



# SMARTER Center Competitive/Collaborative Request for Proposals

The SMARTER Center solicits competitive/collaborative projects from researchers at its consortium universities on an annual basis. Each competitive-collaborative proposal must include principal investigators from at least two consortium universities. A single university may lead no more than two projects but may contribute to additional projects if they choose. A total of four proposals will be selected by external reviewers, with each receiving a \$120,000 budget.

The request for proposals submission period for 2024 competitive/collaborative projects closes on **January 15, 2024**. Proposals must be submitted with a Data Management Plan and a Project Budget to be considered. Approved proposals will be announced in late February, and projects will commence on **March 1, 2024**. Proposals can be submitted using the **Google Form [here](#)**.

Each competitive/collaborative project will be completed within 18 months, with a general schedule guideline of 12 months for conducting research and 6 months for implementation, publication, and dissemination. The principal investigators (PIs) of each project are expected to send their final report to the SMARTER Center's editor by the end of Month 13 to revise and finalize the report by the end of Month 15.

Each proposal must outline a plan for technology transfer and implementation in the 'Partnerships and Dissemination' section of their proposal. Priority will be given to proposals that can demonstrate close cooperation with their university's technology transfer office (or similar institution). Reviewers will also favor those who provide proof of interest from relevant stakeholders in government, the private sector, or community organizations. These activities must be documented during the 6-month implementation period mentioned previously.

## Proposal Requirements

Competitive/collaborative proposals shall be no more than 6 pages including the budget.

Each proposal must include the following information:

1. A research description and the major objectives of each proposed project/activity.
2. A general description of how the proposed project/activity supports [the DOT priorities](#), the [RD&T strategic goals](#), and the statutory area of focus for the UTC (equity, mobility, sustainability, and innovation).
3. A general description how the proposed project/activity engages in breakthrough, advanced, or transformative research, education and workforce development, or technology transfer activities that cut across disciplines and encompass multiple modes of transportation.
4. An assessment of the potential impact of the project/activity including potential outputs, outcomes, and impacts on technologies, practices, federal regulations, or workforce development.
5. A description of potential partnerships to be established to conduct the project/activity, as well as the implications that the findings may have for government, industry, or communities.

6. A budget that outlines the sources of funding for the project. The budget must include both the Federal and matching budgets and explicitly identify technology transfer expenses. This includes:
  - a. planned USDOT funding of any new project or activity;
  - b. planned additional funding for any existing project or activity; and
  - c. planned non-USDOT funding.
7. A data management plan\* as outlined in both the [USDOT Data Management Plan Guidelines](#) and the [SMARTER Center Data Management Plan](#) guidelines.
8. Any additional information the program office determines to be necessary to address departmental priorities and statutory mandates.

\*The data management plan should be submitted as a separate document and does not contribute to the page limit.

### **Data Submission**

Each SMARTER competitive/collaborative project must be in compliance with the [USDOT Public Access Plan](#) and the data management practices detailed in SMARTER's Data Management Plan before starting a research project. To that end, SMARTER research projects shall consider, plan, budget for, and implement appropriate data management to promote public access to research data acquired or generated during the course of the project. Such considerations will include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Providing, at a minimum, the research data to: (1) reproduce significant results (whether positive or negative); (2) measure the outcomes or objectives of the project; (3) add potential value to future research, and (4) support evidence-based policy or actions;
2. Developing a [data management plan](#) and providing relevant metadata (in a [DCAT-US file](#) and, optionally, a discipline-appropriate metadata standard file) and data documentation (README.txt files, data dictionaries, code books, supporting files, imputation tables, etc.);
3. Defaulting to open access when appropriate (exceptions include protecting personally identifiable information, [Indigenous data sovereignty](#), or confidential business information [CBI]);
4. Utilizing, when possible, open licenses and protecting USDOT's non-exclusive copyright license to research outputs (<https://doi.org/10.21949/1520564>); and
5. Providing software or tools necessary to analyze or transform the data.

Finally, competitive/collaborative projects should implement data management best practices including, but not limited to implementation of published data specifications and standards (formal and informal); increasing data discoverability and data sharing; protecting human subjects and business information; and enabling interaction of systems, interoperability, and integration of data systems.

### **Reporting Schedule**

In addition to the deliverables schedule, PIs are expected to deliver quarterly and semi-annual progress reports for all ongoing SMARTER research projects in accordance with SMARTER and USDoT guidelines as per the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2022. Semi Annual Progress Reports will be due on

April 1<sup>st</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>, and supplemental quarterly reports will be due on January 1<sup>st</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Deliverables**

1. Final report: first draft due by Month 13 and the final draft due by Month 15.
2. Data to be submitted to data archive by Month 13. (See data management plan)
3. Fact sheet: Preferably an infographic fact sheet. Due by the end of Month 15.
4. The PIs will contact SMARTER’s communications manager ([joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu](mailto:joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu)) to schedule a recorded interview by the end of Month 17. The interview will be used to generate video content related to the project.
5. Community outreach results by the end of Month 18. If community outreach was during the research conducting process, it could be part of the final report. If it is part of the implementation process, it could be part of the implementation results report.
6. Technology transfer / Implementation results by the end of Month 18.

<b><i>Deliverable</i></b>	<b><i>Due</i></b>	<b><i>Format</i></b>	<b><i>Recipient</i></b>
Report: Final (first draft)	3/1/2025	MS Word doc	Joe Niehaus <a href="mailto:joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu">joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu</a>
Data Storage	3/1/2025	See data management plan	Repositories as outlined in data management plan
Report: Final (final draft)	5/1/2025	MS Word doc	Joe Niehaus <a href="mailto:joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu">joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu</a>
Fact sheet infographic	5/30/2025	MS Word doc or PDF	Joe Niehaus <a href="mailto:joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu">joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu</a>
Recorded interview	7/31/2025	Coordinate interview with Joe Niehaus	
Community outreach documentation	8/31/2025	Community Outreach form	Joe Niehaus <a href="mailto:joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu">joseph.niehaus@morgan.edu</a>
Tech transfer/ implementation documentation	8/31/2025	Tech Transfer form	Brandy Savarese <a href="mailto:brandy.savarese@morgan.edu">brandy.savarese@morgan.edu</a>

***RfPs are due by January 15, 2024. Please submit your proposal [here](#).***