

N-CATT Technology Strike Teams

Request for Applications

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Request for Applications: Technology Strike Team Technical Assistance

Issue Date: February 6, 2020

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Technology Strike Team Technical Assistance Request for Applications RFA Number: 38715RFA 002

Introduction

The goal of the National Center for Applied Transit Technology's (N-CATT) is to improve and make more efficient small-urban, rural and tribal transit service by assisting local systems in understanding, selecting, and otherwise planning to incorporate new technology into service. N-CATT helps transportation providers, managers, and decision-makers, such as board members or public officials, identify promising technologies, practices, and opportunities that accomplish agencies' goals or resolve particular challenges.

The recent burst of technology-based innovations in transportation has largely focused on dense urban areas. N-CATT seeks to spread the benefits of these developments to smaller transit agencies that lack the resources and capacities of large-urban systems to research, analyze, and test new products that could enhance their services. This includes educating system managers and helping them to encourage influential stakeholders to support needed technological advancements.

To achieve this vision, N-CATT provides technical assistance and networking opportunities to transit agencies that need support in navigating the evolving technological landscape and understanding how to best improve their systems through practical applications of new technologies.

Overview of the Innovative Technology Strike Teams

In 2020, N-CATT will provide in-depth technical assistance through "Innovative Technology Strike Teams" (hereinafter referred to as Tech Strike Teams) to up to four rural, small-urban, and/or tribal transit agencies that will give their leadership and partners the opportunity to collaborate in a focused setting on identified goals for the system, potential technological solutions, and planning for implementing those solutions. The Tech Strike Team collaboration will result in an actionable plan.

If you are a small-urban, rural, or tribal transit agency interested in working with a Tech Strike Team, please read the following opportunity description and **submit an application no later than March 6, 2020**.

Purpose

The purpose of the Tech Strike Team technical assistance program is to assist transit agencies in addressing clearly articulated goals through technology adoption. The technical assistance will focus on working with the local or regional team to navigate technology decisionmaking, whether adoption of new technology, conducting a pilot or demonstration of a new technology, or upgrading a technology, to achieve a specified goal or related set of goals. The Tech Strike Team collaboration with selected applicants will result in development of an actionable plan for testing or adoption of technology or in-depth planning for of new technology(ies).

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The Tech Strike Teams are designed to assist transit agencies and their local or regional partners to plan for and implement one or more of the following technologies, which would, when implemented, significantly assist the lead agencies and partners to reach the goal identified in the application or to overcome substantial challenges described to reach that goal.

Suitability for technical assistance will not be assessed on the basis of timing. Technologies that take a long time to plan for, to obtain funding for, and to implement will be eligible.

The technologies that the Tech Strike Teams will be assisting selected applicants to plan for are:

- a. Mobility as a Service and One-Call/One-Click/One-Tap building block technologies and capacities that comprise these;
- b. Ridehailing, microtransit and other on-demand services that complement transit service;
- c. Automated vehicle planning and pilots;
- d. Real-time transit information;
- e. Open Source software that enables interoperability of systems (such as GTFS and GTFS-Flex);
- f. Open data;
- g. Fare integration;
- h. Electric buses and related charging infrastructure or facilities; and
- i. Other emerging technologies.

Approach to be Taken

The Tech Strike Team aims to support and strengthen transportation providers through the following:

- Preliminary conference call (1-2 hours): 1 CTAA staff, 1 Strike Team tech generalist, with local or regional leader(s) (up to 3 local or regional team members). Plan scoping visit to determine agenda for local or regional meeting, who will be invited (or public meeting). Collaborate to determine whether to include riders and/or other stakeholders to identify pain points within the context of the identified goal.
- Scoping visit: 1 CTAA staff, 1 Strike Team tech generalist visit agency
 - Day 1: Tour the service as it is; highlight “pain points” that they’re working on
 - Day 1: Meeting: Meet with transit leadership, partners (or representatives of partner entities) identified in the application, and others whose needs, ideas, or contributions are important to solving relevant challenges and reaching the identified goal.
 - Day 2: Use information gathered from previous day to map out possibilities for addressing those issues; develop three potential avenues to follow up on
- CTAA/ Strike Team Generalist find a specialist(s) in the technologies selected at the conclusion of, or as a result of, the scoping visit to develop information on how the technology(ies) will meet the needs of the provider, affect relevant cost factors, and address other considerations, to consider at planning meeting
- Planning visit: 1 CTAA staff, 1 tech Strike Team generalist, 1-3 Strike Team specialist(s) visit
 - Day 1: work through the costs/scenarios
 - Day 1: narrow ideas to one plan

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- Day 2: develop 1-year plan for technology procurement, testing, piloting, determining a vendor(s) and creation of a detailed plan for executing these tasks or to create a longer-term in-depth plan
- CTAA staff, the Strike Team tech generalist, and Strike Team specialist(s) will be available for two one-half hour calls, up to one hour of follow up assistance, via conference call or equivalent media within the two months after the plan is issued

Logistical Arrangements and Expenses

Once chosen, N-CATT will work with the local or regional leader to solicit participation from relevant transit staff, partners, stakeholders and/or community members, and to design the details of the Tech Strike Team visits.

Eligibility

Interested parties should be:

- Providers of public transportation in small-urban (50,000-200,000 population), rural (<50,000 population), or tribal communities;
- Private non-profits that run public transportation services in these areas; or
- Groups of agencies in small-urban/rural regions that intend to or are currently collaborating.

Please note: Applicants that have specific solutions planned for the future, have issued an RFP(s), or are working with a vendor(s) on the selected issue(s), will not be eligible. The Tech Strike Teams will be working to assess new opportunities for technological improvements.

Application Requirements

A complete application consists of:

- (1) Application Cover Sheet;
- (2) Application Narrative (see word limits for each question); and
- (3) Two letters of support that have, at a minimum, a member of the local government and a relevant partner to be involved in the collaborative Tech Strike Team process (e.g. a representative from a transit advocacy group).

Cover sheet - Please provide the following information:

1. Name of applicant lead agency or group;
2. Location of applicant lead agency or group – Street Address, City, State, and Zip Code;
3. Name of lead contact;
4. Title and agency of lead contact;
5. Lead contact's email; and
6. Lead contact's phone number.

Application Narrative – For the Application Narrative, the word limits below are maximums and in no way reflect a requirement for a specific number of words. Please provide the following information:

1. **Clearly Articulated Goal (100 words):** State the goal to be accomplished or problem to be solved; and why this goal is an important issue to be addressed.

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2. **System description (150 words):** Describe the transportation system(s) that you hope to enhance. Are you small-urban, rural, tribal, or a mix? What is your fleet like, and what condition is it in? Who are your main riders? How are your riders distributed around your service area?
3. **Background (200 words):** Describe how you identified this challenge or goal; efforts to address it thus far; and any challenges confronted in identifying a solution, set of solutions, or appropriate tools to accomplish the goal.
4. **Community involvement and partnerships (100 words):** Describe any community involvement, including with the local or regional government(s) or planning organization(s), that has affected your efforts. Describe partnerships with businesses, advocacy groups, non-profits and/or local or regional leaders to collaborate to accomplish the goal (address the challenge). Describe any larger stakeholder group(s).
5. **Commitment and feasibility (150 words):** Describe the ways in which those individuals and entities listed above in **Community involvement and partnerships** have demonstrated a commitment to accomplishing the goal, whether through funding, expertise, participation in discussions or outreach, advocacy, or in-kind donations; and
6. **Capacity (100 words):** Describe the lead organization's capacity for implementation of the plan to be developed in collaboration with the Tech Strike Team.
7. **Letters of Support** – Please provide two letters of support to indicate a larger local or regional effort to tackle the challenge or reach the goal you have identified. Letters of support should include: a mayor, city manager, elected official, or other official representative of the community, and; a local partner, such as a relevant advocacy group, non-profit, business, or advisory board. (These are examples of sources for letters of support and are not intended as a list of possible partner individuals or entities.)

Timeline

- February 6: Strike Team opportunity is announced
- Through February 14: Questions about the Strike Team opportunity may be submitted to carpenter@ctaa.org. Responses to questions will be compiled into one document and sent to all agencies who submit questions.
- February 19: Responses to questions will be distributed
- March 6: Deadline for interested agencies to submit applications
- March 11: Selected agencies announced
- April through July 2020: N-CATT Strike Teams work with selected providers
- August 2020: N-CATT and providers finalize action plans for providers to implement a technological tool identified as most likely to address the provider's challenge, goal, or enhancement.

After carefully reviewing this solicitation, if you have questions please send them by email to carpenter@ctaa.org no later than 5:00p.m., EST, on February 14, 2020. Responses and questions will be compiled into a document and shared with all who have expressed interest in submitting an application.

Strike team visits must be completed by July 30, 2020.

Selection Process

Summary: Applications will be screened according to initial screening criteria, described below. All applications meeting those criteria will be sent to the review committee and reviewed by that

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committee according to the evaluation criteria. Initial selections will be made for the highest scoring applications according to the evaluation criteria, described below. FTA will make the final selection of successful applicants for the Tech Strike Team opportunity.

Application Screening and Review Process

1. **Screening.** All applications received will be screened to determine that the minimum requirements, as noted in the initial screening criteria, are met. Only those applications that meet the minimum requirements of the initial screening criteria will be reviewed.
2. **Review committee.** N-CATT staff will comprise a committee to rate applications according to the criteria noted below.
3. **Review Process.** The review committee will evaluate the applications based on the evaluation criteria specified below. N-CATT may schedule follow-up phone calls with up to 8 agencies to further discuss their visions for the Tech Strike Team's assistance, as well as potential dates and activities.
4. N-CATT will choose those projects receiving the highest recommendations by its review committee.
5. FTA will make the final selection of successful applicants for the Tech Strike Team opportunity.

Application Evaluation

Initial screening criteria

- Application is submitted by an eligible applicant.
- Complete application must be received by email by the deadline (see timeline above)
- Application must comply with all word limits prescribed for each section.
- Application must be submitted as a single pdf document.
- The application must include all the required elements, as noted above.
- Because the Strike Teams are designed to provide technical assistance, any request for funding will not be accepted.

Application review

Applications will be rated by the review committee on the basis of highly recommended (HR), recommended (R), and not recommended (NR) in the following areas:

1. **Identified goal:** This will be articulated through the following:
 - a. The identified goal is succinctly stated as a goal to be accomplished or as a problem to be solved; and
 - b. A brief statement explains why this goal is an important issue to be addressed.
2. **System description:** The transit system is described in terms of the following:
 - a. The nature of its service area as small-urban, rural, tribal, or a mix;
 - b. The nature of the fleet and what condition it is in;
 - c. Who are the main riders; and
 - d. How the riders are distributed around the service area.
3. **Background:** The identification of the goal is described through the following:
 - a. How and why the particular goal (or worded as a challenge) was identified;
 - b. Previous and current efforts to address the goal; and
 - c. Any challenges confronted in identifying a solution, set of solutions, or appropriate tools to achieve the goal.

4. Community involvement and partnerships: Public, community, and/or partner engagement are described through the following:
 - a. Any public engagement, community involvement, engagement or leadership of local or regional government(s) or planning organization(s), that has affected your efforts;
 - b. Any partnerships with businesses, advocacy groups, non-profits and/or local or regional leaders (elected or otherwise) to collaborate to accomplish the goal (address the challenge); and/or
 - c. Any larger stakeholder group(s).
5. Commitment and Feasibility: Demonstration of commitment and feasibility for working with the Tech Strike Team to identify a solution(s) and create and carry out a plan is described through the following:
 - a. Any public engagement, community involvement, engagement or leadership of local or regional government(s) or planning organization(s), that has affected your efforts;
 - b. The ways in which those individuals and entities discussed in your community involvement and partnerships section have demonstrated a commitment to accomplishing the goal; and
 - c. Whether and what partners have demonstrated a commitment through contributions of funding or in-kind donations; assisting with expertise; participation in discussions, meetings, or events; or through outreach or advocacy.
6. Capacity: Describe the lead organization's capacity for implementation of the plan to be developed in collaboration with the Tech Strike Team through the following:
 - a. The agency provides evidence of its ability to participate in the activities outlined above to fully participate in the Tech Strike Team process; and
 - b. The agency provides evidence of the organization's ability to collaborate to develop a plan and execute it.
7. Support: Two letters of support that demonstrate the following:
 - a. A larger local or regional effort to tackle the challenge or reach the goal you have identified.; and
 - b. Political or official support from a mayor, city manager, elected official, or other official representative of the community (These are examples of sources for letters of support and are not intended as a limited list of possible partner individuals); and
 - c. A local partner entity, such as a relevant advocacy group, non-profit, business, or advisory board. (These are examples of sources for letters of support and are not intended as a list of possible partner entities.)
8. Suitability assessment: The applications will be assessed to determine that the one or more of the following technologies would, when implemented, significantly assist the lead and partners to reach the goal identified or to overcome substantial challenges described to reach that goal. Suitability will not be assessed on the basis of timing; technologies that take a long time to plan for, to obtain funding for, and to implement will be eligible. The technologies are:
 - a. Mobility as a Service and One-Call/One-Click/One-Tap building block technologies and capacities that comprise these;
 - b. Ridehailing, microtransit and other on-demand services that complement transit service;
 - c. Automated vehicle planning and pilots;
 - d. Real-time transit information;

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- e. Open Source software that enables interoperability of systems (such as GTFS and GTFS-Flex);
- f. Open data;
- g. Fare integration;
- h. Electric buses and related charging infrastructure or facilities; and
- i. Other emerging technologies.

The review committee will make its recommendations based on the following guidelines:

- Applications rated as highly recommended (HR) will be those that receive “HR” in all categories:
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will be those that receive “R” in at least these categories:
 - Articulation of challenge(s) and/or goal(s)
 - Organizational capacity

The review committee will make its recommendations based on the following guidelines:

- Applications rated as highly recommended (HR) will be those that receive “HR” in all of the categories—and receive no “NR” ratings.
- Applications rated as recommended (R) will be those that receive at least an “R” in all categories—and receive no more than one “NR” rating.
- Applications rated as not recommended (NR) will be those that receive “NR” in 2 or more categories.

Submittal Instructions

Please submit your application in PDF format to Andrew Carpenter, carpenter@ctaa.org, no later than 5:00p.m. EST, on March 6, 2020. No calls, please.