

Puerto Rico's Recovery is in the Hands of Local Workforce

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico – About 1,150 local FEMA employees do their part every day help in the transformation of the island after the devastation left by hurricane María. In addition, they work closely with a team of 154 employees from the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3). This investment in human resources represents a generational opportunity for Puerto Rico's recovery.

Architects, engineers and others with specialized skills in various fields are currently leading the recovery in areas such as Public Assistance, Hazard Mitigation, Planning and also serve as liaisons with other state and federal agencies.

“The role that Puerto Ricans play, along with the rest of the staff working in the recovery, is essential. Their determination is unstoppable, and they are the engine that drives the ongoing transformation process on the island,” said Alex Amparo, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The needs of government agencies and voluntary organizations also require the support of FEMA and COR3 to immediately address their particular efforts. Each municipality has its unique issues in the development of its projects, such as road repairs and recreational facilities. The staff's first-hand knowledge about each municipality complements the mayors' vision on how to achieve building stronger communities. In addition, the long-term employment of local residents provides stability to the work carried out within the municipalities and in collaboration with the state government.

“These projects increase the resilience and prevent future damage if a natural disaster emergency event hits the Municipality of Aguadilla. The positive disposition of FEMA and its team along with the efforts of our workforce have little by little led to the formulation of projects that were pending,” said the mayor of



Aguadilla, Yanitsia Irizarry Méndez.

Besides providing Puerto Rico with funds for the development of permanent projects, recovery work brings with it additional favorable effects to the island. According to Ottmar Chávez, Executive Director of COR3, reconstruction work provides a boost to the economy by generating local jobs with both agencies.

“Despite the complexities and challenges of dealing with more recent disasters, it has been essential to already have working groups from both FEMA and COR3, whose commitment and sense of duty lead them with great enthusiasm to develop the projects of agencies, municipalities and private non-profit organizations. Communication with our counterparts is important and critical to achieve success,” said the head of COR3.

An additional achievement obtained during Puerto Rico’s recovery has been the capacity building within the local employees in multiple competencies of disaster response and recovery. The workforce in Puerto Rico has access to thousands of courses from the Emergency Management Institute, or EMI, to ensure the readiness of the local team in order to handle any future event.

FEMA works with COR3 through the federal agency's Public Assistance program to obligate recovery funds to private nonprofit organizations, municipalities and agencies of the Government of Puerto Rico for expenses related to Hurricanes Irma and María. To date, **over \$7.3 billion** has been awarded to Puerto Rico as part of FEMA's Public Assistance program.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane Maria, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recovery.pr. Follow us on social networking at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and on [@COR3pr](https://Twitter).



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