

# 2009 Innovations Awards Program

## APPLICATION

### Idaho Transportation Department *Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference*

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-W-09ID

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

State: Idaho

Assign Program Category: Government Operations (Subcategory: Public Information)

1. **Program Name:** Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference.
2. **Administering Agency:** The Idaho Transportation Department.
3. **Contact Person (Name and Title):** Adam Rush, Public Involvement Coordinator.
4. **Address:** 3311 W. State Street, Boise, ID 83707-1129.
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7. **E-mail Address:** Adam.Rush@itd.idaho.gov
8. **Web site Address:** <http://www.itd.idaho.gov/funding/>
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.** Idaho's Transportation

Funding Conference was designed to gather public comment on how to best increase funds to meet a financial shortfall. Meetings were held throughout Idaho during the summer of 2008.

10. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 2, 2009 to be considered.** Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference held its inaugural meetings starting in July of 2008.

11. **Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?** The Funding Conference was created to gather public comment on how to increase funding for Idaho's highway system. It also was created to educate taxpayers, city representatives, county representatives and business leaders on why a funding increase is needed.

12. **Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.** Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference, after the planning stage, started with a July 14 meeting in Caldwell, Idaho. This meeting was the first of seven held across the state to gather public comment and input. After the July 14 meeting, meetings were held on July 16, July 17, July 22, July 23, Aug. 5 and on Aug. 26. These meetings lasted the better part of a day, and were organized into individual meetings with city councils, county highway districts and business representatives. Opening remarks were given at each meeting by transportation department leaders, Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and representatives from the governor's office. After the opening remarks, comments and questions were taken from those in attendance. During the evening hours at each meeting, a public session was held with the same format. At each meeting, brochures, comment sheets, a return envelope and comment sheets were handed out to meeting attendees. The meetings included a PowerPoint presentation, and a video presentation on the highway funding challenges the state is facing.

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?** The program is a new and creative approach because it was an extensive and thorough effort to reach out to Idaho taxpayers in their communities, and it wasn't associated with any one specific highway project. Traditionally, transportation department meetings are held to gather public comment and educate the public about a highway construction project that is in the planning stages. These meetings allowed taxpayers to ask questions about how the transportation department works, and why it works the way it does. Residents can ask those questions at any transportation department meeting, and information will be gathered and sent to them. At the Funding Conference meetings, transportation department experts were available to answer questions first-hand. At a traditional transportation department meeting, engineers who are familiar with specific projects attend.

**14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)** The program's start-up costs were about \$70,000. That amount included printing costs, hotel room reservations, fuel for two vans, conference room reservations, mailings, and support staff to help organize the meetings.

**15. What are the program's annual operational costs?** The program's annual operational costs would be roughly the same if it were held each year. The costs would be about \$70,000.

**16. How is the program funded?** During its first year, the program was funded with contributions from Idaho Transportation Department headquarters' divisions.

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.** No. Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference was created from an on-going dialogue among policy makers and the public on why Idaho's highways are in the condition they're in, and what should be done about those highways. Legislation has been introduced during previous legislative sessions to increase funding for Idaho highways.

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?** Apple laptop computers, Microsoft PowerPoint, Quark page design, Toshiba projector.

**19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.** Yes, to the best of the knowledge of staff in the Office of Communications, the program originated in Idaho. The lead staff member of the program's contact information is: Jeff Stratten, Office of Communications, Idaho Transportation Department, 3311 W. State Street, Boise, ID 83707-1129. E-mail Address: [Jeff.Stratten@itd.idaho.gov](mailto:Jeff.Stratten@itd.idaho.gov). Phone Number: 1-208-334-8817.

**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?** No.

**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?** Yes, Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference was fully implemented in that it gave the Idaho Governor's Office input from Idaho residents on how they preferred funding increases to be implemented. The statewide meetings also gave policy makers and the transportation department the opportunity to explain to taxpayers why a funding increase is needed, and how current funds are used.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.** The pros of Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference are its thoroughness in reaching out to Idaho taxpayers, and the depth of information it presented to those who attended the meetings. Seven meetings were held across the state during the summer of 2009. An Internet page also was created with the information on it for those who couldn't attend the meetings. The transportation department received positive feedback and comments of appreciation from some of those who attended the meetings. Attendees said they liked having a public meeting in their communities. One challenge, or drawback, of the meetings was their summer schedule. That meant some who wanted to attend already had family vacations planned. The Internet site was available, but some expressed a disappointment that they had previous engagements. The

department couldn't schedule the meetings earlier in the year, as the Legislature was in session and policy makers wouldn't have been able to attend. Another challenge, or drawback, was the uncertainty of the national and state economy. Even last summer, concerns were being expressed about economic forecasts. Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference would have been stronger with some visual aids or information on how current economic conditions impact the transportation department's mission of building and maintaining highways. It's a challenge to present economic information when forecasts change, and are different from source to source.

**23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?** Last year was the program's first. Preliminary discussions about Idaho's Transportation Funding Conference have included suggestions that it be held in more communities in the future, and possibly offer information in addition to transportation department budget and funding issues.

**24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?** Some limitations or obstacles other states might expect to encounter include the perception that nothing will change after public meetings, a resistance to any increase in funding no matter how well-presented information is, and the sentiment that state agencies are too large regardless of any funding needs.