

2022–2026

# FEMA Strategic Plan

Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves



FEMA

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# Letter from the Administrator

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I am proud to share with you the 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan — a bold approach to building the FEMA our nation needs and deserves.

The field of emergency management is at a pivotal moment. We are seeing tremendous change in the landscape of risk and in our professional roles. While our mission of helping people before, during, and after disasters has not changed, our operating environment has. Ten years ago, we managed an average of 108 disasters a year. Today, we are managing 311 — including the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have taken on this growing mission because it is in our DNA as emergency managers to help people. And it is a point of pride for FEMA to deliver its mission while embodying our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect.

However, much remains to be done. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of disasters. Meanwhile, structural inequities in our society compound the impacts of disasters for historically underserved communities. Left unaddressed, these challenges pose unacceptable risks to the nation — and to us as emergency managers.

This Strategic Plan identifies three ambitious goals we must achieve to address these challenges and to ensure we continue to be the FEMA our nation needs and deserves.

First, we must **instill equity as a foundation of emergency management**. Systems that foster inequality serve no one, especially in times of crisis. We must recognize that disasters affect individuals and communities differently, commit ourselves to reducing barriers to access, and deliver equitable outcomes for all whom we serve.

Second, we must **lead the whole of community in climate resilience**. We must recognize that we are facing a climate crisis and educate ourselves and the nation about the impacts our changing climate pose to the field of emergency management. We must integrate planning for future conditions, move away from incremental mitigation measures, and focus on large projects that protect infrastructure and community systems.

Third, we must **promote and sustain a ready FEMA and prepared nation**. We must recognize that the demands on emergency managers will only continue to increase. We must lean into this as a shared responsibility to prepare the nation's emergency managers and ready ourselves and the larger federal government to meet an expanding mission.

We have so many opportunities in front of us — to reimagine our systems, evolve our work, and build up our teams. After the last few years — after all that we have been through and achieved as emergency managers — the way forward is clear: we will continue to do what we do best, lean on our experience and expertise, and step into the future, define it, and lead the way.

*“Meeting people where they are.”*



**Deanne Criswell**

A handwritten signature of Deanne Criswell in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

**FEMA Administrator**

# About FEMA

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On April 1, 1979, President Carter established the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with the dual functions of civil defense and emergency management. The agency's authorities were further defined and expanded by a series of legislative actions. The Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1988 amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974 and renamed it the [Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act](#) (Stafford Act). The Stafford Act established the current statutory framework for disaster response and recovery through presidential disaster declarations. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President W. Bush signed the [Homeland Security Act \(2002\)](#), uniting FEMA with 21 other organizations under the newly created U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Over the next two decades, Congress passed a series of legislation following significant disaster events that further shaped the agency – the [Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act \(2006\)](#), the [Sandy Reform Act \(2012\)](#), and the [Disaster Recovery Reform Act \(2018\)](#).

Today, FEMA is called upon to help its partners understand and reduce their disaster risk, to lead the coordination of federal response efforts to stabilize communities after a disaster, and to provide support for individuals and communities to build back and become more resilient than before. The agency leads the nation by building collaborative partnerships, delivering federal assistance, and providing resources to help individuals and communities review, build, and continuously improve their own capabilities.



# FEMA Mission

FEMA's mission is **helping people before, during, and after disasters**. Over 20,000 agency employees form a team of dedicated emergency management leaders. These leaders work collaboratively to share experiences and resources, building the FEMA the nation needs and deserves. They draw upon the strengths and expertise of stakeholders from all levels of government – tribal nations, territories, individuals, communities, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations – to guide how FEMA accomplishes its mission. Whether it is before a flood, amid hurricane season, or after a wildfire damages a community, FEMA is committed to helping people.



# FEMA Core Values

FEMA's core values of **compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect** are at the heart of what the agency and its employees stand for and represent. These values form the solid foundation of who FEMA is, what the agency believes, and how it approaches serving the nation. These core values apply to FEMA's interactions with survivors, colleagues, and stakeholders every single day.

# Current Landscape

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To ensure that the 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) postures the agency to meet the immediate and future needs of the nation, it is critical to understand the challenges and opportunities the emergency management community may face over the next decade. October 2022 will mark a decade since Hurricane Sandy, which resulted in legislative reforms that spurred FEMA to drastically improve the efficiency and quality of disaster assistance. As COVID-19 and climate change continue to reshape society, FEMA must look beyond disasters for lessons learned to assess future risks as catalysts for change. To inform the Strategic Plan, the agency conducted an environmental scan of internal and external evidence to assess its operating environment, identify key issues, and determine capability gaps that could impact the future of both FEMA and the nation.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Creating a comprehensive strategic plan required input from a diverse range of stakeholders. These viewpoints helped to articulate the most critical challenges facing the agency and the broader emergency management community, and inform the goals and objectives they will pursue together over the next five years. Input was collected from the public through a [Climate and Equity Request for Information](#) as well as at various FEMA events designed to discuss FEMA's efforts and elicit feedback. Through a series of conversations and workshops, FEMA connected with over 1,000 members of the agency's workforce and senior leadership, and more than 400 external partners spanning all sectors, levels of government, and a wide range of disciplines – including federal and territorial partners, state and local governments, over 50 tribal nations, private and nonprofit partners, and the academic community.



**1,000+**  
**FEMA**  
**Employees**

**50+**  
**Tribes**



**400+**  
**Partners**



# Introduction

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The Strategic Plan positions the agency to respond to a changing landscape in which the emergency management community must embrace its expanding role. To meet this challenge, the Strategic Plan outlines three bold and ambitious goals. The three objectives under each goal outline how FEMA will support its workforce, better position communities, and leverage its programs and processes to advance the emergency management field.

Emergency management is centered around people — those who work with FEMA and those who are served by the agency. The first objective in each goal focuses on the emergency management workforce, ensuring they are ready to support those served. The second objective highlights how the agency can better support communities through FEMA programs. The third and final objective centers around how FEMA policies, tools and programs, as well as collaboration with partners, can be leveraged to increase whole community outcomes in emergency management.

The goals and objectives laid out in the Strategic Plan will enable success for the agency, the emergency management field, and those who are served.

A Whole Community approach attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors — including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the American public — in conjunction with the participation of state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal governmental partners.



# Goals and Objectives



## Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

- 1.1 Cultivate a FEMA that prioritizes and harnesses a diverse workforce
- 1.2 Remove barriers to FEMA programs through a people first approach
- 1.3 Achieve equitable outcomes for those we serve



## Goal 2: Lead Whole of Community in Climate Resilience

- 2.1 Increase climate literacy among the emergency management community
- 2.2 Build a climate resilient nation
- 2.3 Empower risk-informed decision making



## Goal 3: Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation

- 3.1 Strengthen the emergency management workforce
- 3.2 Posture FEMA to meet current and emergent threats
- 3.3 Unify coordination and delivery of federal assistance





# Goal 1

## Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

Disasters impact people and communities differently. Every disaster occurs within a unique context based on a community’s geographic, demographic, political, historical, and cultural characteristics. These unique contexts require **tailored solutions that are designed to meet their unique needs.** Underserved communities, as well as specific identity groups, often suffer disproportionately from disasters. As a result, disasters worsen inequities already present in society. This cycle compounds the challenges faced by these communities and increases their risk to future disasters.

By instilling equity as a foundation of emergency management and striving to meet the unique needs of underserved communities, the emergency management community can work to break this cycle and build a more resilient nation.

The importance of equity in emergency management is not a new concept. The Stafford Act requires FEMA assistance be delivered in an equitable manner without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, language accessibility, or economic status. However, this cannot be done through a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, FEMA must be aware of, and responsive to, the needs of different individuals and communities to ensure that the **benefits of FEMA programs are available.**

The nation needs all communities to be resilient. Proactively prioritizing actions that advance equity for communities and identifying groups that have historically been underserved or disproportionately affected by disasters is critical for their resilience. Through the objectives identified below, FEMA will continue its efforts to integrate equity as a foundation of its culture through transformational change within our workforce, across our programs, and throughout the emergency management community.

[Executive Order 13985](#) (Jan. 20, 2021) defines **equity** as “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

Additionally, “**underserved communities** refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.”

## Objective 1.1

# Cultivate a FEMA That Prioritizes and Harnesses a Diverse Workforce

FEMA is better able to serve the needs of diverse communities when its leadership and staff reflect the communities it serves. Diversity, equity, and inclusion cannot be optional; they must be core components of how the agency conducts itself internally and executes its mission.

**FEMA is committed to ensuring that its employees increasingly reflect the diversity of the nation.** The agency will continue to build a workforce that includes the many identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, ages, cultures, and beliefs of the people it serves. It will actively recruit individuals from underrepresented communities. The agency will also invest in professional development for all FEMA employees to foster an environment in which individuals feel safe, valued, and empowered.

While this work starts with ensuring representation, it does not end there. FEMA must make space within its workplace to invite and elevate diverse voices, and to foster mutual understanding and respect for the perspectives and experiences brought by each employee. This requires that **FEMA's leadership and workforce demonstrate an increased commitment to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in**

**delivering the agency's mission.** FEMA must draw upon its staff's diversity and range of experiences to consistently inform programming, policy, and decision-making.

Through investment in diversity and inclusion efforts — including Employee Resource Groups and multicultural training — FEMA can increase its employees' involvement and participation in cultivating a culture of inclusion. Additionally, leaders and managers must be leveraged to promote equity practices, transparency, and accountability across the agency.

### Equity in Action

Objective 1.1 builds off FEMA's current diversity and inclusion initiatives, including:

- Partnering with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium of Tribal Colleges and Universities to create hiring pipelines into the field of emergency management.
- Supporting staff-led FEMA Employee Resource Groups.
- Implementing a workplace cultural improvement action plan.

*“The role and responsibility of emergency managers requires sensitivity to the needs of all disaster survivors and equitable and fair distribution of assistance to all those affected — especially those disproportionately impacted.”*

— Sima Merick, Director, Ohio Emergency Management Agency,  
and immediate past President, National Emergency Management Association

## Objective 1.2

# Remove Barriers to FEMA Programs Through a People First Approach

FEMA exists to help people before, during, and after their worst days. To do this effectively, the agency's policies and programs must be guided by the needs of the people it serves. FEMA must never lose sight of the people or communities for whom programs are intended. Deliberately shaping FEMA's work to meet the needs of those individuals and communities must be a top priority. This **people first** approach builds on the 2018-2022 FEMA Strategic Plan and, by making programs simpler, more accessible, and more user-friendly, benefits everyone.

A community's history, culture, racial composition, and economic status influence its ability to access federal services. Operating through a people first approach requires that **FEMA resources can be accessed and leveraged by underserved communities in ways that meet their needs.**

Some communities lack emergency managers, staff, or strategic partners to help navigate federal programs. For example, some individuals and communities may have difficulty understanding FEMA's programs or participating in training and planning opportunities due to language accessibility, literacy, technical expertise, or disability challenges. Removing barriers to access starts with understanding and addressing the specific needs of communities.

### Equity in Action

Following [Executive Order 13985](#) FEMA evaluated the equity of its programs and implemented changes to ensure assistance is accessible to people and communities served, including:

- Accepting more forms of documentation to prove ownership and occupancy for homeowners and renters, reducing the administrative burden on low-income and rural applicants.
- Prioritizing efforts for FEMA caseworkers to contact applicants deemed ineligible due to occupancy or ownership verification, so they can help them navigate the application process.
- Changing how we calculate the threshold for property losses to qualify for Direct Housing assistance.

This understanding comes from working directly and consistently with underserved communities to learn about their priorities, needs, and barriers. FEMA must proactively and continuously engage state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, local community leaders, and other community representatives to gain insight into how FEMA programs can better serve them. This level of stakeholder engagement, combined with

technical assistance, can enhance a community's participation in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

But engagement is not enough. **FEMA decisions about policy and program implementation must be routinely informed by how they will impact underserved communities**, and contributing to a rich culture of continuous improvement and people-centered, culturally appropriate service. The success of the FEMA Integration Teams (FIT) – FEMA staff embedded with state and local partners – has demonstrated that by working alongside partners, the agency can build partner capacity while also enhancing FEMA's understanding of how to better tailor programs to meet partner needs.

To implement a people first approach, **FEMA and our partners must have the capabilities and tools to advance equity in the agency's**

**work.** In order to better serve people, every FEMA employee must be respectful, compassionate, and knowledgeable about the realities and experiences of underserved communities. Furthermore, the pursuit of equity is a responsibility FEMA shares with partners. FEMA must both learn from partners who are pioneering equity-based solutions and ensure that its partners are implementing the agency's programs equitably.

## Equity in Action

The [Center for Domestic Preparedness](#) is partnering with the health care coalition in the Caribbean to address specific gaps and high-risk areas within the health care sector. This initiative allows continued growth and partnership to bring Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands students to the campus for resident training opportunities.



## Objective 1.3

### Achieve Equitable Outcomes for Those We Serve

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A people first approach removes barriers to access and is beneficial to everyone. On its own, however, this approach is not sufficient to break the cycle of disasters, worsening societal inequities and exposing underserved communities to increased risk. There are systemic differences in society that access alone cannot fix. Underserved communities experience differences in how prepared they are to respond to disasters, how well their homes have been adapted to mitigate against local hazards, and how quickly their communities are able to resume social and economic life after a major event. **FEMA must direct its resources to eliminate disparities in these outcomes.** FEMA assistance is not designed to solve societal inequities.

However, by intentionally directing resources to communities most in need, FEMA will be able to counteract systemic disaster inequities. This does not mean that resources will be directed away from others in need of assistance. On the contrary, FEMA can work toward improving outcomes that benefit all communities.

Addressing disparities requires that FEMA first understand where they exist. To this end, **FEMA must routinely evaluate its programs and policies for disparities in outcomes.** This starts with deliberately defining what success looks like for the user of each program in a manner that can be consistently measured. Finally, to guide program delivery, the emergency management community must better understand the factors that affect a community's resilience and vulnerability to disasters. To do any of this, FEMA must develop the capacity and capability to conduct ongoing equity-based evaluations across its programs, as well as partner with external organizations experienced in this work.

#### Equity in Action

FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs are participating in a pilot of the [White House's Justice40 Initiative](#) to advance environmental justice. Under this initiative, a minimum of 40% of certain federal benefits will be prioritized to disadvantaged communities.

*“Equity must be baked into the front end of the federal declaration process, not an afterthought. Critical to the process is for decision makers to be intentional in all phases of the disaster management cycle to minimize discriminatory actions to prevent undesired outcomes that plague underserved and marginalized communities.”*

– Warren D. Miller, Equity Subcommittee Vice Chair, FEMA National Advisory Council, and Board of Directors, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster



## Goal 2

# Lead Whole of Community in Climate Resilience

Climate change represents a profound crisis for the nation, making natural disasters more frequent, more intense, and more destructive. In 2020 alone, there were 22 weather and climate disaster events, with total losses exceeding \$1 billion across the U.S. In comparison, the previous record set in both 2011 and 2017 was 16 disasters.<sup>1</sup> The growing severity of disasters increases the time it takes for communities to recover — a process that can be further complicated by repeat events in areas already struggling to bounce back. These cascading and compounding impacts, propelled by climate change, pose the greatest risk to our communal and nationwide resilience.

The emergency management field must anticipate the increasing demands generated by more extreme and frequent disasters — from wildfires and coastal storms to inland flooding. Additionally, emergency managers must learn to manage and support climate-related emergencies such as drought and extreme heat.

To help confront these threats, FEMA will enhance the nation’s ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to future climate conditions. This starts with fostering a common understanding of how climate change will reshape emergency management, and includes building better resources and

tools to drive FEMA’s understanding of future risk and enhance the agency’s ability to act. With the support of these tools, FEMA can engage the agency’s state, local, tribal, territory, private sector, and nonprofit partners in developing climate resilience through systems-based, community-wide investments in climate adaptation.

Natural disasters often disproportionately affect people in underserved communities where weakened infrastructure, fewer resources, and less support to invest in hazard mitigation can compound a disaster’s impact. Therefore, equity and environmental justice considerations must be cornerstones of how the nation builds resilience. FEMA must make targeted efforts to increase resilience for underserved individuals and communities.

Through close collaboration with federal, state, local, tribal, and territory governments, community-based organizations, and the private sector, **FEMA will take a people first approach to increase climate literacy, develop tools, and allocate resources informed by future risk estimates to target investments to create a more equitable and resilient nation.** The agency will demonstrate its commitment to climate change mitigation strategies within its facilities.

*“FEMA is no longer looking at itself as just a response agency but a true resilience agency.”*

— Gina McCarthy, White House National Climate Advisor



## Objective 2.1

# Increase Climate Literacy Among the Emergency Management Community

Climate change is the greatest challenge facing emergency managers today – and it will continue to shape the next several decades. To meet this challenge, the emergency management community must understand how climate change impacts the profession. Climate science literacy is an understanding of one’s influence on climate, and of climate’s influence on individuals and society. Increasing climate literacy of emergency managers and communities will improve disaster outcomes and long-term climate resilience through an increasingly shared understanding of climate risks and impactful mitigation opportunities. This requires that FEMA build a foundational **understanding of climate science, the impacts of climate change, and effective climate adaptation strategies.**

FEMA will grow a climate-literate workforce through integration of climate science into policy, programs, partnerships, field operations, and training. FEMA’s educational institutions train over 2.5 million students each year, and provide a platform for integrating climate adaptation competencies into preexisting curricula. By developing the agency’s own expertise and building strong relationships with agencies and organizations, FEMA can enhance the depth of climate science resources. For example, enhancing existing relationships with agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) will become essential to FEMA’s efforts to increase resilience to climate change.

Taking these steps will allow FEMA to **build the foundation necessary to support the development of a broad nationwide understanding** of how people affect climate and how climate affects communities. Individuals and communities must be empowered with knowledge about the benefits of climate adaptation resources available to them to reduce the risk of climate-related disasters. To enhance public understanding of climate adaptation, FEMA will

## Climate Adaptation in Action

Fire departments across the country are increasingly being called upon to respond to wildland urban interface fires (WUI). More than 46 million residences in 70,000 communities in the U.S. are at risk for these fires.

[FEMA’s U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Academy](#) provides training and its National Fire Programs has data, prevention, and research initiatives to create, sustain, and support a fire-adapted community, land-use planning, code adoption, and evacuation planning.



build on previous experience and current progress to develop trainings, resources, and partnerships focused on future risk.

When individuals and communities are climate literate, they are better positioned to take necessary steps to **apply that knowledge to build resilient communities**. However, full understanding of climate change also includes understanding why some communities are disproportionately impacted by climate-fueled disasters. FEMA will work to ensure the whole community develops a shared understanding of equity and environmental justice in the context of climate resiliency. By incorporating these considerations into mitigation and recovery programs, and other resilience efforts, FEMA can ensure that resources appropriately support communities with disproportionate risk.

## Climate Adaptation in Action

FEMA already works to provide many state, local, tribal, and territorial partners with tools to assist with building resilience, such as the [Risk Analysis and Planning Tool \(RAPT\)](#), [Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment \(THIRA\)](#), and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) processes.

FEMA also provides public tools such as the FEMA [Vulnerability Index](#) and the [Open FEMA](#) platform, which allow stakeholders to access and utilize information specific to their community.



*“Response lead-timelines from federal, state, and local governments, emergency management, and first responders are being tested year over year, making it increasingly important to facilitate an increased understanding of the intersection of climate science, the impacts of climate change, and effective adaptation strategies to empower risk-informed decision-making and build national resilience to the impacts.”*

– Ken Graham, Director, National Hurricane Center,  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



## Objective 2.2

### Build a Climate Resilient Nation

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Climate change has both acute and chronic impacts – communities must be resilient against threats as varied as extreme flooding, drought, hurricanes, and wildfires. FEMA is committed to leveraging grant programs to target investments that will **enable communities to directly address their own threats from climate change.**

Many communities are faced with aging infrastructure, which can increase risk from major disasters. As the frequency of these disasters accelerates, the agency must increase climate adaptation investments across the nation. FEMA has already taken steps for this through Hazard Mitigation Assistance such as the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program, which prioritizes significant or innovative infrastructure projects.

To have the greatest impact, FEMA encourages smart investments in system-based, community-wide projects to protect those at the most severe and persistent risk. For example, helping a community adopt and enforce disaster resistant building codes improves the resilience of the whole community. Research has shown that every dollar invested in building to the latest codes and standards results in \$11

of future avoided losses.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, advancing disaster resistant building codes through FEMA policies, programs, guidance, communications, and partnerships with state and local code officials are critical steps toward achieving a resilient nation. So that FEMA climate resilience investments move the nation closer to equity, the agency is also committed to using comprehensive risk and community data to ensure underserved and vulnerable communities are prioritized.

**FEMA can better target investments to the most transformational projects when FEMA and its partners better understand unique risks posed by climate change.**

### Climate Adaptation in Action

In 2021, FEMA helped communities increase resilience to climate change by:

- Providing an additional \$3.46 billion in Hazard Mitigation grant funding to the 59 major disaster declarations issued due to COVID-19.
- Providing \$1 billion in Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) funding for hazard mitigation projects — twice what was available in the first year of the BRIC program.

*“The impacts of the climate emergency on both our national and collective global security are vast.”*

– Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security



## Objective 2.3

### Empower Risk-Informed Decision Making

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The future disaster environment will not resemble that of the past, or even what is experienced today. To build long-term resilience, communities must understand their future risk – and have the resources and capacity to reduce that risk. Currently, a community’s disaster risk is typically based on past disaster activity. Due to the changing climate, this historical data is no longer indicative of future conditions. **The availability of, access to, and understanding of future conditions data and modeling within FEMA must be expanded.** This will mean leveraging the advanced climate forecasting capabilities of federal agencies to inform the agency’s understanding of risk. FEMA will collaborate with these agencies to ensure the information is provided to communities in plain language and digestible formats.

FEMA must also ensure that future conditions data, tools, and guidance are incorporated into localized risk assessment and planning processes. For example, we know that coastal communities will face the increasing risk of sea-level rise, and those in deserts and some urban areas will experience increased impacts of heat and drought – while the whole nation will see an increase in severe storms.

Even within the same geographic area, different communities will face differing levels of risk due to their unique demographic, economic, and physical characteristics. It is important for FEMA and the emergency management community to

### Climate Adaptation in Action

FEMA is updating the National Flood Insurance Program’s (NFIP) risk rating methodology through the implementation of a new pricing methodology called [Risk Rating 2.0](#). This methodology leverages industry best practices and cutting-edge technology — enabling FEMA to deliver rates that are actuarially sound, equitable and easier to understand, and that better reflect a property’s flood risk.

develop capacity to access and interpret accurate information about this localized risk, specifically in light of future conditions.

Partnerships will be a key tool in increasing access to future conditions data. Collaboration across all parts of communities, at all levels, will be necessary to develop comprehensive information about local infrastructure, land use, building code standards, and other factors to enable better risk-informed decision making.

This information will help **communities better understand their own risks and identify the most appropriate resilience actions.** Data tools, guidance, and public messaging should be developed to ensure highly technical information is explained in easily understood, relatable ways. This will enable individuals and communities to better understand technical information to inform decision making.





# Goal 3

## Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation

The 2017 hurricanes and wildfires marked a change in disaster operations tempo. Compared to the year preceding 2017, for the past four years, FEMA has had more than twice as many staff deployed every day. By November of 2020, FEMA was managing six times as many Stafford Act Events (166 emergency and major disaster declarations vs. 26), and responses to fire incidents were up 120% across the nation. This increase in frequency, severity, and complexity has heightened demands on FEMA and on the larger emergency management community.

To adapt to the trend, FEMA must expand its approach to agency readiness and to national preparedness. The only way to achieve this is to increase the nation's overall emergency management capabilities at all levels of government, as well as the private sector, the nonprofit sector, and among individuals. By incorporating risks posed by future conditions and non-Stafford Act incidents into FEMA's readiness planning, the agency can identify the capabilities required to meet the challenges of today and emergent risks we will face a decade from now. The National Capability Targets provide a shared vision of the staff, expertise, tools, and resources required to build a prepared nation. Aligning FEMA's readiness to these targets will

ensure the agency can **continuously support the needs and priorities identified by whole community partners, in addition to continuity of government across all hazards.**

The nation's ability to address emergent threats is rooted in the strength of FEMA's emergency management workforce, partnerships, and interconnectivity. Emergency managers are leaders within their communities, uniquely positioned because of their skillsets and ability to coordinate across diverse sectors and situations. COVID-19 has taught us that we must

The National Capability Targets describe the level of capability the nation as a whole — including all levels of government, private and nonprofit sectors — would need to address the nation's most catastrophic threats and hazards.



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expand capabilities and cultivate expertise from multiple disciplines to meet new complexities and operational demands. Concurrently, FEMA must engage more effectively with partners in all phases of emergency management to ensure readiness is aligned to meet needs. Within the

federal government, this engagement includes promoting better integration and coordination across agencies **to enable the government to adapt to emergent threats and to help individuals and communities better leverage federal programs.**

*“We consider all agencies of the federal government integral in upholding the trust and treaty obligations of the United States. It is important that with each agency we have ongoing, bilateral educational efforts. This ongoing dialogue is to further the agency’s understanding of the sovereign nature of tribes and the agency’s trust and treaty obligations for tribes, how best to engage with tribes, and conversely for the tribes to understand the agency’s mission and how best to partner with the agency for the benefit of our tribal communities.”*

– Chief Lynn Malerba, Mohegan Tribe



## Objective 3.1

# Strengthen the Emergency Management Workforce

As disasters become more frequent, severe, and complex, the demands placed upon the emergency management community have increased dramatically. To enable shared responsibility for effective disaster management across the nation, FEMA must do more to enhance emergency management community capacity. Through revised training initiatives, the agency will support the development of a **whole community comprehensive emergency management workforce, postured to respond to any incident at any level.** This includes expanding training to individuals and community groups that help their communities respond

### Readiness and Preparedness in Action

Through the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) Anywhere initiative and the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) Virtual Instructor Lead Training (VILT), FEMA is working to make training available to emergency managers anywhere they are, any time in their careers. EMI and CDP are modernizing their operational design to become the nation's emergency management college. This initiative will ensure the nation's federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, NGO, and private sector emergency managers can meet the risks posed by the increasing hazard, and obtain the training required to become certified within the National Qualification System (NQS).

to and recover from disasters, but who may not identify as emergency managers. Investing in readiness at all levels enables emergency managers to leverage state, local, tribal, territorial, and national resources as they coordinate within their community to create a more efficient, effective, and unified response.

The growth of the emergency management community necessitates a clear definition of the competencies required to become a qualified emergency manager. Like other professions, emergency management must standardize its career paths. FEMA's educational institutions will lead the effort to advance the emergency management profession by supporting curricula for federal **comprehensive emergency management training, education, and professional development, accessible to whole community partners.** This means bringing training to students wherever they are in the nation.

To effectively staff the increasing number of emergencies that require federal support, FEMA must both adjust its force structure and adapt to the changing needs of its workforce. **This means building a resilient and diverse workforce that**



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**prioritizes career growth and development opportunities with pathways that support recruitment, promotion, and retention.** Through these efforts FEMA can become the agency of choice for individuals seeking to serve positions that help people and communities.



*“The role and responsibility of emergency managers is evolving and changing and must strive to meet the needs of all disaster survivors.”*

– Mark Sloan, Coordinator, Harris County (Texas) Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and Chair, Big City Emergency Managers



## Objective 3.2

# Posture FEMA to Meet Current and Emergent Threats

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A year-round disaster tempo challenges FEMA's operational capacity and exacerbates existing challenges — such as workforce burnout and the agency's ability to deliver its full range of services. These challenges were especially evident throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, which saw staffing numbers peak in the winter and spring of 2021 to volumes typically seen only during active hurricane seasons, and required the National Response Coordination Center to activate for more than 500 days — far surpassing the previous peak of 79 days for the 2017 hurricane season. The pandemic response highlighted the evolving nature of threats that FEMA is now called to organize, coordinate, and manage across a larger spectrum of sectors.

As the scope of FEMA's mission expands, the agency must envision, plan, and prepare for incidents that do not fall into typical Stafford Act disaster categories. FEMA must be able to quickly assess, adapt, and surge. This effort includes bolstering capacity in its incident management and incident support workforce, continuity communications, and logistics.

Because FEMA's disaster missions are dependent on mission enablers — such as procurement, security, and human capital specialists — these functions must grow in concert with any growth of the incident management and incident support workforce. FEMA readiness must include having the human capital and security specialists necessary to hire and

support the agency's disaster workforce, having procurement specialists to execute the contracts and mission assignments that enable the government to mobilize assistance, possessing the IT infrastructure and tools to support data and information sharing, ensuring civil rights are protected in all activities, having the facilities necessary to train the workforce and manage operations, and focusing on employee health and wellness emphasizing personal resilience.

Recognizing the need to pursue readiness in a realistic, flexible way, FEMA must strive at all levels of the agency to effectively meet disaster operational requirements while maintaining critical steady-state functions. This posture requires the agency to develop a framework that continually assesses FEMA's readiness and provides a systematic approach for prioritizing resources and mitigating risks to critical functions during large or long duration events.

### Readiness and Preparedness in Action

In 2020 FEMA began a multi-year initiative to develop an agency Readiness Framework to unify the way the agency defines and evaluates readiness across all mission areas. This Framework will standardize how we define readiness, align FEMA doctrine and policy with readiness concepts, and link readiness measures to solutions that drive decision making and resource allocation.

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It is not enough for FEMA to be able to effectively deliver assistance. As we aim to meet partners where they are, **FEMA must transform how the agency delivers support so that partners can increase their capacity.** This means working directly with whole community partners to strengthen FEMA’s understanding of their capabilities and tailor engagements to enhance their ability to drive their own mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Through

positioning FEMA’s programs, policies, and partnerships to promote the reduction of whole community gaps across all mission areas, the agency increases their ability to manage future events and decreases their need for federal support. This shared understanding of capability requirements between whole community partners and all levels of government enables the prioritization of federal resources to **mitigate critical national capability gaps.**

*“The emergency management workforce is evolving as rapidly as the environment they are asked to prepare for and respond to. Leading organizations, professional associations, and the training and education enterprise all must accelerate their efforts to meet the needs of its people where they will be, not where they have been. As threats, and opportunities, present themselves in an accelerating environment, we have to increase our ability to define and solve novel problem sets.”*

– Glen Woodbury, Director, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School



## Objective 3.3

# Unify Coordination and Delivery of Federal Assistance

Disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery are not the responsibility of just one agency. Rather, these functions are a shared responsibility requiring coordination of federal agencies, private and social sectors, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and other partners. FEMA is uniquely postured to lead the federal government in integrating delivery of federal resources through leveraging both nationwide initiatives through the Emergency Support, Recovery Support, and Mitigation Support Functional Leadership groups.

Federal support to communities begins with how FEMA helps them prepare before a disaster occurs. Numerous federal partners provide training and technical assistance to communities aimed at increasing resilience. Through better coordination of pre-disaster programs, FEMA can help communities identify, prioritize, and plan to address their specific community-based threats, identify hazards and risks, and mitigate capability gaps. Together federal assistance can be targeted to address areas of greatest national risk and increase support to the most at-risk communities.

Focusing on people first means that federal programs should be easy for individuals and communities to access and navigate in order to meet their unique needs. For example, under the National Response Framework, FEMA collaborates with the Small Business Association (SBA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide initial recovery

assistance to individuals. Building on previous efforts to reduce FEMA's complexity, FEMA will collaborate with federal partners to streamline the disaster survivor and grantee experiences.

**When individuals and communities can easily navigate federal disaster programs, the burden on those individuals and communities is greatly reduced.**

### Readiness and Preparedness in Action

In coordination with the interagency partners, FEMA developed [COVID-19 Resource Roadmaps](#) to help communities navigate COVID-19 pandemic recovery. Each Roadmap identifies potential solutions and describes how federal funding and technical assistance can help communities with pandemic recovery.

For individuals and communities, the time after a disaster is challenging as they work to figure out how to meet their immediate and long-term recovery needs. The vast range of federal programs can make identifying resources that address their specific circumstances time-consuming and confusing. FEMA will reduce this burden by partnering with agencies to better sequence federal disaster recovery programs from the perspective of the end users. This includes identifying and reducing potential gaps in recovery programs and better enabling individuals and communities to use federal support to drive their own recovery.



# Appendix 1:

## Performance Measures

### Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management



#### Objective 1.1 Cultivate a FEMA that prioritizes and harnesses a diverse workforce

**Measure: Percent of FEMA's workforce reflecting the diversity of the nation**

FEMA's commitment to ensuring its leadership and workforce reflect the diversity of the nation will be captured through this measure. Specific diversity factors will be determined to compare FEMA's workforce with the representation of the nation.

**Measure: Percent of staff who see diversity, equity and inclusion valued in their work and the decision-making processes.**

Using the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, FEMA will examine the results of several questions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion to determine if FEMA's workforce demonstrates an increased commitment to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in delivering the agency's mission.

#### Objective 1.2 Remove barriers to FEMA programs through a people first approach

**Measure: Percent of FEMA programs with feedback loops that integrate input from communities**

FEMA will use this measure to track progress made toward incorporating feedback received from communities into programs. Feedback could be incorporated through guidance, policy, service delivery, and program design. FEMA recognizes the need to ensure programs continually review and respond to feedback, and this measure will track the commitment to this priority.

**Measure: Percent of FEMA's programs that require implementing partners to advance equity in their programs.**

Ensuring the equitable achievement of program outcomes is the responsibility of everyone. This measure will enable FEMA to monitor progress made toward the outcome of partners having the capability and tools required to advance equity into their programs.

#### Objective 1.3 Achieve equitable outcomes for those we serve

**Measure: Percent of FEMA's programs that evaluate and report on outcomes**

FEMA will use this measure to track progress toward evaluating and reporting outcomes for each program.





## Goal 2: Lead Whole of Community in Climate Resilience

### Objective 2.1 Increase climate literacy among the emergency management community

**Measure: Percent of participants who report being better prepared to address the impacts of climate change after receiving trainings that incorporate climate adaptation information**

This measure will assess if participants in FEMA trainings report being better prepared to address the impacts of climate change after attending training that has incorporated climate adaptation information.

**Measure: Percent of exercise sponsors who report that their organizations are better prepared to address the impacts of climate change after participating in exercises that incorporate climate change adaptation information**

This measure will assess if sponsors of exercises believe their organizations are better prepared to address the impact of climate change after participating in FEMA exercises that have incorporated climate change adaptation information.

**Measure: Percent of individuals and households who have received climate information that report taking climate adaptation actions**

This measure will assess if individuals and communities at risk for climate impacts have increased knowledge and application of climate adaptation. This measure will evaluate the number of adults who responded affirmatively to the National Household Survey regarding questions assessing whether they had taken more than one preparedness action in the past year.

**Measure: Percent of states, territories, tribal nations and local jurisdictions who have received climate information that report taking climate adaptation actions**

This measure reports the percent of states, territories, tribal nations, and local jurisdictions that respond affirmatively that they have taken climate adaptation actions after receiving climate information.

### Objective 2.2 Build a climate resilient nation

**Measure: Total investment in mitigation and recovery projects that address future conditions and climate change risk**

This measure reports the amount of investment in mitigation through FEMA programs and those of other federal agency partners.

**Measure: Number of properties with flood insurance coverage**

This measure will assess the increase in climate adaption investments by tracking the number of



properties with flood insurance coverage reported to FEMA by private insurance companies and flood insurance partners.

**Measure: Percent of communities adopting risk mitigation actions**

This measure reports the percent of communities that have adopted risk mitigation actions on an annual basis.

**Measure: Benefit to cost ratio of the Hazard Mitigation Grants**

This measure reports the estimated annual benefit to cost ratio of grants provided by the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance program to lessen the impact of disasters. The program works with state, tribal, territorial, and local governments engaged in hazard mitigation planning to identify natural hazards that impact them, identify strategies and activities to reduce any losses from those hazards, and establish a coordinated approach to implementing the plan.

**Measure: Percent of communities in high earthquake, flood, and wind-prone areas adopting disaster-resistant building codes**

This measure assesses if communities have improved climate risk management by reporting the number of communities in high earthquake, flood, and wind-prone areas adopting disaster-resistant building codes. Adopting disaster-resistant building codes helps strengthen mitigation nationwide to reduce the nation's vulnerability to disasters.

**Measure: Percent of total floodplain mileage mapped with improved engineering standards**

This measure reports on the percentage of the total mileage charted in Flood Risk Insurance Maps, for which the program has completed a technical review required every five years by statute.

**Objective 2.3 Empower risk-informed decision making**

**Measure: Percent of U.S population (excluding territories) covered by planned mitigation strategies**

This measure determines the percent of U.S. population (excluding territories) covered by approved or approvable local Hazard Mitigation Plans. FEMA helps communities reduce risk through sound land-use planning principles (such as planned mitigation strategies), floodplain management practices, and financial assistance.





## Goal 3 Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation

### Objective 3.1 Strengthen the emergency management workforce

#### **Measure: Percent of emergency manager qualification systems adopting new standards**

This measure will track the number of qualification systems within FEMA and nationally that have adopted new baseline standards for emergency managers.

#### **Measure: Percent of promotions within FEMA utilizing career path opportunities**

This measure will track the percentage of promotions from within the agency. FEMA will focus on promoting within the workforce through established career paths.

#### **Measure: Percent of workforce retention due to career paths**

This measure will monitor the retention rate of the workforce attributable to career paths, as this will enable attainment of the IM workforce readiness targets.

#### **Measure: Percent of FEMA personnel qualified under new baseline emergency manager standards**

This measure will track the number of FEMA personnel qualified as emergency managers under the newly developed baseline standards.

#### **Measure: Number of authorities having jurisdiction that implement and maintain a cadre of personnel qualified in accordance with National Qualification System guidelines**

This measure captures the number of authorities having jurisdiction with personnel qualified in accordance with National Qualification System guidelines.

#### **Measure: Percent of authorities having jurisdiction with qualified personnel under new baseline emergency manager standards**

This measure tracks the percent of authorities having jurisdiction that have qualified emergency managers under the new baseline standard for emergency managers. The purpose of this measure is to qualify and maintain a cadre of personnel using the new baseline standards.

### Objective 3.2 Posture FEMA to meet current and emergent threats

#### **Measure: Composite FEMA Readiness Indicator**

This measure will capture FEMA's Readiness across all mission areas, including mission-enabling functions.

#### **Measure: Composite logistics readiness rate for moving, staging, and delivering commodities and equipment for catastrophic disasters**



This measure captures FEMA's logistics readiness for responding to a catastrophic disaster based on the catastrophic requirements of a Cascadia-like incident. This measure captures the performance of six components of logistics: contracts, personnel, training, outside of continental U.S. (OCONUS) inventory, continental U.S. (CONUS) inventory, and equipment.

**Measure: Percent of Incident Management workforce readiness targets achieved**

This measure captures FEMA's IM workforce readiness toward established workforce planning factors required to manage the expected disaster activity across the nation. The measure reports on two factors: 1) the number of IM workforce on board or hired, and 2) associated percentages of required trainings and tasks completed by positions.

**Measure: Number of emergency management capabilities where communities are achieving less than 30% of the national capability targets**

This measure captures the number of emergency management capabilities where communities are achieving less than 30% of the national capability targets as identified in the National Preparedness Report.

**Measure: Average community capability compared to community goals**

This measure helps to determine if FEMA programs, policies, and partnerships promote the reduction of whole community gaps across all mission areas. This measure averages community capability targets compared to community capability goals.

### Objective 3.3 Unify coordination and delivery of federal assistance

**Measure: Percent of applicants satisfied with simplicity of the Public Assistance process**

This measure gauges the percent of applicants for Public Assistance (PA) grant programs that are satisfied with the simplicity of the process throughout the recovery lifecycle. Simplicity is measured through an initial customer survey and later assessment on the several dimensions of PA service delivery.

**Measure: Percent of applicants satisfied with simplicity of the Individuals and Households Program**

This measure provides FEMA's program managers with disaster survivors' impressions about the simplicity of the procedures required to receive disaster relief from the Individuals and Households Program (IHP). The program collects survivors' impressions of their interactions with IHP using standard surveys regarding five aspects of the program: 1) financial assistance arriving in a reasonable amount of time, 2) overall inspection experience, 3) simplicity of completing an application, 4) providing easy to understand disaster assistance information, and 5) financial assistance helping to meet disaster related needs.

**Measure: Reduce gaps in service among federal post-disaster recovery programs**

This measure captures the length of the gap in service among federal post-disaster recovery programs. This will help determine the coordination occurring between federal agencies to enable the continuity of service for individuals and communities.



# Appendix 2:

## Learning Agenda

### Purpose

The Learning Agenda is a five-year systematic plan for evidence building in support of the 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan. FEMA has identified evidence gaps in achieving the agency’s strategic goals and will address these through the research questions and data projects listed below.

### Principles

FEMA has developed this Learning Agenda in accordance with the requirements and best practices of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act). In addition to creating and publishing this Learning Agenda, FEMA is implementing the Evidence Act as a component of DHS and will apply the following principles to guide its learning and evidence-building, as outlined in “FEMA Directive 202-000-1, Evaluation and Evidence-Building”:

- A. **Relevance and Utility:** Evaluations and evidence-building address questions that are important and provide findings that are actionable and available in time for use. Evaluation and evidence-building findings inform and are integrated into the agency’s activities, such as budgeting, program improvement, management, accountability, and the development of programs, policies, and regulatory actions.
- B. **Rigor:** FEMA conducts evaluations and evidence-building to the highest standards. Those who conduct program evaluations and policy analysis have appropriate expertise for the designs and methods undertaken, designs and methods are appropriate for the question(s) asked, documentation of evaluation and evidence-building processes and findings are clear and accurate, and the limitations of findings are transparent
- C. **Transparency:** FEMA is committed to ensuring that the agency’s leadership and staff, collaborators, policymakers, researchers, and the public at large are able to learn from our work.
- D. **Independence and Objectivity:** Evaluations and evidence-building activities are conducted with an appropriate level of independence from program, policy, regulation, and stakeholder activities. Those who conduct such work demonstrate objectivity, impartiality, and professional judgement throughout the evaluation process.
- E. **Ethics:** Evaluations and evidence-building meet the highest ethical standards and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants, stakeholders, and affected entities.

## Evidence-Building Priorities

The Learning Agenda is aligned to the goals of the 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan. The research questions and data projects listed below represent those that most directly influence the successful and efficient achievement of these goals. This work will enhance programmatic and operational effectiveness across FEMA, enabling an agency-wide approach to achieving its wide-ranging strategic objectives.



### Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

#### Research Questions

1. How do we measure the culture of FEMA's workforce (i.e., presence of FEMA's core values of compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect)? Is the measurement of FEMA's core values related to the diversity of the workforce?
2. Is there a relationship between the amount of investment and assistance a community receives from FEMA prior to a disaster and the likelihood that the community will access FEMA programs post-disaster?
3. Is there a relationship between the number of challenges faced by individuals eligible for FEMA assistance and race, ethnicity, sex, or disability status of those applicants?
4. Are there disparities in outcomes for communities across FEMA programs, and what is the best way to measure this?
5. Is FEMA's Individual Assistance for Housing Assistance funding distributed differentially by race, ethnicity, sex, socioeconomic status, and disability status for major disaster declarations? Are there differences in who is deemed eligible? Are there differences in the amount received? Are there differences in who applies for assistance? Are some groups not applying for assistance even when they are eligible? Are there differences for renters versus owners? Are there differences in results for Tribes?

## Goal 2: Lead Whole of Community in Climate Resilience



### Research Questions:

1. To what extent is the newly developed Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant achieving its desired outcomes?
2. Has Public Assistance achieved its intended outcome of increasing mitigation funding (is there a difference in the percentage of projects with mitigation dollars awarded)? If so, did it increase community resilience to future disasters?
3. Beyond financial costs, what is the best way to measure loss avoidance and the efficacy of risk reductions? What indicator(s) would best quantify the reduction of risk and lives and resources saved?
4. Is there a relationship between communities' use of future conditions data and loss avoidance?

### Data Projects:

1. Index or indicators identifying climate-vulnerable populations
2. Future conditions data (climate change projections)

## Goal 3: Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation



### Research Questions:

1. What is the best method (or set of methods) to index or normalize major disaster declarations to be able to compare FEMA's disaster response and recovery programs across disasters?

### Data Projects:

1. Administrative data set of the nation's emergency managers

## Next Steps

As FEMA continues to adapt to emerging priorities, the Learning Agenda will reflect accordingly those changes and new challenges. Over the next five years, this research document will be updated and modified to incorporate the shifting environment in which FEMA finds itself and in response to the key questions it answers to enhance its programs, policies, and regulations. This Learning Agenda will set the framework for addressing and resolving evidence gaps, while providing the agency flexibility to adjust course over time.



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  - ii. National Institute of Building Science. (2021, October 8). *National Institute of Building Sciences Issues Interim Report on the Value of Mitigation. Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2018 Interim Report*. Retrieved November 16, 2021, from <https://www.nibs.org/news/national-institute-building-sciences-issues-interim-report-value-mitigation>.

# **Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves**





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