

FEMA National Advisory Council

May Virtual Meeting

May 4 and 6, 2021



PARTICIPANTS

National Advisory Council Members	May 4	May 6
Nim Kidd, Chair	Yes	Yes
Jeff Hansen, Vice Chair	Yes	Yes
Jeanne Abadie	Yes	Yes
Rich Baich	Yes	Yes
Sue Anne Bell, Vision Roadmap Vice Chair	Yes	Yes
Steve Birnbaum	Yes	Yes
Don Bliss, EDA Vice Chair	Yes	Yes
Donna Boston	Yes	Yes
Paul Brennan	Yes	Yes
Deanna Dahl-Grove	Yes	Yes
Dante Disparte	Yes	Yes
Paul Downing	Yes	Yes
Charley English	Yes	No
Charles Esteves	No	Yes
August "Dutch" Geisinger	Yes	Yes
John Grathwol	Yes	Yes
Lori Hodges	Yes	Yes
Patricia Hoffman	Yes	No
Lisa Jones, Equity Standard Chair	Yes	Yes
Ramesh Kolluru, Vision Roadmap Chair	Yes	Yes
Anna Lang Ofstad	Yes	Yes
Jackie Lindsey	Yes	Yes
Linda Long	No	No
Nicolette Louissaint	Yes	Yes
Warren Miller, Equity Standard Vice Chair	Yes	Yes
Jimmy Patronis	Yes	Yes
Brad Richy	Yes	Yes
Carol Salas	Yes	Yes
Carrie Speranza	Yes	Yes
Kevin Staley	Yes	Yes
Tina Titze, EDA Chair	Yes	Yes
James Waskom	Yes	Yes
Pamela Williams	Yes	Yes
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Lily Byrne, Office of the National Advisory Council	Yes	Yes
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Kate Judson, Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration	Yes	Yes
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Tony Robinson, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region 6	No	Yes
Frank Matranga, Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Alicia Jones, Grant Programs Directorate	No	Yes
Other Participants		
Blair Walsh, Texas Division of Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Mike Miron, Homeland Security Advisory Council	Yes	No
Tim Achinger, FL CFO (on behalf of Jimmy Patronis)	Yes	No
Victoria Lawson, CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance	Yes	Yes
Kristin Baja, Urban Sustainability Directors Network	Yes	No
Chauncia Willis, Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management	Yes	No
Dr. James Elliott, Rice University	Yes	No

General Joseph Votel, Business Executives for National Security	Yes	No
Rear Admiral Joseph Nimmich, Potomac Ridge LLC	Yes	No
Samuel Cole, Stonecutter Ventures LLC	Yes	No
Cassidy Mueller, FL CFO (on behalf of Jimmy Patronis)	No	Yes

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jasper Cooke. This meeting is the midpoint check-in for our recommendations process. You will hear from all of the subcommittees, specifically how they are looking to tackle their charges. We have a couple panels and discussions lined up around equity and the recent Business Executives for National Security (BENS) report. On Thursday, we will hear from Administrator Criswell and other members of FEMA leadership.

EQUITY PANEL

The purpose of this session was to provide a different perspective on equity in the emergency management space. The NAC spoke with Ms. Kristin Baja, Programs Director of Climate Resilience, Urban Sustainability Directors Network; Dr. Jim Elliott, Professor of Sociology, Rice University; and Ms. Chauncia Willis, CEO, Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management.

Panelist Opening Remarks

Chauncia Willis. I'd like to make sure that we are comfortable getting into this brave space of equity and having these conversations that can make people uncomfortable. Sometimes there is cognitive dissonance in these conversations, but we are all here to see markable change. Many emergency managers are now being tasked to produce equity and they have no real experience within equity or with equity, have not learned the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion or taken the time to understand existing equity. They are approaching equity to check the box for completion. This is problematic because the work become performative and unsustainable. I suggest more training is required. But first, we must understand the history that produced inequity. Next, we must understand the systems that create inequity. If a system has had negative impacts for historically marginalized groups, we have to look at the policies that enforce those systems. We have to look at how we understand diversity because diversity produces equity.

One issue is that those working in the equity space have often been bypassed because hiring managers do not understand their work. They bypass community-based organizations that add that layer of community and understanding. For example, we hold focus groups with organizations and ask how federal policies and programs have impacted their communities. Have they really been able to benefit from these federal programs? We are producing a check the box numbers game.

All that to say the key to producing disaster equity means working with groups that are familiar with these communities and within organizations that may not be as familiar with doing that on the front end. Also recognizing that right now there is a market for performative equity – people are checking the box and not seeing major impact – they attempt equity but there is no sustainable push for continued improvement.

We must also first understand that we need to hear and understand the perspective of people working and representing those groups. There are other ways to measure this than funding. FEMA could provide more transparency in their data – how many applicants are rejected, where are they from, etc. We need more transparency in the data.

Eliminating inequity will take years not months. It is core to FEMA's mission because it supports efforts to avoid loss of life. It should be a core capability that guides all of our emergency management efforts. It also requires expertise and empowering marginalized groups, which is not something our government is used to doing. We must also make real efforts to include people of color and women to ensure that discussions about this mirror the diversity of our communities.

Jim Elliott. In my work, I've found three major conclusions with regards to equity.

1. There is a growing body of research showing that the way we respond to and recover is inequitable, and FEMA is a part of that. This does not mean FEMA is a bad apple, but that it is complicit. As a publicly funded agency it has a responsibility to take responsibility for this.
2. These challenges are getting more pressing and complex as they combine with pressing climate issues. Who lives in environmentally risky areas? Who owns and controls properties there? Who benefits from investments in those communities? The bad news is that this is pressing and it's getting more complex. The good news is that no one is fighting to defund FEMA. All Americans agree that we need a smart, strong, capable FEMA.
3. For this reform to be effective it will take real time and responsibility. There is no policy lever that we can flip and be done. These complexities are further amplified by the space we occupy. Instead of thinking of a federally declared disaster as a heart attack, instead think of it as a long-term heart disease with many inputs and long effect. Instead of thinking of this in terms of strict causality we should investigate how treatment interacts with long-standing issues.

Kristin Baja. I'd like to start off by acknowledging that the land I am on is stolen Piscataway land. If we are serious about equity, it is important that we all get into the habit of acknowledging the history and perspectives of tribal nations. If you haven't had a chance to investigate the land you are on, I encourage you to look it up. I would also like to acknowledge that I'm a white woman in a white body that gives me privilege in this space. The work that I do is focused on deep wholistic change and acknowledging that the root causes of these issues are the same, they are based on extraction. The real work is around changing and acknowledging that we as white humans created inequitable systems and acknowledge that this system was built for us and we benefit from it.

We need to reframe this bipartisan word of resilience as holistic and year-round and focus on social infrastructure and being proactive rather than reactive. This requires an acknowledgment of positionality and power in this space. A lot of what happens with FEMA and one-size fits all. Unfortunately, those solutions don't prioritize marginalized communities. We should lead with race and not make climate and resilience solutions about checking boxes, moving past the idea of making plans and kits. This is about shifting power. This is hard for people in this field because equity has become so transactional and we need to shift from this transactional based approach. We should acknowledge that all peoples need matter, but we should prioritize people who have intentionally been put in hazardous land. This means getting beyond technical support – get beyond one consultant and shift language and funding. Getting out of traditional cost benefit analysis because it will prioritize our white communities.

Discussion

Jasper Cooke. What would be better than the current cost-benefit analysis?

Kristin Baja. I love this question. A holistic analysis that considers communities would be better. You can't always look at the communities that will be most connected and supported. We should recognize that we continue to prioritize through this traditional model infrastructure as the solution when human ownership is what we should start prioritizing.

Chauncia Willis. We've been working with different communities because when we prioritize equity, we take a human-centric approach, approach the needs of the people rather than the desire to have more tourism dollars, focus on more vocal people etc. When it comes to policies, we need to focus on equity rather than equality. We need to prioritize equity in resilience as well. We see in resilience that we need to make sure everyone has a part in their own inclusive posture.

Rich Baich. In this analysis, are we finding out that communities are playing active roles and seeking out positions that help them be more resilient? Equity needs to be part of volunteering and a resilient America.

Chauncia Willis. That perspective you just described is more problematic than anything. It is making people responsible for their own disaster. The systems in America have caused a lot of that inequity to exist. If we say to people that if they had purchased their preparedness or had flood insurance the outcome would be better we invalidate them. As emergency managers it's not us versus them when we prioritize the most vulnerable—think about redlining—policies have continuously put people in the worst places.

Kristin Baja. A piece of this is the lack of recognition for the structure white people have built. There is a problem with the framing, we can't expect equity to stand alone when the entire system is inequitable. We have to acknowledge

this history. When you are going from federal to state to local the money goes away when you get to the local space, and once that's removed, and we are still expecting people to have buy-in.

Kevin Staley. Emergency management has a part to play but we are part of a larger orchestra. Our marginalized communities live in a state of disaster during the blue-sky days. How are we incorporating local managers into this work?

Kristin Baja. There is the idea of emergency shelters, we were doing the FEMA make a plan, build a kit, etc. and during those sessions people were saying there is no way that they would go to shelters, we identified those problems. We shifted to neighborhood hubs that are continuously open that funnel help from partners and have that site be able to withstand disruptions

Kevin Staley. Do those hubs include this like labor, resources, etc.?

Kristin Baja. Absolutely. I will send a link.

Jim Elliott. If we take this seriously what do we do? The cost-benefit analysis needs to come out, in terms of action this might be very technical. Think of everything that FEMA has to do already, how do we integrate resistance into the long-term response? There are real divergences into who gets assistances and then with PA there are questions about where that goes and what that does to value and access to communities. You are going to get situations where the social value of communities matters. Better off people, white people, are better able to resettle and rebuild. Other markets in communities of color do not recover the same way. There's a real disjunction between what the federal was trying to do and what happened at the state level during Katrina. After Hurricane Harvey, Texans voted to tax themselves, it was amazing that they did. Local folks gave the money to richer communities thinking that they wouldn't get money from the feds. Now, these communities' recovery projects are 100% funded whereas communities of color are only about 25% funded. Where the money is flowing is part of this conversation.

Nicolette Louissaint. I am very familiar with your work in Baltimore. There are somethings we should consider. A lot is dependent on local buy-in and partnership. In Baltimore we are dealing with community level resilience work and there is already some relationship between community-based organizations and the local government. If there is no existing understanding it could be more disruptive. What does it look like to set a standard for FEMA that can cause ripple effects specifically in communities that likely don't have positive relationships with their government? We have to think about what kind of seismic disruption that allows for restructuring at the local level especially if you don't have local buy in.

Chauncia Willis. I agree with you Nicolette. Emergency management has hidden behind the bale of being overtasked and under resources for years. Emergency managers need to be connected to the communities they serve. There has to be some way to tie that to funding, essentially that's how you operate at the local level. There are ways to make local emergency managers feel more connected. Also, I feel the need to connect with all communities as an emergency manager of color. I don't know if other emergency managers who are not people of color are doing this. We have to understand where the most vulnerable communities are located because if there is no intentional understanding it will not happen naturally.

Kristin Baja. There has been no funding for the community hub resilience initiative—it is a locally funded and cohesive initiative. The administration has the opportunity to work on this and with community-based partners. Baltimore is where this started and for most of these places it is wholistic and doesn't exist within emergency management – emergency management is not entirely responsibility.

Jim Elliott. In Houston we've been using public libraries, often within a half mile walking distance of communities as long as they are not overburdened already, they work as good community centers.

Paul Downing. I've heard a lot of state, local, federal, etc. but nothing about tribes. There are 574 tribes here too. As we are talking about governments – we are one of them. When you talk about an inequitable playing field, we are way behind the power curve and I find it overwhelming that this is not recognized. The only thing I would ask is that if you are going to do this research let's include the tribes. Only three of 574 tribes have received major disaster declarations. There is also the issue of funeral costs, tribes are often ineligible for FEMA assistance for tribal funerals and we are left with the question of what to do about that.

Kristin Baja. You are right, I appreciate you bringing this up. We also have to be centering indigenous knowledge and ownership in these solutions while acknowledging that there is a lack of respect a trust with the federal government. There is distrust of government, especially federal, for these communities. I agree that we need to center this.

Warren Miller. This is an interesting and difficult piece. We have to tie the dollars to actions and expectations. As we described earlier on, many of these programs are not down at the local level. With regards to census track data and if there is no intentionality of expectations tied to local engagement we need to understand where the vulnerable communities are, not as after thoughts. The other part is anticipating and utilizing the mitigation process. Governors and state emergency managers need to be intentional when assigning funding.

Equity Panel Zoom Chat

Lori Hodges. Been thinking about this for a while now. I think with the equity focus, the NAC should consider recommendations that fundamentally change the structure and function of FEMA. It gives us the chance to look big and create a system built on equity as well as the lessons of the past to make it work better for future generations.

Kate Judson. Baja - Apart from BCA, how else can FEMA's mitigation grant programs put people first? Have you seen others federal grants do this well?

Jeanne Abadie. Lori, I like the idea. I have been thinking along the same lines. Trying to look at FEMA in pieces makes it difficult to change the whole. But, WOW! Where to we start?

Lori Hodges. We could look at models that already exist to see if they fit for a new way of providing disaster assistance. There are successes out there. I feel like we are in a time of great opportunity right now.

Anna Lang. Great point, Lori. I'm curious how we can complement our joint goals of equity and decentralization.

Kristin Baja. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llci8MVh8J4> ; <http://resilience-hub.org/>

Lori Hodges. We have been doing the hub network in Larimer County and it paid dividends during COVID. One of our large hubs started up a food pantry and continues to run it to this day. It is highly effective for both disaster and non-disaster resilience.

Kristin Baja. We have 40 communities working on Resilience Hubs right now. Fort Collins and Larimer is definitely one. It's wonderful to see how they worked in COVID

Jackie Lindsey. We have a program called Connect at the Santa Fe County level, which is a day to day support network. I look forward to looking at Baja's resource page to see how we can improve. I'd like to learn more about the Larimer model too....

Anna Lang. Chauncia - what metrics might we draw on, or what metrics are missing, to better identify vulnerable communities...and use that to focus resources (personnel, Resilience Hubs, mit funds)?

SUBCOMMITTEE BRIEF-OUTS

The purpose of these sessions was for the chairs of each subcommittee to report out on their progress toward addressing their charges.

Equity Standard Subcommittee

Lisa Jones. Thank you everyone. I will be balancing a little bit with Warren who has some comments on these slides as well. Our charge of creating an equity standard is a lofty one. This is an undertaking the Biden administration has been taking seriously. Executive Order 13985 has become a significant piece of the puzzle. We understand that our role in the NAC is to largely use our expertise and advise FEMA, but we cannot move forward with this equity charge without acknowledge the executive order. This order also revokes Executive Order 15930 about "divisive concepts". In Executive Order 13985, departments are asked to improve equitable access to underserved communities, remove barriers to participation in grants and data collection, contracting, and improve stakeholder processes. We know that parallel work is happening in order agencies and we have to align with it and take it into consideration.

We have heard from the director of the grants program, Christopher Logan. Mr. Logan's goal was to make sure we understand where and how an equity standard can be applied – this helped us understand the challenge of creating a reformative and competitive standard. There are difficulties in creating a standard across all the types of grants. We've thought about identifying one or two programs to start with rather than trying to address all seventeen programs at once. There can be a disconnect between who gets the money and what they do with it. We also received a Resilience, Analysis, and Planning Tool (RAPT) presentation. RAPT allows stakeholders to do their own

analysis of an event or presentation. They add geographic information system (GIS) layers with census tract information to create a combined analysis. We also heard from FEMA's recovery customer survey and analysis analytics. We looked at income in this survey, working with census information, although this the survey is somewhat problematic because it took them two years and compared award rates across income levels and worked with individuals and households program (IHP) analysis. They also mentioned that the system disproportionately benefits high income households. Equity analysis high-level findings agreed that there is limitation to their findings. They all agreed to come back to us later in the summer. Apparently, in April they will get a big dump of information and they will come back and share that with us.

Our final guest speaker was made by Dr. Finucane and Dr. Willis and helped us frame where we will begin when creating the equity standard. This presentation was from the RAND Corporation and gave us a logic model to us help us frame the development of this standard. They also provided us with a quick primer on equity concepts, look at the initial conditionals that look at the outcomes and how costs risk and outcomes are allocated. From this work, we've developed several key questions to guide our discussions:

- Who counts as a subject of equity?
- Why equity (or not)?
- How are parameters (what, who, why) of equity determined?

Warren Miller. On this particular slide as we look at the procedural piece – there tends to be a high number of denials in the application process and as a result of that we are getting people who are having less confidence and willingness to apply when disasters are happening. As we go through the process, we know that it takes legislation to change the process, but we should take the opportunity to identify that there are issues with it. There should be something in between application and denial, allow revision and working with applicants and other Individual Assistance (IA) considerations to re-evaluate this system.

Lisa Jones. We understand this as a critical piece in how we frame this discussion. Another concern is the balancing risk and equity. Dr. Finucane encouraged us to look at balance risk metrics and equity metrics, differential cost-sharing and weighting of criteria is important. We got examples of people trying to do this and how many people relate to certain things and our challenge will be to do something dynamic enough that is applicable across the board. We will work with the logic model to make our standard flexible and applicable.

Anna Lang. How do we solve this? Two of your slices stood out to me – there is no one size that fits but from a instructional level any sort of metrics has to be dynamic and adaptable. My engineering brain can't rectify those too. Is trying to rank cities, applicants, tribes, etc. is that the right approach?

Lisa Jones. All of the subcommittee members have been banging their head against this question and we've been spending time hearing what FEMA has been doing up till now – we need to determine where do we start? Individual Assistance (IA)? Program Assistance (PA)? There are pros and cons to all of that. To answer your question, we are at the "toe of the elephant". We will be trying to figure that out talking with partners. What will be applicable from A to Z? Probably nothing. What about outcomes? Are we going back to see if things are effective? Or just letting things go?

John Grathwol. I've been thinking about how you can't compare one disaster to another disaster because they are always different. This year we have a disaster in every state we've never had something like this before. Certain states that are good at using FEMA and have Covid obligations above a billion dollars while others are just millions. With adjustments no one could argue that there is an equitable distribution of funding. Covid-19 provides data measurements that are relatively standardizable that could show the state of the game. Could this be a metric to describe the current state of equity?

Lisa Jones. That's a good point. I'll add that the issue of missing data came up in the presentations as well. We don't have all the data we need in place.

Expediting Disaster Assistance Subcommittee

Tina Titze. We've decided to focus in on Public Assistance (PA) because with the technical nature of PA there are many avenues for expediting disaster assistance. We've tried to maintain PA as a focus. We asked that these recommendations be focus on PA and the survey results were good, we'd like to have a few more results although we distributed it using agencies and associations like NIMA, we had a fairly good response. The largest group of respondents were local governments, they are really the ones on the ground working with PA. Most respondents had

one or fewer disasters in the last year. They don't deal with disasters every year; we see the lack of experience and infrequency – over 90% of respondents were under 200 million. The largest disaster type was flood followed by wildfire in the past couple of years it has become an issue. We went through each of the phases of public assistance, nailing down what worked well and what didn't work well. The grant portal responses are split between people who think it is helpful or not helpful. The grant portals should have solved more problems than it created. We also asked about the Stafford Act's section 406 and 438. It is a very complex program, and we found that changing just one section of PA could have negative or positive impacts.

We also had a speaker, Frank Matranga, who discussed the PA principles, a document guiding the PA folks at FEMA. We'd like to take any recommendations we have and incorporate them into these principles because they are guiding the agency. We also looked at FEMA's Recovery Operations Support Manual (ROSM), a concept document to ensure our technical recommendations ensure they fit into FEMA's priorities. PA Principle one and two related recommendations include supporting state-led concept by solving the issues delaying this concept, increasing admin funding, to include a sustainable personnel funding source for states, and not shifting the program burden to states without providing adequate funding for states to be successful.

Jasper Cooke. Jeff Stern is advocating for putting FEMA on the FBI model where there is an office in each state and decentralizing the regions.

Jeff Stern. For clarity - keep regions. Add state offices.

Lori Hodges. I did receive some information yesterday that might be something we add in our recommendations for EDA - A majority of people who come out during disaster are contractors and they are paid on an hourly basis so there is no incentive to work quickly. If we want to truly expedite assistance, this will need to be addressed somehow.

Anna Lang. I just heard this need echoed from unnamed earthquake program managers.

Tina Titze. That's a good point, thank you. In terms of PA Principle 2 related recommendations, we've come up with creating additional training opportunities: train-the-trainer and better sharing of information available to applicants, utilizing best practices learned in COVID-virtual processes, evaluating eligibility conditions in PAPPG to better align with Stafford Act intent and other corresponding regulations; eliminating extra Environmental Reviews -- there should only be one at the Federal level- often one federal agency is asking for something different than the other; creating a grants portal "Turbo Tax" format (step by step with a helpdesk) for more flexibility, improving documentation and Digital Data sharing, flexibility in data and information shared; increased file sharing capabilities, reduced burdensome paperwork requirements, and improved consistency across regions, and, finally, creating checklists demonstrating information needs and within what project phase.

In terms of PA Principle 3 related recommendations, we've come up with allowing flexibility to combine mitigation project funding streams – this is a mitigation focus for PA where we can put information about combining funding streams. Additionally, allowing for building back better, not to the same pre-event standards – not making people return to the same standards so we don't repeat the same problems; altering funding formulas to enable easier investments in mitigation; working with OMB to adjust the Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) Discount Rate annually (currently 7% and it should be under 3%) this is outdated, and some countries even have a negative percentage that really emphasizes the importance of mitigation.

In terms of PA Principle 4 recommendations, we've come up with better training for Program Delivery Managers – they should be the most knowledgeable & trained as opposed to the newest employee of FEMA but often it is their newest employee. In South Dakota in 2019 we had four disasters and at one point 80% of our PDMGs had no experience at all. That was an issue throughout the survey. We are recommending that these are your most trained people. We've also talked about working directly with applicants and need to have program and area knowledge; more communications between PDMGs and Consolidated Resource Center (CRC) staff – essentially for those who aren't familiar with PA the information get transmitted to CRC staff in a different staff and city. Their job is to put this into a program worksheet, but this is difficult if they're not understanding the intricacies of a project. If something missing projects can get sent back to the beginning. Finally, we've discussed the determination of who takes precedence in decisions – CRCs or Regions.

In terms of PA principle 5 recommendations, we've discussed using Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit guidelines for validation of large amounts of documentation – right now a huge sampling is done by FEMA staff that the states go through. This may result in a 6% sample (or another smaller random sample) rather than the 40%-100%

sample often requested by FEMA. This process is burdensome and unnecessary, adding to project approval delays and slowing recovery. FEMA could develop policy sampling and training for staff.

In conclusion, we understand the Public Assistance Program is a complex and often complicated program. Our team is working on recommendations which will hopefully reduce this complexity, by utilizing the survey results. It is our hope that the survey helped to flush out the most problematic areas of the PA program so recommendations can be made.

Lori Hodges. I also want to add something about the role of contractors in disaster assistance. The fact that most of the people who come during a disaster are contractors and there is no incentive to expedite disaster assistance because FEMA has to work with contractors.

Vision Roadmap Subcommittee

Sue Anne Bell. The vision, mission, and guiding principles as of now is spanning two years where we developed a vision statement and then worked to develop recommendations that are actionable with respect to that vision. The word “nimble” in particular is one we try to incorporate across the vision. We have focused on the key things we needed in a road map. Our committee worked really hard to narrow things down into what is practical and actionable and in our 2045 road map we’ve thought a lot about recommendations that might need legislation verse those that need internal program realignment. We also thought about recommendations that will fit within FEMA’s strategic plan. We wanted to capitalize on the executive orders. We’ve taken our recommendations and put them into buckets about where we see them on the roadmap, think about when a recommendation could happen immediately and those that could happen in the medium term. There is also the executive standard recommendation. We moved on to a gap analysis thinking about the previous slide and our bucketed recommendations and brainstorm bumps in the road. We went back to the vision statement where we thought about: Equitable Outcomes, Transformational Force, Unites Whole Community, Equitably Builds Resiliency, Data-driven and Risk-Informed, Builds Human Capital.

In our gap analysis we came to three core gaps around expanding human capital and capacity, developing common risk framework for and common operating pictures, and enhancing intergovernmental relationships. Some of our ideas were around building youth preparedness and further preparedness and outreach to younger generations. We talked about using high school as a pathway to higher education and incorporating some emergency management trainings into high schools.

We’ve also recognized the important of leveraging programs including CyberCorps. We talked about Sesame Street and using social media campaigns and private sector partners and the value in terms of youth preparedness. We also talked about integrated teams. We heard already about Jeff Stern’s idea for standing field offices and imbedding the team within SLTTs. Another important part of FIT teams is around transitions in political leadership and fit teams being embedded in political transitions could build regional coordination. Had some coordination with others in the private sector.

Jasper Cooke. I want to put a major gold star emphasis on this one. There is nothing else FEMA could do beyond continue to reform and support the workforce. There is also an advocacy and persuasion role and looking forward to November you have to raise some of these issues and emphasize these issues and your advocacy role as a group. You have to require the senior executive service to take care of their employees. If we want to be successful 20 years down the road that has to keep going up.

Sue Anne Bell. I want to make the point around advocacy and persuasion to the Administrator. That’s an important role for all members of the NAC and bring them together. This subcommittee is a unique role where we are thinking about equity and EDA. We also had an idea was partnering with NIST doing the bulk of this work or exploring the best place to do that. We concluded that in 2045 FEMA should be a body that helps drive local focus, resources & expertise.

PRESENTATION: BUSINESS EXECUTIVES IN NATIONAL SECURITY (BENS) COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE ENTERPRISE (CNRE)

The purpose of this session was to hear from BENS representatives on their recent report. The NAC heard from General Joe Votel, President & CEO, BENS; Rear Admiral Joe Nimmich, Former Deputy Administrator of FEMA; and Samuel Cole, Principal, Stonecutter Ventures LLC.

Opening Remarks

Jasper Cooke. The BENS Commission has been working on a report of their own that was finished in November 2020 – there are different areas of focus, but they are here today to talk about how our groups might coordinate together on shared goals.

General Joseph Votel. I want to start off by giving a special thank you to Pamela Williams – she has point us towards shared goals for possible partnership and a special thank you to Jim Waskom. Jim showed up this year with the entire Louisiana emergency management leadership team and demonstrated real leadership. Now is the time for transformational thinking about transformational policy responses. It was interesting to read the most recent NAC report and the vision for 2045. Like the NAC, the commission sees FEMA as a tool for change. I am speaking on behalf of the Business Executives for National Security. We address business related challenges across the national security enterprise, sharing expertise, recommendations, and best practices from our own experience in the private sector. FEMA directors David Paulson and Craig Fugate, along with 58 business leaders who interviewed 185 people to create our report. We asked about roles and responsibilities, surge, supplies, and components of an integrated response capability. We found that significant and execution challenges do exist and there are gaps in the systems. There was a surge in supply chains across all sectors during the COVID-19 response and until these weaknesses are addressed, they impair our citizens and threaten our national security.

In terms of emergency response policies and processes we found that many of the commissions guiding principles – especially the vision for FEMA in 2045 – are critical. There are many ideas where we are aligned, and we speak the same language around risk and around all actions of emergency response. For example, the commission strongly advocates that guaranteed access to broadband – more than 19 million citizens have no access to real time threat and emergency hazard information. Their ability to carry out their responsibilities is undermined and inequitable. On this issue, we've come up with eleven recommendations are focused on three primary areas: facilitating communication and coordinating, volunteering resources. We also encourage amending the Stafford act to include pandemic and cyber issues.

In terms of the establishment of expense reported authority, we would consider redesigning FEMA's national response coordination center and creating a common operating picture. This could look like a surge center that can create increased situational awareness, offer access to AI enabled predictive analytics, and launching or training civilian expertise reserves modeled after the National Guard with rapid response capabilities. These issues are driving IT modernization and crucial to the national response framework. We are working hard in the Senate and House and we are looking forward to carrying your message on the topics where we are aligned. Involving everyone at the nexus of power and innovation I believe we can beat this timeline before

Joseph Nimmich. There was a very similar exercise to COVID-19 that occurred in 2019. An exercise like that with FEMA would be great. The national guard supports the department of defense and we should have similar thing with FEMA.

Joseph Votel. In the business community people feel like they are seen as vendors not actors and we should recognize that no one agency or sector of government can address and serve the emergency management field by itself. It is important that we look at business as partners rather than vendors.

Discussion

Dante Disparte. This is the criticism not to let go to waste. COVID-19 was the big risk in 2020 and if there is anything we can do from here to learn from our mistakes we should. To be on the receiving end of the Defense Production Act is challenging for firms but at the same time firms that provide assistance get a societal benefit.

Joseph Votel. We shouldn't limit this to the traditional companies most reached out to as well, but we've learned that more non-traditional businesses have an impact on this as well. We've learned a lot about that through the small business chamber.

Sam Cole. I would just make three points here, the first and with some specificity is to accelerate of the deployment of 5G. There are obviously larger tele-companies that are engaged here and are extremely well-adjusted companies and a lot of tech policies are. We need to pay attention when subsidizing the development and technology deployment throughout the united states. The second point I would make here is that one of our recommendations has to do with the ISAC and service to industries. We recommended an expansion for some of these companies.

Nicolette Louissaint. My first question is about the Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) model. There is a conversation about the ongoing surveillance and critical infrastructure modeling that is not disseminated outside of the one line we get from DHS and all of those other structures that serve as public-private mechanisms. Is it a matter of expanding their charge and changing where they sit? My second question relates to the surveillance or analysis. A lot of the recommendations shared had me questioning if that is a role for FEMA or for CISA for Cybersecurity – a lot of the descriptions did seem to align with what the mandate for CISA should be. I'm wondering if there is another place wherever the capabilities of CISA versus FEMA and where the private sectors role should be. Should the private sectors' role be more teased out and granular? The is a private sector office now in response and recovery even during COVID it has taken on a scope far broader than it was meant to be. What do vendors input into the response?

Sue Anne Bell: I googled ISAC: An Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) is an industry-specific organization that gathers and shares information on cyber threats to critical infrastructure. ISACs also facilitate the sharing of data between public and private sector groups.

Nicolette Louissaint. ESF#14 / National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) is run by SZA not OB31 creating a confusing way for the way FEMA is supposed to integrate the business sector. Our job is to make sure that we are maintaining an information-sharing environment.

Joe Nimmich. Your observations are on the mark and ESF14 should the ISAC of ISACs so during a disaster you have representation from all the critical infrastructures are imbedded into one of those lifelines. That's why it moved over to response. ISACs have to be engaged in the NRCC at ESF14. All the ESFs are run by different agencies but it needs to be there with every ISAC having a seat. There should be someone from SZA that sits inside the 7-24. Same thing for the relationship between FEMA and Asper that is continuous. I also want to talk about the defense production act. We don't have defense industry identification for the emergency response sector.

Elizabeth Edge. FEMA OB31 is Office of Business, Industry, and Infrastructure Integration Division housed in the Logistics Management Directorate in Office of Response and Recovery

Nicolette Louissaint: I'd also be supportive of that ESF-14 role being housed solely within FEMA with support from CISA. It may play out better in a response.

Sam Cole. I would just add slightly to this. One of the elements we emphasized throughout our report is collaboration with FEMA around the internet of things, broadband, data-lite, a lot of things where it is critically important that there is collaboration across a number of entities in the government. When we think about the IOT (internet of things) supply chain that requires that FEMA, the ISACs, coordinate openly coordinate and with CISA is important.

Joseph Votel. We heard this a lot talking to the business community – this is a situation that needs more clarity. One of the most important things you can do is the excusing and education before a situation occurs and bringing the business community into this.

Steve Birnbaum. I did want to touch on something that you and Admiral Nimmich touched on in terms of exercising. I've always looked at how we can bring the private sector into exercises where failure is the point. There is always the bias that we exercise to success not to failure – how do we change the culture so that failure is expected and even experiment side by side with A/B scenarios?

Joseph Votel. The military tried to address this because training to a positive conclusion is never the case. What we had to do was get people into process – observer controllers – that watch the conduct and make notes and at periodic sessions brought all the players back to reality and holds everybody honest. Culturally you have to replace after action reviews and look at what you did and people providing a critical review of how they did this.

Joe Nimmich. I have two major concerns – technology has moved and we're still using the capabilities we've had in the past and there are conversations I've had with FEMA about the capabilities. It's a hard thing to look out 30 years and see how things will function after they are going. I was convinced of this when I was at FEMA and now that having a professional, trained, compensated guard so there is enough capacity for whatever we face. I've heard a lot of people say make it a part of the national guard, but they are unique because they are part of the DOD and they are protective about what they do and do not do.

Sam Cole. No entity wants to give up highly sensitive data via exercises and as a last point one of the things we did recommend is to build a digital twin table-top exercise, we think something like that needs to be funded and prioritized.

Jasper Cooke. DOD pays a lot to maintain the capacity – over 700 billion but FEMA’s budget is about 20 billion, not an apples to apples comparison but the point is we pay a lot to maintain vital capacity for security but less to maintain capacity for COVID, hurricanes, etc. If you want the capacity, it just takes money.

Brad Richy. To me your presentation hits right on with some specific focus points. What I’ve learned is that locals are used to doing business with certain businesses. It was nice to see NBOC to see daily reports and when I look at Cascadia rising 2022 which will have a significant participation from the private sector. We don’t seem to have the capability to have state, local business community communicate with emergency management. We have to come together and work technology issues out ahead of time. We can’t recover without the private sector being engaged, some investments need to be made at the higher level and Cascadia rising will be critical.

Joseph Votel. We have tried to share examples like you just highlighted right there, we are focused at a national level and recognize there are local solutions where people are figuring this out.

Same Cole. Briefly our working group highlighted something under development in the private sector where private sector can contribute data which is stripped of sensitive information which can then be shared.

Joseph Nimmich. There is no technological impediment except knowing how data are can be used. The biggest challenge we have is trusting our data. The more you use it the more you trust it. Also, the concept of are you supporting or are you supported? Emergency managers allocate scarcity. If they had everything, they needed they wouldn’t get far.

Jim Waskom. You can’t stop at the response phase. I would like to hear your thoughts on an interagency working group. I had an hour-long conversation with the CEO of Cameron Natural Gas Plant, one of his biggest challenges is that he doesn’t have housing. Right now, it takes on average 2-half to three years to get after this problem and that’s too late. We don’t focus on the private sector initial because FEMA programs are not directed at that. They are directed at the individual survivor.

Joseph Votel. Your point about how you organize these things – shared awareness about how we’re going to address this. This oftentimes falls to the special operations community. Didn’t mean we were always in charge or the decision making, more about shared awareness. I look at FEMA as an accelerator organization.

Joseph Nimmich. FEMA will be there during the response but then the recovery drags on and we can’t do that anymore. WE need more day to day engagement and exercise recovery. Most money goes to response. Also, your report was close to what BENS did and FEMA’s self-assessment.

BENS Presentation Zoom Chat

Nicolette Louissaint. I’d also be supportive of that ESF-14 role being housed solely within FEMA w support from CISA. It may play out better in a response.

Dutch Geisinger. Nicolette, I think your comment would absolute with the roles and responsibilities outlined within CISA. As much as they play a part in risk management and relationship building between critical infrastructure and government agencies, they are not equipped to manage the role of NBEOC during disasters. They info they collect can help define dependencies and interdependencies, prevent potential cascading impacts, and assist in critical decision-making during disasters and they need to be at the table.

Jackie Lindsey. The implementation of AAR seems to be broken. How do we fix and ensure implementation?

Paul Downing. I had a classmate who was in the Cascadia Event Rising Exercise as a State EOC Operations Chief in 2016. The AAR is an eye opener, most of her observations she shared were about failure not success. Here is the link to the AAR... <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3149651-CR16-AAR-Final.html>

Nicolette Louissaint. Dutch, I wholeheartedly agree. I also think the switching of the roles has put CISA in the position of having more resources (mainly staffing and analysis inputs from the NRMC), with the NBEOC being left behind.

Thursday, May 6, 2021

PANEL: FEMA IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of this session was for the NAC to hear from FEMA leadership on priorities in the new administration. The NAC spoke with Administrator Deanne Criswell; Mr. Justin Knighten, Director, Office of External Affairs; and Ms. Cynthia Spishak, Associate Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Analysis.

Administrator Criswell Opening Remarks

Administrator Criswell. I know that I had a really short time on the NAC but I really enjoyed the weeks that I participated in this process. I know the work you are doing is so important and the charges align with the direction I want to take the agency. What I'll say coming into this position I am bringing my recent experience in NYC and impacts a local large jurisdiction and my time in Aroura, Colorado with a smaller jurisdiction. I know one of the challenges is continuing to expedite disaster assistance especially this year with the impacts of Covid-19.

I have four key priorities coming into this role.

1. Taking care of the workforce, I know you are addressing this as well – our workforce has been stressed really thin – we are pulled in a lot of directions supporting initiatives that are forefront across the country right now but also investing in them and their career progression and there is a lot we can do as an agency so we create more capability and support the workforce as the execute the mission
2. Readiness for the disaster response readiness. We become the defacto group of individuals that can come in and “fix anything”. This is a wonderful ability –I learning how to get across the bureaucracy and working but as you continue to do great work it distracts from your ability to get more tasks
3. Think about how we can do system wide mitigation to reduce risk. I was asked a lot about how to protect fiscal exposure and the best way to do that is to reduce the risk to those disasters – that’s a long-term investment strategy we need to put in place. We have opportunities like with the BRIC program that are long-term and flexible and innovative. I’ve been using my time as a fire fighter, there were days when there were a lot of fires but there was also a lot of investment in fire prevention.
4. Cross cuts everything – diversity equity and inclusion can’t just be a buzzword, we need o learn how to institutionalize that whether that’s internally or externally that’s going to be a critical component and making sure we are reaching out to communities that are underrepresented and under supported.

I’ll continue to refine those and share some actionable items on those.

Questions for Administrator Criswell

Dante Disparte. We are asking FEMA to do more when Congress and the political system and our economy can give less. It’s hard not to think of the role of technology – parametric insurance, etc. – can create leverage for resilience. Where do you see technology playing a part?

Administrator Criswell. The things we have learned over the past year can teach us, what have we learned how to do virtually? There is a starting point to see innovation which will help us reduce that strain on our workforce to better guide our decision making. This can make a big difference so they can get back and ready for the next event. Technology fits into all of the priorities.

Paul Downing. My role as a tribal voice – one of the things we are noticing in Indian country is an inconsistent application of the rules. Covid is novel, there is a lot of guess work, what I’ve been hearing is that. John brought this up yesterday that this is an excellent platform for learning as we move forward. Tribes don’t want to hear the buzzwords and then find ourselves in the same position that we were in in 2013. There are other demographics in that same boat, my question is simple – is there going to be a consistent interpretation across the board or regions?

Administrator Criswell. At headquarters we have a responsibility to make sure standards are being interpreted equitably. With such a big country though we need to have some level of flexibility. That balance is hard to strike but it goes to the point of not just saying equity but making sure that we are living that.

Jim Waskom. My question goes to your second priority --- response enterprise. With grants it seems that they become more difficult for staff at the local level, some discussion of not using Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) for salaries and asking that it not become more challenging than it already is. As a profession we’ve come a long way as emergency managers and if we do get more requirements, I ask that we get more support.

Administrator Criswell. On the EMPG grants, I'll have to look and see what the new requirements are, I'll definitely look into that, we have to define what we are using it for. Salaries or capability gained through a salary. I remember well those short turnaround times let me work with the team and see where they are at.

John Grathwol. Everybody in the profession of disaster recovery and management can't really compare disasters, a hurricane in two cities is different. Even comparing the same disaster makes it hard to measure how you are doing. COVID is a national disaster, good opportunity for the agency to measure the success of PA.

Administrator Criswell. That's a great point you are right I'll take that to the team.

Nim Kidd. Thank you for your long history of work and time on the NAC. We are here to support you and you can challenge us.

Administrator Criswell. Thank you so much. Don't worry, I will come up with my own charges and look forward to hearing about your work.

Other Panelist Remarks

Cynthia Spishak. I want to thank Administrator Criswell. OPPIA is responsible for coordinating a preparing the agency for transition, the strategic plan, and today I wanted to share how we've been walking through the transition. Since the inauguration we've seen quite a few executive orders – 64 to be exact, several directly overlap with FEMA's ongoing work. FEMA and our partners have taken an agency wide approach. We've made good progress so far in terms of closing out and in addition to the vaccination mission. We also expanded federal PA available to our communities. We've established a couple of bodies across the agencies, we're participating in White House organizations working on COVID, there will be additional ones on equity and climate changes. Two enterprise steering groups focusing on equity and climate change, this will be an important way to think about how we deliver our programs, enduring approach. Four of the executive orders required action from FEMA to address climate change, one of the was advancing racial equity and those exposed or exacerbated by inequalities. We've sent out a memo on policymaking and finally protecting public health and the environment. Prioritizing environmental justice is a priority too. There has been a lot of executive actions and I'm proud of the progress we've made in advancing their intent.

Strategic plans are each five years and our current plan goes through 2022, during this transition we can reflect on what we've done and can leverage what we've learned. Consider the perspectives of those that we serve, we'll have engagements throughout the year. I know the NAC has been charged with addressing equity in emergency management – this is an important part of our feedback group. We are also focused on a learning agenda and the big questions we want to ask ourselves about our programs and outcomes. While it has been a challenging response this is also an exciting time.

Justin Knighten. I'm the Director of External Affairs. This is everything from education reform to human rights work. We are working on making emergency managers more accessible to people who need them – adults, people with disabilities, people of color – we found that 88% of the most vulnerable people got the message that they need to get prepared but the majority of them never take action because they find it time consuming expensive and scary -- they are just trying to survive for today. What we've found in doing this work, you also have to prepare and navigate response challenges – our languages are not accessible, I've been tapped in this role to complement the work of our colleagues and think about how we can produce information in a way that is more accessible. We are very active in these climate and equity work groups to solve challenges in decisions but in terms of EA how do we think about communities that haven't been reached out to consistently in the past. The mission of FEMA and emergency management at all levels is so connected to the success of our communities. What I've found that in doing this work is that people are shocked that there are emergency managers in their communities that have a responsibility to show up – shocked that there are emergency response plans a structure in place for what a response looks like, I think there is a disconnect between how we are leading in a community and our job is to find out where that disconnect is and put support systems in place that communities will benefit from. The program and policy and strategy leads communications not the other way around. We are excited to hear from you and the experts as we navigate where we need to go to better serve our communities.

Discussion

Sue Anne Bell. Thanks for telling us about your role, we've spent a lot of time talking about youth preparedness. I'm interested in hearing more about FEMA's initiatives in youth preparedness and I'm interested in hearing about how the visions subcommittee can make inroads here and throw out an invitation.

Justin Knighten. We talk about culture change; youth preparedness is squarely aligned with that. I just got a briefing out of operational resilience and the work being done with that, different youth ambassadors a developing on the outreach side and preparedness side of the house. I'm not the expert but I will flag this and reach out to the people in this space. We are committed to having a stronger connection to the space of youth preparedness.

Cynthia Spishak. I'm excited to see some of the energy that Justin is bringing to this. In terms of things that you could do to help us – if there are gaps we don't know about or haven't identified that's helpful for us to know.

Donald Bliss. In your strategic planning efforts how much attention to you pay to the recommendations? How organic is that in your process? The NAC recommendations are one of our inputs there are several things to look at, we are grateful to have Deanne onboard and we think about some of the other drivers like administration priorities and trends and cross-cutting foresights especially. It is a longer term process and we work at the direction of the administrator.

Pamela Williams. Both of your offices play a tremendous role in identifying legislative priorities. Has there been discussions about FEMA developing legislative priorities? Visions have broken down past recs into regulatory and legislative priorities. It has been a few years since FEMA has a robust legislative agenda.

Cynthia Spishak. I think there will be more conversations coming.

Justin Knighten. What we are waiting for is our political team to be built out and at the temperature of the White House. A lot has been presented in the executive orders. There should be in a thoughtful and intentional way focus on outcomes. Right now, we are hyper focused on COVID mission and getting parts of the country to think about what that means and readiness around hurricane season. Eager to have this conversation.

Lisa Jones. The Administrator mentioned the importance of receiving stakeholder feedback from the end user, you also mentioned meeting people where they are. What are your strategies on how you're receiving that stakeholder feedback? Would also like to invite you to our subcommittee.

Justin Knighten. Our feedback strategies in this space is already made public, we've issued a request for information to get feedback from the public. The actual system we have in place for getting feedback to federal government is not accessible, a ton of barriers, does not mean these processes shouldn't be deployed but what we're doing is thinking about how can we overlay accessibility when community based organizations (CBOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs) don't have infrastructure to respond to a federal system of input. Overlay and supplement with outreach on Facebook live and other tools -- using what is possible and what is already in place. We just started this conversation about what is in place when we're not reaching consensus when we don't have the time to have a big model for data collection, focus groups, working sessions, this year. Over time we could have this strategy, but right now we are looking at short-term input strategies. Often times we as emergency managers use Spanish, but we need to go beyond this and consider populations and cultural competency to service a range of communities.

Lisa Jones. This falls into our bucket of procedural equity.

Donald Bliss. As part of the strategic plan will you be looking back at what worked and didn't work?

Cynthia Spishak. Every year we get strategic guidance with regular review cycles and full assessments of challenges and what went well. It's okay "fail" but we have to consider that the words really matter in terms of the framing.

FEMA Leadership Panel Zoom Chat

Jo Linda Johnson. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_civil-rights-summits-2020-after-action-report.pdf

PANEL: FEMA EQUITY

The purpose of this session was for the NAC to hear from FEMA leaders on internal equity efforts. The NAC spoke with Dr. Melissa Forbes, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Recovery Directorate; Ms. Katherine Fox, Assistant Administrator, Mitigation; Mr. Paul Huang, Associate Administrator, Resilience; and Ms. Jo Linda Johnson, Director, Office of Equal Rights.

Panelist Opening Remarks

Jo Linda Johnson. I'd like to go back to a question for Justin Knighten and Cynthia Spishak – what some of the ways are in which we at FEMA receive feedback? I posted an after-action report recently and has hosted three summits

focused on equity, environmental justice, and disability groups. We are always receiving feedback from stakeholders. We are committed to holding these summits routinely, so stakeholders have a venue to express concerns.

Returning to the equity panel and topic hand, I'd like to take this change to talk about our equity efforts within FEMA and set the stage with what we have done so far. I briefed the administrator this morning on what I am calling "five equity buckets" that the office of equal rights is working on right now. We've talked about the executive orders and so far, there has been more than a dozen about equity and thinking about outcomes differently. Executive orders are one bucket – the recommendations and the charge from the NAC – that charge dub tails quite with EO 13985. We also have a several OMB working groups that are associated with the various executive orders. We also have two enterprise-wide steering groups, a climate adaption ESG and an equity ESG co-chaired by my office. We've gotten operational leadership and civil rights leadership from Paul's office as well. We have taken pains to make sure that we have folks from across the agency with different responsibilities in the agency. Finally, we have the internal ongoing equity work of my office. FEMA is working to identify the root causes of inequity to improve the culture and make it a more inclusive environment for everyone.

Paul Huang. I'd like to tell a story about Warren Buffet who is worth over \$100B and planning on giving away 99.7% of his wealth. When asked why he was giving away all of the money he told a story about a lottery winner who could choose to be in any society – they would want to be in the society that gives them a fair shot. We should be doing this an agency – giving everyone a fair shot. Over time, there has been an attempt to create barriers or obstacles. The FEMA COVID vaccination mission is inspiring. I had the opportunity to go to our Atlanta community vaccination center. The location in Atlanta was nearby to a socially vulnerable area and it had access to public transportation. It opened at 6am and closed a midnight to stay open for people working long hours. We had walk-up lines and the biggest delay was me putting data in the iPad. We all have the shared mission of helping people. There is enough to do for delivery to be fairer. We are looking at home value for the first time in our program's history. Last year there were thirty named storms and those impacts are far greater for vulnerable communities. We've added two questions to every priority review: how we look at equity and policy impacts and have we looked at climate change.

Katherine Fox. We know that vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted in emergency management – this is fact. The folks that don't have savings aren't able to take care of unexpected expenses and have worst outcomes from disasters. I've worked on FEMA's recovery programs and seen vast difference in recovery. I've had the opportunity to work on the equity assessment that Jo Linda mentioned. As many of you know, we started with a major stakeholder effort and we've heard from many of you. We are working to increase access to programs and reduce barriers to entry. We've set a three-prong approach, focusing on what our criteria are, how they are being selected, how are we driving equitable outcomes, and then we looked at cost-share requirements. There are things we could do to be more flexible like increasing cost share. Right now mitigation programs are capped at 75%. We established brand new selection criteria and incentivize and think about how we can make those vulnerable communities more resilience. In terms of capacity building there is a huge need for greater investment in resilience. There are some examples of excellence and we've added additional flexibly into what was eligible, specifically how to measure the scope and effect of our projects. We've also invented a new pilot program to offer customized technical assistance, help us learn to deliver Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) more equitability. Simply put, there are equity implications across the board. Even in something like floodplain management, something we build in minimum structures incur 65% less damage and here we've saved 100 billion since flood insurance was first created. We need to help people get into safer and more resilience situations. In terms of how we give services to our stakeholders we have emergency managers and floodplain managers across the broad.

We've also started looking at making training courses virtual. As we see that in action, there are big equity implications. We get diverse attendance and expanded attendance and hitting those communities we haven't been able to reach in the pasta. This week we actually had our flagship annual hazard mitigation partnership workshop going on, focusing on resilience, equity, and future conditions. We went all virtual and we are able to more than double our historical participation. We heard from several speakers about equity from NGOs and the mayor of Baton Rouge talked about the importance of intentionally and the need to focus on people when talking about equity. One of FEMA's major responsibilities is providing grant programs and they need to better align with efforts of states and localities. We finalize the national mitigation investment strategy in 2019 and one of things we recognized was that we need to consider impacts and the needs of specific conditions like how to better achieve outcome sand better align our priorities. We have built equity and future conditions into our three-year. Equity and climate change are part of that.

Melissa Forbes. I'll start by saying that recovery has a leg up in doing equity work for several reasons. We are laser-focused on equity as we move into hurricane and wildfire season. We'd like to find some quick ways to support the

field and give them data and analysis and look through operations through an equity lens and this conversation is ongoing and moving fast. We are focused on the near-term and the long term. Beyond that, we have a bunch of policy stuff, specifically public assistance, and COVID-19 medical policy. Equity and disaster working group has put together to set a framework for how we evaluate policies and are updating. The president signed an executive order focused on ensuring an equitable pandemic recovery. Within this updated medical care policy that recipients and subrecipients we are focusing on equitable delivering of vaccines as well. The Stafford Act mentions marginalized populations, so we have asked recipients and subrecipients to report to us what they are doing vaccine funding how they are accounting for CDC social vulnerability. The regional administrators are tip of the sphere. With the first round of equity submissions on April 14th, 75% submitted on time, 90% completed the application, and less than 5% needed a second pass through. This is a testament to the partnership to the regions and state level staff and using this data. Implementing more high-level analysis will be a huge focus and we could not have done any of this without our OER colleagues using compliance law and civil rights law. People have to be comfortable with the lexicon of equity.

Emergency management and people who enter this field are already oriented towards equity. I think people come into this profession have a helping orientation. Having these equity orientations across the agency is valuable to help build that competency. Internally, policy development we just completed with OER partners for recovery and internal framework for assessing new policies. Thank you to the NAC for the definitions of policy. We have a very excited staff and leadership and we welcome your feedback, questions, or input.

Discussion

Warren Miller. There has to be intentional guidance as we partner with states in dealing with vulnerable communities who receive the resources that are coming to FEMA. We've been giving guidance and expectations but there weren't those things that we delivered. I think it is important that has to be a front-end piece to do our response or recovery or mitigation. We have to be intentional with these things on the front-end.

Jo Linda. Thank you for your comments. Catherine, Melissa, and Paul spoke well to intentionally – and the recovery side. There is quite a bit of thought and intentionality that goes into this.

Melissa Forbes. The work OER did with SAS for vaccine sites is just a model to making sure our field leaders have access to the same tools and give them the decision support tools that are easy to understand and don't require reviewing 500 pages of spreadsheet files. I'm excited to do this because there is a lot of great information, it's just a matter of pulling it together for a field leader trying to make decisions in the moment.

Kevin Staley. I'd like to go back to something Ms. Forbes said -- you made a comment saying the employees of FEMA where they are already inclined to do equity. You have an outstanding workforce and I echo the positive comments, but saying everyone is inclined to do equity creates a blind spot. We don't want to miss something and automatically assume that the workforce is inclusive.

Melissa Forbes. You bring up a great point – the group I am talking about is passionate and self-organizing. We are building out permeant staff to do that work. We still have some cultural literacy that we have to build and training and education, especially for folks that haven't been in that environment.

Paul Huang. FEMA's various employee resource groups have been educated on various communities. Allyship is very important when we talk about socially vulnerable communities. Jo Linda and Jeff are talking about curriculum before you deploy someone – before you are deployed a reminder about unconscious biases is important.

Jeff Hansen. I'd like to bring up a couple of points. When we are talking about equity, I understand that there are regulatory challenges, legislative challenges that lead to inequity. Policy or guidance can be addressed with relative ease. I think we need to be on the same page in understanding there are things to address with rapid policy. The other thing I want to bring up – I've heard a lot about data sets and stakeholders. Tribes and native villages in Alaska – continued to run into issues because of the lack of data. How engaged are you with the tribes to address the inequities within Indian country? Where are you getting the data sets? A lot of tribes struggle with data collection – even the oral stories that is data. How actively are we engaging those traditional methods of knowledge?

Jo Linda Johnson. We want to leave space for regional colleagues to provide information – they often have more than we do at headquarters level. Civil rights requirements on data collection have been in place, but our follow-up is new to a lot of folks and that's why we put those advertisements out. Happy to circle back on that.

Katherine Fox. There are different national level data sets available and a big gap is the availability downscale that. This is one of the things we are going to need to get on top of if we want to move the needle in having more equitable outcomes.

Lisa Jones. Mr. Huang, you talked about the importance of cultural sensitivity training and that was our recommendation in the fall. Happy that you are thinking of that and you are in a leadership role to direct that to happen. My question goes to two questions that you guys have created this guidance about equity and climate change – if it was an individual perspective or if you were talking them collectively? Before I retired in Phoenix, we got some funding because we wanted to create a heat ready instead of a storm ready. In affluent areas there was a difference up to 15 degrees – the temperature didn't go down in those areas. They had to travel five times further in those areas. How do we come up with where we put the trees? How do we come up with the next bus stop? How did you all view equity and climate change?

Paul Huang. This is a prompting questions to start changes in our culture. We have two larger agency enterprise steering groups and they are intertwined. We have made sure that the membership has touch points across. The questions really are to start getting all the way down to our staff members and dealing with reviewing our grant and even doing contract work. We've briefed Ms. Tierney on the capability assessment we are doing, going state by state and laying that out to see where our gaps are. We shouldn't set up a grant where helpers are needed to apply for it – it should be fair or non-profits step in because they see a void.

Steve Birnbaum. On the EDA subcommittee we've sent out a survey to emergency managers around the country. One of the questions was related to the use of GIS and electronic use of tools and data collection tools, in the smaller jurisdictions there is no use because of a lack of budget for the tools or a lack of knowledge in the staff. When you are looking on making data sets available, are you looking at the challenge of how to use these tools?

Melissa Forbes. We are finding that if we are asking people to use these tools and data that is really a place for the federal government to step in with websites, dashboards, open FEMA, look at a heat-map and see where their potential problem spots are or engage earlier. I don't think we should have an expectation that a small or underserved jurisdiction are going to have that skillset.

Paul Huang. In the flood insurance space, we are realizing that FEMA cannot do everything at once. The database is very easy to use. We realize that the private sector does get it down to day-to-day people. The more partnerships we see with private sector entities, we need to be well connected to that so that it is easily consumable data. EHP has also changed in the support model and we need a unified review. In the climate change space, we are going to have to think about hitting the Biden administration's goal by 2050 of no emissions.

James Waskom. Katherine mentioned CMBG and the cost share match. The issue with breaking with hazard mitigation is those communities who keep getting hit can't come up with the cost share and BRIC is trying to get at that. Unless you get a catastrophic disaster then a lot of these communities are stuck. Maybe we come up with criterion that says it is a catastrophic disaster is triggers some kind of cost share match. If we can't speed that up it just brings everything to a halt, and it stays that way for months.

Katherine Fox. That's a good point and the truth is we don't have the same flexibility that our public assistance counterparts do. We are capped at 75% for most of our grants. Similar programs in other countries consider small or disadvantaged communities. We have done a cost share webinar to highlight what the requirements are and what some of those in-kind match opportunities could look like The kind of partnership we hope to support in the development there and could even use as a catalyst.

John Grathwol. We hear time and again that we have under-invested in infrastructure. We need to look at ways to figure out how to spend more on mitigation. What does the country need? Some countries use a negative interest rate for cost benefit analysis of climate change. What can law and calculation authorities do?

Melissa Forbes. Right, and equity requires tradeoffs. Individuals versus communities and who we are focusing on. In some circumstances there is pressure to rebuild in places that aren't sustainable. Equity is one piece of the pie, but it does require tradeoffs.

FEMA Equity Panel Zoom Chat

Paul Huang. <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/products-tools/national-risk-index>

Lori Hodges. The "how to get to yes" has not trickled down to the regional levels. EHP is incredibly difficult at the applicant / subapplicant level.

Jeff Hansen. Very true Lori.

Paul Downing. Good point Lori! Much like the reducing the complexity of FEMA, did that happen??

Paul Huang. We'll take that message back to our EHP team and discuss with the Regions.

Pam Williams. Lori, you are EXACTLY right! That is the roadblock we keep running into!

Rob Long. FYI - MitFLG - <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/mitigation/mitflg#>

Paul Downing. I'll apologize upfront for my focus on these issues around Tribes, the opportunity to have these discussions openly with higher HQ presents itself and I have to take that opportunity.

Jeanne Abadie. Paul, no apologies needed. Your questions can often be (at least in part) generalized to other under recognized or under noticed groups.

Melissa Forbes. Not at all. We welcome the feedback, and tribal engagement and flexibility has to be part of any equity discussion.

Paul Downing. Kci Woliwon (Very big gratitude!)

Warren Miller. The COVID-19 Federally Supported response and the 39 identified FEMA Vaccine Administration sites creates an opportunity and forum for recruitment and engagement of diverse community candidates (ie local HBCU students and NPHC Divine 9 representatives). This would be an opportunity to help with promote recruiting and engaging future diverse candidates for FEMA Management and staff.

Deanna Dahl-Grove. Warren. Great idea.

Paul Downing. Warren, that's definitely a step in the right direction and could be expanding easily to more.

PANEL: GRANTS AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The purpose of this session was for the NAC to hear from FEMA leaders in the grants and public assistance space. The NAC spoke with Mr. Chris Logan, Acting Assistant Administrator, Grant Programs Directorate; and Ms. Ana Montero, Director, Public Assistance Division, Recovery Directorate.

Opening Panelist Remarks

Chris Logan. The work we have been doing in support of the pandemic has mostly been in support of the priorities of Secretary Mayorkas. There are two separate appropriations for SLTTs to help with the pandemic. 400 million is for the coronavirus preparedness act and 100 million for COVID-specific personal protective assistance. We opened the application four weeks after the president signed that act and we had the money following shortly thereafter. We had a hiccup in volunteer fire departments and wound up doing the round of funding and second round of funding later in the fall. Most of the awards have now been made, one award that we were having some issues with. The second program was 100 million with the emergency management performance grant programs. All of the awards were made within a month of the passage of the appropriations act. We award 200 million on April 17th. We then received 900 million through the American rescue plan and 110 million through the emergency food and shelter program. This has gone into targeted to humanitarian relief along the southwest border. The application for that program closes in 8 days and we will be making those awards throughout the rest of the summer. There's been 320 million in AFG and 355 million in Safer and 35 million in fire prevention. We are in the process of working through the 20 awards and additional money for 2021 is roll it into the normal FY20 programs. We expect to double the size of the FY21 funding for each of those three programs. There are also several programmatic and risk methodology reviews that Secretary Mayorkas has asked us to conduct. The previous administration directed changes to preparedness grants programs, programmatically there will be change to risk formula and how we distribute those dollars. We got the appropriation around the middle of December.

We had a change in administration and we got on the calendar with Secretary Mayorkas to have a long talk about the various programs. Secretary Mayorkas asked us to roll some programs back and engage in listening sessions with state and local partners in order for us to come back with recommendations so he could make a decision. We have

had listening sessions with SAs, we had a session solely with law enforcement agencies, the team is wrapping up a session with tribal partners. We've discussed increasing a tax on soft targets, houses of worship, entertainment. We are also thinking about cyber-attacks, drones as potential weapons, domestic terrorists. In terms of programmatic review and risk review we are thinking about what changes we need to make.

Ana Montero. I'm coming up on my six-month anniversary with FEMA. Today I get to talk about the great work that the PA team has been doing before my time at FEMA. I truly believe in the positive impact we can make. Disaster recovery is provided in an equitable manner and developing strategies to ensure that it is. We need to ensure our funding is delivered equitably and to the most vulnerable communities. How we are trying to simplify the public assistance program. The agency and the PA program have made huge contributions to the response to the pandemic. We have provided over \$23B for support for COVID, which includes \$5B for SLTTs for vaccination. This work includes an introduction and a focus on ensuring the equitable provision of assistance for every American. I am focused on understanding the workload that is being generated for the program. The nationwide pandemic is making every entity eligible for public assistance. This workload has been historic for the agency. The President directed us to spare no efforts, no expense and that is where we are. The program will do everything we can to support local communities and we are going to make sure our funding flows as quickly as possible.

While there is a specific NAC charge – we are working to build equity in the program to have an accessible process for all of our programs. I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with many of our program stakeholders. One of the biggest challenges I have faced on equity is to be better able to navigate a complicated public assistance program. For less resourced customers, their experience is more work than the program obligations are worth. We want to simplify the customer experience and take a risk-based approach. The PA program addresses a large scope of damages. This launches the ability for localities to apply directly and this allowed SLTTs to apply without waiting on FEMA to deploy staff, which ensured an immediate and round the clock access without having to wait on and utilize a FEMA point of contact. We are paying attention to that success and making sure we are paying attention to lessons learned to improve that process. My ask is that all of this is from my perspective and speaking to stakeholders. Now the public assistance program is at a point where we are pivoting – what will we need to do as we are at a COVID response. The public assistance program is mine and it is one of the biggest tools to help communities. Provide us with recommendations that are in-line with the agency's core values and principles that guide our program.

Discussion

Jeanne Abadie. Was there a deep dive done to ensure smaller communities get some of that money?

Chris Logan. The fire grant AFG supplemental – authorizes that program requires 25% goes to career fire departments and 25% goes to combination fire departments. What happened last year was we got plenty of applications from career departments, but in the volunteers and combination departments, we didn't get enough quality applications. Under normal program assistance, departments can buy apparatus and program and gear. This round of funding is very specific to PPE for our first responders. We got a lot of applications for apparatus for SEEA. We asked the National Volunteer Fire Council to break this down. Career departments have the resources to very quickly turn down an application about communities that are familiar with our programs and they know how to do so quickly. Small volunteer fire departments don't have those resources; often, the fire chief has a day job and is doing grant applications at night. A lot of small departments did not have the wherewithal, while we were rushing to get the money out we left those small departments behind. As a result of that, we went back out in October and we didn't fully award the \$100M. we are still shy of building the volunteer departments for congress. That is what happened in that situation with those volunteer fire departments. Cost share because of the smaller departments dot participate because they can't meet that cost share.

Paul Downing. From a tribal perspective, a lot of us do the entire process. I wish we could take the old system and take the best of each and combine them to make this one great system. If I want to withdraw a project, I have to find my PGMG I have to have it drawn. The amount of money that has been uploaded and then sent back to communities is incredible.

Brad Richy. When we speak of fire grants – when homeland security initiative came out these special teams were able to stand-up and buy equipment, in a lot of times those grants have been reduced significantly – as we look back now coming back on 20 years and the new homeland security grant carve outs – possibility of being able to include special teams equipment into the fire grant? When I look at the WMD teams are fire department related and they do hazmat response across the state – same individuals that are eligible.

Chris Logan. For WMD Teams – for two different programs – the state homeland security grant program – the eligibility for the fire grants: broad eligibility if something is going to be allowed under the program, we convene the fire community – 9 national fire organizations – they collectively determine what the criteria are going to be for that year's round of funding. The type of equipment you are talking about and based on their own experience they assign whether that category of equipment is going to be a high priority, medium priority or low priority – departments don't get funding through that competitive AMG process. Whether the fire service deem that to be a priority for the year. The fire programs are significantly over subscribed – \$700M a year in AFG and 200 in applications. Idaho is a minimally funding state, but you're over scribed in specific funds.

Brad Richy. It is difficult for small and remote and underserved locations to stand-up on the team. They are dependent on another team to come in. We need to be making sure we are doing things equitably across the entire fire service. Equity could be a great priority when we talk about the underserved as a breakout higher priority. Ensure volunteer departments had equal access to this funding.

John Grathwol. This was a great experience for me with the PA program, I wasn't totally surprised. I agree that the simplified applications and the grant portal and direct application is really a whole help for the program. All of these applicants entering applications you get a lot and it goes faster. A simple FEMA process should go into a process that is automated – close to standardized and can work through the automated system. How do the more complicated systems work? One of the recurring things on the survey was, how are differences and interpretability of education work? Don't want to focus on the PDMGs; a lot of people had to be hired for that position. There is an experience challenge and new system challenge. This lack of communication leads to a CRC step and folks on the applicant side. Determination and denying the eligibility and appeals – things that are going through more quickly. Things might be bounced out and ended up it eh appeals route. May not be friendly to the applicants pathway. Do you have any thoughts are you thinking about that problem?

Ana Montero. We are learning about those issues every day, looking at what the CRCs are accountable for and what their work is every day. We have received a tremendous amount of positive feedback. If it is a more complicated applications and you have an applicant who wants to directly apply and so we ended up in an automated

Steve Birnbaum. I am part of the EDA subcommittee and we've been talking about PA applications quite a bit. Did you have to make any substantial changes to the process, approval, structure? Any early data from applications submitted directly?

Ana Montero. I'm going to give this one to my deputy, Frank Matranga, to get his thoughts.

Frank Matranga. We did have to make some changes to the process for direct applications, the biggest of which was trying to collect all applications at one time. What we have seen in terms of how it is going, we are better than we were, and we aren't where we need to be. We are Turbo Tax in 1998 when you used the first version of Turbo Tax. The challenge is it is 2021 and everyone gets to use the 2021 version of Turbo Tax. It is hard to separate out COVID from everything here because COVID has been such a large problem from the emergency management community. People taking a lot of time for good reasons like running a vaccination site – we don't know if that is why we haven't gotten quite as many, but we have 25,000 that have applied for PA but only 20,00 applications in. Of course, a portion of that gap that is driven by the inequities inherent in the complexities in our program. COVID is a massive drain on public health and emergency management communities.

Grants and Public Assistance Panel Zoom Chat

Anna Lang. Is there a broad FEMA strategy for wildfire?

Jackie Lindsey. Given COVID has shown us how quickly we can get money out the door...how can we ensure this continues Post-COVID?

Jackie Lindsey. To Ana's question/statement, I don't think it is that the work load for funding outweighs the threat/risk/disaster but given both many cannot do both and so they do with what they have. Does that make sense? The FIT program has helped and I believe the NAC has noted it several times to be a good way forward to ensure support is where it needs to be...

Nicolette Louissaint. The COVID response has been tremendous, but such a large scale event makes me wonder about the support provided to states and locals, and possible efficiencies there. For example, if the vaccine rollout was managed fully at the fed level, easing some of the burden from states/locals, is it possible that we would have seen significant savings in assistance, that could have been used in other ways to benefit states?

Anna Lang. In that example of volunteer FDs trying to apply - who at FEMA can they call on to help them out?

Chris Logan. We provide technical assistance to potential applicants through our AFG program, when asked.

Anna Lang. Will the FD Chief have a personal relationship with the person answering the phone? In other words, is there any type of consistent, agency assignment?

Jeanne Abadie. Anna, not sure. But, it does seem that there are inequities in the system, but I am appreciative of the transparent answer. Acknowledging the problem is always a good step.

Rob Long. Since Chris is speaking, I'll see if I can help. I used to sit next to the AFG technical assistance folks. There are around 4-5 people sitting in a line, together, fielding calls. Most are former Chiefs, commanders or long careers in the fire service.

Maggie Wilson. Rob is correct, they are all either active or retired firefighters answering the Help Desk every weekday.

Rob Long. These folks love to help the applicants. 2 years of overhearing hundreds of calls, I can say that these AFG helpline people really do get to know the people calling in. That's just my take.

Don Bliss. Plus, each region has Assistance to Firefighter Grants POCs:
<https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/regional-contacts>

Rob Long. Side note on Anna's question - by extension, all preparedness grant programs have a program-specific, region-specific preparedness officer sitting at FEMA that they can develop a relationship with. As you might expect, the squeaky wheel gets the oil, but I think that connection is available to all current grant recipients.

Anna Lang. Thanks for that, Rob. I'm not knowledgeable about what qualifies for AFG, but a 30 sec Google search tells me it's equipment and training. I'm thinking about how could such a program be re-framed in a decentralized FEMA structure, going back to where our conversations in our Vision Subcommittee have been. What I'm hearing is that a volunteer FD has 3+ different departments in FEMA or their state agency to seek funding to X, that they see needs to be done. We should EXPAND the FIT programs to have permanent/FT FEMA personnel in a number of different areas: mitigation x2+, equity/outreach, response, recovery. The local fire chiefs should have their personal cell numbers! *and applications assistance

Jackie Lindsey. I agree with Anna! Rob could you send the numbers you have mentioned. As a new Fire Chief of a Combo Dept who has never been able to take advantage of these grants due to the human capital they require for application and management. I would like to get some detailed information.

Carrie Speranza. Excellent recommendation Anna.

MAY MEETING WRAP-UP

Nicolette Louissaint. This conversation has been rich. I appreciate how hard the FEMA staff is working and the questions helped us to get somewhere meaningful. I find myself grappling specifically in assistance with how we carve out the role and responsibility of the federal government. What is the role the federal government in response? What is left over for the states to do? I am struggling because I think a lot of these issues and what does it look like to ask the states to do something about money. If we were more intentional for how the feds stepped up in the response or what role the feds took, there would be opportunity to take advantage. There is potential for waste because we have not relinquished the idea that the states can still be in charge but not have to take on and basically doing what is a country-level responsibility. How do you look at on-boarding volunteers and paid workforce? I'm not sure if I am thinking about that correctly and wanted to through that out to the council.

Brad Richy. I think if you had fifteen more members from FEMA within the state that could help those identify and very underserved communities, especially rural communities work through the process, it would make a big difference. In Idaho we have people trying to run a very large county with a person that only works one day a week because the community can't afford to pay to have a full-time emergency manager.

John Grathwol. This topic of a more robust FIT teams and a reservist CORE for disaster recovery or emergency managers are important. To Nicolette's point about the feds' role in vaccines is important – they had to do procurement and supply chain distribution that no one else could do. The idea of should that area of direct federal

response be expanded goes well with the expanded FIT team. I think that all of these are good ideas of what is a good expansion of the federal role. Combination speaking to a more flexible and nimbler federal role.

Jackie Lindsey. This is a great summation of everything we have been talking about particularly how to create a better response. So much of our emergency response has been coming from the military and I wonder if modeling a program after the military is a good idea and working towards building a federal system into something more permeant in the future.

Steve Birnbaum. I caught up with Admiral Nimmich after his presentation because he was talking about a reserve cadre for the workforce. Israel has a mandatory service and mandatory military service. If you are not serving reserve duty, you are eligible for firefighting, police or jobs that are needed etc. We could develop a similar program here. When I look at countries with a mandatory service it does a lot to bring people from different background together, could be a good direction and address equity.

Paul Downing. If we are talking about creating a doctrine within FEMA and building civilian posture because you won't have that same enforcement if based on the existing model of FEMA top-down control. FEMA cannot control what goes on outside.

All members. Thank you to Jasper for your years of service.