

Module 1: Navigating the USDOT Grant Application Process

Applying for USDOT grants through Grants.gov requires careful preparation. This guide outlines key steps and considerations for a successful application. Early registration and attention to detail are crucial.

JADA Grant Strategy Workshop, Sept 17, 2024

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The Importance of Early Registration

1

Start Early

Begin the registration process as soon as possible. It can take several weeks to complete.

2

Avoid Delays

Early registration ensures you won't miss critical deadlines due to unexpected issues.

3

Be Prepared

Having all necessary information ready streamlines the registration process.

Steps to Register on Grants.gov

1

Obtain UEI

Get a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, which replaced DUNS numbers in April 2022.

2

SAM Registration

Register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.SAM.gov.

3

Grants.gov Account

Create a Grants.gov username and password for access to the system.

4

AOR Authorization

Ensure E-Business Point of Contact authorizes you as an Authorized Organization Representative.



SAM Registration Requirements

Prior Registration

Complete SAM registration before submitting your grant application.

Valid UEI

Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in your application.

Active Status

Maintain an active SAM registration with current, accurate information. Make sure that you know who your AOR is, if they leave, make sure you update your entity's credentials to their replacement.

Minimum Time

Allow at least two weeks for SAM registration to be processed.



Key Considerations for Applicants

- 1 Time Management**
Plan for a minimum of two weeks for SAM registration completion.
- 2 Compliance**
Failure to register or comply with Grants.gov requirements may disqualify your application.
- 3 Technical Support**
DOT cannot assist with technical issues related to Grants.gov or SAM registration.
- 4 Proactive Approach**
Address potential issues early to ensure a smooth application process.



Support Resources Available



Hotline Support

Contact Grants.gov Customer Service Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance.



FAQs

Explore Grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions for common issues and solutions.



Educational Resources

Utilize Grants.gov Grants 101 page and Federal Grant Applicant Resources for in-depth guidance.



Grant Lifecycle

Refer to the Grant Lifecycle Timeline to understand the entire process.





Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Procrastination

Waiting until the last minute can lead to missed deadlines due to unforeseen issues.

Incomplete Information

Failing to provide all required details can result in application rejection.

Outdated Registrations

Not keeping SAM registration current can disqualify your application.



Final Tips for Success

Tip

Benefit

Double-check all information

Ensures accuracy and completeness

Set personal deadlines

Allows buffer for unexpected delays

Keep records of all steps

Facilitates troubleshooting if needed

Stay informed of updates

Ensures compliance with latest requirements



Questions and Answers

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Module 2 – NOFO 101: Mastering Grant Applications

Welcome to NOFO 101. This module will guide you through the essentials of understanding NOFOs (Notice of Funding Opportunity).

We'll cover how to read a NOFO, key information to get started, and preparing an application template.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION Office of the Secretary

Notice of Funding Opportunity for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary (OST), US Department of Transportation (DOT)

ACTION: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF KEY INFORMATION: RAISE Grant Opportunity

Issuing Agency	Office of the Secretary, US Department of Transportation
Program Overview	RAISE grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, per statute, for planning or constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects that will improve safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, mobility and community connectivity, economic competitiveness and opportunity including tourism, state of good repair, partnership and collaboration, and innovation.
Objective	- Invest in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact; and - Support projects that are consistent with the Department's strategic goals: improve safety, economic strength and global competitiveness, equity, and climate and sustainability.
Eligible Applicants	- States - District of Columbia - any territory or possession of the United States - a unit of local government - a public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more States - a special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority - a Federally recognized Indian Tribe or a consortium of such Indian Tribes - a transit agency - a multi-State or multi-jurisdictional group of entities that are separately eligible
Eligible Project Types	- highway or bridge projects eligible under title 23, United States Code - public transportation projects eligible under chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code

Understanding NOFO Basics

What is a NOFO?

A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is an official document announcing available grant funding.

Why it Matters

NOFOs provide crucial details about eligibility, funding amounts, and application requirements.

Where to Find NOFOs

NOFOs are typically published on government websites or grant databases like Grants.gov.

NOFO

Anatomy of a NOFO

- 1 **Executive Summary**
Brief overview of the funding opportunity and its purpose.
- 2 **Eligibility Information**
Specifies who can apply for the grant.
- 3 **Award Information**
Details on funding amounts, duration, and number of awards.
- 4 **Application and Submission**
Instructions on how to apply and deadlines.

Key Information to Get Started

- 1 **Eligibility Check**
Ensure your organization meets all eligibility criteria before proceeding.
- 2 **Deadline Awareness**
Note all important dates, including submission deadlines and review periods.
- 3 **Funding Alignment**
Confirm that the grant aligns with your organization's mission and goals.
- 4 **Required Resources**
Identify the personnel, time, and materials needed for a successful application.



NOFO

Reading Strategies for NOFOs

First Pass

Skim the entire document to get an overview. Focus on headings and bolded text.

Deep Dive

Read thoroughly, highlighting key points and requirements. Make notes on important details.

Review and Clarify

Discuss with team members. Reach out to the funding agency for any clarifications.

Preparing Your Application Template

1

Outline Creation

Develop a basic structure based on NOFO requirements.

2

Section Planning

Break down each section into manageable parts.

3

Content Gathering

Collect necessary data, statistics, and supporting documents.

4

Review and Refine

Continuously improve your template as you work through the application.



Common NOFO Requirements

Requirement	Description
Project Narrative	Detailed description of proposed project
Budget	Itemized financial plan for grant funds
Timeline	Project schedule with milestones
Evaluation Plan	Methods to measure project success



Leveraging Technology in NOFO Analysis



Search Functions

Use digital tools to quickly find key information in lengthy NOFOs.



Deadline Tracking

Set up reminders for important dates and milestones.



Collaboration Tools

Utilize shared documents for team-based NOFO analysis and application preparation.



Avoiding Common NOFO Pitfalls

- 1 Missing Deadlines**
Set internal deadlines well before the actual submission date.
- 2 Overlooking Details**
Create a checklist to ensure all NOFO requirements are met.
- 3 Misinterpreting Guidelines**
When in doubt, contact the funding agency for clarification.
- 4 Ignoring Formatting Rules**
Adhere strictly to all formatting guidelines provided in the NOFO.



Next Steps in Your NOFO Journey

- 1 Practice Reading NOFOs**
Review sample NOFOs to familiarize yourself with common structures and language.
- 2 Build Your Team**
Identify key personnel who will contribute to grant applications.
- 3 Create Templates**
Develop reusable templates for common NOFO sections to streamline future applications.





Questions and Answers



Module 3: Stakeholder Engagement and Public Involvement in Transportation Projects

Effective stakeholder engagement and public involvement are critical for successful transportation projects. This presentation explores key strategies and best practices for meaningful participation and inclusive decision-making.

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Stakeholder Engagement

This Section will provide tips on accomplishing Meaningful Public Outreach as is required for USDOT federal funding.

Stakeholder Engagement as a Process

- 1 **Initial Planning**
Identify key stakeholders and develop engagement strategy.
- 2 **Project Development**
Regular meetings and feedback sessions with stakeholders.
- 3 **Implementation**
Ongoing communication and addressing stakeholder concerns.
- 4 **Evaluation**
Review the engagement process and incorporate lessons learned.



USDOT Guidance on Public Involvement

- 1 **Equity-Focused Approach**
USDOT emphasizes inclusive and equitable public involvement practices.
- 2 **Meaningful Engagement**
Guidelines promote active participation throughout the decision-making process.
- 3 **Transparency**
Clear communication of project goals, timelines, and potential impacts is encouraged.
- 4 **Accessibility**
Ensuring information and participation opportunities are accessible to all communities.





Creating a Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Objectives

Define clear goals for stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

Timeline

Establish a schedule for engagement activities aligned with project milestones.

Methods

Select appropriate engagement tools and techniques for different stakeholder groups.

Resources

Allocate necessary budget, staff, and materials for effective engagement.

Identifying Stakeholders

1

Brainstorming

List all potential individuals and groups affected by or interested in the project.

2

Categorization

Group stakeholders by interest, influence, and impact levels.

3

Prioritization

Determine key stakeholders requiring more focused engagement efforts.

4

Mapping

Create a visual representation of stakeholder relationships and interests.





Stakeholder Engagement Tools



Surveys

Gather quantitative and qualitative feedback from a wide audience.



Public Meetings

Host in-person or virtual forums for information sharing and discussion.



Social Media

Leverage platforms for real-time updates and community engagement.



Project Websites

Provide a central hub for project information and feedback collection.

Gathering Diverse Perspectives



Outreach Strategies

Develop targeted outreach to underrepresented communities. Partner with local community-based organizations to expand reach.

Inclusive Events

Host meetings at accessible locations and varied times. Provide translation services and childcare options, if possible. Consider hybrid events to allow for virtual participation.

Multiple Formats

Offer various participation methods. Include online surveys, in-person workshops, and mobile outreach units.



Environmental and Social Impact Considerations

Environmental Factors

Air quality

Noise pollution

Habitat disruption

Water resources

Social Factors

Community cohesion

Property values

Access to services

Local economy

Active Listening Techniques

1 Empathetic Engagement

Show genuine interest in stakeholder concerns and perspectives.

2 Clarifying Questions

Ask follow-up questions to ensure clear understanding of stakeholder input.

3 Nonverbal Cues

Use body language to demonstrate attentiveness and respect.

4 Summarizing

Recap key points to confirm the accurate interpretation of stakeholder feedback.





Integrating Stakeholder Input

1

Data Collection

Systematically gather and organize stakeholder feedback from various sources.

2

Analysis

Identify key themes, priorities, and concerns from stakeholder input.



Integrating Stakeholder Input

1

Incorporation

Modify project plans and designs to address stakeholder feedback where feasible. Document modifications.

2

Communication

Inform stakeholders how their input influenced project decisions and outcomes.

Sample stakeholder engagement cycle

Engagement kick-off meeting

- Outline project plan
- Identify key milestones
- Communicate time commitment

Existing conditions analysis

- Validate current state
- Identify gaps, needs and opportunities

Future state

- Determine vision, goals, and objectives
- Identify strategies to achieve the vision

Final Plan/Report

- Ground truth technical analysis
- Validate recommendations
- Develop implementation plan



Public Involvement

This Section will provide tips on accomplishing Meaningful Public Involvement as defined by USDOT federal funding.

Public Participation Tools



Workshops

Facilitate collaborative sessions for in-depth discussions and idea generation.



Interactive Mapping

Use digital tools for location-based feedback on project impacts.



Mobile Apps

Develop user-friendly apps for on-the-go project updates and input.



Preference Voting

Implement voting systems to gauge public opinion on project alternatives.



Conflict Resolution in Public Participation

Active Mediation

Employ trained mediators to facilitate discussions between conflicting parties.

Collaborative Problem-Solving

Encourage stakeholders to work together on finding mutually beneficial solutions.

Transparent Communication

Provide clear, factual information to address misconceptions and reduce conflicts.

Follow-up Meetings

Schedule additional sessions to resolve ongoing issues and build consensus.



Engaging Disadvantaged Populations

Cultural Competence

Train staff in cultural sensitivity. Develop materials that resonate with diverse communities.

Language Access

Provide translations of key documents. Offer interpretation services at meetings.

Community Partnerships

Collaborate with local organizations. Leverage existing community networks for outreach.

Culturally Appropriate Materials



Multilingual Brochures

Create informative materials in languages spoken by local communities.



Inclusive Visuals

Use imagery and symbols that represent the diversity of the community.



Social Media Outreach

Develop targeted social media content for different cultural groups.



Strategies to Maximize Participation

① Convenient Scheduling

Offer multiple meeting times, including evenings and weekends.

② Virtual Options

Provide online participation methods for those unable to attend in person.

③ Incentives

Consider offering small incentives or refreshments to encourage attendance.

④ Multi-Channel Promotion

Use diverse outreach methods to spread awareness about participation opportunities.



Letters of Support

Identifying Supporters

Reach out to key stakeholders who can provide meaningful endorsements.

Drafting Guidelines

Provide clear instructions and key points for supporters to include. Strongly encourage customization in the writer's voice.

Collection Process

Establish a system for efficiently gathering and organizing support letters.

Leveraging Support

Strategically use letters to demonstrate community and stakeholder backing for the project.



Documenting the Engagement Process

- 1 Data Collection**
Gather all engagement materials, feedback, and participation metrics.
- 2 Analysis**
Synthesize information to identify key themes and outcomes.
- 3 Report Creation**
Develop a detailed report summarizing the engagement process and results.
- 4 Distribution**
Share the report with stakeholders to validate what was heard and use it to inform future planning.

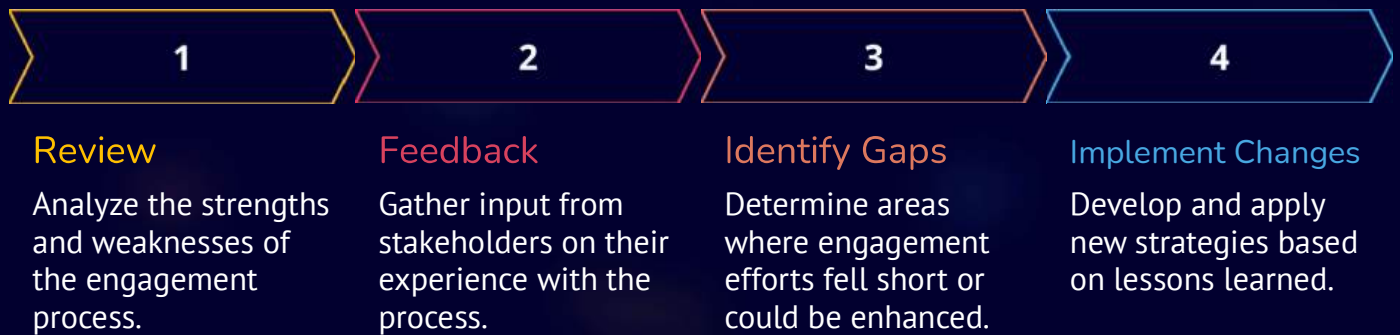
Evaluating Engagement Effectiveness

Metric	Measurement
Participation Rate	Number of attendees/respondents
Diversity	Demographic breakdown of participants
Feedback Quality	Depth and relevance of input received
Impact	Changes made based on stakeholder input





Continuous Improvement



Building Long-Term Relationships

- 1 Regular Updates**
Maintain consistent communication with stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle.
- 2 Feedback Loops**
Create mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and input from stakeholders.
- 3 Recognition**
Acknowledge and appreciate stakeholder contributions to the project's success.
- 4 Capacity Building**
Invest in educating stakeholders to enhance their ability to participate effectively.



Questions and Answers



Module 4 part 1

USDOT Infrastructure Grants: Project Readiness Guide

This presentation provides an overview of USDOT Infrastructure grants, focusing on the RAISE program. It covers key components of project readiness, including technical assessment, financial completeness, and environmental risk.

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Overview of USDOT Infrastructure Grants

1

Types of Grants

RAISE, INFRA, and MEGA grants are available through USDOT.

[DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard | US Department of Transportation](#)

2

Current Funding

Significant funding is available in the current grant cycle.

3

Competitive Nature

These grants are highly competitive, requiring thorough preparation.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)

Focus on RAISE Program

Purpose

RAISE grants aim to improve transportation infrastructure across the United States.

Objectives

Administration priorities focus on safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, and environmental sustainability.

Eligibility

Various multimodal projects and applicants are eligible, including state and local governments.



Importance of Thorough Preparation

- 1 Competitive Nature**
RAISE grants are highly sought after, requiring exceptional proposals. For example, in a recent round there were 1,100 applications and only 162 were awarded.
- 2 Community Impact**
These grants can significantly improve local infrastructure and quality of life.
- 3 Preparation Benefits**
Thorough preparation increases the chances of success and efficient and effective project delivery.



Project Readiness: Key Components

Technical Assessment

Demonstrates the project's feasibility and the team's capability to deliver.

Financial Completeness

Ensures a realistic budget and secure funding sources.

Environmental Risk

Addresses NEPA / environmental permitting requirements and potential environmental impacts.

Technical Assessment

This next section will focus on the key elements recommended to showcase in the Technical Assessment section(s) in your application.





Technical Assessment: Demonstrating Capability

1

Skilled Team

Highlight the expertise and experience of your project team.

2

Past Success

Showcase relevant projects completed successfully.

3

Innovative Approaches

Demonstrate ability to implement cutting-edge solutions and incorporate innovative approaches / materials.



Building a Strong Internal Project Team



Project Manager

Experienced in overseeing large-scale infrastructure projects.



Financial Expert

Skilled in budget management and funding strategies.



Compliance Officer

Ensures adherence to all regulatory requirements and grant guidelines.



Technical Capacity: Supplement with a Strong External Project Team



Project Manager

Experienced in overseeing large-scale infrastructure projects.



Engineers

Specialists in relevant fields such as civil, structural, and environmental engineering.



Environmental Specialist

Knowledgeable about NEPA requirements and mitigation strategies.



Showcasing Relevant Experience

1

Past Projects

Highlight successful infrastructure projects completed by your team.

2

Lessons Learned

Demonstrate how past experiences inform current project planning.

3

Innovations Applied

Show how your team has implemented innovative solutions.

Demonstrating Technical Capacity: Past Projects



Bridge Reconstruction

Successful completion of a major bridge reconstruction project.



Light Rail System

Implementation of a city-wide light rail transit system.



Highway Expansion

Expansion and modernization of a high-traffic highway corridor.

Case Study: Alaska Highway Permafrost Degradation Restoration

RAISE FY 24 provided \$25,000,000 for the Alaska Highway Permafrost Degradation Restoration Project in Fairbanks, Alaska – The project will restore approximately 45 miles of the Alaska Highway impacted by thawing permafrost and other climate change-related degradation. The project maintains and improves the mobility and community connectivity for Alaskans by ensuring the only all-season overland corridor between Alaska and the lower 48 remains traversable. Safety will be improved for roadway users by addressing severe road conditions associated with the thawing permafrost. The improvements will also ensure the roadway remains resilient to future climate change.

Project Overview

Restoration of highway sections affected by permafrost degradation.

Innovative Approaches

Use of thermosyphons and insulation to stabilize permafrost.

Outcomes

Improved road stability and reduced maintenance costs.

[Click here for more information on the project](#)



Financial Completeness

This next section will focus on the key elements recommended to demonstrate the Financial Completeness of the project.



Financial Completeness: Creating a Realistic Funding Package

Cost Identification

Thoroughly identify all potential project costs.

Contingency Planning

Include realistic contingencies for unexpected expenses.

Diverse Funding

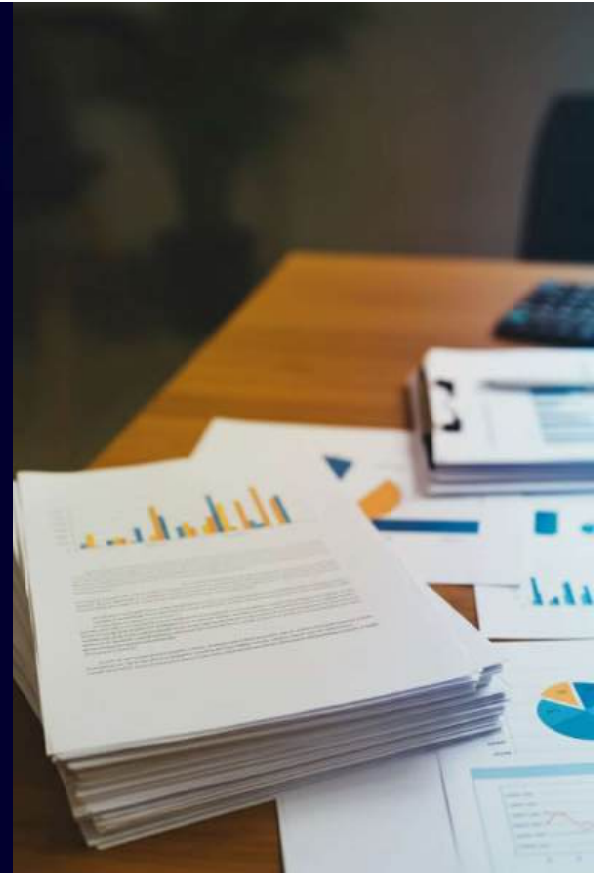
Leverage a mix of local, state, and private funding sources.

Matching Funds

Secure and document required matching funds.

Supporting Documentation Essentials

- 1 **Detailed Cost Estimates**
Provide comprehensive breakdowns of all project costs.
- 2 **Commitment Letters**
Include letters confirming matching funds from various sources.
- 3 **Cost Responsibility**
Demonstrate understanding of responsibility for potential cost overruns.

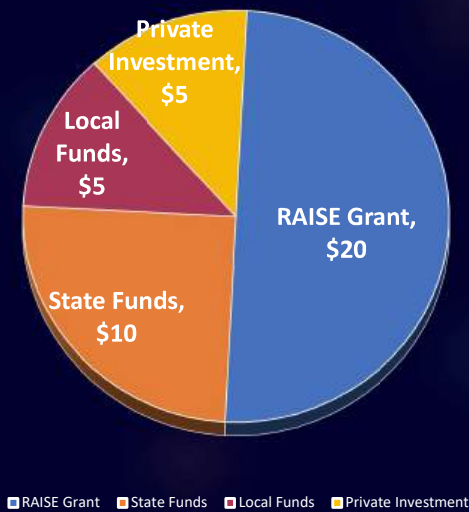


Financial Completeness: Detailed Cost Estimates

Category	Estimated Cost	Percentage
Construction	\$40 million	80%
Design	\$5 million	10%
ROW Acquisition	\$3 million	6%
Contingency	\$15 million	30%*

* Depending on what stage of project development – this could be 15% - 30%. Don't underestimate the potential increase in costs during the project's life.

Funding



Example: Successful Funding Breakdown

Source	Amount	Percentage
RAISE Grant	\$20 million	50%
State Funds	\$10 million	25%
Local Funds	\$5 million	12.5%
Private Investment	\$5 million	12.5%

Environmental Risk

This next section will focus on the critical elements recommended for evaluating environmental risk in the Environmental Review section of the application.

Assessing and Mitigating Environmental Risks

- 1** Identify Impacts
Thoroughly assess potential environmental impacts of the project.
- 2** Develop Strategies
Create comprehensive mitigation strategies for identified risks.
- 3** Implement Measures
Incorporate mitigation measures into project design and execution.



FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit: NEPA and Project Development

NEPA and Environmental Risk: Understanding the Requirements

Categorical Exclusion (CE)

For projects with minimal environmental impact.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

For projects with uncertain environmental impacts.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

For projects with significant environmental impacts.

FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit: NEPA and Project Development

NEPA and Environmental Risk: Understanding the Resulting Federal Action

Environmental Assessment (EA)

FONSI

Finding of Non- Non-Significant Impact
For projects with minimal environmental impacts. A FONSI indicates that no significant environmental impacts were found during the EA process.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

ROD

Record of Decision
A ROD is the final decision document following an EIS, detailing the chosen action and mitigation measures.



Environmental Risk: NEPA Process Integration

1

Scoping

Identify potential environmental impacts and alternatives.

2

Analysis

Conduct thorough environmental studies and assessments.

3

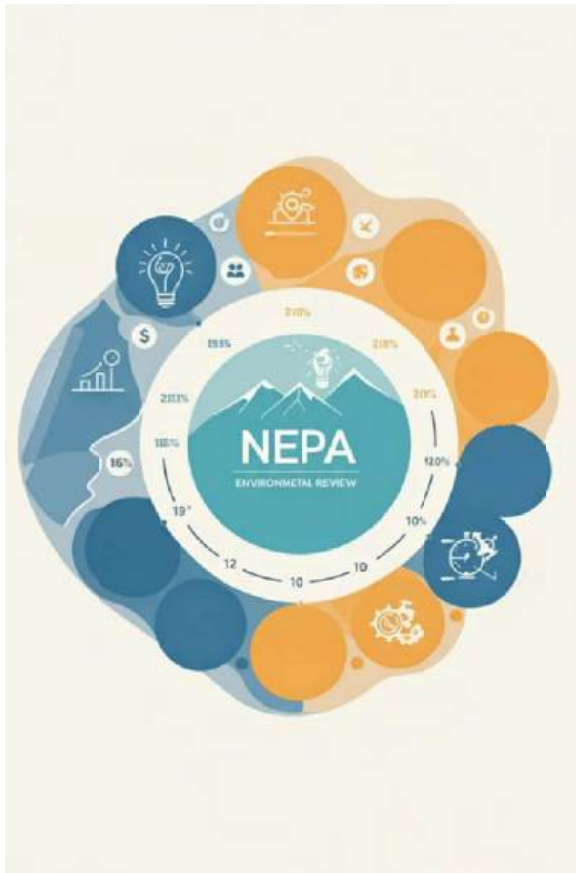
Public Comment

Engage the public and address concerns, adjust design as needed.

4

Decision

Finalize environmental documents and obtain approvals.



NEPA Timeline Considerations

1

Early Planning

Integrate NEPA considerations into the initial project planning.

2

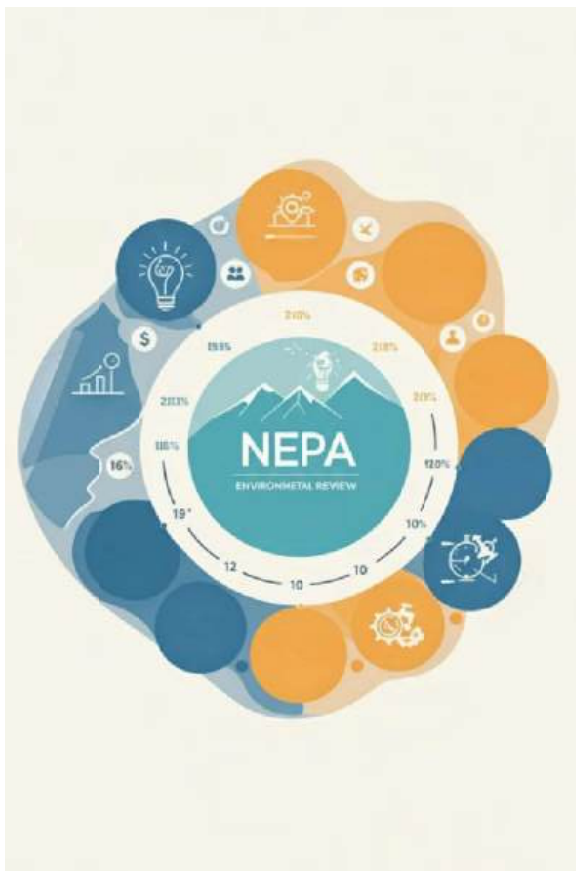
Parallel Processing

Conduct NEPA review alongside other project development activities.

3

Expediting Strategies

Implement strategies to streamline the NEPA process when possible.



Strategies for Streamlining NEPA

1

Programmatic Agreements (PA)

Particularly useful for large-scale or long-term projects where individual reviews for each action would be impractical.

2

Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL's) Studies

Particularly useful for complex transportation projects where early integration of planning and environmental considerations can lead to more efficient and effective decision-making.

3

Early Coordination with Resource Agencies

Particularly beneficial for projects with complex environmental impacts, as it helps ensure that all relevant factors are considered from the outset.



Railroad Agreements, Utility Relocation, ROW Acquisition

This next section will focus on the critical elements to consider regarding the following subjects to include in the application:

- Railroad Agreements,
- Utility Relocation,
- ROW Acquisition



Railroad Agreements: Key Components

Right-of-Way

Address access and use of railroad property.

Safety Requirements

Ensure compliance with railroad safety standards.

Operational Considerations

Minimize disruption to railroad operations during construction.

Maintenance Responsibilities

Define long-term maintenance roles for shared infrastructure.

Common Challenges in Railroad Agreements

- 1 Review Delays**
Railroad engineering reviews may not be a priority for their team.
- 2 Negotiation Complexities**
Balancing project needs with railroad operational requirements can be challenging.
- 3 Timeline Management**
Incorporating railroad agreement processes into the project schedule is crucial.



Solutions for Railroad Agreement Challenges



Budget Ample Time

Allow sufficient time in the schedule for railroad reviews and approvals.



Relationship Management

Use seasoned professionals to manage relationships and expedite processes.



Leverage Connections

Utilize railroad Government Relations personnel to facilitate communication.



Example: Santa Ana Boulevard Grade Separation Project

Project Overview

Grade separation of Santa Ana Boulevard from railroad tracks.

Negotiation Tactics

Early engagement and clear communication of mutual benefits.

Outcomes

Timely agreement and successful project completion.

[For more Information on Santa Ana Boulevard Grade Separation Project](#)



Utility Relocations: Planning and Identification

- 1 Early Identification**
Locate all affected utilities in the project area.
- 2 Impact Assessment**
Determine the extent of necessary relocations.
- 3 Coordination Initiation**
Begin early discussions with utility companies and public agency owners.



Coordination with Utility Companies

Early Engagement

Involve utility companies in the planning process as soon as possible.

Clear Communication

Establish open lines of communication with utility representatives.

Timeline Integration

Incorporate utility relocation schedules into the overall project timeline.

Conflict Resolution

Develop strategies for addressing potential conflicts or delays.

Best Practices for Minimizing Utility Relocation Delays



Accurate Mapping

Invest in precise utility mapping to avoid surprises. Consider digitization of utility assets for future reference.



Contingency Planning

Develop backup plans for potential relocation issues.



Relationship Building

Foster strong relationships with utility companies early in the process.





Right-of-Way (ROW) Acquisition: Process Overview

Property Identification

Determine all properties needed for the project.

1

Acquisition Planning

Develop a comprehensive plan for acquiring necessary properties.

2

3

Legal Considerations

Review relevant laws and regulations governing ROW acquisition.



Strategies for Streamlining ROW Acquisition

1 Early Engagement

Reach out to property owners as soon as possible.

2 Fair Compensation

Ensure offers are based on accurate and fair property valuations.

3 Clear Communication

Provide property owners with clear information about the process and their rights.

Addressing ROW Acquisition Obstacles



Reluctant Sellers

Develop strategies for negotiating with property owners hesitant to sell.

Eminent Domain

Understand and prepare for potential eminent domain proceedings if necessary.

Quick Take Powers

Be aware of Illinois Quick Take powers under the Eminent Domain Act.



Conclusion: Ensuring Project Readiness

Technical Excellence

Demonstrate a strong, experienced team and proven track record.

Financial Soundness

Present a realistic, well-documented funding package.

Environmental Compliance

Show thorough understanding and planning for NEPA and environmental permitting requirements.

Stakeholder Coordination

Highlight effective management of railroad, utility, and ROW issues.



Questions and Answers



Module 4 part 2: Mastering USDOT Grant Applications

Welcome to our comprehensive guide on preparing successful USDOT grant applications. This presentation will cover risk assessment, recent updates, tools, and strategies for competitive proposals.

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Preparing a Risk Matrix

- 1 Risk Identification**
Identify potential risks across technical, financial, procurement, environmental, and social/political categories.
- 2 Probability and Impact Assessment**
Evaluate the likelihood and potential consequences of each identified risk.
- 3 Mitigation Strategies**
Develop action plans for each risk and assign responsibility for risk management.



Recent USDOT Grant Requirement Updates

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Changes

New funding allocations and updated project selection criteria have been implemented.

New Focus Areas

Emphasis on climate change, resilience, equity, environmental justice, and technology integration.

Application Process

Revised guidelines for demonstrating project impacts and alignment with national objectives.



Tools and Resources



Grant Portals

Utilize Grants.gov and USDOT-specific platforms for application submissions.



Project Management

Employ scheduling software like Microsoft Project or Primavera for efficient planning.



Cost Estimation

Use specialized tools to accurately estimate project costs and budgets.



Resources

Access webinars, workshops, FAQs, and application guides on transportation.gov.



Case Study: Successful RAISE Grant Application

Project Overview

Highlight innovative elements and objectives of a successful RAISE grant project.

Alignment with Priorities

Demonstrate how the project aligns with current USDOT focus areas and goals.

Strong Partnerships

Showcase the importance of community support and diverse collaborations.

Clear Benefits / Outcomes

Illustrate how the project effectively demonstrated quantifiable positive impacts.



Common Pitfalls and Mistakes

1

Insufficient Funding

Secure adequate local match funding and explore strategies to increase it.

2

Incomplete Applications

Use a comprehensive checklist to ensure all required elements are included.

3

Lack of Public Engagement

Implement effective community outreach strategies to gain stakeholder support.



Tips for a Competitive Application

- 1 Address National Objectives**
Clearly align your project with USDOT goals and demonstrate its national significance.
- 2 Quantify Impacts**
Use **data and metrics** to support claims about project benefits and outcomes.
- 3 Highlight Innovation**
Showcase new technologies, approaches, and diverse partnerships in your proposal.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Recap key points	Encourage persistent effort
Utilize available resources	Stay informed on USDOT updates
Network with successful applicants	Continuously refine your approach while moving the project forward through pre-construction activities





Questions and Answers



Module 5- Internal Grant Administration: Policies and Procedures

Welcome to our comprehensive guide on internal grant administration policies and procedures.

This presentation will cover critical aspects of managing grants within your organization, including auditing requirements, accounting procedures, reporting obligations, and compliance with federal regulations.

By following these guidelines, you can ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to legal standards in the grant management processes.

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Auditing Requirements: Ensuring Financial Integrity

- 1 Pre-Award Audit**
Conduct a thorough review of the grant application and proposed budget to ensure compliance with funding agency requirements and organizational policies.
- 2 Interim Audits**
Perform regular internal audits throughout the grant period to monitor financial transactions, verify proper use of funds, and identify any potential issues early.
- 3 Post-Award Audit**
Complete a comprehensive audit after the grant period ends to evaluate overall financial management, ensure all funds were used appropriately, and prepare for potential external audits.
- 4 External Audit Preparation**
Compile all necessary documentation and financial records to facilitate smooth external audits by funding agencies or independent auditors.

Accounting Procedures: Tracking Grant Funds

Separate Accounts

Create individual accounts for each grant to ensure accurate tracking of funds and prevent commingling with other organizational finances.

Expense Coding

Implement a detailed coding system to categorize all grant-related expenses, facilitating easy reporting and analysis of fund utilization.

Regular Reconciliation

Conduct monthly reconciliations of grant accounts to identify and resolve any discrepancies promptly.

Documentation Retention

Maintain comprehensive records of all financial transactions, including invoices, receipts, and payment confirmations, for the required retention period.



Reporting Requirements: Timely and Accurate Submissions

1

Financial Reports

Prepare and submit detailed financial reports according to the schedule specified by the funding agency, typically quarterly or semi-annually.

2

Progress Reports

Compile comprehensive progress reports outlining project achievements, challenges, and future plans, usually on a semi-annual or annual basis.

3

Final Report

Submit a thorough final report at the end of the grant period, summarizing all project outcomes, financial data, and impact assessments.

4

Special Reports

Be prepared to generate ad-hoc reports as requested by the funding agency or internal stakeholders to address specific inquiries or concerns.

Title VI Policies: Ensuring Non-Discrimination

Policy Overview

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Your organization should be committed to full compliance with these regulations in all grant-funded projects.

Implementation Strategies Documentation and Reporting

Ensure Title VI compliance through comprehensive staff training, regular policy reviews, and the establishment of clear reporting procedures for any potential violations. All grant-related activities are carefully monitored to prevent any form of discrimination. It is important to have an ongoing Title VI policy – it should be posted to your agency's webpage

Maintain detailed records of all Title VI compliance efforts, including training logs, policy acknowledgments, and any investigations into reported incidents. Regular reports on Title VI compliance are submitted to relevant authorities as required.



ADA Compliance: Accessibility in Grant-Funded Programs

① Facility Accessibility ② Communication Accommodations

Ensure all grant-funded programs are conducted in facilities that meet ADA accessibility standards, including ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms.

Provide necessary accommodations for effective communication, such as sign language interpreters, braille materials, or assistive listening devices when required.



ADA Compliance: Accessibility in Grant-Funded Programs

③ Program Inclusivity

Design grant-funded programs to be inclusive of all participants, making reasonable modifications to policies and procedures when necessary to ensure equal access.

④ Staff Training

Conduct regular training sessions for all staff involved in grant-funded programs to ensure they understand and can implement ADA requirements effectively.

Best source for additional information on ADA Compliance is the US Access Board <https://www.access-board.gov>

Buy America: Supporting Domestic Products



Policy Overview

The **Buy America** provision requires the use of U.S.-made iron, steel, and manufactured products in certain federally funded projects.

Your organization should adhere strictly to these requirements for all applicable grant-funded activities.



Compliance Procedures

Implement a **rigorous vetting process** for all suppliers and subcontractors to ensure they meet Buy America standards.

Maintain detailed documentation of product origins and manufacturing processes.



Buy America: Supporting Domestic Products



Certification

Obtain and maintain proper certifications from suppliers confirming compliance with Buy America provisions.

Regularly audit these certifications to ensure ongoing compliance.



Reporting

Include Buy America compliance information in regular grant reports, detailing steps taken to ensure adherence, and any challenges or exceptions encountered during the reporting period.



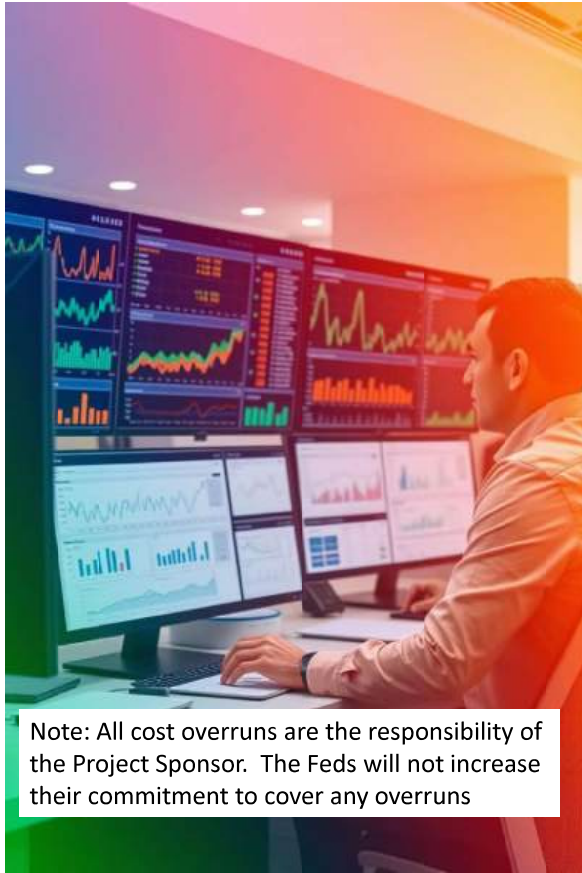
Critical Infrastructure Security Requirements: Cybersecurity, and Resilience

New Requirements prior to completing the Grant Obligation / Award of Funds

It is the policy of the United States to strengthen the security and resilience of its critical infrastructure against all hazards, including physical and cyber risks, consistent with Presidential Policy Directive 21 – Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience, and National Security Memorandum (NSM-5) on Improving Cybersecurity for Critical Infrastructure Control Systems.

Note: Each applicant selected for federal funding must demonstrate, prior to signing of the grant agreement, efforts to consider and address physical and cyber security risks relevant to the transportation mode and type and scale of the project.

Projects that have not appropriately considered and addressed physical and cyber security and resilience in their planning, design, and project oversight, as determined by DOT and the Department of Homeland Security, will be required to do so before receiving funds.



Note: All cost overruns are the responsibility of the Project Sponsor. The Feds will not increase their commitment to cover any overruns

Budget Management: Maximizing Grant Funds

1

Initial Budget Review

Conduct a thorough review of the approved grant budget, ensuring all line items are clearly understood and properly allocated.

2

Ongoing Monitoring

Regularly track expenses against the budget, identifying any potential overruns or underspending early to allow for timely adjustments.

3

Budget Modifications

When necessary, prepare and submit budget modification requests to the funding agency, following all required procedures and obtaining necessary approvals.

4

Final Reconciliation

At the end of the grant period, perform a comprehensive reconciliation of the budget, ensuring all funds were used appropriately and any unused funds are properly reported or returned.



Procurement Policies: Ensuring Fair and Efficient Purchasing

Competitive Bidding

Implement a transparent competitive bidding process for all significant purchases, ensuring fair opportunity for all qualified vendors.

Conflict of Interest

Maintain strict policies to prevent conflicts of interest in procurement decisions, requiring disclosure and recusal when necessary.

Documentation

Keep detailed records of all procurement processes, including bids received, evaluation criteria, and final selection rationale.

Cost Analysis

Conduct thorough cost analyses for major purchases to ensure reasonable pricing and efficient use of grant funds.



Procurement Policies: Ensuring Fair and Efficient Purchasing

Competitive Bidding

Understanding of federal contract and procurement requirements, Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, Davis Bacon Act, etc.

Procurement of professional engineering services must be in compliance with the Brooks Act and in Illinois law, The Architectural, Engineering and Land Surveying Qualifications Based Selection Act

Personnel Management: Staffing Grant-Funded Projects

Hiring Procedures

Develop clear job descriptions and qualifications for grant-funded positions. Ensure all hiring processes comply with organizational policies and grant requirements.

Time and Effort Reporting

Implement a robust system for tracking and documenting time spent on grant-funded activities. Regularly review and certify these reports to ensure accuracy.

Performance Evaluation

Conduct regular performance evaluations for grant-funded staff, aligning individual goals with project objectives and providing constructive feedback.

Consider if you have the internal capacity for Grant management or need additional assistance from external help through consultants

Example of Grant Compliance Requirements

Quarterly Status Reports

Develop clear job descriptions and qualifications for grant-funded positions. Ensure all hiring processes comply with organizational policies and grant requirements.

Monthly Invoicing

Requesting reimbursement of approved grant expenses.

Monthly Progress Reports/ Calls

Prepare Monthly Progress Reports
May have Monthly or Quarterly Calls with funding agency.

Annual Updates of Grant Deliverables

Update of Workplan Budget, Schedule, Funding Matrix

Review progress on Deliverables
– Environmental Mitigation Matrix

Consider if you have the internal capacity for Grant management or need additional assistance from external help through consultants



Risk Management: Identifying and Mitigating Potential Issues

- 1 Risk Assessment**
Conduct comprehensive risk assessments at the start of each grant-funded project, identifying potential financial, operational, and compliance risks.
- 2 Mitigation Strategies**
Develop and implement specific strategies to address identified risks, including preventive measures and contingency plans.
- 3 Monitoring**
Continuously monitor project activities for emerging risks, adjusting mitigation strategies as needed throughout the grant period.
- 4 Reporting**
Regularly report on risk management activities to project stakeholders and funding agencies, ensuring transparency and proactive problem-solving.



Data Management and Privacy: Protecting Sensitive Information

Note: These are examples of requirements- Check NOFOs for additional requirements such as Mega Grant Data Plan Requirements



Data Security

Implement robust security measures to protect all grant-related data, including encryption, secure servers, and strict access controls.



Privacy Policies

Develop and enforce comprehensive privacy policies that comply with all relevant regulations, including HIPAA and FERPA where applicable.



Access Management

Establish clear protocols for data access, ensuring only authorized personnel can view sensitive information related to grant-funded projects.



Regular Audits

Conduct periodic audits of data management practices to identify and address any potential vulnerabilities or policy violations.

Subrecipient vs. Contractor

1

Subrecipient

Carries out a portion of a Federal award to help achieve the program's objectives.

Engages in substantive, programmatic work and contributes to the scientific or scholarly aspects of the project.

2

Contractor

Provides goods or services for the non-Federal entity's own use, creating a procurement relationship.

Supplies goods or services necessary for the project but does not engage in programmatic work.



Subrecipient Monitoring: Ensuring Compliance Across Partners

1

Pre-Award Assessment

Conduct thorough evaluations of potential subrecipients to assess their capacity to manage grant funds and comply with all requirements.

2

Agreement Development

Create comprehensive subrecipient agreements that clearly outline all expectations, reporting requirements, and compliance obligations.

3

Ongoing Monitoring

Regularly review subrecipient activities, financial reports, and performance metrics to ensure compliance and progress towards project goals.

4

Corrective Action

When issues are identified, work closely with subrecipients to develop and implement corrective action plans, providing support and oversight as needed.



Closeout Procedures: Wrapping Up Grant Projects

1

Final Reporting

Prepare and submit all required final reports, including comprehensive financial summaries and detailed project outcome assessments.

2

Financial Reconciliation

Conduct a thorough reconciliation of all grant funds, ensuring all expenses are accounted for and any unused funds are properly handled.

3

Asset Disposition

Properly dispose of or transfer any equipment or assets purchased with grant funds, following all relevant regulations and agency guidelines.

4

Record Retention

Organize and archive all grant-related documentation according to retention policies, ensuring accessibility for future audits or reviews.

Continuous Improvement: Enhancing Grant Management Practices

① Post-Project Evaluation

Conduct thorough evaluations after each grant project, identifying successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in management processes.

② Staff Feedback

Regularly solicit input from staff involved in grant administration to gather insights and suggestions for enhancing procedures and policies.

③ Industry Best Practices

Stay informed about evolving best practices in grant management through professional development, industry conferences, and networking with peer organizations.

④ Policy Updates

Regularly review and update internal grant administration policies and procedures to incorporate lessons learned and adapt to changing regulations.



Questions and Answers

JADA Grant Strategy Workshop, Sept 17, 2024

ANN SCHNEIDER AND JEANNIE BECKETT

ANN L. SCHNEIDER AND ASSOCIATES LLC & THE BECKETT GROUP



Module 6: Winning Infrastructure Grants: 10 Key Tips

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law offers historic grant funding opportunities for cities, towns and villages. Here are ten essential tips to make your application competitive.

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The NOFO is Your Roadmap

Key Resource

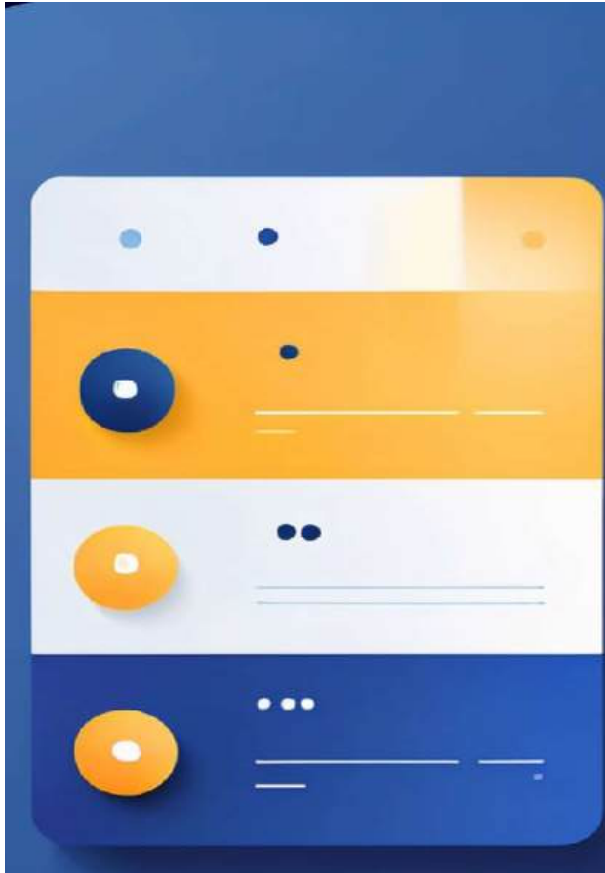
The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) contains all essential information.

Fair Process

The NOFO ensures a fair grant process for all applicants.

Scoring Criteria

Applications are scored based on responses to NOFO questions.



Eligibility is Essential to Win

- 1 Check Requirements**
Confirm your project meets all eligibility criteria in the NOFO.
- 2 Avoid Mistakes**
Don't apply for grants if your project doesn't meet specific conditions.
- 3 Example: Bridge Program**
Only bridges in poor or at-risk fair condition are eligible.



Put Your Community First

- 1 Describe Your Community**
Explain your community's context to unfamiliar reviewers.
- 2 Focus on Residents**
Put the story of local residents at the center of your application.
- 3 Test Your Application**
Share with someone unfamiliar to gauge clarity and effectiveness.

Project or Idea?

1

Ideation

Initial concept development for the project.

2

Planning

Detailed project planning and community outreach.

3

Engineering

Preliminary engineering and environmental review.



Project or Idea?

4

Funding

Securing funding for project implementation.

5

Construction

Final phase of project execution.





Consider Partnerships



Collaboration

Partner with other entities to bundle projects into larger applications.



Leverage Resources

Work with counties, MPOs, states, or tribal nations.



Shared Success

Contribute to joint efforts for greater chances of success.

Prepare Your Budget for Reimbursement

1

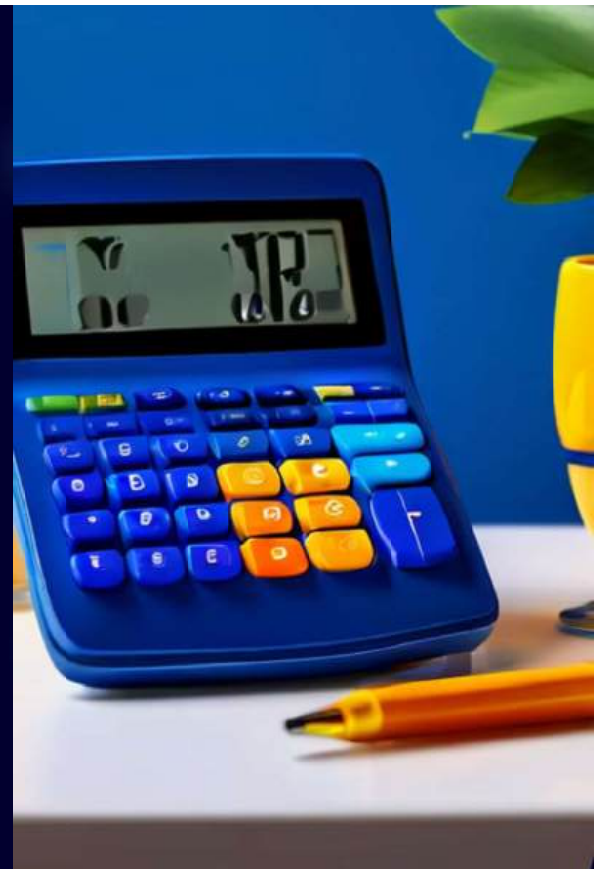
Grant Agreement

Sign a binding agreement with USDOT before making purchases.

2

Project Expenses

Start purchasing after the agreement is in place.



Prepare Your Budget for Reimbursement

3

Submit Costs

Submit project costs to USDOT for reimbursement.

4

Reimbursement

Receive payment for submitted and approved costs.



Be Clear About Local Match Sources

Hard Matches

Monetary contributions

State DOTs

Universities

Nonprofit partners

Philanthropic organizations

Soft Matches

Non-monetary contributions

Space

Time

Labor

Services or expertise



Time Out Your Federal Environmental Clearance

1

Obligation Deadline

Final date for executing grant agreement with USDOT.

2

Project Execution

Implement project within specified timeframe.



Letters of Support and Asking Questions



Support Letters

Letters from Congress and community groups can be helpful but aren't required.



Ask Questions

Submit questions to USDOT for clarification on the NOFO.



Seek Feedback

Request a debrief from USDOT if your application is unsuccessful.



Conclusion: Seize the Opportunity

Time is Limited

Act now to take advantage of historic infrastructure grant funding.

Resources Available

USDOT offers technical assistance and guidance for applicants.

Improve Your Community

Successful grants can significantly enhance local infrastructure.



Questions and Answers