

LEADERSHIP

Unified Federal Review Briefing Package

UNIFIED FEDERAL REVIEW PROCESS OVERVIEW AND GOALS

The Unified Federal Review (UFR) Process is an improved approach for the federal environmental and historic preservation (EHP) reviews associated with disaster recovery projects that provides federal agencies with opportunities to expedite EHP reviews through enhanced coordination for Presidentially-declared disasters. The UFR Process promotes the use of best practices and provides tools designed to address gaps in EHP review processes, increase consistency, and leverage existing resources to create process efficiencies. Through this enhanced coordination, the UFR Process can improve the Federal Government's assistance to state, local, and tribal governments; communities; and families and individual citizens as they recover from future disasters.

EHP requirements include laws, regulations, and Executive Orders that protect water, air, coastal, wildlife, land, agricultural, historic, and cultural resources, and minimize disproportionate adverse effects on low-income and minority populations, as well as other disaster vulnerable populations, thereby protecting human health. EHP reviews ensure that natural and cultural resources are considered in the federal decision-making process regarding funding or permitting actions.

THE UFR PROCESS DOES:

- Expedite and unify EHP review processes, reducing duplication of effort for applicants and facilitating joint reviews by agencies
- Enhance working relationships by creating opportunities for greater coordination across agencies
- Establish a common issue resolution procedure
- Leverage existing agreements and use new Tools and Mechanisms

THE UFR PROCESS DOES NOT:

- Establish a single review process for agencies funding a single project
- Circumvent or supersede any existing federal, tribal, state, or local EHP requirements
- Eliminate requirements for consultations among agencies or between agencies and applicants
- Change existing interagency agreements



LEADERSHIP

Unified Federal Review Briefing Package

UFR PROCESS ESTABLISHMENT

The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 (SRIA) amended the Stafford Act, directing the President, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Council on Environmental Quality, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, to “establish an expedited and unified interagency review process to ensure compliance with environmental and historic requirements under federal law relating to disaster recovery projects, in order to expedite the recovery process, consistent with applicable law.” An interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed by eleven departments and agencies (*seals depicted below*) on July 29, 2014, which committed them to support the UFR Process.



“Consistent with existing authorities, this MOU enhances the working relationships of the Parties by reflecting newly focused executive commitments to utilize existing and new tools to expedite and unify the process for completing environmental and historic preservation reviews required for Disaster Recovery Projects while maintaining the technical rigor and public participation associated with those reviews.”

UFR MOU COMMITMENTS

The UFR process was created through a collaborative effort resulting in an MOU defining agency roles and responsibilities. As a signatory agency, your leadership has strengthened interagency coordination through commitments to:

- Provide staffing and resources to support the UFR Process
- Distribute and use the UFR Tools and Mechanisms
- Document lessons learned
- Provide training to staff
- Use the established issue elevation process to quickly resolve any issues or disputes that arise during the EHP review of a disaster recovery project, as appropriate



Oglala Sioux Tribal Leadership and FEMA dignitaries commemorate Federal Tribal Agreement signing (photo credit FEMA/Christopher Mardorf)

LEADERSHIP

Unified Federal Review Briefing Package

UFR PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION AND BENEFITS

The Tools and Mechanisms of the UFR Process are a set of products and procedures that enhance interagency coordination on EHP reviews. The Tools and Mechanisms clarify agency roles and responsibilities; educate EHP practitioners and disaster recovery applicants; expedite decision making; and increase collaboration, communication, data sharing, and transparency among agencies. UFR Process improvements result in improved outcomes for communities and natural, cultural, and historic resources when federal funds and permits are used for disaster recovery projects. The UFR Process integrates with the National Disaster Recovery Framework, complementing its goals and aligning with its structure, to restore, redevelop, and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural, and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient nation.

THE UFR PROCESS ADDS VALUE BY

- Providing federal decision makers with tools that allow for more timely and integrated processes, resulting in better outcomes for communities and the environment when federal funds and permits are used for disaster recovery projects
- Creating opportunities for better coordination across agencies to expedite EHP requirements
- Reducing duplication of information provided by applicants working with multiple agencies
- Leveraging existing and developing new interagency agreements
- Aligning review processes and preparing joint reviews with other agencies to satisfy one or more EHP requirements

UFR PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

An example of a process efficiency made available as part of the UFR is the FEMA Prototype Programmatic Agreement (PPA) for **Section 106** of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The PPA allows FEMA to fulfill its Section 106 compliance responsibilities in states where it is executed; however, it also allows other federal agencies to utilize the PPA to satisfy their Section 106 responsibilities for response and recovery activities when appropriate. In allowing the other agencies to utilize the PPA for their compliance responsibilities, agencies are able to leverage existing reviews, allowing communities to rebuild more quickly.

TOOLS AND MECHANISMS OF THE UNIFIED FEDERAL REVIEW PROCESS

<i>UFR Webpage</i>	MOU Establishing the UFR Process
EHP Agency Point of Contact List	UFR Guidance for EHP Practitioners
Information Technology Resources List	FEMA PPA for Section 106 of the NHPA
EHP Disaster Recovery Skills Checklist	Template Disaster-Specific MOU
UFR Applicant Guide	Data Sharing Agreement Content
UFR Advisor and Leadership Training	Data Standards List
Template Environmental Checklist for FEMA and Housing and Urban Development	

LEADERSHIP

Unified Federal Review Briefing Package

LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Continued interagency involvement in the UFR Process is crucial to fulfilling our commitments to expedite the EHP review process, reduce duplication of work by applicants and federal agencies, and enhance communication across and within agencies. Senior leadership play a critical role by engaging in and supporting the implementation of the UFR Process and communicating the message to regional and field offices that these efforts are a priority within each agency. By communicating the benefits of the UFR Process, it will empower your agency staff to coordinate and communicate with other agencies, paving the way for better outcomes for disaster-affected communities and the environment.

SUPPORTING THE UFR PROCESS AT HEADQUARTERS

- Promote best practices through existing interagency groups such as the UFR Working Group, the Recovery Support Function Leadership Group, and the Federal Permitting Improvement Council.
- Empower staff to prioritize interagency coordination.
- Inform agency staff of the UFR Process through training programs.
- Prioritize the development of programmatic approaches, interagency agreements, or other best practices that can expedite EHP reviews.
- Share best practices and success stories with the UFR Team and National UFR Coordinator.
- Institutionalize the objectives of the UFR Process through standardized interagency coordination.
- Recognize the importance of establishing interagency relationships with peers.

The UFR Process is most successful when **early engagement and coordination** occurs among federal agencies, tribal, state, and local partners.

THE UFR ADVISOR AND REGIONAL UFR COORDINATOR

The UFR Advisor and Regional UFR Coordinator are the field positions with the primary function of supporting and implementing the UFR Process during disaster recovery and steady state operations, respectively. The UFR Advisor is typically, but not always, a FEMA staff member; the Regional UFR Coordinator is a FEMA position. Senior leadership should encourage their agency's regional and field personnel to:

- Engage with the UFR Advisor and Regional UFR Coordinator as appropriate
- Build interagency relationships and pre-position resources and analyses in advance of EHP compliance
- Leverage existing analyses, permits, agreements, and tools to expedite reviews

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the UFR Team:

federal-unified-review@fema.dhs.gov

Visit the UFR Webpage:

www.fema.gov/unified-federal-environmental-and-historic-preservation-review-presidentially-declared-disasters

Browse the UFR Library:

www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/98911