB Administrator before major project activities begin. The project plan can be updated over time, in coordination with the PCB Administrator, as needed.

All project activities should lead to concrete, useful deliverables that strengthen community capacity. At minimum, these include:

Table 4: Required Project Deliverables

Deliverable	Purpose
Kickoff meeting (with agenda and materials)	Align all partners, CARB, and the PCB Administrator at the start of the grant
Semi-annual status reports	Share progress, lessons learned, and any implementation issues
Meeting notes from check-ins with partners and the PCB Administrator	Document shared decisions and support transparency
Public-facing project summaries and web content	Share project updates and outcomes with the broader community
Draft and final project report	Capture results, lessons learned, and recommendations for future work

All grantees are expected to complete the required deliverables listed above in Table 4. Additional outputs (e.g., educational materials, community presentations, or online resources) may vary depending on the project scope and will be defined in the approved project plan.

Note to Applicants:

- Templates and support for all required deliverables will be provided by the PCB Administrator
- Deliverables should be designed with future use in mind – helping your community continue planning or secure future funding
- The scope and scale of deliverables should reflect your project’s size, budget, and goals

How to Prepare and Submit an Application

Application Process

CARB will release a full RFA in September 2025. Applicants will have eight weeks to prepare and submit their applications. All application materials will be available on CARB’s website and shared by the PCB Administrator.

- CARB and/or the PCB Administrator will offer:
 - Free technical assistance which will be available to potential Applicants upon request, including first-time and Tribal Applicants. This is tailored support that may be offered via office hours or one-on-one meetings.
 - Live virtual Q&A sessions during the application window
 - Templates, budget tools, and examples
 - Frequently asked questions (FAQ) updated throughout the application window

Applications must be submitted electronically by the deadline specified in the upcoming RFA, using the official submission portal (details will be provided in the upcoming RFA). Late or incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

What Happens After You Submit an Application

- Eligibility review: CARB staff will screen all submitted applications to confirm they meet basic eligibility requirements (e.g., all application materials submitted and complete, Applicants are eligible, project location, partnership structure).
- Scoring process (See [Application Review and Scoring](#) section below for additional details)
- All eligible applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel that includes CARB staff and reviewers from other State agencies with expertise in equity, climate, transportation, and planning.
- Scoring criteria will focus on:
 - Alignment with program goals
 - Strength and clarity of the community partnership
 - Equity and engagement approach
 - Quality of the proposed work and deliverables
 - Capacity to manage the grant responsibly
 - Any violation of the California False Claims Act (Gov. Code, § [12650](#), et seq.)
- Funding decisions will be based on total scores and program priorities, such as geographic diversity and representation of Tribal, rural, and school-based Applicants.
- Award notifications are expected in December 2025, with grant agreements finalized starting in January 2026.

Key Takeaways for Applicants

- You do not need a perfect plan – just a strong vision and clear plan for how you will refine it
- Focus on demonstrating your connection to the community and readiness to carry out the work
- Use simple, direct language to make your project clear to reviewers who may not be familiar with your region or context
- You will have support available throughout the application period

Application Templates and Guidance

A complete application must include responses to the prompts in the official application template, which will be released when the full RFA opens. The template will guide Applicants through the key pieces of information needed to evaluate the project.

CARB and/or the PCB Administrator will offer technical assistance as described above in the [Application Process](#) section.

Required Application Components

The following provides a list of the proposed application components. The final application will consist of a form or template to complete with guidance that includes character limits for each section:

Table 5 Description of Proposed Application Sections

Section	Purpose	Format
Project Summary	An overview of what the project will do, who it will serve, and why it matters.	Application form (1 page - narrative)
Project Community Description	Define the community that will benefit from the work – including demographics, needs, and transportation challenges.	Application form (1-2 pages - narrative)
Project Community Map	A map showing the geographic boundaries of the Project Community, with more than 50% in disadvantaged or low-income census tracts	Attachment
Partnership Structure	Identify the Lead Applicant, required Sub-Applicant, and Community Partners, and describe their respective roles. Provide letters of support (LOS) and commitment from each of the Applicants.	Application form (1-2 pages); LOS Attachments
Project Goals and Activities	Describe the major project activities and how they align with Planning and Capacity Building objectives.	Application form (1-2 pages - narrative)
Proposed Deliverables	Identify what will be created or produced as a result of the grant – including community plans, outreach materials, reports, or events.	Application form (1 page - narrative)
Equity and Engagement Approach	Explain how the project will incorporate community voices, especially those of low-income residents, Tribal members, youth, or other underrepresented groups.	Application form (1-2 pages - narrative)
Preliminary Budget	Provide a draft budget that includes staff time, outreach costs, Indirect Costs (up to 30%), Insurance, onboarding, and evaluation (at least 5%).	Spreadsheet template
Optional: Intent to Request Advance Payment	If applicable, note whether you plan to request advance payment after award. This will not affect your score but is used merely for planning purposes.	Application form
Timeline	A general outline of when key tasks or milestones will happen during the 2-year project period.	Application form (1 page - narrative)

Additional Tips:

- You do not need to have everything figured out to apply. This grant is designed to help you **build capacity during the project**.
- Use **plain language** and concrete examples when responding to prompts.
- Keep your audience in mind. Reviewers may not know your community, so help them understand why this work matters.

- You may, but are not required to, submit additional **supporting documents** such as community support letters, visuals, or prior planning materials to strengthen your application.

Application Review and Scoring

Review Process

After the application deadline, CARB will conduct a two-step review process:

1. **Eligibility Screening:** All submitted applications will be screened by CARB staff to ensure they meet the following basic eligibility requirements before they are scored. If an application does not appear to meet all eligibility requirements or needs more documentation, documentation or clarification may be requested from the Lead Applicant, and the Lead Applicant then has two business days to respond by providing proof of eligibility. Only updates directly addressing the specific information request will be considered, and they should not significantly change the application.
 - The application is complete and submitted by the application deadline.
 - All Applicants are eligible and meet the partnership structure requirements.
 - Letters of support and commitment from all Applicants are included.
 - Project Community boundary map included.
 - More than 50% of the Project Community is located in low-income or disadvantaged census tracts.
 - The proposed project is eligible.
 - Budget (total budget is less than or equal to \$500,000, 5% of total budget funds data collection, and Indirect Costs do not exceed 30% of total budget).
 - Project will be complete, and all project funds spent by December 31, 2027.
2. **Application Scoring.** Eligible applications will be reviewed by a scoring panel made up of CARB staff and reviewers from other public agencies with expertise in community engagement, transportation equity, Tribal priorities, and climate investments. Reviewers will use a standardized scoring rubric and record written notes to inform review panel discussions and final scoring decisions.

Review Panel Priorities

The review panel will prioritize funding for:

- Projects led by or directly benefiting **Tribal communities, rural communities, or public schools serving under-resourced students**
- Strong partnerships between CBOs and Local or Tribal Governments
- Projects in underfunded regions or areas new to CARB programs

- Projects that demonstrate meaningful engagement and share power with the community

Scoring Criteria

Applicants will be scored based on the following categories (up to 100 points total):

Table 6 Draft Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Description	Points
Project Vision and Community Need	Clear goals that reflect local transportation or access challenges. The project demonstrates strong alignment with Planning and Capacity Building program objectives – even if the full details are still being developed.	20
Communities of Focus	The project serves one or more of the following: a Tribal community, a rural community, or under-resourced students through a school-based initiative.	5
Community Engagement & Equity	The application reflects a strong commitment to inclusive engagement and equity. Applicants are encouraged to describe past efforts, current relationships, or how this grant will help build new connections with underserved communities.	20
Partnership & Collaboration	The partnership structure is appropriate to the project's goals. Applicants may describe either established partnerships or a plan for using this grant to build new relationships over time. Roles and responsibilities should be defined or clearly anticipated.	20
Work Plan & Deliverables	The application outlines a feasible and realistic work plan. While not all deliverables need to be finalized at the time of application, there should be a clear path toward refining and completing them during the grant.	15
Grant Readiness	The Applicant team demonstrates a basic capacity to manage the grant (staff time, insurance, onboarding). Experience with State funding is not required. Support will be available to help with grant onboarding and compliance.	10
Budget & Resources	Budget reflects a reasonable estimate of project needs. Applicants are encouraged to include costs that support staff time, insurance, partnership development, and evaluation – even if all specifics are still being finalized.	10
	TOTAL	100

Note for Applicants: Many Applicants – especially first-time Applicants, small organizations,

schools, and Tribal Governments – may use this grant to build partnerships, explore needs, and refine their planning approach.

- Applicants are not required to have formalized partnerships or finalized deliverables to score well.
- The review panel values potential and alignment as well as readiness. Reviewers are looking for alignment with community priorities, a strong vision, and a realistic plan for how the project will take shape over time. Planning and Capacity Building is designed to support this development.

Final Selections and Final Decisions

Approximately 15 grants will be awarded through the upcoming RFA. Final selections will be based on application scores and available funding.

We anticipate strong interest in this opportunity. If we receive more eligible and high-quality applications than we can fund, our approach will be to use the full list of scored applications to advocate for additional funding. Should additional funding become available, we may fund additional applications without reissuing the RFA. Please note, however, that funding from different fiscal years may result in different project start and end dates.

All Applicants will be notified of their status in December 2025. Selected Applicants will begin grant agreement development with the PCB Administrator in January 2026 with the PCB Administrator. The grant term for all projects selected through the upcoming RFA will end in December 2027.