

FEMA National Advisory Council

November Virtual Meeting

November 17-18, 2020



FEMA

PARTICIPANTS

National Advisory Council Members	November 17	November 18
Nim Kidd, Chair	Yes	Yes
Jeffrey Hansen, Vice Chair	No	Yes
Jeanne Abadie	Yes	Yes
Rich Baich	Yes	Yes
Sue Anne Bell	Yes	Yes
Steve Birnbaum	Yes	Yes
Donald Bliss	Yes	Yes
Donna Boston	Yes	Yes
Paul Brennan	Yes	Yes
Deanne Criswell	Yes	Yes
Deanna Dahl-Grove	Yes	Yes
Dante Disparte	Yes	Yes
Bryan Desloge	No	No
Paul Downing	Yes	Yes
Charley English	Yes	Yes
Charles Esteves	Yes	Yes
August Geisinger	Yes	Yes
John Grathwol	Yes	Yes
Lori Hodges	Yes	Yes
Pat Hoffman	No	Yes
Lisa Jones, Equity Subcommittee Chair	Yes	Yes
Ramesh Kolluru, Vision Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Yes	Yes
Anna Lang	Yes	Yes
Jackie Lindsey, Vision Subcommittee Chair	No	No
Linda Long, Capacity Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Yes	Yes
Nicolette Louissaint	Yes	Yes
Warren Miller, Equity Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Yes	Yes
Jimmy Patronis	Yes	Yes
Brad Richy	Yes	Yes
Carol Salas	Yes	Yes
Carrie Speranza	Yes	Yes
Kevin Staley	Yes	Yes
Tina Titze, Capacity Subcommittee Chair	Yes	Yes
James Waskom	No	Yes
Pam Williams	Yes	Yes

FEMA Participants		
Pete Gaynor, Administrator	No	Yes
Adrian Sevier, Chief Counsel	No	Yes
David Bibo, Associate Administrator (A), Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Eric Heighberger, Chief of Staff	No	Yes
Myung Kim, Deputy Chief of Staff	No	Yes
Bridget Bean, Senior Official Performing the Duties of Deputy Administrator, Resilience	No	Yes
Chris Grisafe, Associate Administrator (A), Resilience	No	Yes
Jasper Cooke, Office of the National Advisory Council	Yes	Yes
Rob Long, Office of the National Advisory Council	Yes	Yes
Paden Tranter, Office of the National Advisory Council	Yes	Yes
Elizabeth Edge, Office of Regional Operations	Yes	Yes
Lydia Sanchez, Office of Regional Operations	Yes	Yes
Andy Burrows, Individual and Community Preparedness	Yes	No
Dan Snedden, Office of External Affairs	Yes	Yes
Jake Rodriguez-Noble, Office of Response and Recovery	Yes	Yes
Kate Judson, Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration	Yes	Yes
Krista Junvisetsak, Office of Resilience Integration and Coordination	Yes	No
Leslie Saucedo, Office of Equal Rights	Yes	No
Maggie Wilson, Grant Programs Directorate	Yes	No
Mark Millican, National Integration Center	Yes	Yes
Mike Boney, National Preparedness Directorate	Yes	Yes
Patrick Cowhey, National Training and Education Division	Yes	Yes
Rachel Tranchik, Office of Response and Recovery	Yes	Yes
Tami Todd, Office of Disability Integration and Coordination	Yes	Yes
Travis Battiest, Office of Response and Recovery	Yes	Yes
Travis Gaines, Office of the Chief Counsel	Yes	Yes
Larissa McDonogh-Wong, Interagency Coordination Division	Yes	Yes
Adam Shapiro, Office of External Affairs	Yes	No
Gina Valentine, Public Assistance Division	Yes	No
Tessa Wix, Public Assistance Division	Yes	Yes
Ben Berger, National Preparedness Assessment Division	Yes	Yes
Mileka Ackie, Office of External Affairs	Yes	No

Savin ven Johnson, Office of Preparedness Integration and Coordination	No	Yes
Kimberly Helm, Office of External Affairs	No	Yes
Robyn Cadwallader, Office of External Affairs	Yes	Yes
Kennedi Locus, Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Bambi Kraus, Office of External Affairs	No	Yes
Megan Smernoff, Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Sarah Byrne, Office of External Affairs	No	Yes
Sarah Farrell, Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Jacob Spell, Office of External Affairs	No	Yes
Rob Schweitzer, Resilience	No	Yes
Michael Plostock, Office of Response and Recovery	No	Yes
Roseanne David, Office of External Affairs	No	Yes
Rachel Nutter, FEMA Region VI	No	Yes
Christine Montani, National Preparedness Assessment Division	No	Yes
Claire Thomas, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	No	Yes
Other Participants		
Brett Mattson, National Association of Counties	Yes	No
Emily Burdick, Department of Energy	Yes	Yes
Jeremy McBryan, Palm Beach Co., FL	Yes	
Karl Fippinger, International Code Council	Yes	Yes
Mollie Rivas, Texas Division of Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Trina Sheets, National Emergency Management Association	Yes	Yes
Julia Hansen-Takyi, Department of Homeland Security	Yes	Yes
Naaz Modan, Education Dive	Yes	Yes
Sima Merick, National Emergency Management Association	No	Yes
Robert Nadeau, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	No	Yes

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS READOUT AND VOTING

The purpose of this session was for the full National Advisory Council to discuss and vote on the recommendations.

Focus on Equity

Lisa Jones. Early in the process, the following question arose and aided in developing the recommendations: "How can we measure equity if we have not created a standard?". FEMA has the opportunity to serve as a

standard bearer. Programs are not targeted to those with greatest need. FEMA is supposed to provide assistance based on need – this is the equity principle. Metrics are important to measure not only the need but also the outcomes.

Recommendation 2020-01: Create an Equity Standard

Anna Lang. How will the Executive Order (EO) on combatting race and stereotyping and the change in Administration impact this recommendation?

Nicolette Louissaint. We discussed this and recognized the difficulty around it. The current language in the EO would not impede the ability to implement any of these. The next Administration can eliminate the EO, which makes it easier for FEMA to adopt.

Anna Lang. How are all of our recommendations going to be impacted with the change in Administration?

Lori Hodges. The NAC does not structure recommendations on who the current administration is. The challenge of that particular EO is that the language really hits against the recommendation. But, I do not think the recommendations would or should change depending on the Administration.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-02: Direct Mitigation and Preparedness Funds to Improve Equity in Outcomes

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-03: Improve Cultural Awareness in Employees

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-04: Ensure the FEMA Workforce Reflects the Populations It Serves

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-05: Measure Social Capital and Work to Increase It

Steve Birnbaum. It would likely take one to two full time equivalent (FTE) employees working approximately 50% of the time to build out the entire metric concept before training materials could be developed.

Lori. There is not a good understanding of social capital.

Deanna Dahl-Grove. Is it our job to figure out how FEMA can implement this program? Or is it our job to give FEMA the recommendation to implement this program?

Lisa Jones. We will add in the potential cost / anticipated cost as best we can. We realize that this is very ambitious, but we recognize that we need to say it anyway.

Anna Lang. There is an opportunity to leverage the knowledge base in other agencies. This area seems a bit outside of FEMA's repertoire.

Deanna Dahl-Grove. There are some places within the federal government that have defined equity and social capital. We are going to make the recommendation to FEMA and let FEMA go looking for that information. We did not feel we could tell FEMA where to look or how to look.

Language recommendation: The FEMA Administrator should *identify*, rather than should *develop*.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-06: Include Social Capital in Training Programs

Lori Hodges. Social capital is at the most local level where it is important. Local emergency managers understand their communities the best for what their needs are.

Paul Downing. By 2045, we are asking the FEMA Administrator to ensure that there is social capital. I do not think the Administrator will be able to enforce that social capital building.

Lori Hodges. We are saying that social capital building is important; FEMA needs to develop a training program so that this is a cornerstone of what we do as emergency managers.

Steve Birnbaum. I have concerns that mandating training would affect grant programs, making them difficult to apply for. We want these grants to be given out, but if we constrict the requirements so much that there are too many hurdles for vulnerable jurisdictions to qualify, it defeats the purpose.

Lisa Jones. We recognize that as well; we are trying to add a new lens for how grants are distributed. This isn't a vision; this is a goal. We wanted to give FEMA something they can actively participate in.

Anna Lang. I recommend revising the language to combine the last 2 sentences: "By 2030, social capital building will be embedded in all relevant emergency management training programs 1) to improve future disaster outcomes, and 2) to enable emergency managers facilitate social capital building in their communities.

Nicolette Louissaint. I understand the concern but do not understand how the proposed change would eliminate burden. They require ownership and commitment; our job is to lay out that vision and FEMA's job is to figure out how they would implement it. This requirement or this burden should not just shift towards states or locals.

Lori Hodges. We were given a lofty goal by the FEMA Administrator; so, our recommendation should be what do they need to do, and then FEMA can figure out how to get there.

Paul Downing. I recommend changing 75% to 95% or 100%, because if they are coming out of a FEMA training, they should already know this standard.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-07: Understand Emergency Management Capacity in Tribal Nations

Anna Lang. Would it dilute the recommendation if we added territorial to it?

Nim Kidd. My recommendation is that it should be a standalone Native American working group; leave this as it is, and possibly come up with one for territorial.

Kevin Staley. Agreed, it should be a separate focus.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Focus on Outcomes

Recommendation 2020-08: Introduce Common Data-Driven Models for Risk Across SLTT and Federal Levels

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-09: Use a Streamlined Funding Approach that Aligns to Mission Goals

Anna Lang. I recommend defining "enterprise funding".

Paul Brennan. I believe it was dedicated funding as opposed to coming from different pots of money.

Lori Hodges. They do not take tax dollars; they are self-supporting.

Deanna Dahl-Grove. I recommend rephrasing from "enterprise funding" to "whole community simplified funding streams".

Anna Lang. To require all local, elected officials to identify the hazards – I don't know what this means for them. How they are supposed to identify enterprise funding?

Ramesh Kolluru. Different federal agencies have different missions; they support different parts of funding for SLTTs. FEMA should serve as a coordinator to simplify those streams. FEMA should use its emergency management expertise to ensure equitable and efficient coordination and efforts across funding resources.

John Grathwol. FEMA should advocate within the family of federal disaster coordinators; FEMA cannot just nominate itself.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-10: Educate Incoming Political Leadership About Emergency Management

Paul Downing. Doesn't the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) have a course on this already? I know they have one for tribal leadership.

Sue Anne Bell. Yes, we did note that in the recommendation, but also added to review and revise the curricula as necessary to address gaps.

Anna Lang. Can I make a language suggestion, including “all levels of government”? Not all officials are elected. Nothing is going to get done if we don’t incentivize or require some level of training.

Sue Anne Bell. The idea is for people who are incoming to positions, that this would be an incoming orientation packet. I don’t disagree with you, but I’m wondering if there is some way to say that this training will be a part of training for certain levels of employees.

Anna Lang: I don’t think you can do a requirement at the county level. Is there is some sort of FEMA funding that we could incentive to require all levels of governments to go by?

Tina Titze: For county commissioners, we can require they take certain trainings. For the county emergency manager, we write it into our grant what trainings we want them to take.

Ramesh Kolluru. It is requiring them to be trained and to have the tools in their toolkit to do their job. It does not complicate the process. What we are recommending here is giving incoming elected officials the tools needed to do their jobs more effectively and to provide them mitigation tools.

Jasper Cooke. It might make sense to consider this as part of 17 and 18, which are focused on improving relationships with political leadership. The overall goal for those (and this one I think) is to elevate the position of emergency management with political leadership. Perhaps we move these down to the beginning of the coordination section.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-11: Train Emergency Managers to Educate Leaders

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-12: Enhance Partnerships with Leaders in Research and Data Science in Other Federal Agencies, the Private Sector, and Academic Research University Programs

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-13: Invest in a FEMA-Wide Data Management System to Track and Monitor Outcomes

Nicolette Louissaint. We should incorporate language about integrating this system with those that currently exist.

Steve Birnbaum. This may require a heavy upgrade of existing systems. The outcome is not which system it plugs into, but who has access to it. Hopefully this will break down some of the silos that currently exist.

Lisa Jones. I don’t see a cost-related notion. Jasper Cooke had said we might remove cost-related recommendations so as not prevent recommendations from moving forward.

Ramesh Kolluru. We talked about cost; we do recognize that it will be an expensive undertaking. It is all suggesting the challenge and the opportunity of having a standardized enterprise-wide data management system, to achieve those objectives we have been talking about.

Jasper Cooke. The title of the recommendation says track and monitor outcomes. It would be valuable to add that in the text.

Sue Anne Bell. Our actions to implement these recommendations should include exploring what efforts are currently underway, in order to make this recommendation more feasible.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-14: Develop Scientific and Technology Professional Development Training for Emergency Management

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Focus on Coordination

Recommendation 2020-15: Review FEMA Headquarters Versus Regional Responsibilities

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-16: Establish FEMA as a Cabinet-Level Agency Reporting Directly to the President

Don Bliss. Is this something the FEMA Administrator can even do?

Ramesh Kolluru: The recommendation is not addressed exclusively to the FEMA Administrator; it is a recommendation *through* the Administrator. The intended audience is the White House and Congress.

Donald Bliss. This is outside our scope.

John Grathwol. This report will be used by anybody who has an interest in these issues; we should make the recommendation.

Nicolette Louissaint. Where does the DHS Secretary fit in? They may want to be included in the task force, recognizing that they would be losing an agency and there are implications therein.

Steve Birnbaum. At face value, it would seem to leave DHS as a separate and independent executive agency. But, I think it would be up to the proposed task force to spell that out and make recommendations.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-17: Establish Unified Coordination

Nicolette Louissaint. I agree with this and the spirit of this recommendation; however, when you get down to the state and local level, they are going to read it as they are supposed to report to FEMA during a public health emergency. That is not going to go over well.

Steve Birnbaum. I would suggest removing the reference to the new FEMA Secretary – we should not connect this to the previous recommendation. They are independent. There is a clear distinction between unified command and unified coordination. We aren't suggesting a reunified coordination system.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-18: Create a National Supply Chain Strategy

Nicolette Louissaint. The point of distribution (POD) part is where I am getting thrown off. I recognize the need for a strategy. There is a difference between creating a good strategy and creating specific supply chain components.

Don Bliss. This is a strategy for how the distribution is coordinated.

Nicolette Louissaint. Such a strategy may not build as much resilience or ensure equitable distribution. There is also the challenge with how involved FEMA should be specifically in healthcare supply chains.

Don Bliss. We kept away from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) and that kind of thing after receiving feedback from healthcare professionals. In my view, having the equipment held regionally can allow for customization to individual disasters experienced in that particular region.

Tina Titze. Being in a state with less than a million people, if we had a pod closer we would've gotten resources quicker in COVID-19.

Paul Downing. Tribes are stuck in the same boat.

Nicolette Louissaint. There is a difference between a stockpile and a POD, as well as a difference in how FEMA manages what happens at the regional level. Smaller states with less buying power are not being shut out. I don't know that a POD solves that. I would welcome seeing the strategy address a range of things, including PODs.

Tina Titze. I took this as a regional distribution center, not a POD.

The recommendation passed with one opposing vote.

Recommendation 2020-19: Enhance National Disaster Supply Chain Support and Coordination

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-20: Expand Disaster Supply Chain Coordination

Nicolette Louissaint. I would recommend removing the word “regional”; you want a paradigm for supply chain building, focused on the needs of regions and specific states that are included in specific supply chain coordination.

Steve Birnbaum. The concern was that we have Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) agreements that work at the state level. When we experience mega-disasters that exceed regional or national resources, then this recommendation would come into play. That was our focus and why “regional” appeared.

Nicolette Louissaint. You aren’t looking for supply chain, you are looking at what resources can be diverted from a supply chain or from multiple supply chains. If the FEMA region is fully overwhelmed, what other resources exist elsewhere that can be utilized?

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-21: Support Establishing SLTT and Private Sector Stockpiles

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-22: Increase Private Sector Supply

Nicolette Louissaint. We don’t know what the impediments are for encouraging their availability. There may be things that FEMA or the federal government could do that would make it sustainable for the private sector to increase their ability or nimbleness.

Donald Bliss. We want FEMA to be learning in return. We don’t know what the private sector is facing, which is why we left it as broad as possible.

Linda Long. This is an opportunity to expand the use of public-private partnerships.

Nicolette Louissaint. The Administrator making strides to work with businesses to understand impediments or strategies to increase their supply could go under anticipated impact. Section 708 of the Defense Production Act creates an action to allow for the sharing of information across competitors without any fear of intellectual property being used outside the bounds of those discussions. This could be used to increase these partnerships.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-23: Better Use Mutual Aid and Shared Resources

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Focus on What Works

Recommendation 2020-24: Expand FEMA Lifelines to Include Cascading Events

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-24a: Establish an Interactive, Intuitive, Consequence Management Tool for SLTT Stakeholders to Identify Their Lifeline and Cascading Disaster Vulnerabilities

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-24b: Train for Consequence Management and Cascading Impacts

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-24c: Address Cascading Impacts of a Cyber Attack

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-24d: Improve Public and Private Sector Coordination on Critical Lifelines

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 25a: Create an Expeditionary Entrepreneurial Team for Technology, Collaboration, and Acquisition Innovation

Kevin Staley. Does the current IT technology environment at FEMA support them in making the jump to this?

Steve Birnbaum. The FEMA steady state would continue as the FEMA steady state. This is being proposed to the Office of the Administrator for that reason. These will be transformational challenges. The team needs to report to the FEMA Administrator. Our intent is to allow them the autonomy to create new solutions to problems.

Nicolette Louissaint. Is there a potential role for the FEMA Chief Technology Officer (CTO) here?

Steve Birnbaum. There is a role for the CTO to advise in this, but the intent is not to have the team sit under that office.

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Recommendation 2020-25b: Partner with Industry to More Effectively Use Technology by Launching a Recurring FEMA Challenge to Inspire the Creation of Transformative Solutions

The recommendation passed unanimously.

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

DELIVERY OF NAC 2020 REPORT TO FEMA LEADERSHIP

The purpose of this session was to provide the NAC the opportunity to present their recommendations to senior FEMA leadership.

Opening Remarks from Subcommittee Chairs

Ramesh Kolluru. Our charge was to describe a vision for emergency management in 2045. In 2045, emergency management achieves outcomes equitably, through a federally supported, state and tribally managed, and locally executed framework. Emergency management ties together the whole community strengthening every link in the chain. The mission for 2045 is to ensure mitigation and preparedness for existing threats and emerging threats. The guiding principles for this vision are equity, professionalism, and accountability, among others. The key recommendations we want to highlight are 2020-15, 2020-16, and 2020-17. 2020-15 focuses on reviewing the responsibilities of FEMA Headquarters versus the regions. 2020-16 recommends establishing FEMA as a cabinet-level agency, and we believe has a broad, overarching, and important outcome. We have support from both the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) to work with Congress and the White House to establish this task force. 2020-17 calls for establishing FEMA as lead for unified coordination across all hazards. We believe that for all hazards – Stafford Act and non-Stafford Act, FEMA should be designated as lead for unified coordination. Depending on the emergency, for example a global pandemic, other agencies would still have incident lead.

Lisa Jones. Administrator Gaynor, you asked us to focus on equity and we did. In 2045, emergency management is equitable across the full spectrum. We believe the core definition of equity is to provide assistance to those with the greatest need. FEMA unintentionally perpetuates inequities. Certain programs are more accessible to those with time, income, and access. While we recognize that it is not the role of FEMA to dismantle inequitable systems, it can and must ensure that new policies and programs do not exacerbate them. Because emergency management serves as a social safety net across all phases, one must bake in equity across the full spectrum. In our discussions we considered what is possible today and what is necessary to achieve our vision by 2045. FEMA is to build upon equity as a foundation, address Native American tribal concerns, and build cultural competency.

Tina Titze. Our charge was to look at how to build capacity at all levels and at all phases of emergency management. Our discussions led us to some critical areas where we felt real improvements could be made: supply chain, consequence management involving lifelines and cascading impacts, and embracing technology. How can we quickly utilize technology to solve problems? How do we build new collaborations with the private sector? With these recommendations, we examined ways increase the capacity and capability of SLTTs to handle disasters, so that they are not relying so heavily on federal resources and personnel.

Initial Report Discussion with Senior FEMA Leadership

Administrator Gaynor. I am going to start by addressing some of the things Ramesh spoke about. First, Recommendation 2020-15, which looks at FEMA headquarters versus regional responsibilities. In the COVID-19

response, the regions were incredibly important and powerful, and were really an asset like no other in the federal government. There are dedicated people across the regions. Hopefully we get more capacity at the regional level, because they have proved how valuable they are. We here at FEMA cannot manage it all, and nor do we want to manage it all; this is why the regions are so important. We will probably see this in an after-action report at FEMA. Second, there is Recommendation 2020-16, which calls for establishing FEMA as a cabinet-level agency. This is personality driven; there may be an administration in the future where the personalities of the FEMA Administrator, DHS Secretary, and the President do not mix, which can complicate communication. From my experience, I did not have these complications; I had the right access to the Oval Office. Maybe in the future it could become problematic, but from my point of view the current structure is working pretty well. The last thing is Recommendation 2020-17, establish unified coordination. We need to redefine what catastrophic means and determine what exactly unified coordination entails. There needs to be unified coordination at the highest level, as well as decision makers at that level. Moving on to equity, equity and diversity are all things that matter to us. COVID-19 has highlighted these equity challenges and has shown that we have a lot of work to do. To Lisa's point, we all have an obligation to do what we can to reduce inequity and I do think we need an equity standard. What is the standard we are trying to achieve, and what is the outcome? Some of these things we have to agree on and bake into what we do. This is not just an Office of Equal Rights problem. I applaud the work on equity and all the recommendations that you made. Lastly, Tina talked about data and innovation. If there is one thing we have learned in a new way, I know FEMA has embraced data. We have to get smarter on data. We have actually baked that in, to include innovation into our Annual Planning Guidance.

David Bibo. To build on the Administrator's comments, an equity charge to the NAC is well-timed, but overdue. This is not a 2045 thing – it is a now thing. COVID-19 has only made it clearer how stark the equity challenges are in our field, and my sincere hope is we can use what you all have developed to act. There has been an assumption for many years that there is limited action we can take without Congress. There is some truth to that, but we need to make sure we have exhausted all of our remedies to address exactly the issues that you all have captured in your draft report.

Nim Kidd. We try to do this here in Texas as well. It is difficult to ask for candid feedback, and it is difficult to accept some candid feedback. FEMA has had great access to the President, and I want to ensure this is a model moving forward.

Paul Downing. Of the 574 federally recognized tribes, only 80 directly engaged with FEMA during the COVID-19 pandemic response. If only 8 states out of 50 had engaged with FEMA during this response, that would create all kinds of red flags. This is a missed opportunity and is incredibly concerning.

Administrator Gaynor. Increasing tribal engagement was one of my goals when I first came in as Administrator. Some tribes have immense capacity and other tribes do not, and maybe they don't have the engagement because of that. We need to invest a lot more with our engagement with tribes. To get to 100% engagement, we probably need to design a mechanism to maximize our engagement with tribes, especially when it matters. We need to determine how to do that in a more efficient, proactive, and open way.

FEMA LEADERSHIP PANEL

The purpose of this session was to provide NAC members the opportunity to engage in a free-flowing discussion with senior FEMA leadership.

What have we learned as a result of COVID-19 and how will that change FEMA's priorities in 2021?

Administrator Gaynor. 2020 has been a tumultuous year, with earthquakes in Puerto Rico, hurricanes, and of course COVID-19. COVID-19 has been historic in every way. FEMA was designated by the White House to be the lead in operational coordination and the lead of the Coronavirus Task Force. We opened the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) surge space. For the first time in history, FEMA was managing shortages, which is not what we do. We used the Defense Production Act at least 14 times. We developed COVID-19 operational guidance for hurricane season, so that we were prepared for both hazards. We saw some of the largest wildfires in California, tornados in Tennessee, flooding in Michigan, and the list goes on. We developed the Lost Wages program to provide unemployment insurance for the entire country. There are lots of lessons learned with COVID-19, some we would rather not think about and some that would make ourselves more efficient, smarter, and faster. We did a lot of things overnight.

FEMA can be described as a grant making agency and its grants can make a big difference in building resilience. What is FEMA doing to better target its grants to help communities before, during and after disasters?

Bridget Bean. FEMA is a grant making agency, but it is also so much more. Grants are just a vehicle. This year we have done some amazing things; however, we did not have a coordinated effort like we should have. The challenge is that we pushed boundaries that we haven't pushed before. Now we must continue to push ourselves to think outside the box. As Deputy Administrator for Resilience, I cannot work alone with trainings and grants – I have to ensure we are in sync with the Office of Response and Recovery (ORR). We are more than a grant making agency; we are in the grants world to help the rest of the agency. The Administrator consolidated grants under Grants Program Directorate (GPD). It was a strategic move. ORR jointly signed grant guidance to SLTTs to reduce the complexity and make things easier for them. While that was going on, we in Resilience tried to find areas where we could provide support. We did just-in-time training for pandemic guidance. We just recently issued some exercise start-up kits, which provide the opportunity to exercise the plans that SLTTs have. All the while, the types of threats facing the nations are changing – hurricanes, fires, tornadoes. We also need to help SLTTs prepare for other types of threats, such as cyber-attacks or terrorism. Resilience needs to determine how to help SLTTs plan for the worst, and how to gather feedback from the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) to determine the highest risks and how to drive investment in those areas.

David Bibo. I want to add two additional points. Having 57 disaster declarations and developing the Lost Wages program required FEMA to take action and deliver the mission overnight. They required that FEMA did not spend as much time considering the risk out of necessity. The fact that strong regions were the only way to deliver protections across the country has led to a greater level of trust and a stronger relationship with regions that increases efficiency and speed. With the Lost Wages program, there was a quick turn-around timeline and greater collaboration with the grants team. Grants are a means to an end, but they are a critical means to an end.

Administrator Gaynor. Post-COVID, Congress is going to have something to say about grants. We need to change the way we look at grants; they need to be more competitive, not based on 20 years of entitlement. They eat up innovation, they eat up emerging threats. When the next catastrophe happens – border to border, east to west – every single jurisdiction that has built capacity will be better off than those that did not. We need to ensure grant recipients are building capacity.

In emergency management, states have always been able to look to mutual aid and federal support when overwhelmed by a disaster. The COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously stressed global, federal, state, and local resources for extended periods, rendering mutual aid impracticable. What efforts are being taken to ensure FEMA and its partners are prepared for future large scale, catastrophic disasters?

Chris Grisafe. Having come from the Department of Defense (DoD), one of our pre-COVID assumptions was that we could hit the DoD button and that will solve our problems. Now, we realize we need to think of how we approach disasters differently. We are finding ways to make it easier for partners to access training and education, especially through leveraging virtual learning. We are looking at ways to incentivize cultural preparedness through the grant programs. In the last 20 years, we have been focused on terrorism, but now we are looking at nation-state and domestic threats. We need to take a more near-term focus. We have become extremely reliant on vulnerable communication technologies and we need to incentivize more attention on this topic. We are strengthening our relationship with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to teach the public how to better prepare. We are also working on ways to develop increased public communication about these threats.

Claire Thomas. We executed the Defense Production Act in really big ways. Title 7 had several provisions that we leveraged, including voluntary agreement lasting for 5 years, which also provide anti-trust protections. This allows us to improve response to all disasters. The other thing I'd like to highlight is our work with our international partners. We were able to look at the international transport of personal protective equipment (PPE) and restrict those shipments that were deemed inappropriate. Further, there has been increased collaboration with international partners to support each other through the system CONOPS. We are also working on a tribal annex to ensure we can provide the maximum support to indigenous citizens, so that they can prepare for future catastrophic events.

How is FEMA adapting to a national health emergency that knows no boundaries and has broken through normal regional patterns? How is FEMA adapting its service delivery model to ensure that the populations of states that are not frequent disaster partners with FEMA have the resources and support to access needed disaster funding?

David Bibb. The biggest adaption was recognizing that a Headquarters-centric approach would fail. The risk of devolving authority to the Regional Administrators has worked very well. We foresaw several risks in doing that and worked to manage as many of them as we could. We have a pretty significant privilege in the federal government as we work the COVID-19 response. The Stafford Act has a lot of flexibility; FEMA gets to use those tools to support the states. I know that in many states there is a continuum of the authorities that tribes, states, and territories have. Some have a lot of authority, but not a lot of resources. As much as this has been a challenging year for us here at FEMA, I cannot imagine having been on the state end of this. We have put out guidance and made the strategic eligibility decisions, and we are trying to get to “yes” as much as we can for the SLTTs. In terms of adaptations for delivery of FEMA programs, we have had to make a lot of changes. We have been conducting preliminary damage assessments virtually, as well as have taken a hybrid deployment approach. We have also delivered swaths of the Public Assistance (PA) program remotely.

Do the states in the center of the country have adequate capacity to access needed COVID-19 emergency funding?

David Bibb. This relates back to Paul Downing’s question regarding tribes. There is a capacity and an awareness question going on here. For COVID-19, we have seen more PA applicants than we did for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Irma, Sandy, Harvey, Irma, and Maria combined. We have a lot of entities interacting with FEMA for the first time. We have entities that may not be aware of that program gap – it is a question of those areas that may not have a history of dealing with FEMA. We need to reach all potential customers.

Administrator Gaynor. Having a national disaster declared overnight is something that FEMA had never experienced. We made a pitch to ask tribes to go to the state for funding. This may have had a negative result in terms of how tribe interaction with the federal government has worked in this disaster. Some tribes do not know that they are eligible for funding, others have not applied because it is too complicated.

How should FEMA, in the grant application process, take into account the different types of risk that states face?

Bridget Bean. We need to hear more from states about what their major risks are. What are their core capabilities? With which lifelines do they face challenges? In the policy side of the grants programs, there are a number of things FEMA must do to make applications more descriptive and to identify flexibilities.

David Bibb. The FEMA National Risk Index allows us to take into account different disaster risks and to look at hazard and social vulnerability. As we hold this mirror up to ourselves on the equity question, we need to find a way to prioritize resources that are vulnerable in these ways. That overlaps to places with serious vulnerability challenges. It comes to an SLTT capacity issue as well. We need to figure out how to move programs to those who need it the most.

What is FEMA leadership doing to support women and minorities in the workplace and in the field, as well as in the emergency management discipline as a whole? What role do you see FEMA playing in helping cultivate the next generation of local, state, and federal emergency management leaders?

Claire Thomas. FEMA released our Publication 1, which is a foundational document and highlights our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity and respect. We built on these efforts with the We Are FEMA campaign; you have likely seen this campaign, which highlights the work that we are doing across the nation and highlights employees from diverse backgrounds. FEMA has a robust network of diverse workforce groups, including the Women’s Forum. We are continually looking for ways to improve FEMA’s organizational culture. We are undertaking analysis and examining potential challenges that employees might be experiencing and making that data available to all staff. We also encourage supervisors, managers, and leaders to foster a culture of inclusiveness throughout FEMA.

The 2020 NAC report looked at vision and the future of emergency management. How is FEMA planning for the future?

Claire Thomas. The emergency management community continues to face a future unlike any other. We are in the process of identifying key drivers over the next 25 years, and are taking into consideration some of the findings presented by the NAC today. We are hopeful that this report will be helpful to us in looking forward when planning future strategic plans.

FEMA is consistently ranked as a challenging place to work, but people value the mission highly. How is FEMA trying to address this?

Administrator Gaynor. My belief is that FEMA historically has been focused on programs. The programs we do have are wonderful, from grants to insurance to NIMS. We have promised to take a look at ourselves through our Publication 1 and the FEMA core values. We have tried to take a person-centric approach; this requires that FEMA spends time hiring the right people and that we are retaining those people. People come to us because they love this mission.

Deanne Criswell. What do you think about the new bill that passed the House yesterday looking at cost-share?

Administrator Gaynor. It increased eligibility for operating costs. There is a process for all of those things. The challenge in all of this, and I'm not necessarily talking about the bill, is that there are so many buckets of supplemental funding out there. We want to make sure we use the best bucket for the right thing for the maximum value. If there is better money under a different program or agency, we want to maximize that. This will follow a process, and ultimately, we will comply with what the law says.

David Bibb. The agency has put together roadmaps that have decoded the available funding. The daunting task is to identify all of the eligible resources. We have a healthcare roadmap and an economic roadmap, among others, and we will continue to update those.

Warren Miller. Application processes are becoming astronomically complex. I pose that we need to update the terminology about how we respond to Individual Assistance (IA) and PA requests from denial, when things are in process in order to not deter the application.

Administrator Gaynor. That has been a sticking point for years, about how we communicate with our disaster survivors. You think you have done all the right things, you submitted the paperwork, then FEMA says denied. It is painful. We changed the wording this year, which will hopefully help.

Warren Miller. We need to do some public education on it as well.

Administrator Gaynor. With hurricane response in Louisiana, we directed the team down there to avoid speaking in "FEMA language", but instead speak in plain language about what survivors can expect. This year we have had an opportunity to change a few of the things that were not working.

Lori Hodges. A lot of folks do not want to apply FEMA flood and fire mitigation because of past experiences with these programs. How can you change mitigation programs so that they can be changed to work across jurisdictions?

Bridget Bean. You are raising an issue that others have raised before, and our team is looking into it. I am happy to circle back on this later on to provide the full feedback.

Jim Waskom. We are experiencing a lack of housing capacity nationwide. It takes very long to get survivors out of hotels, into temporary housing, and then eventually back into permanent housing. What is FEMA doing to address this issue?

Administrator Gaynor. This is a challenge, as FEMA is responsible for emergency housing while Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is focused on permanent housing, and our two agencies rarely align. As a nation, how do you solve post-disaster housing shortfalls in a community? FEMA has been working with HUD on this issue, as this is a continuing challenge and there are regulations and authorities involved. The goal would be that disaster housing is under one program. We absolutely know this system is broken, and we need to work to improve it.

David Bibo. This comes back to the equity challenge: there may be pre-disaster housing issues in a community, which are then exacerbated by a disaster. Some solutions that we bring are not well-received by communities. That is something we need to work through with the NAC, to put some better tools in the toolbox.

Anna Lang. Currently, at the local level there is legislation to share disclosure about flood and fire risk. At the federal level this legislation has stalled. Do you have ideas on how the general public can get hazard information about the areas in which they live?

Administrator Gaynor. As an emergency manager and a resident of wherever you live, you have an obligation to know your community's risks. At FEMA, we have plenty of partners and validated data sources that we use to build our products. I would be happy to connect you with someone that is more well-versed in this area.

COVID-19 AFTER ACTION REPORT BRIEF

The purpose of this session was for the NAC to receive a brief of the 2020 COVID-19 After Action Report. The report time frame is January 2020 through September 2020. It focuses on strategic and operational impacts. The NAC spoke with Ms. Christa Montani, Branch Chief of Continuous Improvement, FEMA.

Presentation by Christa Montani

Methodology

We conducted 244 interviews and 44 hot washes across FEMA headquarters and the 10 FEMA regions. We wanted to ensure we had a national perspective. 14 surveys were issued by individual program offices and were focused on narrower themes and topics. We also conducted three interim assessments with senior leadership to ensure we were on the right track.

Section 1: Coordinating Structures/Policy

- What can FEMA learn from this event in terms of adapting these policies and approaches to other national-level events?
- COVID-19 required a complex federal response, with exercise of non-traditional authorities.
- It left infrastructure largely undamaged; however, it did affect the use of critical facilities and critical infrastructure. This required close coordination with Health and Human Services (HHS) and the White House Coronavirus Task Force.
- We have identified a number of areas for improvement of FEMA operations and how FEMA can sustain those partnerships for future events.

Section 2: Resource Management

- From a logistics standpoint, resource management was unprecedented in terms of magnitude for FEMA.
 - There were challenges in tracking and maintaining awareness of products that were moving to fulfill resource requests.
 - We had unique partners when it came to procuring and distributing supplies.
- Resources included technical and medical PPE, which typically does not fall within FEMA's purview. This challenged our system for tracking and responding to resource requests.
- We struggled on the supply and demand side to understand what was being requested and how to allocate resources in an expeditious way.
- Potential opportunities to build upon:
 - How we track and respond to resource requests in a globally resource-restrained environment
 - Supply chain stabilization
 - Private sector concerns – how to ensure a more unified approach to private sector engagement
 - Exploring FEMA's role in facilitating supply chain and maximizing capacity

Section 3: Supporting SLTT Partners

- Two sides of the coin: how to build operational capacity in the regions, and how to strengthen the relationship between the regions and FEMA.
- Advanced Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) were successful in establishing lines of communication and coordination with COVID-19 response.

- We would like to add enhance the capacity and operational capability of these teams
- We recognize that funding sources and authorities can be incredibly complex for SLTT partners to navigate.
- FEMA has developed several recommendations and is working on developing new doctrine policy relating to these issues.

Section 4: Preparedness and Information Analysis

- This event required us to gather different types of information than we have in the past and analyze that with a different set of partners. We plan to build this into a consistent tool used for situational awareness and reporting.
- This work should continue in the steady state. We need tools and systems that integrate data sources, GIS platforms, data modeling platforms, etc.
- How we incorporate the use of that data into our deliberative plans? How do we use this information to prepare in advance for these types of events?

Section 5: Organizational Resilience

- This section is focused primarily on internal FEMA operations.
- There were a number of unique approaches to how we deliver our programs, with emphasis on social distancing and limiting contact.
- There were a number of IT changes to ensure our resilience and functional operation of software and hardware. FEMA was able to move to a virtual environment quickly and easily due to investments in IT over the last 5 to 7 years.

NAC AFTER ACTION REVIEW

The purpose of this session was for the NAC to reflect on the 2020 report cycle: what went well, what did not go well, and what needs to be done in 2021 to improve the process. The NAC used Miro to conduct this exercise.

Common themes: What went well

- Establishment of the structure tiger team
- Liaison and ONAC staff support
- Crosspollination between subcommittees

Common themes: What did not go well

- Version control
- Heavy overlap with charges
- Member engagement issues (with COVID, disasters, etc.)

Common themes: Actions to take going forward

- Less subcommittee overlap to reduce redundancy
- More input from FEMA staff
 - Liaisons interact on subcommittee calls
 - Vet recommendations through program offices early on
- More time allocated to research
- Fewer recommendations per cycle
- Clarify scheduling through setting milestones and check-in points

