



FEMA

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# Backgrounder

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

**DOWNERS GROVE, Ill** — The **Public Assistance (PA) grant program** provides state, tribal and local governments and certain types of private nonprofit organizations with grants that help communities quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies.

Among other things, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) PA grants help to remove debris, fix bridges, repair water systems and power lines, pay for emergency services, rebuild schools and universities and much more. The program is intended to ease the burden on local and state governments, and their taxpayers, by providing funding that pays 75 percent of eligible costs incurred in returning a facility to its pre-disaster condition.

### Types of entities that may be eligible for Public Assistance include:

- State government agencies
- Local governments, and special districts
- Certain private nonprofit organizations or institutions that own or operate facilities that are open to the public and that provide certain services otherwise performed by a government agency.
- Federally recognized Indian tribal governments.

A federal disaster declaration may include counties that are eligible for Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, or both. **Illinois counties currently designated for Public Assistance include:** Adams, Carroll, Jo Daviess, Moultrie, Ogle, Pike, Schuyler, and Stephenson. In addition, the counties of Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle and Stephenson have also been designated for Individual Assistance.

## ELIGIBILITY

Whether FEMA and the state approve a project depends on four primary factors:

- Is the applicant eligible? PA grants are for state agencies, local governments, Indian tribes and certain private, nonprofit organizations that perform services of a public nature (e.g., public utilities, emergency medical facilities, museums).
- Is the facility eligible? The facility must be the responsibility of an eligible applicant, in the disaster area, active at the time of the disaster and not the under authority of another federal agency.
- Is the work eligible? The work completed must be required as a result of the disaster, be the legal responsibility of the applicant and be within the disaster area (except for sheltering/evacuation).
- Is the cost eligible? Generally, eligible costs are costs that can be directly tied to the performance of eligible work. Costs must be reasonable to complete the work and compliant with procurement regulations, and will be reduced by insurance proceeds, salvage value or other duplicating funding sources.

## CATEGORIES OF WORK

### Emergency Work

- Debris Removal
- Emergency Protective Measures

### Permanent Work

- Roads and Bridges
- Water Control Facilities
- Buildings and Equipment
- Utilities
- Parks and Recreation/Other

### Why does the reimbursement process take time?

Reimbursement is a multiple-step process that depends on efficiencies in collection of documentation, adherence to deadlines, and completion of paperwork and other time-sensitive factors that may influence the final delivery of reimbursement grants. There may be a learning curve as well for officials who have never before been involved in a federal disaster. The following process illustrates the basic steps:

- The State officials hold an Applicant Briefing to explain the reimbursement process.
- The applicant completes a one-page Request for Public Assistance, initiating a “Kickoff Meeting” with FEMA project coordinators and state PA representatives.
- Applicants work with PA representatives to formulate repair projects. Each proposed repair project is entered on a “Project Worksheet” (PW), which defines the job to be done and the projected cost.
- Completed applications for federal funds are submitted to the state and FEMA along with all required supporting documentation (labor, equipment, materials, contracts and/or estimates).
- FEMA is responsible for approving projects and making the federal share of the approved amount (grant) available to the state through a process known as “obligation.”
- Obligated money goes to the state and becomes the responsibility of the state to administer. There may be specific state requirements before the final disbursement of approval funds.

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