



PREPAREDNESS GRANT PROGRAMS – REVIEW PROCESSES

All grant applications received by the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) undergo an extensive review process to determine eligibility and adherence to programmatic requirements prior to award allocations. The review process can occur in different phases which are outlined below.

Step One: Initial Screening

For all grant programs, FEMA conducts a preliminary review of submitted applications to verify compliance with all administrative and eligibility criteria identified in the program-specific grant guidance. Such screening also ensures that eligible applicants have provided complete submissions prior to the initiation of application reviews.

Step Two: Programmatic and Panel Review Processes

At the conclusion of Step One, all grants must undergo a programmatic review and most grants will undergo a panel review to include a Federal review or peer review. For example, FEMA Program Analysts, or a qualified Federal reviewer will conduct programmatic review of applications to assess and validate the feasibility of proposed projects, budgets, and timelines. The majority of grants will also undergo a panel review, where they are evaluated by multiple reviewers for completeness, adherence to programmatic guidelines, feasibility, and how well the proposal addresses homeland security priorities, need and/or capability deficiencies.

For competitive grant programs, applications that are deemed high-scoring and/or high-ranked by State Administrative Agencies (SAAs), where appropriate, and have also addressed programmatic priorities are selected to advance to the Federal and/or peer review pool. For non-competitive grant programs, generally all submitted applications will be programmatically reviewed by select reviewers to ensure proposed funds are aligned with programmatic priorities which are feasible during each program’s period of performance.

Panel Review Process

The panel review process is generally conducted in-person or remote-based where one application is reviewed at least two or more times by select reviewers during the application review process.

- **Federal Review** – A Federal review is comprised of a panel of officials from FEMA (headquarters and regions) and representatives from other Federal agencies, to include but not limited to, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC). National stakeholders that also participate in this review process include, but not limited to, the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) to leverage their subject matter expertise during application reviews. Federal reviewers can have

expertise in areas such as interoperable emergency communications, critical infrastructure, law enforcement, and border protection. During the Federal review process, reviewers evaluate the effectiveness of applications while ensuring adherence to programmatic requirements as identified in the respective program's grant guidance. Federal reviewers, in some instances, provide scores as an output of their effectiveness review and/or recommend applications for approval or conditional approval based on the ability of applicants to comply with programmatic requirements.

- **Peer Review** – A peer review process leverages subject matter experts to review applications from the homeland security and emergency management fields at the State, local, and/or Tribal level. Peer review requires a community of qualified experts to perform impartial application reviews individually and within a panel setting; such experts can be members of national organizations such as the NEMA and/or the IAEM. During the peer review process, similar to the Federal review, reviewers evaluate the effectiveness of applications to ensure adherence to programmatic requirements as identified in the respective program's grant guidance. Similarly, peer reviewers also participate in the scoring of applications which is used to influence how program allocations are determined at the conclusion of the review process.

Please note that these review processes are not mutually exclusive. Some grant programs use a blend of these review processes in order to comprehensively evaluate the wide variety of preparedness grant program applications that FEMA GPD receives.

These reviewers collectively determine if proposed activities help achieve core missions of the respective grant programs. Protective measures are used in arranging panels to avoid potential conflicts of interest and ensure a fair and balanced process.

Step Three: Award Notification Review

Once all grants have completed Step Two and have been deemed as eligible and compliant with programmatic requirements, each grant package will then undergo the award notification review process. The award notification review process manages pre- and post-allocation activities where the documentation is reviewed and verified as compliant against financial management requirements. Once all steps have been completed and verified as complete, the FEMA Program Analyst will work with the grantees provide documentation on the approval of the grant, so, implementation can begin.

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"FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards."

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