

Specialized Transportation Grant Program

Cycle 11 Call for Projects

Questions & Answers

Q1: What is the difference between traditional and non-traditional projects under the Section 5310 program?

A: The definitions of traditional and non-traditional projects is available in the [STGP Overview](#). Examples of eligible, traditional Section 5310 projects include vehicle procurement, purchase of support equipment such as computer hardware and software or dispatch systems, contract transportation services, and mobility management programs. Examples of eligible, non-traditional projects include volunteer driver programs, shuttle programs, and non-emergency medical transportation.

SANDAG does not require applicants to determine whether their project is Traditional or Non-traditional. SANDAG makes this determination based on federal guidance ([FTA Circular 9070.1 G](#)) during the preliminary eligibility review. The Traditional and Non-traditional Section 5310 project categories are significant to SANDAG because the Federal Transit Administration requires 55 percent of the funding available through the program be awarded to Traditional Section 5310 projects.

Q2: Would a proposed Section 5310 non-traditional, non-medical transportation project provided by a non-profit organization be considered a capital or an operating project?

A: It would most likely be considered an operating project.

Q3: What types of expenses are allowable for Section 5310 operating projects?

A: Grant funds are eligible to be used toward the net cost of a project. Net project cost is defined as part of a project that reasonably cannot be financed from revenues generated through the project. Project expenses are costs associated with an organization's daily operations, which include wages, office supplies, dispatch systems, mileage reimbursement, and others that are necessary to operate, maintain, and manage the grant-funded transportation project.

Grant funds cannot be used to reimburse direct operating costs for vehicles, including fuel, tires, oil, vehicle insurance, and vehicle repairs. As stated above, grant funds can be used to reimburse for mileage on a per-mile basis up to the most current Internal Revenue Service mileage reimbursement rate.

Q4: Is it acceptable to propose a transportation service where most trips would not be shared?

A: Yes. SANDAG recognizes that physical distancing requirements or other public health recommendations due to COVID-19 may necessitate a reduction in the number of shared trips. Accordingly, SANDAG revised how an applicant's seat utilization performance indicator will be evaluated. Please see the [Program Goal, Objectives, and Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria](#) and [Grant Applicant Workshop Presentation](#) for more information.

SANDAG encourages the use of shared trips whenever possible and safe to do so. When the public health orders are lifted or when the need for physical distancing due to COVID-19 subsides, the use of shared trips will be strongly encouraged to maximize the use of grant funds and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Q5: Is technical assistance available from SANDAG or a consultant that SANDAG can recommend for help with determining cost per trip and budgeting information?

A: It is incumbent upon applicants to determine the number of one-way passenger trips it proposes to provide for its project and the amount of the grant request. The “Operating Scope, Schedule, Budget, and Performance Indicators” Excel workbook auto-calculates an operating project’s proposed cost per trip based on the grant request and number of proposed one-way passenger trips. The Excel workbook also includes instructions for applicants to complete a budget for a proposed operating project. SANDAG does not have any consultants it can recommend for guidance.

For technical assistance regarding uploading a completed application and attachments via the electronic submission portal, please contact grantApp@sandag.org.

For applicants awarded funding, SANDAG will provide technical assistance through the STGP Cycle 11 Successful Applicant Workshop, which is anticipated to occur in Spring 2021. Additionally, SANDAG provides oversight and technical support for all of its grantees throughout the implementation of their projects.

Q6: Is there any requirement that proposed projects generate revenue?

A: An applicant may generate revenue through its transportation service but is not required to do so. As stated in the definitions section of the [STGP Overview](#), revenue may include rider registration fees, fares, or ride-based donations.

Q7: Does a capital grantee own the vehicle(s) it was awarded after the completion of the vehicle project?

A: Under the Section 5310 program, a capital grantee must operate the vehicle(s) it was awarded for the minimum useful life of the vehicle(s), which depends on the vehicle type. Please see the Program Management Plan and Vehicle Lease Agreement available at sandag.org/stgp for minimum useful life thresholds by vehicle type. At the end of the minimum useful life of the vehicle, SANDAG will determine the most appropriate disposition action consistent with FTA guidance, which may include transferring the vehicle to the capital grantee depending on the circumstances.

During the grant project, SANDAG owns the vehicle as a lienholder and the grantee is the registered owner. SANDAG will hold the title to the vehicle until the disposition process is complete.

Q8: Can prospective applicants request a copy of a successful application?

A: Yes. Prospective applicants may submit a public records request for successful and non-successful applications from prior cycles of STGP funding. Requests for records should be directed to Peter Stevens at publicrecords@sandag.org or (619) 595-5622. The SANDAG Public Records Request Guidelines are available at www.sandag.org/legal.

Q9: Would a transportation program serving Fallbrook, California and surrounding areas within San Diego County be eligible for Senior Mini-Grant funds?

A: Yes, so long as the proposed transportation project serves seniors (age 60 and over).

Q10: Can a response to an application question be longer than what can fit inside its text box such that a reviewer would need to scroll in the text box to read the entire response?

A: No. All responses must fit within the space provided.

Q11: Are applicants permitted to count trips used for meal deliveries toward the overall calculation of total one-way passenger trips?

A: Due to the unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, SANDAG has permitted grantees to use grant funds to deliver meals, food, PPE, and other essential goods so long as the alternative delivery service does not conflict with the provision of one-way passenger trips or reduce service to riders.

Applicants with proposed operating and capital projects may count trips used for these alternative services when preparing their application, however applicants must complete and submit the “Alternative Services Proposal Form” in order for SANDAG to identify the number and costs of proposed alternative services compared to the number and costs of one-way passenger trips typically provided, as applicable.

See Addendum No. 1 for more information.

Q12: Should a nonprofit organization interested in applying for a Section 5310 traditional program as well as well a Section 5310 non-traditional program submit two separate applications?

A: All applicants, including nonprofit organizations, interested in applying for a non-traditional project and traditional project should submit two project applications, but only one organization application.

Q13: Are rural areas of the county eligible for the Section 5310 program?

A: If the majority of the clients served by an applicant’s proposed project do not reside in the urbanized area of San Diego County (as defined by the U.S. Census), then the project is ineligible for Section 5310 funding through SANDAG. If the project is ineligible for Section 5310 funding through SANDAG, it may be eligible through the Section 5310 program for rural and small, urbanized areas administered by Caltrans. A map of the urbanized area of San Diego County is available in the [STGP Overview](#) and [2020 Coordinated Plan](#).

Q14: What is the minimum grant request amount?

A: The minimum grant request amount is \$30,000 per proposed project. Information on minimum and maximum grant request amounts is available in the [STGP Overview](#).

Q15: Can Senior Mini Grant funds be used for a volunteer driver program?

A: Yes, this would be an eligible project for seniors within San Diego County.

Q16: Are rural areas of San Diego County eligible for Senior Mini Grant funding?

A: Yes.

Q17: Why is there a differentiation between very high and high priority strategies outlined in the Coordinated Plan?

A: This distinction is a result of stakeholder engagement through the Coordinated Plan outreach process. Projects must be derived from either very high or high priority strategies outlined in the 2020 Coordinated Plan to be eligible for funding.

Q18: What are the requirements for an applicant to demonstrate coordination with one or more agencies?

A: An applicant is required to submit letters of support if it coordinates with one or more agencies for the full or partial provision of specialized transportation service. The letters of support should come from the partner agency or agencies with which it coordinates.

Q19: Is there a website that shows a comparison of the cost per one-way passenger trip for recent Senior Mini Grant recipients such as Cycle 9?

A: No. SANDAG does, however, provide quarterly status updates on Specialized Transportation Grant Program projects to the SANDAG Transportation Committee. The quarterly status updates list each project, the proposed cost per trip, and the cumulative, actual cost per trip through the reporting period. Quarterly status updates through Quarter 1 of FY 2020 (July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019) are posted on the [STGP webpage](#), the most recent of which lists many Cycle 9 Senior Mini Grant projects.

Q20: Is the resolution from an applicant's governing body required by Board Policy No. 035 due at the time of grant submittal or afterwards?

A: SANDAG encourages but does not require the applicant to submit the resolution approved by its governing body when it submits its application. Per the [STGP Overview](#), signed resolutions are due at least two weeks prior to the review of the funding recommendations by the SANDAG Transportation Committee, anticipated as early as February 2021.

Q21: Is there anything on the SANDAG website that shows the actual or projected average cost per trip county-wide going into Cycle 11?

A: Please see SANDAG's response in Q17. SANDAG staff anticipates presenting a Specialized Transportation Grant Program (STGP) status update for the reporting period October 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 to the Transportation Committee at its meeting on October 16, 2020. The update includes STGP project data such as cost per trip. SANDAG staff anticipates that the agenda will be posted to the Transportation Committee's webpage on October 9, 2020, but no later than October 13, 2020. SANDAG staff also presents quarterly status updates on Senior Mini-Grant updates to the Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee (ITOC). The most recent quarterly status update to the ITOC was on September 9, 2020 for the reporting period April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

Through the Section 5310 program, specialized transportation operating projects collectively provided 234,428 one-way passenger trips in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020) at a cost per trip of \$4.89. Through the Senior Mini-Grant program, specialized transportation operating projects collectively provided 184,794 one-way passenger trips in FY 2020 at a cost per trip of \$6.68. STGP grantees with operating projects collectively provided 346,621 unduplicated one-way passenger trips at a cost per trip of \$6.87.

SANDAG has observed great variation in actual cost per trip data from current STGP grantees resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. SANDAG does not have projected average cost per trip information.

Q22: I noticed that opening the application in Adobe Reader on an internet browser appears to allow users twice as much content without scrolling unlike Adobe Acrobat. If a user uses Adobe Reader, but the reviewer uses adobe acrobat, the content will be cut off and require scrolling. Maybe each allows the same content, but the viewing option would be different. I also noticed that the text size for responses is larger than in the previous cycle. Can SANDAG please provide clarification on this and if these formatting errors will affect scoring?

A: SANDAG has revised all fillable PDF documents, reformatting them by removing the infinity scrolling feature and reducing the response text font size for many of application questions. All responses must be "print-ready," meaning only response text visible to an evaluator will be scored. Please see Addendum 2.

Q23: Are all answers specific to the proposed project(s) in the Organization Application? Certain sections/questions reference “project”, but others do not specifically.

A: All application questions in the Organization Application that do not refer to a proposed project refer to the applicant.

Q24: Should applicants submit responses such that a reviewer would not be expected to use a scrolling feature to read a response within the fillable PDF?

A: Please see the response to Question 22 on this topic.

Q25: What is SANDAG’s definition of “sub-applicant”?

A: A sub-applicant is a proposed third-party that would perform some or all of the applicant’s scope of work of the proposed project.

Q26: I noticed a Statement of Eligibility under Federal forms last cycle required this by “a Third Party at any tier.” Is the Third-Party Statement is no longer required and is a Statement of Eligibility is only required by sub-applicants?

A: Yes.

Q27: Does an applicant need a signed resolution with the application on October 30th as it states/implies in the Organization Application (page 6), or just submit a draft, then follow up with a final signed resolution before February as instructed in the STGP Cycle 11 Call for Projects (page 18) and in SANDAG Board Policy 035 (4.1)?

A: Please see the response to question 20.

Q28: Our agency intends to apply for a contracted services project. Would SANDAG advise us to use a Capital application form?

A: A contracted services project would be appropriate for an applicant interested in contracting with a third-party to provide its transportation service. Per federal guidance (FTA Circular 9070.1 G), the “acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement” is an eligible capital expense and may be considered a capital or Traditional Section 5310 project. It may also be considered an operating or Non-traditional Section 5310 project. Applicants should keep in mind that capital and operating projects have different match requirements and different applications through SANDAG’s Specialized Transportation Grant Program. The required match is 20 percent for capital project and 50 percent for operating projects.

An applicant applying for a contracted services project as a capital or Traditional Section 5310 project should complete the Capital Project Proposal Application as well as the Capital Project Budget and Performance Indicators Form, but not the Vehicle Selection and Budgeting Tool. On the budget tab of the Capital Project Budget and Performance Indicators Form, applicants may write their own response such as “Contract Services” under “Vehicle Type/Other Equipment,” rather than select a vehicle type. The Excel also has write-in capabilities under the Vehicle Type column on the Performance Indicators tab.

An organization applying for a contracted services project as an operating or Non-traditional Section 5310 project should complete the Operating Project Proposal Application as well as the Operating Scope, Schedule, Budget, and Performance Indicators Form.

SANDAG encourages applicants interested in contracting with a third-party that would perform some or all of the proposed project to review the third-party contractor guidance in the Program Management Plan and Section 5310 Grant Agreement template.

Q29: Would SANDAG clarify the seat utilization: “What is your project’s proposed seat utilization rate? Despite potential constraints due to COVID-19, how will you demonstrate efforts and exhibit strategies to improve the proposed project’s seat utilization rate over time?” Specifically, is the question asking how an applicant will utilize vehicles to maximum capacity once COVID restrictions are lifted? Is the question instead asking for strategies an agency currently employs to increase the seat utilization rate? Is there another interpretation?

A: An applicant is advised to first state the seat utilization for its proposed project(s). An applicant is then encouraged to describe the strategies it will employ if the proposed project is awarded to increase the seat utilization rate over time, given limitations caused by COVID-19.

Q30: There appears to be a calculation error in Cell D18 of the Alternative Services Proposal Form that produces an incorrect operating cost for some project types. Would SANDAG confirm if there is an error?

A: Yes, there was an error. SANDAG has corrected it and reposted the Alternative Service Proposal Form to the STGP Cycle 11 webpage. See Addendum No. 3.

Q31: To whom should the letters of support be addressed?

A: Letters of support or coordination may be addressed to SANDAG and the evaluation panel that will review applications. All letters of support or coordination must be submitted via the electronic submission portal. Please see the Electronic Submittal Instructions on the [STGP Cycle 11 Call for Projects webpage](#).

Q32: Do all applicants applying for Senior Mini-Grant funding need to have an “Attachment 5” Required Forms? It does say (For all applicants) but wanted to clarify for the Senior Mini-Grant SANDAG is requiring the Public Contract Code Questionnaire and Public Contract Code Section Statements?

A: Senior Mini Grant and Section 5310 applicants are required to submit the Public Contract Code Questionnaire and Public Contract Code Section Statements with their application. Section 5310 applicants are required to submit additional forms with their application: Eligibility Certification for Federally Funded Contracts, Noncollusion Affidavit/Declaration, Debarment and Suspension Certificate, Certificate of Restrictions on Lobbying, and Subapplicant’s Statement of Eligibility. The required forms are available as a packet on the [STGP Cycle 11 Call for Projects webpage](#).

Q33: The allowable length for applicant responses in the fillable application forms varies depending on what program is used. For example, more content can be provided in the response text boxes when Adobe Reader is used than when Adobe Acrobat is used. Thus, content that I added when using Adobe Reader is cut off when using Adobe Acrobat. Would SANDAG provide guidance on what space applicants can use?

A: SANDAG cannot standardize the text box size through the fillable PDF setting so that the size is uniform across all programs that can read and open the application forms. SANDAG advises applicants to provide concise responses that that are “print-ready” and can be read and scored by evaluators in most all programs. Therefore, if the issue of cut-off text is present, SANDAG recommends that of the two programs listed as examples in the question, applicants use Adobe Acrobat and not Adobe Reader so that responses can be read in both programs.

Q34: Our organization intends to contract with a third-party vendor to provide the proposed transportation service. Is the third-party vendor required to sign and submit the following required forms: Equal Employment Opportunity Certificate, Certificate of Nondiscrimination Assurances, Public Contract Code Questionnaire, Public Contract Code Section Statements, Certification of Restrictions on Lobbying, and Subapplicant’s Statement of Eligibility?

A: Please see the response to Question 32. Any third-party vendor that would perform some or part of a proposed Section 5310 project is required to complete the Subapplicant’s Statement of Eligibility. There are additional forms that are required if a project is awarded but before or concurrent with grant execution. The required forms are available on [STGP webpage](#). Descriptions of the forms are included in the SANDAG Program Management Plan.

Q35: For a single project for which we are requesting funding from both SMG and 5310 sources, is only one project application required/expected (separate funding requests are consolidated in the organization application)?

A: Please see the STGP Overview. Per the STGP Overview, “Both applications (Organization and Project Proposal) are designed to be universal such that the applications can be used and submitted for either grant funding source: Section 5310 or Senior Mini-Grant. Please keep in mind, however, that the project and applicant eligibility criteria differ slightly between funding sources. Therefore, an applicant who is interested in requesting both Section 5310 and Senior Mini-Grant funds to support a project, and is eligible to receive funds through both funding sources, can fill out the application package once and submit the same application package for each funding source.”

Q36: I am having trouble with the form titled Capital Budget & Performance Indicators. On tab two (budget) in populates with a “no” answer under “match met?”, even though the match amount is 20%. The third tab (performance indicators) indicates that a password is needed in order to fill it in.

A: The discrepancy between the match showing as 20% and the form marking “no” under “match met?” is due to the formatting of the cell for Match Percentage. The cell displays the match percentage to the nearest tenth, which may be less than the required Minimum Match amount. Providing an additional, nominal match such as \$1 or \$2 should correct this issue. SANDAG found that the performance indicators tab was unlocked, so a password should not be required.

Q37: The new, revised Alternative Services Proposal Form does not appear to have the correct formulas in Section C if a Senior Mini Grant – Operating Project is selected. Would SANDAG confirm these errors and provide a correct form?

A: SANDAG has revised the formulas to correct for the identified errors in Section C of the Alternative Services Proposal Form. SANDAG has also revised Section C of this form to allow applicants to overwrite the formulas and enter the requested data in the event there are future errors and omissions within this section.

Q38: If our organization’s project is awarded funding, would SANDAG permit our organization to modify our project scope given the evolving and unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: SANDAG staff will evaluate requests for scope of work changes that deviate from the original project on a case-by-case basis. To maintain the integrity of the competitive process, SANDAG reserves the right to deny requests to change a grantee’s scope of work if it is likely that the revised project would not have been fully or partially funded through the call for projects.

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For operating and mobility management projects, please see SANDAG’s response to Question 11. SANDAG staff has been granted authority by the Board of Directors to approve requests for scope of work changes related to COVID-19 for alternative services limited to delivery of meals/food, Personal Protective Equipment, and other essential goods and services.

For vehicle projects, SANDAG staff does not have authority to approve of scope changes to the original project (for example the class or quantity of vehicles).

Requests for scope modifications that SANDAG staff do not have authority to approve would need to be considered by the SANDAG Transportation Committee and Board of Directors.

Any additional questions regarding the Specialized Transportation Grant Program’s Cycle 11 Call for Projects must be directed to grantsdistribution@sandag.org. Questions may be emailed until 5 p.m. on October 23, 2020 and will be answered no later than 5 p.m. on October 26, 2020.