



Issue Brief: Saving by Mitigating

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► Hazard Mitigation: Defined *Sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from hazards.*¹

Natural disasters can cause loss of life, inflict damage to buildings and infrastructure, and have devastating consequences for a community's economic, social, and environmental well-being. Hazard mitigation means reducing damages from disasters.

Local governments have the responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens. Proactive mitigation policies and actions help reduce risk and create safer, more disaster-resilient communities. Mitigation is an investment in your community's future safety, equity, and sustainability.

Consider the critical importance of mitigation to:

- Protect public safety and prevent loss of life and injury
- Reduce harm to existing and future development
- Prevent damage to a community's unique economic, cultural, and environmental assets
- Minimize operational downtime and accelerate recovery of government and business after disasters
- Reduce the costs of disaster response and recovery and the exposure to risk for first responders
- Help accomplish other community objectives, such as leveraging capital improvements, protecting infrastructure, preserving open space, and preserving economic resiliency

► Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000: The Legislative Context

The purpose of the federal Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (1988), as amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, is to reduce the loss of life and property, human suffering, economic disruption, and disaster assistance costs resulting from natural disasters.² Section 322 of the Act specifically addresses mitigation planning and requires state and local governments to prepare multi-hazard mitigation plans as a precondition for

receiving Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation project grants.

► Mitigation Planning

Mitigation is most effective when it is based on a comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed before a disaster occurs. The purpose of mitigation planning is to identify risks and then develop local policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk from future losses from hazards. Mitigation planning not only reduces the economic, social, and environmental costs of disasters, it also achieves positive secondary benefits, such as:

- Identifying and analyzing risks and vulnerabilities
- Taking action for risk reduction that are agreed upon by stakeholders and the public
- Building partnerships by involving citizens, organizations, and businesses
- Increasing education and awareness of threats and hazards
- Communicating priorities to State and Federal officials
- Aligning risk reduction with other community objectives

Hazard Mitigation: Defined

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With vulnerable areas mapped, community leaders can make informed decisions about populations and property most in need of mitigation measures.

Hazards that Communities may address in their mitigation plans:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Drought | Earthquake |
| Extreme Temperature | Flood |
| Forest Fire | Hurricane |
| Landslide | Severe Storm |
| Tornado | |

► Steps to Develop a Mitigation Plan

1. Conduct the planning process

The process of building the plan is as important as the plan itself...



An all-inclusive plan development process will allow for equitable representation by diverse community groups. Through meetings, facilitated activities, and other outreach measures, community leaders can contribute their knowledge about community capacities and needs and provide input on mitigation strategies that will be pursued upon official plan adoption.

Partners to consider including in the planning process:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Building Code Enforcement | Business/Private Sector |
| Community Development | Emergency Management |
| Fire Department/Districts | Floodplain Administration |
| Geographic Information Systems | Health Department |
| Hospitals/Medical Facilities | Mayor's Office |
| Multicultural Affairs | Neighboring Jurisdictions |
| Nonprofit Organizations | Parks and Recreation |
| Planning | Public Information Office |
| Public Works | Regional Planning Agency |
| Schools/Universities | Stormwater Management |
| State Emergency Management | Transportation (Roads/Bridges) |

2. Complete a risk assessment

The planning team conducts a risk assessment to determine the potential impacts of hazards to the people, economy, built and natural environments of the community. The risk assessment provides the foundation for the rest of the mitigation planning process, which is focused on identifying and prioritizing actions to reduce risk to hazards.



3. Build a mitigation strategy



The mitigation strategy is the community's blueprint for reducing the potential losses identified in the risk assessment. This section of the plan will contain the mitigation goals, objectives, and action items that the community will pursue.

Below are a couple of ideas for finding effective solutions, innovative ideas, and best practices for mitigating risks:

- Ask subject matter experts
- Collect ideas from stakeholders and public
- Research existing guides and resources
- Review FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) for eligible activities



Funding Mechanisms

One of many funding considerations, HMA grant programs provide funding for eligible mitigation activities that reduce disaster losses and protect life and property from future disaster damages. The most recent Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance provides information on eligible project activities.

Additional funding information can be found in the companion to this issue brief, *Hazard Mitigation Funding Resources*.

4. Commit to plan maintenance procedures

The mitigation plan is a living document that guides action over time. As conditions change, as new information becomes available, or as actions progress over the plan's life, it may be necessary to adjust the plan in order to maintain its relevance.

Plan maintenance is the process the planning team establishes to track the plan's implementation progress and to inform the plan update.

Develop procedures for:

- Monitoring* - Tracking the implementation of the plan over time
- Evaluating* - Assessing the effectiveness of the plan at achieving its stated purpose and goals
- Updating* - Reviewing and revising the plan at least once every 5 years

► References and Resources to Learn More

The "how to" of producing a local plan - [FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Handbook](#)

Funding opportunities through FEMA - [FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance \(HMA\) Grant Programs](#)

FEMA's grading criteria for local mitigation plans - [Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide](#)

Lyles, Ward, Philip Berke, and Gavin Smith. July 2012. "Evaluation of Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Quality." Center for Sustainable Community Design. University of North Carolina Institute for the Environment.

► **Appendix: Funding Information**

FEMA-Funded Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Programs

| Program | Purpose | Hazard Mitigation Application | Who is eligible? | Where to learn more |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program</p> | <p>The purpose of the FMA Program is to help States and communities plan and carry out activities designed to reduce the risk of flood damage to structures insurable under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).</p> | <p>The program provides planning, project and technical assistance grants for mitigation activities that are technically feasible and cost effective. The FMA Program allows for cost share flexibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 100% Federal cost share for severe repetitive loss properties* - Up to 90% Federal cost share for repetitive loss properties*, and, - Up to 75% Federal cost share for NFIP insured properties. <p><small>*The Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 eliminated Repetitive Flood Claims (RFC) and Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) programs.</small></p> | <p>Funds are provided annually to States, Territories, Indian Tribal governments, and local governments.</p> | <p>http://www.fema.gov/flood-mitigation-assistance-program</p> <p>Application cycles announced via http://www.grants.gov</p> <p>For more information, contact your State Hazard Mitigation Officer</p> |
| <p>Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)</p> | <p>The purpose of HMGP is to ensure that the opportunity to take critical mitigation measures to reduce the risk of loss of life and property from future disasters is not lost during the reconstruction process following a disaster.</p> | <p>Project grants can be funded for activities, such as acquisition, relocation, elevation, and improvements to facilities and properties to withstand future disasters. HMGP is available when authorized under a Presidential major disaster declaration. The amount of HMGP funding available to the Applicant is based upon the estimated total of Federal assistance, subject to a sliding scale formula outlined in 44 CFR Section 206.432(b) that FEMA provides for disaster recovery under the Presidential major disaster declaration.</p> | <p>Funds are available to States, Territories, Indian Tribal government, local governments, and eligible private non-profits following a major presidential disaster declaration.</p> | <p>http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program</p> <p>For more information: Contact your State Hazard Mitigation Officer</p> |
| <p>Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program</p> | <p>The purpose of the PDM Program is to provide assistance to implement a sustained pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program to reduce overall risk to the population and structures from future hazard events, while also reducing reliance on Federal funding in future disasters.</p> | <p>Provides funds for hazard mitigation planning and the implementation of mitigation projects prior to a disaster event.</p> <p>Small impoverished communities may be eligible for up to a 90% Federal cost share.</p> | <p>Funds are provided annually to States, Territories, Indian Tribal governments, and local governments.</p> | <p>http://www.fema.gov/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-program</p> <p>Application cycles announced via http://www.grants.gov</p> <p>For more information, contact your State Hazard Mitigation Officer</p> |

Eligible Activities by FEMA Grant Program

Source: [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance](#)

| | HMGP | PDM | FMA |
|--|------|-----|-----|
| Mitigation Projects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Property Acquisition and Structure Demolition | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Property Acquisition and Structure Relocation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Structure Elevation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mitigation Reconstruction | | | ✓ |
| Dry Floodproofing of Historic Residential Structures | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Dry Floodproofing of Non-residential Structures | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Minor Localized Flood Reduction Projects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Structural Retrofitting of Existing Buildings | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Non-structural Retrofitting of Existing Buildings and Facilities | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Safe Room Construction | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Wind Retrofit for One- and Two-Family Residences | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Infrastructure Retrofit | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Soil Stabilization | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Wildfire Mitigation | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Post-Disaster Code Enforcement | ✓ | | |
| Generators | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 5 Percent Initiative Projects | ✓ | | |
| Advance Assistance | ✓ | | |
| Hazard Mitigation Planning | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Management Costs | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

¹ Source: 44 CFR §201.2 Mitigation Planning - Definitions.

² Source: Public Law 106-390-OCT. 30, 2000. Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.