



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 "Keith 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](mailto:traci.brasher@fema.dhs.gov).

## FACT SHEET

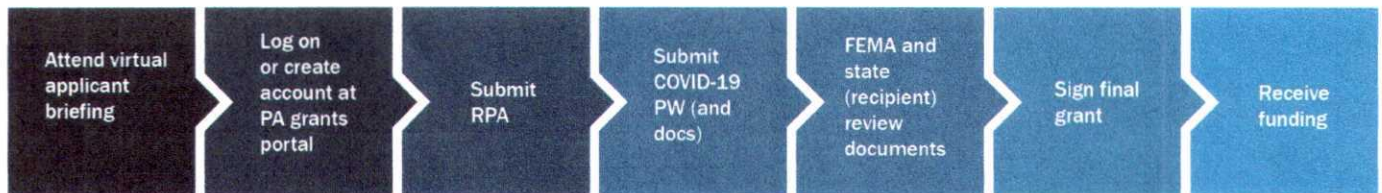
# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Public Assistance Simplified Application

This Fact Sheet supplements *Fact Sheet: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Emergency Protective Measures* and provides an overview of the FEMA Public Assistance application process for recipients and applicants requesting reimbursement related to federal emergency and major disaster declarations for Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). FEMA is simplifying the Public Assistance application and funding process to address the magnitude of this event and allow local officials to receive eligible funding more quickly.

**FEMA is simplifying the Public Assistance application process.** FEMA is developing a simplified online form applicants can complete, and on which they may explain work activities, answer basic questions, provide limited supporting documentation, and provide a cost estimate. FEMA and the recipient will review this information, follow up with limited requests for additional information if necessary, and award assistance. Recipients will have access to all projects in [PA Grants Portal](#), consistent with the traditional PA process.

The national emergency declaration authorized Public Assistance Category B reimbursement for emergency protective measures. It does not include additional categories of assistance, such as infrastructure repair and replacement, which are needed after typical natural disasters. This enables FEMA to eliminate many application steps that are designed for those categories, including: eliminating exploratory calls, recovery scoping meetings, and most site inspections; and reducing documentation requirements to the minimum needed to support Category B reimbursement.

Recipients are states, tribes, or territories that receive and administer Public Assistance awards. Applicants are state, local, tribal and territorial governments, or eligible private nonprofits, submitting a request for assistance under a recipient's federal award.



**Applicants are empowered to drive their own recovery** and directly apply for reimbursement without waiting for FEMA to assign a Program Delivery Manager. FEMA is simplifying the process so applicants may directly apply for assistance through the [PA Grants Portal](#).

As FEMA and recipients implement these changes, FEMA will continue to process and fund Public Assistance projects. Funding is immediately available should state, tribal, territorial or local officials request expedited assistance. Prior to funding, recipients must sign FEMA-State/Tribal/Territorial Agreements, submit signed Federal Grant Applications (SF-424), and update Recipient Public Assistance Administrative Plans. Recipients should start [setting up Grants Portal accounts](#) for themselves and applicants at [grantee.fema.gov](http://grantee.fema.gov) so they can



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apply for assistance. Once an account is created, Applicants may [submit Requests for Public Assistance](#) to begin the application process.

FEMA is working to rapidly scale up the information, tools and technology necessary to provide assistance to all applicants. Eligibility guidance on what FEMA can fund will be updated on the Public Assistance Policy, Guidance, and Factsheets [page on FEMA.gov](#) and the [COVID-19 page on FEMA.gov](#). Application support and tutorials are available on the resource tab in [PA Grants Portal](#).

## More Information

For more information, visit the following websites:

1. [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#)
2. [FEMA.gov/Coronavirus](#)
3. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) (CDC)