Welcome

On behalf of the ATR program and course facilitators, I’m pleased to welcome you to the ATR Certification Training Course. This course has been developed by NPS subject matter experts and learning professionals for NPS employees who have some responsibility for the initiation, award, and/or monitoring of financial assistance agreements, also known as grants and cooperative agreements.

Over the course of several weeks, we’ll provide you with the tools for assisting in the preparation of competitive Funding Opportunity Announcements and non-competitive Notice of Intent to Award funds documents, and developing the required agreement documents for review and approval by the Awarding Officer. Finally, we’ll cover the monitoring of awards, including a general understanding of roles and responsibilities at all phases of the program.

We want to ensure that your time in this course is well-spent, and that we support you to strengthen the skills and knowledge you need to be successful with your ATR responsibilities back on the job.

This Student Guide will detail what to expect throughout the course via the following sections:
1. Course Rationale
2. Course Objectives
3. Course Expectations
4. Technology Requirements
5. Reasonable Accommodation
6. Guidelines on Participating via the Virtual Classroom
7. Training Agenda

We want you to feel comfortable and engaged throughout this course, so please reach out with your questions and ideas.

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Section 1 - Course Rationale

NPS policy requires ATRs to meet a 24-hour certification-training requirement prior to appointment so that they can execute job tasks effectively. To help meet this requirement, we have developed this course for non-Financial Assistance personnel that need to learn relevant processes, procedures, limitations, and laws to fulfill ATR responsibilities as a collateral-duty assignment.

Current training offered through external vendors does not meet the needs of the NPS and requires travel and tuition costs that impact our organization. Therefore, we’re currently piloting a method of delivering ATR certification training that is more efficient and makes it easier to participate.

This initial offering leverages experienced NPS ATRs and existing distance learning technologies to provide relevant, easy to access learning. In collaboration with the NPS Distance Learning Program, we’ve created a learner-centered, virtual curriculum that provides opportunities for meaningful interaction, practice, and reflection. We’ll rely on web conferencing systems for live sessions and a virtual classroom system to organize assignments and self-paced modules that support self-paced learning and student collaboration.

In addition to achieving ATR certification, you’ll also be able to influence how this course is delivered for future students. Throughout the training, you’ll be asked to provide feedback in a number of forms (i.e. self-paced survey, verbally during live session) to help us improve the effectiveness of the course. We’ll be able to make some adjustments while the course is still in progress, and more complex changes can be incorporated into future iterations.
Section 2 - Course Objectives

When you’re assigned a project that requires a Financial Assistance (FA) agreement, you will use a purchase request, mandatory and optional financial assistance documents and templates, and standard Federal forms to develop the FA agreement package including all required supporting documentation per 2 CFR Part 200, DOI and NPS policy.

By the end of this training you will be able to:

● Select the most relevant legal instrument(s) for a FA scenario
● Locate legal authorities
● Recommend the proper legal authorities for a given FA action
● Complete all required sections of necessary optional and mandatory templates
● Coordinate with the awarding officer to ensure approval of submitted FA documents
● Assist the awarding officer with post-award monitoring and agreement close-out.

By completing all activities and assessments in this training course to the specified standards, you’ll achieve the NPS ATR certification.
Section 3 - Course Expectations

This 24-credit-hour certification course relies on a blend of live and self-paced learning activities, assignments, and assessments. To qualify for course credit, you must satisfy the following course participation and performance standards:

1. Participate in eight (8) live virtual sessions on Adobe Connect. (If you miss a session, you can view the recording for course credit).
   a. Enter chat comments and complete polls as requested
   b. Contribute to verbal discussion when prompted

2. Participate in course discussions on the NPS Virtual Campus: Post original submissions and reply to posts from instructor and/or peers on threaded discussions at the frequency and quality levels specified in the assigned posts.

3. Complete the following course assignments (also posted in the virtual campus) by the deadlines indicated in the course agenda. If you cannot complete an assignment on time, notify the instructor so that you can determine an alternate plan for completion. You must complete all assignments by the end of the course to receive credit.
   a. Pre-course Survey
   b. Course Pre-assessment
   c. Self-paced online training module - Introduction to FA Processes & Responsibilities
   d. Public & Purpose and Partnership video presentation
   e. Legal Instrument Comparison Assignment
   f. Legal Authority Selection Assignment
   g. Cost Principles Assignment
   h. Budget Review Assignment
   i. Self-paced online training module - NPS Templates and Documents
   j. Watch SF425 Presentation
   k. Final Assignment - Construction Agreements Package

4. Complete course assessments to the required standards
   a. Pre-assessment - Completed
   b. Quizzes - Completed
   c. Final assessment - 70% or higher
Section 4 - Technology Requirements

In this course, we’ll be using the NPS Virtual Campus, a virtual learning environment that provides the framework for organizing all course materials.

We’ll also use Adobe Connect, a web conferencing software tool that allows us to meet in real time for interactive multimedia presentations and discussions. We strongly recommend that you review the following guidelines and test your adobe connect access prior the first live session. Adobe Connect does not require a software download, but it does require certain Flash and browser requirements.

To participate successfully in all class activities, you’ll need:

1. A headset for your phone (if calling into audio via phone). You may also be able to call in via your computer (if accessing audio via Voice over IP).
2. Computer with hi-speed internet access. Test your connection
3. Up-to-date version of Google Chrome (Vers 30+) or Microsoft Internet Explorer (Vers 9+)
4. Adobe Flash player (Vers 13+)
5. Bison credentials to access email and files stored on Google Drive
6. Ability to view Microsoft Word, Microsoft PPT and Adobe PDF files
7. Word processing capability to complete assignments (i.e. Word, GDrive)

*Note: some but not all features of both systems are available for use on mobile devices but may require additional applications. Full specifications for Adobe Connect & NPS Virtual Campus (Moodle).
Section 5 - Reasonable Accommodation

The collaborative tools used for this course have built-in accessibility features that support some assistive technologies. Information on the accessibility of Google Drive documents.

Live sessions in Adobe Connect will be live-captioned via a captioning pod. Information on Adobe Connect Accessibility Features

Self-paced training modules hosted in the NPS Virtual Campus provide content via text, audio narration, and script/captions. Information on NPS Virtual Campus (Moodle) Accessibility Features & Screen Reader Configurations

If you require additional accommodation to access any materials or participate in instruction, please contact your lead instructor prior to the first live session.
Section 6 - Guidelines on Participating via the Virtual Classroom

In addition to learning how to be an ATR, you’ll also need to learn to effectively navigate the online systems used in the course. You may have already used some or all of the technologies we’ll be using in this course on the job, an academic environment, or another setting; however, working exclusively online can be intimidating if it’s your first time in this learning environment.

Here are some tips and tricks for successful participation:

1. **Plan to be fully-engaged during class sessions.** While many activities and assignments are designed so that you can complete them at your discretion based on other personal and professional priorities, *live virtual sessions* should be treated as if you were actually in a training setting behind closed doors.

   Many of us have grown accustomed to webinars that provide little more than an opportunity tune out or to multi-task on other projects. The live sessions in *this* course are not designed that way, and there will be regular opportunities to ask questions, respond to prompts, chat with your peers, and complete polls and assignments. It’s important that you’re focused on course content and interactions rather than other project (i.e. Bison email account).

   We’d encourage you to block out extra time on your calendar before sessions to test and troubleshoot your connection and inform co-workers that you will be unavailable during sessions. Some students have found that posting a “Training in Session” sign on their door/cubicle is a good way to prevent disruptions.

2. **Schedule time to complete self-paced assignments.** The instructor team recognizes that there are valid differences between you and your peers in terms of how you prefer to learn and structure your time. We’ve created assignments due on a weekly basis that allow flexibility in terms of when they are completed.

   However, there are significant time requirements for many of the assignments, are we’re counting on you to make sure you’ve built enough time into your work schedule and coordinated with peers or supervisors to allow time to complete assignments. The requirements vary from week to week, but our initial estimate is that you’ll need, on average, 2 hours per week during the 4 core weeks in which there are live sessions.
3. Get familiar with web conferencing practices

Test your connection prior to the first live session. Make sure your system meets the necessary configuration and your internet speed is acceptable. Test your webcam and audio headset (for phone or computer) as relevant.

We'll review the key features of the system during the first session, but if this is your first time using the system, we'd encourage you to take advantage of free resources on Adobe Connect such as the quick start guide.

4. Get familiar with the NPS Virtual Campus

The NPS Virtual Campus is an interactive virtual learning environment that supports various learning and development opportunities across the service. We’re not only piloting this course, but we’re also piloting this system, so we’d ask for your patience and feedback if you experience any difficulties using or navigating the system.

The campus is built on a web-platform called Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), which is an open source software program that educational institutions and federal agencies have been using for over 10 years. We'll use it to organize course materials and as a springboard for discussion forums and assignments.

Here are some of the key components:

Login screen - Your instructor will provide detailed instructions about logging into the system for the first time (https://nps.expertlearning.net/login/index.php).
Main system page - The main page for the virtual campus system is at this URL: (https://nps.expertlearning.net/).

Note that you can see the ATR course under the list of courses at the bottom of the page. Once you are enrolled, you’ll also see it listed under the “My Courses” dropdown at the top of the page.
Main system page - The main course page is at this URL: (https://nps.expertlearning.net/course/view.php?id=49).

There are two primary navigation options: the navigation block on the left and the “breadcrumb” navigation at the top.

Note how there are options to minimize or dock the navigation, administration, and activities blocks at the top right of each block. We recommend docking all blocks to maximize available space on the screen. In the shot below, see how the blocks now appear as expandable tabs on the left.
Course content is organized vertically by week. For each week, there are links to relevant live sessions and any assignments that need to be completed. These activities should line up with those specified on the training agenda.

### Week 1 - Orientation, Public Purpose & Legal Instrument Selection

**Live Sessions**
- Attend Live Session 1 Tuesday, April 12, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
- Attend Live Session 2 Thursday, April 14, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
- Project Examples for types of Cooperative Agreements

**Assignments**
1. Complete the Legal Instrument Comparison Assignment
2. Post to Discussion Forum: “Tell me a little about yourself”
3. Review Course Resources Folder

There are activity completion check boxes to the right of each activity to track progress.

Solid gray boxes can be manually checked by you upon completion

Dotted gray boxes will be automatically checked by the system when specified criteria are met (i.e. you click a link, complete an assignment, post to a discussion board).

Course content will be updated from time-to-time, and some assignments are hidden until a relevant instructional time-frame, so it’s a good practice to check the virtual campus at regular intervals. Whenever possible, your instructor will use email and/or the news forum on the virtual campus to announce critical updates.
Discussion Forum - There are different formats for each activity type, but most are pretty intuitive. Note in the example below how the discussion forum allows you to see posts by topic area. To respond to a post, simply click “reply” and enter your response.

### 2. Post to Discussion Forum: "Tell me a little about yourself"

Post to Discussion Forum: "Tell me a little about yourself"  
by DAVID BARTON - Tuesday, November 10, 2015, 9:31 AM

Please post your bio here including your job description, park, program or regional affiliation, years with the National Park Service, etc.

Re: Tell me a little about yourself  
by TODD WILSON - Thursday, October 22, 2015, 6:26 PM

My name is Todd Wilson and I am a Financial Assistance Awarding Officer at the NPS Intermountain Regional Office in Lakewood, Colorado. I have worked at the Park Service for about a year and a half.

### 5. Successful Online Communication

It can be a challenge to effectively communicate in online training sessions when we lack the breadth of cues we have in a face-to-face training setting. You’re probably already familiar with online etiquette and communication principles from the vast array of collaborative technologies and social media we use at work and at home and most of those still generally apply.

Here are a few tips for participating via the Adobe Connect web conferencing system:

1. Follow your instructor’s prompts. Your instructor will ask for participation in a number of ways. Sometimes it’s appropriate to respond verbally whereas other times the instructor is simply looking for you to update your status or post to the chat board.
2. Stay on task. It’s easy to get distracted online, so close your email program and other browser windows.
3. Chat comments should be brief and to the point. Your instructor and moderator will do their best to monitor the chat boards, but it is not possible to respond to all comments or questions in real-time.

Here are a few tips for participating in virtual campus discussion forums adapted from Touro’s 15 Rules of Netiquette for Online Discussion Boards:

1. Before posting to a discussion board check the most recent comments before you reply to an older comment or ask the same question as someone else.
2. Stay on topic and don't post irrelevant links, comments, thoughts or pictures.
3. Don't type in ALL CAPS! If you do it will look like you are shouting.
4. Humor is good, but don't write anything that sounds angry or sarcastic even as a joke, because without hearing your tone of voice, your peers might not realize you're joking. Discussion comments will remain in the system for a long time!

5. Respect the opinions of your fellow participants. If you feel the need to disagree, do so respectfully and acknowledge the valid points in your peer's argument.

6. Avoid short, generic replies such as, “I agree,” but don’t overwhelm us with long-winded responses.

7. If you refer to something your classmate said earlier in the discussion, quote just a few key lines from their post so that others won't have to go back and figure out which post you're referring to.

8. Run a spelling and grammar check before posting to the discussion board, but don’t get more caught up in the details than the message.
Section 7 - Training Agenda

Hyperlinks within this Document

- Week 0 [Mar 21 - April 8] Course Pre-Assignments
- Week 1 [April 11-15] Orientation, Public Purpose & Legal Instrument Selection
- Week 2 [April 18-22] Legal Authorities, Standard Forms & Cost Principles
- Week 3 [April 25-29] Budget Review & NPS Templates and Documents
- Week 4 [May 2-6] Post-Award Monitoring & Final Assignment
- Week 5 [Due May 12] Course Post-Assignments & Resources
Week 0 [Mar 21 - April 8, 2016]

Course Pre-Assignments

Navigate to the NPS Virtual Campus and complete all course prerequisites prior to our first live session:

1. Review Student Guide
2. Complete Pre-Course Survey
3. Complete Course Pre-Assessment
5. Review video presentation “Public Purpose and Partnerships”

Weekly assignments directly relate to upcoming live sessions. For maximum benefit, complete the weekly assignments before class. ALL coursework must be completed prior to the end of training.
Week 1 [April 11, 2016 - April 15, 2016]

Orientation, Public Purpose & Legal Instrument Selection

Attend Live Session 1: Tuesday, April 12, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
In our initial facilitated session, we’ll use the Adobe Connect web conferencing platform to discuss course expectations, use of training technologies, and other orientation topics.

Attend Live Session 2: Thursday, April 14, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
We’ll begin by discussing the concept of public purpose and its importance in the financial assistance process. An overview of financial assistance (FA) instrument types including Cooperative Agreement (master & task agreements vs. stand-alone agreements) & Grant Agreements and how to choose the most relevant legal instrument(s) for a FA scenario.

Assignments
1. Complete the Legal Instrument Comparison Assignment
2. Post to Discussion Forum: “Tell me a little about yourself”
3. Review Course Resources Folder
Week 2 [April 18, 2016 - April 22, 2016]

Legal Authorities, Standard Forms & Cost Principles

Attend Live Session 1:  **Tuesday, April 19, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)**
We’ll review the [Legal Instrument Comparison Assignment](#), and discuss how to locate, reference, and use legal authorities to develop a FA package.

Attend Live Session 2:  **Thursday, April 21, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)**
The format and function of Standard Forms (SF424 series) required by OMB for FA will be reviewed. We will learn about the cost principles, and how to use the cost principles to determine the allowability of costs.

Assignments
1. Complete the [Legal Authority Selection Assignment](#)
2. Complete the [Cost Principles Assignment](#)
3. Complete Self-Paced Training: NPS Templates and Documents
Week 3 [April 25, 2016 - April 29, 2016]

Budget Review & NPS Templates and Documents

Attend Live Session 1: **Tuesday, April 26, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)**
We’ll review your Legal Authority Selection and Cost Principles assignments. We’ll discuss how to conduct reviews of proposed project budgets to determine the reasonableness and allocability of costs.

Attend Live Session 2: **Thursday, April 28 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)**
We’ll go over both mandatory and optional NPS financial assistance forms and templates and how to locate the forms required for submission to the Awarding Officer as part of the agreements package.

Assignments
1. Complete the Budget Review Assignment
2. Watch SF425 Presentation
3. (Optional) Begin work on your Agreements Package Submission Assignment
Week 4 [May 2, 2016 - May 6, 2016]

Post-Award Monitoring & Final Assignment

Attend Live Session 1: Tuesday, May 3, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
We'll review the Budget Review Assignment and any outstanding discussion topics. We'll also cover acceptable post award monitoring techniques and how to review and accept required reports.

Attend Live Session 2: Thursday, May 5, 2016 (9 a.m. – 11 a.m. MT)
We'll review your role in the financial assistance agreement close-out process. We'll review the Agreements Package Submission assignment and answer any remaining questions.

Assignments
1. Ensure that all previous assignments have been completed prior to final class
2. Complete the Agreements Package Submission Assignment prior to May 12, 2016.

Week 5 [May 12, 2016]

Course Post-Assignments & Resources

In order to receive credit for this course, you must complete all course activities and assessments to the standards specified in the course expectations section of this Student Guide.

Once you’ve completed all requirements, your instructor will award certification credit and you will receive a certificate of completion from DOI Learn. If you have any issues completing assignments or have not received your completion certificate within 2 weeks of training, please contact your instructor.

Assignments
1. Review course completion instructions
2. Complete Final Course Assessment
3. Complete Post-Course Survey