

COVID-19 Program Delivery Manager (PDMG)

Public Assistance Position Assist Addendum

This position assist addendum provides interim guidance for Program Delivery Managers (PDMGs) working with Applicants on COVID-19 events and supplements the *COVID-19 Process Overview FEMA Job Aid*. This guidance is intended to supplement information found on the [Program Delivery Toolbox](#) and outlines changes to the program delivery process that are specific to COVID-19 events. FEMA will revise this guidance as Grants Manager (GM)/Grants Portal (GP) is updated to incorporate system enhancements to streamline the Public Assistance application process. A comprehensive PDMG position assist for COVID-19 process changes is under development. All COVID-19 specific guidance can be found on the [Coronavirus PA Toolbox](#). Please check this site frequently to make sure you are using the latest guidance documents.

What's different about the COVID-19 Streamlined Application Process?

- Applicants will use the COVID-19 Streamlined Project Application to provide information usually gathered through the Damage Inventory, Essential Elements of Information (EEl)s, and physical site inspections. Applicants use the same project application for all their activities, including for small and large projects, completed work and work to be completed, and regular and expedited funding requests.
 - All projects under the large project threshold will be processed with limited documentation and Applicant certifications.
- Applicants may apply directly to FEMA without relying on FEMA or Recipient staff. In most cases, FEMA will not assign PDMGs to Applicants and will not conduct the traditional Exploratory Calls, Recovery Scoping Meetings, or Recovery Transition Meetings.
- Many projects will qualify for a streamlined Environmental Historical Preservation (EHP) review at the Consolidated Resource Center (CRC) and will not require additional Regional EHP review. For projects that do not qualify for a streamlined EHP review at the CRC, Applicants will answer simplified EHP questions in the streamlined project application which Regional EHP will review to ensure the project's compliance with EHP laws, regulations, and executive orders.
- As PA streamlines the application process for COVID-19, PDMGs should expect to have more Applicants assigned to them than for non-COVID-19 declarations. FEMA has developed guidance, resources, and tools to assist applicants in driving their own recovery.

Working in a Remote Work Environment

With social distancing measures in place nationwide to prevent the spread of coronavirus, PDMGs will be supporting Applicants remotely. PDMGs should consider the following best practices for supporting Applicants in a remote work environment.

Staying Engaged with Applicants

Lack of in-person engagement will require PDMGs to rely on virtual communications and deliberate outreach to Applicants. To maintain engagement with Applicants:

- ☐ PDMGs should use FEMA-authorized technologies to communicate with Applicants. More information can be found on FEMA's intranet: [IT How-To Guides for Virtual Work](#).
- ☐ Consideration should be given to the Applicant's level of tech-savvy. Phone conferences may be the easiest mode of communication for some Applicants while others may be familiar with video platforms and screen sharing technologies (for example, Skype, Teams, or FaceTime).
- ☐ PDMGs should strive to reply to Applicant requests by phone or email within 24 hours. For more complex issues, they should engage their PD TFLs to help resolve and provide Applicants regular status updates if needed.
- ☐ PDMGs should convey available technical resources to Applicants, including Resources for Applicants will be available in Grants Portal under "Resources." the [Grants Portal YouTube Channel](#) (Request video zip files from Training staff if the Applicant cannot access YouTube), and the Grants Portal Hotline.

PDMGs may be assigned more Applicants than usual for COVID-19 events. In most scenarios, an Applicant will only claim emergency protective measure activities (Category B) conducted in direct response to the COVID-19 threat. Strategies for handling the workload include:

- ☐ Use Week in the Life Of (WILO) and Day in the Life Of (DILO) tools to manage time, to establish weekly goals, accomplish set objectives, and provide customer service tailored to the Applicants.
- ☐ Attend daily huddles to identify issues that that require elevation for additional potential policy or process clarification, or a follow-up meeting to resolve outstanding challenges
- ☐ Become familiar with the COVID-19 streamlined project application
- ☐ Keep up with policy and program guidance for COVID-19 events

Staying Engaged with Leadership

PDMGs should use the following tactics to stay engaged with their leadership:

- ☐ Update virtual huddle boards and participate in daily huddles
- ☐ Set up calendars in Grants Manager and share with their PD TFLs
- ☐ Attend virtual sit-withs as scheduled by PD TFLs and request follow-ups as needed

- ☐ Participate in weekly roundtables with other PDMGs to share proven approaches to excellent customer service
- ☐ Discuss concerns about workload with PD TFL and request overtime (or a day off!) if needed

Using Grants Manager for Tracking Projects and Applicants

Grants Manager features should be used to the maximum extent possible to track Applicants and their projects and provide information to leadership. Specific examples include:

- ☐ Set up Tiles to monitor project progression. Refer to [PDMG–Tile Guide 2.3](#) located in the [Program Delivery Toolbox](#).
- ☐ Ensure that agendas and meeting notes are up to date
- ☐ Track outstanding RFIs and follow up to ensure resolution
- ☐ Address all open comments from Applicants, supervisors, and colleagues

Virtual Communications Tools

A lack of in-person meetings requires virtual channels for communications with colleagues and Applicants. Refer to **Appendix A: Virtual Meeting Tips** for best practices on virtual meetings. PDMGs can use the following tools to maintain effective communication while working remotely:

- ☐ Microsoft Teams
 - ☐ Conduct virtual huddles within MS Teams. Use the video feature to maintain personal connections and read body language.
 - ☐ Make individual video or voice calls from your computer
 - ☐ Update DILO/WILO's in Outlook Calendar, which can then be shared in MS Teams.
 - ☐ Utilize and monitor chat to raise concerns or questions.
 - ☐ Share and store files to increase visibility collaboration.
- ☐ FEMA iPhone
 - ☐ Use the MS Teams app on the iPhone when computer is not available.
 - ☐ Pick up the phone for complex issues that are difficult to resolve by email or chat
 - ☐ Use Facetime for video calls
- ☐ Document sharing
 - ☐ Use screen share on Adobe Connect, Skype, or Teams to walk Applicants through documents or Grants Portal upload steps. PDMGs may also direct Applicants to the Grants Portal Hotline for technical assistance if they are not immediately available.
 - ☐ If Applicants need help uploading documents, they can:
 - ☐ Scan and email documents
 - ☐ Use the iPhone Note App to scan documents

Phase 1: Operational Planning

In Phase 1, PDMGs work with their Program Delivery Task Force Leaders (PD TFLs) and PA Group Supervisors (PAGSs) to identify Applicants' Public Assistance funding needs. PDMGs use Exploratory Calls (ECs) and Recovery Scoping Meetings (RSMs) to explain the streamlined process of applying for PA funding for COVID-19 events. This process is based on the Applicant's completion of the project application with the PDMGs providing customer service as needed. PDMGs will no longer need to gather Damage Inventories from their Applicants for COVID-19 events in Phase 1. PDMGs should also plan to hold all Applicant meetings remotely.

During Phase 1, PDMGs should perform the following COVID-specific process steps:

- ☐ Review available options for holding Applicant meetings remotely.
- ☐ Review the FEMA COVID-19 Process Guide and project application.
- ☐ Review the COVID-specific EC and RSM agendas provided in **Appendix B**. Please note that the scripts have not yet been updated in Grants Manager. However, the PDMGs will still need to complete the EC and RSM steps in the system in order to access the project application submission steps in Phase 2.
- ☐ Complete the EC with the Applicant using the agenda provided in **Appendix B**.
- ☐ Complete the EC section of Grants Manager, using the following steps to bypass non-COVID-19 questions:
 - Click Exploratory Call Information, click Call Options, click Meet Now, Did the Applicant answer? -> click Yes. This will take you to the wizard.
 - On Introduction Tab, click Next.
 - For Questionnaire Tab, click Unsure for all questions. For Categories A and C-G, click No; for Category B, click Yes. Has work started? Click unsure. For Point of Contact, type primary contact listed on the Request for Public Assistance.
 - For Other Considerations Tab, For EHP, Mitigation, and Insurance, select unsure for all. For Mitigation boxes, type "N/A."
 - For RSM Scheduling Tab, Is the Applicant able to schedule an RSM? Click No. Type "N/A." Click Next.
 - For Complete the Call Tab, Leave blank.
 - Click Save and Complete
- ☐ Prepare for RSM
 - Review Applicant's profile on Grants Manager
 - Invite applicable attendees to call, inform them what platform the call will be on
 - Review **Appendix A: Virtual Meeting Tips**
 - Make sure to have these documents readily available
 - ☐ Document to record names and affiliations for attendees on call
 - ☐ COVID-19 Streamlined Project Application (be sure to review prior to RSM)
 - ☐ RSM Meeting Agenda
 - Review and understand Public Assistance policy
 - Call Applicant one day before RSM to confirm:



- ☐ Date, time, and call platform
- ☐ FEMA and Applicant attendees
- ☐ Applicant has copy of project application
- ☐ Conduct the RSM with the Applicant
- ☐ Complete the RSM section of Grants Manager, using the following steps to bypass non-COVID-19 questions:
 - Click Manage the RSM or reschedule the meeting
 - Click Schedule Options, Click Schedule Manually, fill out information with proposed time, select default address (should be the Applicant's address), Click Save
 - Click Conduct RSM, this starts the RSM wizard
 - For Meeting Preparation Tab, click Next
 - Damage Inventory, Damage Survey, and EHP Damage Survey Tabs, these are not required and can be skipped in the system.
 - RSM Information Tab
 - ☐ Fill out Scheduling Information
 - ☐ Attendee Information- Fill out sign-in sheet and Upload
 - ☐ Click Next
 - Complete RSM Tab
 - ☐ Input comments in text box
 - ☐ Click Complete
- ☐ After the EC and RSM, discuss any potential eligibility issues or communication challenges learned about the Applicant with PD TFLs.

PDMGs may be assigned an Applicant at any point in the program delivery process if FEMA or the Recipient determines that the Applicant needs more assistance. In these cases, the system will allow the PDMG to skip the EC and begin Phase 1 with the RSM.

Phase 2: Field Development and Reviews

In Phase 2, PDMGs will help Applicants submit project applications for review and validation by Consolidated Resource Center (CRC) Specialists. The submission of a project application takes the place of the following steps normally completed in Phase 2: Damage Inventory Completion, Project Formulation, Site Inspections, and EEIs. PDMGs should set up regular meeting with the Applicant to check on status of their project applications and address questions, and work with PD TFLs to address eligibility issues.

PDMGs should use the following steps to submit the project application in GM:

- ☐ Click "Create Project" button at the top right of the Projects section under the Applicant Profile (You **do not need any damage line items in the Damage Inventory** to create a project for COVID-19 events.)
- ☐ Select the appropriate project type. For COVID-19 events, choose Completed or Standard based on the status of the work that the Applicant reported in the project application form.

- ❑ On the next screen, click “Yes” to “Is this a Streamlined Standard Project Application?” (Clicking “No” will send the project through the normal workflow. This option should generally not be used for COVID-19 events).

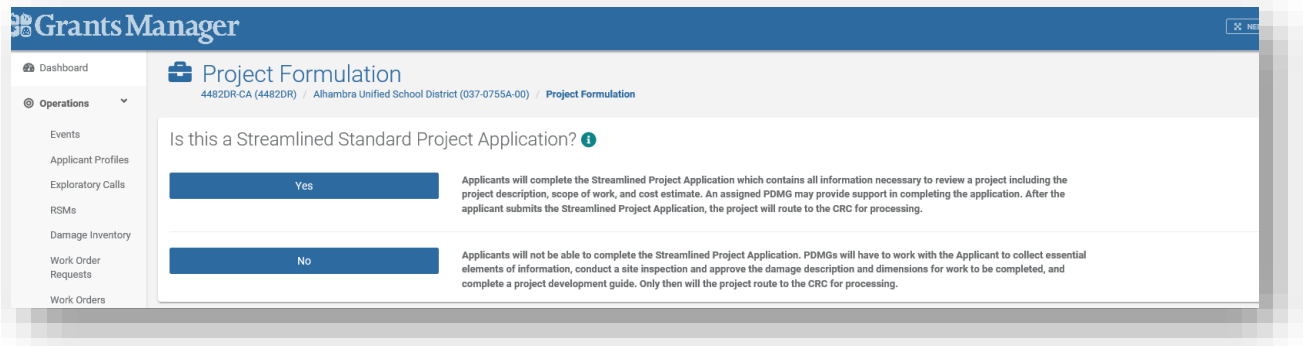


Figure 1. Screenshot from Grants Manager

- ❑ Answer the questions in the “Project Application Information Screen” based on what the Applicant has provided on its project application form.
- ❑ Upload the project application using the naming convention: “Project # - DRxxxx – Applicant-Assigned Project Application # - Project Application”
- ❑ Upload supporting documentation as required by the project application form under “Support Documentation.”
- ❑ Click “Submit Application” to send the project

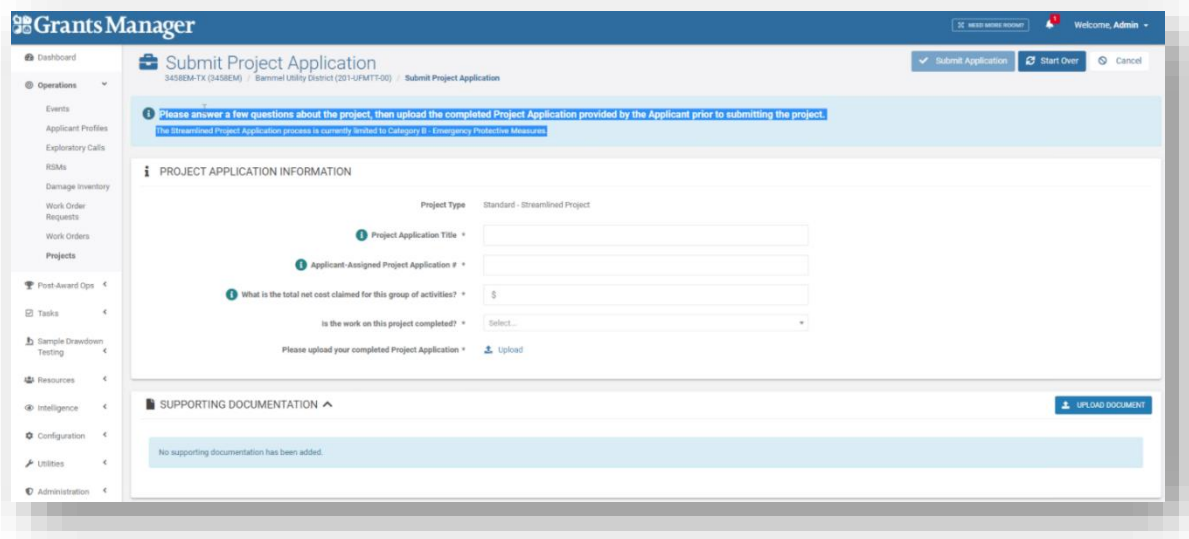


Figure 2. Screenshot from Grants Manager

Phase 3: CRC Development and Reviews

In Phase 3, CRC Specialists develop and/or validate scopes of work and cost estimates and perform program compliance reviews needed to obligate a project. PDMGs must be available to support CRC Specialists by providing additional information from Applicants as



needed to complete a project. Process steps in Phase 3 have not changed for PDMGs working on COVID-19 events.

Phase 4: Final Field Review and Signatures

In Phase 4, projects developed by the CRCs are returned to the field for final reviews prior to obligation. PDMGs review projects to ensure they align with the Applicant's recovery goals and FEMA policy. After FEMA reviews are completed, PDMGs track the progress of the Recipient and Applicant project review to make sure projects are obligated in timely fashion. Process steps in Phase 4 have not changed for PDMGs working on COVID-19 events.



APPENDIX A: Virtual Meeting Tips

adapted from [*How to Run a Great Virtual Meeting*](#) by Keith Ferrazzi

- ❑ **Connect with people** - People perform better when they are comfortable with each other, which affords a greater degree of candor and mutual interest. Your job, particularly when people may not know each other, is to make them feel connected so you can have a productive meeting. How? Clarify roles (who is there and why). It is always useful to explain why people are in the collaborative space and the role they play.
- ❑ **Ban multitasking** - Multitasking was once thought of as a way to get many things done at once, but it's now understood as a way to do many things poorly. Despite the brain's remarkable complexity and power, there's a bottleneck in information processing when it tries to perform two distinct tasks at once. Give the meeting your full attention. It's more productive and more respectful.
- ❑ **Make sure you're 'screen-ready.'** One of the best things about working remotely is the freedom to wear anything to work. However, when you're in a virtual meeting, your coworkers don't need to see your sweats and bedhead. Put on a clean shirt, brush your hair, and set up your webcam at eye level.
- ❑ **Minimize distractions** - Conference calls or video meetings have enough background noise, so don't add to it. Make sure you're in a quiet room; turn off stereos, cell phones, and TVs; relocate pets; and minimize use of your keyboard because the sound is distracting.
- ❑ **Speak clearly, concisely, slowly, and don't interrupt** - Whether you are on the phone or using video conferencing, it's important to speak clearly, concisely and slowly. If you have a decent mic, you don't need to yell. Your normal speaking volume should be fine. As much as possible, stick to your natural speaking cadence.
- ❑ **Make eye contact** - If you are using video technology, your screen probably has the presentation open, a window to type comments, and multiple video screens with your colleagues' faces. When it's your turn to speak, remember to look into your camera, not at the multiple distractions on your computer screen. It takes a while to grasp this, but it looks more natural and connects to people much more effectively.
- ❑ **Don't eat** - Even if the meeting falls during your normal mealtime, don't eat during your video call. Just because people can't smell it doesn't mean they can't hear or see you chewing. Trust me, no one wants to see you stuff your face while discussing important business matters.
- ❑ **Keep the mute button handy** - Nothing is more frustrating than hearing background noise during a call so be sure to keep your microphone muted when you're not speaking. It gives everyone else the ability to chime in without distraction.
- ❑ **Be patient** - If someone doesn't respond immediately, give him or her a few seconds. The slow response may be an audio delay or people might be desperately trying to unmute themselves.



APPENDIX B: Exploratory Call & Recovery Scoping Meeting Agenda

Based on when they are assigned to an Applicant, PDMGs may need to conduct both an EC and an RSM. The EC will be conducted when PDMGs are assigned to an Applicant immediately following FEMA's approval of the RPA. If PDMGs are assigned after this step, GM will allow PDMGs to begin the process with the RSM but they may still consider conducting an EC to coordinate the RSM with the Applicant.

Exploratory Call Agenda

The exploratory call should be a brief initial check-in with the Applicant to set up the Recovery Scoping Meeting. It may be the Applicant's first interaction with FEMA staff, and FEMA's first glimpse of the Applicant's situation and its COVID-19 response activities.

1. Introduce yourself as the primary FEMA point of contact (POC) for the Applicant.
2. Ensure the Applicant representative you have contacted is the most appropriate person to speak to about COVID-related activities.
3. Ask whether the Applicant is familiar with the Public Assistance program.
 - a. If yes, explain that the COVID-19 process is slightly different. Have them review the project application and let them know you will discuss the process differences in more detail during the next meeting.
 - b. If no, point them to the project application and COVID-19 Process Overview: Applicant Quick Guide and let them know you will review the process in more detail during the next meeting.
4. Plan the Recovery Scoping Meeting.
 - a. Explain to the Applicant that the purpose of the RSM is to explain the application process in-depth to the Applicant and answer any questions about next steps.
 - b. Ask them to coordinate appropriate attendees – that is, colleagues who will help complete the project application(s).
 - c. RSMs last between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on the Applicant's needs.

Recovery Scoping Meeting Agenda

During this meeting, you will discuss the Applicant's COVID-19 event-related activities in detail, go over the project application, and prepare for next steps in the Public Assistance process. Remember that this meeting and the Public Assistance process may be overwhelming to first-time Applicants or those with limited staff or capacity.

1. **Facilitate introductions and outline the plan for the meeting**
 - a. Welcome attendees and do a roll call of participants. Record names and affiliations in place of a sign-in sheet.
 - Ensure that the Recipient representative has an opportunity to provide opening remarks and discuss their role.
 - Remind everyone that your role as PDMG is to:
 1. Be the Applicant's primary point of contact at FEMA
 2. Support the Applicant through the Public Assistance grant process



- b. Discuss the objectives of the Recovery Scoping Meeting.
 - o Ensure the Applicant understands and has information on the Public Assistance program
 - o Discuss the project application
 - 1. Outline a plan for completing the Applicant's grant application
 - 2. Identify and agree to next steps
 - c. Based on the Applicant's previous level of experience with Public Assistance, explain the differences between the normal process and the COVID-19 process
- 2. Discuss the COVID-19 Streamlined Project Application**
- a. Make sure the Applicant has reviewed the project application and ask if it has started completing the application
 - b. Using the project application as a guide, discuss activities being conducted in response to COVID, including:
 - o Types of activities, using the list in Section II of the project application.
 - o Cost information and the status of work, which will guide the Applicant about which sections of the project application they will need to complete.
 - o Immediate needs and priority projects. These may guide how the Applicant's activities should be managed and organized.
 - 1. Explain the option of expedited projects are funded at 50% of eligible federal cost share. Refer to the [Expedited Funding Guidance](#).
 - 2. Complex projects (such as alternate care facilities, temporary sheltering, non-congregate sheltering). Explain that certain projects may each be filled out on separate project application(s)
 - c. Make note of the Applicant's primary activities, priorities or concerns.
 - d. As you go through the project application, point out to the Applicant the supporting documentation requirements for relevant activities and costs
- 3. Outline a plan for completing the Applicant's grant application**
- a. Develop a "roadmap" or work plan to get the Applicant through grant development and to obligation
 - o Schedule Applicant Status Meetings as needed
 - o Discuss COVID-19 specific timelines, milestones, and deadlines for project completion and identifying eligible work
 - b. Identify the Applicant's preferences and capabilities for virtual meetings (Skype, Adobe Connect, FaceTime) and communications (phone calls, emails, text).
- 4. Identify and agree to next steps**
- a. Plan for the next check-in or meeting
 - b. Identify useful resources that you will send as follow up to help the Applicant complete the project application, including guidance in the Resources section of Grants Portal
 - c. Remind the Applicant to keep working through the project application and reach out for assistance if needed

The *Position Assist Series* provides guidance to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) staff in Joint Field Offices (JFOs) and Consolidated Resource Centers (CRCs). The *Position Assist Series* is designed to explain **what** staff are expected to do and **why** those actions are critical. Links are provided to additional resources that offer guidance on how to perform each task. Read more about Public Assistance Program delivery in other Job Aids, the [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#), and resources available on [Grants Portal](#) and the [Coronavirus PA Toolbox](#).