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## **2010 Innovations Awards Application**

Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-MW-14KS**

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

**State:** Kansas

**Assign Program Category (applicant):** Transportation

- 1. Program Name:** Transportation Project Selection Process
- 2. Administering Agency:** The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT)
- 3. Contact Person (Name and Title):** Julie Lorenz, *Director of Public Affairs*
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- 9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**

After more than three years of extensive outreach across Kansas, the new highway project selection process was developed to allow the State to capitalize more quickly on economic opportunities, serve regional priorities and provide communities the flexibility to address emerging needs. The new process utilizes engineering data, citizen input and economic impact analysis as factors in selecting highway expansion projects (projects that add lanes or interchanges).

**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 1, 2010 to be considered.**

KDOT launched the selection process in February 2009.

**11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?**

In the past, Kansas selected projects every 10 years, which did not allow communities the flexibility to capture emerging economic opportunities. For example, a business might be considering locating in a community if better access (ranging from a new turning lane to a new interchange) could be added to accommodate them; however with the past process funding for major improvements would not have been available until the Legislature authorized additional funding 10 years later. This new process allows projects to be selected more frequently so that communities can meet these emerging opportunities that will bring jobs to Kansas. In addition, Kansans expressed the need to link transportation project with the economic priorities of the State, which this process ensures.

**12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

1. Utilizing engineering data, KDOT staff compiles a list of transportation needs across the state. Projects are ranked based on their engineering score, which includes factors on how a project will impact congestion or safety issues and pavement condition.
2. KDOT staff presents this list of projects to communities across the state during the Local Consultation meetings. Participants (usually local officials or economic development professionals) are given the opportunity to add new projects to the list if needed and they identify what projects on the list are the region's top priorities.
3. Based on the discussion from the Local Consultation meetings and other interaction with local residents, KDOT's Area Engineers assign each project in their region a Local Consultation score.
4. In addition, Area Engineers work with local economic development officials to gather data about how a highway project will impact the local/State's economy.
5. Area Engineers submit the economic data to the Planning staff, which inputs the data into the economic model, TREDIS. (More information about TREDIS is presented in question 18). The score a project receives from TREDIS determines its Economic Impact score.
6. Planning staff combine a project's engineering score (50%), local consultation score (25%) and economic impact score (25%) to determine a project's overall score. That score along with other factors (such as whether right of away has already been purchased, if communities have matching funds, etc) will be considered when prioritizing projects for construction. The number of projects constructed is determined by how much funding is available. It should be noted that urban and rural projects are scored separately and don't compete with each other for funding.

**Highway Selection Process Scoring**

Engineering Factors = 50%

Local Consultation = 25%

Economic Impacts = 25%

7. Every two years, KDOT will meet with communities to rescore projects. Thus, if new issues or opportunities emerge in a community since the last Local Consultation meeting, a project can be re-evaluated and its score can be raised – and perhaps will be constructed sooner.

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

It's a new approach for Kansas, because in the past KDOT relied predominantly on engineering data to make transportation decisions. This new approach incorporates citizen input and economic impact analysis as factors in selecting projects. This approach helps to ensure highway projects will better serve a community's needs and will help the State receive a greater return on its highway investments by capitalizing on economic opportunities.

It's also likely a new approach for the nation. Other states are using TREDIS to identify the potential economic impact of an individual project or corridor that supports building the project. However, as far as we know, no other states are using this level of economic analysis to evaluate a slate of projects to determine programming, which makes KDOT's selection process rather unique. In addition, this process combines local input and economic analysis in scoring, which differs from other states.

**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.)**

TREDIS costs approximately \$25,000. No additional people were hired. However, 5 planning staff spent approximately 200 days scoring projects and learning about the economic model. And 38 members of district staff spent about 20 days gathering local information.

**15. What are the program's annual operational costs?**

TREDIS has an annual subscription of \$25,000. All staff working on the project has other responsibilities; this analysis represents just a portion of their time.

**16. How is the program funded?**

TREDIS and staff support are all funded through KDOT's annual operations budget.

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.**

No.

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

A TREDIS (Transportation Economic Development Impact System) model was used by KDOT to predict economic impacts for the project selection process. It portrays the Kansas economy based on customized county-level economic data about employment patterns, business activity, and freight movements by type, amount and value. For each project, it also includes information on local economic conditions collected by KDOT's area engineers from local officials and economic development experts. This information is

combined with projections KDOT engineers make (based on regional travel model data where available) about project-level changes in congestion, travel times, travel distances, or accessibility.

**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.

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**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?**

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**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

No. The process will not be fully implemented until the Legislature authorizes the funding necessary to begin building new projects.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.**

In 2003, KDOT administered a statistically-valid survey to more than 900 stakeholders from across the state to evaluate the agency's performance. While the highway system received high marks with respondents, the agency was criticized for being inflexible and rigid when working with communities. Local Consultation meetings, which are the cornerstone of this process, have improved relationships immensely between the agency and communities. Communities have praised this new process for giving them more input in the decision-making process and for the flexibility it allows.

Another benefit of this approach is allows the State to align its economic priorities with transportation investments; therefore giving Kansas the potential to get the biggest bang for its buck.

One drawback of this program is that the Local Consultation and Economic Impact scores are seen as less objective than engineering data is. Thus, the agency opens it up to criticism from communities on how the projects are scored. However, KDOT's pilot process with this approach was well-received among communities and if there were concerns about an individual project score, KDOT staff was willing to reevaluate the project, which seemed to ease the concerns of citizens.

**23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

The idea for this process began during KDOT's long range planning process in 2006. After meeting with hundreds of stakeholders across the state, certain principles began to emerge for what Kansans wanted out of selection process. The primary principles being that it needed to be more flexible, it should represent regional priorities and it needed to link transportation investments to the economy. In 2008, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius appointed a statewide task force, T-LINK, to craft a new approach to transportation. Building off the long range planning process, T-LINK established a working group to formalize these principles into a project selection process. This working group fully developed the process and then KDOT staff piloted the approach across the state in 2009. Communities were very supportive of the process.

**24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?**

This approach allows highway projects to be selected by local officials and KDOT staff. However, some states rely on legislators to determine highway projects and thus, there could be resistance from legislators to relinquish control of the selection process. Another challenge with this approach is that requires a statewide effort to facilitate meetings with local communities. Some agencies may struggle if they do not have the necessary staff to undertake such an effort.