



Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Unified Federal Review (UFR) process for practitioners from other federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) agencies and members of the public. Beyond these general answers, documents specific to the UFR process are available via FEMA's [UFR Library](#).

1. Overview of the UFR Process for Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Compliance

Q: What is the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Process focuses on coordinating federal Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP) compliance reviews across federal agencies applicable to disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster under the Stafford Act. The UFR Process utilizes a set of tools and mechanisms, such as Programmatic Agreements, data sharing, and other streamlining tools, that were developed to foster partnerships, enhance intergovernmental coordination, and streamline federal agency EHP reviews for disaster recovery projects. The UFR Process was designed to be adaptive and flexible to the needs of a specific disaster, and to improve the efficiency of the EHP review process. These efforts support efficient decision making on federally funded, approved or permitted activities which, in turn, expedites delivery of recovery projects.

Q: Under what authority was the UFR Process created?

A: The establishment of the UFR Process was mandated in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 (SRIA). SRIA directed the President to “establish an expedited and unified interagency review process to ensure compliance with EHP requirements under federal law relating to disaster recovery projects, in order to expedite the recovery process, consistent with applicable law.” The UFR Process was established on July 29, 2014, through the Memorandum of Understanding Establishing the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process (UFR MOU) among eleven federal agencies involved in the EHP compliance reviews associated with disaster recovery assistance following a presidentially declared disaster. A copy of the UFR MOU is available in FEMA's [UFR Library](#).

Q: What federal agencies are participating in the UFR Process?

A: The following agencies are signatories to the UFR MOU and are responsible for implementing the UFR Process. Among their responsibilities are attending meetings to review and improve UFR tools and mechanisms, providing staff and resources to support UFR efforts, implementing UFR tools and mechanisms to streamline processes, and working toward coordinated environmental and historic preservation reviews:



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- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- The Council on Environmental Quality;
- The Department of Agriculture;
- The Department of the Army – Civil Works;
- The Department of Commerce;
- The Department of Energy;
- The Department of Homeland Security;
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development;
- The Department of the Interior;
- The Department of Transportation; and
- The Environmental Protection Agency.

The following agencies are members of the UFR Steering Group responsible for leading the implementation of the UFR Process:

- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- The Council on Environmental Quality;
- The Department of Homeland Security; and
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Q: How is ongoing coordination to improve UFR processes managed at the federal level?

A: Established by the UFR Steering Group, the UFR Interagency Working Group is a federal interagency group that assists the UFR Steering Group to institutionalize and further develop and implement the UFR Process during steady-state and disaster operations. The UFR Working Group will:

- Provide a forum for member agencies to coordinate efforts to identify barriers to unified and expedited EHP reviews,
- Collaborate and communicate at the headquarters level in support of regional, field, and state level staff;
- Identify opportunities to develop efficiencies to streamline environmental and historic preservation review; and
- Support the development of additional UFR tools and mechanisms.

Q: Is there a non-federal role in UFR Process?

A: There are important non-federal roles in the UFR Process. UFR resources (found in the [UFR Library](#)) guide non-federal stakeholders in providing information to SLTT governments seeking federal assistance. This information is required to complete environmental and historic preservation reviews and obtain permits or other approvals. SLTT governments may have additional requirements to protect their unique environmental and historic resources. The implementation of the UFR Process can help improve all levels of intra- and intergovernmental coordination and ensure compliance with both federal and non-federal EHP requirements for disaster recovery projects.

Q: Is there a public role in the UFR Process?

A: There are also important roles for the public in the UFR Process. Identifying opportunities for public engagement is an integral part of the EHP review process. The UFR process does not alter public involvement requirements. Providing comments in response to a public notice, participation in workshops, and attending public meetings are expected to continue and are encouraged.

2. EHP Review Requirements and the UFR Process

Q: What are EHP Review requirements?

A: EHP review requirements are found in federal statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders developed for the protection and good stewardship of natural and cultural resources. Some examples are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Clean Water Act (CWA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). An EHP compliance review is required for disaster recovery projects and programs that are entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by federal agencies. To receive funding, applicants must accept the responsibility of complying with these requirements. In general, EHP requirements state disaster recovery projects should be designed to minimize impacts on the environment, and must respect the cultural and historic resources that define communities and contribute to their unique character.

Q: Does the UFR Process alter existing EHP requirements?

A: No, the UFR Process does not change any existing EHP laws, Executive Orders, or other requirements. It does not eliminate consultation requirements or establish a single, EHP review for disaster recovery projects. Instead, it helps practitioners, applicants, and stakeholders coordinate EHP reviews and reduce project review timelines through creating and implementing UFR tools and mechanisms.

Q: What are the benefits of implementing the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Process enhances the ability of federal agencies to expedite and navigate the complexities of intra- and intergovernmental EHP reviews for disaster recovery projects by promoting:

- Consistency and coordination among multiple federal agencies in completing EHP compliance reviews;
- Collaboration and coordination among federal and SLTT entities;
- Efficient and targeted use of agency staff and funds;
- Quick resolution of intra/intergovernmental coordination challenges;
- More informed federal decision making; and,
- Expedited execution and implementation of disaster recovery projects.

3. Implementing the UFR Process

Q: What disaster recovery projects are addressed by the UFR Process?

A: The UFR process focuses on federal disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster. Such projects are aimed at restoring a community's facilities to pre-disaster condition and/or capacity, assisting with post-disaster needs, and improving community resilience for future disasters. While the eleven UFR MOU signatory agencies have explicitly agreed to implement UFR throughout their agencies, UFR tools and mechanisms may be used or adapted by any government entity to expedite EHP reviews for any disaster recovery project.

Q: How will the UFR Process be coordinated across federal agencies?

A: The UFR MOU establishes roles and responsibilities among the federal agencies for implementing the UFR Process. Within FEMA, the UFR Process created new roles, including a headquarters-level National UFR Coordinator, Regional UFR Coordinators, and UFR Advisors within the Cadre of On-Call Response/ Recovery Employees. UFR Advisors are field positions, with the primary function of responding to disasters to identify strategic goals within a specific disaster response, then work collaboratively to identify areas where the Unified Federal Review process can be leveraged to achieve these goals. The UFR Advisor assists in coordinating EHP compliance for disaster recovery projects involving multiple agencies in the field by doing the following:

- Educate staff and interagency partners about the UFR Process;
- Support development of or recommend specific UFR Process components to support disaster recovery;
- Act as liaison between federal agencies to identify opportunities to expedite EHP compliance;
- Facilitate coordination meetings across agencies;
- Coordinate federal technical assistance capabilities, e.g. identification of data sharing opportunities and facilitating the development of data sharing agreements.

Q: How is the UFR Process related to the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)?

A: The NDRF provides a coordinating structure that facilitates communication and collaboration among all stakeholders and enables effective recovery support to impacted SLTT jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner. It also focuses on how best to restore, redevelop, and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural, and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient nation. The UFR Process leverages the NDRF to identify common EHP concerns and to resolve these concerns while complying with EHP requirements.

Q: What resources are available to disaster recovery staff to assist in UFR Process implementation?

A: The following are some of the resources available in the [UFR Library](#) that have been developed to assist disaster recovery staff:

- Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Guide for Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Applicants
- Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Agency Point of Contact List
- UFR Fact Sheets
- Interagency Meeting Checklist
- Data Standards List
- Template Environmental Checklist for FEMA and HUD
- Data Sharing Agreement Content
- IT Resources List
- Disaster Recovery Skills Checklist
- UFR Practitioner and Leadership Briefing Packages
- Prototype Programmatic Agreement for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Q: Do the Tools and mechanisms developed for the UFR Process have application to other types of disasters or even non-disaster projects?

A: While the UFR Tools and mechanisms were developed specifically to assist federal agencies in the recovery process for presidentially declared disasters, they are being shared within the federal community to consider or adapt to other types of projects and activities. Likewise, they may have application to non-federal activities.

4. Participants and Stakeholders in the UFR Process

Q: What is the participant and stakeholder role in the UFR Process?

A: Factsheets describing the role of each participant and stakeholder in the UFR Process are available in the [UFR Library](#) including information for permit or grant applicants, disaster recovery staff, emergency managers, and SLTT entities regarding the engagement of federal and SLTT entities.

Q: Were stakeholders and the public engaged in the development of the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Steering Group engages stakeholders throughout the development of the UFR Process by hosting webinars and meetings, establishing a webpage, and soliciting public input on UFR Tools and mechanisms. The Steering Group continues to engage with stakeholders through the UFR Working Group, workshops, and newsletters to improve the process and build resiliency. Disaster recovery projects differ from many other types of projects as the urgency associated with disseminating funding to communities often relies on stakeholder engagement at the regional, disaster-specific, and local levels.

Q: Where can I find information and resources needed to implement the UFR Process?

A: The [UFR Library](#) has information, updates, and resources for the UFR Process. Contact the UFR Team at federal-unified-review@fema.dhs.gov.

5. Monitoring of the Success of the UFR Process

Q: How will the success of the UFR Process be monitored?

A: The UFR Process was designed to be scalable to the needs of specific disasters and to incorporate a process of continual improvement that will ensure the goal of expediting and unifying EHP reviews for presidentially declared disaster recovery projects is achieved. The National UFR Coordinator in FEMA monitors the implementation of the UFR Process through review of annual reports and ongoing meetings with UFR practitioners and interagency partners. Collaborative review of UFR activity, including best practices, lessons learned, and development of new agreements supports decision making among federal partners to improve UFR processes.