



**North Central Texas
Council of Governments**

**Freight Efficiency Outreach Center
Call for Proposals Guidelines**

March 2011
North Central Texas Council of Governments
Air Quality Policy and Program Development
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www.nctcog.org/smartway

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INTRODUCTION

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is offering up to \$450,000 in grant funding through the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center Call for Proposals (CFP) to provide financial assistance for the establishment of a facility that would provide a comprehensive suite of services to the trucking industry. These services are expected to include outreach and education regarding fuel-efficient practices and technologies; education regarding local regulations and grant opportunities; and financial assistance in procuring vehicles/technologies that will reduce emissions, such as newer, lower-emitting trucks/engines, EPA-verified SmartWaySM technologies, and emission-reducing devices. The requested funds are anticipated to cover initial start-up and operating costs of the Outreach Center; NCTCOG expects that the facility will become self-sustaining shortly after the first year of operation and should be able to remain in operation indefinitely. Funds for this CFP are made available through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The CFP is being administered by NCTCOG and is consistent with requirements set forth in the EPA Climate Showcase Communities Program.

PURPOSE

Nine counties in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) area have been classified as serious nonattainment under the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone. This means that ground-level ozone concentrations in these counties exceed the federal health-based limit as set forth by the EPA. Ozone is formed when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOC) react in the presence of sunlight and heat. The region is considered NO_x-limited, indicating that NO_x emissions are the primary determinant of ground-level ozone formation; therefore, most strategies implemented at the regional level focus on reducing emissions of NO_x in order to reduce ozone.

According to modeling performed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), diesel 18-wheelers contribute approximately 37 percent of all on-road mobile source NO_x emissions in North Central Texas, or 69 tons per day. Projects that reduce pollution from long-haul trucks must be implemented in order to achieve significant NO_x reductions and progress toward attainment of the federal ozone standard in this region. Additionally, projects that reduce heavy-duty truck emissions will provide reductions in PM emissions, diesel toxics, carbon dioxide (CO₂), and overall exposure to diesel exhaust.

NCTCOG has already initiated several programs that seek to reduce emissions from the freight industry, particularly the trucking sector. Examples include the Diesel Idling Reduction Program, Locally Enforced Idling Restrictions, partnership in the EPA SmartWay Transport Program, and Truck Lane Restrictions. However, NCTCOG has found that it is difficult to effectively build relationships with the industry; this problem is exacerbated by the fact that much freight traffic in the region is transient, and staff has often faced geographic constraints on agency resources. The Freight Efficiency Outreach Center is anticipated to help fill this gap and NCTCOG wishes to partner with an entity that has industry expertise. In addition, the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center can provide a local "one stop shop" for companies and drivers to learn about and begin implementation of best practices related to increasing efficiency. In accordance with EPA goals, it is hoped that this facility could be replicated across the country in other major freight activity centers.

NCTCOG anticipates that development of a Freight Efficiency Outreach Center has the potential to reduce localized air quality impacts of the freight sector, particularly the trucking industry, by facilitating greater awareness and understanding of existing freight and air quality initiatives. The North Central Texas region is crisscrossed by numerous interstates, resulting in heavy freight traffic throughout the DFW area. This highlights the potential for the DFW region to positively impact the entire industry by showcasing projects and technologies to a large audience. NCTCOG expects that a Freight Efficiency Outreach Center will also enhance regional efforts by educating the industry about existing NCTCOG-administered freight and air quality focused programs, and promoting or facilitating use of appropriate technologies and operational practices. NCTCOG has set a goal to impact a minimum of 250 trucks per year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

CFP information, including an Intent to Submit form, is available at www.nctcog.org/smartway. Potential applicants may also contact NCTCOG staff with any questions or comments. As questions are received and answered, a Frequently Asked Questions document will be made available on the website listed above.

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ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Funding is available to public sector and non-profit entities who wish to establish and operate a Freight Efficiency Outreach Center in the DFW area. Non-profit applicants will be required to submit proof of non-profit status. Private, for-profit, entities are not eligible to apply.

NCTCOG is particularly interested in responses from entities who have demonstrated expertise and knowledge of both the trucking industry and efficiency-improving technological and operational solutions.

Public sector or non-profit entities in which a NCTCOG or EPA employee, spouse, or family member of a NCTCOG or EPA employee has a direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, may be prohibited from receiving a grant, depending upon the nature of the interest. Any questions regarding the eligibility of an entity to apply for a grant should be referred to NCTCOG staff early in the application process.

ELIGIBLE AREAS

The facility must be located within one of the nine counties currently designated as part of the DFW ozone nonattainment area, which is outlined in Map 1.

Map 1: DFW Ozone Nonattainment Area (as of March 2011)



DELIVERABLES

The principal work product that will be developed is the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center itself. The recipient(s) will be responsible for building, staffing, operating, and ownership of the facility. The Freight Efficiency Outreach Center will be expected to offer a comprehensive suite of services to the freight industry, with an initial emphasis on the trucking sector. NCTCOG will expect the range of services to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Education on technological solutions for freight efficiency
- Education on operational solutions for freight efficiency
- Education on regulations that impact the freight industry
- Outreach/promotion of various NCTCOG programs related to the industry
- Outreach/promotion of the EPA SmartWay Transport Program
- Outreach related to air quality and the importance of reducing freight emissions
- Assistance with selection and procurement of verified SmartWay upgrades
- Assistance with procurement of newer, more efficient trucks/engines, including cooperative purchasing to drive volume discounts

- Assistance with applying for and education on relevant grant programs
- Financial assistance through low-interest financing, revolving loans, or other low-cost mechanisms

The recipient(s) will be expected to develop marketing and/or training materials, such as brochures and fliers, to both promote the Outreach Center and educate the industry on relevant technologies, operations, and programs. The recipient(s) must ensure that such items may be shared with communities seeking to replicate the Outreach Center in their area to help facilitate future success. NCTCOG will work closely with the recipient(s) to provide support and guidance and to monitor results.

INELIGIBLE COSTS

Internal Costs: Administrative, capital, and operational costs related to initial startup of the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center may be eligible for reimbursement. However, ongoing internal costs of the grant recipient(s)—including but not limited to personnel expenses, internal salaries, indirect costs, and travel—are not eligible.

Consultant Fees: Consultant fees for the preparation of a grant application, either directly or as an addition of the cost basis of the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center, are not eligible for reimbursement by NCTCOG.

REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must comply with the following elements to be considered for funding.

Activity Life: Applicants must commit to operating the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center for a minimum of five years. Closure of the Outreach Center prior to the end of the five-year Activity Life may result in repayment of a portion of grant funds awarded.

Applicant Type: Applicants must be either public sector or non-profit. Non-profit applicants will be required to show proof of non-profit status.

Cost Share: The recipient(s) must provide a minimum cost share equal to 35.8 percent of the total project cost. For example, if the full \$450,000 is requested, approximately \$250,935 in cost share funds is required. Federal funds may not be included in cost share provided; only state, local, and private funds are allowable.

Compliance with Regulations: The recipient(s) must agree to comply with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations for the duration of the Agreement.

Debarment/Suspension: Applicants may not have been debarred or suspended from obtaining federal assistance funds through grants, cooperative agreements, or third-party contracts by the federal government.

Detailed Budget: Applicants must include a detailed budget outlining expected costs, broken out by line item, as well as how grant funds are anticipated to be applied. The budget should also outline anticipated cost share and indicate how cost share is expected to be utilized will be provided.

Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE): The recipient(s) will be encouraged to take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBE), Women-owned Business Enterprises (WBE), Historically Underutilized Business (HUB), Small Business Enterprise (SBE), and Labor Surplus Area Firms (LSAF) are used when possible. The recipient(s) will be required to report and provide DBE certificates for any DBE receiving funding as a part of the award.

Emissions Credit: The recipient(s) is expected to surrender all emissions reductions to NCTCOG for the Activity Life of the project to meet air quality requirements and goals. In the event the recipient(s) wishes to claim credit for emissions reductions, this desire must be clearly stated in the narrative application, along with an explanation of which emissions reductions are desired and how they are anticipated to be used.

Environmental Clearance: Award for the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center is contingent upon receipt of environmental clearance under the National Environmental Policy Act. Applicants will be required to identify a project site in the application process. Environmental review will be coordinated by NCTCOG and the EPA.

Financial Disclosure: Applicants must notify NCTCOG of the value of any existing financial incentive that directly reduces the cost of the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center, including tax credits or deductions, other grants, or any other public financial assistance, to allow for accurate calculation of project cost.

Location: Applicants must identify a proposed site location for the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center. Locations with existing structures that will require little or no ground-up construction are preferred. If the applicant is not the property owner, it must also demonstrate that it has the support of the property owner for use of the site/facility for the purposes of the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center. A formal, legally binding Agreement with the property owner is preferred; in absence of this document, a signed letter or support or statement of intent may be acceptable. The agreement with the property owner will be required to extend for at least the five-year required Activity Life of the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center.

Notification: The recipient(s) must agree to notify NCTCOG of any changes in the following during the Activity Life: termination of use, change in use, sale, transfer, or accidental or intentional destruction of the facility.

Program Income: Any funds received as revenue from the project will be treated as program income, which may include a requirement to reinvest revenue back into the project for the purpose of furthering the goals of the program.

Project Dates: The Freight Efficiency Outreach Center must be operational within two years of the recipient(s) receiving the award. NCTCOG will look favorably upon proposals that clearly indicate timely implementation in advance of this deadline.

Restrictions on Lobbying: The recipient(s) will be prohibited from using grant funds for lobbying purposes and will be required to disclose any lobbying activities.

SCHEDULE

Task	Estimated Timeframe
Call for Projects Opens	March 14, 2011
Application Deadline	Friday, April 22, 2011, 5 pm Central Time
Announce Awarded Projects	June 23, 2011
Begin Implementation	Late Summer/Early Fall 2011
Outreach Center Operational	No Later Than Two Years from Award

SELECTION CRITERIA

Properly completed, eligible applications will be evaluated and ranked by NCTCOG staff based on the following criteria. Emphasis will be placed upon the Qualitative Assessment.

- **Quantitative Assessment**
 - Number of Trucks Anticipated to be Impacted By Center's Services
 - Estimated Emissions Reductions
 - Cost Share Provided
- **Qualitative Assessment**
 - Knowledge/Experience
 - Work Scope
 - Partnership
 - Feasibility/Risk
- **Other Criteria as Established by the Applicant**
 - NCTCOG may consider other items which are identified in submitted proposals that are deemed integral to project success.

NCTCOG is not obligated to fund a proposal from an applicant that has demonstrated marginal or unsatisfactory performance on previous grants or contracts with the NCTCOG and/or other State or Federal agencies. NCTCOG is not obligated to fund a proposal from an applicant based on a determination of the risks associated with the applicant, including the financial condition of the applicant and other risk factors as may be determined by the NCTCOG.

Regardless of the scores and ranking assigned, the NCTCOG may base funding decisions on other factors associated with best achieving the goals of the program, and the NCTCOG is not obligated to select a project for funding. Additionally, the NCTCOG may select parts of a proposal for funding and may offer to fund less than the dollar amount requested in a proposal.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Interested applicants should submit an application package that includes the following elements:

- **Contact Information**
 - **Applicant Legal Name, Address, Phone, and Website**
 - **Applicant Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number** (A DUNS Number will be required for award. If an applicant does not already have a DUNS Number, one may be requested at no charge online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.)
 - **Project Contact** (Individual who will manage project implementation)
 - Name, Title, Address, Phone, E-mail
 - **Authorized Official** (Individual authorized to sign Agreement with NCTCOG)
 - Name, Title, Address, Phone, E-mail
- **Narrative Proposal**, which should respond to the following selection criteria:
 - **Knowledge/Experience**

Applicants should detail their knowledge and expertise of the trucking industry, freight-related air quality programs (i.e. the EPA SmartWay Transport Program), and strategies that reduce emissions and fuel consumption, including both technological and operational/behavioral practices. Technological strategies of interest to NCTCOG include, but are not limited to:

 - Alternative Fuel or Advanced Technology Vehicles
 - EPA-verified SmartWay Technologies
 - Vehicle Replacement/Repower/Retrofit Solutions
 - **Work Scope**

This section of the narrative should respond to the CFP Purpose as outlined in this document. Applicants should clearly outline how it proposes to successfully implement the project, including plans to build, staff, and manage the facility. The Work Scope should thoroughly address how the center will market and provide desired services or produce anticipated deliverables, including:

 - Education and Outreach Assistance
 - Technology Procurement/Assistance
 - Financial Assistance

Quantification of expected results, such as estimated number of trucks impacted and resulting emissions and petroleum reductions, should also be included. Applicants should also detail why the proposed location was selected, and how the applicant proposes to ensure a significant amount of industry traffic through the facility from which a customer base will be established. Examples of relevant previous work should be provided.
 - **Partnership**

Applicants should detail involvement in other air-quality focused initiatives, such as the EPA SmartWay Transport Program or regional EPA Diesel Collaborative,

such as the Blue Skyways Collaborative. In addition, existing partnerships with industry participants, particularly companies with a presence in the DFW area, should be highlighted.

- **Feasibility/Risk**
 - **Location**

In this section, applicants should explain the stability of property ownership and of an agreement with the property owner. Applicants should also identify whether any existing structures are present that may provide space for the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center, or if new construction will be required. An Environmental Questionnaire must be completed and returned with the application, along with documentation regarding property ownership. A formal agreement with the property owner is preferred, but a letter of support or statement of intent may be allowable in lieu of the formal agreement. Site photos and site plans should also be included to the greatest extent possible.
 - **Cost Share/Sustainability**

This section should also address required cost share, including the source, amount, and reliability of identified cost share funds. A discussion on how the center is expected to be financially self-sustaining beyond the initial grant assistance should also be included. A detailed budget outlining anticipated expenses, as well as how requested grant funds and proposed match will be utilized in the project must be provided as an attachment. The budget should also indicate funding that will allow the center to become self-sustaining after use of grant funds. A template budget form has been provided by NCTCOG and is recommended.
 - **Schedule**

Applicants should provide a detailed schedule for project implementation, including major milestones, from award through the opening of the facility.
- **Required Attachments**
 - Proof of Non-Profit Status (Non-Profit Applicants Only)
 - Detailed Budget
 - A template budget table is included as an Appendix to this document. Applicants are advised to use this or a similar format.
 - Documentation of Property Ownership or Agreement with Property Owner
 - A formal agreement is preferred, but a letter of support or statement of intent may be allowable in its place.
 - Photos of Site
 - Environmental Questionnaire
- **Preferred Attachments**
 - Site Plan/Drawings, as applicable
 - Previous Relevant Work, such as Marketing/Training Materials or Other Publications
 - Other Relevant Documentation as Determined by Applicants

SUBMITTAL PROCESS

In accordance with Regional Transportation Council (RTC) bylaws, late applications will not be accepted. Supplemental information may not be submitted after the application deadline. All applicants are encouraged to submit in advance of the application deadline to allow NCTCOG staff to review for completeness. Non-material omissions will not constitute an incomplete application. Applicants may submit by one of the two methods outlined below.

Submit Via E-mail:

Applicants may submit proposals by e-mailing an application package to the NCTCOG Project Lead at lclark@nctcog.org. Required attachments must accompany the application. Applicants are advised that e-mail submissions are limited to five (5) megabytes in size, per e-mail. Large files should be separated into multiple e-mails to ensure that this limit is observed.

In addition, electronic submittals must include a certification statement in the body of the e-mail. If submitting electronically, the following statement must be typed into the e-mail to accompany the attached proposal:

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all information provided in this application and any attachments is true and correct. By e-mailing this file, I understand that I am formally submitting an application on behalf of the applicant for grant funding and am authorized to do so. I further understand that e-mailing this file shall constitute an electronic signature for the application. In addition, I understand that prior to incorporating these forms and information into a grant contract, the data and information may be revised by the NCTCOG for accuracy and that my acceptance of a grant contract will constitute agreement with those revisions.

Submit Hard Copy:

Applicants who do not wish to submit via e-mail may request to submit a hard copy application. Hard copy submissions will require a cover letter with an original signature by the Authorized Official, must be in a sealed envelope with a return address on the outside, and must be "in hand" by the deadline. Please contact the NCTCOG staff identified under the *Contact Information* section of this document.

Applications must be received "in-hand" by 5:00 pm Central Time on Friday, April 22, 2011, in order to be considered for funding. Applications that have been postmarked, or, in the case of e-mail, are "sent", but are not received by the Friday deadline, and/or for which NCTCOG staff must request supplemental information, will be considered late and will not be accepted. Faxed copies of the application packet will not be accepted.

Applicants should clearly mark each page of the proposal which contains trade secrets or other confidential information which the applicant believes should not be disclosed to an outside party. Applicants are advised that NCTCOG may be requested or required to release proposal information. Disclosure will be determined in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Successful applicant(s) will be notified their selection and the amount of grants funding that may be awarded. Award of funds is contingent upon receipt of environmental clearance. In addition, award of funds is limited to the receipt and availability of funds which are received by NCTCOG from the grantor agency. Entities selected to receive grant funding will be required to execute an Agreement with NCTCOG. All services or work carried out under an Agreement awarded as a result of this CFP must be completed within the scope, time frames, and funding limitations specified by the Agreement. Upon signature and execution of the contract by NCTCOG, a copy of the executed Agreement will be returned to the recipient(s), at which time the grant will be considered awarded.

The grant recipient(s) shall submit monthly invoices for all expenses incurred during the preceding month. Documentation for all claimed expenses shall accompany all invoices. Documentation includes, but is not limited to, labor summary reports, receipts, vendor invoices, expense reports, and other documentation deemed necessary by NCTCOG. The monthly invoice should also include a monthly progress report for the preceding calendar month's work. The progress report shall briefly describe the work accomplished, problems arising, proposed remedies for those problems, deliverables completed, the status of the budget for each task, the percent of project completion for each task, and the status of the schedule for the project.

Grant funds will be paid out on a reimbursement basis for eligible expenses incurred and paid by the grant recipient(s). A cost may not be considered incurred until the recipient(s) has paid for the item for which reimbursement is being requested, and proof of payment will be required for as a part of the request for reimbursement. The recipient(s) may also have the option to assign their grant payments directly to a dealer or service provider. NCTCOG will supply reimbursement request and a template monthly progress report form for use by the recipient(s). ***Under no circumstances will reimbursement be made for costs incurred prior to the date of the Notice to Proceed.***

Upon completion of all grant-funded activities, the grant recipient(s) will need to submit a final request for reimbursement of all remaining unreimbursed expenses. The final request must include a completed and signed release of claims.

The grant recipient(s) must also agree to place signage at the site identifying the receipt of grant assistance upon request by NCTCOG.

The recipient(s) will be obligated to fulfill the requirements of the grant Agreement with NCTCOG for the full Activity Life of the project. The recipient(s) is responsible for achieving the annual and total emissions and petroleum reductions within the eligible areas as defined in the contract, and may be required to return all or a pro rata share of grant funds to NCTCOG if emissions and petroleum benefits are not achieved.

The grant recipient(s) is responsible for complying with all US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) laws and rules regarding the taxable status of grants. The grant payments are Form 1099 reportable.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Monthly progress reports will be required for the duration of the Agreement, which will last until the Freight Efficiency Outreach Center is open and operational. Beyond the termination date of the Agreement, the grant recipient(s) must commit to submitting semi-annual reports regarding progress and results for the duration of the Activity Life. Failure to submit these reports for the duration of the five-year Activity Life activities may be grounds for return of a pro-rata share of funds.

Written Certification of Disposition

At the end of the Activity Life, or upon transfer of ownership, a written certification must be submitted documenting the continued use and condition of the facility, fair market value, remaining useful life, and any actual or anticipated improvements that may increase the value of the facility.