

FEMA 2023 NATIONAL TRIBAL STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT



This year as we honor Native American Heritage Month, FEMA worked with Tribal Nations across Indian Country to implement FEMA’s first [National Tribal Strategy](#). This roadmap redefines how the Agency will meet its treaty and trust responsibilities through building, enhancing, and sustaining our relationships with Tribal Nations. This 2023 progress report is a way for us to remain accountable to Tribal Nations on how we are implementing the strategy they helped us create.

To meet our commitments to you, FEMA connected with tribal leaders and tribal emergency management staff across the country to better understand the challenges and needs of Tribal Nations as we work to implement the three main goals of the National Tribal Strategy.

Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

This year, FEMA evaluated and identified strategies to increase in-person engagement with Tribal leaders in Indian Country and at FEMA headquarters in a manner that acknowledges tribal sovereignty and ensures accessibility to FEMA resources. The FEMA Administrator, National Tribal Affairs Advocate, and other senior leadership visited more than 70 Tribal Nations and engaged tribal leaders in person at their tribal headquarters and during several national and regional tribal events, including United South & Eastern Tribes Impact Week (February), National Congress of American Indian Indians Executive Winter Session (February), Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes Impact Week (March), Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Midyear Convention (May), Northern Minnesota Tribal-County Relations Workshop (June), Wisconsin Tribal Emergency Managers Association (June), Inter-Tribal Emergency Management Coalition Annual Summit (August), Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention (October), and the



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National Congress of American Indians Annual Convention (November). Moreover, the FEMA Administrator met virtually with leadership of the national and regional tribal associations on a quarterly basis to provide updates on tribal emergency management priorities, policies, initiatives, and programmatic changes and to gather their input on ongoing efforts.

Closer to home, FEMA convened its first annual meeting of the Administrator, National Tribal Affairs Advocate, Regional Tribal Liaisons, and tribal FEMA Integration Team (FIT) staff at FEMA headquarters in Washington, D.C., in April to discuss program work underway and develop recommendations on how FEMA can better serve Tribal Nations across Indian Country.

Goal 2: Lead the Whole of Community in Climate Resilience

The National Tribal Strategy is committed to increasing tribal access to FEMA programs and services by streamlining and revising our existing policies and creating new programs to better meet the needs of the Tribal Nations we serve. Several major initiatives were undertaken this year, including updating the (2017) [Tribal Disaster Declarations Guidance](#). This Guidance is the pathway for a Tribal Nation to request a major or emergency disaster declaration directly from the President and receive federal response and recovery funding. Since January 2023, FEMA has held nine government-to-government tribal consultations and listening sessions across the country and a weeklong Tribal Focus Group comprised of fifteen tribal emergency managers to update this important policy for Tribal Nations. The revised Tribal Declarations Guidance will be released in 2024. On November 15, FEMA will release a new tribal disaster declarations video series and new Tribal Nation disaster declaration process checklist on the [FEMA Tribal Affairs webpage](#) under the Declaration Resources section.

FEMA is also working to update and improve its (2017) [Tribal Mitigation Planning Guide](#). Mitigation planning helps Tribal Nations understand risks from natural hazards and develop long-term strategies to reduce the impacts of hazards on people, property, and the environment. Tribal mitigation plans are also required to access certain funding streams at FEMA and across the federal government. Since June 2023, FEMA has held four tribal consultations and listening sessions on the Tribal Mitigation Planning Guide update and released an [Introduction to Tribal Mitigation Planning Training video](#) on the FEMA YouTube page.

FEMA continues to work on proposed legislative changes to the [Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program](#), and we would like to extend our appreciation to all of the Tribal leaders and representatives of Tribal Nations who provided invaluable feedback during the November 2022 tribal consultation and subsequent comment period that ended in January of this year. We wanted to share that we took several of the recommendations proposed by Tribal Nations during that consultation and the proposals to increase flexibilities and reduce barriers has reached Congress for consideration and we will follow-up with you once we have another update.

In August 2022, FEMA was excited to announce the launch of our new [Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program](#) (TCGP) with the Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Agency (CISA). Under the TCGP, \$18 million was made available for Tribal Nations in FY2023 to build Indian Country Cybersecurity Resilience. FEMA is happy to share that Tribal Nations had a direct impact on the shaping of the TCGP through our extensive consultation that eventually led to there being no nonfederal cost share required and a streamlined application process. On November 1, we held a virtual tribal consultation on the TCGP asking for Tribal leaders and their representatives to provide us with feedback

on how best to implement and improve this program for next year. We welcome any comments and suggestions you may have, and the consultation record will close on December 15, 2023.

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

FEMA is dedicated to help build tribal capacities and capabilities to improve readiness and resilience in the face of climate change and more frequent natural disasters. This is why FEMA is committed to deliver comprehensive emergency management training opportunities to Tribal Nations and FEMA's annual [Tribal Nations Training Week](#) at the Center for Domestic Preparedness provides attendees with necessary emergency certifications, offers training from fellow tribal instructors, and helps build emergency management relationships across Indian Country and beyond.

This training is fully funded up front for tribal leaders, tribal emergency responders, and any designated tribal staff and includes roundtrip airfare, meals, and lodging. FEMA's 9th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week will take place March 9 – 16, 2024, and registration is currently open and we encourage you to apply. If you would like to learn more or register for Tribal Training Week, please email fema-tribal@fema.dhs.gov.

FEMA is also home to the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), which is the national-level coordination center for FEMA disaster response operations. The NRCC provides overall incident support and coordinates nation-level response efforts in support of Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC). During activations in 2023 (Hurricane Hilary, Hurricane Idalia, Hurricane Lee), FEMA continued to enhance federal incident support capability to impacted Tribal Nations. Working through its National Tribal Advisor desk in the NRCC, we worked with our federal interagency and regional partners to ensure there were no unmet Tribal Nation needs or challenges during these successive disasters.

Finally, we wanted to provide an update on FEMA's Tribal Affairs Work Group (Work Group). The Work Group was stood-up in September 2022 to help advance the goals and objectives of the FEMA's National Tribal Strategy and to develop recommendations to transform business and program operations across all Tribal specific mission areas.

The Work Group, which is composed of FEMA staff across the Agency, has met regularly throughout 2023 and its highest priority actions have been to develop several key tools to enhance FEMA's ability to meet its treaty and trust responsibilities to Tribal Nations. We are pleased to announce that several of these deliverables are in their final stages of development and will then be reviewed by Senior FEMA leadership. These products include a: (1) "Tribal Staffing and Engagement Analysis" white paper that reviews current Tribal Affairs staffing levels across the agency and provides recommendations for enhanced support; (2) "Meeting Tribal Obligations: Recommended Performance Metrics and Evaluation Tools" white paper that offers an analysis of current FEMA Tribal Affairs program staff performance at the headquarters, regional, and field operations levels and provides metrics used to evaluate and inform the program's work with Tribal Nations; and (3) "Developing an Engagement and Assessment Playbook" white paper which provides recommendations and strategies for FEMA to implement to better engage with and serve Tribal Nations during times of crisis.