



Solicitation for INVEST Implementation Projects

November 10, 2016

Summary

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announces an applied research funding opportunity for transportation agencies to use INVEST to evaluate the sustainability of their projects and programs, identify areas for improvement, analyze options for improving sustainability, and document results. INVEST is FHWA's voluntary sustainability self-assessment tool and is available at www.sustainablehighways.org.

The INVEST website has a growing set of case studies on how the tool has helped transportation agencies improve the economic, social, and environmental outcomes of their projects and programs. FHWA seeks to grow and diversify this set of case studies with additional examples from areas of the country that have not yet used INVEST and with innovative examples of how INVEST can help agencies take sustainability to the next level.

The funding opportunity is available to State departments of transportation (DOTs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and Federal land management agencies (FLMAs).

Agencies that would like to apply should send letters of interest to Connie Hill Galloway and Rob Hyman with FHWA's Office of Natural Environment (see contact information on page 5) and copy their corresponding [FHWA Division Office](#) by January 5, 2017.

Transportation agencies receiving funding will benefit from this opportunity through additional resources for assessing current levels of sustainability and analyzing options for sustainability improvements. FHWA and stakeholders nationally will benefit from this opportunity as it will establish a broader collection of case studies of evaluating and improving the sustainability of transportation projects and programs.

Background

INVEST is a practical, web-based collection of voluntary best practices and criteria designed to help transportation agencies integrate sustainable practices into their projects, plans, and programs. A product of FHWA's planning and environmental research program, INVEST helps transportation agencies improve investment decisions while considering limited resources by addressing the sustainability triple bottom line – enhancing economic, social, and environmental outcomes.



By offering transportation agencies a collection of best practices, INVEST serves two purposes. First, it enables transportation agencies to gauge their performance in adopting sustainability practices. Second, and more importantly, it helps agencies identify workable solutions that allow them to further incorporate sustainability into pending planning or project decisions, or to identify potential changes to business processes. Many of the best practices presented by INVEST save money as well as improve sustainability. For example, items such as quality construction, designing pavement for long life, life cycle concepts, recycled materials, and improved safety can all show overall lower cost as well as benefits to society.

The tool has four modules:

- **System Planning for States:** for assessing and improving system-level planning and programming policies, processes, procedures and practices. This module is geared towards States, Tollways and local agencies that perform landscape-scale and corridor-wide planning and that typically own infrastructure.
- **Systems Planning for Regions:** for assessing system-level planning and programming policies, processes, procedures and practices. This module is geared towards Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Council of Governments, or other planning organizations that perform landscape-scale planning for a regional area (and that typically do not own infrastructure).
- **Project Development:** for assessing and improving the sustainability of specific transportation projects, including project planning, design, and construction phase.
- **Operations and Maintenance:** for assessing and improving the sustainability of transportation agency operations and maintenance programs.

FHWA developed INVEST with input from, and in cooperation with, State, regional, and local transportation agency officials and professional organizations. FHWA is continuously improving the tool with feedback from users to keep pace with the evolving field of sustainability.

Eligible Activities

The intent of this FHWA research funding opportunity is to develop case studies and analyses showing sustainability improvements that transportation agencies can make through self-evaluation with INVEST and subsequent exploration and implementation of promising sustainability practices. As such, funding may be used for staff or consultant time to use the tool, conduct additional analyses of sustainability practices, develop case studies and reports, identify changes that can be made to projects or processes, develop cost estimates for improved practices, estimate benefits of improved practices, and develop and evaluate action plans to implement these changes.

Assessing the sustainability of current action is only the first step. Making changes to improve sustainability is the desired result. As such, FHWA is interested in applied research projects that utilize INVEST to assess the sustainability of current practice, identify opportunities for improvement, implement improvements, and document case studies and results of analyses. Projects should also

quantify as best as possible costs and cost savings, as well as benefits to environmental, economic, and social outcomes. FHWA strongly encourages applications from States and/or regions that have not received funding in the previous two rounds.

Final Product

Each INVEST implementation applied research project should result in a final report that details the work performed, parties involved, issues encountered, lessons learned, sustainability improvements identified, sustainability improvements implemented, analyses of costs and benefits of implementing particular sustainability best practices, recommendations for future action, and recommendations on improving INVEST and adding to the state of the practice. The final report must also include a two to five page summary case study. The final report should be in a form that is sharable with other agencies, and may be posted to the FHWA website.

Funding

Funding levels for applied research projects may vary depending on the depth and extent of analysis proposed as well as the potential benefit to FHWA and the recipient. FHWA anticipates making approximately four to six awards, with each project's Federal share ranging between \$20,000 and \$50,000. By Federal statute, there is a matching requirement of at least a 20% non-federal share, though larger non-federal shares are highly encouraged with a 50% share preferred. In-kind contributions such as staffing can be counted towards the match requirement. Federal land management agencies are not required to provide a non-federal share, but are encouraged to use other sources of funding as match.

Process

Agencies interested in the funding opportunity are asked to submit a five to ten page letter of interest to Connie Hill Galloway and Rob Hyman with FHWA's Office of Natural Environment (see contact information on page 5) and copy their respective FHWA Division Office. Division Offices will provide feedback on the submitted letters of interest by January 11.

Projects will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Workable plan for conducting an evaluation with INVEST, analyzing additional sustainability strategies identified as a result of the INVEST evaluation, and documenting a case study.
- Impact on decision-making through evidence that the results of the INVEST evaluation will lead to implementation of sustainability best practices; for example, that results will influence pending planning or project decisions.
- Potential of project to serve as a national case study on the benefits of using INVEST.
- Willingness and plans to provide case studies and lessons learned to share with others as well as providing feedback to improve INVEST.
- Demonstrated interest and support. For instance, support from senior management, past work in this area, support from local elected officials, public support, etc.
- Availability of local match and necessary staffing and resources.

- Project adds to the diversity of the set of INVEST projects underway nationally. See [Who is Using INVEST](#).

After selection, the recipient will participate in a conference call with FHWA to discuss the project. FHWA will provide feedback on the draft work plan, the goals of the project, and any additional assistance/resources that FHWA may have available. A revised work plan should be submitted and approved by FHWA before commencing work.

Submitting a letter of interest is not a guarantee of funding.

Timeline

The deadline for submitting letters of interest is January 5, 2017. Division Offices will provide feedback to headquarters on the submitted letters of interest by January 11, 2017. Funding decisions will be announced in mid-to-late January 2017. Projects must be completed by September 2018 unless a reason for a longer timeline is justified in the letter of interest. Earlier conclusion dates are encouraged.

Required Contents for Letters of Interest

The letter of interest must be five to ten pages and must include the following elements:

- Description of agency interest in using INVEST, goals for sustainability, and management support for the effort.
- Description of the proposed effort and work plan. This section should include the purpose and a detailed description of the effort to be funded. It should explain plans to conduct the INVEST evaluation, and analyze the feasibility of additional sustainability practices identified through the INVEST evaluation. It should include the phases of work, budget, work products, and timing. If contractor assistance is planned to support the effort, that support and estimated level of effort should be included.
- Impact on decision-making. This section should describe how the results of the INVEST evaluation and analysis of additional sustainability practices will lead to implementation of sustainability best practices.
- Collaboration. This section should describe plans to provide case studies, lessons learned, and feedback for improving the tool. It should also describe the potential of the project to serve as a national case study on the benefits of using INVEST.
- Description of dedicated staffing/resources. This section should fully describe the funding and assets that will be dedicated to the project, and demonstrate how the non-Federal match requirement will be met.

Webinars

Two one-hour webinars will be held on the following dates to inform interested parties about INVEST and how to apply for Round 3 funding:

- Thursday, November 17, 1:00 – 2:00 PM EST
- Thursday, December 1, 2:30 – 3:30 PM EST

During these webinars FHWA will address any questions that applicants have regarding Round 3. To register for the webinars, visit www.sustainablehighways.org. The webinars will be recorded and posted to the INVEST website.

Contacts

- Connie Hill Galloway, Office of Natural Environment, 804-775-3378, Connie.Hill@dot.gov
- Rob Hyman, Office of Natural Environment, 202-366-5843, Robert.Hyman@dot.gov

Resources

Please visit www.sustainablehighways.org to learn more about INVEST, browse the criteria, view videos, and explore case studies of State DOTs and MPOs that have used INVEST. If your agency is interested in learning more about INVEST training and technical assistance opportunities, please contact the FHWA staff members listed above.

Please visit www.sustainablehighways.dot.gov to learn about FHWA's Sustainable Highways Initiative, hear news of FHWA sustainability activities, and view sustainability-related publications and resources.