

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Transportation Research and Policy



INFRASTRUCTURE



Overview

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a philanthropy dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice.

The Infrastructure team has been investing in efforts to build better, faster, and lower-cost infrastructure with a focus on housing, energy, and transportation. For transportation, we are investing in policymaking and research that tackles the inefficiencies that make U.S. transportation infrastructure so difficult and expensive to build.

PURPOSE

Transportation policy represents an avenue for improving the systems moving people, goods, and services. The Infrastructure team is seeking proposals evaluating the effectiveness and/or benefits of existing transportation or transportation-adjacent policies on outcomes for communities in the United States.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- U.S.-based organization
- Must have an EIN

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND TOPIC AREAS OF INTEREST

This Request for Proposals (RFP) aims to bolster the knowledge base of potentially effective policies, programs, and interventions by funding efforts that align with key AV Infrastructure policy areas.

AV is primarily focused on traditional surface transportation — road and public transit — but is open to proposals in aviation, maritime, passenger and freight rail, trucking, and more.

We seek proposals for: 1) research, expanded data sets, or analysis; 2) administrative or legislative policy reforms at the federal, state, or local level; or 3) models of effective implementation including proposals for implementing agencies to partner with researchers or program evaluators to conduct baseline and post-intervention research on implementation effectiveness that will advance the knowledge base and provide illustrative examples within, but not limited to, the following topic areas:

- **Transportation Capital Investment Reform.** Evaluating how capital funding is prioritized and selected at the federal, state, or regional level, including discretionary grant programs and formula-based funding. What reforms could ensure projects deliver higher public returns?
- **Cost Estimation, Oversight, and Accountability.** Why do major transportation projects frequently exceed budgets and timelines, and how can we identify strategies to improve transparency, cost realism, and performance oversight?
- **Access in Mobility Outcomes.** Measuring how current transportation investments affect access to jobs, services, and economic opportunities for workers and families, and what policy changes could improve access.
- **Performance-Based Project Selection.** How can public agencies shift from current, politically driven allocations to data-driven, performance-based decision-making on capital project selections?
- **Institutional Barriers to Reform.** What organizational, legal, or procedural hurdles prevent DOTs and MPOs from adopting better practices (e.g., outcome-based planning, integrated land use/transportation policy)?
- **Permitting and Permit Reform.** How do current local, state, and federal permitting practices affect project cost, quality, timeline, and other concerns?
- **Intergovernmental Dynamics.** How do federal, state, and local funding structures and requirements enable or constrain effective transportation investment? What governance structures would improve outcomes when it comes to transportation planning and project delivery?

- **Data Sets and Root Causes of High Delivery Costs.** Expanded data sets on unit costs and/or research illuminating the root causes of why transportation and transit projects cost so much and take so long to deliver. What policy and practice changes could manage project delivery risks and improve the likelihood that projects will be delivered on schedule and on budget?
- **Domestic Content.** How do Buy America and domestic content requirements affect the cost, speed, innovation, and effectiveness of transportation infrastructure projects?
- **Procurement Process.** How do current procurement practices affect project cost, quality, innovation, and accountability — and what policy and regulatory reforms could improve outcomes?
- **Other.** AV also welcomes innovative proposals on other transportation issues that align with our mission.

These research, policy development, and implementation proposals can be relevant to federal surface transportation reauthorization legislation or federal administrative changes; state reforms to Departments of Transportation; and/or local-level reforms relevant either to regional transportation agencies, transit agencies, or municipal governments.

RFP Timeline

STAGE OF APPLICATION PROCESS	DATE
Deadline to receive letters of interest (LOI)	March 27, 2026
Notification if invited to submit a full proposal	April 10, 2026
Deadline for invited applicants to submit full proposal	May 8, 2026
Notification if selected for award	May 26, 2026

How to Apply:

All applicants are asked to submit a letter of interest via the Transportation RFP [applicant portal](#) by **March 27, 2026**. Letters of interest (LOI) should be no longer than 4 pages, single or double spaced, in 11-point font with 1-inch margins. If there are any supporting documents, we ask that they be attached under the Optional Upload for Supporting Documents section of the portal.

The LOI should include the following:

- **Project Proposal:** Provide a 1- to 2-page overview of the topic area and proposed scope of the project. This should include the transportation-related issue being addressed and the approach the applicant would take as described in Eligible Projects and Topic Areas of Interest.
- **Study Team Overview:** Provide an outline of the roles and responsibilities of key project members with brief bios and qualifications.
- **Project Length:** Provide an overview of the proposed project timeline. Projects longer than 18 months will NOT be considered.

- **Budget Request Summary:** Specify the amount of funding requested from AV, reflecting the proposed project timeline and consistent with AV's indirect cost policy. Please refer to our [Indirect Costs Policy Guide](#) for further information. While a formal budget is not required at this stage, applicants should provide details on the anticipated drivers of project costs (e.g., personnel time, data acquisition, travel, and administrative costs). The target budget for RFP proposals is around \$200,000. If your proposal is above \$200,000, please provide a more detailed breakdown on the project costs.

The Transportation Infrastructure Team at AV will oversee this Request for Proposals.

All qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, military/veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is funding available to cover programmatic costs?**
 - › Generally, AV funding supports project-related expenses such as research management, data collection, data analysis, support to programs for research and data costs, etc. In a limited number of cases, budgets may include a nominal amount of funding for programmatic costs that are necessary to enable a sufficiently-sized project to go forward — for example, if additional program staff are needed to administer the program as part of the project.
 - › If you'd like to discuss a question about the budget for your application, please reach out to our team at transportationRFP@arnoldventures.org.
- **Can we submit multiple LOIs?**
 - › Yes, we welcome multiple submissions. Please submit a separate letter of interest for each distinct project.
- **How long does your application process take from start to finish?**
 - › This varies from project to project. From receipt of letter of interest to the execution of a grant agreement, our process typically takes around 6 months.
- **Can I meet with your team to discuss a potential submission idea?**
 - › Unfortunately, due to the number of inquiries we receive, our team is unable to schedule a call or provide individual feedback at the letter of interest stage.
- **Do you fund efforts outside the United States?**
 - › We only fund projects that focus on U.S. programs and policies.
- **Do my references/citations count as part of the four-page limit?**
 - › No, references/citations do not count as part of the 4-page limit.
- **Is there a maximum budget?**
 - › There is no set maximum budget. We expect project costs to vary based on the complexity of the project and overall scope of work. Budgets should be well-justified and aligned with the project's goals and design. Reviewers will assess the proposed budget closely as part of the evaluation process.
- **Is there a maximum period of performance?**
 - › For this RFP, the maximum period of performance is 18 months.

- **What should be included in the budget?**

- You should specify the amount of funding requested from AV, reflecting the project timeline and the project scope, along with a brief budget narrative. The budget should include the anticipated drivers of project costs (e.g., personnel time, data acquisition, travel, and administrative costs), and indirect costs that are consistent with AV's cost policy (linked in the RFP). If we invite a full proposal, we will share a detailed budget template.

- **Are for-profit institutions eligible to apply?**

- Yes, for-profit institutions are eligible for funding, though reporting requirements may differ if a grant is awarded.

Please direct other questions about the selection criteria or application process to transportationRFP@arnoldventures.org.

STATEMENT ON COMMITMENT TO ASSESSING IMPACT ON ALL COMMUNITIES

AV's mission includes maximizing opportunity and minimizing injustice. We encourage research projects that use inclusive research methods and frameworks, including assessments of whether policy and practice have a disproportionate impact on particular communities, whenever appropriate and possible.

[Arnold Ventures](https://arnoldventures.org) is a philanthropy that supports research to understand the root causes of America's most persistent and pressing problems, as well as evidence-based solutions to address them. By focusing on systemic change and bipartisan policy reforms, AV works to improve the lives of American families, strengthen communities, and promote economic opportunity.