



City of Homer

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Administration

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Memorandum 22-206

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Jenny Carroll, Special Projects and Communications Coordinator
THROUGH: Rob Dumouchel, City Manager
DATE: November 20, 2022
SUBJECT: FY23 RAISE Planning Grant Task Order

- I. **Issue:** The purpose of this Memorandum is to recommend a Task Order to HDR Engineering to assist with a FY23 Federal RAISE Planning Grant application.
- II. **Background:** Ordinance 22-39, adopted by City Council in August appropriated \$125,000 to support development and submission of grant applications under the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Resolution 22-061 approved the first Task Order issued under this appropriation to HDR Engineering to develop an overall IIJA program strategic plan, recommendations on how to pre-position projects for grant competitiveness, and provide financial recommendations. I anticipate we will present the results of this work to City Council in January, and that the cost (based on time and effort) will come in slightly under the \$63,000 maximum approved.

In the meantime, the application period for the FY 2023 RAISE Federal grant program is expected to open in December. HDR recommends that the City apply for a FY23 RAISE Planning Grant to advance design, financing, NEPA and other pre-development activities for sidewalk and trail projects in Homer's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. The advantage of a planning grant is that it could fund much of the work required to federalize a project, and also allow for the data analysis and design work required to prepare a competitive capital grant application in future RAISE grant cycles.

The study area would either be City-Wide, which is likely the best option, or it could be an expansion of the Homer All Ages & Abilities Pedestrian Path. Grouping the City's many non-motorized transportation projects under one request maximizes potential funding amounts and maximizes the return on investment in grant application and administration costs.

A Resolution approving a Task Order to HDR to develop a RAISE grant application is before you for consideration. The scope of work (attached) and outlined below is estimated not to exceed \$32,000 based on time and effort. Should Council approve, the Task Order will be negotiated with HDR based on staff capacity to take on any of the tasks.

- Developing the project, workplan, timeline, budget, and deliverables in consultation with the City

- Managing the application process
- Writing the narrative and appendices
- Filling out forms required for application
- Graphic design including custom images as needed
- Several rounds of review of the application with City staff and HDR subject matter experts
- Application debrief with USDOT

HDR grant writing services will benefit staff capacity; City staff will be working on five known and anticipated State funding requests during the time of the RAISE application period.

Information about of the RAISE grant program is provided below to further assist your consideration.

Eligible Activities for RAISE Planning Grant

- Includes, but is not limited to: Design, environmental analysis, equity analysis, community engagement, feasibility studies, and other pre-construction activities

Timeline and Funding Potential

Planning Phase

- **December 2022:** RAISE Notice of Funding Opportunity released
- **March 2023:** Application due
- **December 2032:** Fund expenditure deadline (assumed it would be completed much earlier)
- Minimum grant request for planning (rural applicants): \$1 million
- Average planning grant award last year was around \$3 million
- Match requirements: None required for rural applicants.
- Total planning funds available in last year's RAISE: \$113.75 million

Construction Phase

- **Timing and amount TBD – likely FY 2025 or FY 2026 grant opportunity**
- Average capital grant award last year for rural applicants: \$12 million
- Average project cost for successful rural applicants last year: \$18 million
- Average matching fund requirement for rural applicants last year: \$6 million (~30% of project cost)

Risks/Requirements

- Must consider equity in planning phase
- Must demonstrate plan to administer grant funds via staff capacity or contracting
- Must meet federal requirements such as NEPA, Buy America, Bacon/Davis wages, etc.

III. Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution **22-XX** to authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute a Task Order to HDR Engineering to assist with a FY23 Federal RAISE Planning Grant application.



RAISE Grant Application

HDR has a proven approach for supporting and preparing grant applications that meet granting agency guidelines. In 2022, our teams helped secure \$649 million in new federal discretionary funding for 19 states through 26 grant awards. HDR won over \$212 million in RAISE funding for clients in 2022. Between 2009 and 2021, HDR supported more than 100 successful grant applications under U.S. Department of Transportation programs receiving \$2.5 billion in federal funds for building key valuable highway, rail, port, transit, bike and pedestrian, freight, and multimodal projects.

This scope describes HDR's approach to preparing a RAISE Planning Grant application to the FY 2023 opportunity for City-wide improvements to non-motorized facilities. The notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) is expected to be released in late November or early December 2022, with applications due three months later.

We propose to coordinate and lead the City of Homer's RAISE application development process while working closely with City staff, including Jenny Carrol, Jan Keiser, and Julie Engebretsen, to agree on key strategic decisions. Multiple rounds of review will confirm that each application captures the essence of the City's needs, plans, and expected impacts, and aligns with federal grant program priorities.

Kiernan Maletsky will serve as overall grant manager, with oversight and contributions from Aurah Landau. They will both suggest an overall thematic approach for the application narrative to facilitate accessibility and readability by grant reviewers and to emphasize the project's strengths. Aurah and Kiernan will also lead grant writing services; additional project team members will provide support as needed.

HDR's approach to grant writing can be summarized as follows:

2.1 Kick-Off Meeting, Grant Program Requirement Checklist, and Application Management

Working closely with the City's staff, Kiernan will discuss project selection and develop a unique work plan and schedule to address the specific application requirements, including grants.gov sign-up and all supporting documentation, data, and analyses. This schedule will be used to monitor progress, identify critical path items, meet client deadlines, and document issues and concerns as they arise.

HDR will hold a kickoff meeting to:

- Discuss project definition
- Address project benefits, drawbacks, and relevant documents; identify needed documentation and data; and potential for alignment with the program's merit criteria
- Confirm the approach to matching funds, assuming that there would be no local contributions in keeping with RAISE criteria for rural applicants.

- Prepare a project timeline and determine potential weaknesses in terms of administration federal discretionary grant funds and project definition; discuss these with a goal of identifying any actions that can be undertaken quickly to address potential reviewer concerns
- Begin developing the “story” or theme of the project to help it make a strong and memorable impact on reviewers; discuss how the project aligns with the grant program’s criteria
- Develop a schedule for grant application; discuss the need to obtain letters of support; identify any actions that Homer must quickly undertake to mitigate potential reviewer concerns

DELIVERABLES

Grant application kick-off meeting; grant application work plan; brief meetings twice weekly to coordinate on grant progress; oversight and coordination of tasks required to complete high quality grant application; assistance preparing for grants.gov submission.

2.2 Project Definition

We will work with City staff to define the project scope, timeline, budget, deliverables, and work plan to meet grant merit criteria.

This work will include a virtual work session with City staff as well as evaluation of existing planning documents based on the City’s Nonmotorized Transportation & Trains Plan, FY 2024 Capital Improvement Plan, and other transportation planning activities.

Discussion will also include strategic recommendations from HDR for consideration by City staff related to applicable project development activities, match, and future application to the RAISE program for capital grant funding.

DELIVERABLES

Work session; project scope, schedule, budget, and workplan for use in the application.

2.3 Grant Application Narrative

We will develop an outline that summarizes each required section of the application, key themes for the project relative to that section, and excerpts from the NOFO to ensure that the narrative persuasively covers key grant scoring criteria. Our grant writing team will produce the narrative and supporting data analyses and guide the City in gathering relevant project documentation.

Concurrently, HDR’s graphic designer, Michele Myers will develop an application template that includes an attractive visual theme and will work with the City to develop appropriate maps, graphics, and photos that will create a lasting impression with design, images, and color.

Our team will deliver a draft version of the Application Narrative in MS Word for review and a final version of the Application Narrative in PDF for submission, including the Work Plan appendix and letters of support. We will work with the City to prepare for final submission at least a day before the application deadline, when the City staff will upload the documents onto the grants.gov web portal.

DELIVERABLES

Draft and final versions of a clear, concise, and complete narrative that answers all grant evaluation metrics; draft and final layout templates; up to 7 maps and graphics to support the narrative.

2.4 Stakeholder and Legislative Outreach and Support

We will also support the City in outreach to key stakeholders and legislators to garner and document strong, specific support for the selected project. Aurah will identify key stakeholders and assist the City in drafting support letters from the Congressional Delegation, state legislators, the Governor, and/or other stakeholders as requested.

DELIVERABLES

List of key stakeholders; template letter of support with separate letters customized for each supporting entity.

2.6 Post-Application Debrief

We can support the City in reaching out to the grant agency to request an application debrief to garner lessons learned from the funder's project review.

DELIVERABLES

Attendance at debrief meeting and a summary of lessons learned.