

TRANSPORTATION RURAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TRIP)

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for Project Administration [DRAFT]

Rev. 10/31/2024

Note: The answers listed in this document are for typical situations and may not apply correctly to every project. The CTDOT reserves the right to issue an alternate response if the answer here is deemed incorrect.

1. Q) As the Project Lead for my Municipality, how do I go about administering a TRIP project?
 - A) The Transportation Rural Improvement Program Guidelines (located on the program website here: [CCGP About](#)) outlines the process to administer a TRIP funded project from the award through construction. The website also includes links to all required program documents and forms.
2. Q) If I am awarded a grant, is there a requirement to provide updates to the Department?
 - A) Yes, The Department requires quarterly project status updates to be provided following the execution of the Commitment to Fund Letter continuing through construction. There are 2 methods provided on the TRIP webpage to submit project status updates:
 - i. (Preferred) a link to an online form that automatically submits the response to our database.
 - ii. A fillable PDF form that can be filled out and emailed to the Project Manager for manual entry.
3. Q) Can a Municipality modify the scope from what was submitted in the grant application?
 - A) The scope can be modified for the same project that was applied for (i.e. limits can be extended or reduced, elements can be added or removed, etc.), however, work cannot be included for other locations or elements that are not aligned with the goal of the program. Each project is unique so if there is any question, it should be discussed with the project manager. The scope cannot increase the funding awarded.
4. Q) For work that will take place on a state route or will impact state owned right of way, when should the Municipality begin the Encroachment Permit Process?
 - A) Municipalities are strongly encouraged to communicate and coordinate with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Office of Maintenance during the design phase to determine if the design is deemed acceptable for issuance of an encroachment permit. Information on Encroachment Permits can be found here: <https://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?A=1394&Q=259544>.

Generally, it would be the responsibility of the contractor to apply for and obtain the Encroachment Permit before construction begins.

5. Q) How long does a Municipality have to use the grant funds?
 - A) It is the goal of the program to have projects constructed in a reasonable timeframe. A Project Authorization Letter (PAL) must be executed between Department and the Municipality, within 1095 days (3 years) of the execution of the Commitment to Fund Letter. A PAL will be issued following the approval of the authorization by the department to advertise the project for construction bids. An extension may be requested by providing written justification to the Department. The length of the extension will be dependent on the justification and should be coordinated with the Project Manager.
6. Q) Is there a penalty for the Municipality that cancels the project at the last minute or simply does not complete the project?
 - A) There is no specific penalty if a Municipality cancels a project and rescinds their grant. However, if a grant project does not show significant progress toward construction after 3 years, and the Municipality does not request an extension or respond to requests from CTDOT for updates, the grant may be in jeopardy of being rescinded by the Department.
7. Q) If the design of the project is complete, and the engineering estimate comes out lower than what was applied for in the grant, can the Municipality accept a lower bid?
 - A) Yes, the actual grant award will be based on the amount requested on the application and any unused funds will be returned to the Department through the audit process.
8. Q) Who is responsible to pay for utility adjustments/relocations?
 - A) Utility adjustment/relocation costs are the responsibility of the Utility Company or the Municipality and are not reimbursable with TRIP funds.
9. Q) Will CTDOT perform a detailed plan review during design?
 - A) If construction will take place within the state right-of-way, the CTDOT Maintenance District Special Services Section will review the plans during the encroachment permit process. The Project Manager will not perform any detailed technical reviews of project design or related documents during the design phase. It is the responsibility of the licensed Professional Engineer approving the plans to ensure that the project is designed in accordance with the standards defined in the TRIP guidelines.

10.Q) Will CTDOT charge for administration of the grant?

A) No, CTDOT has separate funds budgeted for project administration.

11.Q) Do the grant funds need to go into a separate account?

A) It is strongly recommended that the Municipality establish a separate account for the TRIP project, and all disbursements be made from there. Expenditures directly related to the TRIP must be identified separately from other State financial assistance. Keeping track of accurate expenditures will assist with the Municipal State Single Audit and the Departments final audit at the completion of the project.

12.Q) What is the Master Municipal Agreement for Construction Projects and how does it apply to the grant administration?

A) The Master Municipal Agreement for construction projects (MMAC) is a document agreed to between the CTDOT and each Municipality in Connecticut. The MMAC sets out standard terms that apply to all the transactions entered into between those parties. Each time that a transaction for a construction project is entered into, the terms of the MMAC do not need to be re-negotiated and can be applied automatically. Before the grant funds can be disbursed, the CTDOT and the Municipality must execute a Project Authorization Letter (PAL), which is pursuant to the respective MMAC, and will define the project specific terms of the agreement.

13.Q) Will the CTDOT require a "4 Book" process for construction inspection?

A) No, inspection reporting may follow municipal construction inspection standards. Inspection must be adequate to satisfy the engineer overseeing the project construction, and to adequately document that the project was built in accordance with the final plans and specifications.

14.Q) What level of detail is required for final design plans? Can an aerial photo be used as the base map or is a field survey required?

A) It depends on the complexity of the project and the existing features in the area. The Municipality is responsible for developing a design that can be accurately estimated and legally constructed. Projects plans should show right-of-way lines, regulated floodplain or wetland areas and limits of construction (grading), etc in order to identify any impacts that must be mitigated.

15.Q) Can Municipal Forces be used for construction (Force Account)?

A) Yes. Municipalities may utilize their staff to perform project construction by use of labor, equipment, materials, and supplies furnished by the Municipality, and used under the Municipality's direct control.

If a Municipality desires that construction work be undertaken by force account, it must submit a request to the CTDOT Project Manager identifying the of work to be performed. The Municipality must demonstrate that it is staffed and equipped to perform such work satisfactorily and cost effectively.

16.Q) Is compacted stone dust or gravel an acceptable surface for a shared-use path to be constructed using TRIP funds?

A) While not desirable for a multi-use path to be constructed compacted gravel, grant funds may be used to construct a trail with a surface other than bituminous concrete with approval from the Department. Typically, these trails are primarily for outdoor recreational use and the justification for the alternative material must be provided. For ADA guidance for recreational facilities see: <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/outdoor-developed-areas/final-guidelines-for-outdoor-developed-areas/text-of-the-guidelines>

17.Q) Will CTDOT require a special sign, displaying the project name and funding program, to be erected at the project limits?

A) Yes, a "Project Funding" sign must be included in the contract showing the state funding source. Information on this sign can be found on the TRIP Webpage here: [CCGP About](#). In past projects these signs have typically costed \$1,000-\$1,500 and are an eligible expense for grant funds.

18.Q) What is required by the Municipality for material testing?

A) Local standards or materials testing requirements may be used; however, in the absence of local standards or requirements, materials incorporated into the project must be tested in accordance with the Department's Form 819 "Standard Specifications for Roads, Bridges and Incidental Construction". Material testing is an eligible cost under TRIP.

19.Q) Is there a DBE or SBE goal for TRIP projects?

A) Since this program is 100% state funded a DBE goal is not applicable. An SBE or Small Business Enterprise goal is required and is assigned by the Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). The Municipality should review the information on the [CHRO website](#) and include the following contract language in the bid documents:

Effective October 1, 2015, new Small Business Enterprise (SBE) requirements apply to municipally-held public works contracts as required by P.A. 15-5. The Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) is responsible for the administration of these requirements. Refer to the CHRO website for the most current SBE requirements that are to be included in the bid documents and legal notice.

20.Q) Can the Municipality acquire rights-of-way in accordance with municipal procedures or do they have to follow CTDOT requirements?

A) The Municipality must certify that the land has been acquired in accordance with the CTDOT's Engineering Directive for "State Funded Municipal Projects Requirements for Rights of Way Acquisitions". A copy of this Directive can be found on the Community Connectivity website at: [CCGP About](#)

21.Q) Can a Municipality start performing design work before the PAL is executed and the funds have been received?

A) Work related to engineering and design may be performed at any time since it is not eligible for funding under the TRIP. Any construction work performed prior to execution of the PAL is at the risk of the municipality. Grant funds can only be issued after the execution of the PAL.

22.Q) Can the Municipality use EZ-IQc for construction of TRIP funded projects?

A) Maybe. The municipality must request approval from the TRIP Program team if they elect to use this method of construction. If used, the Municipality must provide proper documentation as to what items were purchased under this construction procurement method.

23.Q) Can the Municipality use an on-call contractor that has been selected based on the Municipal competitive bid process?

A) Construction contracts must be competitively bid when using TRIP funds. However, if the municipality can demonstrate that the Municipal competitive bid process meets CTDOT requirements, the Municipality can use this contract.

24.Q) Are TRIP projects considered “Prevailing Wage” jobs and are Municipalities required to pay prevailing wage rates?

A) Typically, projects constructed under the TRIP would be considered “alterations” to an existing facility, therefore requiring projects with a construction cost of more than \$100,000 to comply with Connecticut’s Prevailing Wage Law. Certain exclusions may apply. If the applicability of prevailing wage rates is in question, the Municipality must coordinate with the Connecticut Department of Labor, Wage and Workplace Compliance Division, to determine if current law applies to their project. More information can be found at: <https://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wgwkstnd/prevailwage.htm>

If applicable, the most recent State Prevailing wage rates must be included in the construction contract at the time of advertising.

25.Q) Does a contractor have to be prequalified by the DOT or DAS to bid or be awarded a TRIP project?

A) No, DOT prequalification is required for **CTDOT administered** construction bids/projects. However, often the towns require it for their own piece of mind, but it is not required by state statute.

26.Q) My project plans are complete, what's the next step?

A) Once the Municipality has completed the design process, the next steps as outlined in the TRIP Program Guidelines are the following:

1. Submit (digitally) a final design package to the Project Manager with the following:
 - Complete set of final project plans, specifications and engineers estimate
 - Draft Contract Documents/Project Manual
 - Completed [Final Design Submission Documentation Form](#) (Appendix C of TRIP Program Guidelines)
 - [Completed General Municipal Certification for Design Activities Form](#) (Appendix B of TRIP Program Guidelines)
 - If encroachment permit is required from the Department: Approval Letter from District Special Services Section, stating plans are acceptable for issuance of an encroachment permit.

Please note the requirement is to include a “Project Funding” sign in the contract showing the state funding source. Information on this sign can be found on the TRIP Webpage here: [CCGP About](#).

The Project Manager will do a quick review of the submission and either provide comments or issue an authorization for the town to advertise the project for construction bids. Since the Department does not perform a detailed technical review, we can typically get a response back in 1-2 weeks.

If the project will be constructed by a method other than Design/Bid/Build please work with the project manager to approve that method.

2.) After the bid opening, the following information should be submitted (Digitally) to the Project Manager:

- Date of bid opening
- List of all bidders and total bid amount
- Recommendation from the Municipal Chief Administrative Officer for award of project to the responsible low bidder
- Written justification for awarding the construction contract to any bidder other than the lowest bidder (Additional coordination and/or documentation may be required)
- Contractor's Certification of Compliance with Connecticut General Statute Section 31-57b 3.

Upon acceptance of the above, the Department will authorize the Municipality to award the contract and proceed with construction. (again, 1-2 weeks for review)

3.) The Department will then issue the Project Authorization Letter (PAL) (digitally) to be executed between the Department and Municipality, which that will act as the State/Municipal project agreement.

4.) Following receipt of the executed PAL, the Department will then issue the grant payment to the Municipality in total.

27.Q) If a project location falls on the mapped line between Rural and Urban, is it eligible?

A) Yes, the project must be primarily outside of the census defined urban boundary. A discussion with the Department may be warranted to determine eligibility if there is question.