

# SUCCESSING IN TODAY'S GRANT-FUNDED WORLD

FINDING, PREPARING, WRITING, AND ADMINISTERING GRANTS

Presented by:  
Sandy Zimmer - Grants & Funding Program Manager



***“Applying for grants matters because they give people and organizations access to funding they don’t have to repay, helping them pursue projects, education, research, or services they otherwise couldn’t afford.”***

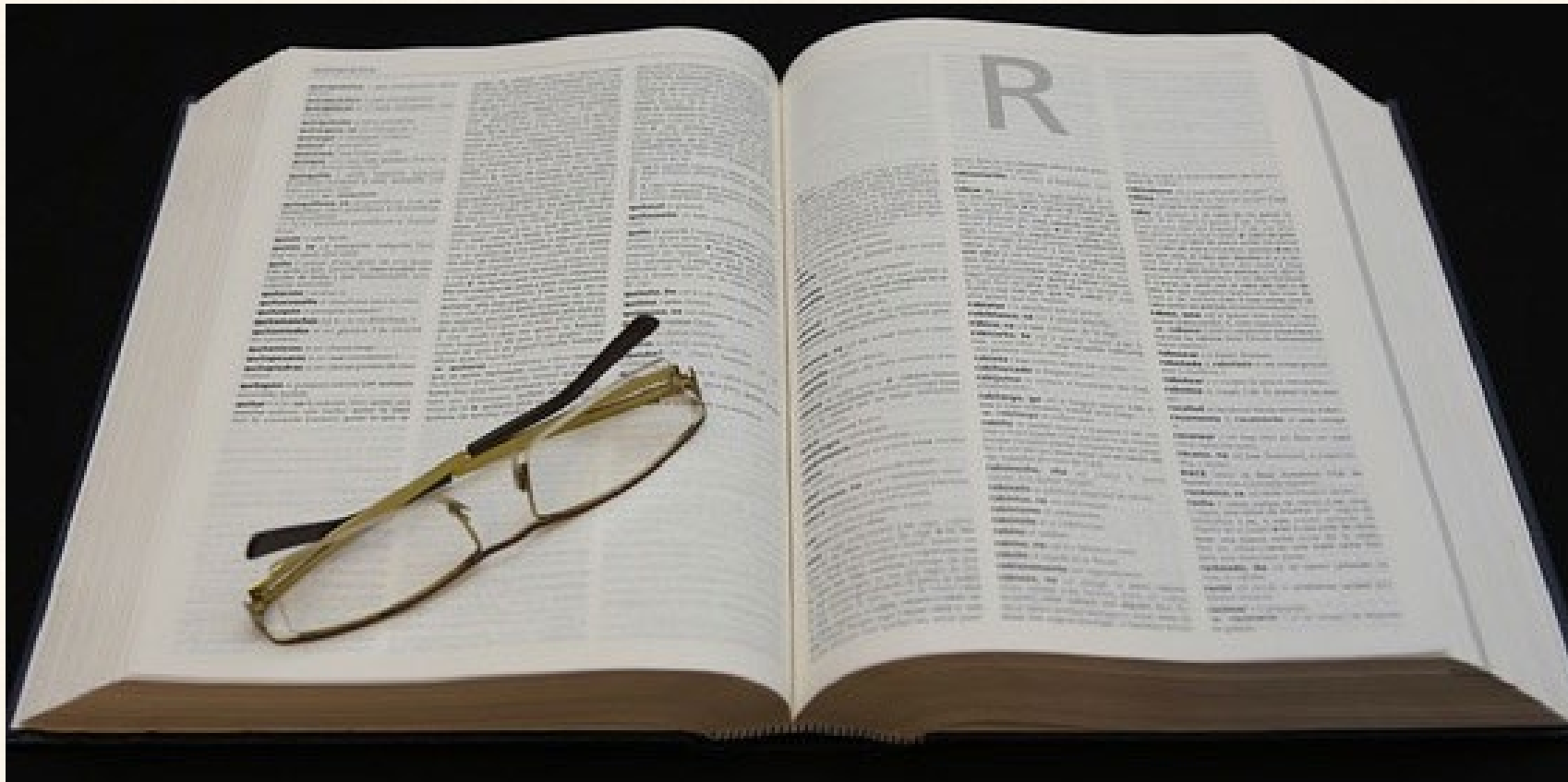
# AGENDA

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- Terminology
- Formulating a Strategy
- Getting Prepared
- Writing Grants
- Administering Grants
- Demonstration

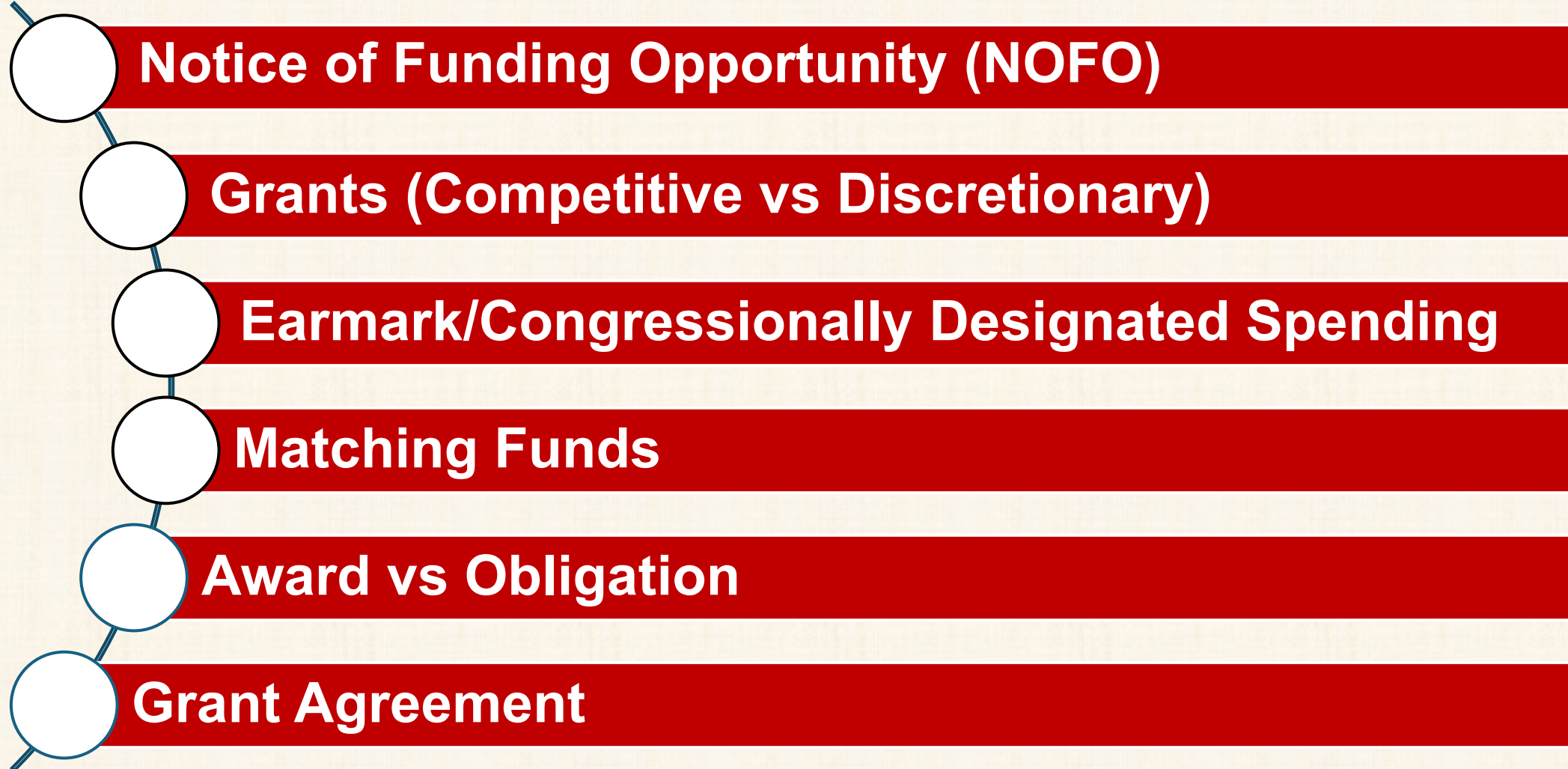


# TERMINOLOGY



# TERMINOLOGY

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# TERMINOLOGY

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- **Period of Performance – 2 CFR 200**
  - Timeframe to incur costs
  - Start Date
    - Grant Agreement Signed
    - Begins Eligibility Period
  - End Date
    - All work must be completed
    - No additional costs incurred
- **Close-out Period = 120 Days**
  - Complete all administrative actions/reports
  - Liquidate financial obligations
- **Extensions**



# **FORMULATE A STRATEGY (I.E., FINDING GRANTS)**

# FORMULATE A STRATEGY

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- DEVELOP A LIST OF PROJECTS
- FIND POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
  - Grants (All)
  - State-funded programs (Example: BIG)
  - SDOT formula federal funding
  - Other stakeholders/agencies
  - Innovative financing (PPP, TIFIA, bonds)



# FORMULATE A STRATEGY

## ■ FINDING POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Subscribe to notifications and databases
  - Grants.gov: <https://www.grants.gov/>
  - Simpler.grants.gov
  - <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dashboard>

Home > Search

### Search funding opportunities

**Search terms** Enter keywords, opportunity numbers, or assistance listing numbers

rural tribal Search

[Copy this search query](#)

**Opportunity status**

☒ Forecasted ☒ Posted

☐ Closed ☐ Archived

**Funding instrument** +

**5 Opportunities** Sort by Most relevant (Default) 1

[Export results](#)

**CLOSING:** -- Posted: December 19, 2024

**Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program NOFO**

Agency: Department of Transportation - 69A345 Office of the Under Secretary for Policy  
Opportunity Number: DOT-OST-2024-103

Award Ceiling: \$750,000  
Floor: 200,000



GRANTS.GOV > Connect Center

## CONNECT CENTER

**WELCOME:**  
Sandy Zimmer

### MANAGE SUBSCRIPTIONS

- » [Subscribe to Grants.gov News](#)
- » [Subscribe to All New Opportunities](#)
- » [Subscribe to Opportunities](#)
- » [Subscribe to Saved Searches](#)
- » [Unsubscribe](#)
- » [Newsletter Archive](#)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

- » [Discussion Forum](#)

### Grants.gov Opportunities Update

 do\_not\_reply@grants.gov  
To: Sandy Zimmer

 We removed extra line breaks from this message.

External Sender Warning: Proceed with Caution!

The following grant opportunities were created, updated, or deleted on Grants.gov:

DOS  
Department of State  
U.S. Mission to Paraguay  
Advancing Secure Digital Connectivity in Paraguay Synopsis 1  
<https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/360176>

# FORMULATE A STRATEGY

- FINDING POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES
  - Subscribe to notifications and databases
    - Program Websites
    - State Websites

## Grants Newsletter Signup



 U.S. Department of Transportation

ABOUT DOT ▾ PRIORITIES ▾ CONNECT ▾

Office of the Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
United States  
Email: [BUILDgrants@dot.gov](mailto:BUILDgrants@dot.gov) ✉  
Phone: [202-366-0301](tel:202-366-0301)  
Business Hours:  
8:00am-5:00pm ET, M-F

### Email Updates

To sign up for updates, please enter your contact information below.

Email Address

Sign up to receive informative emails from Arizona State Parks and Trails about new grant opportunities and upcoming grant workshops.

Email \*

# FORMULATE A STRATEGY

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## ☐ ANALYZE THE OPPORTUNITIES

- Eligible Entity
- Project Alignment
- Timeline
- Data (technical, cost-benefit, etc.) tells a compelling story



## ☐ MATCH “WINNING PROJECTS” TO POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

A blurred background image of a business meeting. Several people in light blue shirts are gathered around a table, looking at and pointing to documents. The image is intentionally out of focus to emphasize the overlaid text.

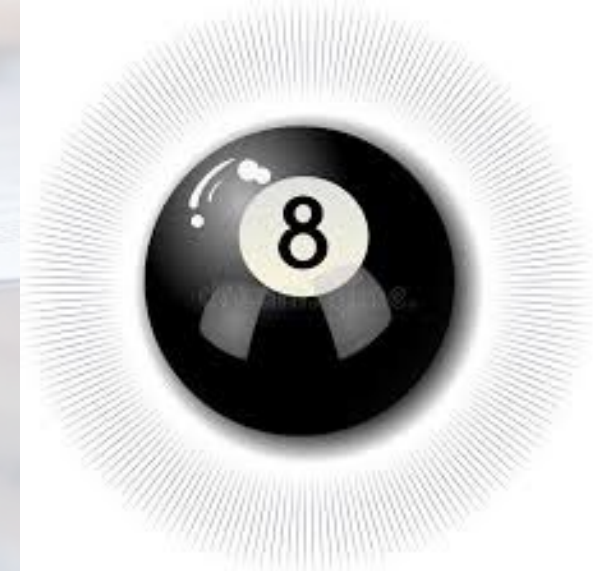
# **GET PREPARED**

# GET PREPARED

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- If not prepared and the NOFO hits the street, you'll find yourself behind the.....



# GET PREPARED

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## Get Registered w/SAM.gov

- UEI Number (formerly CFDA)
- Can take weeks – don't wait.
- If registered, ensure information is current.
- Don't let your registration lapse!

## Review Your Single Audit (2 CFR 200 Subpart F)

- Used in the risk assessment to determine the level of oversight.
- Is it current?
- Is it posted to the clearinghouse: <https://www.fac.gov/>?
- Have any findings been addressed?

# GET PREPARED

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## **Get Familiar With the Program Requirements**

- Review previous NOFOs & Grant Agreement Language
- Determine What Governs (2 CFR or other)
- Perform an Assessment of Processes, Procedures, and Systems

## **Review the Project Estimate!**

## **Build Boilerplate Information**

- Economic, Location, Technical Capacity, Experience, Etc.

# GET PREPARED

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## Collect Data

- Safety/Engineering/Environmental
- Cost-Benefits
- Administration's priorities

## Complete Standard Forms

- SF-424 application for federal assistance
- SF-LLL disclosure of lobbying activities
- SF-424A budget information for non-construction programs
- SF-424B assurances for non-construction programs
- SF-424C budget for construction
- SF-424D assurances for construction programs

# GET PREPARED

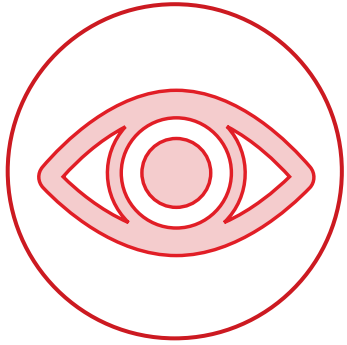
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**Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!**

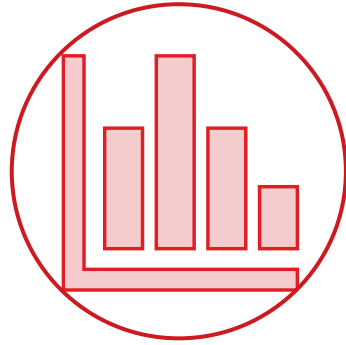
- Legal Counsel, State DOT, and Congressional Team

# GET PREPARED

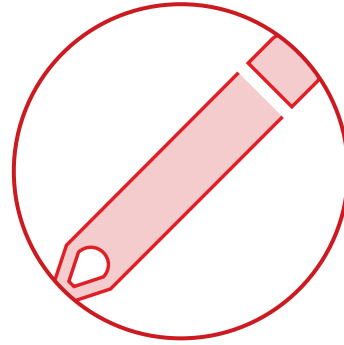
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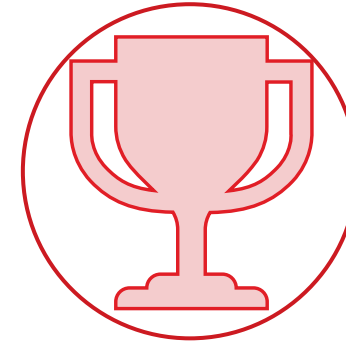
**Familiarity  
with the  
Project**



**Provide  
Data and  
Analysis**



**Write a  
Compelling  
Story**



**Designate a  
Champion!**

**BEGIN ASSEMBLING A TEAM**

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of two hands writing on a document. The left hand holds a silver pen, and the right hand holds a black pen. The background is a soft-focus office setting with a desk and a laptop. The text 'GRANT WRITING' is overlaid in the center in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

# GRANT WRITING

# GRANT WRITING – REVIEW THE NOFO

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**To write a winning grant...**

- **What Are the Administrative Requirements** (i.e., page, font, etc.)
- **What Is the Application Review Process?**
- **What Are the Merit Criteria?**
- **How Are They Rated/Scored?**

**...ensure your narrative addresses them all!**

# GRANT WRITING – CRITERIA EXAMPLE



## 2025 BUILD GRANT PROGRAM (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development)

### F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

#### CRITERIA

This section specifies the criteria the Department will use to evaluate applications.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>TIER 1</b><br>All Eligible Applications                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <b>Merit Criteria Review</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| <b>TIER 2</b><br>All applications rated “Highly Recommended” under the merit criteria review automatically advance for second tier analysis. The Senior Review Team (SRT) can advance applications rated “Recommended” for second tier analysis. |  |
| <b>Project Readiness Review</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
| Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
| Financial Completeness Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| Technical Capacity Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| <b>Benefit-Cost Analysis</b> (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |

8

# EXAMPLE– CRITERIA RATINGS

## 2025 BUILD GRANT PROGRAM



| Individual Merit Criteria Ratings |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High                              | The criterion must be addressed as a primary project purpose (not an ancillary or incidental consideration, except for the Partnership and Collaboration and Innovation criteria), must include clear, direct, data-driven (capital projects only), and significant benefits, and must align with at least one of the benefits described in the high column of the merit criteria rubric. |
| Medium                            | The criterion may not be a primary project purpose, or the project benefits do not meet at least one of the requirements for a ‘high’ rating, as described in the merit criteria rubric.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Low                               | The application contains insufficient information to assess that criterion’s benefits.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Non-Responsive                    | The proposed project negatively affects the criterion, or the application does not address the criterion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

# GRANT WRITING – CRITERIA EXAMPLE



## 2025 BUILD GRANT PROGRAM (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development)

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| Project Readiness Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
| Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| Financial Completeness Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |
| Technical Capacity Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
| Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |

# EXAMPLE – OVERALL MERIT RATING



## 2025 BUILD GRANT PROGRAM



| Overall Merit Rating |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Highly Recommended   | six or more of the eight merit criteria ratings are “high”<br>none of the merit criteria ratings are “non-responsive”                                            |
| Recommended          | one to five of the merit criteria ratings are “high”<br>no more than three of the merit criteria ratings are “low”<br>none are “non-responsive”                  |
| Acceptable           | a combination of “high,” “medium,” “low,” or “non-responsive” ratings that do not fit within the definitions of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Unacceptable |
| Unacceptable         | three or more “non-responsive” ratings                                                                                                                           |

# GRANT WRITING – CRITERIA EXAMPLE



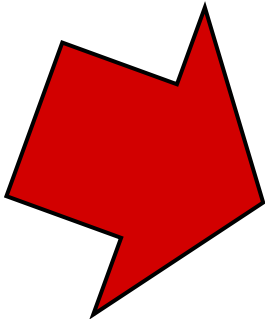
## 2025 BUILD GRANT PROGRAM (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development)

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| TIER 1<br>All Eligible Applications                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Merit Criteria Review                                                                                                                                                                                                           |        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | TIER 2 |
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| Project Readiness Review                                                                                                                                                                                                        |        |
| Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                           |        |
| Financial Completeness Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                               |        |
| Technical Capacity Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                   |        |
| Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)                                                                                                                                                                                   |        |



# GRANT WRITING - TIPS

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**Fully  
address ALL  
criteria in the  
NOFO**

**Put Yourself  
In the  
Reviewer's  
Shoes**

**Solidify the  
Project  
Estimate**

**Be careful of  
“Insider  
Bias”**

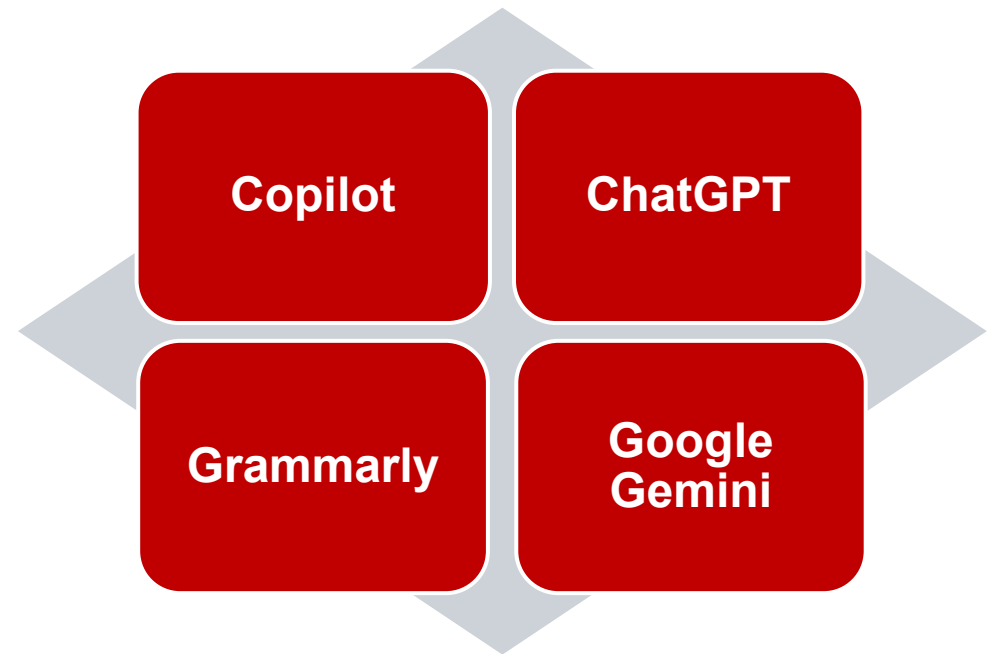
**Take  
Advantage of  
Feedback**

**Plan for a  
Haircut**

# GRANT WRITING – BEGIN WRITING

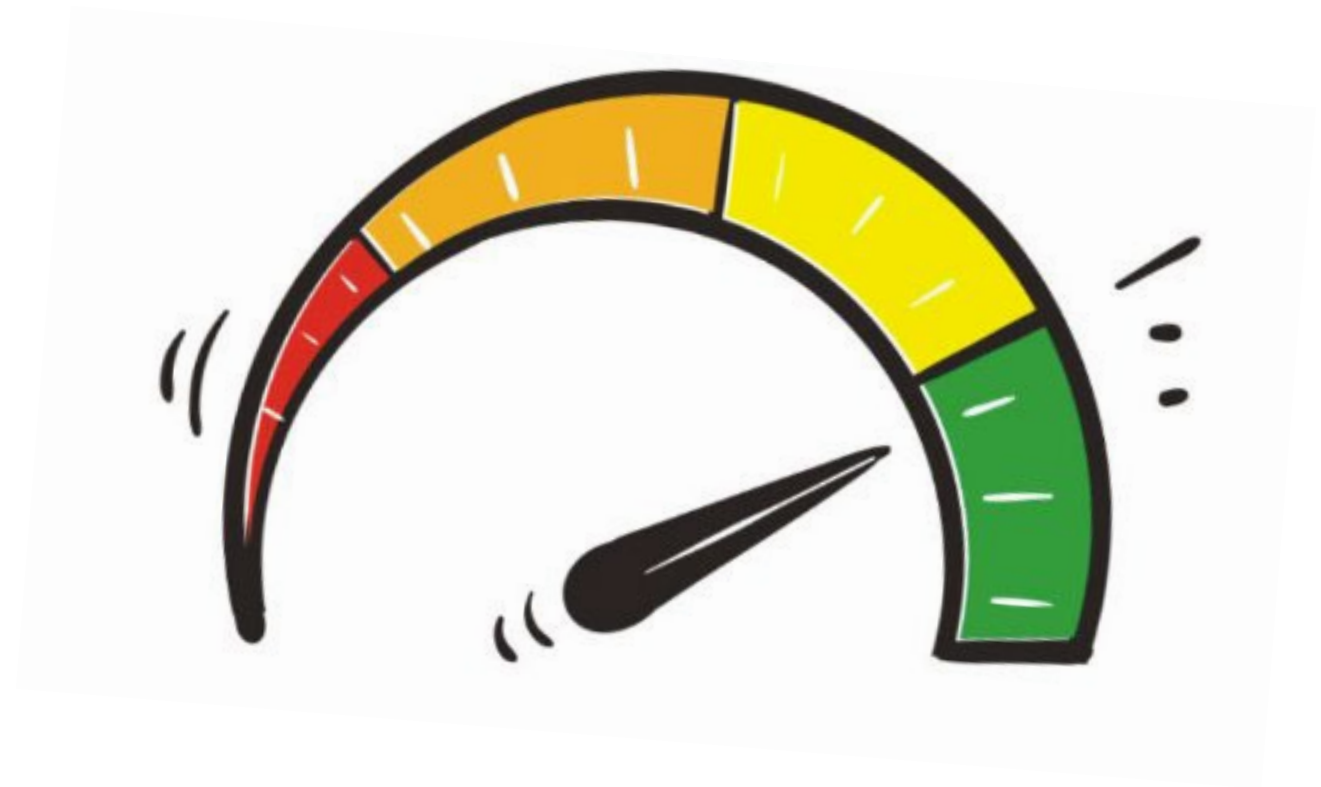
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- Include a Clear & Concise Scope (Project Description)
  - What's the issue?
  - Why is it important or urgent?
  - Who is affected and how?
  - What evidence (data) supports the need?
- Let AI tools Help!.....



# GRANT WRITING – BENEFIT COST ANALYSIS (BCA)

- Required for many grants
- Factor in project competitiveness
- Requires data:
  - Traffic/Users
  - Crashes
  - Expected Project Impacts
  - Travel Time
- Do benefits exceed capital cost



# GRANT WRITING – BCA

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## WHY:

- Helps decision-makers determine if the **value of benefits** gained from an action **exceeds the costs** required to implement it.

## HOW:

- **Benefits:** Gains such as increased revenue, time savings, improved safety, or environmental improvements.
- **Costs:** Expenses like capital investment, operating costs, maintenance, and potential risks.
- **Net Benefit:** Total benefits divided by total costs.
- **Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR):** A ratio  $>1.0$  means benefits outweigh costs.

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dot-navigator/what-is-a-benefit-cost-analysis>

# GRANT WRITING – BCA EXAMPLE

**PROJECT:** Citywide Bike Lane

**OBJECTIVE:** Evaluate the economic feasibility of constructing 20 miles of protected bike lanes

## **Costs:**

- Construction: \$5m
- Annual maintenance: \$200k
- Public outreach and education: \$100k

## **Benefits (Annual):**

- Reduced traffic congestion: \$1.2m
- Health benefits from increased physical activity: \$800k
- Lower emissions and environmental impact: \$500k
- Fewer traffic accidents: \$600k

## **Net Present Value (10 years):**

- Total Costs: \$7m
- Total Benefits: \$31m
- Benefit-Cost Ratio: 4.43

## **Conclusion:**

- The project is economically viable and provides significant public health and environmental benefits.

# GRANT WRITING – SUBMISSION

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***Don't Wait Until the Deadline!***





**CELEBRATE BRIEFLY!**



**EXECUTE THE GRANT**

# EXECUTE THE GRANT

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- **Be ready to get started immediately!**
  - But don't incur costs!



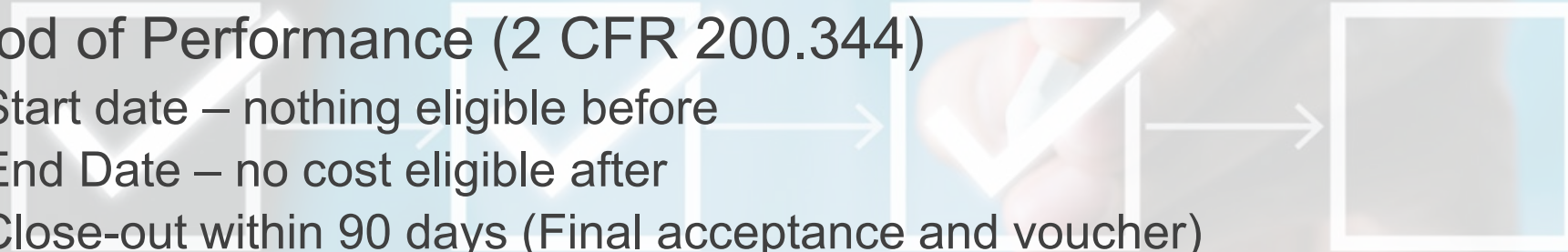
- **Execute the grant agreement**
  - Kick-off meeting
  - Expect 6-12 months
  - Templates – no changes allowed
  - Original application modifications are challenging!

# EXECUTE THE GRANT

---

- **Grant Agreement**

- Regulatory Requirements
- Period of Performance (2 CFR 200.344)
  - Start date – nothing eligible before
  - End Date – no cost eligible after
  - Close-out within 90 days (Final acceptance and voucher)
- Invoicing System
  - USDOT/FHWA: DELPHI eInvoicing
- Reporting
  - Financial
  - Progress
  - Performance

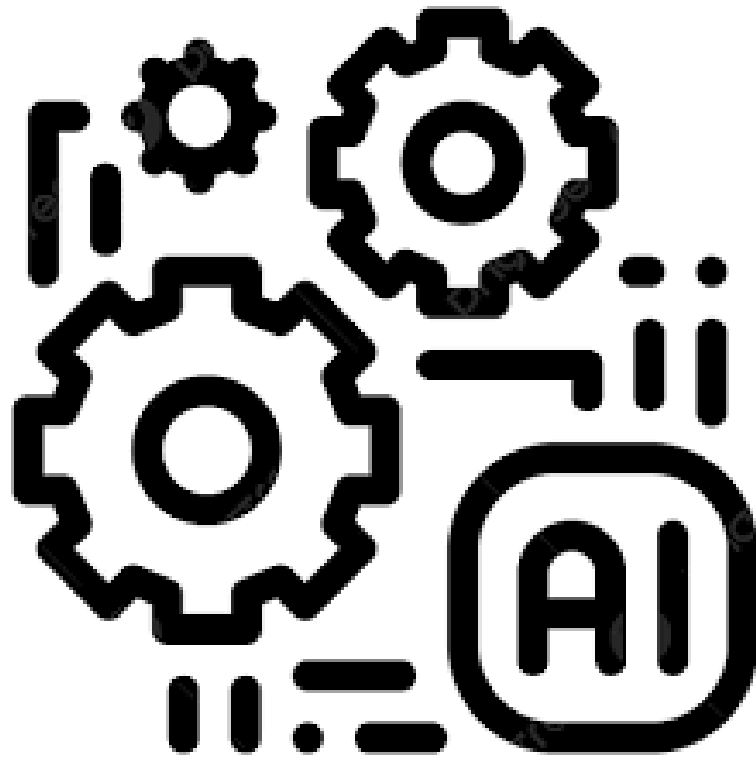


A woman in a light-colored blazer stands in the center of a modern office, gesturing towards a large whiteboard. She is addressing a group of four people seated around a table. Two people on the left are looking at her, while two on the right are looking at laptops. The room has large windows in the background, letting in bright light. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

# DEMONSTRATION

# HOW CAN AI HELP?

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# UNDERSTANDING HOW AI BEHAVES

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## AI Composes Answers — It Doesn't Look Them Up

Think of it like a very knowledgeable assistant who has read millions of books

*but* who sometimes misremembers things and states them confidently anyway.

It's not lying; it genuinely doesn't know what it doesn't know.

## Sounding Sure Doesn't Mean Being Right

Copilot is built to be helpful and well-written. Its responses often sound polished, clear, and authoritative.

But **confidence is not accuracy**.

An answer can sound very convincing and still be wrong — especially on topics where you can't easily fact-check the answer.

## Results Can Vary

Ask the same question twice and you may get different answers.

That's not a bug — it's how these systems work.

Don't rely on a single response for anything important. Instead, try asking the same question in different ways and compare the answers.

**Bottom line: AI doesn't replace your judgment. It's a powerful assistant.**

# HOW TO ASK AI A QUESTION (PROMPT)

---

1

## GOAL

What do you want from Copilot?

*Example: "I want to find federal grant opportunities for bridge infrastructure projects"*

2

## CONTEXT

What does Copilot need to know to give you a useful answer?

*Example: "We are a mid-sized engineering firm working with municipal clients in the Midwest"*

3

## EXPECTATIONS

How should Copilot respond?

*Example: "Give me a summary of each opportunity including deadlines, eligibility requirements, and funding amounts"*

4

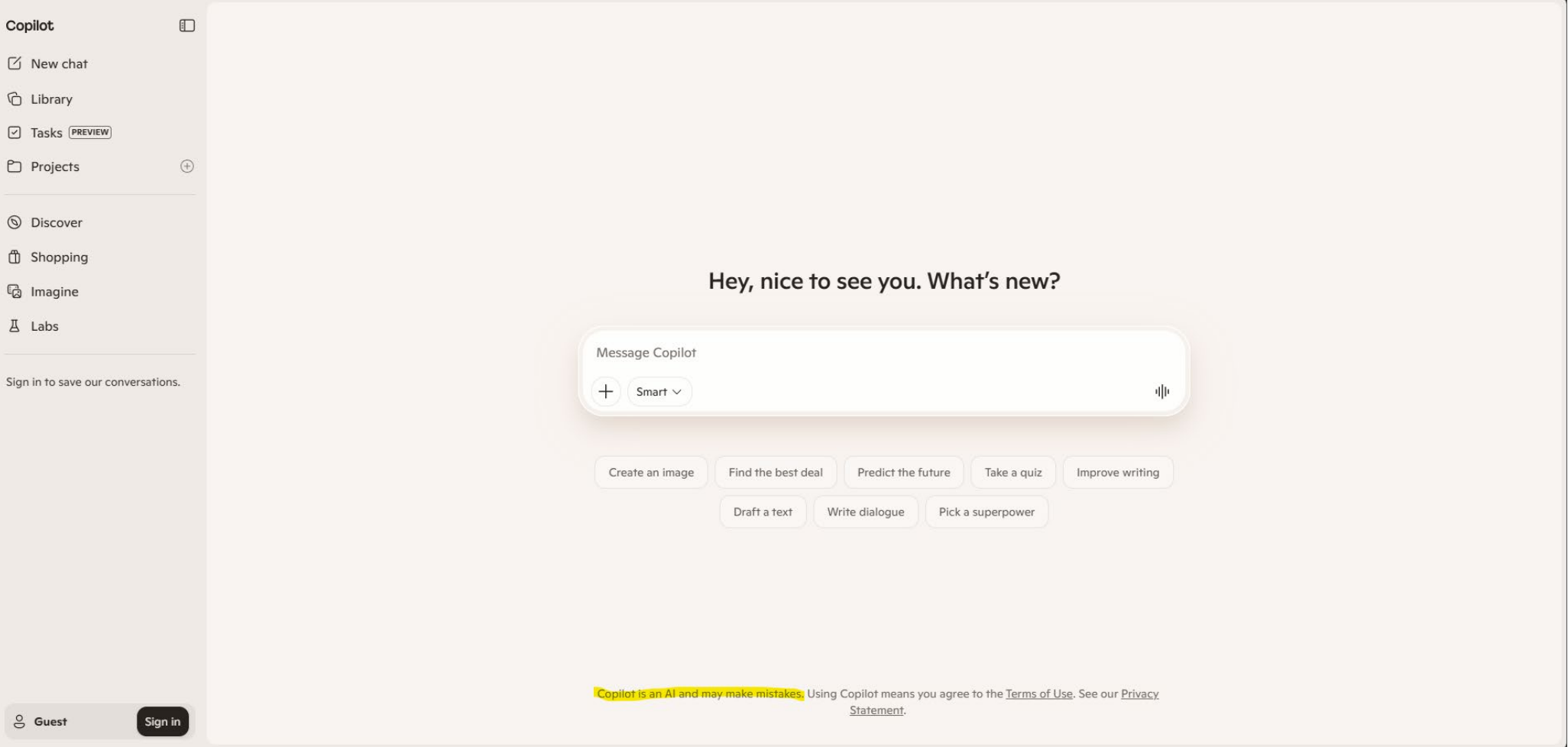
## SOURCE

What should Copilot draw from, your files, a website?

*Example: "Focus on grants published from EPA and FEMA"*

# DEMONSTRATION – USING AI TO ASSIST

## Microsoft Copilot: Your AI companion



# DEMONSTRATION – FUNDING STRATEGY

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## Finding Grants With AI's Help

### Prompt:

Research and compile a list of grant programs that local governments are eligible for, focusing only on grants related to bridge construction or reconstruction projects, including both new construction and improvements or reconstruction of existing bridges. For each grant, include a brief program summary, high-level eligibility information, the types of road projects it supports, and a source link for the information.

**ANALYZE!    USE CAUTION!    QUESTION!**

# DEMONSTRATION – GET PREPARED

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## EXAMPLE: SAFE STREETS FOR ALL (SS4A)

- Review NOFO
  - <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/ss4a/fy26-nofo>
  - All 83 pages!
- Review NOFO w/ AI's Help
- Review Criteria and Scoring w/ AI's Help

# DEMONSTRATION - GRANT WRITING

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**We want to fix some roads and bridges that are old and messed up. It's important to make infrastructure safer and help people get to places faster. With the grant, we can do construction on the most needed parts. We are confident it will improve things for the community.**



# DEMONSTRATION - **BCA**

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# USING AI TO ASSIST – KEY TAKEAWAY

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***“Treat it as a powerful assistant  
that amplifies your thinking—  
not a replacement for it.”***



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

The logo consists of a solid red square with the word "Ulteig" written in white, sans-serif font, centered within the square.

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Sandy Zimmer**

Grants & Funding Program Manager

[sandy.zimmer@ulteig.com](mailto:sandy.zimmer@ulteig.com) or  
[grantsandfunding@ulteig.com](mailto:grantsandfunding@ulteig.com)

701.355.2376

[www.ulteig.com](http://www.ulteig.com)



# DEMONSTRATION

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## ☐ Home | Grants.gov

- Searching
- Subscribing

## ☐ DOT Competitive Grants Dashboard | US Department of Transportation

## ☐ Sam.gov

## ☐ <https://www.fac.gov/>

- Federal Audit Clearinghouse (FAC)