MPA Track — The Public Side: Money, Rules, and Accountability (6 sessions)

For Masters in Policy Administration students. The core gave you the pipeline. This track is the government-side view: how the money moves, how the rules are enforced, how grants are managed, and how oversight keeps the system honest — including the equity lens that makes public spending a policy instrument.

Audience: MPA / public policy students. **Prerequisites:** shared-core. **Readings:** doctrine/01, doctrine/02, doctrine/04, doctrine/08, the literacy maps, and the case study.

Session MPA-1 — The money flow, from the inside

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) trace a federal dollar from appropriation to award; (2) explain the difference between contract and assistance rulebooks; (3) read a published award record and explain what it reveals.

Session plan (60 min). - Open (5 min): "Where does a federal dollar begin?" - Teach (20 min): doctrine/01 + literacy/where-the-money-flows.md. Congress → budget → agency → solicitation → competition → award → performance → published record. - Apply (20 min): in pairs, trace one real award on USAspending.gov back to its agency and appropriation context. What does the record reveal about how the money flowed? - Discuss (10 min): "What does the published record make possible — and what does it not show?" - Close (5 min): assignment.

Discussion prompts. 1. Why is the public record of awards a governance feature, not an accident? 2. What would be lost if awards were not published?

Homework / reading. Read literacy/where-the-money-flows.md. Deliverable: a one-page money-flow map of one agency program, from appropriation to a specific award.

Comprehension check. What are the steps of the money flow? What is the difference between contract and assistance dollars?

Session MPA-2 — The rulebook: FAR and the grants framework

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) explain what the FAR is and why it exists; (2) describe how grants policy differs from acquisition rules; (3) locate the compliance requirements in a solicitation.

Session plan (75 min). - Open (5 min): "Why does the government need a 2,000-page rulebook to buy things?" - Teach (25 min): doctrine/02 + doctrine/04. The FAR as the fairness mechanism; grants policy as its sibling; the two rulebooks as two halves of public governance. - Apply (30 min): give teams a real RFP and a real NOFO. Find the compliance requirements in each — the "shall"s, the certifications, the clauses. Compare how each document enforces fairness. - Discuss (10 min): "What do the rules protect, and who bears the cost of following them?" - Close (5 min): assignment.

Discussion prompts. 1. Do the rules create more fairness or more burden? Argue both sides. 2. How does a public administrator weigh compliance against innovation?

Homework / reading. Read doctrine/02 and literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md. Deliverable: a one-page comparison of contract vs. grant compliance, with examples from the two documents you examined.

Comprehension check. What is the FAR, and what does it protect? How do grants policy and acquisition rules differ?

Session MPA-3 — Grants management: the administrator's craft

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) explain the lifecycle of a grant from announcement to closeout; (2) identify the key management responsibilities after award; (3) reason about the budget-and-work alignment the grants world requires.

Session plan (60 min). - Open (5 min): "The award is made. What does the work actually begin?" - Teach (20 min): doctrine/02 + literacy/how-to-read-a-nofo.md. The NOFO as the contract of the grant; the post-award obligations; reporting, payments, and compliance. - Apply (20 min): use a real NOFO's award-administration section. Teams build the post-award timeline: what must happen, when, and to whom. - Discuss (10 min): "Where do grants most commonly go wrong after the award?" - Close (5 min): assignment.

Discussion prompts. 1. Why is the budget part of the proposal, not an afterthought? 2. What does good grants management protect for the taxpayer?

Homework / reading. Read literacy/how-to-read-a-nofo.md. Deliverable: a one-page post-award management plan for a grant you chose, built from its NOFO.

Comprehension check. What are the post-award obligations of a grantee? Why must budget and work tell one story?

Session MPA-4 — Eligibility and equity: small-business programs as policy

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) explain the statutory purpose of the small-business programs; (2) assess HUBZone, 8(a), WOSB, VOSB as equity instruments; (3) evaluate whether set-asides achieve their policy intent.

Session plan (75 min). - Open (5 min): "Is a set-aside an advantage or a correction?" - Teach (25 min): doctrine/01. The small-business universe as deliberate policy; eligibility as a gate; the equity argument for restricted pools. - Apply (30 min): the policy debate. Split the room: one side argues set-asides are the right equity instrument; the other argues they distort the market. Use the Ravonics case (a HUBZone firm) as the concrete object. - Discuss (10 min): "How would you measure whether a small-business program works?" - Close (5 min): assignment.

Discussion prompts. 1. What does HUBZone try to achieve, and for whom? 2. How should the success of 8(a) or HUBZone be evaluated?

Homework / reading. Read doctrine/01 and the Ravonics case. Deliverable: a one-page policy memo evaluating one small-business program against its stated purpose.

Comprehension check. What is the statutory purpose of small-business set-asides? How is eligibility an equity instrument?

Session MPA-5 — Oversight: accountability, reporting, and the learning loop

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) explain the oversight chain for federal spending; (2) describe how published data enables external accountability; (3) connect oversight to the doctrine's learning loop.

Session plan (60 min). - Open (5 min): "Who watches the watchers?" - Teach (20 min): doctrine/04 + literacy/where-the-money-flows.md. The oversight chain — audits, reporting, the published record, and the public as the final reader. Oversight as the learning loop at the system level. - Apply (20 min): take a published award and follow its paper trail: what would an auditor look for? What does the public record let a citizen learn? - Discuss (10 min): "Does transparency produce accountability, or is something more needed?" - Close (5 min): assignment.

Discussion prompts. 1. What is the weakest link in the oversight chain? 2. How does the doctrine's learning loop mirror system-level oversight?

Homework / reading. Read doctrine/04. Deliverable: a one-page oversight map for one award — the checks, the data, and the accountable parties.

Comprehension check. What is the oversight chain for federal money? How is transparency a governance mechanism?

Session MPA-6 — The public-policy view of the pursuit doctrine

Learning objectives. By the end of this session, students can: (1) integrate the money flow, the rules, the programs, and oversight into one policy view; (2) argue the case for the doctrine from the public side; (3) present a policy recommendation to a public-sector audience.

Session plan (75 min). - Open (5 min): "What is the *public* reason the pursuit doctrine matters?" - Teach (20 min): synthesis across doctrine/01, 02, 04, 08. The doctrine as the shared language between the public side and the private side of the same transaction. - Apply (30 min): the policy presentation. Each team presents to a "public-sector panel": a recommendation about how an agency should run its next competition, informed by the doctrine — money flow, rules, programs, oversight. - Discuss (15 min): "What did the private-side students get right about the public side — and vice versa?" - Close (5 min): assignment and bridge to the capstone.

Discussion prompts. 1. How does a public administrator use the doctrine to make spending fairer and smarter? 2. What is the equity responsibility of a pursuit organization?

Homework / reading. Read the full doctrine folder if you have not. Deliverable: a one-page policy recommendation for an agency — one concrete improvement to how it solicits, evaluates, or oversees, grounded in the doctrine.

Comprehension check. How are the money flow, the rules, the programs, and oversight one system? What is the equity lens on the doctrine?