

# WHERE TO TURN?

## Guide to FEMA resources

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### FEMA overview

FEMA is a Federal organization whose mission is to help America recover from disasters. A critical step in being eligible for FEMA grants is for your area to be classified as a National Disaster Area by the President. The biggest part of dealing with FEMA is making sure that you have all documentation on public buildings to provide the agency with so they can determine reimbursement. Basically, try to complete the grant before you need to. Work with a FEMA representative on preparing your packets, this will be the best way to streamline the process.

Website: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

Phone: 1-800-621-3362 (Staffed 24 hours a day)

Email: [FEMA-Correspondence-Unit@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Correspondence-Unit@dhs.gov)

Office Locations: FEMA will open up local offices per each disaster area.

#### Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

##### Summary:

The Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program provides funds to states, territories, Indian tribal governments, communities, and universities for hazard mitigation planning and the implementation of mitigation projects prior to a disaster event. Funding these plans and projects reduces overall risks to the population and structures, while also reducing reliance on funding from actual disaster declarations. PDM grants are to be awarded on a competitive basis and without reference to state allocations, quotas, or other formula-based allocation of funds. Must use the [www.portal.fema.gov](http://www.portal.fema.gov) website to submit the application.

States must submit a minimum of \$500,000 of mitigation study research. FEMA will choose at its own discretion which sub-applications per state will be used. However, it is possible to receive more than \$500,000 per state.

# Public Assistance Grant Program

The objective of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) Grant Program is to provide assistance to State, Tribal and local governments, and certain types of Private Nonprofit organizations so that communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President.

Through the PA Program, FEMA provides supplemental Federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and the facilities of certain Private Non-Profit (PNP) organizations. The PA Program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.

The Federal share of assistance is not less than 75% of the eligible cost for emergency measures and permanent restoration. The grantee (usually the State) determines how the non-Federal share (up to 25%) is split with the sub grantees (eligible applicants). Also, while repairing the damaged property, the money provided will only pay for damages to the property not improvements. <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/index.shtm>

After a natural or man-made event that causes extensive damage, FEMA coordinates with the State to implement the Public Assistance Grant Program. The funding process consists of the following steps:

- Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)
- Presidential Disaster Declaration
- Applicants' Briefing by Grantee
- Submission of Request for Public Assistance by Applicant
- Kick-off Meeting with Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC)
- Project Formulation and Cost Estimating
- Project Review and Validation
- Obligation of Federal Funds and Disbursement to Sub grantees
- Appeals and Closeout

## Infrastructure Projects

### *Eligible Applicants*

Four types of entities are eligible applicants for Public Assistance. If an entity meets the requirements of one of the types, the applicant may apply for FEMA disaster assistance. The types of eligible applicants are:

1. State government agencies, such as:

- Departments of transportation
- Environmental resources agencies
- State parks agencies
- Water quality commissions

2. Local governments, including:

- Towns, cities, parishes
- Municipalities, townships
- Local public authorities
- Government councils
- Regional and interstate government entities
- Agencies or instrumentalities of local governments
- Special districts or regional authorities organized under state law
- Rural or unincorporated communities represented by the state or a political subdivision of the state
- School districts

3. Private nonprofit organizations or institutions that own or operate facilities that are open to the public and that provide certain services otherwise performed by a government agency.

Eligible facilities are limited to:

- Educational
- Emergency
- Medical
- Utilities
- Custodial care
- Irrigation organizations
- Other essential governmental services not falling into one of the categories described above, including community centers, homeless shelters, libraries, museums, rehabilitation centers, senior citizen centers, shelter workshops, zoos, and health and safety service facilities

4. Federally recognized Indian tribes or authorized tribal organizations and Alaskan Native village organizations. This does not include Alaska Native Corporations, which are owned by private individuals.

All eligible applicants, except Indian tribal governments that have been designated as grantees, must submit their requests for assistance through the state.

***Eligible Costs***

Not all costs incurred by an eligible applicant are eligible for Public Assistance funding. Eligible costs are costs that:

1. Are reasonable and necessary to accomplish the eligible work
2. Comply with federal, state, and local requirements for procurement
3. Do not include (or are reduced by) insurance proceeds, salvage values, and other credits

The eligible cost criteria apply to all direct costs, including salaries, wages, fringe benefits, materials, equipment, and contracts awarded for eligible work. In addition to these direct costs, an applicant will receive an administrative allowance.

### ***Eligible Facilities (Projects)***

Projects eligible for Public Assistance funding include facilities for transportation, water control, utilities, and recreation, and are listed below by the categories defined by FEMA.

- Category A: Removal of debris, including clearance of trees, woody debris, and building wreckage; sand, mud, silt, and gravel; and other disaster-related material on public property.
- Category B: Measures taken before, during, and after a disaster to save lives and protect public health and safety.
- Category C: Roads, bridges, and associated features, such as shoulders, ditches, culverts, lighting and signs.
- Category D: Water control facilities, including drainage channels, pumping facilities, and the emergency repair of levees. Permanent repair of flood control works is the responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Category E: Buildings including their contents and systems.
- Category F: Utility distribution systems, such as water treatment and delivery systems, power generation facilities and distribution lines, and sewage collection and treatment facilities.
- Category G: Public parks, recreational facilities and other facilities, including playgrounds, swimming pools and cemeteries.

### ***Eligible Work***

In general, eligible work is based on the following minimum criteria:

- It must be required as a direct result of the declared event
- It must be within the designated disaster area
- It must be the legal responsibility of an eligible applicant at the time of the disaster

There are two types of work eligible for the Public Assistance Grant Program. These types of work are:

- Emergency work (Categories A and B)

- Permanent work (Categories C through G)

### ***Alternate Projects***

Occasionally an applicant may determine that the public welfare would not be best served by restoring a damaged facility or its function to the pre-disaster design. This usually occurs when the service provided by the facility is no longer needed, although the facility was still in use at the time of the disaster. Under these circumstances, the applicant may apply to FEMA to use the eligible funds for an alternate project.

Possible alternate projects include:

- Repair or expansion of other public facilities
- Construction of new public facilities
- Purchase of capital equipment
- Funding of hazard mitigation measures in the area affected by the disaster

The alternate project option may be proposed for both small and large projects, but only for permanent restoration projects located within the declared disaster area. All requests for alternate projects must be made within 12 months of the kickoff meeting and approved by FEMA prior to construction. However, due to the extent of disaster related damage in Greater New Orleans, many deadlines have been extended.

Alternate projects are eligible for 75 percent of the approved federal share of the estimated eligible costs associated with repairing the damaged facility to its pre-disaster design, or the actual costs of completing the alternate project, whichever is less. The share of the costs may be increased to 90 percent for publicly owned facilities where unstable soils are present at the site of the damaged facility. This exception does not apply to private nonprofit facilities.

The proposed alternate project must not be located in the regulatory floodway and will have to be insured if located in the 100-year floodplain. Public Assistance funding may not be used for operating costs or to meet the state or local share requirement on other Public Assistance projects or projects that use other federal grants. Hazard Mitigation funds cannot be applied to an alternate project (Hazard Mitigation, Stafford Act Section 406). An environmental assessment is normally performed for alternate projects. For alternate projects in Greater New Orleans, Alternative Arrangements will be used and applicants must meet all Alternative Arrangement requirements. Environmental/Historic Preservation review must be completed prior to approval of alternate projects by the grantee.

### ***Improved Projects***

Applicants performing restoration work on a damaged facility may use the opportunity to make additional improvements while restoring the facility to its pre-disaster design. For example, an applicant might propose laying asphalt on a gravel road or replacing a firehouse that originally had two bays with one that has three. Projects that incorporate such improvements are called improved projects. For the most part, these are projects in which it is hard to differentiate

between the funding for approved work the improved project because of physical changes or contracting arrangements.

An improved project may be requested for both small and large projects, but must be approved by the grantee prior to construction. Any project that results in a significant change from the pre-disaster configuration (that is, different location, footprint, function, or size) must be reviewed by FEMA's Environmental and Historic Preservation process prior to initiation of any construction or deconstruction activity. Environmental/Historic Preservation review must be completed prior to approval of improved projects by the grantee.

Federal funding for improved projects is limited to the federal share of the estimated costs and to the time limits that would be associated with repairing the damaged facility to its pre-disaster design. Funds to construct the improved project can be combined with a grant from another federal agency; however, federal grants cannot be used to meet the grantee or local cost-share requirement.

If the original facility is being repaired and improvements are being added, Section 406 Hazard Mitigation funding may be applied to the original facility. If the improved project involves a new facility on the same site or on a different site, Hazard Mitigation funding will not be applied to that project