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Based on experience with past grant and funding award winners, our experts offer the following insights on key strategies for application success.

01

Focus on regional impact. When able, the federal government seems to have a bias towards regional impact (and applications) over a single applicant that is part of a larger metro. They look at total impact on people, and generally speaking most people live, work, and play in a community's geography irrespective of legal boundaries. For instance, having a Municipal Planning Organization (MPO) apply, rather than a city or town within the MPO, is a winning strategy.

NOTE: If a community (city or town) that is part of an MPO already won an application, but did so as a single entity applicant, this may "force" the larger community to then pursue single entity applications or have to carve out the awarded city so the federal investment is not considered duplicative, which may jeopardize all other applicants.

02

Justice 40 implications matter. Even if a community doesn't have a ton of census tracts that are Justice 40 designated, areas that are close to being Justice 40 can be integrated into the application's language and impact statement.

03

Show a ripple effect. Orienting the use of funds towards problems solved is important. When able, the ability to show a ripple effect (or highly correlated relationship) between a variety of problems that have multiple impact benefits is helpful for the grant reviewer.

Stating simple problems but properly identifying all contributing factors or conditions is vital. Leaving out an element not only reduces funding, but it may also be seen as an incomplete analysis relative to other grant applicants who have thoroughly identified all factors as this improves the likelihood of overall success.

04

Weave sustainability throughout your application. Sustainability is showing up more and more in applications. Take advantage of any use case or opportunity where you can draw a tie to sustainability efforts.

05

Incorporate narratives about successful execution. This narrative should include labor availability, qualified labor, and the speed of deployment.The federal government is not excited to support a project that will take five years when two is feasible. Think in terms of being able to support claims of success that can support political victory.

06

Quantification of impact is a carryover lesson learned from ARPA. Having baselines to measure against (current state) and then future measurements of success (KPIs) helps explain how the applicant will be able to justify why IIJA invested in the project.

07 **Grant stacking is an important strategy to consider.** For example, if SS4A supports the hardware/software expense for lighting upgrades and another grant supports the deployment of a camera that sits on the same light pole, but this second grant also includes truck rolls that can serve both lighting and camera deployment.

08 **Gather feedback and support from the community.** This step is essential for any project funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It's important to demonstrate community engagement, and to recognize that not every community member can or wants to engage in the same manner. This may be due to various limitations, including physical, financial, or language barriers (for those who are not English as a Second Language speakers), or due to the distance from meeting locations. Additionally, consider the preferred methods of communication among community members, such as written, Public Service Announcements (PSA), or digital formats, which include channels like email or social media. It's also important to have a systematic, as opposed to an ad hoc, method of communicating about the project.

09 **Show leadership engagement within a community.** Use anecdotal evidence of the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders related to project success. Letters of support are good, past examples of collaborative success are even better.

10 **Make a link to job creation.** The economic impact of even shorter-term jobs should not be overlooked, especially if the jobs created have a longer-term implication beyond the project, create new labor supply/workforce development that was not previously present, or the job is an above-average wage (high-quality job) for the NAICS (job code).

11 **Provide more than the minimum grant match, when applicable.** When a match is required, and when the grant applicant is able, providing more than the minimum grant match helps score the application higher.

12 **Have a dedicated team or a named committee for the larger project.** This gives the federal government a higher level of confidence for project success, continuity if key people leave, and increased survival when a mayoral change occurs. This also supports effectiveness and speed to deployment considerations.

13 **Work in advance of upcoming grants with known NOFO windows.**
Mobilizing in advance not only creates a higher quality of work output but usually also secures better quality vendors, labor, etc.

14 **Watch the available webinars.** Most federal agencies will spell out helpful tips.
Read the FAQ's. Read the call transcripts that provide guidance.

15 **Seek out examples.** For repeat grants in which there is a relevant peer city or town (even better if in the same geography) that has won funds, ask if you can see their application (if you have a good relationship OR are not competitive to their potential upcoming funding cycle for a follow-up grant).

16 **Incorporate equity angles wherever possible.** Include racial, socio-economic, and digital divide considerations throughout the application. This is related to but NOT identical to Justice 40.

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