The President's Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Final Report Overview

Discussion Points

- The Council's Task
- Guiding Principles
- Listening to the Nation
- Key Recommendations
- Looking Forward

The Council's Task: Executive Order 14180

President Donald J. Trump appointed ten Council members with two Co-Chairs, Secretary Mullin and Secretary Hegseth, to conduct a full-scale review to recommend to the President improvements or structural changes to promote the national interest and enable national resilience.

- Advise…on the existing ability of FEMA to capably and impartially address disasters
- A comparison of the FEMA responses with State, Local, and private sector responses
- Traditional role of States and their coordination with the Federal Government
- Shall advise the President on all recommended changes related to FEMA to best serve the national interest
- An account of the commentary and debate about the role and operation of FEMA in our Federal system
- An evaluation of whether FEMA can serve its functions as a support agency, providing supplemental Federal Assistance
- Assessment of the adequacy of FEMA's response to disasters during previous 4 years, including sufficiency of staffing
- Historical background of other periods in the Nation's history…methods by which disaster aid and relief were then provided
- Other recommended improvements to FEMA in the current statutory structure

On January 24, 2025, President Donald J. Trump established the Federal Emergency Management Agency Review Council (FEMA Review Council) through Executive Order 14180, *Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency*.

Listening to the Nation

In order to meet the mandate established by the President, for over a year the Council was deliberate in its actions, devoting significant time to engage across jurisdictional levels and with various entities to hear about their experiences with FEMA during and after disasters.

11,708
Public comments received and considered by the Council

1,387
Nationwide survey respondents that represented emergency management stakeholders across SLTT and non-governmental partners

16
In-person and virtual listening sessions that engaged all 50 states, as well as local, tribal, and territorial stakeholders

This robust engagement process has provided the Council with invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing FEMA's operations. The feedback serves as a cornerstone for shaping the future of FEMA's programs, ensuring that reforms are informed by the lived experiences of those directly impacted by disasters and those responsible for managing emergency response and recovery efforts.

Guiding Principles

After an exhaustive national review of the nation's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, the Council developed five guiding principles for reform:

Council Guiding Principles

- **Return** leadership for emergency response and recovery to the States, Tribes, and Territories
- **Reaffirm** that individual American preparedness is foundational to disaster readiness
- **Accelerate** federal assistance dollars to help Americans **recover from their worst day**
- **Maximize** the transparency and efficiency of federal and SLTT dollars spent in emergency management
- **Boldly transform** FEMA into a lean organization that puts **Americans first**

Key Recommendations

With the aforementioned guiding principles as a framework, the Council's report provides ten key recommendations that will boldly transform FEMA as an agency as well as address the return of leadership and responsibility for disaster management to the States, Local Communities, Tribes, and Territories.

1. Equip SLTT to lead disaster response with the federal government in a supporting role
2. Enhance critical federal programs & resources to support communities
3. Realign the criteria for federal disaster assistance
4. Replace the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program with a two-phase funding structure
5. Streamline the Individual Assistance program into a single direct payment program
6. Reform the Public Assistance program to provide direct funding
7. Reform the National Flood Insurance Program for financial stability and risk resilience
8. Maximize every dollar spent by reducing administrative costs
9. Revitalize A Unified National Network for Partnership
10. A Transformed Agency

Equip SLTT to Lead Disaster Response with the Federal Government in a Supporting Role

Reorienting the National Preparedness System to empower SLTT governments to manage the mitigation, response, and recovery of disasters effectively will return the federal role from leading to supporting.

Lack of a national standard for incident response and recovery

- Encourage adoption of national capability standards
- Incentivize building scalable training resources
- Professionalize emergency management to promote professional development
- Focus on catastrophic planning and promote a common approach to exercise standards

Limited ability to share and coordinate resources

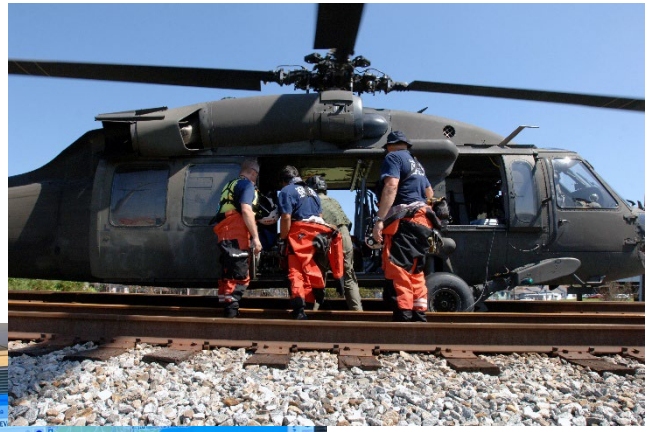
- Revitalize and promote the use of the Unified Resource Catalog
- Refocus SLTT grant investment on mission-ready teams, capabilities, and infrastructure
- Enhance and improve upon the existing credentialing framework
- Promote the integration of additional partners including volunteer/faith-based
- Incentivize investments in interoperable systems for communication and data sharing

A truly resilient nation depends on seamless collaboration across government, private industry, and nonprofit partners. Empowering SLTT governments to take the lead in managing disasters is essential for a resilient national preparedness strategy.

Enhance Critical Federal Programs & Resources to Support Communities

The Council recommends that the future agency preserve and modernize the federal government's capability to support state and local partners in lifesaving and life-sustaining efforts.

- Sustain Core Standards to support effective and interoperable teams
- Integrate Emerging Technology
- Improve Federal Coordination
- Leverage Supply Chains for National Security
- Build Capacity for Emerging Threats
- Continuity of Government



The agency maintains an arsenal of dual-use capabilities, regional offices, incident management teams, and prepositioned logistic systems or programs, and the Disaster Relief Fund to ensure the American people are resilient in the face of any threat, whether natural or man-made. Therefore, sustaining and resourcing this mission in the transformed agency is vital to public safety, economic stability, and national resilience.

Realign the Criteria for Federal Disaster Assistance

Federal assistance should only be reserved for truly significant events that exceed SLTT capacity and capability. Therefore, common criteria should be established on how to evaluate when this occurs. This includes a reset of the Per Capita Indicator (PCI) threshold using the Consumer Price Index to account for historical inflation. The current disaster declarations process for federal assistance does not adequately account for SLTT capacity and, therefore, is inconsistent with legislative intent and disincentivizes SLTT investment in disaster preparedness.

Reassess

Review existing methodologies to realign criteria to reduce federal disaster declarations, leading to a rebalancing of state and federal responsibilities

Simplify

Eliminate the cost-to-capacity ratio and replace with an evaluation based on targeted factors like primary residence damage and other community impacts

Transparent

Utilize clear methodologies that help Americans easily understand federal responsibilities

The transformed agency should implement common-sense approaches to realign criteria for federal disaster declaration thresholds to return responsibility to the States, Tribes, and Territories.

Replace the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program with a Two-Phase Funding Structure

The Council proposes a state-managed program where project priorities are nationally set and environmental reviews are handled locally, with two phases of funding.

Rapid Mitigation

Within the first 30 days provide up to 5% of the federal government contribution for the disaster to facilitate immediate residential mitigation to primary residences and communities impacted by the event or in other high-risk zones

Strategic Mitigation

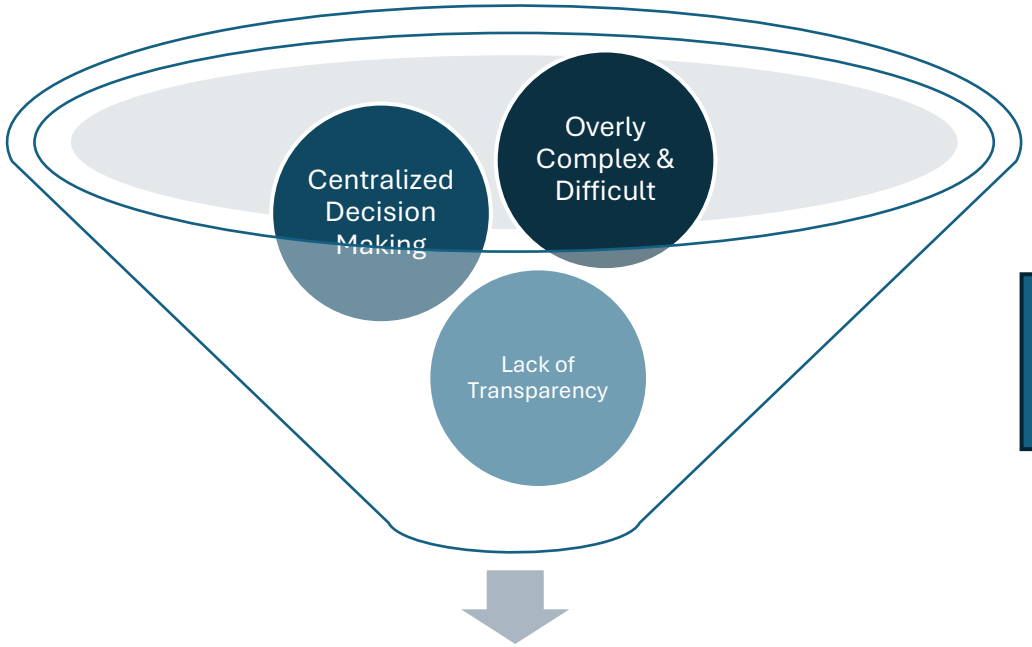
Within the first six months provide up to the remaining 10% of the federal government contribution to improve the performance of the NFIP by mitigating properties and critical infrastructure based on Federal Administration priorities

For mitigation to work, the Council recommends states take on greater program management responsibility and continue to develop an improved and comprehensive state hazard mitigation process that identifies projects that are immediately implementable.

Accelerating Federal Assistance

The transformed agency must accelerate federal assistance dollars to help Americans recover from their worst day.

Current Public and Individual Assistance Programs



Delayed Assistance

Individual

- Consolidate Disparate Programs (Less Complex)
- Direct Payment Package (Faster)
- Reduced Administrative Costs (Savings)

Public

- Upfront index-based Direct Funding (Less Complex)
- Leverage SLTT Review Processes (Expedite Recovery)
- Reduce Bureaucracy & Increase Fiscal Discipline

By moving beyond slow and reactive traditional assistance programs, the new programs leverage flat-rate reimbursements for individuals, SLTT autonomy, near-immediate funding, and transparent auditing to reduce bureaucracy while creating faster, more effective, and more accountable systems for all Americans which will also remove FEMA from long-term recovery burdens.

Streamline the Individual Assistance Program into a Single Direct Payment Program

Swift support for emergency sheltering with a faster amount of monetary assistance would directly and positively impact affected Americans. Consolidating assistance into a single payment would provide all Americans clear, specific information on what assistance they would receive from the federal government in the event of a catastrophic loss.

Single Payment

Consolidate existing programs into one direct payment to survivors whose homes are uninhabitable after a disaster.

Focus on Emergency Housing

Focus the future agency's role on emergency and temporary housing (mass care/sheltering and temporary housing/rental assistance) instead of long-term housing, and only for Americans whose homes are uninhabitable (not those who experience minor damage).

These reforms will provide quick, cost-effective, and transparent support to disaster survivors, within the limits of federal funding, as well as reduce administrative overhead and clarify federal agency responsibilities. Further, there should be an option for this to be a state-managed program if individual states wish to do so.

Reform the Public Assistance Program to Provide Direct Funding

The Council proposes a modern and agile framework that converts the existing PA program into a direct funding model that leverages pre-defined objective event criteria and cost estimates to accelerate and streamline recovery.

Parametric Threshold

Utilizing a parametric threshold, funding would be released to states within 30 days of a major federal disaster declaration. This eliminates the need for time consuming loss assessments and quickly provides a financial backstop and cashflow for rapid response and recovery.

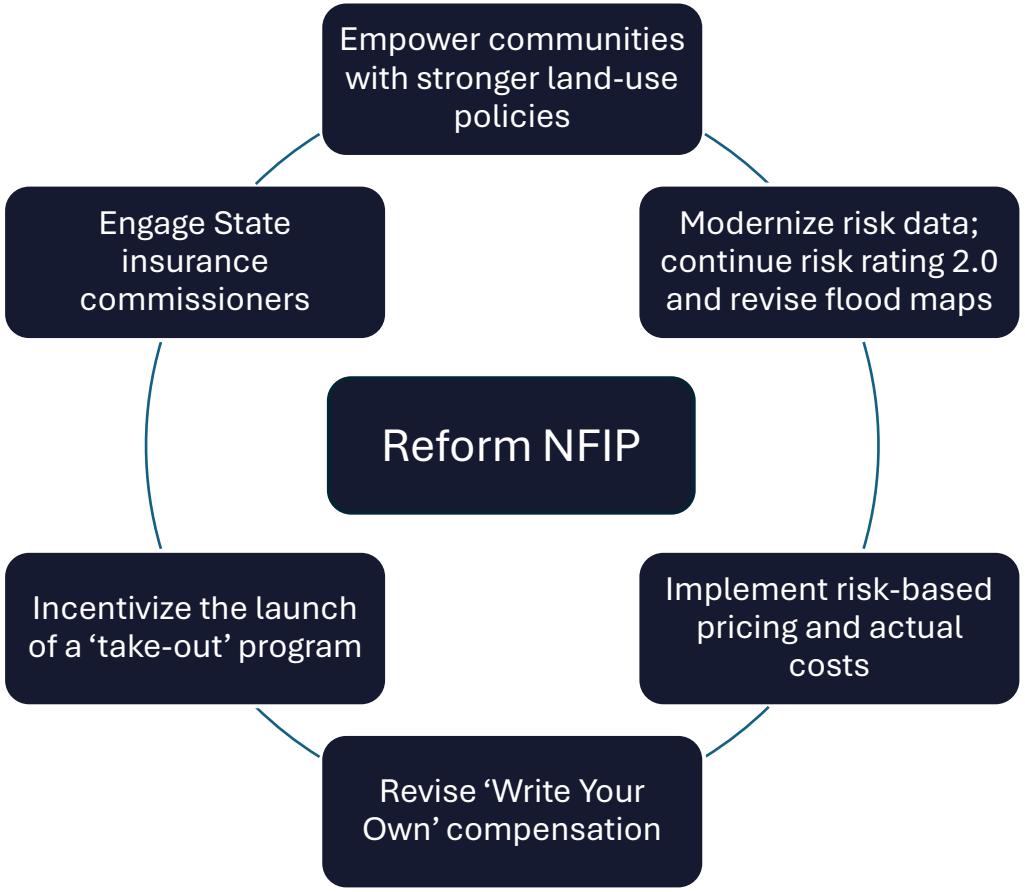
Accountability

Accountability would be maintained through a two-phase audit process: a one-time validation of costs within one year and a final program closeout. All federal funding provided in this program must be expended or returned within eight years.

The new program offers a modern solution to the challenges of post-disaster recovery. By moving beyond the slow and reactive traditional PA program, it leverages States, Tribes, and Territories' autonomy, parametric funding, and transparent auditing to create a faster, more effective, and more accountable system for all Americans affected by disaster.

Reform the National Flood Insurance Program for Financial Stability and Risk Resilience

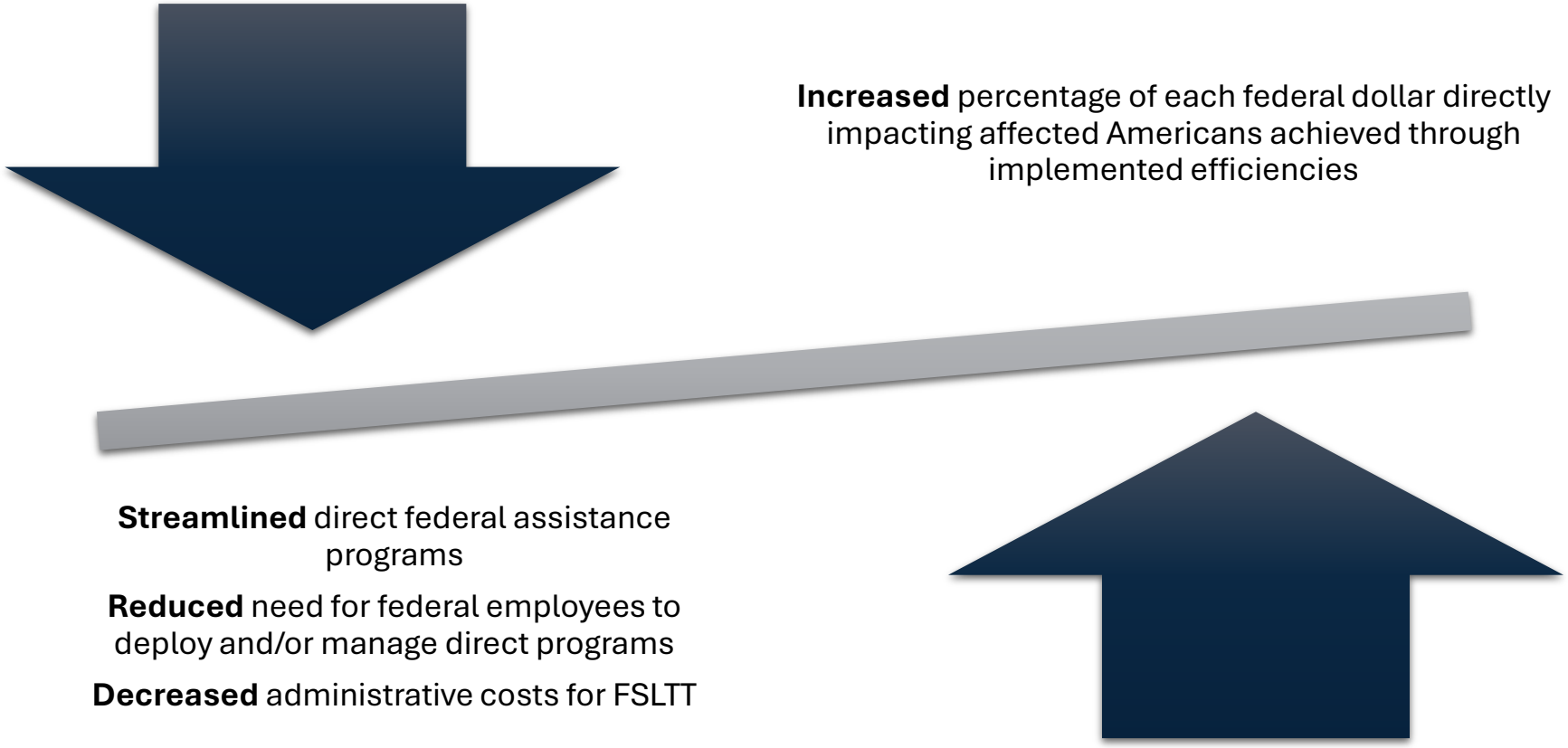
The Council recommends a comprehensive reform plan centered on a strategic shift toward a primary role for the private market, with the goal of fostering a more resilient and financially stable flood risk management system.



These changes are expected to accelerate disaster recovery, reduce the federal government's financial burden, send clear financial signals, and provide predictable financial outcomes for homeowners, ultimately leading to a more prepared nation.

Maximize Every Dollar Spent by Reducing Administrative Costs

To put Americans first, it is vital to maximize the efficiency of federal and SLTT dollars spent in emergency management.



Increased percentage of each federal dollar directly impacting affected Americans achieved through implemented efficiencies

Streamlined direct federal assistance programs

Reduced need for federal employees to deploy and/or manage direct programs

Decreased administrative costs for FSLTT

Highlighted reforms will reduce administrative and overhead costs, which preserves more of each federal or SLTT dollar to be spent on emergency management. Federal assistance reforms will create significant efficiencies that will generate upfront savings and increase the impact of each dollar distributed by accelerating the payments to enable faster recoveries.

Revitalize A Unified National Network for Partnership

The new framework would formalize and streamline coordination between government agencies, critical private-sector partners, and nonprofit organizations.

Whole Community Approach

Disasters demand a unified national effort that leverages the strengths of all sectors

Public-Private Coordination

Formalize and streamline coordination between government agencies, critical private-sector partners, and nonprofit organizations.

Shared Information

Develop and implement modern technology and communication protocols that ensure shared data and situational awareness among all partners

The transformed agency would address the existing gap in the emergency management landscape by returning to a network that enables government, private industry, faith-based, and non-profit partners to build toward a shared capability and integrated resources.

A Transformed Agency

To address these shortcomings and national challenges in emergency management, transform FEMA into a new lean agency.

Review of Requirements

Conduct a strategic review to determine appropriate staffing levels against mission requirements.

Phased Approach

This transformation should be conducted over a 2-3 year phased approach.

Empower States

States will assume a greater role in managing disasters from preparedness to recovery, utilizing direct federal funding mechanisms.

Shift Training

While the future agency must establish and maintain national standards for disaster response, the direct execution of training should be shifted to the regional and state level.

The transformation is an imperative step toward restoring the agency's effectiveness, accountability, and public trust. By implementing a bold restructuring plan—centered on reviewing mission requirements, streamlining operations, eliminating redundancies, and empowering state partners—the federal government can ensure a more immediate, effective, and efficient response to disasters.

Implementation Requirements by Recommendation

While Executive Orders may be used to make some of the proposed changes, the Council advocates for legislative action to ensure a systemic and sustained transformation of the current approach to disaster management.

Recommendation	Minimum Action Required to Implement			
	Policy	Legislation	Regulation	Executive Order
#1 Equip SLTT to Lead	✓			
#2 Enhance Critical Programs	✓		✓	
#3 Realign Criteria for Assistance			✓	
#4 Replace HMGP		✓		
#5 Streamline IA		✓		
#6 Reform PA		✓		
#7 Reform NFIP		✓		
#8 Reduce Admin Costs				✓
#9 Network for Partnership	✓			
#10 Transform FEMA		✓		✓

It is important to note that all recommendations requiring legislative action will also need to be accompanied by regulations, but since they cannot be accomplished through regulation alone that action is not checked.

A more resilient AMERICA

These recommendations will lead to a more resilient *AMERICA*:

- ***A**ccelerate* disaster response and recovery
- ***M**odernize* systems and technology for greater efficiency
- ***E**mpower* local and state governments with better resources and tools
- ***R**educe* administrative costs and federal burden
- ***I**mprove* coordination across government, private sector, and nonprofits
- ***C**ultivate* public trust through transparency and accountability
- ***A**mplify* resilience for rural communities and critical infrastructure

These reforms aim to create a more resilient and prepared nation by ensuring that disaster response and recovery efforts are efficient, cost-effective, and locally executed. Such reforms also ensure that federal support will be available when significant events occur that overwhelm local systems.