



Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP) and the FEMA Grants Process

Environmental resources, cultural institutions, and historic assets define communities and contribute to their well-being and unique character. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (OEHP) plays a critical role in safeguarding these resources by helping communities incorporate environmental stewardship and historic preservation into emergency management decisions. As disasters continue to challenge our nation and communities grapple with issues of preparedness and sustainability, the Office offers expertise to ensure both legal compliance and informed local, state, tribal, and national planning.

FEMA Grants and EHP Review

The integrity of our natural and historic landscape is important to all of us, and steps taken to strengthen or rebuild communities can have long-term environmental and cultural impacts. Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP) is not just a desirable outcome of community projects—it's a legal requirement. Federal law requires that most projects funded through a FEMA grant program comply with EHP requirements.

It is important to understand how the FEMA grant process works so that any potential environmental and historic preservation issues are identified early. The exact process for review depends on the type of FEMA grant and there are some key steps that every applicant can expect. Once an application is submitted through the grant application system, it will be reviewed for:

- **Basic eligibility requirements** including completeness of the application and eligibility of the entities applying (e.g., local, state, territory, tribal governments).
- **Technical review**, which frequently involves a benefit-cost analysis and a determination of the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed project.
- **EHP review**, which includes a review for compliance with relevant Federal regulations, directives, and legal mandates, as well as state laws and regulations, aimed at ensuring the responsible stewardship of historic and environmental resources.

OEHP provides expertise that helps applicants navigate the unique laws and regulations governing

environmental and historic preservation. By coordinating with OEHP early on environmental and historic preservation considerations, applicants will be better positioned to satisfy requirements and secure FEMA grant funding critical for project completion. In addition, working with FEMA to examine the potential impacts of community projects on environmental and cultural resources will help funded projects progress more smoothly and will enable communities to make better decisions about their unique community assets.

FEMA Grant Programs

Project funding may be available through a variety of FEMA grant programs, such as:

- Public Assistance
- Individual Assistance
- Preparedness Grants
- Hazard Mitigation Assistance

To apply for FEMA grant funding, visit e-grants at <https://portal.fema.gov/>

Factors that Impact EHP Review

While some FEMA grant applications require minimal EHP review, others demand more attention due to the nature of the project proposed. For example, post-disaster repairs to a historic building or construction of a flood control structure near



endangered species' habitats can understandably have a significant impact on cultural and environmental resources and involve more extensive review. Other activities that trigger more in-depth EHP review may not be as obvious—such as projects involving construction on undeveloped land or modifications to structures more than 45 years old. By collaborating with OEHP early in the planning and grants process, applicants can get a clear indication of the potential impacts of projects on natural and cultural resources and minimize the possibility of lengthy review.

Timeframes for Review

Timeframes for EHP review vary depending on the potential a project has to impact environmental historic, or cultural resources. FEMA's EHP review is one of the most expeditious environmental and historic review processes in the Federal government. And through an increasingly streamlined process, FEMA has successfully reduced the time needed for most project reviews.

However, every project is unique, so the timing for EHP review varies by project. EHP compliance review is completed in less than 30 days for nearly three of every four FEMA-funded projects nationwide. Only five percent of FEMA funded projects nationwide, most often those that are not pursued as part of disaster recovery, require more than 120 days to complete EHP review. When additional time is needed, it is often for communities to provide full scopes of work and appropriate documentation so that EHP review may begin. Applicants and grantees can work with their FEMA Regional EHP contact to obtain more details on documentation requirements and the expected timeframe for a specific project.

Expediting the Process

Applicants and communities can play a critical role in helping FEMA expedite the review process. The earlier communities begin project planning and the more information applicants provide in the project description, the better equipped FEMA will be to help applicants anticipate and address any legal requirements that may affect a project. Some

additional tips for communities and applicants to accelerate EHP review include:

- **Advance Planning:** Take into account the possible EHP compliance requirements for your project. This may affect your planning, budget, and timeline.
- **Clear Project Scope:** Write a clear description of the scope of work for the entire project. This should include any elements not Federally funded or not funded by FEMA.
- **Detailed Documentation:** Include in your application relevant documentation, such as reports, plans, maps, photographs, and studies that offer detailed information on your project. Examples of pertinent details include dimensions of proposed structures; acreage of land affected; extent of ground disturbance for new construction; or usage of special equipment.
- **Identification of Nearby Resources:** Provide details about resources in the vicinity of the proposed project, such as nearby water bodies, endangered species, floodplains, and historic properties.

Frequently Encountered EHP Laws and Executive Orders

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Executive Order 11088 (Floodplain Management)
- Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands)

Additional Resources

For more information on OEHP's role in the FEMA grants process or to identify your Regional EHP contact, visit www.fema.gov/plan/ehp. For additional details regarding FEMA grant programs, visit www.fema.gov/government/grant.