California Active Transportation Program Grant Application Tips

Project selection

Carefully read the ATP guidelines (Chapter 22 of the Caltrans Local Assistance Procedures Manual) to understand expenses eligible to be funded under ATP. Caltrans is very strict about funding only eligible expenses and will go line-by-line to strike ineligible items from project budgets. The guidelines will be posted on the ATP page of the California Transportation Commission's web site – in draft form while they are being considered, and in final form once they have been adopted.
http://www.catc.ca.gov/programs/ATP.htm

Read the application and instructions to gain an idea of how projects will be evaluated during the current cycle and what characteristics a high-scoring project is likely to have. The draft application will appear on the CTC site linked above, while the final application will be posted on the Caltrans ATP page.
http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/atp/index.html

We identified the following desirable project characteristics using the Cycle 2 application & guidelines as well as various other organizations' analyses of strong projects from Cycle 1.

A desirable project:

- Will likely lead to an **increase in active transportation**
    - Improves safety and comfort of users in an area with high existing bike/ped volumes
    - Located on a corridor that links major destinations (schools, employment, shopping, recreation, high-density residential, transit stops)
    - Eliminates barriers or gaps (new/improved crossings, new facilities, links between existing facilities)
    - Area has favorable demographics for active transportation (lower incomes, low vehicle ownership, high number of school-aged children, seniors)
- Has a documented **history of safety problems**
    - Collision data – bike/ped focus, collision factors, collision severity, etc.
    - Anecdotal info from users as well as field observation – near misses, poor visibility, substandard conditions, frequent Vehicle Code violations, other unsafe behavior, etc.
- Incorporates improvements that **directly address** these problems
- Is based on **prior planning and outreach**, with documentation
    - General Plan elements, active transportation/SRTS plans, public health plans, neighborhood- or corridor-focused initiatives, community needs assessments
    - Public meetings, workshops, town halls, surveys, online presence of project or planning process

Coordination/teamwork considerations

You should review the final guidelines and application fully as soon as they become available. Identify specific information items needed to answer each question, and potential sources for each. Put together a comprehensive, question-by-question data and info needs document as soon as possible.

Assemble an action plan summarizing key items needed for each question and assign responsibilities and dates for producing each. Note the number of points awarded for each question so that priority can be placed on answering high-value questions.

If working with a large team, use a shared local network drive and/or a cloud storage service to facilitate collaboration (but save everything permanently to a hard drive or server that your organization controls). Establish a file naming and organizing protocol as soon as you begin working and adhere to it throughout the process of preparing the application. Create separate folders for materials relating to each question, attachment, etc. so that items are easy to find.

Many items on the application require either traffic engineering expertise or detailed knowledge of city finances; thus, it is critical to have a city or consultant contact to assist with these pieces.

The ATP is a production-intensive application, with five hard copies and two electronic copies (USB) required for submittal during Cycle 2. Carefully read the submittal instructions and note mailing addresses and requirements for each agency involved. Identify necessary supplies (paper, divider tabs, binding materials/equipment, etc.) well ahead of time, and plan for printing, final QA/QC, binding and packaging to take at least one full day to complete.

Letters of support

Cycle 2 of the application allowed for up to 10 letters of support. Letters of support should be gathered from key partners and requested as early as possible (at least 4 – 6 weeks before the deadline). The letters should show that the project represents a high active transportation priority for the community and stakeholders.

General application tips

The ATP application consists of the bare text of the questions themselves, plus accompanying instructions. In Cycle 2, Caltrans provided two separate documents – one with the questions only (to serve as a template for grant writers to prepare their applications) and one with the questions plus more detailed instructions. It's recommended you read the latter document very carefully, note key items that the instructions tell you to include, and refer back to it frequently when writing the responses.

In answering all narrative questions the reviewer needs to be able to identify the key pieces of information easily and see how the response relates to the question text and application instructions. This means you should **bold** key points of the responses and edit the response to include some of the same phrases, word-for-word, that appear in the instructions. Place the most important pieces of information at the beginning of the response.

It helps to be as brief as possible – long blocks of text are tiring for reviewers to read and bloat the overall word count of the application. Make key, essential points in the text and save detailed descriptions of methodology, data analysis, etc. for the attachments.

Question-by-question items

The numbering and content of individual questions on the application changes from one cycle to the next as Caltrans receives feedback and makes tweaks. As stated above, be sure to read the application carefully, both in draft form while it's being considered by the CTC and in final form once it's been approved.

Q1 User counts/projections, destinations served

Users can be quantified in a variety of ways. Caltrans prefers on-the-ground counts. Any counts need to be conducted as early as is feasible.

Once you're familiar with the data, it's critical to determine a methodology for projecting future use. In order to calculate a projection, you need

a) the existing number of users,
b) baseline increase in users assuming no project, and
c) projected increase in users with the project.

Existing users

To determine the number of existing users, on-the-ground counts are preferred. If counts have been done recently for a planning document (e.g., in the past couple of years) it's OK to use those. Student tallies for SRTS projects, which typically document mode shares (i.e., percentages) for various means of arriving to campus, are also acceptable.

Baseline, no build

If projecting future use of the facility based on existing user counts, you need to **account for the additional users that would result from mere population increase** – whether or not the proposed project is built. One way to do so is to assume that population will grow at the same rate as it has in the recent past, and that the number of active transportation users will grow at the same rate as population. For example, if the city's or project area's population has grown in recent years at a 0.45 percent annual rate, then you can assume credibly that it will continue to grow at that rate for the near future – and that the number of users will grow at the same rate as well.

On the other hand, if you're quantifying existing use based on walking or bicycling mode share, i.e., a rate, then you don't need to account for growth resulting from population increase – it's reasonable to assume that new residents will walk or bike at the same rate as current residents, absent any intervention.

Projection

Once you have the baseline projection, you can calculate the increase in bicycling and walking you anticipate will result from the project. The key is to make **well-documented assumptions** that are credible and comprehensible.

One way to calculate the anticipated increase is to **examine stakeholder input for what it reveals about travel behavior** and the reasons why people choose to get where they're going in one manner (e.g., driving) vs. another (e.g., walking). From this information, you may be able to identify ways that the project could alter the factors on which these decisions are based (e.g., by making streets safer to cross),

and estimate how many people might enjoy expanded options – and subsequently make use of them – as a result.

For example, for the Cudahy ATP 2015 application, we knew that there was a 13 percentage-point gap between the proportion of kids living within one-half mile (i.e., walking distance) and those actually walking to school. We assumed that any increase in walking would come from this 13 percent subset of the student population who could easily walk but didn't.

To determine how big that increase would be, we assumed that the project, by making improvements to intersections and crossings, would address the concerns of parents who may have wanted their kids to be able to walk to school, but were concerned about their kids' ability to safely cross the street and decided to drive them instead. We knew from a parent survey that 27 percent of parents said the safety of intersections and crosswalks factored into whether they would let their children walk or bike to school. Thus, we assumed 27 percent of this subset of students who lived within walking distance (but were not currently walking) would shift to walking once the project was implemented.

Another method would be to **examine pre/post evaluations of comparable projects** to see how much bicycling and walking increased after a given project was implemented. For example, if you intend to install bicycle lanes on a street, try to find a before-and-after study from a community where bicycle lanes were added to a street with similar characteristics to yours and identify how the number of bicyclists changed post-implementation.

As appropriate, take into account population growth (as described above) into the future projections.

Note that in Cycle 2, the application asked applicants to separate the projection by type of user (bike vs. ped). Be sure to identify elements of the project that apply specifically to each mode and consider the effects they will have on future levels of biking and walking separately.

Q2 Collision history and safety countermeasures

The collision history for the project area should be downloaded and analyzed relatively early in the timeline. UC Berkeley's Transportation Injury Mapping System, or TIMS (tims.berkeley.edu), is a commonly used source that uses interactive maps to display crash data, school locations, bikeways, and other community characteristics. But to do deeper analysis, you need to get data directly from the California Highway Patrol's Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) – the source from which TIMS pulls its collision data. In fact, the application in Cycle 2 required the applicant to analyze the most recent 5 years of data.

The most important things to note when analyzing collision data are

- Victim type: pedestrian, cyclist
- Severity / fatality: projects generally are likely to score higher if there have been fatalities or severe injuries
- Primary collision factor: helps you understand what caused the crash, and then subsequently whether your intervention will address the crash
- Trends: are there crashes happening in the same locations? Same crash types or actions? This could help justify your project.

SWITRS Data

SWITRS has three different files for each jurisdiction: **collision, party and victim**. All collisions have a unique ID. All the parties in a collision have their own separate record in the party file, but parties in the same collision will be identified by the same crash ID. Within each party, there are sometimes multiple victims, who are identified both by the crash ID and the party ID within that crash. Some parties may have no injured person(s), in which case there is no victim record for the party.

Collision can give you the location, date, time, crash type, primary collision factor, and vehicle code section violated, among other important characteristics pertaining to the crash.

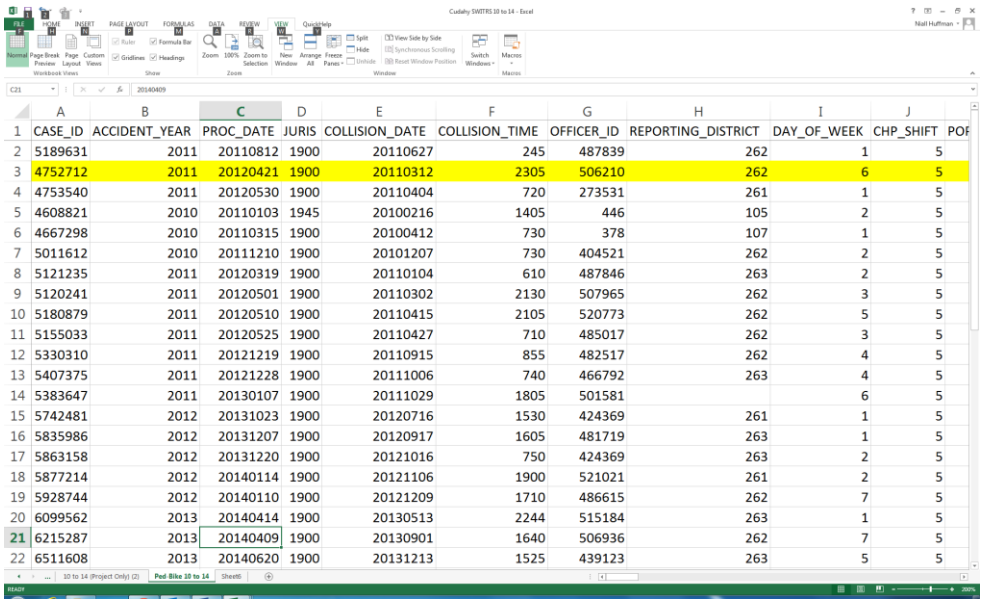
Party can give you the movement of each vehicle, bicycle or pedestrian prior to the crash, which can illuminate the precise circumstances of the crash and indicate who committed the violation that led to the crash. It also has information for the vehicle (type, make, and model).

Victim can give you the age and sex of each person injured, as well as the injury severity.

The **SWITRS Code Book** can help you decipher these various data fields and values (http://tims.berkeley.edu/help/files/SWITRS_codebook.doc).

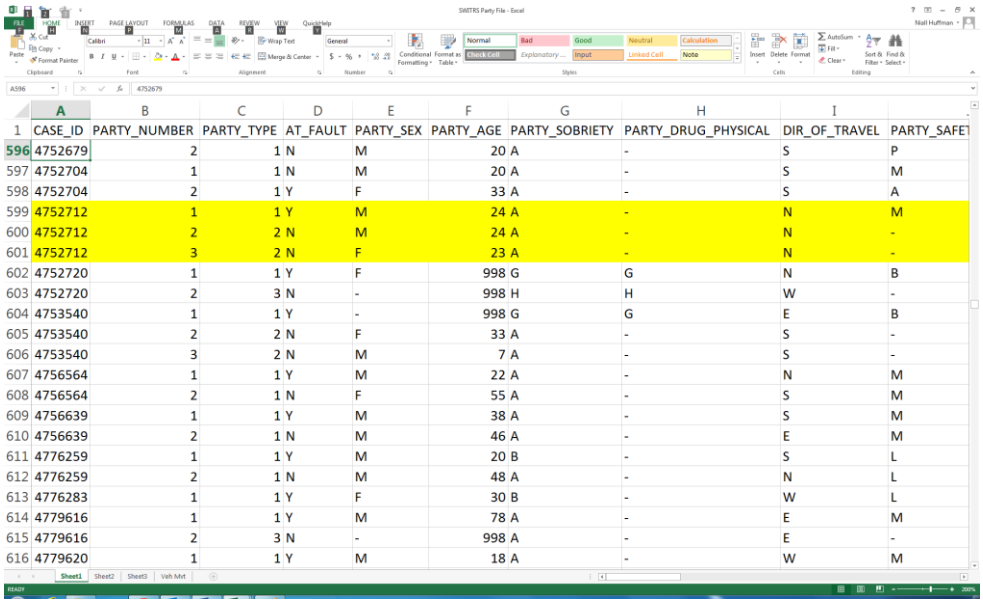
It is important to both map the data and conduct an analysis. Mapping can help show how collisions are clustered around certain intersections or roadway segments and illustrate the need for improvements in a particular area. Analysis should go beyond the mere locations of crashes to illuminate how crashes are occurring. In particular, **the code violation, party at fault, and movements of the respective vehicles are critical pieces of information** that help to give a complete picture of what happened and what types of interventions are appropriate to prevent or reduce future crashes. Make sure to look up the precise language of each code section given in the data (at the Department of Motor Vehicles site) to understand exactly what violation was committed and by whom.

The following screenshots help to illustrate the relationship between the Collision, Party and Victim files.



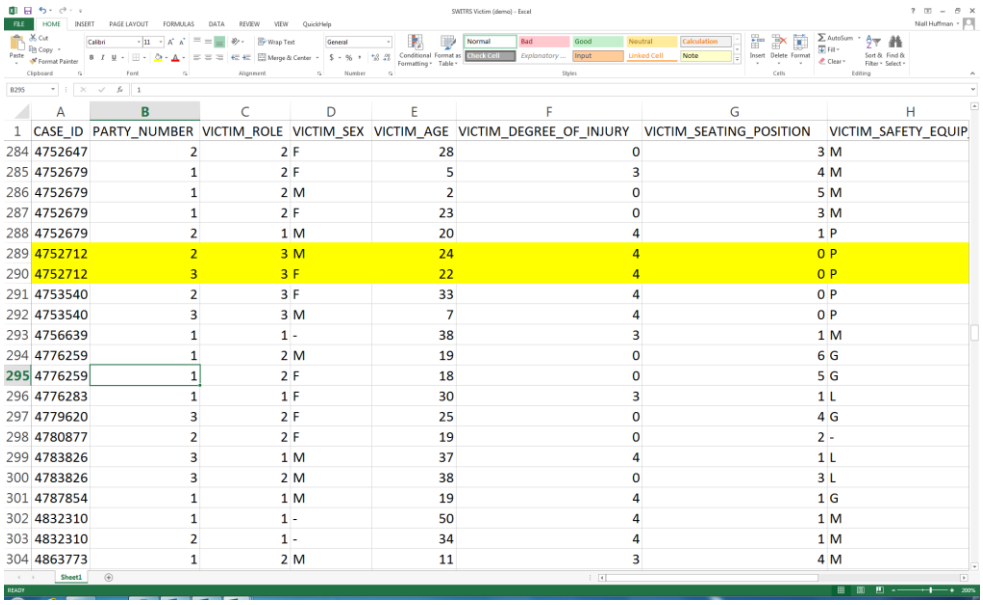
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	POF
1	CASE_ID	ACCIDENT_YEAR	PROC_DATE	JURIS	COLLISION_DATE	COLLISION_TIME	OFFICER_ID	REPORTING_DISTRICT	DAY_OF_WEEK	CHP_SHIFT	
2	5189631	2011	20110812	1900	20110627	245	487839	262	1	5	
3	4752712	2011	20120421	1900	20110312	2305	506210	262	6	5	
4	4753540	2011	20120530	1900	20110404	720	273531	261	1	5	
5	4608821	2010	20110103	1945	20100216	1405	446	105	2	5	
6	4667298	2010	20110315	1900	20100412	730	378	107	1	5	
7	5011612	2010	20111210	1900	20101207	730	404521	262	2	5	
8	5121235	2011	20120319	1900	20110104	610	487846	263	2	5	
9	5120241	2011	20120501	1900	20110302	2130	507965	262	3	5	
10	5180879	2011	20120510	1900	20110415	2105	520773	262	5	5	
11	5155033	2011	20120525	1900	20110427	710	485017	262	3	5	
12	5330310	2011	20121219	1900	20110915	855	482517	262	4	5	
13	5407375	2011	20121228	1900	20111006	740	466792	263	4	5	
14	5383647	2011	20130107	1900	20111029	1805	501581		6	5	
15	5742481	2012	20131023	1900	20120716	1530	424369	261	1	5	
16	5835986	2012	20131207	1900	20120917	1605	481719	263	1	5	
17	5863158	2012	20131220	1900	20121016	750	424369	263	2	5	
18	5877214	2012	20140114	1900	20121106	1900	521021	261	2	5	
19	5928744	2012	20140110	1900	20121209	1710	486615	262	7	5	
20	6099562	2013	20140414	1900	20130513	2244	515184	263	1	5	
21	6215287	2013	20140409	1900	20130901	1640	506936	262	7	5	
22	6511608	2013	20140620	1900	20131213	1525	439123	263	5	5	

SWITRS Collision data with one collision record (identified by CASE_ID) highlighted.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
1	CASE_ID	PARTY_NUMBER	PARTY_TYPE	AT_FAULT	PARTY_SEX	PARTY_AGE	PARTY_SOBRIETY	PARTY_DRUG_PHYSICAL	DIR_OF_TRAVEL	PARTY_SAFET
596	4752679	2	1	N	M	20	A	-	S	P
597	4752704	1	1	N	M	20	A	-	S	M
598	4752704	2	1	Y	F	33	A	-	S	A
599	4752712	1	1	Y	M	24	A	-	N	M
600	4752712	2	2	N	M	24	A	-	N	-
601	4752712	3	2	N	F	23	A	-	N	-
602	4752720	1	1	Y	F	998	G	G	N	B
603	4752720	2	3	N	-	998	H	H	W	-
604	4753540	1	1	Y	-	998	G	G	E	B
605	4753540	2	2	N	F	33	A	-	S	-
606	4753540	3	2	N	M	7	A	-	S	-
607	4756564	1	1	Y	M	22	A	-	N	M
608	4756564	2	1	N	F	55	A	-	S	M
609	4756639	1	1	Y	M	38	A	-	S	M
610	4756639	2	1	N	M	46	A	-	E	M
611	4776259	1	1	Y	M	20	B	-	S	L
612	4776259	2	1	N	M	48	A	-	N	L
613	4776283	1	1	Y	F	30	B	-	W	L
614	4779616	1	1	Y	M	78	A	-	E	M
615	4779616	2	3	N	-	998	A	-	E	-
616	4779620	1	1	Y	M	18	A	-	W	M

SWITRS Party data with multiple parties (identified by PARTY_NUMBER) from same collision highlighted. Note common Case ID corresponding to record from Collision data.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	CASE_ID	PARTY_NUMBER	VICTIM_ROLE	VICTIM_SEX	VICTIM_AGE	VICTIM_DEGREE_OF_INJURY	VICTIM_SEATING_POSITION	VICTIM_SAFETY_EQUIP
284	4752647	2	2	F	28	0	3	M
285	4752679	1	2	F	5	3	4	M
286	4752679	1	2	M	2	0	5	M
287	4752679	1	2	F	23	0	3	M
288	4752679	2	1	M	20	4	1	P
289	4752712	2	3	M	24	4	0	P
290	4752712	3	3	F	22	4	0	P
291	4753540	2	3	F	33	4	0	P
292	4753540	3	3	M	7	4	0	P
293	4756639	1	1	-	38	3	1	M
294	4776259	1	2	M	19	0	6	G
295	4776259	1	2	F	18	0	5	G
296	4776283	1	1	F	30	3	1	L
297	4779620	3	2	F	25	0	4	G
298	4780877	2	2	F	19	0	2	-
299	4783826	3	1	M	37	4	1	L
300	4783826	3	2	M	38	0	3	L
301	4787854	1	1	M	19	4	1	G
302	4832310	1	1	-	50	4	1	M
303	4832310	2	1	-	34	4	1	M
304	4863773	1	2	M	11	3	4	M

SWITRS Victim data with multiple victims (no unique ID; differentiated by attributes such as age and sex) from same collision highlighted. Note common Case ID corresponding to Collision and Party files and Party Numbers corresponding to Party file.

Countermeasures and crash reduction

Once you've identified the locations and types of crashes, show in your narrative text how they relate to the countermeasures being proposed. Consider using research, such as PEDSAFE/BIKESAFE website material (http://pedbikesafe.org/), as support for the crash reduction effects you claim for each

countermeasure, and highlight connections between those crash reduction effects and the types of collisions your analysis shows to be occurring. It is critical to demonstrate that the **crash history shows a safety problem**, and that your **proposed interventions address that safety problem**.

At this time, it does not appear that Caltrans wants extensive quantification of crash reduction effects, but they do want some evidence that you have considered the collision history and safety issues in the planning and design of the project.

Q3 Public participation

The goal of this question is to ensure that the project was selected and vetted by the community, and represents a high priority project. In addition, the question asks the applicant to demonstrate that the outreach process is representative of the community itself and engaged a wide variety of stakeholders.

Hopefully the project you have selected is the result of a robust and extensive community engagement process. If so, this section requires documentation (explained further below) of your planning process (bicycle, pedestrian, active transportation and/or safe routes to school plan). If the project was not identified through this type of process, you should consider conducting community outreach during the application window to demonstrate and confirm that the project is a high priority.

Quick outreach ideas could include hosting a town hall meeting, distributing surveys to parents at impacted schools, tabling at local festivals or farmers markets, collaborating with a local community-based organization, presentations at faith-based institutions, etc.

Be comprehensive when describing the full range of outreach and participatory activities that led to the project, including a mention to every meeting and every type of outreach that was included. Include details such as whether the meetings were public transit accessible, time the meeting was held, whether children were welcome/child care provided, translation/interpretation services, etc. It's OK to summarize and put most of the details in attachments, but include at least these key points in the text.

Connect the comments received during the outreach to the actual interventions or programs proposed. Mention safety concerns at specific locations, as well as general, area-wide concerns addressed by the project. Back up with meeting notes, comment forms, etc. in the attachments as appropriate.

Q4 Public health

Research and resources about the connection between active transportation and public health are growing and changing; therefore, guidance from the State may change with each application cycle. At this time, one of the key aspects of a strong application is providing appropriate local, state and national data that demonstrates primary health concerns that could be improved with your project. Refer to DPH's compilation of health data sources here:
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/PLACE_Data_Sources.htm

Typically, active transportation projects can have an impact on safety, air quality, and physical activity, all of which affect chronic disease. It is important to provide evidence for your assumptions. For example, if you assert that your project will increase physical activity, it will be important to provide academic research as evidence that shows a link between your project type and increased physical activity. We encourage you to discuss these details with your local health department.

Because you'll be citing so many studies, reports and academic articles in this response, it's critical to create a proper citation and bibliographic entry for each source at the time you decide to include it. It may help to assemble this information in a spreadsheet as you compose the response. Use an established citation style such as Modern Language Association, Chicago Manual of Style, or American Psychological Association – select one and use it consistently throughout the application.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health intends to provide a guidance document for ATP applicants on our website at http://ph.lacounty.gov. We encourage you to review our Cycle 2 guidance, which has many helpful data sources and tips for thinking about the health impacts of transportation projects.

Q5 Disadvantaged communities

The criteria for defining a disadvantaged community (DAC) were revised for the second cycle, so they may change again in the future. For Cycle 2, three measures were used, only **one** of which had to be met in order to qualify the jurisdiction as a DAC. They were:

- The **CalEnviroScreen score** of the Census tracts in which the project is located (http://oehha.ca.gov/ej/ces2.html -- keep looking for updated versions of the tool)
- The percentage of **students eligible for free or reduced price meals** at the schools served by the project (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/cw/)
- The percentage of Census tracts in which the project is located that are below 80% of the **Statewide median household income** (available from the Census Bureau's American Fact Finder. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)

As of Cycle 2, you only need to document one; however, showcasing all three may help illustrate just how high a need exists for a project.

For question 5B, if the entire project is within Census tracts that qualified for disadvantaged community status, it is 100%. Projects that spill over into a non-DAC may need to take geographic boundaries into account when preparing their cost estimates.

The next question (5C) asks how the project would have a "direct, meaningful and assured benefit" to members of the DAC, how it would be achieved, and who would receive the benefit.

You can reference previous questions to support 5C, such as the number of students living nearby and using the street to walk/bike to school; the extensive engagement process that occurred, the safety concerns raised by parents, the crash history of the project area, and other aspects of the application that demonstrated the benefits that the project would bring specifically to the disadvantaged population.

A successful application should reiterate all the strongest aspects of the project that address the disadvantaged community's needs.

Q6 Cost effectiveness

The key element of this question is the discussion of alternatives (5A). Describe the various options that the jurisdiction considered for achieving the project objectives or addressing stakeholder concerns. For options that were not included in the final project scope, explain why they may be less effective or cost too much to implement compared with the project you ultimately submitted.

For 5B (Benefit/Cost ratio), Caltrans may standardize the ATP benefit/cost analysis similar to other programs such as Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Be sure to ask Caltrans staff about the status of the tool and participate in any training sessions or webinars offered.

Q7 Leveraging non-ATP funds

The scoring criteria for local match changed for the second cycle, and are likely to do so again. Again, it is critical to read this question carefully once the final application comes out to know how providing a local match can improve your score. Depending on the financial situation of your local jurisdiction, you will need to evaluate whether it makes sense to do so.

Question 8 Use of conservation corps

In order to successfully respond to this question, carefully note the information required to be submitted and reach out to the appropriate individuals as early as possible. Ensure you save the e-mail correspondence and include it in your application.

Question 9 Project delivery history

This is available from Caltrans staff. For District 7, the appropriate contact is Dale Benson dale.benson@dot.ca.gov

Attachments

Caltrans has standardized the required content and formatting of all of the attachments in the ATP application; make sure to review the instructions carefully and provide all of the items that are required for your application and/or needed to provide context to your responses. Include all attachments in your action plan and include a short description of each so that they're easy to identify.

The largest attachment will be Attachment I (or whichever letter Caltrans specifies in future rounds), which is reserved for materials that support the narrative questions. It's crucial, for the sake of clarity, to create a mini-table of contents at the beginning of the attachment that identifies the various items in the order they appear. It's also a good idea to create a separate cover page at the beginning of each sub-attachment; i.e., for Question 1, Question 2, etc., listing the individual items that pertain to that question.

One of the most time-consuming attachments was the backup materials for Question 4 (public health benefits). The instructions ask that you attach the relevant pages of all sources used to support this response. As noted previously, be sure to cite sources properly using an established style guide. As you compose and edit your response, you're likely to change your mind about which sources to include or

exclude. Carefully note which sources are cited in the text so that you don't leave them out of the attachment – again, it may help to assemble a spreadsheet of all sources cited for this question alone so that you can easily keep track of the various articles and keep them in the correct order when you insert them.