COURSE SYLLABUS

Pre-Award Risk Assessment and Award Structuring Course

This intermediate, practice-focused course is for federal and pass-through entity staff involved in grant review and award decisions. It teaches how to identify, analyze, and document pre-award risk—and deliberately translate that risk into defensible award structures before funds are obligated.

> Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://www.graduateschool.edu/courses/pre-award-risk-assessment-and-award-structuring-course



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Course Outline

Module 1: Purpose and Role of Pre-Award Risk Assessment

- Explain why pre-award risk assessment is a decision-making function rather than a compliance exercise.
- Identify how early program design and award decisions drive downstream performance failures and audit findings.
- Recognize oversight expectations from OMB, Inspectors General, and Congress.

Module 2: Regulatory and Policy Foundations

- Review Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) requirements related to pre-award risk assessment and award conditions.
- Understand risk-based decision-making and internal control expectations.
- Identify documentation standards needed for defensible pre-award decisions.

Module 3: Core Categories of Pre-Award Risk

- Identify key categories of pre-award risk, including financial, programmatic, compliance, capacity, and external risk.
- Distinguish material risk from routine variation or administrative noise.
- Recognize how different risk types require different management responses.

Module 4: Program Risk vs. Recipient Risk

- Differentiate between risks inherent in program design and risks specific to recipient capacity.
- Identify how program structure can amplify or mitigate recipient risk.
- Avoid over-reliance on audit history or financial metrics as sole indicators of risk.

Module 5: Pre-Award Risk Assessment Methods and Inputs

- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of common pre-award inputs, including applications, audits, and financial statements.
- Distinguish high-value risk indicators from low-value or misleading information.
- Apply professional judgment when data is incomplete, outdated, or conflicting.

Module 6: Analyzing Risk and Reaching Defensible Conclusions

- Assess risk based on likelihood and impact rather than checklist scoring.
- Prioritize material risks that could affect performance, compliance, or stewardship of funds.
- Document risk conclusions clearly to support defensible award decisions.

Module 7: Using Risk to Inform Award Decisions

- Determine when to approve, condition, modify, delay, or decline awards based on risk.
- Align award decisions logically with documented risk analysis.
- Recognize when conditions alone are insufficient to address structural risk.

Module 8: Structuring Awards Based on Risk

- Design special award conditions that are targeted, proportional, and defensible.
- Apply phased or incremental funding to manage risk.
- Use prior approval requirements and authorities strategically.

Module 9: Linking Pre-Award Risk to Oversight and Monitoring

- Translate pre-award risk findings into proportional post-award oversight plans.
- Establish escalation triggers and monitoring strategies aligned with risk.
- Use technical assistance as a preventive risk-management tool.

Module 10: Documentation, Defensibility, and Capstone Simulation

- Identify what auditors and oversight bodies look for in pre-award files.
- Avoid common documentation failures that undermine defensibility.
- Apply course concepts through a capstone simulation involving a full pre-award risk assessment and award recommendation.