

## METRO RTO GRANT ELIGIBILITY GUIDE

*Last update: March 01, 2024*

The Regional Travel Options (RTO) program funding is shaped by guidelines given to Metro by the Federal Transit Administration, and through the RTO Program Strategy created in collaboration with regional stakeholders and approved by Metro Council. Metro staff and managers interpret this guidance on how funds may be used.

### **RTO grant funds are primarily intended for the following purposes:**

- Staff salaries for eligible programs (with the exception of grant categories in the Small Grants application track, which does not fund staff time).
- Non-capital materials and services directly related to and necessary for the RTO grant-funded program work. This includes consulting services, marketing and outreach materials, and incentives (see FAQ below for definition of eligible incentives).
- Planning efforts to inform TDM programs and plans.
- Agency capacity building to develop new RTO program efforts at the local or community level.
- Participation in RTO-led initiatives and RTO stakeholder collaboration.
- Data collection and evaluation of RTO-funded program activities.

### **RTO grant funds cannot be used for any of the following:**

- Projects or programs held outside the Metro boundary.
- Salaries, materials, or other costs not directly related to or included in the scope of work.
- Costs incurred in preparing this or other grant applications.
- General organizational support or operating costs. (Grantees may include overhead costs in their invoices, at agreed-upon rates, with prior approval from Metro.)
- Annual appeals, or fundraisers.
- Incentives/gifts used as a contribution to or for joining an organization.
- Direct grants or loans that primarily benefit specific individuals or businesses.
- With limited exceptions, purchases of food are not eligible for reimbursement. Eligible food items are light snacks and refreshments to support a public outreach event. Contact your Metro grant manager if you have any questions.

Examples of **ineligible** items include:

- Alcohol for any purpose
- Purchases of sandwiches, pizza, or other types of meal items for any purpose

*Eligibility guidelines for RTO Small Grants funds are different than those contained in this guide. Visit the [RTO Small Grants Application](#) to access the RTO Small Grants Guide, which includes specific eligibility information for Small Grant awards.*

- Purchases of food for staff meetings, such as coffee, pastries, etc.

Examples of **eligible** items include:

- Snacks at a community engagement event like fruit, granola bars, etc.
- Treats for participation in an event, such as a school walk & roll event with popsicles or cupcakes
- Infrastructure projects that build bicycle, pedestrian, or transit infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, signals, warning signage, transit stop enhancements, etc. Examples of infrastructure projects that are **not eligible** include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Construction of sidewalks or trails
  - Bicycle lanes, cycle tracks, etc.
  - Enhanced crossings (painted crosswalks, flashing beacons, warning signage, etc.)
  - Transit stop amenities or shelters
  - Maintenance of existing infrastructure
- The purchase of bicycles for use in a shared system – ‘bike-share’, or for individual use. Bicycle parts are also ineligible.
- The purchase of adult electric scooters for use in a shared system – ‘scooter share’ – or for individual use.
- Any transit or shuttle operational costs or the costs associated with establishing a new service. This includes but is not limited to fare-payment systems, real-time transit tracking, on-board displays, and any other cost related to directly providing service. Costs associated with promoting or encouraging people to use these services are eligible for RTO grant funding.
- Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs.
- Any attempt to directly influence policymakers, legislation, or public funding decisions, participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, induce or encourage violations of law or public policy, or to cause improper private benefit to occur.
- Work to support, inform or influence a public planning process, such as project-based infrastructure planning and engagement activities, transit system and service plans or transportation system plan updates.
- Activities or events held on property whose owner discriminates against individuals or groups because of race, color creed, national origin, sex, age, or disability, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, as amended; 42 U.S.C. Section 2000d; Section 303 of the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; 42 U.S.C. Section 6102; Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; 42 U.S.C. Section 12132.
- Any other cost not addressed above, not included in the grant scope of work, or not previously approved by Metro.

## Frequently asked questions:

The following list describes situations or questions that occur regularly in the delivery of RTO grants. This guidance is intended to help potential grantees avoid situations where they have incurred ineligible costs or planned for work that RTO grant funds cannot cover. This list is not exhaustive. If you have a question about eligibility that is not covered here, please contact RTO staff prior to applying to discuss your ideas.

- Bicycles and scooters for an educational fleet are eligible purchases (the only eligible bike purchase). An “educational fleet” is a set of bikes or scooters for limited use during educational or outreach events. Grantee must maintain possession of the fleet when not being used directly for educational purposes.
  - If you are interested in purchasing children’s kick-scooters, or a scooter or bike fleet for educational or other purposes, contact Noel Mickelberry (School & Community Travel Options Coordinator) to discuss your options at [noel.mickelberry@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:noel.mickelberry@oregonmetro.gov).
- If an item is required for your grant project but was not included in the scope of work and budget, contact your Metro grant manager to discuss eligibility and applicability.
- Any eligible infrastructure paid for with RTO grant dollars must be publicly available. This means infrastructure in the public right of way or on public property, which may include public colleges and universities, or publicly funded housing communities and is available to guests.
- Scholarships, such as conference attendance or other educational opportunities: Funding to support conference attendance aimed at networking and learning about travel options (or other similar educational opportunities) are eligible, but not the priority of RTO grant funds. Grantees are encouraged to consider these potential costs as they prepare a proposed budget and check in with their grant manager to verify.
- **Engagement items, incentives, and stipends:** See below for definitions and differences between these closely related types of purchases. This guidance is to provide consistency in how items in this category of spending are provided and recognizes that funding these activities needs to be scaled appropriately. Purchase of items in this category must be associated with increasing awareness of travel options programs, improving safety while using travel options, and/or changing behavior to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. The cost should be reasonable and prioritize new participants or expanded use of travel options by existing participants.
  - **Engagement items** are safety or program awareness/marketing items that are handed out at engagement events or as a thank you for participation (stickers, lights, etc.). These items do not need to be tracked using the RTO Incentives Tracking Sheet for invoice documentation purposes, but receipts will need to be provided to Metro along

with how they were used for engagement. Gift cards do not fall under engagement items.

- Cost range: under \$5 per item.
- For small engagement items for SRTS applications, such as pencils, shoelaces or stickers – please utilize statewide SRTS resources, which are available multiple times a year: <http://streettrust.oregonscreen.com/>
- **Incentives** may be funded only if they are used for the direct purpose of encouraging people to participate in a program intended to increase their use of travel options and reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips. Incentive items should be related to improving a travel options trip (i.e. bike locks, transit fare) or improving safety (i.e. reflective items, helmets, etc.) Requests for non-travel options incentives (i.e. a gift card for coffee/local restaurant) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Incentives cannot go toward the purchase of items for single-occupancy vehicle trips (i.e. gas gift cards, parking payments if not associated with carpooling). *Incentives and recipients must be tracked using the Metro-provided RTO Incentives Tracking Sheet for invoice documentation purposes. Incentives cannot be provided to paid staff supporting an event.*
  - Cost range: \$5-25 for items such as helmets, reflective items, bike locks, gift cards, etc.
  - Random drawings of items above \$25 should be coordinated with Metro RTO staff before purchasing.
  - If a program intends to purchase children's kick-scooters as an incentive, there is a cap of \$500 for the purchase of scooters for a single program/year and they must be used as an incentive for participation in a travel options program.
  - Per IRS Rules, if gift cards are used as incentives: If the total value of gift cards received by any individual from your organization (grantee) exceeds \$600, the grantee must issue a Form 1099-MISC for that individual, and that individual will be responsible for any taxes. The organization (grantee) is responsible for sharing this information with each gift card recipient. This language is included in the Metro-provided template.
  - Gift cards as incentives should not go to paid staff whose time supporting the program is covered by another source. Small thank you incentives (gift cards of \$5 or less) can be used if time on the program is outside the scope of duties for their job – for example, a teacher doing hand tallies in their classroom for Safe Routes to School.
  - If gift cards are used as an incentive and an individual is receiving more than \$600, the program should implement a more formal stipend agreement. Gift cards should be used for short-term program incentive purposes to kickstart activity but not an ongoing payment method.
- **Stipends** may be used in regional travel options projects in several ways. This includes compensating individuals for their time assisting in the administration of events or ongoing activities. In addition, stipends can be used to compensate individuals for their participation in surveys, focus groups, community walks, or other substantial community engagement activities. Gift cards may be used as a stand-in for stipends, if

necessary, for short-term program purposes. Payment amounts should be commensurate with the activity occurring and it is recommended that you review your proposed payment structure with Metro staff before implementing. *All stipends must be documented via a stipend agreement (for cash stipends) or tracked using the RTO Incentive Tracking Sheet (for gift card stipends) for invoice documentation purposes.*

- Per IRS Rules: If the total value of cash or gift cards received by any individual from your organization (grantee) exceeds \$600, the grantee must issue a Form 1099-MISC for that individual, and that individual will be responsible for any taxes. The organization (grantee) is responsible for sharing this information with each stipend or gift card recipient. This language is included in the Metro-provided template.

For more information or individual assistance with the minimum grant requirements, contact RTO staff (see the Contact Information section).