



External Stakeholder Working Group (ESWG)

Year in Review

Calendar Year 2020



FEMA

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- Steven Duryea – Tribal Land Planner, FEMA Liaison / Tribal Hazard Mitigation Officer, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
- Megan Hart – HMA Branch Chief, FEMA Region 5
- JaLeesa Tate – State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Maryland Department of Emergency Management
- Brynne' Walker – Floodplain Management Planner, Pierce County Planning & Public Works

1.2. Outgoing Members:

HMA would like to express sincere gratitude to the following ESWG members whose membership term ended in December 2020.

- Jim Poppen – Mitigation and Recovery Manager for the State of South Dakota
- Jennifer Gerbasi - Division Manager / Recovery Manager, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
- Kaylynn Gresham – Director of Emergency Management, Oneida Nation
- Daniel Jones - Environmental Specialist, FEMA Region 8
- Stacy Robarge-Silkiner – HMA Branch Chief, FEMA Region 7

1.3. Alumni Shoutouts:

- Congratulations to ESWG alumni who have transitioned into new professional roles.
 - Paula Gutierrez (Term: 2017-2019) – Formerly the Disaster Recovery Manager for the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribal Government, now serves as the Tribal Relations Specialist, External Affairs, FEMA Region 6.
 - Lauren Oates (Term: 2019) – Formerly the State Hazard Mitigation Officer for Vermont, now serves as a Climate and Energy Policy Manager at The Nature Conservancy in Vermont.
 - Tracy DePew (Term: 2017-2018) – Tracy, who serves as the Cow Creek Emergency Management Director, represented the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians in a meeting in October 2020 with FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor to discuss ongoing wildfire and COVID responses, FEMA grants, and the future of preparedness.
 - Jim Poppen (Term: 2018-2019) – Recently promoted to the Mitigation and Recovery Manager for the State of South Dakota after seven years serving as the State Hazard Mitigation Officer.

2. 2020 Meetings

2.1. “Water Water Everywhere” – Q1 Meeting in Terrebonne Parish, LA



Figure 1. ESWG Members at the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary

In February 2020, ESWG member Jennifer Gerbasi of Terrebonne Parish, La hosted the first quarterly meeting of 2020. During the weeklong meeting, ESWG members enjoyed an opportunity to learn about mitigation projects in Louisiana’s bayous. For some ESWG members, this was an opportunity to see first-hand the many innovative ways coastal communities mitigate against flooding. The field trip included visits to notable mitigation project sites such as the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary, the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), and the Bubba Dove Floodgate.

2.2. Resilience and Flexibility



Figure 2. To build morale over the new virtual platform, FEMA encouraged all ESWG members to wear their favorite hats during the Q2 meeting

The year 2020 brought new challenges and the ESWG was not spared. However, in a showcase of adaptability and resilience, FEMA pivoted the remaining in-person ESWG meetings to virtual engagements. While doing so, the ESWG embraced new ways of engaging with each other and creating the same joyful and collaborative atmosphere that is a hallmark of the in-person meetings.

3. Deep-dive Problem Solving

Each year, the ESWG identifies topics of interest for state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners to engage in deep dive thinking and problem solving through workstreams. Each of these workstreams aligns with FEMA’s strategic priorities as shown in Table 1. ESWG members made impressive strides in moving each of these workstreams forward and producing tangible outcomes that will assist FEMA in better serving partners.

Table 1: ESWG Workstream Alignment with the 2018-2022 FEMA Strategic Plan

<i>FEMA Strategic Plan Objectives</i>	<i>Mitigation Directorate Objectives</i>	<i>ESWG Workstream</i>
3.1 Streamline the disaster survivor and grantee experience	Deliver programs that reduce complexity while improving efficiency and expediency	Grants Process Support for Locals and Tribes
1.1 Incentivize investments that reduce risk 1.4 Better learn from past disasters	Strengthen and advance Section 406 mitigation	Public Assistance (PA) Mitigation
3.1 Streamline the disaster survivor and grantee experience	Deliver programs that reduce complexity while improving efficiency and expediency	Acquisitions

3.1. Grants Process Support for Locals and Tribes

The Grants Process Support for Locals and Tribes workstream concluded an analysis of existing FEMA grants tools and materials that could be used to reduce the complexity of the FEMA HMA grant application process. Findings from this analysis were summarized and presented to HMA leadership in November 2020. The recommendations detail specific actions FEMA leadership can take to reduce the barriers of entry for small local or tribal governments and expedite approvals for all applicants, including promoting the use of plug and play applications. Recommendations included:

- Consolidate all HMA application resources into a single library and include all links within the new HMA Guidance update.
- Use the Application Review Tool (ART) at a national level.

- Create a simplified version of the ART for subapplicants.
- Incorporate existing and new plug and play applications into the new FEMA Grants Outcomes (FEMA GO) application system as drop-down templates that can be selected based on mitigation project type.

3.2. PA Mitigation

The PA Mitigation workstream worked with FEMA to develop a suite of materials that would help grant recipients and subrecipients better understand the program, lower the barriers to entry for subrecipients to apply for funding, and increase the overall demand for mitigation. With the assistance of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Knauss Fellow, Brittney Parker, the workstream conducted a gap analysis of PA Mitigation information found on state and local jurisdiction websites. The workstream also developed more accurate and targeted materials to share. In the coming year, the workstream plans to conduct a pilot program roll out of the updated materials and plans to continue developing additional publications and messaging that states and Joint Field Office (JFO) staff can use to promote PA Mitigation.

3.3. Acquisitions

The Acquisitions workstream conducted exploratory research on whether allowing a direct to local government Repetitive Loss Property Acquisition program would lead to more efficient acquisition projects. The workstream's goal is to produce a white paper that will assist FEMA in making an informed decision about the viability of a direct to local government acquisitions program. Workstream members conducted desktop research and interviews with local communities that currently have large-scale acquisition programs and are leading the country in voluntary acquisitions as a means of mitigation. In the coming year, the workstream plans to further explore this issue and what might be needed for a direct to local government acquisitions program to occur, as well as identify characteristics that would make communities eligible and mechanisms for monitoring such programs.



Interested in learning more or joining the ESWG?

If you are state, local, tribal, territorial or FEMA regional stakeholder and are interested in becoming a member of this group, please visit the [ESWG webpage](#) to read about the group and [SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST](#). Expression of Interest forms are accepted year-round on a rolling basis and spots are filled as needed.