

# Highlights from the 73rd Annual Local Government Conference by the Alaska Municipal League

## 1. Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management: Hazard Mitigation

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs provide funding for eligible mitigation activities that reduce disaster losses and protect life and property from future disaster damages.

Why develop a Mitigation Plan?

- Reduce risk of future disaster losses
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
- Eligibility for FEMA mitigation funding (Pre-Disaster)
- Eligibility for FEMA recovery funding (Post-Disaster)
- Mitigation planning helps communities act now, before a disaster, and to reduce the impact and risk of future disaster losses

**Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC)** Annual Federal funding opportunity • Community pays 25% cost share / FEMA 75% • Competes with other eligible projects nationwide

*Note that BRIC may not be a good fit in most cases for smaller Alaskan communities. Project applicants compete nationwide. HMGP grants may be more realistic as projects only compete at the state level.*

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)** - Portion of Federal funding when a disaster occurs • NOFO is based on federally declared disaster anywhere in State • State pays 25% cost share / FEMA 75% • Competes with other eligible projects state-wide

**FEMA Mitigation Funding: HMGP** HMGP is authorized through a major disaster declaration. A governor, tribal chief executive, or equivalent, may request that HMGP assistance. Federally recognized tribes, through their tribal chief executive, may also submit a request for a disaster.

**Community/Tribe/Borough must have an adopted, FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)**

- In order to be eligible, projects must be registered in HMP and be "Shovel-Ready"
- Grant application requires extensive documentation, including a Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)

### **HMGP Eligible Projects**

- Property Acquisition and Structure Demolition
- Property Acquisition and Structure Relocation
- Structure Elevation
- Mitigation Reconstruction
- Flood Risk Reduction
- Stabilization
- Localized Flood Risk Reduction Projects
- Tsunami Vertical Evacuation
- Safe Room
- Wildfire Mitigation
- Infrastructure Retrofit
- Structural Retrofitting of Existing Buildings
- Wind Retrofit for One and Two Family Residences
- Emergency Generators
- Warning Systems
- Miscellaneous

### **HMGP Ineligible Projects**

- Projects that do not reduce the risk to people, structures, or infrastructure, i.e. a project must increase the level of protection
- Projects for which actual physical work has occurred prior to award
- Projects constructing new buildings or facilities
- Projects that address operation, deferred or future maintenance, repairs, or replacement
- Studies not directly related to design and implementation of a proposed project
- Preparedness measures and response equipment
- Projects that involve land that is contaminated with hazardous waste.

## **2. Local Government Action on Housing**

### **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

#### **Creating ADU-Friendly Regulations: Do's**

- Allowing ADU development "By-right"/ministerial approval rather than through a discretionary approval process.
- Blanket use permissions for ADUs in all areas zoned for single-family housing.
- Clear, objective standards intended to mitigate environmental hazards and impact on city resources.
- Regulations should reflect community values without hindering development.

- Set a realistic timeline for producing decisions. ☑No additional off-street parking requirements.
- Reasonable size/height/setback requirements that ensure resulting unit can meet the needs of long term rentals and aging individuals.

#### **Snapshot of Alaska Communities with Existing ADU ordinances:**

- City and Borough of Juneau Grants up to \$13,500 provided to 16 homeowners annually
- Petersburg Borough No off-street parking required
- City and Borough of Sitka No off-street parking required can only be used as long-term rentals (90+ days)
- City of Palmer Permit applications reviewed within 30 days

#### **Financing ADUs**

- Designated Municipal Funding Schemes
- Grant-Based Subsidies
- Low Interest Loans/Loan Pools
- Property tax abatement
- Free design help or pre-approved, permit ready plans
- Reduce/waive permitting and inspection fees
- Economies of scale.
- RurAL CAP's Mutual Self-Help Housing Program
- Pre-fabricated units

## **3. Volunteer Fire Departments**

### **Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)**

#### **Authority**

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

#### **Summary**

The SAFER Grant Program provides funding directly to fire departments and national, state, local, or tribal organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters to assist them in increasing the number of firefighters to help fire departments meet industry minimum standards and attain 24-hour staffing to protect communities from fire and fire related hazards, and to fulfill traditional missions of fire departments.

The SAFER Grant Program is comprised of two categories:

- Hiring of Firefighters - Including subcategories for rehiring, retention, attrition, and new hires
  - First priority: Rehiring laid off firefighters
  - Second priority: Retention of firefighters who face imminent layoff or filling positions vacated through attrition but not filled due to economic circumstances
  - Third priority: Hiring new firefighters
- Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters
  - First priority: Assist departments experiencing a high rate of turnover and with staffing levels significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards/

The goal of the SAFER Grant Program is to assist local fire departments with staffing and deployment capabilities in order to respond to emergencies, and assure that communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. SAFER intends to improve or restore local fire departments staffing and deployment capabilities so they may more effectively and safely respond to emergencies. With enhanced or restored staffing levels, grantees should see a reduction in response times and an increase in the number of trained personnel assembled at the incident scene.