



SESSION 1 PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Getting Started Right

Understanding Your Funding Award — Your Desk Reference

February 26, 2026 | Rural Capacity Assistance Program

How to Use This Handout

Keep this document at your desk. It is built as a reference, not a transcript. Each section pairs a plain-language explanation with a table or checklist you can apply to your own funding award.

Getting started right comes down to three habits: read your funding agreement closely, test every cost before you spend, and put every deadline on a calendar from day one. This handout gives you a tool for each.

Additional Support

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Part 1: Anatomy of Your Funding Agreement

Your funding agreement is your roadmap. Before the project starts, read it cover to cover and find each of these five things. If any section is unclear, ask your program manager before you begin work — not after.

Section	What to Look For
Scope	Eligible activities, project description, and deliverables
Timeline	Start and end dates, period of performance, and extension terms
Budget	Line items, categories, limits, and match requirements
Special Conditions	Davis-Bacon, Build America Buy America (BABA), NEPA, and any unique requirements
Reporting	Due dates, required formats, and the submission process

Read It Before You Start

The single most common source of compliance trouble is a community that started spending before fully reading the award.

Highlight the special conditions and reporting due dates on your first read — those are where the surprises hide.

Part 2: The Six-Question Cost Eligibility Test

Per 2 CFR 200, every cost must pass ALL six questions before you spend. Run this test on any expense you are unsure about:

- Is it necessary and reasonable?
- Is it allocable to this project?
- Is it allowed by the funding agreement?
- Is it consistent with your written policies?
- Is it properly documented?
- Is it NOT already charged to another award?

One “No” Is Enough

If the answer to ANY of the six questions is no, the cost is not eligible — full stop. When you are unsure, ask your program manager before you spend, not at closeout.

Always Ineligible — Don't Even Ask

These costs are never allowable on a federal award, regardless of how the test comes out:

- Alcohol and entertainment
- Lobbying and political activities
- Bad debts, fines, and penalties
- Pre-award costs, unless specifically authorized in the award
- Any costs incurred after the period of performance ends

Part 3: Build Your Compliance Calendar

Build this calendar the week your award is executed — not the week the first deadline arrives. Pull every date from your funding agreement and set reminders two weeks ahead of each one.

Compliance Calendar Must-Haves

- Project start and end dates
- Progress report due dates
- Financial report due dates
- Amendment request deadlines
- Closeout requirements and final report deadline
- Special condition deadlines (Davis-Bacon, BABA, environmental)

Part 4: Capacity-Building Funding

Managing one award well builds the capacity to win the next. These programs fund the staff capacity, planning, and technical assistance that make your community a stronger applicant and a more confident grant manager.

Program	Best Fit For	Award Size	Cycle
USDA RCDI	Capacity-building for nonprofits & public bodies serving rural areas (population < 50,000)	\$50K–\$500K; match required	Watch FY2026 NOFO
EDA Planning & Local TA	Strengthen local economic development capacity; CEDS planning support	\$100K–\$500K	Rolling
Oregon Main Street Network	Training & TA for downtown revitalization; Revitalization Grant funds building projects (50% reserved for rural)	Grant up to \$400K (match)	Network rolling; grant cyclical — verify
ODOT Rural Transportation Planning	Planning support for rural transportation and connectivity projects	Varies	Contact ODOT region

Program details and deadlines change. Confirm current requirements with your Business Oregon Regional Development Officer or EDD partner before applying.

Three Things to Remember

- 1. Your funding agreement is your roadmap.** Read it before you start, and refer to it often.
- 2. Ask before you spend.** When in doubt, contact your program manager before the money goes out the door.
- 3. Build your compliance calendar now.** Track every deadline from day one.

Resources

- RCAP Resource Page — oregon.gov/biz/programs/RCAP/project-management
- 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance) — [ecfr.gov](https://www.ecfr.gov)
- Business Oregon Infrastructure Finance — oregon.gov/biz
- USDA Rural Development Oregon — rd.usda.gov/or
- Grants.gov — grants.gov

Part of the four-session Rural Capacity Assistance Program series: Getting Started Right · Keeping Control · Procurement, Risk & Quality · Finishing Strong.

Technical Assistance

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