Introduction

An email was sent to all of the State NFIP Coordinators and State Hazard Mitigation Officers in FEMA Region V requesting input into this report. The email contained a series of questions intended to help spur thoughts and feedback for this report. The questions covered the following topics: 1) Key Accomplishments, 2) Challenges, 3) Priorities, and 4) Recommended Actions. The email responses received are summarized below.

The FEMA Region V states include: Illinois (0), Indiana (0), Michigan (0), Minnesota (3), Ohio (0), and Wisconsin (0) and 34 Tribal Nations (0). The number in parenthesis after the state/Tribal Nation name is the number of Major Disaster Declarations for flooding in that state since January 2021.

Key Accomplishments

Michigan

- **Grant applications are keeping the mitigation program very busy.** Between BRIC and two HMGP disasters Michigan submitted 41 apps for $220 million in January and February.

Minnesota

- Submitted 100% of COVID HMGP applications ($14m) by one-year application deadline, success partly due to BRIC rejection of ready-to-submit large infrastructure application ($7m).
- Funded acquisition of HMA application and grant management software (Civix).
- Hazard Mitigation increased staffing to three people.

Ohio

- The Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch has been pushing for the creation of a state mitigation grant program for years. For the first time, funds were requested as part of the Governor’s budget, which is now being reviewed by the Ohio Legislature. The final decision will be known in late June.
- The Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch successfully applied for all HMGP funds available to the state as part of the COVID-19 disaster declaration. There was over $38 Million in federal funds as part of this disaster declaration.
Wisconsin

- Continues to work statewide with stakeholders on floodplain management workshops. The workshops are a combination of in-person and web-based offerings. The target audience is local zoning administrators with various titles. The state partnered with the University of Wisconsin to provide the webinar series.

Challenges

Michigan

- It is difficult to keep up with the workload right now. The unprecedented grant opportunities are a good thing but it is hard but build enough staff capacity in a stable, sustainable way based on management costs. We can only hire limited term positions and that scares a lot of good candidates away from applying.
- FEMA grants continue to get more complex despite their stated efforts to streamline and simplify. FEMA’s own program rules keep growing and then other federal requirements like FFATA, BABAA, federal procurement get added to it. It requires more and more staff time and almost guarantees audit findings.
- The PDM CDS ends up significantly impacting our available staff time. We haven’t built that application process into our work plan because it doesn’t run through the state. It just shows up as a surprise that pulls us away from our other priorities.

Minnesota

- Hazard Mitigation assisted Recovery with FEMA preliminary damage assessments and applicant briefings for 66 counties and five tribes for three federal disasters during summer months.

Ohio

- FEMA GO continues to cause problems for HMA grant implementation in Ohio and nationwide. The system cannot perform all grants management functions and glitches continue to delay projects for months.
- The Mitigation Branch is down two staff members at a time when we have an historic amount of funding and grants being administered by the Branch. Internal state hiring processes continue to be slow and unwilling to adapt to current needs and trends.

Priorities

Michigan

- State mitigation plan – due in April 2024.
- Getting $80 million in HMGP approved and starting implementation.
• Building a better application process for BRIC so we can be more successful in the competition funding.
• Building a STORM revolving loan fund.

**Minnesota**

• State Plan update due March 2024.

**Ohio**

• State of Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan update due May 2024.

**Wisconsin**

• Many communities will be receiving Letters of Final Determination in the next few years due to the new coastal maps going effective. As a result, the state program will be very busy with ordinance updates and trainings on the new coastal VE zones.

**Recommended Actions**

**PDM CDS**

The PDM Congressionally Directed Spending program is causing issues in FEMA Region V states and across the country. Some of the issues that have arisen with projects selected for funding include, but are not limited to:

• Ineligible applicants,
• Project requested is not feasible,
• No local match available,
• No local mitigation plan,
• Implementation of the scope of work has already started before the award has been made etc.
• States are asked to provide a letter stating that projects are eligible with wholly inadequate time to evaluate eligibility. FEMA's flipping of the grant process (determining projects to fund first and then completing the application process) puts states in a difficult position. If we say we can't evaluate eligibility that quickly then they complain to the legislator they are seeking funding through. The community and the legislator often don't understand the complexity of eligibility requirements so the state becomes the bad guy.
• The process forces FEMA to devote a lot of effort to the expedited application/eligibly/obligation process which takes away from their capacity to process and approve regular HMA grants.
• When projects are identified for funding in the budget and ultimately do not get funded (due to eligibility issues), it is bad for everyone involved. It makes FEMA and the state EMA look bad and frustrates the community and the legislator.
FEMA Region V states would like ASFPM to research and answer the question how Congress and FEMA are able to operate the PDM CDS program in light of Section 203 (I) of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) titled, *Prohibition of Earmarks*. This language defines “congressionally directed spending” and very clearly states that, “None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to carry out this section may be used for congressionally directed spending.”

**HMA Programs**

- Continue to encourage FEMA to take meaningful action to reduce program complexity in lieu of issuing a 600-page HMA Program Guidance document adding additional priorities and requirements to already overburdened states and communities. “Disadvantaged communities do not have the capacity to effectively compete in these programs. States can and should assist these communities, but our capacity is limited as well. FEMA Direct Technical Assistance is not the answer to this problem. FEMA needs to develop a consistent funding source for state mitigation programs that will allow states to hire permanent staff that can provide the needed technical assistance to communities to be successful in these programs.

- ASFPM should utilize the upcoming comment period for OMB Circulars A-4 and A-94 to reduce or eliminate the burden placed on states and communities by the benefit cost analysis process. So many studies have proven that mitigation is cost effective, yet we continue to require this exercise for every grant application.