

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>Factor 9 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</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>Additional Guidance If the agency is submitting multiple applications, state plainly that this is the agency's designated priority and briefly explain why. This is also an opportunity to continue your narratives and storytelling around this project.</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, readiness, regional alignment, and ability to position the agency for future funding success.</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 timeframe. Compared with the agency's other candidate projects, it offers the strongest combination of readiness, deliverability, regional benefit, and likelihood of producing timely on-the-ground results.</p>
<p>Engagement Planning and Implementation (2pts)</p> <p>Factor 7 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance Evaluates whether the project clearly identified its community context, key impacted and interested parties (including DACs/LIPAs), and used inclusive engagement strategies with documented follow-through. Higher scores reflect thoughtful, meaningful engagement that informed project development. Full points are awarded to projects that were developed through the Mobility Zones program. For PAED or pavement projects, this may include how the roadway was identified as a priority, evidence of agency-level or interdepartmental coordination, consideration of affected communities and corridor users, and a clear plan for future community engagement appropriate to the project phase.</p> <p>Additional Guidance Identify who was engaged, why those parties were relevant, and how the engagement methods matched the project stage. For early-phase projects, reviewers will look for evidence that corridor users, affected communities, and partner agencies were identified and that outreach will continue during PAED. For more advanced projects, emphasize specific meetings, surveys, advisory committees, business or</p>	<p>The City first established why this corridor matters by documenting [insert corridor-specific evidence such as maintenance requests, crash history, ADA gaps, transit or school access needs, freight or operational issues, pavement data, adopted plan references, or council/board direction], which helped identify the communities and corridor users most affected by the project, including [insert affected residents, businesses, transit users, schools, agencies, and underserved populations identified through screening tools or community context data] During early project development and preparation of the PSR/PSRe, the City conducted engagement during [insert timeframe] through [insert specific outreach or</p>	<p>Before finalizing the project for construction, the City documented why this corridor is important through [insert corridor-specific evidence such as recurring maintenance or safety issues, ADA needs, transit or freight importance, business access concerns, adopted plan references, or agency direction] and used that information to focus outreach on the people and organizations most affected by the work. Those parties included [insert affected residents, businesses, transit providers, freight or operations stakeholders, schools, property owners, partner agencies, and underserved communities]. As the project moved through planning and design toward construction, the City conducted targeted engagement during [insert timeframe]</p>

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	<p>transit coordination, and outreach to underserved communities, along with how that work informed project development.</p>	<p>coordination actually used. Applicants should be specific about how many meetings or events occurred, where they occurred, whether materials or interpretation were provided in multiple languages, which agencies or community-based organizations participated, and what audiences were reached.] This work helped the City understand corridor travel patterns, safety and accessibility concerns, operational issues, and the topics that should be studied during PAED. The City will continue engagement during PAED through [insert planned outreach approach] at key milestones such as alternatives development, environmental review, and preliminary design.</p>	<p>through [insert specific outreach and coordination actually used. Applicants should identify the exact meetings, corridor walks, business or property-owner discussions, advisory committee presentations, agency coordination, translations, and follow-up conversations that occurred.] This engagement helped the City understand concerns such as [insert issues raised], refine the final design, and prepare construction staging, access, and operational strategies in advance so implementation better reflects community needs.</p>
<p>Responsiveness and Support (2pts)</p> <p>Factor 8 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance Evaluates how effectively the project incorporated public feedback and demonstrated community or partner support. Higher scores reflect clear responsiveness to community input and ability to demonstrate how the community influenced project scope or design. Full points are awarded to projects that were developed through the Mobility Zones program. For PAED or pavement projects, this may include documented Public Works requests or complaints, public comments, safety or accessibility concerns, agency or elected-official direction, equity-based targeting, or consistent identification across adopted plans and maintenance or safety data that together explain why the roadway was prioritized.</p> <p>Additional Guidance Do not stop at listing outreach activities. Explain what the agency heard and exactly how that input influenced the project scope, alternatives, prioritization, or implementation approach. This can include community-identified safety concerns, requests from Public Works or maintenance staff, elected-official direction, agency coordination, adopted plan references, or documented complaints and service needs. Strong responses also identify who supports the project and why, using concrete examples instead of general statements of support.</p>	<p>The City used engagement and other documented inputs to confirm both corridor importance and the need to advance this project into PAED. Community and stakeholder input, together with [insert reports, maintenance records, adopted plans, Public Works requests, safety data, accessibility concerns, transit needs, freight considerations, or board/council actions], consistently identified issues such as [insert specific concerns]. In response, the City defined the PAED scope to study [insert project elements, alternatives, or technical issues] and to coordinate with [insert agencies, property owners, transit providers, schools, freight stakeholders, or community groups] early in the next phase. [Support for moving into PAED should be described concretely. Applicants should identify who supports the project and why, such as references in adopted plans, agency or interdepartmental coordination, council or board direction, letters or requests from partners, or repeated community concerns showing why further environmental review and project development are warranted.]</p>	<p>Community and partner input directly changed the project as it moved toward construction. During [insert timeframe], the City heard concerns about [insert specific construction, safety, access, transit, freight, ADA, business, or neighborhood issues]. Rather than simply noting those comments, the City responded by [insert specific actions taken, such as revising access points, refining striping or lane configurations, modifying crossings, adjusting staging or phasing, coordinating transit operations, protecting freight access, or adding business access measures]. The City also worked directly with [insert agencies, property owners, businesses, schools, transit providers, community-based organizations, or operations partners] to resolve location-specific concerns before advertisement and construction. [Support should also be shown with specific evidence. Applicants should identify who supports the project and why, using adopted plans, council or board actions, partner coordination, agency commitments, letters, documented requests, or other concrete sources demonstrating that the project reflects community priorities and is ready to move forward into construction.]</p>
<p>Project Readiness (3pts)</p> <p>Factor 1 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance Evaluates how prepared the project is to proceed within the requested phase, including progress on planning, environmental clearance, design, permits, and right-of-way. Higher scores reflect projects with clearly defined scope, completed prerequisites, and minimal barriers to timely delivery.</p> <p>Additional Guidance</p>	<p>The project is ready to advance into the PAED phase upon receipt of funding. The City has completed a Project Study Report equivalent (PSRe), which established the project scope, identified key constraints, and evaluated major risks that could affect delivery. Through this effort, the City developed a strong understanding of the issues that will need to be addressed during</p>	<p>The project is fully prepared to advance into construction upon receipt of funding. Environmental clearance is complete, with the CEQA IS/MND adopted in 2018 and the NEPA Categorical Exclusion approved in 2019. Right of way acquisition began in 2020 and was completed in 2021. All utility relocations required prior to construction were completed in 2022, and</p>

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	<p>The application shows that implementation of the proposed project phase is ready to move forward. This would include what prior development phases are complete or nearly complete or for the next phase. Areas to cover are the status of the following: Environmental Clearance (CEQA/NEPA), Right of Way Acquisition, Utilities (Coordination/Relocation), Permits (Environmental/Regulatory),</p> <p>For project development phases that are incomplete, but you are still asking for funding for the next phase you will need to explain your current status and you have a clear path to competition and any plans to avoid, minimize or mitigate risks.</p>	<p>PAED, including environmental review, right of way considerations, utility coordination, permitting, and construction staging. The City has also worked to build political support and engage the community early in the process, helping to confirm project need, identify concerns, and inform project development. This early technical, policy, and public outreach work positions the project to proactively manage challenges, reduce uncertainty, and advance efficiently through the next phase.</p>	<p>all necessary permits, including the USACE Section 404 permit, Section 401 water quality certification, and Section 1602 permit, were secured that same year. With environmental, right of way, utility, and permitting activities complete, the project has no remaining pre-construction barriers and is ready to proceed to construction.</p>
<p>Ability to Proceed (3pts)</p> <p>Factor 2 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance</p> <p>Evaluates how ready the project is to initiate work immediately upon award. This focuses on near-term deliverability, including the ability to advertise, obligate funds, or begin construction or implementation within the program's expected timeframe.</p> <p>Higher scores reflect projects with complete or near-complete prerequisites for the requested phase, clear schedules showing readiness to proceed, and no major unresolved barriers to starting work</p> <p>Additional Guidance</p> <p>Similar to the criteria above this scoring criteria also focuses on project readiness but more specifically how the project schedule aligns with the funding years expected in this funding round. Since projects are anticipated to be programmed into FFY 2027-2028, 2028-2029, 2029-2030, projects that can show they have the ability to proceed now or the first FFY will score higher than those that are in the last FFY of 2029-2030. Both the application narrative and Project Programming Request (PPR) Form should show how well the project is positioned for funding.</p>	<p>The project is well positioned to initiate PAED immediately upon award and within the program's expected timeframe. Completion of the PSR provides a clear foundation for the next phase by defining the scope, identifying key technical issues, and reducing uncertainty around delivery. With this work complete, there are no known major barriers to initiating PAED, and the City is prepared to move promptly into environmental review, technical studies, and preliminary engineering activities once funding is secured.</p>	<p>The project is positioned to initiate construction immediately upon award and within the program's required delivery timeframe. All major prerequisites for construction have been completed, including environmental clearance, right of way acquisition, utility relocation, and permitting, and there are no known unresolved barriers that would delay advertisement or obligation of funds. The City has developed a clear delivery schedule and is prepared to move promptly into final bid and construction activities once funding is awarded, demonstrating strong near-term deliverability and a high level of implementation readiness.</p>
<p>Past Performance & Risk Assessment (3pts)</p> <p>Factor 3 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance</p> <p>Evaluates the applicant's track record delivering similar projects and the extent to which project risks (scope, schedule, environmental, right-of-way, funding) are identified and addressed.</p> <p>Higher scores reflect strong past performance and well-managed or minimal risks. First-time applicants can still score well if they demonstrate solid fund management and a credible plan to identify and address potential risks.</p> <p>Additional Guidance</p> <p>If hard delivery numbers are not available, focus on the types of comparable projects the agency has delivered and the delivery functions it has managed, such as CEQA/NEPA, right of way, utilities, permits, consultant management, and interagency coordination. For risk, identify the most credible issues for this project phase and explain what has already been done to reduce uncertainty. The strongest responses show that prior delivery experience has directly informed the agency's approach to scoping, scheduling, coordination, and risk management on this proposal.</p>	<p>The City has experience delivering transportation projects similar to this proposal, including [insert similar project types]. Through these efforts, the City has managed many of the same issues that will need to be addressed on this project, including environmental review, utility coordination, right of way considerations, public outreach, and interagency coordination. This experience has given the City a practical understanding of how to identify key issues early, define a workable scope, and advance projects efficiently through the PAED phase.</p> <p>That experience is reflected in the City's approach to this proposal. The City has already completed a PSR to define the project scope, identify key constraints, and evaluate potential risks before entering PAED. By completing this early work, the City is applying lessons from prior project delivery efforts to reduce uncertainty, improve project definition, and position the project for efficient advancement once funding is secured.</p> <p>The City has identified the key risks that could affect the project during PAED, including</p>	<p>The City has experience delivering transportation projects similar to this proposal, including [insert similar project types]. Through these efforts, the City has managed the full range of activities needed to move projects from design into construction, including final design, right of way acquisition, utility relocation, permitting, bid package preparation, and construction administration. This experience has given the City a practical understanding of how to sequence pre-construction activities, coordinate with outside agencies and stakeholders, and position projects to move efficiently into construction once funding is available.</p> <p>That experience is reflected in the City's approach to this proposal. The City has already completed the major prerequisites needed to advance into construction, including environmental clearance, right of way acquisition, utility coordination, and permitting. By completing these activities in advance, the City has applied lessons from prior project delivery efforts to reduce uncertainty, resolve issues early, and position the project to advertise, obligate funds,</p>

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		<p>environmental constraints, permitting requirements, utility conflicts, right of way considerations, scope refinement, and schedule or cost pressures. These risks are common for projects of this type, but the PSR has already helped establish the project purpose and need, evaluate preliminary concepts, and identify the principal issues that will need to be addressed during the next phase. As a result, the City enters PAED with a clearer understanding of project challenges and a stronger basis for managing them.</p> <p>To mitigate these risks, the City's approach is centered on early coordination, thoughtful project refinement, and proactive issue resolution. During PAED, the City will continue coordinating with Caltrans, resource agencies, utilities, property owners, and community stakeholders to identify and resolve issues as early as possible. The City will prioritize design solutions that avoid or minimize environmental impacts, right of way needs, and utility conflicts where feasible, while maintaining the core purpose of the project. The City will also maintain a realistic schedule with appropriate contingency to address unforeseen issues and preserve delivery momentum. With these strategies in place, the City is well positioned to manage risk and advance the project efficiently through PAED.</p>	<p>and begin construction within the program's expected timeframe.</p> <p>The City has identified the key risks that could affect the project during construction, including bid and cost escalation, utility conflicts, contractor availability, construction staging, traffic management, and unforeseen field conditions. While these risks are common for projects of this type, the City has already taken substantial steps to reduce them through completion of environmental review, right of way acquisition, utility relocation, and required permits before construction. This early work provides a strong basis for implementation and significantly reduces the likelihood of major unresolved issues delaying project advertisement or construction start.</p> <p>To mitigate remaining risks, the City will continue to use proactive coordination, schedule management, and issue resolution throughout project delivery. The City will maintain close coordination with utilities, regulatory agencies, contractors, and affected stakeholders to address issues quickly and minimize disruptions during construction. The City will also use a realistic delivery schedule and appropriate contingency to manage unforeseen conditions while preserving project momentum. With major pre-construction activities complete and a clear path to implementation, the project is well positioned to manage risk and advance into construction efficiently upon award.</p>
<p>Financial Plan & Viability (2pts)</p> <p>Factor 4 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance</p> <p>Evaluates whether the applicant has a realistic and complete funding strategy to deliver the requested phase. This includes identifying committed and anticipated funding sources, local match, contingency assumptions, and plans to address potential funding gaps.</p> <p>Higher scores reflect projects with clearly identified funding sources, reasonable cost assumptions and contingency below 10%, and a credible plan to address shortfalls or cost escalation.</p> <p>Additional Guidance</p> <p>The application includes a well-defined financial plan and strategy with a funding plan, budget and schedule, which includes leveraging previously awarded federal or state grants, additional opportunities for federal and state grant funding and a credible plan to address shortfalls or cost escalation. Both the application narrative and Project Programming Request (PPR) Form should reflect the same financial plan.</p>	<p>The City has a realistic funding strategy to complete PAED, with committed and anticipated sources identified for the requested phase and the required local match. Cost assumptions are based on current scoping information and include reasonable contingency for consultant services, technical studies, and environmental documentation. If costs increase, the City has a credible plan to address shortfalls through local funds, scope refinement, phasing, value engineering, or pursuit of complementary grant funds, which supports reliable delivery of the requested phase.</p>	<p>The funding plan combines requested grant funds with committed local match and any other programmed sources needed to deliver construction. The estimate is based on current engineering assumptions and includes reasonable escalation and contingency, along with a schedule aligned to funding availability and project delivery. The City also has a credible strategy to manage potential cost increases or funding gaps through local backfill, bid alternates, phasing, value engineering, or pursuit of supplemental funds, and has the financial capacity to address ongoing operations, maintenance, and cost overrun responsibilities.</p>
<p>Cost effectiveness (3pts)</p>	<p>SACOG Description / Guidance</p> <p>Evaluates whether the project provides meaningful benefits for its cost through right-sized, targeted treatments. Higher scores reflect projects where the expected impact is proportional to or exceeds the investment. This helps ensure projects are</p>	<p>Although this request is for PAED, the proposed scope is a right-sized investment that advances a clearly defined project with documented transportation, safety, access, and/or state-of-good-repair needs. Funding PAED now will</p>	<p>This project represents an efficient use of federal funds because it applies targeted improvements to a corridor or facility with documented needs and meaningful user demand. The investment is right-sized to the problem being addressed,</p>

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<p>Factor 5 in SACOG Evaluation Criteria Document</p>	<p>appropriately scaled to their context and prevents defaulting to large capital projects simply because they serve high-volume corridors.</p> <p>For NextGen / CMAQ-eligible projects, this includes demonstrated cost effectiveness using the required CMAQ calculation methodology (e.g., cost per unit of emissions or VMT reduction), where applicable. For System Preservation and System Performance projects, cost effectiveness is evaluated quantitatively, using the Cost Effectiveness Calculator, as well as qualitatively, focusing on right-sized, targeted investments that represent an efficient and effective use of federal funds.</p> <p>This criterion helps ensure limited funds are invested in projects that are appropriately scaled, impactful, and aligned with program intent.</p> <p>Additional Guidance</p> <p>Include the required calculator inputs and result, then add a short narrative explaining why the project is a right-sized investment for the problem being solved. For pavement preservation and system performance projects, explain how the treatment strategy extends useful life or addresses a clearly documented corridor need without overbuilding. For PAED requests, explain why the requested phase is a targeted investment that reduces uncertainty and positions a well-defined project for implementation.</p>	<p>reduce uncertainty, refine scope and cost, and position the agency to implement an improvement whose anticipated benefits are proportionate to the overall investment.</p>	<p>extends asset life and/or improves safety and multimodal access, and delivers measurable benefits relative to project cost.</p>