

# Public Assistance Program in Puerto Rico

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FEMA provides Public Assistance (PA) funding to help government agencies, municipal governments and certain nonprofit organizations repair damaged property and recover from losses caused by natural disasters.

## What is FEMA Public Assistance?

- Public Assistance (PA) is a *reimbursement program* that provides federal funding to help communities respond to and recover from natural disasters such as Hurricane Fiona.
- PA provides reimbursement to *eligible applicants*. These include organizations that provide essential public services, such as local, tribal and state government agencies and certain nonprofit organizations.
- Eligible applicants and organizations may include:
  - Public and private education organizations
  - Certain private non-profit organizations: FEMA cannot provide PA funding to private, for-profit organizations
  - Public and private utilities (water, electricity). PA is available to private non-profit organizations, such as community aqueducts and healthcare facilities
  - Medical facilities



- Museums, zoos, parks, houses of worship and others
- Reimbursement for damage caused by Hurricane Fiona is available for emergency response, debris removal and restoration of disaster-damaged public facilities and infrastructure (roads, bridges, buildings, public utilities, etc.)

## **Phases of Public Assistance**

- Following a presidentially declared disaster such as Hurricane Fiona, government agencies, municipalities and nonprofit organizations must identify the facilities damaged by the disaster.
- The recipient (i.e., state, tribe, or territory) will then conduct Applicant Briefings to inform potential applicants (i.e., state, local, tribal, territorial, and PNP officials) of the assistance available and how to apply. Applicants must then file a Request for Public Assistance within 30 days of the date their respective area is designated by the federal declaration.
- Following the approved request, FEMA and the applicants will conduct additional meetings to discuss disaster damage and project formulation. Applicants must identify and report damages to FEMA within the 60-day regulatory timeframe. FEMA, the recipient, or the applicant will then prepare projects for eligible work and eligible facilities based on actual or estimated project costs.

## **Damage Inventory**

- A Damage Inventory is a detailed list of damage, such as: debris removal, emergency work activities and damaged facilities for which an applicant is seeking PA reimbursement. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify and report damage to their facilities.



- Federal regulations require that all debris removal, emergency work activity, and disaster-related damage must be identified and reported within 60 days of the Recovery Scoping Meeting to be reimbursed.

## **Site inspection**

- A site inspection is an in-person assessment of incident-related damage outlined in the Damage Inventory. Site inspections are conducted by FEMA staff, the applicant and the recipient.
- Site inspection reports are used to estimate the cost of restoring the facility or infrastructure and determine how much funding FEMA can provide.

## **Documentation of costs**

- FEMA requires that applicants document the costs related to the PA reimbursement they are seeking, including reimbursements for debris removal, emergency work activities, and damaged facilities.
- Costs are expenses tied directly to eligible work, and must be adequately documented, authorized, necessary and reasonable. Eligible costs include labor, equipment, materials, contract work and management costs.
- FEMA reviews and validates all documentation to ensure quality assurance, document integrity, and compliance with all laws and regulations. Duplication-of-benefits from insurance or other Federal Agencies are examples of these.

## **What is the meaning of “obligating” funds?**

- When FEMA obligates PA funding this means the money is committed, but not yet disbursed to the applicant. FEMA obligates funds to the Recipient based on



the eligible total of an approved project.

- FEMA *never* directly pays government agencies, municipalities and nonprofits that apply for public assistance. Instead, FEMA provides PA funds to the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience (COR3), a branch of the Government of Puerto Rico that promotes and implements reconstruction efforts, which is then responsible for disbursing the money to applicants.
- FEMA may reimburse applicants for damage or losses *that were caused as a direct result of the declared disaster and occurred during the incident period specified in the declaration*. Damage that occurred prior to the disaster does not qualify for reimbursement under Fiona.

