

FEMA 2024 NATIONAL TRIBAL STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT



As we celebrate Native American Heritage Month, FEMA continues to connect and work with Tribal Nations across Indian Country to implement our [National Tribal Strategy](#). This roadmap marks a new chapter in how we honor our treaty and trust responsibilities through building, strengthening, and sustaining our partnerships with Tribal Nations. The 2024 progress report serves as a testament to our commitment, ensuring we remain accountable to the Tribal Nations that played a pivotal role in shaping this strategy.

To uphold our responsibilities, FEMA engaged closely with Tribal leaders and emergency management teams from coast-to-coast, listening and learning to better grasp the unique challenges and needs of Tribal Nations. This collaboration is vital as we work together to fulfill the three core goals of the National Tribal Strategy.

Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

This year, FEMA strived to enhance its in-person interactions with Tribal leaders, both within Indian Country and at FEMA headquarters, with a focus on respecting Tribal sovereignty and ensuring easier access to FEMA's resources. The FEMA Administrator, Deputy Administrator, along with the National Tribal Affairs Advocate and other senior leaders, connected face-to-face with leadership from over 238 Tribal Nations, visiting their tribal headquarters and participating in various national and regional tribal events, including the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Winter Convention (January), FEMA Region 6 Tribal Summit (February), National Congress of American Indians Executive Winter Session (February), Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes Impact Week (March), United South & Eastern Tribes Impact Week (March), Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Assistance and Coordination Group Conference (May), FEMA Region 10 Tribal Workshop (May), National Congress of American Indians Midyear Convention (June), FEMA Region 9 Tribal Summit (June), FEMA Region 2 Tribal Summit (July), FEMA Region 1 Tribal Summit (July), Inter-Tribal



Emergency Management Coalition Annual Summit (August), FEMA Region 5 Tribal Summit (September), and the National Congress of American Indians Annual Convention (October).

Moreover, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell traveled to the homelands of the Mescalero Apache Tribe (New Mexico, April) and the Chickasaw Nation Reservation (Oklahoma, April) to engage with Tribal leaders after devastating fires and tornadoes impacted tribal homes and facilities. The Administrator also hosted several tribal emergency recovery and hurricane pre-landfall teleconference calls with leadership of the Cherokee Nation, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Havasupai Tribe, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Seminole Tribe of Florida, and Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. The Administrator met virtually with leadership of the national and regional tribal associations on a quarterly basis sharing updates on tribal emergency management priorities, policies, initiatives, and programmatic changes and gathering Tribal input to help shape and refine ongoing efforts.

In addition, in April, FEMA convened its second annual meeting of the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, National Tribal Affairs Advocate, Regional Tribal Liaisons, and tribal FEMA Integration Team (Tribal FIT) staff members at FEMA headquarters in Washington, D.C., to discuss program work underway and develop recommendations on how FEMA can better serve Tribal Nations across Indian Country.

Goal 2: Lead the Whole of Community in Climate Resilience

The National Tribal Strategy is dedicated to improving Tribal Nations' access to FEMA's programs and services by refining our policies and designing new initiatives tailored to their unique needs. This year saw the launch of several key efforts to bring this vision to life, including reforming our [Individual Assistance \(IA\), Individuals and Households Program](#) helping disaster survivors by establishing new benefits, cutting red tape and expanding eligibility, and simplifying the application process for certain types of assistance under IA. In January 2024, FEMA published an interim final rule amending its regulations governing IA. In February and March, FEMA held three government-to-government tribal consultations on the IA Reform Rule to provide a summary of the changes and solicit additional Tribal Nation recommendations that will help inform implementation of this rule in the future. The improvements to the IA Program were some of the biggest that FEMA has proposed in 20 years. FEMA Tribal Affairs published a [tribal one-pager](#) to highlight these improvements for Tribal Nations and the positive impacts they will have on Indian Country.

FEMA is also working to update and improve its 2020 [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#) (PAPPG). The Guide provides a pathway for a Tribal Nation to request Public Assistance (PA) after a Presidential disaster is declared so that it can more quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies. In 2024, FEMA hosted a series of webinars, listening sessions, and consultations with Tribal Nations to gather input on revisions and updates to the guide, specifically how to simplify the PA program, streamline ways for customers to meet requirements, and increase accessibility. The revised guide will be released soon with [key improvements for Tribal Nations](#).

FEMA remains committed to its responsibility under [Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments](#), reaffirmed by President Biden's January 26, 2021, [Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#), and reflected in FEMA's National Tribal Strategy to engage in meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribal officials.

In 2024, FEMA invited Tribal Nations to participate in a series of tribal listening sessions and consultations to discuss updating its 2019 [Tribal Consultation Policy](#), which provides guidance on agency-wide tribal consultation protocol and helps FEMA officials review tribal consultation requests in a meaningful and consistent way. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Tribal leaders and representatives of Tribal Nations who offered their invaluable insights during the tribal engagements and the comment period that followed. Your voices have been heard and the revised Tribal Consultation Policy will be released soon.

FEMA continues to work on enhancing the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). The NDRF explains how the federal government supports disaster-impacted Tribal Nations as they recover and provides a framework to support Tribal Nations planning for, and leading their own, recovery operations. In 2024, FEMA began its work to improve five NDRF issue areas that partners identified as important areas for updating: recovery scope, roles and responsibilities, capacity and resources, planning, and data metrics.

To better incorporate Tribal Nations within the NDRF, FEMA hosted three Tribal Working Group sessions with Tribal emergency managers and Tribal leaders to begin the process of gathering feedback and input to improve disaster recovery in Indian Country. Having gathered this initial input, FEMA invited Tribal Nations to participate in tribal consultations to gather formal input on revisions and updates to the NDRF. These consultations led to a NDRF that better incorporated Tribal Nations' needs for recovery after a disaster strikes. The new Framework will be released soon.

Building upon our extensive consultations and work with Tribal Nations in 2023, FEMA developed an updated Tribal Declarations Guidance. This document serves as a comprehensive guide for Tribal Nations to navigate the major disaster and/or emergency declaration process. The updated Guidance will increase flexibility and adaptability for Tribal Nations to declare a major disaster or emergency, allocate funding, receive requested assistance, and close out projects in a timely manner. The updated Guidance will empower Tribal Nations' sovereignty and access to federal assistance, thereby enhancing their response and recovery efforts and improving outcomes for community and Tribal community members.

FEMA continues to work on its implementation of [Executive Order 14112, Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations To Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination](#). In August 2024, FEMA hosted a six-hour tribal consultation on all FEMA grant programs pursuant to E.O. 14112 during the Inter-Tribal Emergency Management Coalition Annual Summit in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The goal of this in-person consultation was to provide Tribal executives and their designees the opportunity to engage with FEMA leadership to discuss ways to increase accessibility, equity, flexibility, and utility of federal funding and support programs for Tribal Nations. Furthermore, this engagement sought to increase the transparency and efficiency of FEMA funding processes to fulfill the agency's trust responsibilities and support Tribal self-determination more effectively.

Goal 3: Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation

FEMA is home to the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), which is the national-level coordination center for FEMA disaster response operations. The NRCC provides overall incident support and coordinates nation-level response efforts in support of Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC). During activations in 2024 for hurricanes Debby, Beryl, Francine, Helene, and Milton, FEMA continued to enhance federal incident support

capability to impacted Tribal Nations. Operating through its National Tribal Affairs Advisor desk in the NRCC, we worked with our federal interagency and regional partners to ensure there were no unmet Tribal Nation needs or challenges during these successive disasters.

FEMA is dedicated to supporting Tribal Nations by enhancing their capacity to withstand the growing challenges of climate change and increasingly frequent natural disasters. That's why we're committed to providing Tribal Nations with robust emergency management training opportunities, ensuring they are equipped and ready for whatever comes their way. FEMA's annual Tribal Nations Training Week at the [Center for Domestic Preparedness](#) (CDP) in Anniston, Alabama provides attendees with necessary emergency certifications, offers training from fellow Tribal instructors, and helps build emergency management relationships across Indian Country and beyond.

The training is fully funded up front for Tribal leaders, Tribal emergency responders, and any designated Tribal staff and includes roundtrip airfare, meals, and lodging. FEMA's 2024 [Tribal Nations Training Week](#) welcomed more than 375 students representing 105 Tribal Nations. We encourage Tribal Nations to apply for FEMA's [10th Annual Tribal Nations Week](#).

FEMA's CDP will also host a virtual Tribal Nations Training Week during May 5-9, 2025, with registration information forthcoming. To learn more about either week or to register, send an email to FEMA-tribalnationscdp@fema.dhs.gov. Tribal Nations to apply.