COURSE SYLLABUS

Program Design and Risk Assessment Course (Self-Paced)

This intermediate course for federal and pass-through entity staff focuses on integrating risk awareness into grant program design. It teaches how early design decisions can prevent compliance issues, reduce burden, and strengthen program outcomes.

> 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/program-design-and-risk-assessment-course-self-paced



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Course Outline

Module 1: Federal Grant Program Design Lifecycle

- Understand how federal grant programs translate statutory authority and national priorities into operational funding mechanisms.
- Distinguish between program policy, program design, and program execution.
- Identify how early design decisions shape accountability, performance, and risk across the grant lifecycle.

Module 2: OMB's Role in Grant Program Design and Oversight

- Explain the role of the Office of Management and Budget in federal grants governance.
- Understand how the Uniform Guidance serves as a foundational framework for program design.
- Recognize OMB expectations for risk-based program design and oversight.

Module 3: Translating Statutory Intent into Program Design

- Interpret authorizing statutes and appropriations language to define program purpose and scope.
- Design eligibility criteria and allowable activities aligned with statutory intent.
- Balance flexibility and control to support both innovation and accountability.

Module 4: Risk Assessment in Program Design

- Identify programmatic, financial, operational, compliance, and reputational risks at the design stage.
- Recognize how early design choices introduce or mitigate downstream risk.
- Apply pre-award risk assessment concepts to program-level decision-making.

Module 5: Designing Controls into Grant Programs

- Embed risk mitigation strategies into program structure, award conditions, and reporting requirements.
- Use phased funding, monitoring models, and subrecipient oversight to manage risk.
- Align controls proportionately to risk while preserving program effectiveness.

Module 6: Program Design Risk Mapping Case Exercise

- Analyze a realistic grant program design to identify embedded risks before award.
- Map risks to specific design decisions and anticipate how they may escalate post-award.
- Propose targeted design modifications that reduce risk without undermining program goals.

Module 7: Aligning Grant Programs with Agency Strategic Goals

- Link grant program objectives to agency mission, strategic plans, and performance goals.
- Design programs that emphasize outcomes rather than activity counts.
- Use grants as strategic policy tools rather than administrative funding transactions.

Module 8: Program Evaluation Fundamentals

- Distinguish between performance measurement and program evaluation.
- Understand formative and summative evaluation approaches.
- Recognize OMB expectations for evidence-building and evaluation use.

Module 9: Metrics and Indicators for Demonstrating Program Success

- Develop meaningful performance measures aligned with program goals.
- Distinguish outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
- Design metrics that are feasible for recipients and useful for decision-making.

Module 10: Working with Industries and Communities Served by Grant Programs

- Assess recipient operating environments, capacity, and industry constraints.
- Incorporate equity and community readiness considerations into program design.
- Use engagement and technical assistance as preventive risk-management tools.

Module 11: Integrating Risk Assessment, Performance, and Oversight

- Use performance data to inform monitoring and oversight decisions.
- Apply escalation and corrective action triggers consistently.
- Support continuous improvement in grant programs.

Module 12: Capstone — Designing a Defensible Grant Program

- Integrate strategy, risk assessment, performance measurement, and oversight into a single program design.
- Identify and mitigate risks across the grant lifecycle.
- Develop a defensible grant program framework suitable for audit and oversight review.