



# **FEMA's Delivery of Resources and Technical Assistance to Small, Low-Income Communities**

*February 10, 2020*

Fiscal Year 2018 Report to Congress



**Homeland  
Security**

*Federal Emergency Management Agency*

# Message from the Administrator

February 10, 2020

I am pleased to submit the following report, “FEMA’s Delivery of Resources and Technical Assistance to Small, Low-Income Communities,” which has been prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The report has been compiled pursuant to provisions in the Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-123). This report describes FEMA’s efforts to provide “adequate resources and technical assistance to small, low-income communities affected by natural disasters” as directed by the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and of the Senate in P.L. 115-123.



FEMA has the tremendous responsibility to help people before, during, and after disasters. This responsibility includes delivering resources and technical assistance to states, local communities, tribes, territories (SLTT), and individuals both pre- and post-disaster, on the basis of FEMA’s statutory authorities and flexibilities. Post-disaster, FEMA also works with SLTTs to deliver Stafford Act programs, supports the SLTTs’ priorities, and makes its resources available to any community in a declared disaster area, regardless of community size or income. In the case of FEMA programs directed toward individuals and households, FEMA makes its programs available, in accordance with the law and regulations, to anyone affected within a disaster area. However, additional effort is made to ensure that vulnerable populations are identified and served regardless of the characteristics of the communities in which they live.

Pursuant to congressional requirements, FEMA is providing this report to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Please direct inquiries related to this report to the FEMA Congressional Affairs Division at (202) 646-4500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "PTG", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Pete Gaynor  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

# Executive Summary

FEMA provides a full suite of disaster services to all affected communities, regardless of size or income. Although FEMA attempts to identify and serve vulnerable populations adequately wherever it works, a few programs are dedicated specifically to small, low-income communities, in keeping with FEMA's mission to help all disaster-affected persons. This report includes discussion of the following:

- Resources described include those that support individual and household needs, as well as those that support larger scale community needs after a disaster.
- Resources described include both funding and technical assistance provided to disaster-affected SLTTs.
- Resources are made available to disaster-affected SLTTs and eligible applicants regardless of size or income level.
- Efforts are made to ensure that small, low-income, or otherwise disadvantaged communities are made aware of and are empowered to use FEMA resources.

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. FEMA supports SLTTs under its core mission areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. To carry out this mission, FEMA encourages the delivery of support to all disaster-affected communities. Furthermore, FEMA's delivery of support and resources to all disaster-affected communities aligns to the Administrator's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan goals of building a culture of preparedness, readying the Nation for catastrophic disasters, and reducing the complexity of FEMA.



# FEMA’s Delivery of Resources and Technical Assistance to Small, Low-Income Communities

## Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Requirement.....	1
II.	Background.....	2
	A. Stafford Act.....	2
	B. Other Acts.....	4
III.	Overview of FEMA Programs.....	5
	A. Hazard Mitigation.....	5
	B. National Flood Insurance Program.....	6
	C. Public Assistance.....	6
	D. Individual Assistance.....	7
	Housing Assistance.....	8
	Other Needs Assistance.....	8
	E. Community Services Programs.....	9
	F. Community Disaster Loans.....	9
	G. Disaster Survivor Assistance.....	10
	H. Disaster Recovery Centers.....	10
	I. Voluntary Agency Coordination.....	10
	J. Community Recovery Planning and Capacity-Building Assistance.....	11
	K. Intergovernmental Affairs.....	12
	L. Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation.....	12
	M. Other Technical Assistance – National Integration Center.....	13
	N. Other Technical Assistance – Community Resilience Indicators.....	13
	O. Other Technical Assistance – Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool.....	14
	P. Other Technical Assistance – PrepTalks.....	14
IV.	Conclusion.....	15
	Appendix: List of Abbreviations.....	16

# I. Legislative Requirement

This document responds to the reporting requirements set forth in the Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-123), which includes the following provisions:

Title XII. General Provisions – This Subdivision.

SEC. 21209. Any agency or department provided funding in excess of \$3,000,000,000 by this subdivision, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Corps of Engineers, is directed to provide a report to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate regarding its efforts to provide adequate resources and technical assistance for small, low-income communities affected by natural disasters.

## II. Background

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. Before disasters, FEMA makes available a variety of resources and technical assistance to improve the preparedness of all states, local communities, tribes, and territories (SLTT) to address response and recovery after future disasters. After presidentially declared disasters, FEMA provides funding and technical assistance to affected SLTTs through a full suite of programs such as Public Assistance (PA), Individual Assistance (IA), and Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA), among many others described in this report. Emergency declarations also allow FEMA to provide supplemental support to SLTTs in the form of limited PA (debris removal and emergency protective measures only) and IA (the Individuals and Households Program (IHP) only).

In all of FEMA’s efforts, the agency works very closely with the state, tribal, or territorial officials to engage local governments and applicants. The state, tribal, or territorial emergency management agency, or other designated agency for FEMA programs, is the primary interface between the Federal Government and communities, setting general priorities and serving as the primary liaison. For some programs, such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), the states establish priorities and select which projects are submitted to FEMA for funding.

FEMA’s disaster-specific resources (including funding and technical assistance resources) are available to any SLTT, applicant, or individual or household under an emergency or presidentially declared disaster, on the basis of the Stafford Act and established regulations, regardless of the size or income of the community. FEMA makes its programs available, in accordance with the law and regulations, to anyone affected within a disaster area. This includes ensuring that low-income or otherwise disadvantaged individuals and households (such as non-English speaking households) are aware of and have access to all forms of FEMA assistance. For example, disaster survivor assistance teams (DSAT), discussed in more detail in the following section, actively engage disaster survivors on the ground, with attention to vulnerable individuals and households. Although DSATs are individual and household needs-focused, the size and income of the community at large are not considerations for DSAT support – all communities in a presidentially declared disaster area are served.

FEMA recognizes the importance and uniqueness of its relationship with tribal governments and is committed fully to supporting disaster-affected tribes before, during, and after disasters. FEMA has an Office of Tribal Affairs responsible for building and maintaining effective relationships with tribes that are necessary to fulfill FEMA’s mission of working together to improve our Nation’s disaster preparedness and response. Tribal liaisons are also available in each of FEMA’s 10 regional offices for deployment to disaster areas and for steady-state support to tribes. After disasters, FEMA can work directly with federally recognized tribal governments in a government-to-government relationship, as applicants for support, or it can work with federally or nonfederally recognized tribal governments as subapplicants for support through the state.

### A. Stafford Act

Many of FEMA’s authorities are derived from the Robert T. Stafford Act (“Stafford Act”), including authorities related to the distribution of resources to disaster-affected SLTTs. In

general, the following Stafford Act mechanisms at FEMA’s disposal to support small, low-income communities, are summarized below:

- Predisaster Hazard Mitigation (42 United States Code (U.S.C.) 5133) (Stafford Act Section 203)
  - Provides predisaster hazard mitigation funds to communities that meet criteria defined under Section (a): Definition of Small Impoverished Community. In this section, the term “small impoverished community” means a community of 3,000 or fewer individuals that is economically disadvantaged, as determined by the state in which the community is located and is based on criteria established by the President. The use of predisaster hazard mitigation is discussed in the Overview of FEMA Programs, HMA section.
- Waiver of Administrative Conditions (42 U.S.C. 5141) (Stafford Act Section 301)
  - Allows the modification or waiver of administrative conditions for assistance that otherwise would prevent the giving of assistance after a major disaster. The applicability of waiver of administrative conditions is discussed in the Overview of FEMA Programs, HMA and PA sections.
- Designation of the Small State and Rural Advocate (42 U.S.C. 5165d) (Stafford Act Section 326)
  - Section (b): The Small State and Rural Advocate shall be an advocate for the fair treatment of small states and rural communities in the provision of assistance under the Stafford Act. The Small State and Rural Advocate is discussed in the Overview of FEMA Programs, Intergovernmental Affairs section.
- Community Disaster Loans (42 U.S.C. 5184) (Stafford Act Section 417)
  - Section (a): Loans may be available to local governments that suffer a substantial loss of tax or other revenues because of a major disaster and has a demonstrated need for financial assistance to perform government functions. Community disaster loans (CDL) are discussed in the Overview of FEMA Programs, Community Disaster Loans section.
- Congressional Declaration of Policy Respecting Insular Areas (48 U.S.C. 1469a)
  - Section (d): The administering authority of any department or agency, in its discretion, may (i) waive any requirement for matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by the insular area involved and (ii) waive the requirement that any insular area submit an application or report in writing with respect to any consolidated grant.

## B. Other Acts

Other acts that guide FEMA's delivery of resources include the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA), the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), the National Flood Insurance Reform Act (NFIRA), the Flood Disaster Protection Act, the Housing and Urban Development Acts of 1968 and 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act, among others.

### **The Disaster Declaration Process**

Section 1232 of the DRRA directs the FEMA Administrator to give greater consideration of severe disaster impacts to localities, or to disaster-affected localities with a recent history of prior disaster impacts, when making recommendations to the President regarding whether to declare a major disaster. Greater consideration is to be given to factors such as local per capita impacts, impacts to local businesses and employment centers, and high concentrations of damage to individuals that may increase the actual severity of a disaster's impact at the local level.

Section 1232 of the DRRA does not apply specifically to small, low-income communities; however, greater consideration of severe disaster impacts to localities that may lack the capacity and/or resources to recover from those impacts (which often includes small, low-income communities) may inform FEMA in making declaration recommendations. If the President concurs with FEMA's declaration recommendations, FEMA resources reserved for presidentially declared disaster areas can be made available to those severely affected localities.

### III. Overview of FEMA Programs

Following a disaster, depending on the disaster declaration designations made by the President, FEMA offers HMA, PA, IA (including Housing Assistance and Other Needs Assistance (ONA) under IHP), Community Services Programs, CDLs, Disaster Survivor Assistance, Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC), Voluntary Agency Coordination, Community Recovery Planning and Capacity Building Assistance, Intergovernmental Affairs, Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP), and other technical assistance to SLTTs, regardless of their size or income level. FEMA, through the state, tribe, or territory, also provides communication and liaison support, guidance, and other forms of recovery technical assistance to communities based on the extent of disaster impact and those communities' capacity to recover on their own. Often, these communities are small and low-income, although small, low-income communities are not targeted specifically for this assistance on the basis of those characteristics (one exception being the Predisaster Hazard Mitigation Program, which is offered before disasters strike, and is discussed in this section). Additionally, the federal disaster recovery coordinator, typically appointed by FEMA for large or unique disasters, facilitates interagency resources through six recovery support functions (RSF) to address the wide range of recovery needs beyond FEMA programs. These needs include economic recovery, health and social service needs, long-term housing needs, infrastructure recovery, and community planning and capacity-building support.

#### A. Hazard Mitigation

HMA is offered to all SLTTs in all eligible areas regardless of jurisdiction size or income. The only exception is the Predisaster Hazard Mitigation Program,<sup>1</sup> which helps SLTTs to implement sustained predisaster natural hazard mitigation programs to reduce risk to the population and structures from future disaster events. Small and impoverished communities may receive an increased federal cost share of up to 90 percent, instead of 75 percent, of the total amount approved under the federal award to implement eligible approved mitigation activities in accordance with the Stafford Act.

- HMGP provides resources to SLTTs to implement hazard mitigation measures after a presidentially declared disaster, to reduce the risk of loss of life and property from future disasters. States, tribes, and

Under the **Predisaster Hazard Mitigation Program**, in order for a community to qualify as small and impoverished, it must:

- Be a community of 3,000 or fewer individuals identified by the applicant as a rural community that is not a remote area within the corporate boundaries of a larger city or jurisdictional area or boundary.
- Be economically disadvantaged, with residents having an average per capita annual income not exceeding 80 percent of the national per capita income, based on best available data. For the most current information on the national income, see [www.bea.gov](http://www.bea.gov).
- Have a local unemployment rate that exceeds by 1-percentage point or more the most recently reported, average yearly national unemployment rate. For the most current unemployment information, see [www.bls.gov/eag/eag.us.htm](http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.us.htm).

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1234 of the DRRA amended Section 203 of the Stafford Act and authorizes the National Public Infrastructure Predisaster Hazard Mitigation fund. With this new authority, FEMA is working to establish a new Predisaster Hazard Grant program: the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program. The Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program will take the place of the Predisaster Hazard Mitigation program in FY 2020 and will establish a more reliable stream of funding for projects.

territories have the primary responsibility for prioritizing, selecting, and administering HMGP projects. The state, tribe, or territory establishes priorities for the types and/or locations of local subgrant projects. FEMA reviews projects submitted by the state to ensure that they meet eligibility requirements. States, tribes, and territories also have access to a portion of the HGMP funding set aside for advance assistance, which allows advancing up to 25 percent of the HMGP ceiling or \$10 million to applicants and subapplicants, whichever is less. FEMA requires SLTT jurisdictions to have an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. The projects submitted are guided by SLTT Hazard Mitigation Plans. Those plans evaluate risk, hazard, and community conditions in identification of mitigation measures, and are required to go through a public involvement process. Mitigation planning requirements are set forth in 44 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 201 and advance assistance requirements are set forth in 44 C.F.R. Part 206. FEMA provides in-person, virtual, and on-line training as well as tailored technical assistance to SLTT jurisdictions/individuals responsible for developing and/or updating state, tribal, and local mitigation plans. For more information on hazard mitigation planning training, visit <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-training>.

- The Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program (FMA) provides funding to SLTTs for projects and planning that reduce or eliminate the risk of flood damage to structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FMA was created as part of NFIRA.

## B. National Flood Insurance Program

The NFIP aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners, renters, and businesses and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations. These efforts help to mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. Overall, the program reduces the socioeconomic impact of disasters by promoting the purchase and retention of general risk insurance, but also of flood insurance, specifically. NFIP is available in flood-prone areas, but is not targeted specifically to small, low-income communities. NFIP provides increased cost-of-compliance coverage to assist homeowners in meeting mitigation requirements required when homes are damaged substantially by a flooding event. This coverage can be very beneficial to lower income homeowners facing that increased cost. FEMA produced an Affordability Framework for the NFIP in 2018. The framework acknowledges that lower income individuals are less likely to have flood insurance and proposes different ways to address this issue. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1524056945852-e8db76c696cf3b7f6209e1adc4211af4/Affordability.pdf> to download the framework.

In 2017, 2018, and 2019, the Administration submitted a means-tested affordability proposal to serve current and potential policyholders who meet the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of low income (household income at or below 80 percent of the area median income). This proposal would help to reduce the burden of flood insurance for those within the floodplain and would help to ensure faster and more complete recovery after a flood event.

## C. Public Assistance

PA provides federal assistance to SLTT agencies and organizations and certain private nonprofit organizations after a presidentially declared disaster. This program provides supplemental federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, life-saving emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged publicly owned facilities, and the facilities of certain private nonprofit 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.

Note that under a typical cost-share, FEMA covers 75 percent of eligible PA program costs and can recommend an increase of up to 90-percent cost coverage of eligible PA program costs if actual federal obligations (excluding administrative costs) meet or exceed a qualifying threshold.

PA has requirements for provision of information, contracting, deadlines for project applicants, and project completion. To improve the capacity of all local governments, but particularly smaller local governments that may not be as familiar with the PA program, extensive pre- and post-disaster training courses have been developed and are available through the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), either in person or as independent study courses online. Visit the training section at <https://www.fema.gov/public-assistance-resources-and-tools> for a listing of PA courses currently available. Visit <https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx> for more information about arranging training through EMI.

The PA program also can exercise flexibility regarding project deadlines in extenuating circumstances that may arise in low-capacity communities. FEMA provides program delivery managers who work with applicants to assist them in development of project documentation, to advise on program requirements, and to serve as the primary point of contact to facilitate communication and approval of projects. This assistance is an integral part of the delivery of all PA projects; however, this hands-on guidance can be especially valuable for small or under-resourced local governments and applicants.

Section 1219 of the DRRA amended Section 423 of the Stafford Act to provide a right of arbitration for applicants who dispute a FEMA determination on their PA application, including eligibility for assistance or repayment of assistance. This DRRA requirement also directed FEMA to have a lower threshold for arbitration in rural areas. Projects that cost more than \$500,000 in urban areas and more than \$100,000 in rural areas are eligible for the arbitration process. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1553698031170-126e5dcfa4f1a27b799475831c5168df/Section1219ArbitrationFactSheet3.27.19final.pdf> for more information about changes to Section 423 of the Stafford Act.

PA encourages the leveraging of Stafford Act Section 428, which allows PA Alternative Procedures (PAAP). PAAP allows for flexibility in how PA-eligible projects are grouped and funded, but is not targeted specifically to small, low-income communities. The use of PAAP is based on project scope and eligibility.

## D. Individual Assistance

IA, through IHP, provides financial assistance and direct services to eligible individuals and households that have uninsured or underinsured necessary expenses and serious needs. IHP assistance is not a substitute for insurance and cannot compensate for all losses caused by a

disaster. IHP assistance is intended to meet basic needs and to supplement disaster recovery efforts. IHP assistance is not considered income or a resource when determining eligibility for welfare, income assistance, or income-tested benefit programs that the Federal Government funds, such as Social Security benefits or disability income. This assistance is also exempt from garnishment or seizure, but this exception does not apply to assistance recovered by FEMA after being received in error or fraud. There are two categories of IHP assistance: housing assistance and ONA.

## **Housing Assistance**

- Individuals and households may receive more than one type of housing assistance, including a combination of financial assistance and direct services. FEMA determines the appropriate types of housing assistance for which an individual or household may be eligible on the basis of disaster-caused loss, access to life-sustaining services, cost-effectiveness, and other factors. FEMA provides financial housing assistance through funds paid directly to eligible individuals and households. Financial housing assistance may include the following types of assistance:
  - Lodging expense reimbursement;
  - Rental assistance;
  - Repair assistance; and
  - Replacement assistance.
  
- FEMA may provide direct housing assistance when applicants are unable to use rental assistance because of a lack of available housing resources. FEMA makes efforts to ensure that temporary housing solutions are within reasonable access to community and wraparound services such as accessible public transportation, schools, fire and emergency services, grocery stores, etc. FEMA will make sure that a property is safe, habitable, accessible, and functional for temporary housing. Direct housing assistance is not counted toward the IHP financial assistance maximum award amount and may include:
  - Multifamily lease and repair;
  - Transportable temporary housing units:
    - Manufactured housing units, and
    - Recreational vehicles.
  - Direct lease; and
  - Permanent housing construction:
    - Repairs, and
    - New construction.

## **Other Needs Assistance**

- Applicants may receive financial assistance for other disaster-caused expenses and serious needs. The types of ONA are divided into two categories that are either dependent or nondependent on the applicant's ability to secure a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan. The SBA may provide low-interest, long-term loans to help applicants with transportation losses, moving and storage expenses, and repair/replacement funds for real and personal property damage caused by the disaster.

- Only applicants who do not qualify for a loan from the SBA may be eligible for assistance for the SBA-dependent category. SBA-dependent ONA includes personal property, moving and storage, and transportation assistance. Non-SBA-dependent types of ONA may be awarded regardless of the applicant's SBA status and may include funeral, medical, dental, child care, and assistance for miscellaneous items such as chainsaws or dehumidifiers purchased or rented after the disaster. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/24945> for more information about the IHP.

## E. Community Services Programs

Community services programs are offered to all individuals and households within a presidentially declared disaster area and are not targeted specifically to small, low-income communities. FEMA practices nondiscrimination in the delivery of assistance to individuals and households.

- The Disaster Case Management (DCM) program is available to SLTTs and certain private organizations in a presidentially declared disaster area. The program partners disaster survivors with case managers to identify their unmet needs and to seek resources (including nonfederal resources) to support the survivor. The DCM grant now allows for the inclusion of a children's coordinator/children's liaison to identify better the needs of families with children and to coordinate the provision of resources.
- The Disaster Unemployment Assistance program is available to SLTT governments in presidentially declared disaster areas to provide unemployment benefits and reemployment services to individuals who are not eligible for regular state unemployment insurance.
- The Disaster Legal Services program provides legal assistance to low-income individuals in presidentially declared disaster areas. This service is provided through the request of an SLTT.
- The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) is available to SLTTs in a presidentially declared disaster area and assists individuals and communities recovering from the psychological effects of disasters through outreach and educational services. The CCP also allows for the inclusion of a child coordinator to support the emotional needs of children better.

Visit <https://www.fema.gov/community-services-programs> for more information about the Community Services Program.

## F. Community Disaster Loans

The Stafford Act authorizes FEMA to provide direct loans (subject to the availability of appropriations) to local governments who have suffered a substantial loss as a result of a presidentially declared disaster, and who can demonstrate a need for federal financial assistance in order to perform its governmental functions. To qualify for a CDL, the applicant/local government must:

- Be located in the presidentially declared disaster area, and the disaster must have adversely affected the level of essential municipal services previously provided.
- Be able to show a substantial loss (greater than 5 percent) of tax and other revenues for the current or succeeding year as a result of a presidentially declared disaster.
- Not be in arrears with respect to any payments due on previous loans.
- Ensure that state law doesn't prohibit local governments from incurring indebtedness resulting from a federal loan.

Visit <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/176527> for more information about CDLs.

## G. Disaster Survivor Assistance

DSATs are deployed immediately after presidentially declared disasters. DSATs support disaster survivors at their homes or shelters, or in their communities, offering options for how to access programs that can help them to move forward in their recovery. DSATs deploy in support of the entire disaster area and do not specifically target small, low-income communities. However, DSATs do work with SLTTs to evaluate community characteristics and to conduct strategic outreach to disproportionately affected populations, including disaster survivors with disabilities, limited English proficiency, etc. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster-survivor-assistance-program> for more information about the Disaster Survivor Assistance Program.

## H. Disaster Recovery Centers

DRCs are established equitably throughout presidentially declared disaster areas. These facilities are accessible to all members of the community, including survivors with disabilities. FEMA recommends DRC locations to states, tribes, or territories to ensure coverage based on the concentration of survivors and the ability of the affected populations to access the DRCs (although the locations of DRCs ultimately are decided upon by the states, tribes, or territories). DRCs provide a fixed facility or mobile office where survivors may go to access information, face to face, about FEMA programs as well as other disaster assistance programs, to follow up on their cases, or to have information sent to the National Processing Servicing Center. DRCs generally are staffed by IA, SBA, Hazard Mitigation, voluntary agencies, community groups (including volunteer and faith-based groups), and state officials. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster-recovery-centers> for more information about DRCs.

## I. Voluntary Agency Coordination

FEMA voluntary agency liaisons (VAL) support the significant contributions of voluntary, faith-based, and community stakeholders active in disaster by building relationships – and coordinating efforts – with and across partner organizations and government agencies. VALs promote information-sharing and mutual understanding among partners and provide guidance on integrating activities across various subject areas and the full disaster lifecycle. This work empowers stakeholders and communities to strengthen their capabilities, capacity, and delivery of inclusive, equitable services.

VALs can provide information, guidance, and support on a range of topics, tailored to the needs of a voluntary or community organization or event, including:

- Planning, preparedness, and mitigation programs;
- Response and recovery programs;
- Community services programs; and
- Voluntary, faith-based, and community efforts.

Visit <https://www.fema.gov/voluntary-faith-based-community-based-organizations> for more information about Voluntary Agency Coordination.

## J. Community Recovery Planning and Capacity-Building Assistance

FEMA is the coordinating agency of the Community Planning and Capacity-Building (CPCB) RSF, one of six RSFs defined in the National Disaster Recovery Framework and the Federal Interagency Operational Plan. The other five are coordinated by other federal agencies. When activated by FEMA disaster leadership after large or unique disasters, it assists SLTTs to plan for post-event recovery and to build their capacity to manage recovery. When activated, CPCB RSF enlists FEMA staff, as well as support from its national and regional network of partners and other federal agencies. CPCB works directly with a state-, tribal-, or territorial-level CPCB RSF, if one exists, or with other designated state agencies, to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to localities. Although the CPCB RSF does not target its services *specifically* to small, low-income communities, often those are the communities that the RSF identifies as lower capacity and thus serves more intensively, if concurred on by the state.

FEMA can provide technical assistance to aid local communities to develop their own outcome-driven recovery plans.<sup>2</sup> These planning efforts aid SLTT entities to develop plans that identify, prioritize, and articulate local recovery needs and outcomes, and to identify resources to help SLTTs to meet those needs and outcome goals. This support is offered only through and with concurrence of the state or territory, or directly to tribal governments. More intensive forms of this support are offered to targeted communities that have limited capacity to manage recovery while also having faced the most severe disaster impacts. Post-event recovery planning support is suited ideally for the lowest level of government (local and county governments) and tribal communities with significant communitywide impacts. This assistance is helpful for lower capacity communities that may not have the understanding and/or resources to begin this process expeditiously on their own.

FEMA also provides support for capacity-building that involves helping SLTT governments to identify their local capacity gaps with respect to managing overall short- and long-term recovery, and identifying capacity-building solutions to address those gaps, which may include training, technical assistance, peer-to-peer support, or identification of opportunities for the community to hire additional staff to manage the recovery process. However, FEMA does not have authority to provide grants through this support. FEMA efforts to deliver capacity-building assistance are provided only in coordination with and through the concurrence of the state or territorial government, or directly to tribal governments.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to multiple references throughout the Stafford Act for supporting and coordinating recovery, the Stafford Act was modified through PKEMRA to add support for recovery planning. See Section 402(3)(F), Assistance for recovery planning and assessment.

When activated, the CPCB RSF develops a community conditions assessment that evaluates the relative disaster impacts to communities in the disaster area, and the context of each disaster-affected community regarding demographics and socioeconomic conditions (including size and income), local government capacity (including local government size and planning experience), and other relevant disaster-specific factors. This assessment is done in concert with federal, SLTTs, and other partners (such as state-level professional associations) that have knowledge of local conditions. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/community-planning-and-capacity-building> for more information about CPCB.

## K. Intergovernmental Affairs

The Intergovernmental Affairs Branch (IGA), including the Small State and Rural Advocate within the Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Division of External Affairs, provides direct communication and outreach to SLTT officials, including governors and state officials, state legislators, tribal governments, small states and rural constituencies, territorial governments, county/parish officials, mayors and city managers, and city councils. In addition, IGA fosters and maintains relationships with national organizations and associations that represent SLTT governments, emergency managers, and homeland security officials. IGA also continues to build relationships with key nongovernmental organizations connected to traditionally underserved populations and underutilized stakeholders. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/office-external-affairs> for more information about IGA.

## L. Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation

The Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation works with FEMA programs to ensure that consideration of potential impacts to environmental, historic, and cultural resources are incorporated into FEMA's mission, programs, and activities. This is done, in part, by the agency ensuring that all FEMA actions comply with federal EHP laws, regulations, executive orders (E.O.), and directives, including DHS Directive 023-01-01: Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act; FEMA Directive 108-1: Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); National Historic Preservation Act; Endangered Species Act; E.O. 11988 (Floodplain Management); E.O. 11990 (Protection of Wetlands); E.O. 12898 (Environmental Justice for Low Income and Minority Populations); and their implementing regulations.

The FEMA EHP review process ensures that all FEMA grants and FEMA-supported actions comply with all relevant EHP laws. When FEMA prepares an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement in accordance with NEPA, the decision-making process includes public participation, community input, and identification of potential impacts and mitigation measures within the affected areas of the community. Adequate and appropriate public notice of the decision-making process is provided in the most effective and accessible method of delivery to the affected population. Consideration is given to the use of local resources, community and other nongovernmental organizations, or locally targeted media as effective means to inform populations of any disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, economic, and social effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations as required by E.O. 12898.

Although FEMA considers environmental justice as part of its mission, EHP reviews conducted by FEMA are not triggered on the basis of the size or income of a subject community at large, but rather on the basis of the proposed action or activity. As part of the EHP review process, FEMA assesses whether an agency’s actions comply with E.O. 12898.<sup>3</sup> Populations that may face environmental justice issues as the result of a proposed action or activity are identified in the environmental review process to ensure that these communities have access to information that is concise and clear enough to participate effectively in the public involvement process. This helps to ensure that these communities disproportionately are not affected adversely by the action.

## M. Other Technical Assistance – National Integration Center

The National Integration Center (NIC) Technical Assistance Program, within the National Preparedness Directorate, provides specialized expertise and services to SLTT partners to improve emergency management capabilities before a disaster on the basis of greatest need, risk, national priorities, and resources available.

FEMA uses a variety of methods to provide technical assistance, including:

- In-person workshops to support implementing the National Preparedness System and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning; and
- Technical assistance for emerging, crosscutting, or complex topics. This delivery method may include the development of new tools, plans, and processes that benefit jurisdictions nationwide.

FEMA also assists jurisdictions by identifying guidance, training, and templates that jurisdictions can use to improve and maintain core capabilities, and by hosting webinars to showcase SLTT achievement, lessons learned, and subject matter expertise on a range of topics relevant to today’s emergency manager. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/fema-technical-assistance-program> for more information about the NIC Technical Assistance Program.

## N. Other Technical Assistance – Community Resilience Indicators

There is broad interest in the United States in identifying key factors of community resilience and in understanding where we stand as a Nation related to those factors so that we can develop better informed capacity-building strategies. The Mitigation Framework Leadership Group developed a concept with potential indicators and measures of community resilience that may be considered by a variety of users when evaluating how to improve a community’s ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Community resilience indicators may include social vulnerability data related to poverty, among other things, that potentially could be used to direct certain technical assistance such as that provided by mitigation planners and the CPCB RSF after disasters. Visit

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<sup>3</sup> E.O. 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” Each federal agency, including FEMA, must make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, economic, and social effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

<https://www.fema.gov/community-resilience-indicators> for more information about community resilience indicators.

## O. Other Technical Assistance – Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool

The NIC Technical Assistance team worked with Argonne National Laboratory to develop a geographic information systems-based tool for emergency managers at all levels to visualize and assess challenges to community resilience. Information, including a user guide, on the Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool is available at <https://fema.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d39cef0df1c1410eaa420c6e1af9771c>. The Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool includes data layers for hazards, such as seismic and flood risk; infrastructure information, including fire station and hospital locations; and the 20 community resilience indicators identified by analyzing the collective body of peer-reviewed research on community resilience: [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1576582195058-2014f1c3254951cadffdb8e4458ee292/RAPT\\_Overview\\_Final.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1576582195058-2014f1c3254951cadffdb8e4458ee292/RAPT_Overview_Final.pdf).

## P. Other Technical Assistance – PrepTalks

FEMA produces PrepTalks in partnership with the emergency management associations – International Association of Emergency Managers, National Emergency Management Association, National Homeland Security Consortium, and the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security – to bring national and international experts to all areas. These presentations are from leaders in a range of fields relevant to emergency managers. FEMA releases the video presentation, a discussion guide, and a slide deck to support local emergency managers with integrating new research, new ideas, and new approaches to build resilience across the country. All the PrepTalks are available at [www.fema.gov/preptalks](http://www.fema.gov/preptalks).

## IV. Conclusion

FEMA assistance is directed to all disaster survivors to ensure that they benefit equally from disaster assistance programs. The Stafford Act, DRRA, Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, PKEMRA, NFIRA, Flood Disaster Protection Act, Housing and Urban Development Acts of 1968 and 1969, various E.O.s, and FEMA doctrine enable the agency to deliver resources and technical assistance to disaster-affected SLTT communities in a flexible manner. Although certain program provisions are designed to benefit small, low-income communities, FEMA generally does not have specific programs or funding established exclusively for those communities.

## Appendix: List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definition</b>
CCP	Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CPCB	Community Planning and Capacity-Building
DCM	Disaster Case Management
DRC	Disaster Recovery Center
DRRA	Disaster Recovery Reform Act
DSAT	Disaster Survivor Assistance Team
EHP	Environmental and Historic Preservation
EMI	Emergency Management Institute
E.O.	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMA	Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program
HMA	Hazard Mitigation Assistance
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
IA	Individual Assistance
IGA	Intergovernmental Affairs Branch
IHP	Individuals and Households Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NFIRA	National Flood Insurance Reform Act
NIC	National Integration Center
ONA	Other Needs Assistance
PA	Public Assistance
PAAP	Public Assistance Alternative Procedures
PKEMRA	Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act
RSF	Recovery Support Function
SBA	U.S. Small Business Administration
SLTT	States, Local Communities, Tribes, and Territories
U.S.C.	United States Code
VAL	Voluntary Agency Liaison