Federal Transit Administration’s Formula Grants for Rural Area Program  
*(Section 5311)*  
2019-2020 Application FAQ

1) **What is Public Transportation?**  
   A: Public Transportation is a shared passenger-transport service which is available for use by the general public. Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (Section 5311) provides formula funding for the purpose of supporting public transportation in non-urbanized areas as defined by the US Census. Generally, rural areas have populations of less than 50,000 people. An applicant in an area or county with a population over 50,000 is eligible to apply for 5311 funds so long as the rural area served has not been designated as an Urbanized Area (UZA) in the most recent decennial census. Please contact NYSDOT for specific questions regarding UZA designations in your area. For more information, review the FTA Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (Section 5311) Guidance & Application Instructions on NYSDOT’s website at https://www.dot.ny.gov/public-transportation/rural-programs/5311/application-material.

2) **Who is eligible for funding under the Section 5311 Program?**  
   A: Any County, City, Intercity Bus Operator, Regional Transportation Authority or federally recognized Indian Tribal Government is eligible to apply for FTA Section 5311 Rural Program assistance so long as the Applicant is eligible for, or a current recipient of Statewide Mass Transportation Operating Assistance Program (STOA) funds through NYSDOT. For more information, review the FTA Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (Section 5311) Guidance & Application Instructions on NYSDOT’s website at https://www.dot.ny.gov/public-transportation/rural-programs/5311/application-material.

3) **What is STOA?**  
   A: The Statewide Mass Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) program provides annual recurring operating assistance to support open to the public transportation services. Applicants for FTA Rural Section 5311 must be a STOA program participant or eligible to receive STOA. For more information on STOA, refer to the NYSDOT website at https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/public-transportation/funding-sources/STOA.
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4) How do I submit the application package, I cannot save the PDF file?  
   A: To maximize functionality of Part II and IIA (if applicable), Adobe Acrobat Standard or  
      Professional 9.0 or greater and Adobe Reader of 11.0 or better must be used.

5) How do I submit a partial application for Section 5311 2019-2020 Operating and Mobility  
   Management Assistance prior to submitting my entire Section 5311 application?  
   A: Applicants may submit a partially completed application for 2019-2020 Operating and  
      Mobility Management Assistance by completing Part I Section 1 of the application as it  
      applies to both Operating and Mobility Management Assistance. This includes  
      completing Column C on all applicable “Operator” tabs as well as completing SHEET  
      3B-Mobility Management (Column G) for any Mobility Management Assistance you are  
      seeking for the project period.

6) How do I submit my application for Section 5311 2019-2020 Capital Assistance?  
   A: Part 1 Section 2 of the 5311 Application as well as Parts II and IIA will be sent out via  
      email as well as posted to the website once the OGS Adult Bus Contract is awarded.  
      Part I Section 2 of the 5311 Application will contain worksheets allowing you to apply  
      for vehicle and other capital projects.

7) Do I have to send my entire Title VI plan with the application?  
   A: If you have submitted an updated Title VI plan to NYSDOT in the last three years and  
      have not completed any updates since then, please indicate that in your cover email  
      and a new Title VI plan will not be required.

8) I don’t have an SFS (State Financial System) Vendor ID. Can I still apply for funding?  
   A: An SFS Vendor ID is assigned by the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) to every  
      entity who does business with the State of New York. Not having an SFS Vendor ID will  
      not preclude you from applying for funding or being named a successful applicant.  
      However, you will be required to obtain an SFS Vendor ID as a prerequisite to entering  
      into a contract with NYSDOT.
9) I don’t have a NYS Grants Gateway ID. Can I still apply for funding?
   A: The Grants Gateway is an on-line system for managing New York State grant programs. Registered vendors have the ability to search for (or sign up for email notification of) grant opportunities. Future functionality will include the ability to submit applications, e-sign contracts, and submit payment vouchers all online. While not required for this solicitation, you will be required to register in Grants Gateway as a prerequisite to entering into a contract with NYSDOT. In addition to registering, not-for-profit organizations must also be prequalified in Grants Gateway prior to entering into a contract with NYSDOT. See www.GrantsReform.ny.gov for more information.

10) How do I/we know that our application(s) has/have been submitted successfully? Will NYSDOT provide electronic confirmation that our application(s) has/have been received?
   A: After submitting your application, you will receive a reply via email within 48 hours from 5311RuralApplications@dot.ny.gov confirming receipt of your application materials. Retain this email address for your records.

11) Is it necessary to publish a Public Notice for this application?
   A: Yes, a Public Notice, properly advertised and documented in appropriate media that covers the service area of your transit agency, is required and must be included in your submission. Please consider your Title VI population when determining publications for placement.

12) Is it necessary to pass a Local Resolution for this application?
   A: Yes. The FTA 5311 Circular 9040.1G requires a local resolution to be adopted authorizing the application and identifying the person responsible for signing and timely implementation of any projects awarded from the application. The applicant must also recognize in the resolution that this is a reimbursement program, they are responsible for the local funding share, and that eligible federal and state funds will only be reimbursed after the subrecipient purchases the service/product and supplies the appropriate reimbursement documentation. The resolution must be received no later than 30 days after the application due date.
13) Is the Cost of painting and outfitting the bus with logos included in the projected cost?
   A: Yes, up to $5,000 per vehicle has been built into the current projected vehicle costs for use in the marketing upgrades associated with vehicle procurement. This may include graphic design and bus appearance upgrades such as paint schemes, wraps and logos.

14) Where can I find operating assistance funding information?
   A: The operating assistance funding apportionments can be found on page 21 of the Guidance and Application Instructions.

15) There is no operating assistance funding listed for my municipality. What should I do?
   A: Complete the operating assistance budget in Part I to demonstrate funding needs. An apportionment will be calculated for the area served.

16) How do I get help with the application?
   A: Questions may be sent to 5311RuralApplications@dot.ny.gov at any time. Throughout the application period, all questions and answers will be posted to this page each Monday as Updated FAQ’s.

17) My county or area population exceeds 50,000. Can I apply for 5311 funds?
   A: Yes. An applicant in an area or county with a population over 50,000 is eligible to apply for 5311 funds so long as the rural area served has not been designated as an Urbanized Area (UZA) in the most recent decennial census. Please contact NYSDOT for specific questions regarding UZA designations in your area.

18) Are DPW and Transit joint-use facility construction projects eligible for 5311 capital funding?
   A: Yes. A joint-use facility project is eligible to be considered for funding.

19) What information is required to apply for a DPW and Transit joint-use facility construction project?
   A: Applicants must submit the following information with the application:
   1. A total cost estimate for the project which includes, at a minimum, a breakdown of preliminary design and engineering, federal environmental review (NEPA), final design, land costs (if any), construction and contingency.
2. A proposed cost-share of the facility between transit and DPW and description of the methodology used to determine the cost-shares.

20) Will applications be accepted on flash drives, CD’s or other electronic media?
   A: No. Applications and all supporting attachments must be submitted via email to:
   5311RuralApplications@dot.ny.gov.

21) Can in-kind marketing services, marketing receipts, or contractual revenues be used as a match for a capital bus project?
   A: No. The project sponsor must demonstrate the ability to provide matching funds for capital items. Marketing receipts or contractual revenues used as local match are subsequently disallowed as operating revenue. In-kind local match must be documented and approved by NYSDOT at the time of Application. In-kind match is generally used to offset construction costs, such as the value of land being built on, or mobility management projects.

22) Can local staff time costs for shelter installation be counted as local match?
   A: Yes. This must be documented and approved by NYSDOT at the time of the application.

23) Is a seasonal service in non-urbanized areas eligible to participate in this program?
   A: Yes, if service is open to the public and compliant with all applicable federal and state program regulations. Please contact your NYSDOT Transit System Specialist to discuss your specific situation.

24) Is the total cost for Appalachian projects considered separate from the regular operating assistance worksheet (Part I, Sheet 2)?
   A: No. This has been incorporated into the Operator tabs in Part I of the Application.

25) Where do you apply for Mobility Management funding?
   A: Use Part I, Sheet 3B to apply for Mobility Management funding.
26) Are small urbanized areas required to complete and submit an application for Operating, Capital or Appalachian funding if the money is going to be transferred to 5307?
A: Yes.

27) Are bus wraps and branding eligible expenses?
A: Yes, wraps and branding are eligible for non-vehicle capital funding.

28) What is the February 24, 2020 time deadline for applications?
A: Applications are considered to be submitted timely if received by midnight February 24, 2020.

29) What is the maximum amount of a grant funding request?
A: There is no pre-defined maximum amount. However, funding is awarded based upon available funding and evaluation of completed applications.

30) How is 5311 operating assistance paid?
A: Regardless of the type of operating assistance, a sub-recipient must have incurred 6 months, or 50% of their operating expenses, during the current program year before 5311 operating assistance may be paid. Before operating assistance is paid, Sub-recipients must also complete and file an annual report with NYSDOT for the prior program year. The Annual Report must be approved by NYSDOT.

31) When will the 2019 Annual Report request be sent to sub-recipients?
A: Since 2019 Operating Expenses have already been incurred, we will be sending a supplemental annual report document to you for completion in February.

32) My Title VI program exceeds the file size limit of 20MB. Can it be referenced if it is available electronically on our website or through FTA’s TRAMs system?
A: Yes. Provide a link or reference to the electronic Title VI plan with your application submission.
33) Where can I find a copy of the Third-Party Lease and Service Agreement?
   A: The Agreement is found on the NYSDOT website at:
      https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/public-transportation/rural-
      programs/5311/forms.

34) Are intern expenses related to a transit project eligible for reimbursement?
   A: Yes. Expenses may be included in wages. You must have and maintain sufficient
      records to support the expenses.

35) If my application indicates that I plan to retire vehicles, do I still have to submit an official
    vehicle retirement request?
   A: Yes. The application collects information based upon the anticipated awarding of
      funds. As the vehicle retirement will occur post-application the Vehicle Disposal Form
      is required.

36) My legislative body must approve all applications before they can be signed. The next
    scheduled meeting is after the February 24, 2020 deadline for submission. Can I submit the
    application pending local legislative approval?
   A: Yes. Submit your otherwise completed application by February 24, 2020 along with an
      official letter signed by an authorized official, providing the date(s) when legislative
      approval(s) is expected to occur.

      The approved application must be submitted no later than 30 days after the due date
      (March 25, 2020). Applicant must also provide documentation of legislative approval,
      such as official meeting notes, affidavit, resolutions, etc. at the time of final
      submission. Changes to the original application will not be considered in the evaluation
      of the application.

37) Where do I find the webinar presentation?
   A: It will be posted to:
      https://www.dot.ny.gov/public-transportation/rural-programs/5311/application-
      material
38) Do Small Urbanized Areas (SUZA’s) have to file a complete application?
   A: Yes.

39) Are support letters required for an application?
   A: No. Support letters are optional.

40) Do we have to ensure DBE participation if planning to purchase from the OGS Adult Bus Contract?
   A: No. DBE participation was included in the original OGS Adult Bus Contract bid. You do need to ensure TVM (Transit Vehicle Manufacturer) status is still valid at the time of purchase in coordination with your NYSDOT system specialist.

41) Will capital requests be considered on an all or nothing basis?
   A: No.

42) If we haven’t received notice of award for the ATC funding applications should we apply for those projects through the 5311 application?
   A: No. Only apply for projects that did not meet the ATC funding eligibility criteria as indicated by your NYSDOT system specialist. Assume ATC project requests that met the eligibility criteria will be funded.

43) On Sheet 3-Vehicle Request, how do we request funding for any of the options listed in the matrix table following the base vehicle options (ie: ADA Transit Package) and where do we list the options we are requesting?
   A: Add the vehicle base cost and all options you are requesting in the unit cost column and provide a detail of the options requested for each vehicle lot as a separate attachment, such as price worksheet from the OGS vendor, or provide the option details requested in Part J of Part II.

44) If I cannot attend a scheduled webinar, what are the options for completing the required webinar?
   A: A recording of the webinar will be made available and you will be given a registration link to the recording that will track your viewing of the recorded webinar.
45) Should we include STOA hold harmless funding in our projected budget revenue?  
   A: No.

46) Are memberships, such as NYPTA, considered eligible for operating assistance?  
   A: Yes.

47) Is a mobility manager position eligible for funding in this application?  
   A: Yes, Sheet 3B in the Excel file is for the Mobility Management project application  
      which includes both eligible Personnel and Non-personnel services.

48) Are coordination and planning activity expenses eligible to use as in-kind match for mobility  
    management?  
   A: Yes. Document in-kind match on Sheet 3C.

49) If you have a local government resolution authorizing a third-party operator to submit an  
    application, is it ok for the third-party operator to submit the application on behalf of the  
    eligible local government?  
   A: No. Application must be submitted by an eligible entity listed in the instructions.

50) If a local government process does not allow a public notice to be issued before the application  
    deadline how do we address this issue?  
   A: Provide documentation with an official letter detailing the local government public  
      notice process. Also include in the letter a time-line for the anticipated public notice  
      publication and completion. The public notice process must be completed no later  
      than 40 days after the application due date; i.e., by April 14, 2020.

51) Do all grants awarded follow the State Fiscal Year?  
   A: No. Grants are awarded for the time period specified in the application.

52) Where do I find my Grants Gateway ID?  
   A: You can search if you are registered in Grants Gateway using the link below and  
      contact the administrator listed for your Grants Gateway Document Vault ID.  
      https://www.grantsgateway.ny.gov/Intelligrants_NYSGG/module/nysgg/goportal.aspx  
      ?NavItem1=9
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53) Where do we put our bus schedule route guide?
   A: The bus schedule route guide should be attached in Part G of Part II.

54) How do SES (Supportive Employment Services) funds work? In other words, how is value determined, are SES funds for new services only, and how do SES funds become available?
   A: SES funds are operating assistance only and may be used to support new or expanded services that provide access to employment opportunities. Value is derived as a percentage of overall regular operating expenses, validated through regular surveys of riders for the purpose of their trip and subject to FTA operating assistance maximum limitations which are calculated in the Operating Assistance budget. Details of the new or expanded service, including proposed start date and how the percentage cost was arrived at must be provided as an attachment to the application. Funds are reimbursed with regular 5311 operating assistance payments.

55) I don’t have access to the necessary software to complete Part II of the application. How can I complete the form?
   A: Please contact your systems specialist who will assist you in this process. You may also email 5311RuralApplications@dot.ny.gov.

56) Is the purchase of software an eligible 5311 or RTAP expense?
   A: Annual software expenses may be included in your 5311 operating assistance budget. However, the initial purchase of software is considered to be a capital project. You may also request RTAP (Rural Transportation Assistance Program) funds to get directly reimbursed for the software purchase.

57) Can I attach supporting information or documents to an application that addresses some of the evaluation criteria (efficiencies, innovation, economic and community benefits) listed on Page 11 of the Guidance and Application Instructions?
   A: Yes. Supporting documents or attachments must clearly identify the content and the file name must reference the contents. For example: “New York County 5311 App 2019-2020 Eval Narrative”.
58) I am currently eligible but not a recipient of STOA funding. Can I still apply?
   A: Yes. If you are eligible for STOA but are not currently receiving funding, you may still apply directly for a 5311 grant.

59) Can a project cover multiple Counties?
   A: Yes. Projects may cover multiple counties.

60) I am the sponsor for a project that covers multiple counties. Can I submit one application for this project?
   A: Yes. If a single sponsor will be the lead and solely incurs the project expenses, then that applicant would need to submit one application and clearly identify how expenses will be incurred. However, if there are multiple stakeholders incurring expenses, then each should reference the project and apply separately for the appropriate share.

61) I have a multi-county project. Each county will incur expenses. Does each county need to apply?
   A: Yes. If there are multiple sponsors incurring expenses. If each county will be seeking reimbursement, then each county should reference the project and apply for the appropriate share.

62) I have a Ridesharing project. Can I apply for 5311 funding?
   A: Yes. If the project is to coordinate the provision of the services, it is considered a mobility management function. Use Sheet 3B in Part I of the Application. If the project is reimbursing the actual provision of service, it is considered an operating assistance project. Complete a separate Operator sheet in this instance.

63) Can in-kind local match be used for mobility management projects?
   A: Yes. In-kind local match is allowed. Use Part 1, Sheet 3C of the application to document in-kind match. Facility rent, utilities, office supplies and employee in-direct and fringe are some examples of in-kind match.

64) My project requires funding beyond 2019-20. How can I reflect this in this application?
   A: Although funding under this grant can only be awarded for this solicitation year, consideration will be given to the overall funding package as part of the evaluation process.
65) When will the next 5311 program be offered?
   A: It is anticipated that the next round of funding will be released in the second half of 2020.

66) How do I apply for multiple instances of mobility-management projects?
   A: Use Sheet 3B in Part I to provide a total budget for mobility management projects. Supply a breakdown of components of mobility management projects in a separate attachment using a copy of the Sheet 3B format. Please indicate a priority order to the mobility management project requests and if the projects are inter-related/dependent upon other mobility project components.