
DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended for use by local government, districts, and certain eligible private non-profit organizations to help define roles and activities for coordinating with disaster recovery agencies and services (county, state and federal government) as necessary to support the delivery of assistance and overall recovery of disaster impacted communities throughout Westchester County, NY.

Recovery is not only about the restoration of structures, economic systems, and services. A successful recovery program is also about individuals and families being able to rebound from their losses, and sustain their physical, social, and economic wellbeing. The shared recovery objective should always be to empower people to recover from disasters by assisting them with the opportunities, and tools to rebuild their communities. To accomplish this, the Westchester County facilitates the disaster recovery process established by state and federal partners to assist municipalities, eligible private non-profit organizations and individuals impacted by disasters.

In general, disaster recovery is complex and requires a team-based approach in order to achieve an organized, accurate, and efficient process. The procedures contained in this document are meant to provide guidance to local and county governmental and eligible private non-profits organization personnel having roles and responsibilities for the provision of assistance prior to, during, and following a disaster. In the most severe situations, modified processes not outlined in these guidelines may need to be implemented appropriate to the scope of the disaster. It is understood a strategic jurisdiction-specific recovery and redevelopment plan will likely be necessary following a catastrophic event to rebuild impacted neighborhoods, address long-term unmet needs, and mitigate against future reoccurrences to provide for more resilient communities.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (The “Stafford Act”) is the federal law that delineates the authorities, requirements and processes for state and local governments to obtain the provision of federal disaster assistance. These guidelines attempt to be consistent with the Stafford Act, New York State and Westchester County disaster recovery requirements, policies and procedures, and should be reviewed regularly for any required updates.

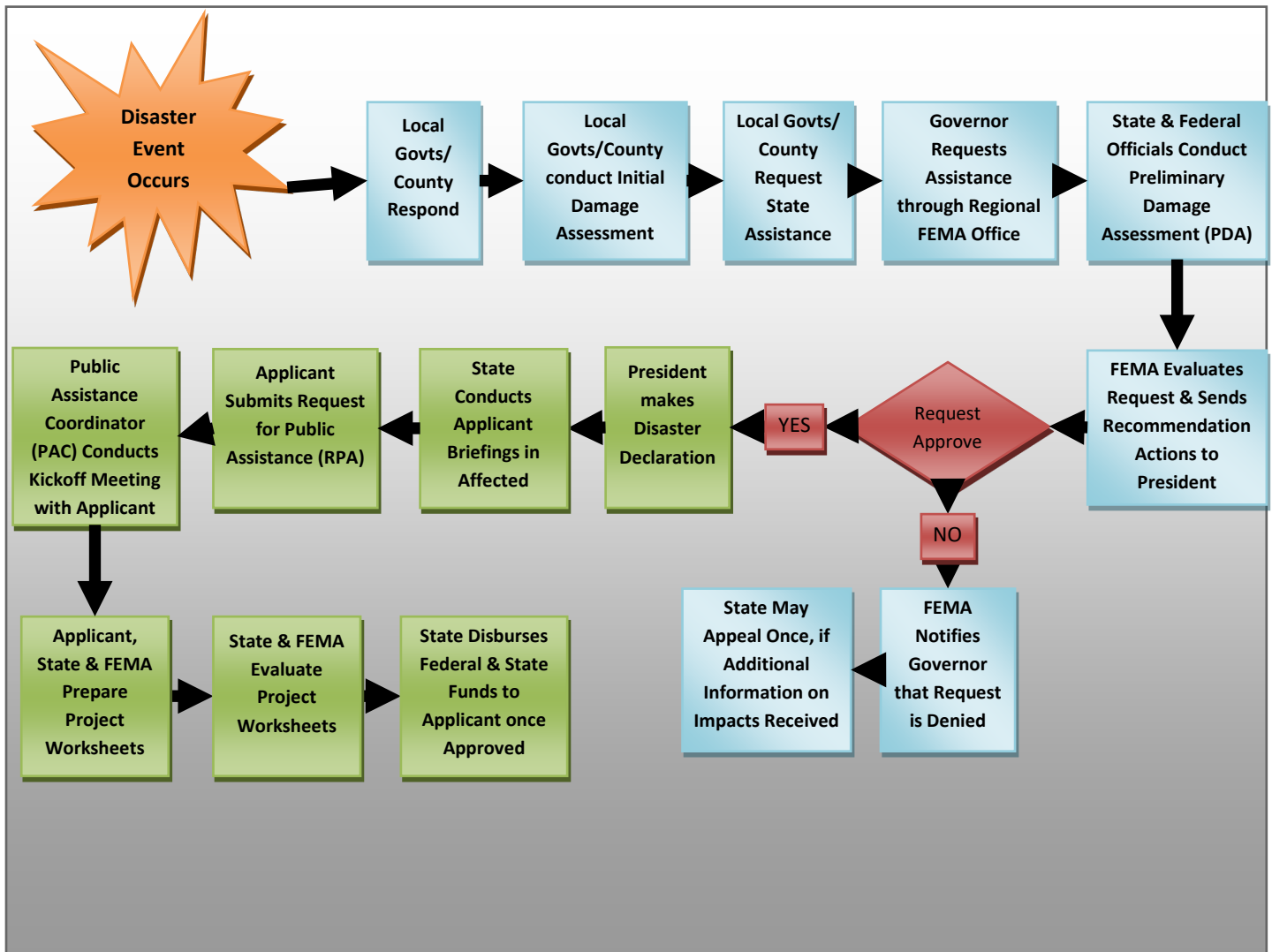
DISASTER RECOVERY ASSISTANCE SEQUENCE

Westchester County is vulnerable to natural, technological, and man-made disasters. Like all emergencies, the initial response and recovery from a disaster begins with the impacted community(s). Local governments, working in concert with their emergency response partners, may contact Westchester County to begin the process of requesting assistance. If determined to require resources that go beyond local capabilities, the county may request assistance from New York State which in turn may request assistance from the Federal government. Aid can come in the form of direct assistance such as mutual aid, through coordination and technical support, or financial assistance through state and federal services and programs.

Local jurisdictions have the authority to declare a local “state of emergency” pursuant to New York State Executive Law - Article 2B. Emergency declarations should be made prior to requesting disaster assistance from the state. Doing so let’s state decision-makers know that an emergency situation exists which is beyond the local jurisdiction’s response and/or recovery capabilities. If the state determines the emergency or disaster is beyond the local ability to effectively respond, a State Disaster Emergency can be declared by the Governor through an executive order for the impacted counties. The enactment of such a declaration will enable the county to request state assistance, if needed, invoke emergency related mutual-aid assistance, and/or waive the procedures and formalities otherwise required of the political subdivision by law, to respond to the emergency. When state and local resources are inadequate to effectively respond to a major emergency or disaster, the Stafford Act allows for federal assistance through a Presidential Disaster and/or Emergency Declaration. The Governor requests this assistance through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security if the situation meets the criteria for a declaration.

Damage Assessment Process

Immediately following a disaster, an **Initial Damage Assessment** must be performed by the local jurisdiction (town, village, city, district, eligible private non-profit, and county) to assess the impacts of the disaster. This assessment should provide a reasonable estimate of the type and the extent of local damages, including probable costs. This will require the coordination of the county with the various municipal governments who will each perform their own damage assessments. When the information has been collected by the county, it is transmitted to the State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) for review and further processing to FEMA as may be necessary.



POTENTIAL APPLICANT DISASTER ASSESSMENT PREPAREDNESS

This checklist details the steps potential applicants (municipalities, county departments, school districts, special districts, and certain eligible private non-profit organizations) should follow to be prepared for any event/disaster which may require a damage assessment and state/federal disaster assistance.

In advance, determine how the local disaster recovery process will be implemented and identify a primary and secondary point of contact to communicate related information to the county, state, and FEMA. Ideally, these should be individuals familiar with damage assessment concepts (Code Enforcement/Building Inspection) and internal financial tracking and reporting procedures (Fiscal Officer/Human Resources).

Establish procedures and requirements for your local damage assessment, documentation and dissemination of information to include:

- Capturing reported preliminary damages, locations and contacts for necessary follow-up
- Tracking cumulative damages and associated estimated costs through the point they become more refined
- Documentation of damages (Narrative descriptions, pictures accessible via electronic media, maps/geocodes)
- Documentation of incurred expenses (force account labor, equipment, materials and supplies)
- Existing insurance policy, labor contracts, mutual aid agreements, fringe benefits, purchasing procedures

Initial Damage Assessment Best Practices:

- Local **Initial damage assessment** cost estimates for facilities and structures must be reasonable and should be developed by qualified professionals and/or representatives of the jurisdiction familiar with the damaged facility and who regularly develop work estimates.
- As soon as practical, supporting documentation should be prepared to include damage photos, damage descriptions, repair scope of work descriptions, and cost estimates for labor, materials, supplies, and equipment. *It is highly recommended supporting documentation include engineering letters and/or professional contractor proposals and estimates.* In addition to facility and structure repairs, activities associated with emergency protective measures (search and rescue, flood mitigation, emergency operations, etc.) and debris management (quantities, transfer and disposal) should be tracked.
- **Initial damage assessment** procedures should be consistent with FEMA's **Damage Assessment Operations Manual**:
 - https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/Damage_Assessment_Manual_April62016.pdf
- If it is determined through the **initial damage assessment** the jurisdiction's repair costs will exceed local financial capabilities, a request should be made to the county for potential state and federal disaster assistance.
- In order determine if the county is eligible for federal disaster assistance, a Joint **Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)** will be conducted by NYSDHSES and FEMA with representatives of the county and local jurisdiction. A representative of the jurisdiction familiar with the damages will be required to be available to tour the damages.
- Information captured during the local **initial damage assessment** will be utilized to prioritize and arrange **PDA** visits to the most significant reported damaged sites. *Access to potential federal disaster assistance is predicated on the validated damage estimate exceeding the state and county thresholds (see attached).*
- Specific details about the PDA process, federal disaster declarations and **FEMA Public Assistance Program** (Government and Non-Private Disaster Recovery) can be found at:
 - https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_papppg-v4-updated-links_policy_6-1-2020.pdf
- Specific details about the **FEMA Individual Assistance Program** (Residents and Businesses) can be found at:
 - https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_iapppg-1.1.pdf

Remember... be flexible and adaptable. The pace of the assessment is not determined or controlled by the County, FEMA or NYS DHSES

INITIAL DAMAGE ASSESSMENT (IDA) - INTRA-COUNTY PROCESS

This checklist details the steps for the Initial Damage Assessment process and should be used as a guideline for any event/disaster which may require a formal damage assessment.

Determine if event is of such a magnitude and scope as to require initiation of the local Initial Damage Assessment Process

- Obtain incident impact situational awareness as soon as appropriate from available sources (Municipal notifications, Emergency Operations Center, 911 Centers, First Responders, Non-governmental Community Organizations active in Disasters)
- Query available sources for local damage information:
 - Internet and social media;
 - Local news sites for pictures or video
- **Communicate with County Emergency Management to identify county-wide impacts, recovery efforts, and to coordinate activities**
- Implement Disaster Recovery Organization, procedures and responsibilities as applicable:
 - Reminder to identify specific points of contact for continuing discussion and follow-ups and to update contact information as necessary
 - County Disaster Recovery Task Force includes representatives from Public Works (Engineering, Roadways), Environmental Facilities (Water Systems, Debris Management), Risk Management (Insurance), Budget (Finance/Admin), Parks and Recreation (Site Coordination), Social Services (Individual Assistance), and Emergency Management.

Confirm with County and NYS DHSES Emergency Management current thresholds for potential consideration of Presidential Declaration

- Westchester County per capita threshold
- New York State per capita threshold

Disseminate notification to agencies and departments designated to assist with disaster recovery activities:

- Begin to compile damage information and collect supporting back-up documentation including pictures, maps/GIS data of significant damages, with brief description of response activities and estimated costs and retain detail locally, AND
- Initiate labor cost tracking activities and need for special event code notification to all department heads and timekeepers
 - Provide details about time frame for use and categories of work to be included

- **Complete Damage Assessment Survey(s)** coordinated by County and NYS DHSES by established dates and times
- Compile and maintain supporting documentation for all reported damages and reasonable estimates throughout the collection process for eventual submission to NYSDHSES and FEMA, as determined
- Provide situational updates to the organization leadership, EOC, if activated, and the County's Disaster Recovery Task Force as requested (Include lists of all critical activities remaining to be completed)

Communicate requests for disaster recovery assistance to County Emergency Management for consideration of:

- Damage Assessment Response Teams (DART) (if applicable)
 - NYS OFPC mutual aid resource requested via WCEOC/NYSEOC for assistance with conducting rapid visual screening of buildings
- Code Enforcement Damage Assessment Response (CEDAR) teams (if applicable)
 - NYS Dept. of State mutual aid resource requested via WCEOC/NYSEOC for assistance to code enforcement officials with rapid post-disaster building damage evaluations
- Westchester Red Cross (if applicable)
 - ARC may be able to provide individual/family-level detail without confidential information

Coordinate with County and NYSDHSES Emergency Management to determine if thresholds are reasonably anticipated to be met and/or exceeded (pending validation by NYS DHSES and FEMA PDA)

- Continue to provide damage reports to County and NYS DHSES until determination of threshold status is known

Be prepared for damage assessment site visits or virtual evaluations:

- Determine from the County/NYS DHSES if assessments require site visit or virtual evaluation
- Identify Point of Contact (knowledgeable of locale/damage site) for each damage site to be visited/evaluated
- Notify identified contacts of scheduled site visit/virtual evaluation, and expectations
- Prepare directions (include GPS coordinates or maps) for specific locations of damages or locations to meet with contacts to review costs incurred, etc.
- Prioritize locations to meet "worst" damage coverage and travel efficiency
- Prepare Assessment forms as may be required by County/NYS DHSES/FEMA

The **Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)** is a joint assessment used to determine the magnitudes and impact of a major event or disaster's damage. A FEMA/State team will typically conduct field visits to view damages, assess the scope of damage and validate estimated repair costs. The State utilizes the results of the PDA to determine if the event is of such a scale as to be eligible for a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Prior to requesting a PDA from NYS DHSES, local municipalities and County departments perform an Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) and communicate findings to County Emergency Management for coordination with NYS and FEMA. The information collected and compiled from the IDA outreach provides the essential information required to consider pursuit of a PDA request.

PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT (PDA) - NYS DHSES/ FEMA

This checklist details the steps for the Preliminary Damage Assessment process and should be used as a guideline for any event/disaster which may require a formal damage assessment.

If PDA request approved by NYS, County Emergency management will facilitate scheduling a date for PDA site visit (or virtual evaluation meeting) through NYS DHSES.

Prepare PDA Briefing and Package based on information collected from the IDA process, including the following:

- Brief/Executive Summary of damages and preliminary/estimated costs
- Spreadsheet of cumulative costs and damages
- Pictures of highlights: printed pictures or accessible via electronic media
- Any relevant supporting documentation (evaluate each source for accuracy and relevance)
- Assemble PDA Packages (Files) At minimum: 1 copy for County, 1 copy for NYS DHSES (1 copy for FEMA if requested by NYS DHSES)

Identify Point of Contact for each agency or damage site to be visited/evaluated

- Include jurisdiction, name, title, agency, cell phone and alternate phone for each site
- Locations for site visits: specific locations of damages or office locations to meet with contacts to review costs incurred, etc.

Develop PDA Plan:

- Determine with County and NYS DHSES/FEMA if assessments require site visit or virtual evaluation
- Prepare travel routes/maps for damage locations including GPS coordinates and/or street addresses, as applicable
- Prioritize locations to meet both comprehensive jurisdictional coverage and "worst" damages
- Identify participating staff based on number of PDA teams
- Prepare Assessment forms as may be required by NYS DHSES/FEMA (IA, PA, SBA)

Inform all identified contacts of local jurisdictions and county departments of scheduled PDA site visit/Virtual evaluation details

If site visits are required:

- Request/schedule guides and vehicles to escort PDA team(s)
 - Obtain number of teams from County/NYS DHSES, number of members per team and if transportation is required
 - Schedule individual(s) knowledgeable of damage sites with vehicle(s) per number of PDA teams to escort
- Disseminate location and detail of meeting place for PDA team briefing to local, State, FEMA and County guides

DAY(S) OF PDA:

- Confirm routes/maps and PDA Plan for each of the teams and County guides
- Ensure identified local points of contact are prepared to show the PDA team damage locations
- Establish communication method and assign monitor to track team progress and provide advanced notice to damage site location POCs of arrival times
- Conduct initial briefing for County guides and PDA Team members
 - Provide PDA Briefing materials/packages to NYS DHSES and FEMA
 - Provide PDA plans and maps for each team
- Upon conclusion of PDA, conduct exit briefing of County guides and compile any updated information collected

Remember... be flexible and adaptable. Process (timing, number of teams) will vary for each disaster

- The pace of the assessment is not determined or controlled by the County, FEMA or NYS DHSES

Prepare internal brief for municipal leadership as well as EOC, if activated

- Status of PDA and any indications that County/State thresholds were met and/or exceeded
- Provide summary of next steps if applicable

PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION

If the Preliminary Damage Assessment does not substantiate damages and expenses that meet the county per capita threshold, the county may be provided an additional 30-days to submit supporting damage documentation to meet the threshold. However, if the established per capita threshold for both the county and state are found to be met, FEMA may proceed with a recommendation of the Governor's request for a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Upon approval of the declaration NYS DHSES will conduct an applicant briefing for all affected counties, providing specific details for potential applicants (Municipalities and Eligible private non-profits) to formally submit their intent to participate in the program(s). Each applicant will then be assigned a FEMA Disaster Program Manager and NYS DHSES Disaster Assistance Representative(s) who will assist the applicant with meeting program requirements.

TYPES OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Public Assistance (PA) is a disaster relief program through which the federal government supplements the efforts of state and local governments and eligible private non-profit and tribal organizations to return their property and service capability to pre-disaster condition. These efforts primarily address the repair, replacement, restoration, and mitigation of disaster damaged publicly owned facilities, and the facilities of certain eligible private non-profit and tribal organizations.

For **PA declarations**, assigned disaster assistance representatives assist with developing claim information (aka projects) that describe, in detail, all damages, repairs, and expenses. Once project descriptions are completed and agreed upon by the applicant, state, and FEMA representatives, federal funds can be approved to be disbursed by the state to the applicant in accordance with state and federal regulations.

FEMA PA grant funding can be made available for eligible work classified into the following categories:

Emergency Work:

Category A: Debris Removal

Category B: Emergency Protective Measures

Permanent Work:

Category C: Roads and Bridges

Category D: Water Control Facilities

Category E: Public Buildings and Contents

Category F: Public Utilities

Category G: Parks, Recreational, and Other Facilities

Federal grant funding allocated through the PA program will typically not be less than 75 percent of the eligible cost for emergency measures and permanent restoration. NY State determines how the non-federal share of 25 percent will be managed and may be passed on to the applicant or offset by state subsidy.

Types of eligible costs:

1. Force account labor

This is the FEMA term for your own work force, in other words your employee's time spent working directly on the incident. This would include regular volunteer activities implemented by the applicant, for example the police auxiliary, volunteer fire department or ambulance corps (if applicable.)

2. Force account equipment

This is the FEMA term for use of your own equipment. This includes any vehicles, machinery, or apparatus operated to perform incident related work. Expenses are calculated based on FEMA equipment rates per hour. Current FEMA equipment rates may be found at: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/schedule-equipment-rates>

Documentation for this category should include:

- Description of the type of equipment (include as much detail as is known: Brand, model, horse power, capacity etc.)
- Municipal vehicle/equipment number
- Number of hours used, per day
- Locations used
- Description about how the equipment was used
- Name of operator

3. Contracts / Rental equipment

This is contracted work or rented equipment. Also this could include donation of work or equipment use.

Documentation for this category should include:

- Procurement policy
- Contract or purchase order and invoice with rate per hour and number of hours used
- Description of the work done and dates worked
- Documentation of contractor record keeping

4. Supplies and Materials

These are consumable goods purchased or used from existing inventory for which replacement costs are needed. This can also include donations of materials.

Documentation for this category should include:

- Vendor
- Description of the materials
- Quantity
- Unit Cost
- Date used
- Contract or PO number
- Check number (if known)
- From existing stock vs. purchased during the emergency

Details regarding federal disaster recovery assistance for governments and eligible private non-profits after a disaster is made available by FEMA at: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public>.

Specific instructions about the FEMA PA program are available to applicants in the [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#).

Individual Assistance (IA) provides assistance to support the recovery of disaster survivors who have uninsured or underinsured necessary expenses and serious needs. This may include assistance for temporary housing and housing repairs, critical disaster related expenses, and the replacement of essential personal property. Federal IA may also provide funding to the state to provide immediate and short-term assistance essential to save lives, protect public property, health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe. Types of assistance include Mass Care and Emergency Assistance, Individual and Households Program, Disaster Case Management, Crisis Counseling and Training, Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Unemployment, and Voluntary Agency Coordination. Specific and current details about the programs may be obtained at: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/individual>.

Following large-scale disasters, it may be necessary for additional humanitarian assistance to augment federal and state IA programs and continue to provide services to those with unmet needs for as long as necessary. This is referred to as Long-Term Recovery, and in Westchester is facilitated by a consortium of private non-profit and local government entities known as the Westchester County Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD).

Small Business Association (SBA) Assistance is made available through the provision of low-interest disaster loans to businesses of all sizes, eligible private non-profit organizations, homeowners, and renters. Loans can be used to repair or replace items damaged or destroyed in a declared disaster, such as real estate, personal property, machinery and equipment, and inventory and business assets.

POTENTIAL APPLICANT DISASTER RECOVERY DAMAGE CLAIM PROCESS

1. **All applicants will be provided with a Damage Inventory (list/spreadsheet) from NYS DHSES and FEMA to update and confirm damage descriptions and estimates, and submit a final copy by the FEMA established deadline.**
 - a. **Important:** FEMA requires PA Program reimbursement recipients to obtain/maintain insurance for any damaged buildings, equipment, contents, and vehicles that exceed \$5,000.00 in repair/replacement costs.
 - b. **Note:** *Since the intent of the FEMA Public Assistance Program is to provide relief to applicants for uninsured or underinsured losses, all applicants must work to ascertain and validate availability of insurance coverage. FEMA requires from each applicant an attestation regarding the status of insurance.*
2. NYS DHSES and FEMA will review the information supplied and determine how best to categorize a list of applicant "Projects". Once projects are categorized, FEMA will create a list of Projects in the Grants Portal System (*internet platform for populating information, uploading supporting documentation and, most importantly, for reviewing and accepting project content prior to submission to NYSDHSES and FEMA*).
3. **Information and back-up documentation needed to describe in detail and substantiate all damages and expenses will be requested from each applicant.** Information will be submitted into Grants Portal collaboratively by the designated representatives of the county department, municipality, or non-governmental organization with support from NYSDHSES, and FEMA as appropriate until all parties agree the information is complete. These preliminary Projects are quasi-contracts between FEMA, NY State and the applicant used to describe all damages, work performed, equipment and supplies utilized to make repairs back to the pre-disaster condition, and serve as the basis for federal reimbursement.
 - **Note:** *Each applicant with damages and/or emergency protective measure expenses must designate at least one representative to coordinate disaster recovery activities with NYSDHSES and FEMA. The representatives will be provided access to FEMA's Grant Portal. This allows the applicant direct access to Project information located in the Portal System to review, adjust, and approve as may be necessary.*
 - *All County department projects will be coordinated by the Department of Emergency Services - Division of Emergency Management in collaboration with the County Disaster Recovery Task Force.*
4. Completed Projects are submitted to the FEMA Consolidated Resource Center for review (insurance, grants, historic preservation, environmental, etc.) and are processed to final approval, funding obligation and payment (once work is completed). **If any information is deemed missing, FEMA will submit an official Request for Information to the applicant for response within a specific time allotment.**
5. Upon verification of by the applicant that all associated work has been completed and invoices paid, NYSDHSES and FEMA will conduct a closeout proceeding to reconcile all financials and administer final payment. **Final reimbursement is based on actual repair/replacement cost as substantiated by the requisite back-up documentation.**