

June 11, 2024

Overcoming Barriers to Federal Funding for Trail Networks

RTC Dialogue on Innovative Practices





At Rails to Trails Conservancy, we are building a nation connected by trails. We reimagine public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors.



TRAIL NATION

rails-to-trails
conservancy



TRAIL NATION

PROJECTS

TRAIL NATION

PLAYBOOK

TRAIL NATION

COLLABORATIVE

Today's Tools

- Use the CHAT box to interact with attendees and pose questions for the Q&A session
- Please update your name in Zoom to include your name, state, and affiliated organization
 - Ex. Yvonne Mwangi, D.C., Rails to Trails Conservancy
- Please remember to MUTE yourself to minimize distractions for others.
- Today's session is being recorded until the breakout groups – please STOP VIDEO if you do not want to be shown in the recording.
- CLOSED CAPTIONING is enabled. Click the "CC" box at the bottom of your screen to utilize this tool.
- We'll use BREAKOUT ROOMS to gather in small peer groups. These will be automatically assigned.

Today's Team



Kevin Mills

VP of Policy, Rails to Trails Conservancy



Gary Toth

Principal Gary Toth Consulting

Common Barriers



**Finding and securing matching
funds**



**Meeting environmental
requirements**



Getting projects into plans

5 Habits of Highly Successful Communities: What Works to Secure Federal Grants



1. Network Vision

- North Star to...
 - Guide planning
 - Set priorities
 - Inspire, drive political will

2. Project Pipeline

- Sequence of planning to construction

5 Habits of Highly Successful Communities:

What Works to Secure Federal Grants



3. Document Costs and Benefits

- Tool of persuasion – know your audience
- Show value – Return on Investment (ROI)

4. Correlate Needs to Funding Programs

- Timing, eligibilities, requirements
- Scale – implications of first federal \$

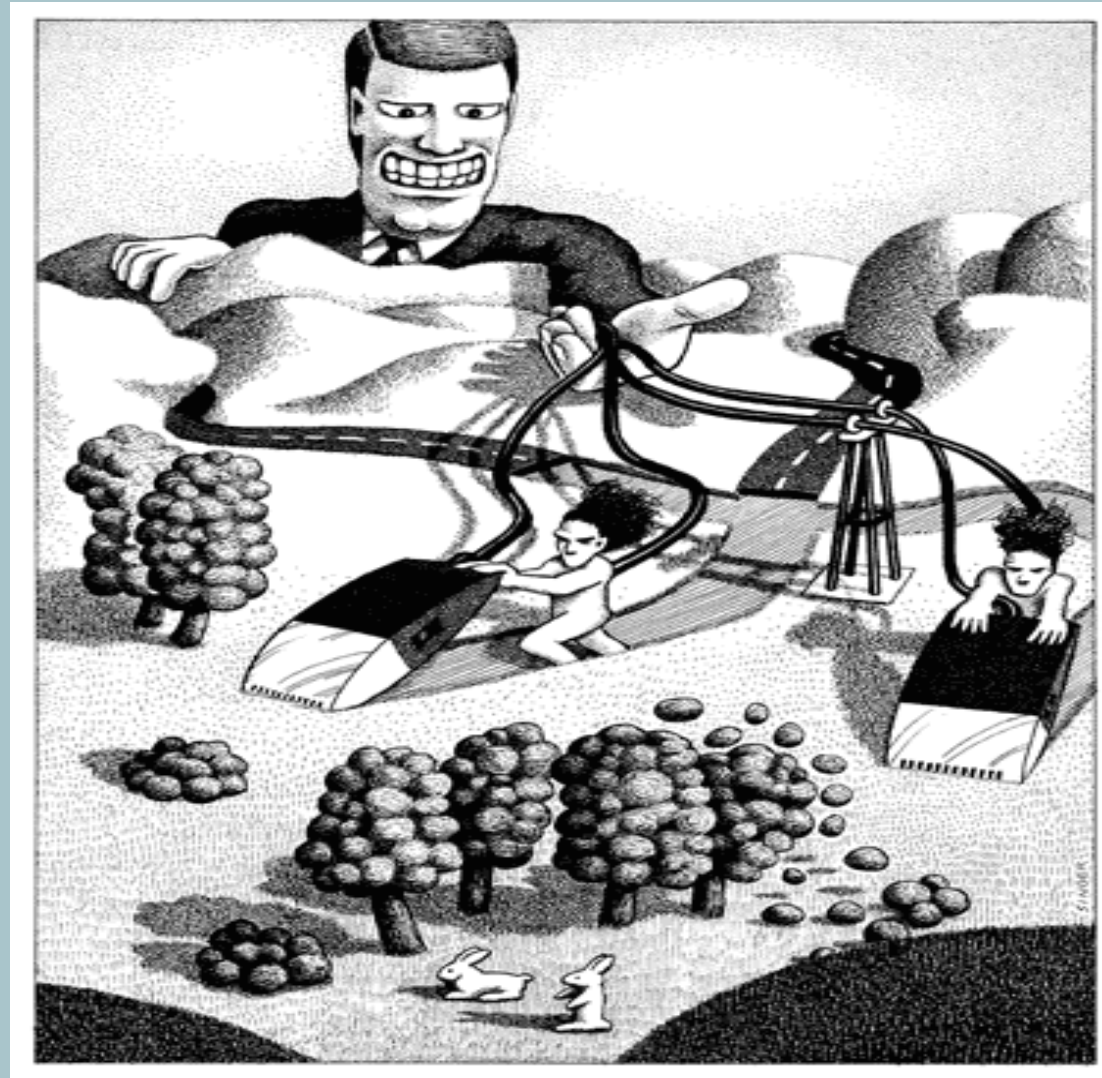
5 Habits of Highly Successful Communities: What Works to Secure Federal Grants



5. Anticipate Steps to be Eligible and Competitive

- Transportation plans
- Match
- Federal Requirements
 - Environment
 - Labor

Understanding DOTs and Engineers

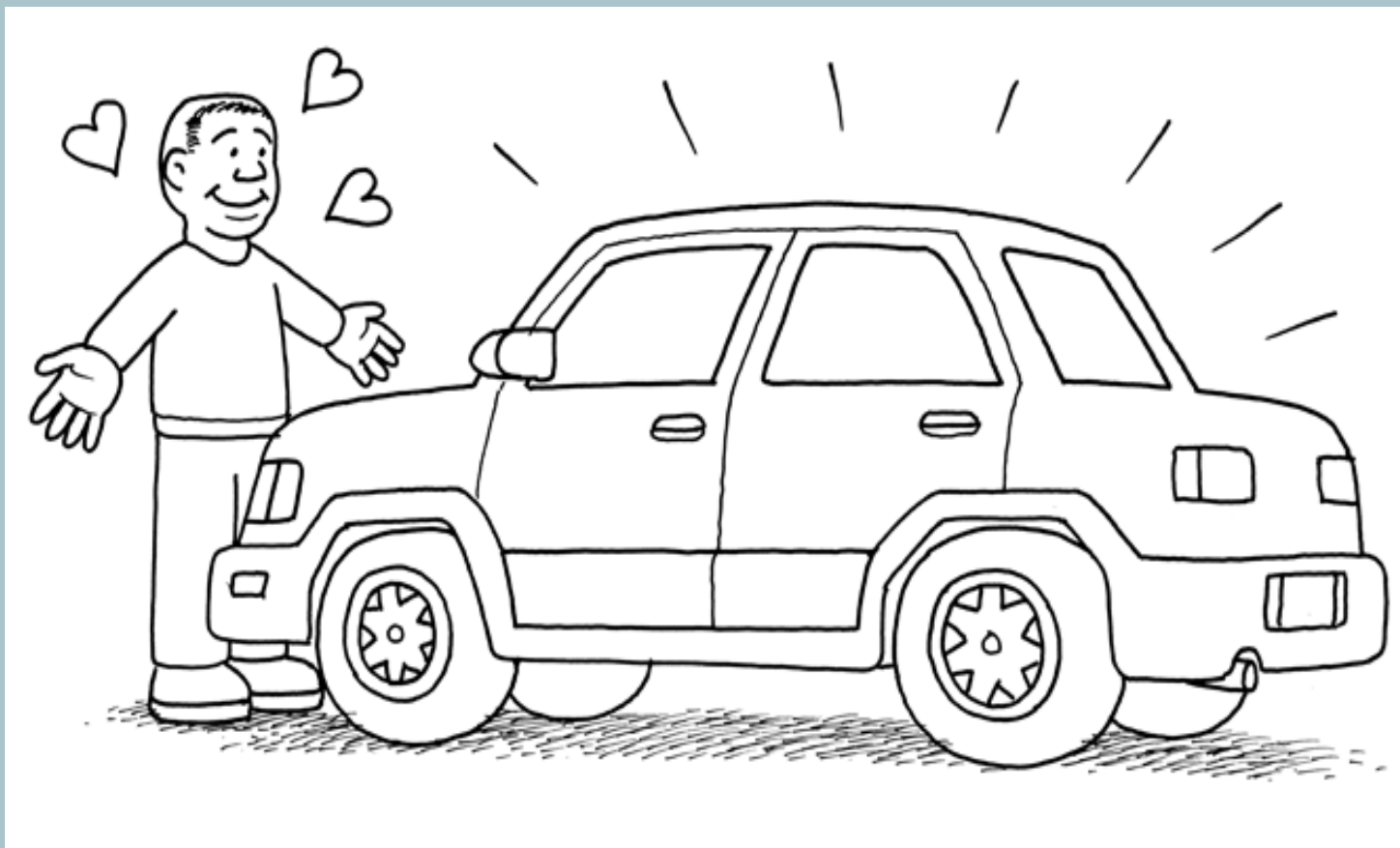


Pre-Automobile Era

Engineers Had a Different Problem to Solve

- Street design HAD to accommodate all users
- Relationship of land use to streets was critical for survival





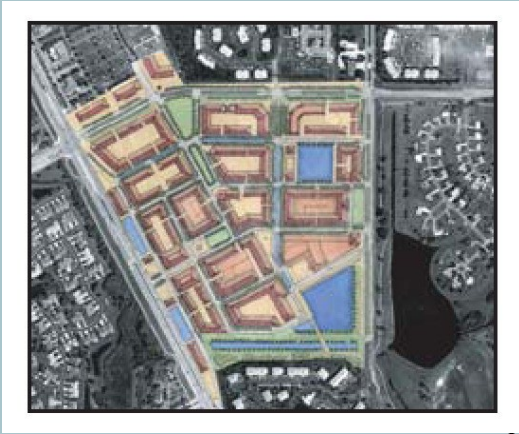
Graphic courtesy of Andy Singer

The Problem Engineers Were Asked to Solve Changed

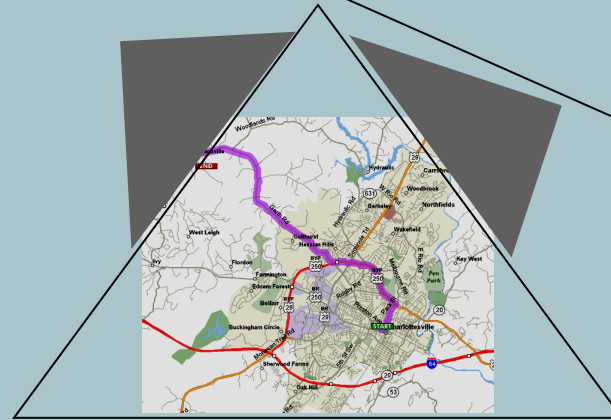
And we *all* stopped viewing Streets as Places



Focus on high-speed mobility



Proximity



Accessibility



Speed

The Transportation Industry Reinvented Itself

Grin & Bear It

By Fred Wagner



1.24

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"We're gonna need roads...lots of 'em!"

Creating A Landmark: The Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991



ISTEA created pockets of federal dollars which DOTs reluctantly set aside and distributed

Policies Were Changed But Practice Was Slow to Follow



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration

Memorandum

SENT BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Subject: **GUIDANCE:** Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design Flexibility Date: August 20, 2013

From: Gloria M. Shepherd *Gloria M. Shepherd*
Associate Administrator for Planning,
Environment and Realty

In Reply Refer To:
HEPH-10

Walter C. (Butch) Waidelich, Jr. *Walter C. Waidelich, Jr.*
Associate Administrator for Infrastructure

Jeffrey A. Lindley *Jeffrey A. Lindley*
Associate Administrator for Operations

Tony T. Furst *Tony T. Furst*
Associate Administrator for Safety

To: Division Administrators
cc: Directors of Field Services

And still is...

But as Kevin pointed out, opportunities are there if you work at it.



5 Habits of Highly Successful Communities: What Works to Secure Federal Grants



1. Network Vision

- North Star to...
 - Guide planning
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- Sequence of planning to construction

- State DOTs now have staff and programs to help you access the federal formula funds distributed by the DOTs (*type your state DOT Local Aid Programs in your browser search window*)

Ohio Department of Transportation

WHAT IS ODOT? ABOUT US | ALL ABOUT TRAVELING | ODOT PROJECTS | **KNOW OUR PROGRAMS** | DOING BUSINESS

Enter Your Location

ODOT / Know Our Programs / Local Programs

Welcome to Local Programs

LPA Federal-Aid Contract Administration Training (FREE)

These free training sessions are scheduled for Columbus - July 30, Lebanon - August 1, Akron - August 7, and Bowling Green - August 20.

[READ MORE](#)

About Local Programs

Local Programs is made up of three distinct efforts that work together to provide services, assistance, coordination and consultation to local government agencies:

The **Local-Let Process** drives funding activity related to local project funding -- funding set aside specifically for projects that fall within the jurisdictions of townships, villages, counties and cities.

[Read more...](#)

Local Funding Opportunities is a collection of programs offering different types of funding to match different types of local-let transportation projects. Local Programs staff promote the funding program, administer the application process and determine the awards based on criteria publicly presented.

[Read more...](#)

Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) staff support local government and ODOT staff by providing training and technical assistance in

Contact

- [Brian Davidson](#)
Local Programs Administrator
- [Victoria Beale](#)
Local Programs Assistant Administrator
Local Technical Assistance Program Manager
- [Jeff Peyton](#)
Local Projects Manager

[VIEW ALL CONTACTS](#)

- All State DOTs have Community Relations, Involvement or Affairs Offices

The screenshot displays the Illinois Department of Transportation website. At the top left is the IDOT logo. The top right features the text "Illinois Department of Transportation" and a "Select Language" dropdown menu. Below this is a search bar with the text "Search" and a magnifying glass icon. A horizontal navigation menu includes "About IDOT", "Doing Business", "Travel Information", "Transportation System", and "Resources". Below the navigation menu is a breadcrumb trail: "IDOT Home > About IDOT > Employment Opportuni... > Community Involvement".

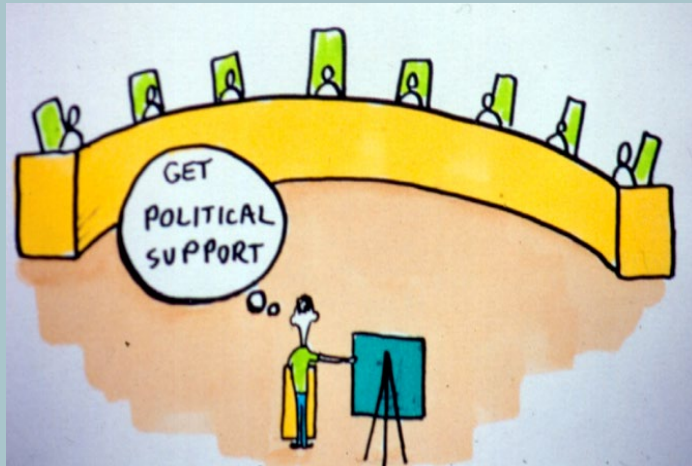
The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is a sidebar menu under the heading "About IDOT". It includes the following items: "Our Story" (with a dropdown arrow), "IDOT Regions", "Civil Rights" (with a dropdown arrow), "Employment Opportunities" (with an upward arrow), "Employment", "Specialized Training" (with a dropdown arrow), "Community Involvement" (with a dropdown arrow), "Seasonal Employment", and "Student Opportunities".

The right column features a large heading "Community Involvement" with an orange underline. Below the heading is a paragraph: "IDOT believes in partnering with Illinois communities statewide to promote a safer, sustainable and effective transportation system for Illinoisans. Through effective partnerships and collaborations, we demonstrate our commitment to move the transportation vision, Transforming Transportation for Tomorrow forward." This is followed by another paragraph: "Partnerships like this encourages and educates citizens of Illinois to create a positive impact in their community." Below the text are three links: "Put a Lid on Litter", "Zero Fatalities", and "Infrastructure Projects".

In Urban Areas, Metropolitan Planning Organizations Can Be Very Helpful

Best place !!

Board



- Local elected officials
- Some state agencies
- DOTs always have a seat

Technical Staff



Full time staff:

- Transportation Planners
- Some Land Use Planners
- Financial Specialists

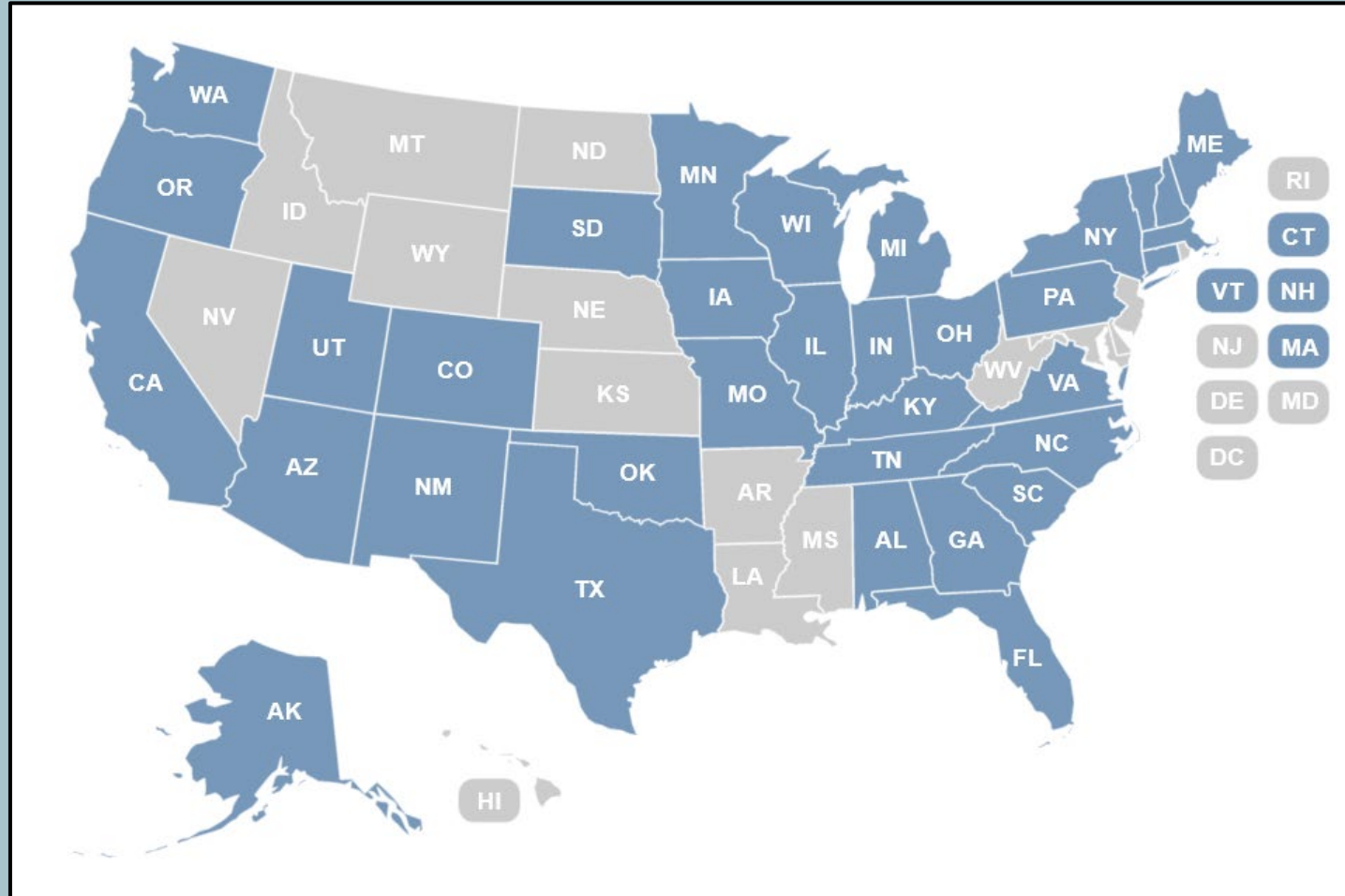
Public Involvement

Committees



- Permanent & Ad Hoc Planning
- Economic Development
- Safety
- Project Prioritization

Many Rural Areas Are Covered by Regional Planning Organizations



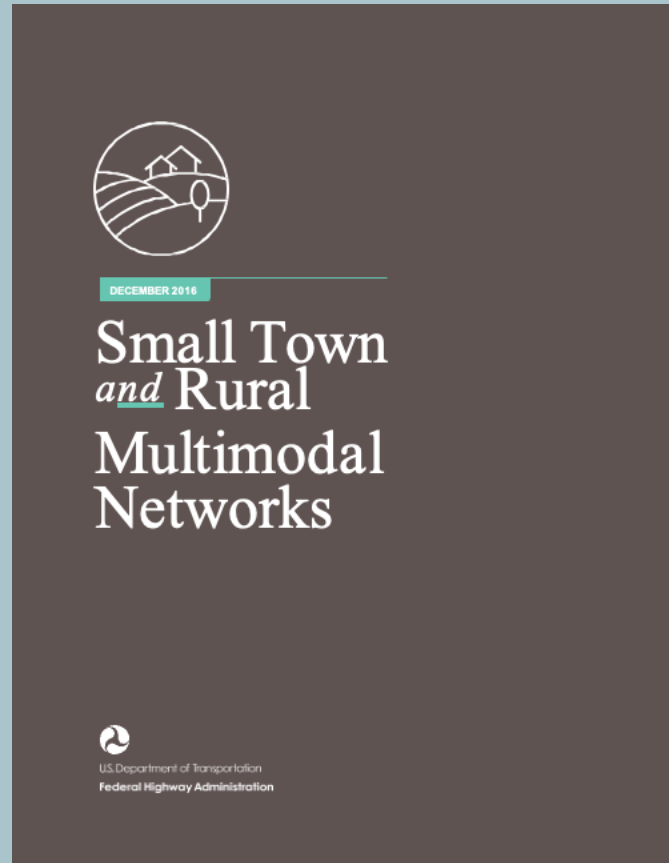
<https://ruraltransportation.org/about-rtpos/rtpo-states/>

A Few Specific Points

1. Read and ***understand*** the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
2. Understand the value of the project to your community and sell that to the funding agency
 - Economically
 - Health
 - Recreation
3. Match your project to the NOFO and make sure the projects you select truly address the grant criteria, and doesn't just pay lip service
 - Equity
 - Multi modal
 - Environmental
 - Sustainability

Note: Don't think adding a three-foot bike lane to a four lane Road will convince USDOT that you are serious about getting folks off your roads!

Resources for “scoping” legitimate multi modal projects



https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/page00.cfm

<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

Breakouts

1. What challenges are you facing?
2. How have you addressed these challenges?
3. What tactics did the presentations bring up for you and how can you apply these tactics to support your federal funding applications?
4. Are there any barriers you have faced that were not mentioned in the presentation?



Breakout Room

Takeaways



Questions?