



FEMA

June 25, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: James Featherstone
Chairman, National Advisory Council

FROM: W. Craig Fugate 
Administrator

SUBJECT: Response to National Advisory Council Recommendations from
March 19, 2014 Meeting

Thank you for your letter dated May 6, 2014 regarding the National Advisory Council's (NAC) recommendations from the March 19, 2014, meeting in Philadelphia. Below you will find our response to these recommendations.

1. Regional Response & Recovery Capability

NAC Recommendation: FEMA should maximize existing mechanisms to continue to implement the National Disaster Recovery Framework and the National Response Framework, to engage and educate the whole community on response and recovery capabilities and resources, and to create lasting relationships:

- a. Re-examine agendas, participants, and outcomes of the existing regional committees and councils, including but not limited to the Regional Interagency Steering Committees (RISC) and Regional Advisory Councils (RAC), to identify participants and gaps in participation.
- b. Ensure the composition of participants includes representatives from Federal, state, local, tribal levels of government, and representatives from faith-based, nonprofit, private sector and volunteer organizations.
- c. For those who are included but not engaged, determine how to re-engage them and encourage their participation in order to accomplish the purpose of implementing the national strategies.

FEMA Response: FEMA partially agrees with this recommendation and will share the recommendation with our Regional Administrators who manage these entities. In many ways our Regions have already embraced this concept, but as you note, it is important to continually re-engage relevant groups and enhance our partnerships. The Regions continue to explore and find new ways to identify and invite non-traditional stakeholders such as private sector entities, faith-based and other volunteer organizations, and academia to work with FEMA as part of the whole community.

Due to the fluid nature of the availability of participants, our Regional leadership is constantly reviewing the membership of the RAC and the RISC to identify any gaps in participation. Being intergovernmental committees, these groups are not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and the official membership is kept relatively small. However, Regions still harness the expertise of a much wider set of professionals by inviting individuals from across the whole community to provide input as speakers or guests at committee meetings.

The Regions are also using innovative technology to maintain the momentum between meetings. Activities such as webinars enable members and participants alike to communicate and coordinate with each other during the months between official gatherings. Furthermore, to reduce the financial strain on the participants, most RAC meetings are now held in conjunction with RISC meetings. This not only reduces travel and personnel costs but fosters a cross-pollination of ideas between members of both committees.

In addition, at the national level, the interagency Emergency Support Function Leadership Group (ESFLG) and Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG) both include references to coordinating with regional groups such as the RISCs in their charters. The exchange of resources and issues between the ESFLG or RSFLG and the RISCs (and similar regional organizations) is intended to result in a more integrated approach to addressing challenges and further developing regional response and recovery capability and capacity.

2. Tracking and Storage of Mutual Aid Agreements

NAC Recommendation: FEMA should encourage state, local, tribal, and territorial entities to conduct a thorough review of all of their agreements (mutual aid agreements, memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement between states, tribes, locals, private and nonprofit sectors, and faith based and community organizations). Before such a review takes place, FEMA should encourage the National Emergency Management Association, International Association of Emergency Managers, and other stakeholder associations to develop guidance and criteria, such as the elements of these types of agreements, to ensure that there is uniformity in these agreements.

- a. Establish a comprehensive management system for mutual aid agreements for governments at the lowest level and community to access electronically or manually.
- b. As a result of the review, conduct a gap analysis to identify new agreements for development.
- c. Eliminate duplicate agreements or revise and update expired agreements as needed.

FEMA Response: FEMA partially agrees with the recommendation. Establishing clear mutual aid agreement guidelines will be an important aspect of the forthcoming National Mutual Aid Plan; to that end, FEMA will work with partners to develop such guidelines. When developing the National Mutual Aid Plan and supporting guidelines, FEMA will also include language encouraging jurisdictions to review and revise mutual aid agreements as appropriate. FEMA does not have the capacity to catalog the totality of the nation's mutual aid agreements. However, FEMA will consider including best practices in the National Mutual Aid Plan and supporting guidelines that promote state, tribal nation, and territorial entity actions related to collecting, cataloguing, and reviewing their respective mutual aid-related agreements.