

Innovative Mobility Program

What we heard, what we're doing

Background

The Innovative Mobility Program (IMP) is a new initiative from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) that aims to improve access to walking, biking, rolling, and public transportation, reduce the number of trips Oregonians make by car, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The IMP has a special focus on equity and helping historically excluded groups to get to where they need to go more quickly, cheaply, and safely.

The IMP is funded by \$10 million in Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds and \$10 million in State of Oregon funds. From June-September 2022, ODOT staff conducted an initial round of engagement with community-based organizations, local and regional governments, transportation providers, and other state agencies to inform the development of the program.

ODOT aims to create an equitable and accessible grants program; therefore, the design and implementation of the IMP will reflect community feedback. Decisions include creating a \$5,000 micro-grant program with no deadline for application in addition to a large competitive grants program, allowing for various delivery models, and both facilitating and incentivizing partnerships between community-based organizations, transportation providers, and local/regional governments.

The following is a summary of what we heard and what we are doing because of the community feedback. The full Engagement Report is available on the [IMP website](#).

What we heard, what we're doing

What we heard: Federal funds can be challenging small organizations to work with, given restrictions on how funds can be spent and federal reporting requirements.

What we're doing: Focusing the federal funds on larger projects and on paying contractors to undertake capacity building and technical support work. Smaller competitive grants and micro-grants will be funded through more flexible state funds.

What we heard: The recipient/sub-recipient model can create a power imbalance that further marginalizes historically excluded groups

What we're doing: Allowing for different delivery models that suit local conditions, including incentivizing equal partnerships between community-based organizations, transportation providers and local/regional governments.

What we heard: Small organizations often serve communities with the greatest need but struggle to produce grant applications that can compete against larger organizations that serve the general population.

What we're doing: Designing a grant application process that prioritizes need and will include support for organizations to develop robust applications that can be competitive in an open, public process.

What we heard: Match funding is a major barrier for small organizations and jurisdictions that serve areas with low population density.

What we're doing: We encourage pooling resources and building on existing work. IMP micro-grants do not require match funding, and we will carefully consider appropriate match rates for large grants.

What we heard: ODOT's grant processes can be opaque and hard to navigate.

What we're doing: Working with communities to design processes that are as simple and clear as possible, being clear and transparent when changes are made and posting our guidance and evaluation forms online so you can see how your application will be assessed. We're also not rejecting applications if they don't meet a technical requirement but working with applicants to "get to yes" wherever possible.

What we heard: We only find out about grant opportunities after it is too late.

What we're doing: Publicizing the IMP a year before the first competitive grants will go out and inviting communities to help us to design the process. We've just completed our initial 6-month engagement process, but we'll keep an open door throughout the process so we can keep responding and improving.

What we heard: We need help now!

What we're doing: Our \$5,000 micro-grants will be issued on a rolling basis so that there's always an opportunity to access some funds.

What we heard: We know that there's need but we don't have the technical expertise to know what to ask for.

What we're doing: We plan to provide technical assistance for grant applicants and grant awardees. We'll also post examples of projects that have successfully secured a micro-grant to help give others' ideas for what kinds of projects they should apply for.

What we heard: Programs that have joint climate and equity goals often discriminate against historically excluded groups by prioritizing climate goals over equity.

What we're doing: The ideal IMP project will meet both equity and climate goals, and we'll work with applicants to help make that happen. If that isn't possible, we'll prioritize equity because we know that communities of color and other historically excluded groups are disproportionately affected by climate change and shouldn't be further excluded by climate change mitigation work.

What we heard: These funds are time limited, what happens when they run out?

What we're doing: We're working to maximize the longevity and impact of the IMP by incentivizing applications that boost existing work, provide seed capital for projects that our local, regional, and state government partners were already looking at funding and by front-loading the spending of our federal funds (which need to be obligated by 2025) to make sure that some form of funding is available from 2022-2027.

What we heard: My organization is already doing this work, and I'm concerned that the IMP will cut across it or replicate what is already being done.

What we're doing: The IMP is intended to supplement existing work wherever possible. It isn't meant to replace work being done by our transportation options and transit partners or by local and regional governments. Tell us about the work you're doing, and we'll see what we can do to help, especially when it comes to connecting you with partners that can improve your equity focus and your reach into historically excluded communities.