



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Agenda Item No. 7.0

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Local Coordinating Committee

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** August 3, 2011

**Re:** Schedule for Future Applications

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Competitive applications are an important feature of CMAP's approach to technical assistance, with project sponsors submitting proposals for review and prioritization by CMAP. Two application processes have been held so far in 2011, including the initial call for Local Technical Assistance (LTA) projects and the application process for Community Planning Program grants.

The schedules for these two initial application processes were responsive to external factors, rather than planned strategically by CMAP. The application process for LTA projects was launched as quickly as possible after CMAP was notified of its grant award (the call for projects began shortly after the first Board meeting following the grant announcement). The Community Planning Program grants were scheduled to align with the RTA's longstanding application process schedule, in the interest of coordinating closely with this existing program. Now that both programs are underway, CMAP has the ability to strategically schedule the timing of future application processes.

Several factors must be weighed when developing schedules for application processes:

- The perspective of potential applicants, in this case local governments and other nonprofit applicants. The ultimate purpose of CMAP's technical assistance program is to provide resources to local governments, and the application process should be designed to avoid creating barriers to participation. From the applicant's perspective, completing and submitting an application takes time, so allowing applicants to submit one combined application for several similar programs, rather than several separate ones, is beneficial.
- The cost to CMAP of administering an application process, in terms of staff time. A full process includes developing a call for projects, advertising it, answering questions from potential applicants, reviewing applications once they are received, following up with applicants to ask for additional information, determining and recommending priorities, justifying the priorities that have been determined, and contacting applicants to let them know the status of their application. It is estimated that the initial application process for LTA projects consumed 500-1,000 hours of staff time.

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- The benefit of coordinating application processes with other granting agencies. GO TO 2040 recommends “coordinated investment”, which involves government agencies working together to streamline and simplify programs. Even beyond the practical benefits to applicants, coordination between granting agencies sends a positive message concerning cooperation and shared priorities.
- Any specific timelines or requirements for the funds in question. There will be occasions where funding needs to be spent quickly or on a specific schedule beyond CMAP’s control. In these cases, it may be necessary to ignore the factors above in order to ensure that available funding is used effectively.

Overall, the conclusion of CMAP staff is that a small number of application processes, closely coordinated if possible with other granting agencies, is preferable to numerous application processes spread throughout the year. However, special application processes may also be necessary to effectively address some grant opportunities.

During FY 12, staff proposes the following schedules for technical assistance applications, including staff assistance and grants:

- Through fall and early winter 2011, CMAP will focus its efforts on the “Ike” Planning Program grants. As discussed with the Local Coordinating Committee in June, CMAP has applied to DCEO to create a grant program for local governments in northeastern Illinois (see [this memo](#) for background). If this application is successful, CMAP will launch its first call for projects for the program in fall 2011. If the application is unsuccessful, CMAP will assist local governments in directly requesting planning funds from DCEO (the DCEO application form is quite complex, and some communities may not be able to complete it without assistance).
- In spring 2012, CMAP will offer a single application process that covers two programs: staff assistance through the LTA program, and grants through the Community Planning Program. This will again be closely coordinated with the RTA, as was done in spring 2011.
- In future years, to the extent possible, technical assistance applications, for both staff assistance and grants, will occur in a coordinated and consolidated manner in the spring of each year. CMAP will seek to broaden the agencies involved to go beyond the RTA to include other transportation and non-transportation sources.

Committee discussion on this initial proposal is requested.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion.

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