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## Federal-aid Program Overview Local Public Agency Programs Certification Programs

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials)

*Certification programs are an effective approach to ensure compliance with project delivery requirements*



Did you know that 75 percent of the Nation's roads are owned and maintained by local public agencies, known as LPAs? You might be surprised to learn that as much as 20 percent of the Federal-aid Highway Program is sub-allocated for LPA projects, all of which makes LPAs important partners in helping to maintain our critical transportation infrastructure.



As part of a broad effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, some State departments of transportation, or State DOTs, are taking a fresh look at the ways they partner with LPAs, and some are implementing LPA certification programs as their approach to LPA oversight. The Federal Highway Administration, or FHWA, supports using certification programs as a method for State DOTs to effectively use limited resources while assuring compliance with project delivery requirements.



On Federal-aid projects, an LPA certification program results in the delegation of project administration to local agencies. However, the State DOT retains full responsibility for LPA compliance with Federal requirements.



LPA certification programs will vary from state to state. For example, one State DOT may delegate a single project phase, such as the design, while another may delegate the administration of projects of a specified nature or size, such as sidewalks.

> Introduction



- ◇ Types of responsibilities that will be delegated
- ◇ Certification agreement
- ◇ Processes and procedures

The requirements for an LPA to participate in a State DOT's certification program are described in a certification agreement. The agreement identifies the processes and procedures for participating in the program and for delivering a project in accordance with State and Federal requirements.

> What we will cover



The successful delegation of responsibilities from the State DOT to the LPA may require both agencies to change some business practices. Let's see how that works.

> Changes in business practices



- ◇ Review
- ◇ Field visits
- ◇ Guidance

When delegating responsibilities to an LPA, including through an LPA certification program, the duties of the State DOT's LPA program staff typically evolve from day-to-day project administration to program management and oversight. This process focuses on the review of project documentation, participation in key field

visits, and the provision of guidance whenever issues are encountered.

> Changes in business practices



- ◇ Staff development
- ◇ Requirements

Additionally, in order to assume the added responsibilities of project administration, the LPA needs to retain and develop qualified staff. Therefore, all LPA certification programs include training on Federal, State, and local requirements. Training can be on the job, instructor-led, online, or any combination of the three.

Here's how one State DOT started with an LPA certification program:

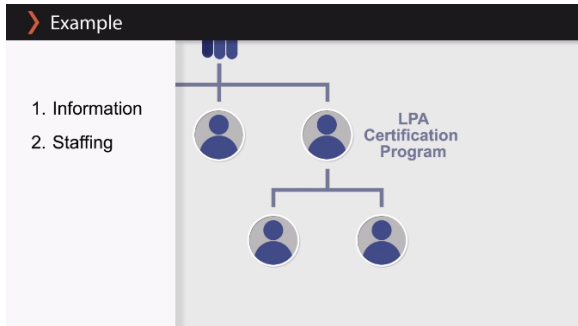
> Example

1. Information

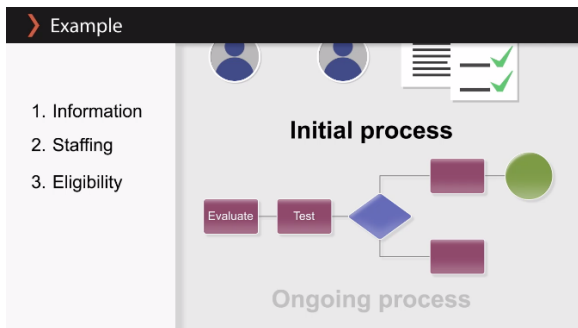


Neighboring State

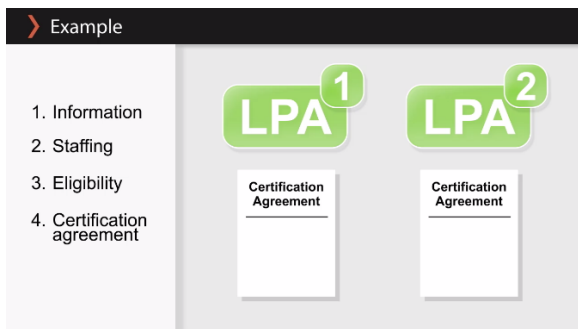
To begin, management needed information about the potential benefits of an LPA certification program and the experiences of other State DOTs. So agency representatives participated in a peer exchange with a neighboring State that had a mature and successful LPA certification program.



Next, the State DOT formed a new group to oversee the LPA certification program. The group included the existing LPA program staff and several new positions at headquarters.



The group's first task was to review manuals, checklists, and other resources gathered during the peer exchange. Based on its research, the group recommended a process for determining an LPA's initial and ongoing eligibility for the program. The group recommended that it first evaluate an LPA's capacity for project administration and then test its capacity during a pilot project. Ongoing eligibility would be based on an annual review of at least one project from each participating LPA.



Using the recommended process, two LPAs were selected to pilot the program, and a certification agreement was developed for

each. One LPA was certified to administer the design phase of a project while the other was certified to administer all project phases, including construction.



During the pilot process, as LPA staff assumed its new administrative duties, the State DOT staff reviewed the LPA's processes and procedures and answered questions. After the pilot, the State DOT could effectively reduce the level of its on-hands oversight and still fulfill its oversight responsibilities.

Since the program's implementation, the pilot process has been acknowledged as rigorous, but staff from both the State DOT and the LPA are realizing a higher level of requirement compliance, product quality and of process efficiency on Federal-aid projects.

As an employee of a State DOT or LPA, you may be under increasing pressure to build projects efficiently. If your LPA program is currently not benefiting from a certification program, contact your State DOT or FHWA division office to learn more about the process.

### Additional Resources

- FHWA Local Public Agency program office website with links to additional information  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federalaid/lpa/>
- FHWA Order 5020.2 - Stewardship and Oversight of Federal-Aid Project Administered by Local Public Agencies (LPA) - dated August 2014  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/orders/50202.cfm>
- FHWA EDC2 Peer Exchange Report of event hosted by Washington DOT in June 2014  
[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts/pdfs/wsdot-udot\\_peer\\_exchange\\_report\\_final\\_082014.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts/pdfs/wsdot-udot_peer_exchange_report_final_082014.pdf)
- FHWA memo regarding LPA Stewardship Issues and OIG findings dated 2012  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federalaid/lpa/120213.cfm>

The content of this document is not a substitute for information obtained from State departments of transportation, appropriate FHWA Division Offices, and applicable laws. Scenarios have been simplified for emphasis and do not necessarily reflect the actual range of requirements applicable to the scenario or this topic. This document was created under contract number DTFH61-14-P-00163 by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, and is offered to the public to heighten and focus awareness of Federal-aid requirements within the local public agencies community and reinforces the importance of these necessary policies, procedures, and practices.

This Companion Resource is the script content for the video production of the same name.