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## Tribal Consultation on FEMA Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide Update *Framing Paper and Key Concepts*

### Overarching Consultation Questions

*What courses of action can the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) take to ensure that Public Assistance meets the needs of Tribal Nations and their members to the maximum extent possible?*

*What are the unique tribal considerations that FEMA should factor when developing policies and procedures?*

*How can FEMA convey information in the Public Assistance program and Policy Guide to make the program simpler, more accessible, and user-friendly?*

### Background

Communities affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, or wildfires often struggle to cover the costs of cleaning up debris, implementing life-saving measures, and repairing public infrastructure like roads and buildings. After a Presidential disaster is declared, FEMA's Public Assistance program supports Tribal Nations, states, territories, and local governments with grants so communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies.

The Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG) was last published in 2020. This guide combines all Public Assistance policy into a single document which provides an overview of the Public Assistance program with links to other publications and resources that provide additional program details. The document is designed to be used by all customers of the Public Assistance program as a guide to navigate the policies that outline funding opportunities for the Public Assistance grant.

This year Public Assistance will publish PAPPG, Version 5, which can be found in the federal register website: <http://www.regulations.gov>, identified by Docket ID: [FEMA-2024-0010-0001](https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2024-0010). The goals are to simplify the Public Assistance program, streamline ways for customers to meet requirements, and increase accessibility through clear and concise language. Improvements were made to support Tribal Nations' ability to recover following a Presidentially declared disaster.

- Clarifications are included to support the unique funding considerations of other federal agencies on tribal owned roads and mutual aid reimbursement when there is no formal agreement in place.
- Program improvements include emphasis on the importance of safeguarding tribal sacred sites, objects, and cultures, and respecting tribal autonomy and sovereignty.
- Process improvements are included to ensure more accurate damage assessments and repair considerations for tribal-owned residential structures and tribal ceremonial buildings by recognizing Tribal Nations are the experts for this information.
- Public Assistance programmatic information specified for state and territory recipients is also provided for tribal recipients.
- Difference between federally recognized and state-recognized tribes is clarified and an explanation of how they both can benefit from the PA Program is included.

- Resilience measures are encouraged for tribally owned homes and traditional tribal structures.

## Tribal Consultations

On March 13, 2024, FEMA's Recovery Directorate hosted a listening session to discuss Public Assistance policies and procedures under development in the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG). Following the listening session, FEMA's Recovery Directorate is planning to host two virtual Tribal consultations on the PAPPG, Version 5, scheduled for [August 7, 2024](#) and [August 8, 2024](#).

Please visit FEMA's [Tribal Consultations webpage](#) for more information and how you can register to participate. Tribal Nations can submit in the federal register website: <http://www.regulations.gov>, identified by Docket ID: [FEMA-2024-0010-0001](#) until **August 19, 2024**. Please note that written comments submitted to the Federal Register will be made public.

If you or other Tribal Nations have any questions about these consultations, please reach out to our FEMA Tribal Affairs team at [fema-tribal@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:fema-tribal@fema.dhs.gov).

## Discussion Questions

### General:

1. What unique challenges do Tribal Nations leaders see as most critical in FEMA's timely delivery of Public Assistance?
2. What do Tribal Nations need from FEMA to ensure the Public Assistance program is properly communicated and supported by FEMA?
3. Are there other considerations unique to Tribal Nations that FEMA should explore to fully support tribes after a disaster?

### Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide:

1. What are the anticipated challenges Tribal Nations have when applying for Public Assistance and completing the steps of the Public Assistance process?
2. Are there specific concerns when interpreting and applying the policies in the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide?
3. Are there challenges with Tribal Nations' ability to navigate the different considerations when receiving Public Assistance as a Recipient or a Subrecipient? Has FEMA adequately conveyed the benefits and challenges of each role?

### Communication:

1. What types of training and/or materials should FEMA develop to supplement the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide to assist tribal understanding of the program?
2. Are there any other ways FEMA can assist to ensure assistance is provided in a culturally sensitive manner?