

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): FEMA Assistance for Tribal Governments

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Based on the President's nationwide emergency declaration for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on March 13, 2020, tribal governments have the option to request Public Assistance from FEMA as either a Recipient or Subrecipient. This fact sheet provides additional information about the assistance FEMA can provide to tribal governments as either Recipients or Subrecipients during the nationwide COVID-19 emergency and replaces FEMA's March 22, 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response: Tribal Recipients Fact Sheet. Read more about the [Federal government's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response](#) for additional information.

## Tribal Options for Assistance

- Under the President's national emergency declaration, states, territories, and tribes are not required to request individual Emergency Declarations, which is typically the case, in order to receive FEMA assistance.
- A tribal government may choose to receive assistance:
  1. As a Subrecipient under a state: All states are Recipients for Public Assistance; tribes have the option of working with the state(s) that they are located in and requesting assistance as a Subrecipient; or
  2. As a Recipient: Each tribe has the option of signing a FEMA-Tribe Agreement and becoming a Recipient.
- Tribes that are Recipients will have a direct relationship with FEMA and will receive assistance autonomously from the state or states in which they are located.
- Tribes may choose to request their own emergency number from FEMA, if desired. However, having a different emergency number will have no practical effect on the provision of assistance or FEMA's relationship with the tribe.
- A tribal Subrecipient of FEMA Public Assistance works through the state or states in which the tribal government is located to coordinate assistance.



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- The tribal government will also need to work with the state to complete a [Request for Public Assistance](#) and submit it to FEMA through the PA Grants Portal.
- A Recipient of FEMA Public Assistance, whether they have their own emergency number or not, has direct interactions with FEMA and has additional requirements and responsibilities for program and grant administration.
  - Tribes that have never been Recipients of FEMA assistance should review [FEMA's New Recipients of Disaster Grants Guide](#) and consult with FEMA regional Recovery Division staff to understand the typical administrative requirements of being a Recipient.
  - Currently, due to the incredible burden and stress on all American citizens from this unprecedented event, FEMA is looking to consolidate resources and processes in order to serve as many communities as quickly and efficiently as possible.
  - If appropriate, FEMA encourages tribal governments to work with their respective state or states for assistance. This in no way diminishes the important tribal government role of serving tribal members during this emergency.
  - FEMA understands that for some tribes this may not be possible, and FEMA respects a tribes' sovereign right of self-governance and will continue to work with closely with tribes during this important time.
  - More information on the Public Assistance grant process can be found in the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Public Assistance Simplified Application Fact Sheet](#).

## **FEMA Role in COVID-19 Pandemic Response**

- FEMA, in coordination with the [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#), will assist state, local, tribal, territorial governments and other eligible entities with the health and safety actions they take on behalf of the American public.
- Tribal governments can express their intent to seek FEMA Public Assistance by notifying the FEMA Regional Administrator in the FEMA regional office in which the tribal government seat is located.
  - As part of the tribal expression of intent, tribal governments should indicate that their emergency plan was executed.
- Each of the ten FEMA regions has Regional Tribal Liaisons to coordinate with tribes located within that respective region.



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- Regional Tribal Liaisons can connect tribes with FEMA leadership and program subject matter experts, as needed, for information, technical assistance and resources.

## Federal Assistance

- FEMA Public Assistance as a Recipient requires execution of a FEMA-Tribe Agreement (FTA) and execution of an emergency plan.
  - An FTA is submitted to the FEMA Regional Administrator and contains the understandings, commitments, and conditions under which federal disaster assistance will be provided.
  - FEMA regional offices can provide a draft copy to tribal governments for review. Once all parties have reviewed and made edits, a final version will be distributed for signature.
- A tribal government must confirm activation of its emergency plan to receive assistance as a Recipient. FEMA regulations do not specify legal requirements for emergency plan; only that a tribal government has one and activates it before requesting a declaration.
  - As indicated in the President's national emergency declaration, FEMA Public Assistance for this nationwide emergency will be provided at a 75 percent Federal/25 percent non-Federal cost share. As direct recipients, Tribal governments, like state and territorial recipients, will be responsible for the 25 percent cost share. Some states choose to share the 25 percent cost share with their Subrecipients to reduce the financial burden on local and tribal governments.
- Eligible emergency protective measures taken at the direction or guidance of public health officials in response to this emergency, and not provided or funded by the authorities of another federal agency, may be reimbursed under the FEMA Public Assistance program.
  - FEMA encourages officials to take appropriate actions that are necessary to protect public health and safety pursuant to public health guidance.
  - Reimbursable activities for the COVID-19 pandemic fall under Category B of the FEMA Public Assistance program—Emergency Protective Measures—and typically include the activation of State or Tribal Emergency Operations Centers, law enforcement and other measures necessary to protect public health and safety.
  - The [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) combines FEMA Public Assistance policy into a single volume and provides overview of



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program implementation process with links to other publications and documents that provide additional process details.

- More information on reimbursable activities may be found in the PAPPG and in the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Eligible Emergency Protective Measures Fact Sheet](#).
- Federal disaster assistance grant programs have additional requirements to complete before FEMA allocates and dispenses grant funds. The [FEMA New Recipients of Disaster Grants Guide](#) describes requirements for Recipients in requesting and receiving FEMA disaster assistance grant funding.
  - A tribal government must have a FEMA-approved [Public Assistance Administrative Plan](#) before FEMA is able to provide assistance. A tribal-government specific template is available.
  - A Hazard Mitigation Plan is not required for FEMA Emergency Assistance. Read more information about [FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Plan requirement](#), which **is** a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance.
- Tribal governments that choose to be a Subrecipient to a state(s) for FEMA Public Assistance should coordinate with the state(s).
- FEMA recognizes that some tribal governments have greater capacity than others. In order to streamline resource requests, it may be more efficient to maintain close coordination with county and state officials. However, tribal assistance can be provided across states and FEMA Regions.

## Definitions

**Applicant:** A non-federal entity that applies to be a Subrecipient of assistance under a Recipient's federal award (e.g., local government agency, housing authority, or private nonprofit organization).

**Subrecipient:** An Applicant that receives a sub-award from a Recipient to carry out part of a federal program.

**Recipient:** A non-federal entity that receives an award from a federal agency (e.g., state, territorial, or tribal government) to carry out an activity under a federal program.

## More Information



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For more information, visit the following websites:

1. [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#)
2. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Eligible Emergency Protective Measures Fact Sheet](#)
3. [New Recipients of Disaster Grant Guide](#)
4. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Public Assistance Simplified Application Fact Sheet](#)
5. [Tribal Access to Crisis Counseling Programs Fact Sheet](#)
6. [FEMA.gov/Coronavirus](#)
7. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(CDC\)](#)



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