



CDFA Tribal Finance Webinar Series

**THE BROADCAST WILL
BEGIN AT 3PM EASTERN**

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advance using the chat box

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Mastering Grant Writing for Tribal Community Growth

Mastering Grant Writing for Tribal Community Growth



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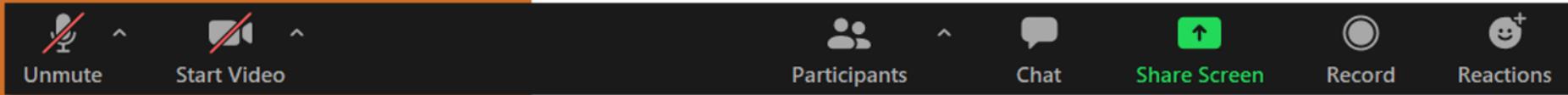
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**Submit your questions by
using the chat function!**

CDFA Community Facilities Technical Assistance Program for Tribal Communities



Core Components

Tribal Finance Resource Center

A searchable online tool with information about tribal finance programs, resources, and best practices from communities.

Tribal Financing Webinar Series

A four-part online offering that explores the tools and approaches available to uplift native communities.

Tribal Communities Project Marketplace

A dedicated online resource where Tribal communities can submit economic development project information and receive a customized list of potential lending partners, project consultants, and economic development advisors that serve their area and project needs.



Mastering Grant Writing for Tribal Community Growth

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Mastering Grant Writing for Tribal Community Growth



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Grant Writing Foundations and Strategy

Denae Johnson, KLJ



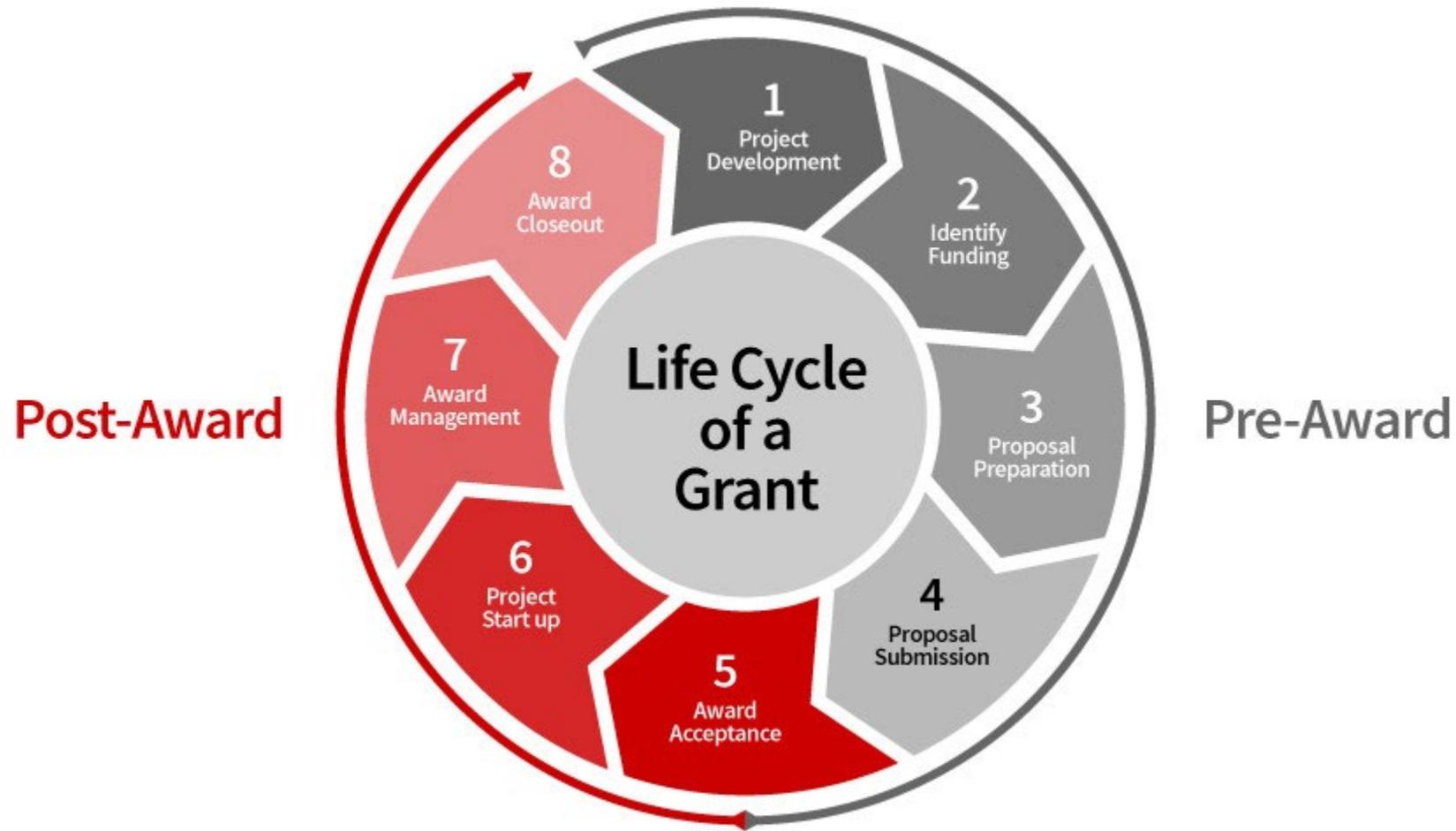
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Introduction to Grant Writing

- Federal, State, Foundation, and Private grants are often extremely competitive
- Aligning and pairing projects with funding sources takes knowledge of each program and intentional planning
- Anticipating discretionary grant rounds is key
- Building partnerships and support for the project often helps build your case



Overview of the Grant Cycle



Tools to Identify Grant Opportunities

Federal Grants

- Grants.gov
- BIA website
- Rural.gov
- Agency specific websites (USDA, DOE, EDA, FEMA, etc.)

State Grants

- State agency websites
 - Economic Development
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Health and Human Services
 - Commerce/Tourism

Philanthropic and Private Funding

- Foundation directories: Paid subscription databases, limited free resources
- Indigenous-focused organizations
- Tribal-affiliated nonprofits



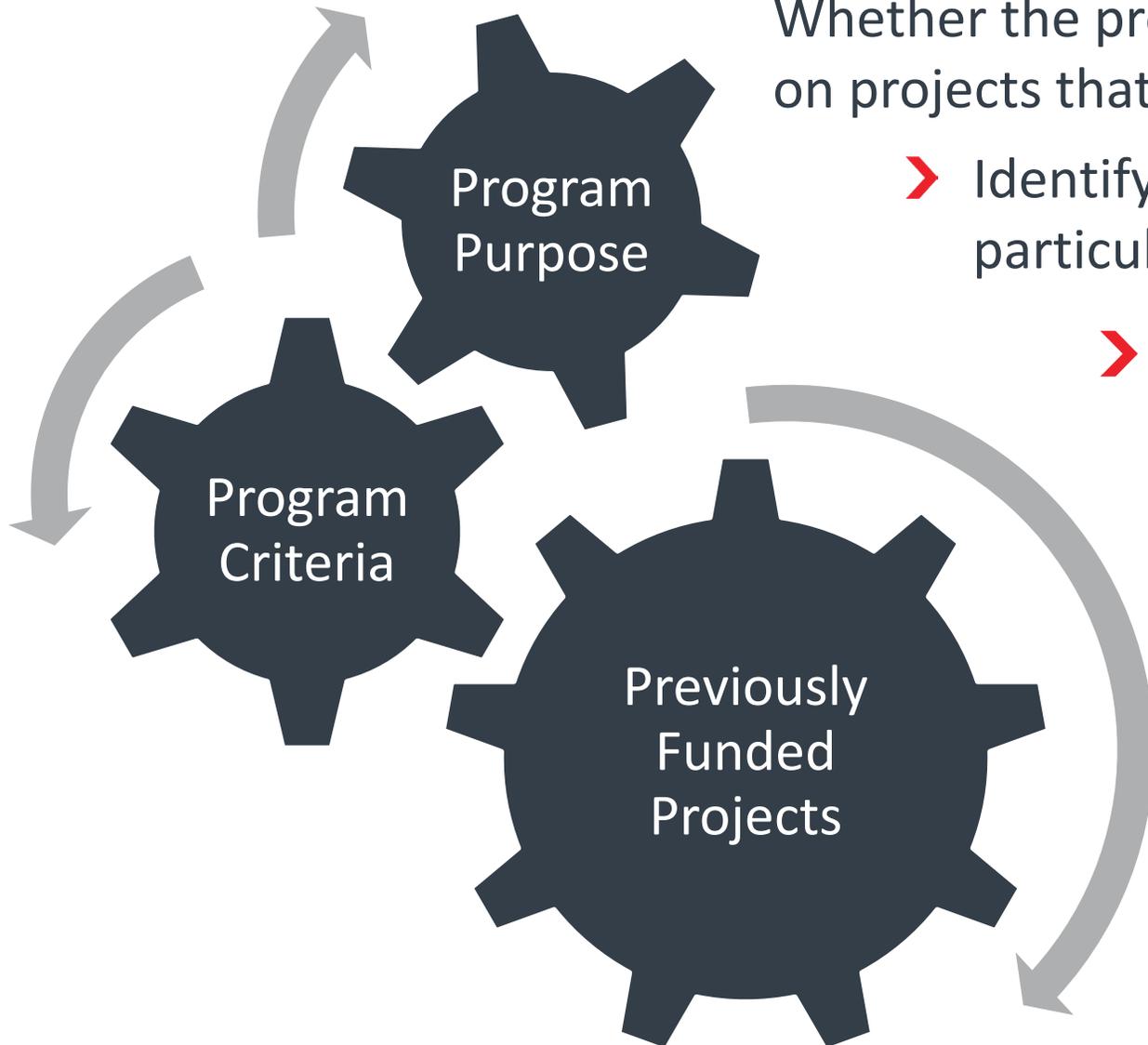
Selecting Projects That Fit the Opportunity

Whether the project or funding opportunity comes first, focus on projects that are opportunistic and justifiable.

➤ Identifying projects that will be a good fit for a particular program. You want to be competitive!

➤ Is the juice worth the squeeze?

- Do you have the time and resources to make the application competitive?
- Does the project match the grant criteria?
- Has adequate planning been done to justify the project as “ready?”
- Do you have the technical data/statistics required to be successful?
- Do you have the capacity to administer the grant?



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Eligibility and Alignment with Community Needs

- Read the Notice of Funding, FAQ's, Grant Guidelines, Webinars
 - Cannot stress this enough!!!
- Is your organization eligible (type, geographic area)
- Does your project align with the funding objectives
- Can you meet the financial requirements
 - Cost share
 - Audits



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Strategic Alignment with Tribal Goals

- Planning is Essential
 - Proactive strategies ensure long-term sustainability
- Data Matters
 - Evidence-based projects will strengthen the outcome
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
 - Builds trust and support for community initiatives

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” – Benjamin Franklin

“Numbers have meaning when they reflect the voices behind them.” - unknown



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Types of planning

Growth
Policies

Capital
Improvement
Plans

Economic
Development
Plans

Preliminary
Engineering
Reports

Transportation
Safety Plans

Drought
Contingency
Plans

Road Safety
Audits

Preliminary
Architecture
Plans

Hazard
Mitigation
Plans

State Water
Plans



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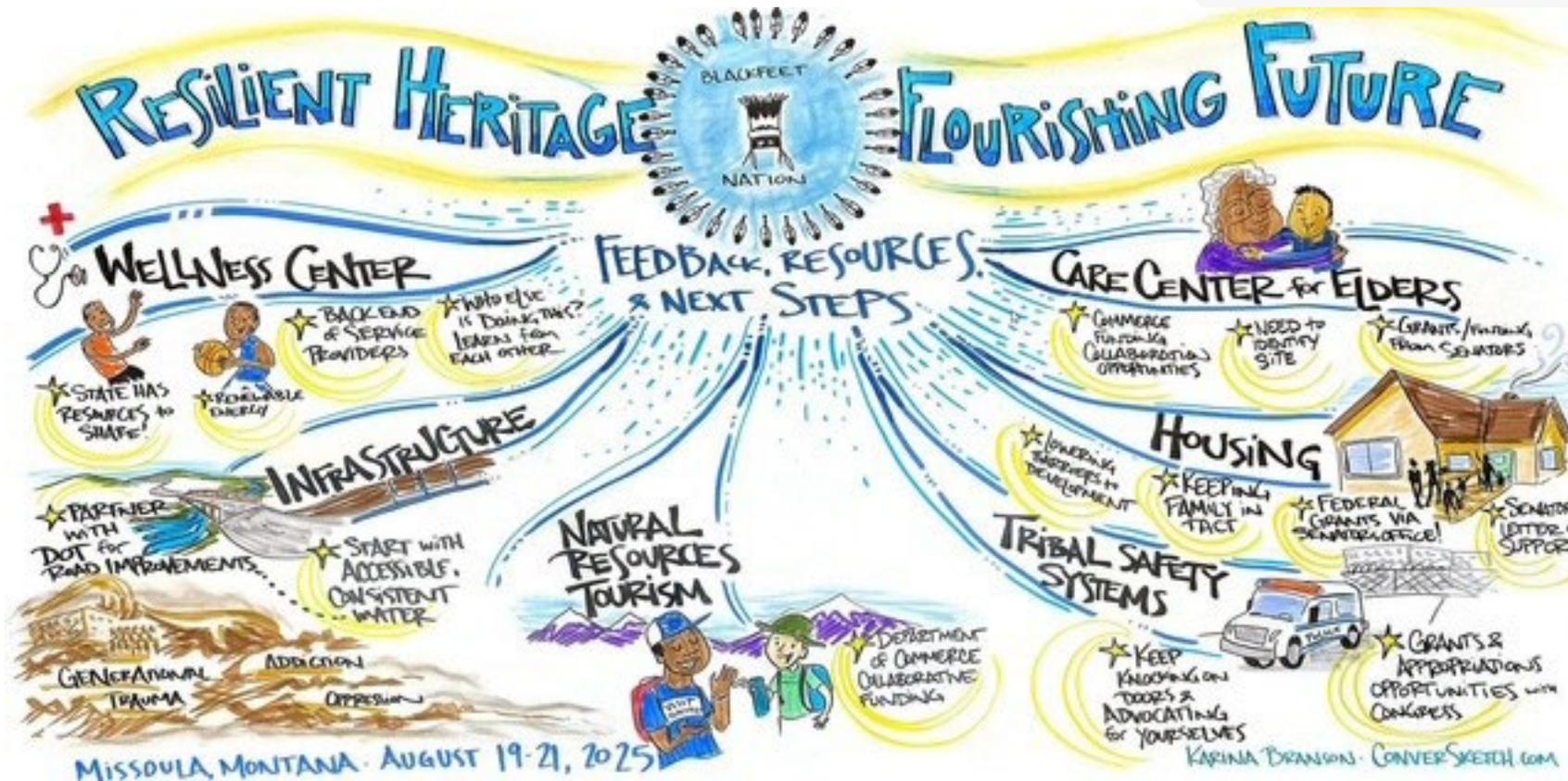
Embedding Culture and Sovereignty into Your Funding Strategy

- **Strong foundations lead to stronger proposals:** Aligning your funding strategy with cultural values and tribal priorities helps ensure your grant applications are meaningful and competitive
- **Define your community's priorities:** Use tribal strategic plans, community input, and cultural teachings to guide funding goals.
- **Center cultural strengths:** Identify how traditional knowledge, language, and practices can shape your programs and outcomes.
- **Planning ahead:** Allows you to lead with your Nation's vision, not just respond to external funding opportunities.
 - Create a living funding plan that aligns with tribal values and long-term goals.



Tribal Strategic Planning

“Your funding strategy is a reflection of your sovereignty. When it’s rooted in culture and community, every grant you write becomes a tool for self-determination.”



Laying the Groundwork for a Success

- **Read the Guidance and Instructions FULLY and multiple times**
- **Collect Statistics and required technical information**
 - Know how long it takes to get important data/statistics (and plan for things like staff vacations and/or holidays)
 - Get/keep statistics and data in advance when possible and from other partners (like EDA, cities, counties, DOT, BIA, and states) and have a repository of that data)
 - Grants tell a story, generally to someone that knows nothing about your community/project. Data should support a compelling story for strangers
 - Develop internal capacity (grant teams, policies, data systems) that supports funding efforts.



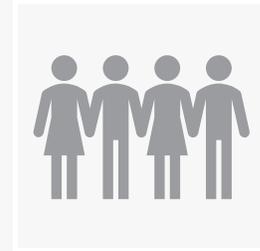
Request Project Support Early



Create an Executive Summary, Abstract,
or Congressional Briefing Paper



Ask for Letters of Support, MOUs, and
Partnership Agreements ASAP



Get public input well in advance



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Tips for Writing with Culture and Sovereignty in Mind



Start with your story: Share the cultural or historical context that shapes your community's needs and strengths



Use your own words: Don't be afraid to include traditional knowledge, language, or practices—these are assets



Highlight tribal governance: Show how your project aligns with tribal priorities, resolutions, or strategic plans



Helpful phrases:

“This project reflects our Nation’s commitment to...”

“In alignment with our tribal values and governance...”

“Our approach is rooted in traditional knowledge and community input...”



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Building Internal and External Partnerships



Why Partnerships Matter

Stronger Proposals
Advocacy for your projects



Internal Partnerships

Align Tribal council priorities and strategic plans
Build cross-departmental grant teams to share knowledge and resources



External Partnerships

Collaborate with colleges, nonprofits and other tribal nations
Engage federal/state agency staff early

Successful partnerships are built on trust, shared purpose, and respect for tribal sovereignty. They don't just support your grant—they strengthen your Nation's future.



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Thank You!



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Mastering Grant Writing for Tribal Community Growth



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Writing & Submitting Strong Proposals

- ✓ Proposal Development
- ✓ Storytelling
- ✓ Practical Tips for Success



RJS & Associates, Inc.



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- ✓ Since 1996, we have successfully raised over \$800 million for our clients.
- ✓ From FY 2021-2024, we successfully raised over \$146.5 million.

Crafting a Compelling Narrative

- ✓ Every grant application starts with a need.
 - The need will drive the entire application.
 - The need will come from the community planning and tribal strategic programming.
- ✓ Fully address all criteria as directed in the NOFO.
- ✓ Ensure compliance with Executive Orders and Regulations (CFR).
- ✓ Your application should tell a **compelling** story.



Key Elements of a Strong Proposal

- ✓ Work plans, budgets, needs statements, measurable outcomes
- ✓ Aligning evaluation methods with community-defined success
- ✓ Elements of most proposals include: Need, Plan, Organization, Budget, Evaluation



Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

- ✓ Create a checklist
- ✓ Engage with stakeholders early
- ✓ Read and follow the NOFO
- ✓ Fill out forms completely
- ✓ Make sure budgets are complete and accurate
- ✓ **SUBMIT EARLY**



Tips for Submitting and Managing Grants

- ✓ Navigating portals (e.g. grants.gov, SAM, FEMA GO, EDA, EDGE, DOT)
- ✓ What to do after submission: follow up, award negotiation, reporting.



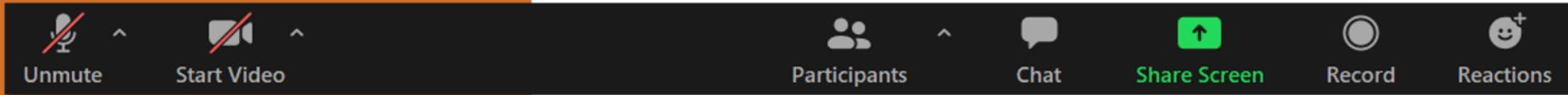


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Audience Questions



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CDFA // BNY Development Finance Webcast Series: Municipal Bonds and Revitalization in Rural America

September 16, 2025 | 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM Eastern

CDFA Advocacy Briefing: CDFA Volume Cap Report Trends and Analysis

September 18, 2025 | 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Eastern

CDFA-Bricker Graydon Webinar Series: Special Assessments and TIF for Mixed-Use Projects

September 23, 2025 | 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern

CDFA Food Systems Finance Webinar Series: Unlocking Local Capital: The Power of a Food-Focused Loan Guarantee

September 30, 2025 | 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern

**OCTOBER
8-10, 2025**

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Topics Covered:

Projects:

- Clean Energy
- Food Systems
- Disaster Relief
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Small Business

Tools:

- Bonds
- Revolving Loan Funds
- New Markets Tax Credits
- Tax Increment Finance
- Opportunity Zones
 - And more!

Early Bird Registration and Discounted Hotel Rate – Ends next week, September 16

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CDFA TRIBAL FINANCE **WEBINAR SERIES**

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