

Perfecting the 3 P's: Planning, Preparing, and Positioning for Federal Grants

Brownfields Funding Webinar Series

Session #1

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Lines will be muted.



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We're recording!



How did we do?



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Agenda

- Why building readiness before NOFO matters
- **P**lanning - identify and organize projects
- **P**reparing - build the project story and package
- **P**ositioning - coordinate internally and stay aware of funding
- Q&A



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Building Readiness Before the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)



Typical Notice of NOFO Timeline

PROJECT IDEA

- Identify community needs
- Review plans
- Select priority projects

9-12 Months
Before NOFO

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

- Engage departments
- Build support
- Coordinate partners

3-6 Months
Before NOFO

NOFO RELEASED

- Finalize application
- Match project to funding
- Submit

12-18 Months
before NOFO

PROJECT DEFINITION

- Define scope
- Estimate costs
- Gather supporting info

6-9 Months
Before NOFO

FUNDING READINESS

- Refine budget
- Discuss match
- Close information gaps

60-90 Day
Application
Window

TIP: Project readiness matters before funding becomes available.



Pre-NOFO Preparedness

Early project work leads to stronger, faster, and more competitive applications.



Stronger Evidence

What information is already available?

- Documented community need
- Environmental assessments
- Service gaps and infrastructure issues
- Data-driven project justification
- Evidence that aligns with funding priorities



Stronger Alignment

What groups and entities do you have relationships with?

- Internal department coordination
- Community and stakeholder support
- Regional and implementation partners
- Identified project champion
- Defined roles and responsibilities



Stronger Applications

How does preparation improve your application?

- A clear and compelling need
- Community and stakeholder support
- Financial readiness and match commitments
- Feasible project scope and budget
- Implementation readiness
- Long-term project benefits

PRO TIP: Starting early turns the NOFO application window into an opportunity to develop project strategy



Partnership Building: Coordinate Early

Use meetings and information-sharing habits communities already have to keep partners engaged before funding opens.

Best Practices

- Start conversations early
- Share project concepts before deadlines
- Identify a project champion and backup lead
- Define partner roles and next steps
- Document commitments and contributions
- Keep partners informed regularly

Existing Routine	How to Build Partnership	Who to Include
Weekly staff meetings	Share project ideas, needs, challenges, and upcoming opportunities. Keep everyone informed.	Department staff, project lead, finance staff
Department head or leadership meetings	Discuss priority projects, identify obstacles, and confirm next steps.	Mayor, manager, administrator, department heads
Budget, finance, public works, or utility meetings	Talk about project costs, schedules, local funding, and infrastructure needs.	Finance, public works, utilities, engineering
City Council, Alderman, Commission, or Board meetings	Build awareness of community needs and future project funding requests.	Elected officials, leadership, community stakeholders
Regional partner meetings	Coordinate with neighboring communities and organizations that may provide support or partnership.	Regional planning organizations, nonprofits, utilities, neighboring jurisdictions

PRO TIP: Do not leave coordination with one person. Use backup contacts, shared trackers, and recurring touchpoints to maintain momentum.



Planning - How to Identify and Organize Projects



Build Grant Readiness Into Existing Local Roles

The goal is not to create a new process. It is to connect grant readiness to work communities already do.

Local Role / Group	Everyday Task	Grant-Readiness Action
Public Works / Utilities	Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) updates; asset, maintenance, and service records	Flag priority infrastructure needs; keep scope, cost, and location information current
Planning / Zoning	Comprehensive plans, small area plans, redevelopment priorities	Tie projects to adopted plans, land use goals, and community benefits
Emergency Management	HMP updates, risk assessments, damage logs, after-action notes	Connect projects to hazards, impacts, resilience needs, and documented risk
Finance / Grants	Annual budget cycle, match planning, procurement files	Identify match sources, budget timing, and documents needed for applications
Leadership / Council	Agenda items, public meetings, approvals, partner updates	Confirm priorities early and build support before a NOFO is released

PRO TIP: Assign small pieces of grant readiness to the people already managing plans, budgets, projects, and public updates.



Create a Project Pipeline

- If funding became available tomorrow, what projects would the community pursue?
- Compile and flag “grant-ready” projects internally so they can move quickly when funding opens.
- Exercise: pick 2-3 priority projects and identify what information is missing

Additional Tips:

- Maintain a simple project pipeline
- Track project lead, cost, readiness, and funding opportunities
- Keep information updated and funding-ready

Project Name	Project Need	Estimated Cost	Readiness Status	Next Action
Site A Cleanup	Complete remediation	\$1.2M	Ready to fund (Phase I and Phase II complete)	Complete Draft ABCA
Site Preparation	Grading and landscaping	\$400,000	Ready after cleanup is complete	Discuss internal budget for park development with P&R, connect with external open space partners
Trail Development	Bike/ped path	\$200,000	Future project	Research funding options for trail development





SOW: Develop Strong & Efficient Funding Applications

A competitive project needs a clear story, not just a technical need. Consider:

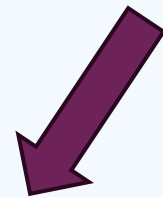
- What is the problem?
- Who is it affecting?
- What is the proposed solution?
- What are the expected benefits?
- What documentation is needed to back up the answers to the questions above?
- Identifying individuals within your organization to drive these efforts forward.

Quick Test:

Can someone outside your department explain the project after reading one paragraph?



Planning: Build a Funding Strategy



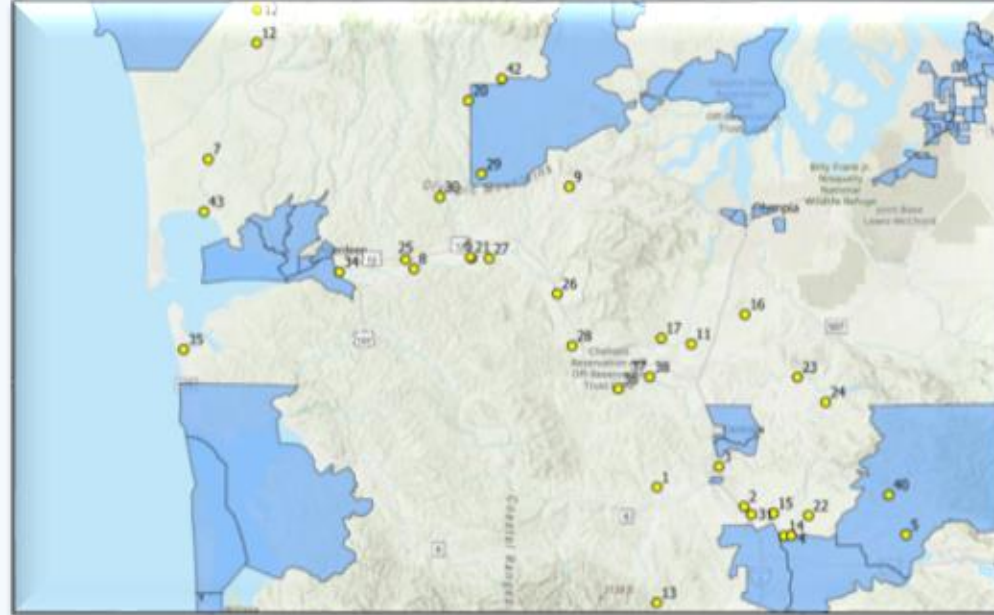
Project Name	Project Need	Estimated Cost	Readiness Status	Next Action	Funding Options
Site A Cleanup	Complete remediation	\$1.2M	Ready to fund (Phase I and Phase II complete)	Complete Draft ABCA	Grant Program A • Pre-application due 8/26 • Full app due 9/26
Site Preparation	Grading and landscaping	\$400,000	Ready after cleanup is complete	Discuss internal budget for park development with P&R, connect with external open space partners	Grant Program B • Pre-application due 6/27 • Full app due 9/27 Internal Budget Available?
Trail Development	Bike/ped path	\$200,000	Future project	Research funding options for trail development	Grant Program C • Full app due 7/27

PRO TIP: A funding strategy connects grant or internal funding sources to projects so there is a clear path for funding pursuits and awareness of key milestones.



Case Study: Office of Chehalis Basin, Washington Department of Ecology

- **Engaged Regional Partners:** Brought together local governments, agencies, and community partners to share project information and identify common priorities.
- **Built Project Bundles:** Grouped related projects by location, shared benefits, and potential funding fit.
- **Created a RoadMap:** Identified next steps and future funding opportunities while strengthening partnerships and increasing regional awareness.



*Map from the workshop showing projects across the
Chehalis Basin region*



Preparing - Build the Project Story and Package



Application Contents: Building the Story

Most federal grant programs share similar core requirements:

- Clearly defined scope of work
- Detailed budget with major cost categories, local match, and local match/budget timing
- Technical documentation (environmental assessments, preliminary design, memo, etc.)
- Permitting
- Historic Preservation
- Coordination with city, county, or state applicant
- Schedule basics: planning or design status, permitting, procurement timing, project implementation window, closeout

Remember:

You don't need perfect numbers or every piece of information to start preparing your grant application.

PRO TIP: Letters of support are optional but go a long way. Reach out to elected officials and partners for this.



Case Study: Donaldsonville, LA

Project story: A wastewater upgrade was framed as a broader community growth and resilience investment.



Infrastructure Need

Aging wastewater system with capacity and operational challenges.



PER / capacity analysis



Project maps



Economic Growth

Infrastructure needed to support industrial, residential, and commercial growth in a highly impoverished area.



Support letters



Economic narrative



Resilience & Public Health

Upgrades help reduce system disruption and protect public health during storm events.



Equipment list



SCADA / controls



Partnership & Readiness

Application became stronger through technical documentation and stakeholder support.



Partner coordination



Match strategy

Partner support



Positioning – External Coordination and Awareness





Positioning: External Coordination

Communities can strengthen applications by having simple conversations before the NOFO opens.

Think: Who needs to know, support, and sign off on the project?



Talk to Decision Makers Early

Goal: Find out if the project fits before the deadline clock starts.

- Share a one-page summary
- Ask: "Is this a fit?"
- Request early feedback
- Apply for TA if offered



Build Champions

Goal: Get people in your corner before the application is submitted.

- Brief leadership
- Engage elected officials
- Coordinate with state agencies
- Line up support letters



Bring the Community Along

Goal: Show local understanding and support for the project.

- Use public meetings
- Explain the need clearly
- Show resident benefits
- Build local momentum

PRO TIP: Objective: Have projects "on the shelf" to maximize your ability to match with funding opportunities.



Positioning: Think Across Funding Types



- Coordinate externally to help show the full value and partners potential on a project
- Make connections through multi-benefit projects.
- Bundle projects only when there is a clear shared purpose, benefit, and/or objective



Positioning: Stay Aware of Funding Opportunities



PRO TIP: Communities that monitor opportunities can align projects before deadlines appear.



Case Study: Lake Lure, NC Hurricane Helene Recovery

Disaster recovery can create a funding window. Communities that position projects early can move faster when funds become available.



1. Disaster Creates Urgency

- 22.5 inches of rainfall reported
- Major damage to roads, bridges, utilities, and facilities
- Recovery planning created the chance to look ahead



2. Funding Window Opens

- \$2.5B+ available under Helene HMGP
- HMGP Advance Assistance used to shape future projects
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, Economic Development Authority, Community Development Block Grant- Disaster Recovery



3. Projects Get Positioned

- Public Safety Campus outside SFHA
- Water, stormwater, and road stabilization advanced
- Recovery Needs Assessment supported prioritization

Why This Works

● Matched to Funding

Projects connected to FEMA, EDA, ARC, DRMF, and state funding options.

● Advanced Early

Advance Assistance supported project development before construction funding.

● Multiple Project Types

Public safety, water, stormwater, roads, facilities, and wastewater.

● Better Positioned

Recovery planning created a stronger project pipeline for future opportunities.



Looking Ahead



Consider these next steps for YOUR Community:

1

Identify Projects

Pick 2 to 3 priority infrastructure projects

2

Build Pipeline

Create a simple project pipeline

3

Draft Summary

Prepare a one-page project summary

4

Gather Materials

Collect maps, photos, budgets, and supporting documents

5

Talk to Partners

Engage finance and internal partners

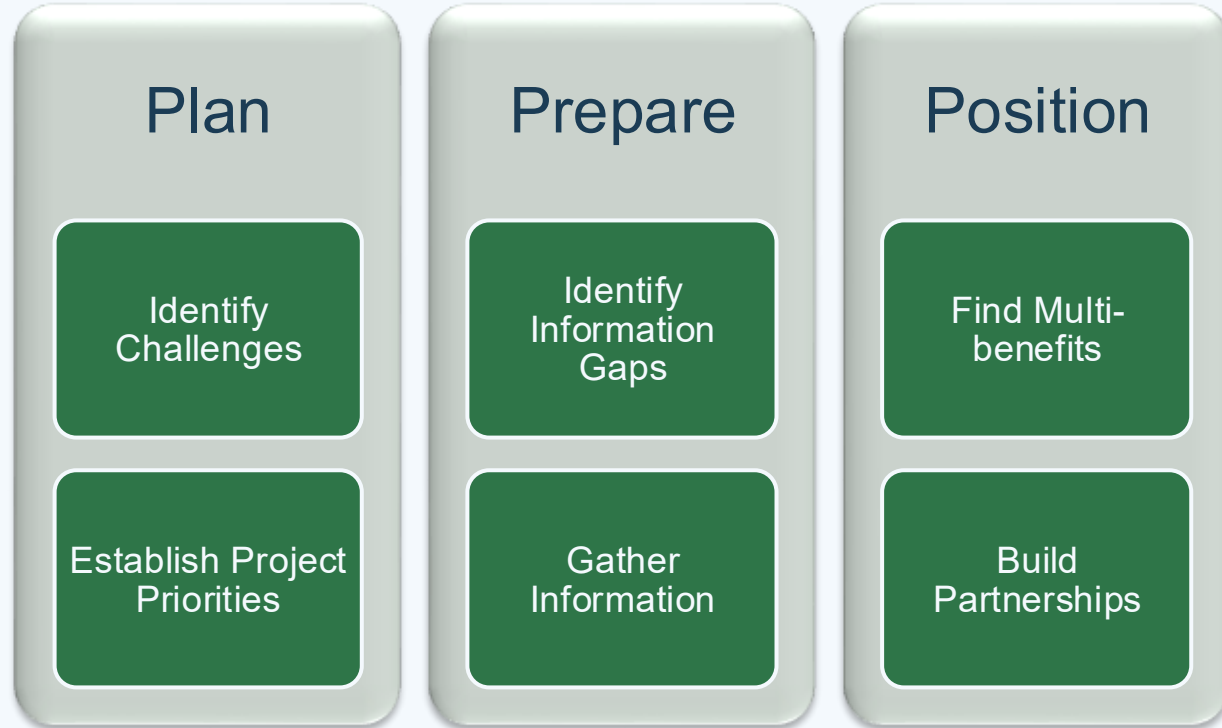
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Track Funding

Track opportunities by project type



Key Takeaways



Upcoming Grants

Agency & Program	Anticipated NOFO Release	Project Types
FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)	Fall 2026	Flood mitigation, elevations, acquisitions, drainage improvements, repetitive loss reduction
FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC)	Late 2026 / Early 2027	Hazard mitigation, critical facilities, utility hardening, resilience infrastructure
FEMA FMA Swift Current	Following major flood events	Property acquisition, elevations, relocation, flood loss reduction
USDOT Safe Streets & Roads for All (SS4A)	Annual (Spring)	Safety action plans, roadway safety, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
EDA Public Works Program	Annual	Water, sewer, industrial parks, site readiness, economic development infrastructure
EPA MARC Grants	Fall 2026 (expected)	Assessment, cleanup, multi-purpose planning, revolving loan funds, site redevelopment
USDA Community Facilities	Multiple Annual Rounds	Public safety, healthcare, libraries, community centers, public buildings
USDA Water & Waste Disposal Program	Ongoing / Annual	Drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, utility infrastructure
National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF)	Late Summer / Fall	Nature-based solutions, flood mitigation, shoreline resilience, habitat restoration
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Area Development	Annual	Community infrastructure, economic development, workforce facilities
Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP)	Spring / Summer	Water, wastewater, transportation, utility, broadband, and infrastructure supporting military installations
EPA Clean Water & Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF/DWSRF)	Annual State Cycles	Drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, resiliency, lead service line replacement



Next Webinar

- Date: Tuesday, September 22nd
- Time: 10am – 11am ET
- Topic: Alternative Funding Resources for Brownfield Projects

**Come find Rachel and Emily
at the West Virginia
Brownfields Conference!**

**Funding Session: Thursday,
9/10 at 11:00am**



Q&A



Thank You!



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Resources and Tools

Resource	How It Can Help
U.S. Census OnTheMap	Analyze commuting patterns, workforce availability, and employment trends
U.S. Census Data Explorer	Access population, income, poverty, housing, and demographic statistics
FEMA National Risk Index	Quantify flood, storm, wildfire, and hazard risks
TIGER/Line Shapefiles	Download roads, boundaries, and census geography shapefiles
USGS National Map	Access elevation, hydrography, infrastructure, and topographic layers
Climate Mapping for Resilience & Adaptation	Identify climate risks and resilience challenges
ArcGIS Living Atlas	Access free map layers, demographics, and infrastructure datasets
Data.gov	Search thousands of federal datasets for project planning and grant support
Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access	Access statewide mapping data and downloadable shapefiles
Virginia Open Data Portal	Download Virginia geographic and planning datasets
West Virginia GIS Technical Center	Access statewide GIS and mapping resources
Maryland iMap	Statewide mapping and geographic datasets
Delaware FirstMap	Download Delaware GIS layers and mapping resources
DC Open Data Portal	Access planning, transportation, and demographic datasets
NADO CEDS & EDD Map	Identify Economic Development Districts and regional planning partners
ARC Local Development Districts	Connect with planning organizations serving Appalachian communities
Pennsylvania Municipal League	Training, networking, and municipal resources
Virginia Municipal League	Technical assistance and local government resources
Maryland Municipal League	Municipal training, policy, and funding resources
Delaware League of Local Governments	Local government advocacy and technical resources
West Virginia Municipal League	Grant and municipal support resources

