



SACOG Regional Funding Round Training

Part 2: Nuts and Bolts: Criterion-Focused Writing to Maximize Scores

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Agenda

Funding Round Overview and Scoring

Addressing Background and Deliverability

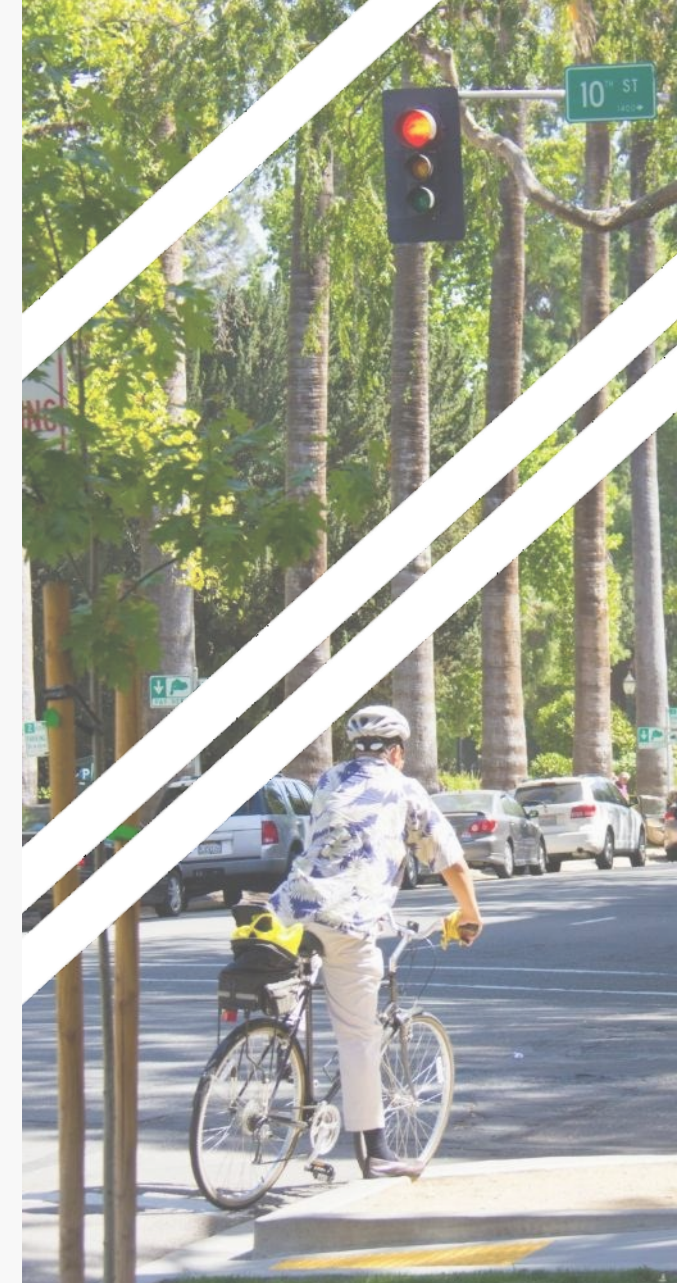
Performance Outcome Selection

Know Your Audience: SACOG Terminology and How to Use It

Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling with Data

AI Dos and Don'ts

Application Preparation and Submission Checklist



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2026 Regional Funding Round Overview: Programs

System Preservation Program (STBG)

- State of Good Repair
- Existing roadway infrastructure

System Performance Program (STBG)

- Efficiency, reliability, and safety
- Goods movement and operations.

Next Generation Solutions & Clean Air Program (CMAQ)

- Multimodal, and emissions-reducing
- Supports regional climate, air quality, and mode shift goals.



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2026 Regional Funding Round Overview: Schedule

System Preservation Program (STBG)

- Application Due: May 8

System Performance Program (STBG)

- Draft Application Due: July 17

Next Generation Solutions & Clean Air Program (CMAQ)

- Draft Application Due: July 17



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2026 Regional Funding Round Overview: Scoring



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Addressing Background and Deliverability



Project Readiness



Ability to Proceed



Past Performance &
Risk Assessment



Financial Plan &
Viability



Cost Effectiveness



Connection to
Regional Priorities



Engagement Planning
and Implementation



Responsiveness and
Support



Agency Designated
Priority

Addressing Background and Deliverability



2026 SACOG Federal Funding Cycle Grant Application Scoring Guidance (Background and Deliverability)

The Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA) is providing additional guidance for the 2026 SACOG Federal Funding Cycle Grant Applications. The table below summarizes the key SACOG evaluation areas for the Background and Deliverability evaluation factors and provides practical guidance, scoring strategies, and sample narrative language to help applicants prepare stronger, more competitive grant applications. The guidance is organized to match the order of the 2026 Project Application and includes separate examples for PAED and Construction projects.

Evaluation Area	SACOG Description / Guidance and Additional Guidance	PAED Example	Construction Example
<p>Connection to Regional Priorities (1pts)</p> <p>Factor 6 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance Evaluates whether the project aligns with regional plans, priority corridors, or strategic initiatives. Higher scores reflect a clear and direct connection to established regional goals. Examples include but are not limited to the 2025 Blueprint, Engage, Empower, Implement (EEI), Green Means Go Program, Mobility Zones Program.</p> <p>Additional Guidance Name the exact SACOG or regional plans, programs, corridor studies, or initiatives the project advances rather than relying on general alignment statements. Where possible, explain both the policy connection and the physical or operational connection, such as improving a designated trail gap, priority transit corridor, freight route, or Blueprint-listed project. For PAED requests, emphasize how the phase will move an already identified regional priority toward implementation. For construction requests, explain how the funded improvements will directly deliver the regional benefit now.</p>	<p>The project advances the SACOG 2025 Blueprint and [insert other applicable regional initiative(s)] by moving a regionally identified [improvement, meeting a need or advancing a policy] from concept toward implementation. The requested PAED phase will refine the scope, complete the technical work needed to advance the project, and position the agency to deliver improvements already consistent with [insert Blueprint project/number, lump-sum category, priority corridor, Regional Trails Network, high-capacity transit corridor, Green Means Go, Mobility Zones, or other regional initiative]. By strengthening project definition and delivery readiness, this request helps turn an established regional priority into a fundable and implementable project.</p>	<p>The project directly advances the SACOG 2025 Blueprint and [insert other applicable regional initiative(s)] by delivering [improvement, meeting a need or advancing a policy] as regionally important. The construction phase will implement [insert key improvements] that improve [safety, reliability, multimodal access, freight movement, transit access, or state of good repair] and support [insert applicable regional initiative or corridor]. Because the requested funds will move immediately into implementation, the project will produce tangible regional benefits within the program timeframe.</p>
<p>Agency Designated Priority (1pts)</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance If an applicant submits more than one application to a funding program, they may designate one (1) project as their agency priority. That project will receive 1 point. All other applications from the same agency receive 0 points for this criterion.</p>	<p>This is the agency's designated priority project because it [add why]. Compared with the agency's other candidate projects, this project offers the strongest combination of need,</p>	<p>This is the agency's designated priority project because it addresses a critical transportation need and is the project best positioned to obligate funds and begin construction within the program</p>



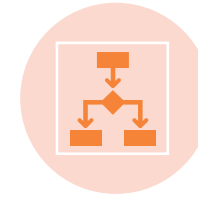
Performance Outcome Selection



VMT Reduction



Congestion
Reduction



Modal Choice



Economic
Prosperity



Goods
Movement



Safety and
Security



State of Good
Repair



Climate Adaption
and Resilience

Performance Outcome Selection

System Preservation



State of Good Repair

Req.



Economic Prosperity



Goods Movement

Pick One

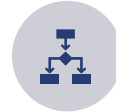
System Performance



VMT Reduction



Congestion Reduction



Modal Choice



Economic Prosperity



Goods Movement



Safety and Security



State of Good Repair

Pick Two

Next Generation Solutions and Clean Air



VMT Reduction



Congestion Reduction



Modal Choice



Economic Prosperity



Climate Adaptation And Resilience

Pick Two

Performance Outcome Selection: The PPA Tool



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- 2025 Blueprint
- 2020 MTP/SCS
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Major Initiatives
- Data Resource Center
 - Data Requests
 - Regional Indicators Dashboard
 - Open Data Portal
 - Project Performance Assessment Tool**
 - SB 743 Technical Assistance
 - Data & Modeling User Conference
- + Travel Demand Model
- Planning Resources

Staff

Planning » Data Resource Center »

Project Performance Assessment (PPA) Tool

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The Project Performance Assessment (PPA) tool links the numerous data sources SACOG tracks and maintains with key policy objectives of the region's long-range transportation plan (now called the [Blueprint](#)). A cornerstone of the tool has been to support data-driven decision making while enhancing transparency in transportation planning and programming. As such, the tool is online and open for anyone to use.

[Access the PPA tool here](#)

How to Use the PPA Tool

Learn how to use the PPA tool quickly by following the step-by-step directions in these videos.

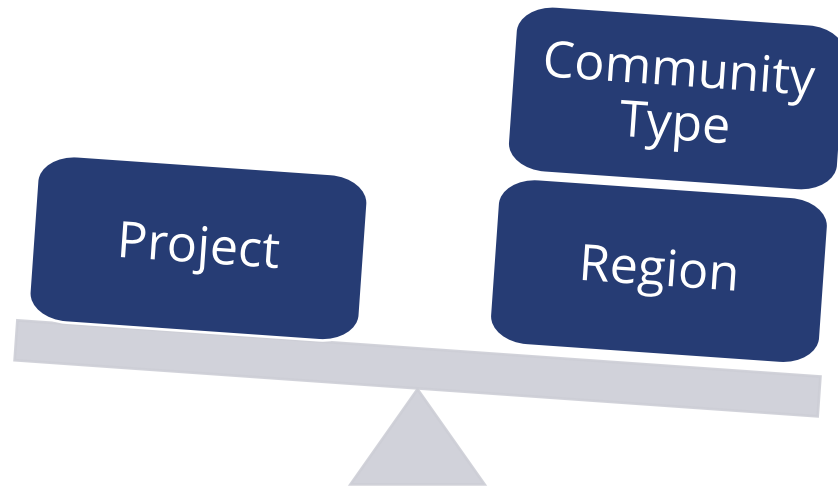
1. [How to run the PPA Tool and create a PPA project report](#) (4 minutes)
2. [Webinar: How to use the PPA Tool](#) (30 minutes)
 - [Download webinar slides](#)

- Training Video
- Webinar
- Tool Guide

<https://www.sacog.org/planning/data-resource-center/project-performance-assessment-tool>

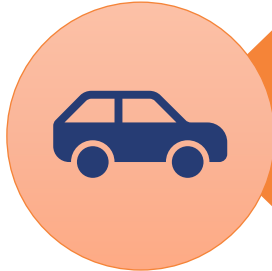
Performance Outcome Selection

- Reviewers will consider the project next to others of the same region and community type (urban vs. urban, rural vs. rural, etc.)
- Select criteria where your project stands out **for your community type and region**



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Performance Outcome Selection: Project Type



Roadway:

Goods Movement, Economic Prosperity,
State of Good Repair



Multi-Modal:

Modal Choice Improvement, Safety and
Security



Transit:

VMT Reduction, Congestion Reduction

Know Your Audience: The 2025 Blueprint

*Transportation
Goals:*

Make Existing Roadways more **Effective** and **Efficient**

Building and Maintaining a **Safe, Equitable, and Resilient** Multimodal Transportation System

Improve Public Health by **Reducing Vehicle Emissions**

Building **Resilience** for a Changing **Climate**



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Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling with Data

? Start with the problem

! Explain why it matters

👤 Show who is impacted

🦸 Show what your agency has done so far

💰 Show what the funding will do



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Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling



Start with the problem

Story telling without data:

“This corridor has had a significant number of bicycle and pedestrian collisions.”

Consider Story telling with data:

“This corridor averages nearly 8 bicycle and pedestrian collisions per centerline mile—68% higher than similar corridors in comparable community types and six times the regional average, based on the PPA report included with this application.”

Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling



Show who is impacted

Story telling without data:

“This corridor serves many underserved communities.”

Consider Story telling with data:

“The entire corridor is within a City-designated Environmental Justice Community and a SACOG-designated Equity Priority Community, as identified in the City’s General Plan, SACOG’s 2025 Blueprint, and the Mobility Zones Project, showing that corridor improvements would directly benefit historically underserved populations.”

Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling



Show what the funding will do

Story telling without data:

“This project will significantly reduce pedestrian collisions.”

Story telling with Data:

“This project will install a pedestrian refuge island, which studies have shown can reduce pedestrian collisions by as much as 56%.”

Maximizing Your Score: Simple Storytelling

- b. Explain how the project supports reliable access to employment centers, commercial areas, schools, and essential services. Discuss the ways deteriorated pavement conditions currently constrain economic activity, travel safety and reliability, multimodal access, and transit operations, and describe the long-term economic benefits expected from pavement restoration for workers, small businesses, freight movement, and regional economic vitality.

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Break down the question and answer all sections:

- Identify major employment centers, commercial areas, schools, and essential services
- Show how the project provides access/connects
- Economic activity, safety, reliability, multimodal access, transit
- Connect back to benefits for workers, small businesses, freight movement, regional economic vitality – as many of these as possible
- Aim for 2 paragraphs

AI Dos



Use AI to Speed up Research



Use AI to smooth out writing



Use AI to get ideas when you're stuck



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AI Don'ts



Don't blindly trust AI – always double check sources



Don't use AI to do all of your writing



Don't use AI without editing



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AI Dos and Don'ts Example

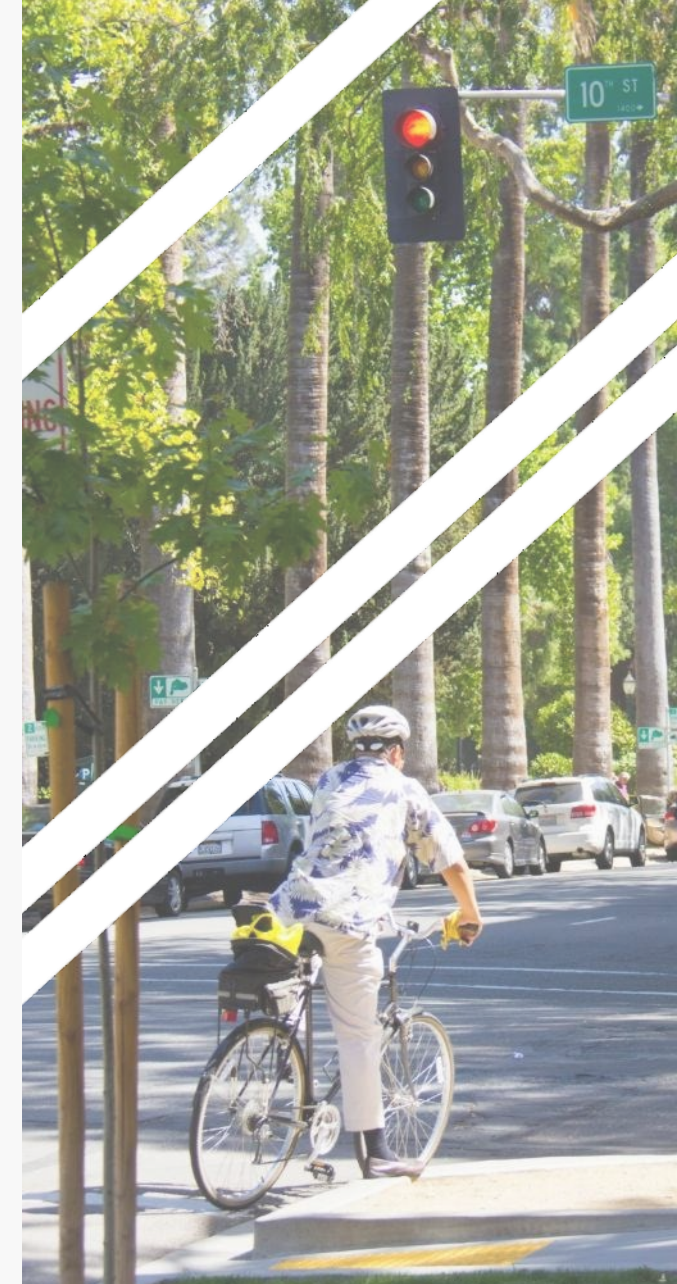
Connection to Regional Priorities (1pt)

A Bad AI Prompt data:

“Can you help me say this project matches SACOG’s Blueprint and other priorities?”

A Good AI Prompt:

“Draft a 1 to 2 paragraph grant narrative for a Sacramento-region transportation project explaining how it advances the SACOG 2025 Blueprint and other applicable regional plans, priority corridors, or strategic initiatives. Before drafting, identify the 2 to 4 strongest and most defensible regional alignment points. Then write a polished narrative in a professional public-agency style that makes the project’s connection to regional goals explicit, accurate, and persuasive. Use the following project information: [insert details].”



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Application Process Checklist

- ✓ Choose the Right Projects to Maximize Background and Deliverability Points
- ✓ Move projects forward when possible
- ✓ Choose the Right Criteria for your Project Type
- ✓ Speak SACOG's Language (refer to the Blueprint)
- ✓ Use the PPA Tool
- ✓ Include other data to make the case for the project when helpful
- ✓ Use AI Wisely for writing and research



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Final Review and Submission Checklist



Have Planners and Engineers Review



Address All Feedback



Proofread (and Proofread Again)



For Attachments: Follow the SACOG Checklist in the Guidance



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Questions?

2026 SACOG Regional Funding Round Training

The Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA), in partnership with its consultant Jacobs, is providing grant training for Sacramento County, cities, transit providers and others planning to pursue funding through SACOG's upcoming Regional Funding Program (federal funding round). This \$203 million



Upcoming Deadlines

- **May 8** – Final Application - *System Preservation Program*
- **September 18** – Final Application - *System Performance and NextGen Solutions Programs*

<https://www.sacta.org/2026-sacog-regional-funding-round-training>