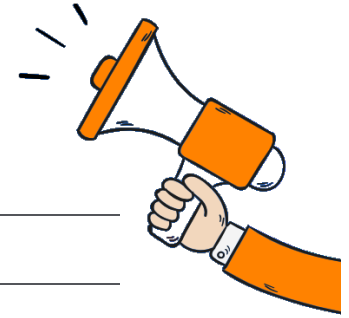# READY, SET, GO! PROGRAM GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Ready, Set, Go! (RSG!) is a grant program designed to assist VDOT's local partners with populations less than 200,000 in developing potential project ideas toward an eligible Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) application. This program provides high-level conceptual planning for localities, including potential project area and alignment, estimated cost, projected schedule, and other relevant conceptual details.

This is a collaborative effort among VDOT's Local Assistance Division, the appropriate VDOT District's technical staff, and a consultant team, all working in partnership with selected communities. The team will analyze the community's needs, goals, and proposed solution, provide assistance in reviewing relevant project information, and developing ideas toward a TAP application.

The outcome of this process is dependent upon a number of factors, but generally includes the following activities, information, and documentation:

- Framework document that details the planned work of the RSG! Grant
- Project description and details
- Project benefits
- Project sketch
- Planning level project cost
  - Total estimate by phase; identifies overall 20% match requirement and any additional local funds needed
  - Cost Estimating Workbook
- Project schedule using the LAP schedule tool
- Pre-application checklist for readiness to proceed
- Site review
  - Desktop review, to include Google Earth and GIS
  - In-field data collection, at VDOT's Local Assistance Division discretion
  - Site visit, in select cases, at VDOT's Local Assistance Division discretion

Participation in RSG! alone is not sufficient to meet all TAP application requirements. Communities that participate in the program should plan to dedicate additional time and resources to the other application requirements.

BACKGROUND

RSG! was developed to support communities in pursuing TAP funding by providing planning support toward developing applications. The pilot program launched in 2022, with the first cohort completing the grant program in May 2023.

The program intends to provide communities with additional technical information to assist in the community's decision-making on planning, funding, and implementation of their project concept. The program process further develops project concepts, identifies risks, constraints and enhancements, and cost information. This program is provided at no cost to the community and is funded and administered by VDOT.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

Localities with a population size of less than 200,000 are eligible to apply for RSG!. Priority is given to localities with populations of less than 5,000 that are not contained within a TMA/TPO area. Consult VDOT's Local Assistance Division should you have questions regarding eligibility.

The RSG! program solely supports project types that would be eligible under the Transportation Alternatives program. Refer to the Transportation Alternatives Program Guide for project eligibility information. Projects that would not be eligible for TAP funding, such as maintenance, projects that are not non-motorized use (e.g., park rehabilitation, intersection improvements that enhance vehicle capacity or operations), recreation trails, or area-wide plans/studies. Logical termini and independent utility must also be identifiable either during submission or during the RSG! process.

If localities choose to submit a TAP application, they can request that VDOT administer projects. Interested parties are strongly encouraged to discuss proposed project ideas and budgets with VDOT District staff prior to submitting a pre-application.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A call for applications for RSG! will be announced in September of odd-numbered years. Applications will be accepted until the published deadline. Applications for RSG! will be accepted through a questionnaire, made available on VDOT Local Assistance Division's Transportation Alternatives website (https://www.virginiadot.org/business/prenhancegrants.asp). Applicants should be prepared to provide information about the community, project concept and goals, location, and the amount of local funding anticipated to be available for the project. All TAP projects require a minimum 20% match, and federal funding is capped at $2.5 million per project.

For selected projects, VDOT will request and collect additional information about any preliminary work that has taken place and any supporting documentation. This additional information is not required but would be beneficial to the process. Communities will be encouraged to share any information they feel is relevant, such as:

- Parcel information
- Utility information
- Comprehensive plans
- Capital improvement programs
- Bike / Trail network plans / studies
- Prior plans or studies within the subject area
- Project design plans for adjacent or overlapping projects

RSG! PROCESS

Communities selected for participation in the RSG! program will not be required to provide any funding for their participation. Funding commitments are required for TAP project applicants; all future TAP applications require a 20% match of federal funds and may require additional local funds if the total project estimate exceeds $3,125,000. Administration for the RSG! project will be provided by VDOT Local Assistance Division, with technical support by a consultant team. The community is expected to remain engaged in the process through email, virtual meetings, and possible site visits, at the discretion of VDOT's Local Assistance Division, and to respond to any requests for additional information and data.

Communities can expect a collaborative assessment and project development process with participation from VDOT's Local Assistance Division (LAD), VDOT District technical staff, a consultant team, and community representatives. An iterative process within the group will confirm the understanding of the project needs and goals, develop an initial project concept, identify risks and constraints, brainstorm revisions, and provide various information and documentation to support the TAP application process.

The consultant team will work with LAD and District technical staff to review applications, make project selections, and develop the State's understanding of each selected project. Successful applicants will be notified by LAD and asked to confirm the State's understanding of the project. Once finalized, the State's understanding will be incorporated into a framework document outlining the work to be completed through the RSG! program. This will provide the foundation for the project planning process and include the identification of needs, goals, and logical termini.

The consultant team will then develop an initial conceptual layout of the project. Through this process, the team will work to provide a TAP-eligible solution to address the projects needs and goals. As the concept develops, the consultant team will begin compiling potential risks, constraints, and impacts. The initial concept and list of risks, constraints, and impacts will be discussed among the consultant team, VDOT staff, and the community in a virtual meeting.

This meeting is intended to foster open discussion of the project concept, confirm assumptions and intent, and receive additional information from the community. This time also serves as a brainstorming session to mitigate risk and limit impacts through concept modification. Following the discussion, the consultant-VDOT team will further refine the concept and provide draft deliverables to the community for review. Communities are encouraged to review the draft deliverables in depth and work with their District staff to provide feedback. Additional meetings may be necessary before providing the final deliverable package to the community.

RSG! COMPLETION AND NEXT STEPS

Upon completion of the RSG! program, the community will have the information necessary to move forward with a TAP application. The primary goal of RSG! is to support communities in pursuing TAP applications. However, the foundation of that goal is providing communities with information to make informed decisions before pursuing TAP funding. Ultimately, RSG! projects may not move forward or may be incompatible with the TAP program due to cost. The RSG! deliverables can then be utilized as supportive information for outside funding programs.

TIMELINE

- September, in odd-numbered years: Call for applications
- November, in odd-numbered years: Applications close
- March, in even-numbered years: Award announcements issued
- April, in even-numbered years, to December, in odd-numbered years: Consultant work with selected localities
- Odd-numbered years: Transportation Alternatives application cycle