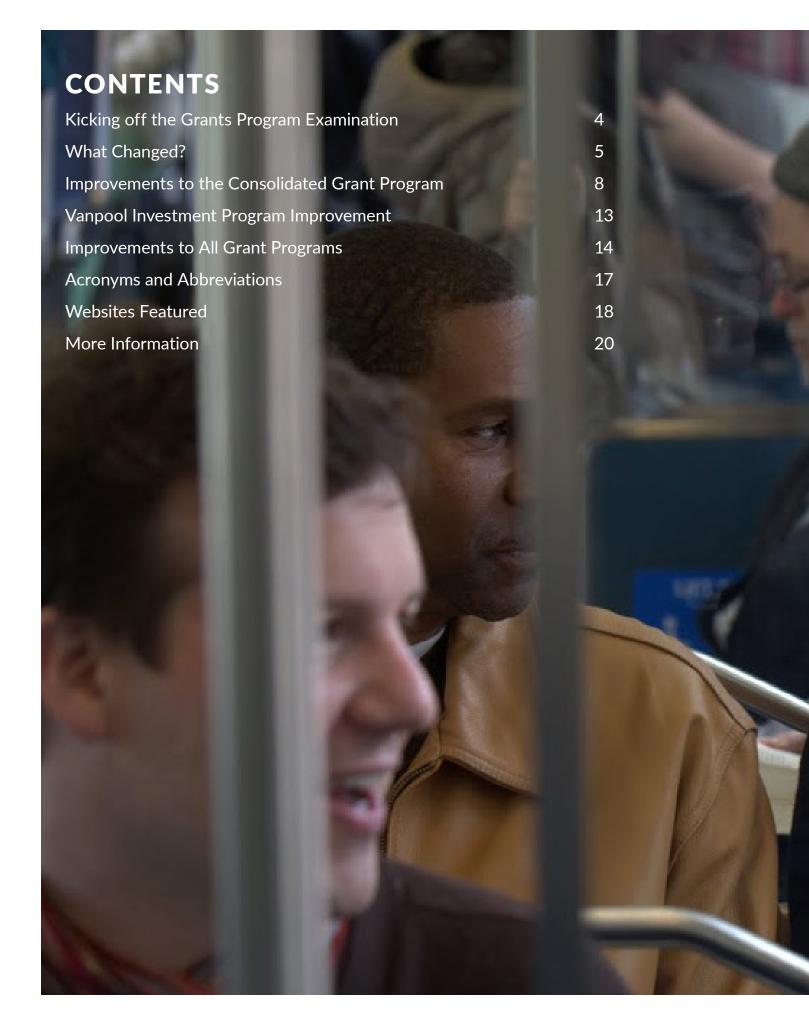


2018 Grant Programs Advisory Committee Report

WSDOT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DIVISION







KICKING OFF THE GRANTS PROGRAM EXAMINATION

Every two years since 2005, WSDOT engages a diverse group of stakeholders in a grants program examination through the Grant Programs Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose for the outreach is to determine whether administrative improvements are needed for WSDOT's Consolidated Grant Program, Regional Mobility Grant Program, Vanpool Investment Program, Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Program, and Commute Trip Innovation Program. For 2017-18, the GPAC examination began with three stakeholder workshops in Spokane, Everett and Olympia in the fall 2017. A total of 49 organizations participated in the workshops, including representatives from rural areas, nonprofits, regional planning organizations, advocacy associations, transit agencies, tribes, and others interested in public transportation in Washington state.1

About the Grant Programs Examined

Consolidated Grant Program

The Consolidated Grant Program awards funding to improve public transportation within and between rural communities, provide transportation services between cities, purchase new buses and other equipment, and offer public transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities. This program is supported by state and federal funding.

Regional Mobility Grant Program

The Regional Mobility Grant Program supports local efforts to improve connectivity between counties and regional population centers, and reduce transportation delay. This program is supported exclusively by state funding.

Vanpool Investment Program

The Vanpool Investment Program funds transit agency purchases of new and replacement vans to expand vanpooling programs. This program is funded exclusively by state dollars.

Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Program

The Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Program authorizes funding for coordinated transit-related projects in the central Puget Sound region. These grants encourage joint planning and coordination of central Puget Sound transit systems to improve the user experience and increase ridership in cost-effective ways. This program is supported exclusively by state funding.

Commute Trip Innovation Program

The Commute Trip Innovation Grant Program is a new program authorized by the legislature in 2017 to increase the use of buses, trains, bicycles, vanpools, carpools, walking and teleworking, as well as consider more non-commute trip reduction travel markets. This program is supported exclusively by state funding.

GPAC Outcomes for the 2019-21 Grant Cycle

The initial 2017-18 GPAC workshops generated 9 improvement ideas for the Consolidated Grant Program, Regional Mobility Grant Program, Vanpool Investment Program, Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Program, and Commute Trip Innovation Program.

Addressing the improvement areas for the Consolidated Grant Program involved two work groups that convened in Olympia during the winter 2018. The stakeholders in the Ongoing Operations and Mobility Management Projects Work Group and Regional Ranking of Applications Work Group met separately as well as jointly for a total of eight meetings. The stakeholders represented nonprofits, regional planning organizations, advocacy associations, transit agencies and tribes.

In total, the 2017-18 GPAC process produced 18 changes to WSDOT's public transportation grant programs for the 2019-21 grant cycle.

WSDOT's Public Transportation Division publishes the Grant Program Advisory Committee Report biennially. The report fulfills reporting requirements outlined in RCW 47.66.080.

What Changed?

The table below shows improvement ideas and changes implemented to WSDOT's public transportation grants for the upcoming 2019-21 grant cycle.

Grant Program	Improvement Ideas	Changes Implemented							
	Provide continuous funding for ongoing operations and mobility management projects over multiple biennia	Revised policy to allow for ongoing operations and mobility management projects to apply for four-years of funding							
Consolidated Grant Program	Address Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) ranking of projects	 Refined project ranking spot allocations Developed regional grading process for four-year projects 							
	Examine minimum local match requirement	Expanded the 10 percent local match cap to all ongoing projects, regardless of applicant type (nonprofit or transit)							
	Review policy of providing full funding for all awarded operating and mobility management projects	No change: Retained the full funding policy for all awarded operating and mobility management projects for the 2019-21 grant cycle							
Vanpool Investment Program	Allow grantees more time to purchase vehicles	Moved the application and award timeline to an earlier date							
	Address grant application timelines	Released the 2019-21 application cycle timelines for the competitive grant programs on January 5, 2018							
	Increase communication	 Revised and tested applications and forms internally and externally prior to release Clarified electronic submittal process in application guidance documents Improved file naming convention in application guidance documents 							
	Improve applications and forms	 Staggered grant application deadlines Increased time between grant announcement and application due date 							
All Grant Programs	Increase training	 Developed a grants training plan that includes a timeline of deliverables and strategy for evaluation Modified training contract with Community Transportation Association Northwest that includes a greater emphasis on e-learning Provided recorded trainings on development of Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans Made Consolidated Grant Program application training available via webinar, recorded video and in person at six locations around the state Added a general grant writing session at the Washington State Public Transportation Conference Expanded asset management training to four locations around the state 							

2017-18 GPAC WORKSHOPS

Dates

Spokane: September 14, 2017

Everett: October 5, 2017

Olympia: October 24, 2017

Participants

Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council

City of Bremerton

City of Seattle, Department of Transportation

City of Vancouver

Clallam Transit

Council on Aging and Human Services

Transportation

Coastal Community Action Program

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

Community Transportation Association Northwest

C-Tran

Everett Transit

Grays Harbor Transit

Homage Senior Services

Human Services Council

Intercity Transit

Island Transit

Jefferson Transit

Kalispel Tribe of Indians

King County Metro

Kitsap Transit

Lummi Indian Business Council

Mason Transit

Northeast Washington RTPO

Northshore Senior Center

Okanogan County Transit Authority

Palouse RTPO

Peninsula RTPO

People for People

Pierce County Human Services

Pierce Transit

Puget Sound Regional Council

Pullman Transit

Rural Resources

Mt Si Senior Center, Snoqualmie Valley

Transportation

Snohomish County Transportation Coalition

Special Mobility Services

Spokane County Commute Trip Reduction

Spokane Transit

Thurston Regional Planning Council

Volunteer Services

Washington State Department of Social and

Health Services

Washington State Ferries

Washington State Transit Association

Washington State University

Whatcom Transportation Authority

WSDOT Public Transportation Division

WSDOT Eastern Region Office

WSDOT Eastern Region Planning

WSDOT Northwest Region Office

WSDOT Southwest Region Office

2017-18 ONGOING OPERATIONS AND MOBILITY MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS WORK GROUP

Dates

Olympia:

- January 11, 2018
- January 24, 2018
- February 14, 2018
- February 20, 2018 joint meeting with Regional Ranking of Applications Work Group
- February 22, 2018

Participants

Ben Franklin Transit

Cowlitz Tribe

Community Transportation Association Northwest

Grays Harbor Transit

Island Transit

Mason Transit Authority

Okanogan County Transit Authority

Puget Sound Regional Council

Spokane Transit

Washington State Transit Association

Whatcom Transit

WSDOT Public Transportation Division

2017-18 REGIONAL RANKING OF APPLICATIONS WORK GROUP

Dates

Olympia:

- January 9, 2018
- January 30, 2018
- February 9, 2018
- February 20, 2018 joint meeting with Ongoing Operations and Mobility Management Applications Work Group

Participants

Ben Franklin Transit

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

Island Transit

Jefferson Transit Authority

Northeast Washington RTPO

Tri County Economic Development District

Palouse RTPO

Peninsula RTPO

Puget Sound Regional Council

Thurston Regional Planning Council

WSDOT Public Transportation Division

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CONSOLIDATED GRANT PROGRAM

The following policy improvements were made to the Consolidated Grant Program. This program awards funding to improve public transportation within and between rural communities, provide transportation services between cities, purchase new buses and other equipment, and offer public transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities. This program is supported by state and federal funding:

State Programs

- o Paratransit/Special Needs Grant Program
- o Rural Mobility Grant Program

Federal Programs

- Bus and Bus Facilities Infrastructure
 Investment Program
- o Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities
- o Formula Grants for Rural Areas
- o Statewide Planning

Consolidated Grant Program Improvement: Provide continuous funding for ongoing operations and mobility management projects over multiple biennia

The synthesis of state and federal funding sources available in the Consolidated Grant Program allows for a multitude of applicant and project types. However, the frequency of the program's competitive application (every biennium) and the complexity of the application process adds challenges for service providers to budget and service planning. Additionally, approximately 80 percent of Consolidated Grant Program awards have gone to ongoing operations and mobility management projects.³

During the 2017-18 GPAC workshops, stakeholders discussed the benefit and cost of requiring Consolidated Grant Program applications every

biennium for ongoing operations and mobility management projects, leading to request to provide continuity of funding for these projects.

The request was forwarded to the Ongoing Operations and Mobility Management Projects Work Group, made up of stakeholders from 12 organizations representing rural public transit, tribal transit, nonprofit special needs transportation, and RTPOs. The work group recommended the following:

- Service providers may apply for ongoing operations and mobility management projects for four years of funding through the Consolidated Grant Program.
- WSDOT will compare budget and performance measures in a project's 2017-19 application with requests in its 2019-21/2021-23 application to determine if the project is ongoing operations or an expansion.
- A grantee awarded funds for ongoing operations and mobility management projects for four years will be required to reapply after two biennia.
- Capital, new or expansion projects are only eligible for the two-year application.
- Projects funded in previous biennia with the same objective and with an increase of funding of five percent are considered ongoing projects.

More information about these improvement is available in the Consolidated Grant Program White Papers at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Transit/ Grants

³ Mobility management projects include:

[•] Multifunctional, multiagency teams that promote transportation opportunities and reduce duplicative service.

One-on-one or small group travel training with the goal of increased mobility.

Coordinated communication through technological means, such as 211 information lines.

What Changed?

WSDOT established performance measures to determine if a Consolidated Grant Program project qualifies as a sustaining operations and mobility management project for the first biennium of funding, or for a second biennium of funding without requiring reapplication.

Performance Measures for Ongoing Operations and Mobility Management Projects

The table below contains performance measures for determining if an ongoing operations and mobility management project may apply for four years of Consolidated Grant Program funding.

What gets measured?*	Change threshold	Outcome	Determination
	≤ 5 percent	No explanation needed	Ongoing operations
Grant funding request	≥ 5.1-10 percent	Explanation needed	Passes or fails reasonableness test
request	> 10 percent	Considered expansion	Submit 2019-21 expansion application for that portion
Traditional measures: Revenue	≤ 5 percent	No explanation needed	Ongoing operations
Vehicle Hours and	≥ 5.1-10 percent	Explanation needed	Passes or fails reasonableness test
Revenue Vehicle Miles	> 10 percent	Considered expansion	Submit 2019-21 expansion application for that portion
Non-	≤ 5 percent	No explanation needed	Ongoing operations
traditional measures: Objectives	≥ 5.1–10 percent	Explanation needed	Passes or fails reasonableness test
as stated in application [†]	> 10 percent	Considered expansion	Submit 2019-21 expansion application for that portion

Table Notes:

- * Compares what was pledged and evaluated in the most recent application (2017-19) with requests in the 2019-21/2021-23 application.
- † There may be some projects where traditional performance measures (Revenue Vehicle Hours and Revenue Vehicle Miles) do not apply. If the applicant would like the evaluation panel to consider the value of the project based on another measurement, quantifiable objectives and targets can be used in place of traditional performance measures (e.g., number of trainings or outreach, number of passengers served). In order to be eligible to apply for two biennia of funding, the project must have documented those same measures in the previous application.

Consolidated Grant Program Improvement: Address Regional Transportation Planning Organization ranking and selection of projects

Since 2005, WSDOT has partnered with RTPOs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to identify projects that could be eligible for Consolidated Grant Program funding. WSDOT entered into this partnership to ensure the selection of projects met regional and local needs identified in locally developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans. These plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. They also provide strategies for meeting these needs and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.

Based on this partnership, WSDOT allocates RTPOs and MPOs a number of ranking spots (further delineated into grades) for the following demographic measurements:

- Rurally isolated
- People living in poverty
- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- Veterans
- Youth

During the 2017-18 GPAC workshops, stakeholders discussed the methodology used for allocating ranking spots. Stakeholders noted that single-county RTPOs and MPOs appeared to have a larger share of ranking spots. Areas with very large populations and/or multiple counties felt their allocation of ranking spots were grouped with RTPOs and MPOs that were not similarly sized. Additionally, demographic measures for rural populations did not match Federal Transit Administration definitions, (e.g., the 85+ age group was not included). This led to requests to update demographic measurements and the way they impacted ranking spots for each RTPO and MPO.

The request was forwarded to the *Regional Ranking* of *Projects Work Group*, made up of stakeholders from 11 organizations representing RTPOs and MPOs, rural public transits, and tribal governments. The work group recommended the following:

- Adjust the rural population measures to match Federal Transit Administration definitions.
- Add demographic data for the 85+ age group.
- Use a combination of methodologies to account for both the raw numbers and per capita populations when evaluating demographic data relevant to the allocation of ranking spots.
- Develop a process for the allocation of regional ranking spots and grading spots to accommodate ongoing operations and mobility management projects applying for four years of funding.
- Update population data biennially, when more current data becomes available.

What Changed?

WSDOT made the following changes, which were recommended in the 2017-18 GPAC workshops and subsequent work group:

Ranking Spots

Ranking spot allocations were changed by:

- Redefining "rural population" to match Federal Transit Administration definitions.
- Adding demographic data for the 85+ age group.
- Distributing ranking spots proportional to the special needs demographics.⁴

These changes were made to ensure more equitable distribution among areas with high and low populations.

⁴ People with special needs are defined as those who cannot provide transportation for themselves due to age, disability, or income.

Grades for Four-Year Funding Cycles

For four-year projects, RTPOs have the option near the end of the project's first biennium to decide whether the project will continue into its second biennium with the same or lower grade.

If the project continues through both biennia with the same grade, the RTPO loses the original grade for the second biennium.

If the project receives a lower grade in the second biennium, the RTPO can reassign the project's original grade to a new project in the second biennium. Projects receiving a lower grade in the second biennium must reapply for Consolidated Grant Program funding.

Regional Ranking Spot Allocation by Biennium

This table contains the projected ranking spots for the next two biennia.

		G	Grading Spots				
Regional Ranking Spots by Planning Organization	2019-21 & 2021-23* Ranking Spots	Α	В	С			
Benton-Franklin Council of Governments	14	5	5	4			
Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council	17	6	6	5			
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments/Southwest Washington RTPO	24	8	8	8			
Island RTPO	9	3	3	3			
Northeast Washington RTPO	17	6	6	5			
Okanogan Council of Governments	9	3	3	3			
Palouse RTPO	15	5	5	5			
Peninsula RTPO	21	7	7	7			
Puget Sound Regional Council	21	7	7	7			
Quad-County RTPO	17	6	6	5			
San Juan County	9	3	3	3			
Skagit Council of Governments	9	3	3	3			
Spokane Regional Transportation Council	9	3	3	3			
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council	17	6	6	5			
Thurston Regional Planning Council	9	3	3	3			
Walla Walla Valley MPO	9	3	3	3			
Whatcom Council of Governments	9	3	3	3			
Yakima Valley Council of Governments	9	3	3	3			
Total	244	83	83	78			

Table Notes:

Assumption: The demographic data underlying the allocation of ranking spots remains constant, and is subject to change.

Consolidated Grant Program Improvement: Examine minimum local match requirement

Projects receiving funding through the Consolidated Grant Program have traditionally been required to commit a minimum local match of 10 percent for ongoing projects. In the 2017-19 biennium, WSDOT had planned to implement a graduated local match requirement, increasing the local match commitment by five percent with each reapplication for an ongoing project. In 2017, WSDOT was instructed by the Legislature to not apply the graduated local match requirement to nonprofit applicants, capping the nonprofit local match requirement at 10 percent.

What Changed?

For the 2019-21 biennium, WSDOT and stakeholders expanded the 10 percent local match cap to all ongoing projects, regardless of applicant type (nonprofit or transit).

Consolidated Grant Program Improvement: Review policy of providing full funding for all awarded operating and mobility management projects

Prior to the 2015-17 grant cycle, it was WSDOT's policy to make full or partial Consolidated Grant Program awards to fund as many projects as possible. While this allowed for more projects to be funded, projects that had been competitively evaluated were often unable to deliver estimated performance measures with only partial funding.

For the 2017-19 grant cycle, WSDOT moved to a policy of fully funding awarded operating and mobility management projects. With this change, an internal review of a project's budget was implemented before projects were evaluated. The internal budget review allowed WSDOT to provide immediate feedback to applicants about their projects. It also provided transparency and defensibility for award decisions, because the final cost was matched with the final benefit of the project.⁵

Stakeholder feedback during the 2017-18 GPAC process supported the continuation of the internal budget review.

What Changed?

No change: WSDOT retained the full funding policy for all awarded operating and mobility management projects for the 2019-21 grant cycle.

Internal budget review occurs prior to the final application deadline. If adjustments are identified, applicants are provided advanced notice to adjust or right size their budget prior to the submission deadline. WSDOT documents the applicant's response to any suggested adjustments, and includes these responses in the application packet sent to the evaluation panel.

VANPOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

The state-funded Vanpool Investment Program provides grants to transit agencies for purchasing new and replacement vans to expand vanpooling programs.

Allow grantees more time to purchase vehicles

Van and minivan manufactures typically open their production lines for new model year vehicles in July. Stakeholders for the 2017-18 GPAC process recommended a closer alignment of the Vanpool Investment Program grant cycle timeline to van and minivan manufacturer timelines.

What Changed?

WSDOT moved the Vanpool Investment Program grant application and award to an earlier date to allow grantees to place orders and receive vehicles earlier than past grant cycles.







IMPROVEMENTS TO ALL GRANT PROGRAMS

The following improvements were made to the Commute Trip Innovation Program, Consolidated Grant Program, Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Program, Regional Mobility Grant Program and Vanpool Investment Program.

Improvement to All Grant Programs: Increase communication

During the 2017-18 GPAC process, stakeholders recommended improvements in communications, specifically publishing 2019-21 application cycle timelines for the competitive grant programs as early as possible.

What Changed?

WSDOT released the 2019-21 application cycle timelines for the competitive grant programs on January 5, 2018, which was five months ahead of the first application due date.

Improvement to All Grant Programs: Improve applications and forms

The application and forms for WSDOT's public transportation grant programs have grown in size and complexity. As complexity grows, the chance for errors increases in applications, embedded calculations and forms.

WSDOT has built time into the overall grant cycle timeline for a number of improvements.

What Changed?

- Revised and tested applications and forms internally and externally prior to release.
- Clarified electronic submittal process in application guidance documents.
- Improved file naming convention in application guidance documents.





Improvement to All Grant Programs: Address grant application timelines

Several of the state's transportation service providers are eligible for more than one WSDOT public transportation grant program. However, the process of applying to multiple grant programs can prove difficult, particularly for smaller organizations with limited staff and resources.

What Changed?

- Staggered grant application deadlines to minimize impact to agencies applying for multiple grant programs (see chart below).
- Increased time between grant announcement and application due date.

2019–2021 WSDOT Public transportation grant program timelines

This chart outlines the timelines for the following grant programs

- Regional Mobility Grant Program (RMG)
- Consolidated Grant Program
- Puget Sound Transit Coordination (PSTC)
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program(RTAP)
- Vanpool Investment Grant Program (VIP)
- Commute Trip Innovation Grant Program (CTIG)

		Start	End	Duration	Q4 17	Q4 17 Q1 18		Q2 18		Q3 18		Q4 18		Q1 19			Q2 19			Q3 19	
	Grant Activity				Nov Dec	Jan Feb Ma	ar Apr	May Ju	n Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct I	Nov De	c Jar	n Feb	Mar	Apr	May .			
1	RMG concept letters	2/1/2018	3/1/2018	29d	■ (RMG)																
2	RMG Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) — Application due date	6/1/2018	7/13/2018	43d	■■■ (RMG)																
3	RMG Internal Review applications/ request changes as needed	7/18/2018	8/10/2018	24d	■◆ (RMG)																
4	RMG revised applications due	8/10/2018	8/10/2018	1d	♦ (RMG)																
5	RMG External Evaluation Panel ranks projects	8/15/2018	9/7/2018	24d	(RMG)																
6	Consolidated NOFO – Application due date	7/9/2018	9/14/2018	68d	↓ (Consolidated)																
7	Consolidated Internal Review applications/request changes as needed	10/1/2018	12/7/2018	68d		(Consolidated)															
8	Consolidated revised applications due	12/7/2018	12/7/2018	1d	♦ (Consolidated)																
9	Consolidated External Evaluation Panel ranks projects	1/7/2019	2/8/2019	33d	(Consolidated)																
10	PSTC NOFO - Application due date	1/7/2019	2/1/2019	26d	(PSTC)																
11	RTAP NOFO – Application due date	1/14/2019	3/11/2019	57d	→ (RTAP)																
12	RTAP Evaluation Panel ranks projects	3/18/2019	4/5/2019	19d	(RTAP)																
13	VIP NOFO - Application due date	3/13/2019	4/26/2019	45d	(VIP)									P)							
14	CTIG NOFO - Application due date	4/8/2019	5/6/2019	29d														(C	CTIG)		

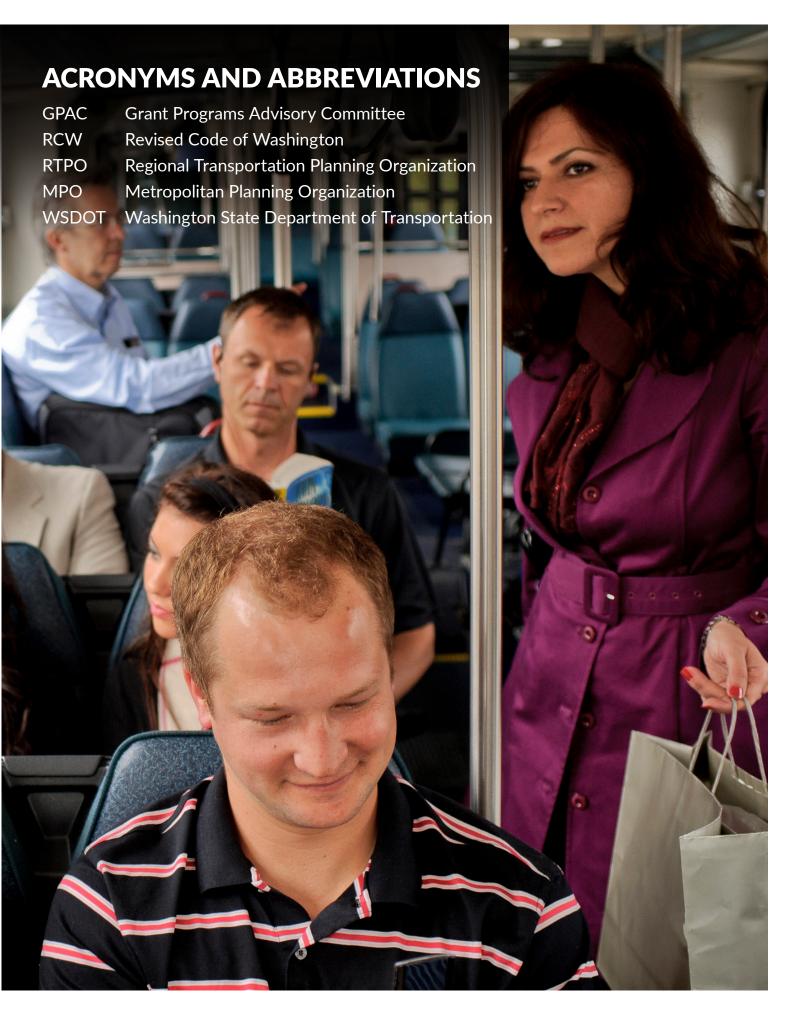
Improvement to All Grant Programs: Increase training

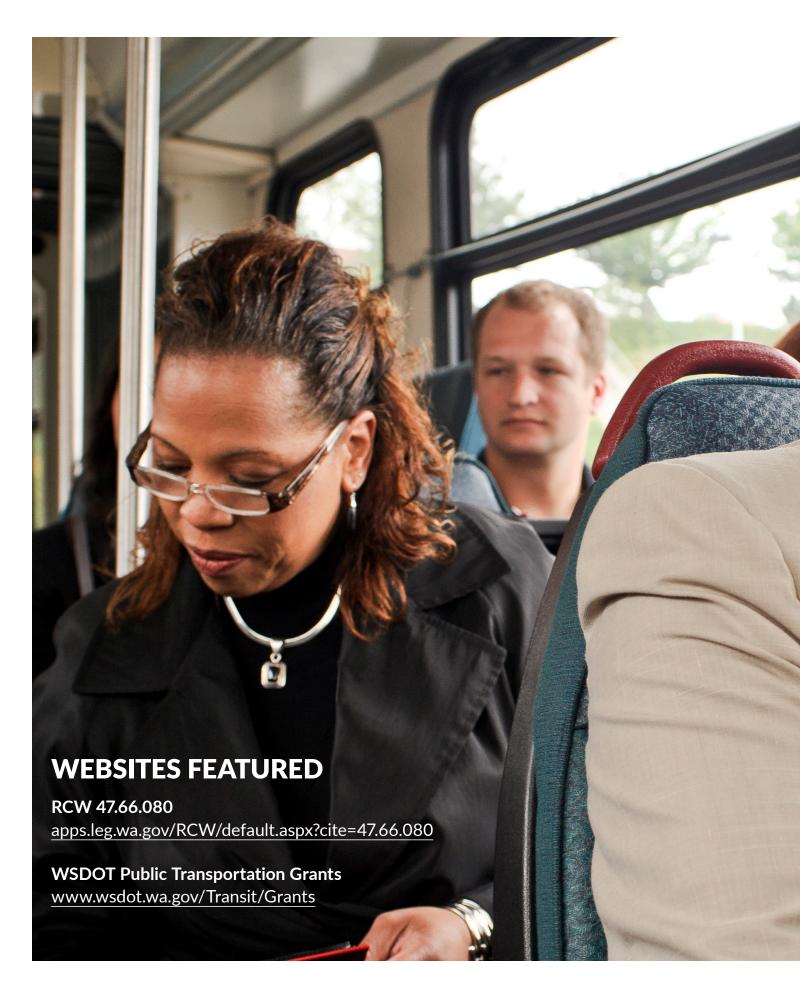
During the 2017-18 GPAC, the following training needs were identified:

- Training for the planning organizations relevant to their Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans development, including the prioritization of projects identified by the plan.
- Additional grant application and grant writing training.
- Additional training resources for rural agencies that cannot travel to trainings.

What Changed?

- Developed a grants training plan that includes a timeline of deliverables and strategy for evaluation.
- Modified training contract with Community Transportation Association Northwest that includes a greater emphasis on e-learning.
- Provided recorded trainings on development of Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans.
- Made Consolidated Grant Program application training available via webinar, recorded video and in person at six locations around the state.
- Added a general grant writing session at the Washington State Public Transportation Conference.
- Expanded asset management training to four locations around the state.









MORE INFORMATION

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