

Pre-Scoping Module Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

What is the Pre-Scoping Module?

- The Pre-Scoping Module is a component of the SMART Portal that enables the applicant community (localities, MPOs, PDCs, and public transportation providers) and VDOT / DRPT staff to create proposed or conceptual project recommendations that have originated out of one or more planning or project identification efforts and may be submitted for one or more funding programs included in the SYIP. The look, feel, and information displayed and required for input into a Pre-Scoping application is extremely similar to the same information on a SMART SCALE Pre-Application and the data can be migrated or “cloned” over into a SMART SCALE Pre-Application as well as other funding pre-applications and full applications for Revenue Sharing, Transportation Alternatives, Virginia Highway Safety Improvement Program, etc.

Why was it developed?

- Efforts to create the Pre-Scoping Module began after Round 3 of SMART SCALE as it became apparent there needed to be a method to begin project funding application development prior to formal intake cycles. This reflects the evolution of project identification across all programs since SMART SCALE was first implemented relating to the need to have more defined scopes, schedules, and estimates PRIOR to applying for funding in the SYIP. It supports and supplements STARS, Project Pipeline, and other planning efforts underway and provides a year round collaboration space between the state and applicant community on candidate project proposals. It provides the opportunity to collaborate on proposed project scopes, schedules, estimates, and funding application readiness and eligibility issues sooner to make formal application intake processes more efficient.

Who has access to use it?

- Generally, anyone from the applicant community that has creator or submitter privileges for their organization in other funding programs in the Portal will have the ability to use the Pre-Scoping Module. VDOT / DRPT staff will also have access to create or submit Pre-Scoping applications as well as review and/or validate those applications submitted from the applicant community.

Is it required to use in order to apply for funding in one or more funding programs in the SMART Portal?

- There is no requirement that an applicant must use the Pre-Scoping Module in order to apply for the various funding programs available in SMART Portal. It is a tool that has been created to enable earlier collaboration on key funding application elements. Applicants can still create ad hoc / from scratch funding applications in the SMART Portal supported programs w/o using the Pre-Scoping module.

Who do I contact for issues using the module?

- Your first point of contact should be your VDOT District or DRPT SMART Portal POC. You may also use the SMART Portal mailbox to submit questions, issues, or concerns regarding using the Pre-Scoping Module. The mailbox is monitored by VDOT – Infrastructure Investment Division and OIPI staff; any inquiries will be directed to the most appropriate staff from there.
 - Smartportal@ctb.virginia.gov

How do I create a new Pre-Scoping application?

- There are four (4) ways to create a Pre-Scoping application. From the top of the Portal banner, select create new application. If you have Pre-Scoping Module permissions, you will see a dropdown of available funding programs for which a new application can be created – Pre-Scoping will be present in that dropdown along with any other funding programs for which formal intake has been initiated. In Pre-Scoping, you will have the following options:
 - Create new record ad hoc / from scratch
 - Clone a “scored” application from previous cycles of funding programs (ex. SMART SCALE, Revenue Sharing, Transportation Alternatives, State of Good Repair, etc.) into the Pre-Scoping Module in order to edit and submit
 - Note* Applicants will be able to clone applications created by VDOT / DRPT staff into the various funding programs...VDOT / DRPT staff cannot submit applications for funding, but they can create Pre-Scoping applications on behalf of an organization and that organization still has to choose to clone and submit that application for funding
 - Import from P4P – those users that have access to Pathways For Planning will be able to export P4P study recommendations into a ZIP File and upload that ZIP File into SMART Portal to “autofill” a Pre-Scoping application with required information plus any documentation attached to the P4P recommendation
 - Recertify – this option is still in its infancy but this allows previously submitted Pre-Scoping applications to be “recertified”; any approved Pre-Scoping applications that have not been cloned into and funded in one or more funding programs will be queried and pushed to “recertify” status which requires the submitter to resubmit the Pre-Scoping application every two (2) years. This ensures that proposed project information is still valid, up to date, and that the organization is still interested in pursuing the proposed project for potential funding applications

Is there a limit to the number (#) of Pre-Scoping applications I can create or submit?

- You can create as many as you’d like but only 10 submitted Pre-Scoping applications at a time can exist if not a VDOT / DRPT creator / submitter
- If a Pre-Scoping application is archived (ex. Applicant no longer interested in applying), more room is freed up on this submission cap (ex. If application gets cloned into a program and funded, we will mark funded and archive to free up space)

Can anyone see my Pre-Scoping applications?

- For Pre-Scoping applications that are not yet “approved” status, only applicant users with permissions for a given organization can see draft or submitted applications within their organization
 - Mechanically this means users can create, save, or submit applications without anyone outside their organization being able to see their application
 - If there are concerns about public visibility, it’s recommended that users fill out Pre-Scoping applications to the greatest extent possible, save that information, and submit for approval in close proximity for formal application intake cycles in order to be able to clone into a funding program
- VDOT / DRPT staff will be able to see all Pre-Scoping applications regardless of status
- For Pre-Scoping applications that are submitted and “approved” anyone with Pre-Scoping permissions will be able to see approved Pre-Scoping applications so users outside of your organization could view your application once in approved status

I submitted a Pre-Scoping application – what happens next?

- Submitted Pre-Scoping applications proceed through District Review and Validation by VDOT or DRPT staff
- During District Review, VDOT / DRPT staff are doing a high-level review to see if sufficient information is present in the application to be able to provide feedback and primarily assess the applications “risk” as a potential funding application.
- VDOT / DRPT users have the option to “push back” an application if there is insufficient information to review the proposed project, even at a conceptual level, or to assign risk
- They will assign a low, moderate, or high level risk value to the application based on a # of factors – for more information about recommended risk values, please click this link to see a Draft Risk Assessment Screening Tool that has been developed. It is based on VDOT’s Instructional and Informational Memorandum of Application Review and Validation (L&D260 / IID11) which outlines the minimum requirements for VDOT staff to review and validate proposed funding applications.
 - [Location and Design Division - Location and Design - Business | Virginia Department of Transportation \(virginiadot.org\)](#) (see L&D260/IID11)
- Once the application has been reviewed and risk assigned, the application is validated to move to “approved” status
- It should be noted that VDOT / DRPT staff do have the option to “reject” a Pre-Scoping application....this should only occur in rare instances where there is some aspect of the proposed project that would prevent it from being eligible in one or more funding programs. Rejected or pushed back applications should include a detailed follow up and communication from the state with the submitting applicant to discuss next steps.

My Pre-Scoping application is “approved” – what does that mean?

- It simply means that the proposed project has been reviewed and validated by the state, risk has been assessed as described above, and is now able to be cloned into one or more funding programs available in SMART Portal
- It is NOT an indication of potential success in a funding program NOR does it infer that a proposed project has been approved for funding in the SYIP

What does low, moderate, high risk mean on my approved Pre-Scoping application?

- It is important to note that “risk” in this context might not be the same as project risks outlined in a formal project development or similar risk matrix.
- Risk in this context is intended to represent risks for being a successful or unsuccessful funding application
 - A very complex project from a real world development/delivery standpoint might represent a low risk from a funding application standpoint b/c it is very well documented, includes a detailed scope, schedule, and estimate, and poses no readiness or screening risks in an upcoming funding application cycle
 - Whereas a very easy, noncomplex project might present a high-risk b/c it does not include any documentation on scope, schedule, or estimate or is at risk for screening out due to one or more policy elements (ex. Not eligible for SMART SCALE b/c it is a maintenance scope of work).
- VDOT / DRPT reviewers are assigning risk in order to create a “punch list” of potential items that need to be resolved before or during formal funding application intake cycles
- “Low risk” applications will bypass formal validation within the Pre-Scoping module
 - If applicants have been in close contact with their VDOT / DRPT counterparts, the majority of Pre-Scoping applications should flow through low risk category
- “Moderate or High risk” applications will go through a validation workflow in Pre-Scoping in order to document what items about the proposed project pose a risk to a funding application’s success (ex. Detailed estimate supporting documentation or no alternatives analysis for certain scope projects in SMART SCALE)...this intended to inform follow up between the state and applicant to resolve such issues prior to final submission of a formal funding application
- The ultimate goal of the Pre-Scoping Module is to support development of “application ready projects” and this is accomplished by early coordination between applicants and the state resulting in mitigating any potential risks or pitfalls for a potential funding application

VDOT / DRPT created a Pre-Scoping application within the boundaries of my organization – I thought VDOT / DRPT could not apply for any funding program – what does this mean?

- VDOT / DRPT cannot apply for funding programs in SMART Portal, however, VDOT / DRPT often provides technical assistance to help applicants develop funding applications
- In many cases, VDOT / DRPT may provide the majority of proposed project information and/or documentation for use by an applicant...the Pre-Scoping Module enables VDOT / DRPT to get said information into the Portal and enables the applicant to still have a chance to review and/or edit information prior to cloning a Pre-Scoping application into another Portal program and submitting a funding application
- Applicants ARE NOT required to use VDOT / DRPT created Pre-Scoping applications to apply for funding, this is merely meant as a tool to enable more efficient collaboration in many instances

What documentation is required to be uploaded as part of a Pre-Scoping application?

- It is recommended that any information that might be necessary for a formal funding application be included in a Pre-Scoping application...this may include information or documentation supporting a detailed scope, schedule, or estimate
- However, the system does not require any formal documentation such as resolutions of support of other materials...in many instances, VDOT / DRPT may be providing technical assistance to develop such information and can edit and add to a submitted Pre-Scoping application

Do I need any formal resolutions from my governing body to use the Pre-Scoping module?

- No – any formal resolutions of support from a governing body or regional entity are only required during formal intake in other Portal programs

How do I get information from Pathways for Planning (P4P) into the Pre-Scoping module or the SMART Portal in general?

- Pathways for Planning (P4P) includes a section for study recommendations. Users of P4P may select one or more study recommendations either individually or as a bundle to “export” into a ZIP file via P4P. This ZIP file can be saved anywhere the user may choose.
- From there, users with Portal permissions in Pre-Scoping, when creating a new application in Pre-Scoping, can select the P4P option of creating an application. The user then uploads the ZIP file from wherever the file is saved, and it will “autofill” as much information on the Pre-Scoping application that was in the ZIP file.
- This may include geospatial data for mapping, proposed project metadata, and any attached documentation from P4P...this intended to save users time and make it easier to leverage study recommendations documented in P4P in order to create potential funding applications in SMART Portal

Will VDOT / DRPT be reviewing my Pre-Scoping application ahead of Round 5 of SMART SCALE and if so, what type of review should I expect?

- The Pre-Scoping Module is a tool to enable collaboration between the applicant community and VDOT / DRPT ahead of formal application cycles...that being said ***it is not a formal funding application and is not governed by any formal policy like each various funding program is with regards to timelines, dispute resolution, etc.***
 - To be clear – projects will not be screened out of Pre-Scoping, estimates disagreements do not have to be finalized yet, final outcomes of studies do not need to be finalized yet, etc.
- Many Pre-Scoping applications initially will be the result of close collaboration that has already been underway via one or more planning efforts statewide in preparation of SMART SCALE Round 5
- It’s expected that applicants in many instances already know which projects they are applying for and are coordinating with their state counterparts – this module offers a mechanism for VDOT / DRPT staff to enter information into the Portal to ensure reviews

on all sides OR to provide early feedback on various proposed application elements (scope, schedule, estimate, program specific requirements).

- Additional benefits include:
 - Earlier ability to get mapping and other general information correct
 - Earlier feedback on VTrans needs qualifications
 - Earlier feedback on required documentation or other approvals to meet readiness requirements or other program eligibility requirements
 - Enables “what if” dynamics such as with cost estimates to get an earlier understanding of how the Portal applies inflation to support decision making on scope elements, which project to submit, or engage earlier estimate conversations
 - Provide the state the ability to plan for expected workloads in providing technical assistance between now and formal submission next year in SMART SCALE which should hopefully make the process more efficient
 - Provide the applicant community with a time frame to space out workload as well and work when it is convenient to them ahead of Round 5 or as information evolves in proposed applications
- Any reviews conducted by the state between now and Round 5 should not expect the same level of vigor as formal application validation but we urge users on all sides to take advantage of this opportunity to try and replicate as close to application ready projects as possible.
 - VDOT Central Office Staff will provide updates to District and DRPT staff on any submitted Pre-Scoping applications to ensure communication is occurring
 - VDOT Central Office Staff will also be conducting quality assurance reviews to ensure that Pre-Scoping applications are getting the best value and not just “checking the box” on reviews (ex. If a wildly inappropriate schedule is entered for a highly complex project, we reserve the right to follow up with the District to ensure coordination between the applicant and their state counterparts is occurring)
 - It is recommended that each SMART SCALE POC and applicant counterparts discuss expectations for reviews and communication that work for them as more robust and longer term guidance is formulated

Prior Round Pre-Scoping Module Applicant Training Questions

Pre-Scoping Module Access

- I can't see the Pre-scoping Module application on my SMART Portal DASHBAORD. What do I do?
 - All organizations have access to the Pre-Scoping Module. If you do not have access your Organization Administrator needs to give you permission in your user settings.

Pre-Scoping Module Process

- Is there a definitive turnaround time for VDOT to review and comment on a submitted Pre-Scoping application?
 - No. There is no time requirement for a response from VDOT. However, if you are having issues getting a project review through you are welcome to reach out to the Pre-Scoping Module or SMART Portal POCs for assistance.
- Can pre-scoping applications be deleted by the organization?
 - Applications can be deleted prior to saving. Once saved applications can only be archived.
- Will you be able to clone applications into the Pre-Scoping Module?
 - Yes. Applications can be cloned into and from the Pre-Scoping Module.
- Will engaging the Pre-Scoping Module impact future scoring of applications?
 - No. Use of the Pre-Scoping Module does not impact scoring outcomes for any of the SMART Portal programs.

Pre-Scoping Module Cost Estimation

- How will cost estimates be validated in the Pre-Scoping Module?
 - Cost Estimates will only be assessed for potential issues in the Pre-Scoping Module. Full validation of cost estimates will still be a part of the of each program specific application process.

Pre-Scoping Module Requirements

- Are potential applicants required to use the Pre-Scoping Module for Smart Scale Round 6 candidate projects?
 - No. The Pre-Scoping Module is a recommended resource but it is not required for submitting applications in the upcoming SMART SCALE Round 5 cycle.
- What are the required fields for the pre-scoping module?
 - Required fields for saving include: Name, Email, Phone Number, Project Title, Principle Improvement Type, and Project Short Description.
 - Required fields for submission include: All of the above plus Location Mapping.

Pre-Scoping Module Potential Future Opportunities

- Could this be accessed by an MPO for RSTBG AND CMAQ application processes?

- Yes. The Pre-Scoping Module is a tool intended to help project recommendations and concepts develop into application-ready project requests or project requests that are ready to be funded.
- It is intended to support a new module in SMART Portal entitled the Candidate Application Module (CAM) which includes functionality for external entities to oversee screening and validation of funding applications under the purview of external funding programs such as those overseen by MPOs and/or Regional Authorities.
- How can an MPO see its member's applications or pre-scoping?
 - MPO's would be able to see approved/recommended pre-scoping applications or applications that have gone through the full Pre-Scoping review and validation process.

WORKING