



FEMA

March 22, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: Regional Administrators
Regions I – X

FROM: Keith Turi
Assistant Administrator
Recovery Directorate

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Turi".

SUBJECT: Public Assistance Application Simplification for COVID-19

To address the magnitude of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and scale the Public Assistance (PA) Program to ensure local officials quickly receive eligible funding, FEMA is simplifying the PA application and funding process for the nationwide emergency declaration declared on March 13, 2020, and any subsequent major disaster declarations for the incident. As we continue to work through major questions of eligibility, deadlines, and duplications of benefits, we are in a position to start awarding funding now and are working to enable applicants to apply directly for assistance. The Recovery Directorate's goals are to: enable the rapid delivery of assistance; keep PA processes simple and consistent across the country; leverage our existing national workflows and processes; and, ensure consistency in decision making.

To address these goals we have developed a revised approach to eligibility decision making, customer service, project processing, outreach and engagement, and environmental and historic preservation that is specific to the circumstances around COVID-19. We are also issuing the *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Public Assistance Simplified Application Fact Sheet* that you may share with Recipients, as well as talking points for you to use as you engage with your Recipient counterparts.

Topline messaging that should be emphasized with your counterparts is as follows:

1. FEMA is making adjustments to simplify the application process but are not deviating from the basics we know how to do.
2. Applicants should be prepared to drive their own recovery through direct application for PA. This will enable us to ensure our limited resources do not become a bottleneck as we try to process projects for all local governments at the same time.
3. This is a dynamic environment, and we are doing everything we can to communicate and iteratively improve our ability to deliver large-scale assistance rapidly.

Additionally, we are quickly moving to build out the technology and tools to support what will be a largely direct application approach. As our processes and tools evolve, a general implementation timeline you may expect include:

- **Immediate term:** You have the ability to process projects now, and your PA staff have been given iterative guidance on how to immediately process projects. Infrastructure Branch Directors can begin working with recipients to submit projects, and Consolidated Resource Centers are standing by to process Expedited Projects per existing guidance.

- **In the next week:** We will be rolling out a COVID-19-specific templated Project Worksheet (PW) and account set up, Request for Public Assistance, and expedited funding guidance to streamline up-front PW development steps.
- **Within 2-3 weeks:** Remote customer service tools and additional functionality in Grants Manager/Grants Portal to support templated PWs and expedited project processing guidance.
- **Within 6-8 weeks:** Initial capability to process direct applications without FEMA/state providing customer service.

If you have any questions, please contact Traci Brasher, Director (Acting), Public Assistance Division at traci.brasher@fema.dhs.gov.