



Public Assistance

Overview

Public Assistance (PA) is FEMA’s largest grant program providing funds to assist communities responding to and recovering from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. The program provides emergency assistance to save lives and protect property, and assists with permanently restoring community infrastructure affected by a federally declared incident.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include states, federally recognized tribal governments (including Alaska Native villages and organizations so long as they are not privately owned), U.S. territories, local governments, and certain private non-profit (PNP) organizations.

PNPs must have “an effective ruling letter from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, granting tax exemption under sections 501(c), (d), or (e) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or satisfactory evidence from the State that the nonrevenue producing organization or entity is a nonprofit one organized or doing business under State law.”¹ Additionally, for a PNP operated facility to be eligible, the PNP must demonstrate the facility provides a critical service or provides a non-critical, but essential government service and is open to the general public. A facility that provides a critical service is defined as one used for an educational, utility, emergency, or medical purpose.²

Project Categories

FEMA processes PA grant funding according to the type of work the applicant undertakes. Eligible work must be required as a result of the declared incident, be located in the designated area, be the legal responsibility of the applicant, and be undertaken at a reasonable cost.

Eligible work is classified into the following categories:

Emergency Work

Category A: Debris removal

Category B: Emergency protective measures

Permanent Work

Category C: Roads and bridges

Category D: Water control facilities

Category E: Public buildings and contents

Category F: Public utilities

Category G: Parks, recreational, and other facilities

Federal funding guidelines for each of these categories are listed in the *Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide*, which is located [online at https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781](https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781).

Application Process

After a federal declaration, the recipient (i.e. state, tribe, or territory) conducts Applicant Briefings to inform

¹ 44 CFR 206.221(f)

² Stafford Act § 406(a)(3)(B), 42 U.S.C. § 5172, and 44 CFR §206.221(e)

potential applicants (i.e. state, local, tribal, territorial, and PNP officials) of the assistance available and how to apply. Applicants must then file a Request for Public Assistance within 30 days of the date their respective area is designated by the federal declaration.

Following the approved request, FEMA and the applicants will conduct additional meetings to discuss disaster damage and project formulation. Applicants must identify and report damages to FEMA within the 60-day regulatory timeframe. FEMA, the recipient, or the applicant will then prepare project worksheets for eligible work and eligible facilities based on actual or estimated project costs.

Grant Administration

The federal share of assistance will not be less than 75 percent of the eligible cost for emergency measures and permanent restoration. The recipient determines how the non-federal share of 25 percent will be dispersed to its applicants.

Recipients are responsible for managing the funds obligated to them by FEMA, including disbursement to applicants. FEMA will continue to monitor the recovery progress to ensure the timely delivery of eligible assistance, and compliance with federal laws and regulations.

Recent Updates

In the fall of 2016, FEMA introduced a new program delivery model to increase simplicity, accuracy, efficiency, and to improve accessibility and timeliness. Applicants will benefit from the changes through the creation of a standardized process. Improvements in the quality of project worksheets will more accurately describe the eligible work and grant conditions.

The new model changes procedures, roles and responsibilities, tools, and information technology systems. The PA Grants Manager and PA Grants Portal are online platforms designed to better manage the engagement between FEMA and applicants from grant application to award.

While FEMA is improving its processes and tools, the new program delivery model does not change the PA program's eligibility authorities, regulations or policies.

The new model is currently being executed in stages until it reaches full operating capacity projected for early 2018.

“FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.”