



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2020 AWARDS

University Transportation Centers Program

Amy Stearns, Grants Manager

University Transportation Centers Program

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research & Technology

June 10, 2020

FUNDING AWARDS TO UTC GRANTEES DURING 2020

- Diana Furchtgott-Roth offered to make early award as part of COVID-19 response
- Award done as Modification of Grant Agreement
- Funds have been released to UTCs that a) have an approved budget and b) are compliant with reporting and other requirements
 - remaining releases will follow when ready
- Award documents transmitted via e-mail due to stay-at-home orders in place throughout the United States
- No changes this year to the grant documents referenced in Modification of Grant Agreement (*General Provisions...*, *Deliverables/Reporting Requirements...*)

FUNDING AWARDS TO UTC GRANTEES DURING 2020, *cont'd*

- **Original 32 FAST Act UTCs awarded in 2016**
 - **FY20 funds, final award authorized under FAST Act**
 - **kept original 9/30/2022 termination date**

- **Regions 1/2/3 UTCs awarded in 2018**
 - **began later than other FAST Act UTCs because of recompetition**
 - **seemed prudent now to award all remaining (FY19 and FY20) funds authorized under FAST Act**
 - **kept original 9/30/2023 termination date**

- **National UTCs on Congestion and Infrastructure awarded in 2019**
 - **seemed prudent now to award all remaining (second- and third-year) funds authorized in legislation**
 - **kept original 9/30/2023 termination date**

FUNDING AWARDS TO UTC GRANTEES DURING 2020, *cont'd*

- **Currently competing New Tier 1 UTCs, anticipate selection approximately late summer 2020**
 - **one funding increment**
 - **duration 18-24 months depending on topic area**





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COVID-19 SPENDING ISSUES

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OMB MEMORANDUM, 3/19/2020, RELIEF FOR RECIPIENTS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 LOSS OF OPERATION

- **Acknowledges the unknown of what sorts of issues will arise and how long they will last**

- **Stresses need to make prudent use of Federal resources even during public-health emergency**

- **Allows waiver of certain prior approvals**
 - **NSF waives certain approvals (generally in the area of contracting), retains others (change in scope, change of P.I.)**
 - **for audit purposes, UTC Program retaining grant's prior-approval requirements**

OMB MEMORANDUM, 3/19/2020, RELIEF FOR RECIPIENTS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 LOSS OF OPERATION, *cont'd*

- Agencies may extend near-end awards impacted by COVID:
 - that were open on March 31, 2020 and have end dates through December 31, 2020
 - *this would affect only MAP-21 UTC grants with termination date between March 31 and December 31*
 - NSF requires COVID requests for extensions to be processed through normal channels, increased internal level of approval depending on number/length of extensions
 - as UTC Program has already extended remaining MAP-21 grants for 2+ years, new requests are not encouraged
 - for audit purposes, situational details must justify a request for extension
 - reporting/other requirements continue during extension

OMB MEMORANDUM, 3/19/2020, RELIEF FOR RECIPIENTS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 LOSS OF OPERATION, *cont'd*

- **Agencies may allow certain costs not normally chargeable to awards**
 - **Examples:**
 - **costs incurred shutting down and restarting activities done in fulfillment of grant, as necessary due to public-health emergency**
 - **unwaived cancellation costs for events not held, due to stay-at-home orders, etc.**

- **UTC Program allows such reasonable and necessary costs**
- **for audit purposes, reduce such costs as much as possible following institutional policies, maintain records**

OMB MEMORANDUM, 3/19/2020, RELIEF FOR RECIPIENTS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 LOSS OF OPERATION, *cont'd*

- **Allows agencies to delay reporting due dates up to 3 months**
 - **NSF has extended certain annual reporting by 3 months but notes that continuation-funding awards are dependent upon reporting by extended date**
 - **to date, UTC Program has had very few requests for delays in reporting so does not plan to issue a program-wide delay of due dates**
 - **some funding awards are being held until reporting complete**

- **Allows extension of final reporting for grants past termination date**
 - **directs grantee to notify agency of need for this**
 - **NSF extended closeout reporting for awards ending Nov. 2019 to April 2020, in early COVID period**
 - **UTC Program office had no requests, does not anticipate any based on closeout schedule of remaining MAP-21 grants**

ISSUES FOR CURRENT FAST ACT UTCs

- **OMB Memo addresses grants nearing their end; not 2022/2023 termination dates**

- **As noted earlier, much of UTC Program office’s process is guided by need to document actions for audit purposes – this includes changes to grant activities and requests for time extensions**
 - **Why is action necessary, how does it benefit the grant?**
 - **Is action allowable under Federal grant regulations and UTC grant terms?**
 - **Does action pass the “smell test” or does it raise red flags?**

- **Future of surface-transportation reauthorization (*FAST Act expires 9/30/2020*) is uncertain**
 - **if new legislation soon, will be new UTC Program competition?**
 - **or if extension of current legislation, short term or long term, what impact on current UTCs?**

REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS OF CURRENT FAST ACT UTCs

- **UTC Program office has received inquiry about already extending a grant not ending until 9/30/2023**
- **Extensions require additional resources from OST-R**
- **Prior to COVID-19, agency leadership had indicated that extensions are a concern, don't know if this has changed**
- **Impacts of extensions:**
 - **staff time (still at 4 grant managers, down from 5)**
 - **records management**
 - **funds management**
 - **external reporting to USASpending, etc.**

REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS OF FAST ACT UTCs, *cont'd*

- **All funding awards processed during 2020 used original termination date that reflected funded years plus closeout year**

- **Extensions require strong justification and specificity**
 - **COVID-19 situation changes daily and FAST Act expires soon – may not have enough information yet to make specific plans, but will know more in 6 (?) months**
 - **past extensions done within final year of grant**
 - **if institutional issues exist that make it problematic to wait to request extension, then contact your OST-R grant manager**
 - **otherwise, UTC Program office recommends waiting until COVID effects/FAST Act future are more clearly understood and issues justifying extension can be documented**



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Thank you!

Questions?

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