Managing a Flood of Mitigation Grant Applications in Colorado

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Key Objectives

- Discuss the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program in the wake of a major federal disaster declaration including
  - Background on 2013 flood and Colorado’s history with mitigation grant programs
  - Standing up a multi-million dollar grant program and mentoring the development of nearly 100 sub-applications
  - Keys for successful sub-applications and minimizing Requests for Information
  - Lessons learned
September 2013 Flood Disaster

Overview

- Approximately 15 inches of rain over 7 days
- 8 Deaths
- 18,000 people displaced
- $3 billion in damages
September 2013 Flood Disaster

- Resulted in state’s largest response and recovery expenditures in history
  - $65 million available for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (15% of FEMA Individual Assistance and Public Assistance Claims)
  - State providing 12.5% of 25% match requirement
Until recently, few and far between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard Type</th>
<th>Disaster #</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe storms, flooding, landslides, mudslides</td>
<td>DR-4145</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildfires</td>
<td>DR-4134</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Wildfires</td>
<td>DR-4067</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe storms and tornadoes</td>
<td>DR-1762</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>Wildfires</td>
<td>DR-1421</td>
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<td>Severe storms</td>
<td>DR-1374</td>
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<td>Severe storms, flooding</td>
<td>DR-1276</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flooding</td>
<td>DR-1186</td>
<td>1997</td>
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Colorado Mitigation Grants and Typical Projects prior to 2013

► Typical Mitigation Grant Programs
  ► Pre Disaster Mitigation
  ► Flood Mitigation Assistance
  ► State Hazard Mitigation Program

► Typical Mitigation Projects
  ► Hazard Mitigation Plans
  ► Stormwater improvements
  ► Erosion Control/Stream stabilization
  ► Critical facility protection
  ► Wildfire mitigation
  ► Occasional acquisitions
    ► landslide–prone homes in Colorado Springs acquired in 1999 with HMGP and CDBG UnMet Needs funding
    ► North La Junta floodprone properties (53) in 1999
Welcome to ‘MARS’

► Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management – Mitigation and Recovery Section
  ► Responsible for managing HMGP and other mitigation programs
  ► Post-disaster hiring brought up to 8 staff, 4 dedicated to HMGP
  ► Double duty helping other sections with Public Assistance program
The Interest in Mitigation

- Applicant briefing held in December 2013
- 183 Notices of Intent received from potential sub-applicants
  - Flood reduction/stormwater projects
  - Acquisitions
  - Elevations
  - Generators
  - Wildfire
  - 5% initiative
    - Flood warning, outreach and other programs not requiring a BCA
  - Planning
- Prioritized by Flood Mitigation Technical Assistance Partnership
The Need for Additional Assistance

- Volume of potential applications
- Limited capacity of state staff and many sub-applicants
- Limited familiarity of the HMGP
  - Time needed by locals and DHSEM to learn program and its implementation
- Limited time to apply
- Complexity and technical nature of HMGP subapplications
  - One on one assistance needed with sub-applicants
  - Acquisition applications particularly complex
- Options for additional assistance included:
  - FEMA
  - FEMA Advance Assistance Funding (25% of HMGP, $10M limit)
  - Other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
  - Consultants
Consultant Assistance

- RFP released for HMGP Technical Assistance for State and Local Government in March 2014 with 2 week turnaround
- AMEC (now Amec Foster Wheeler) Team selected
AMEC Team Scope of Work for HMGP sub-application development

► Development of thorough scopes of work
  ► through coaching, mentoring, prodding
► Assistance with cost estimating, budget development, and analysis of alternatives
► NEPA compliance coordination and outreach to agencies
► Benefit Cost Analysis coordination
► Project management, subapplication tracking, reporting and coordination
► Assist with NEMIS entry
► Site visits and engineering expertise
► Optional Assistance: Specialized BCA expertise, trainings
Techniques and Tools to Manage the Process

► Regular team and DHSEM - MARS coordination calls
► SharePoint Site established for Team, DHSEM, and FEMA use
► Tracking spreadsheets updated on a regular basis
  ► Application status
  ► NEPA coordination
  ► RFI status
► Application attachment checklist tool
► FEMA HMA Application checklist
► NEPA letter templates and review checklist
► QC Review tools and Application Process Flow Chart
Challenges with Applications

► Short timeline challenges
  ► Educating local governments and obtaining timely response from staff overwhelmed with ongoing recovery
  ► Only allowed for screening level QC
► Acquisition application size and complexity
  ► Boulder County acquisition application 2,836 pages, 700 MB
► NEMIS access/entry
► Solutions:
  ► Scope of work and benefit cost analysis prioritized for August 29 deadline
  ► Application Tier Level System developed
    ► Tier 1 – complete
    ► Tier 2 – partially complete, missing documentation
    ► Tier 3 – insufficient information
    ► Tier 4 – not submitted in time for QC
    ► Tier 5 – missed deadline
► Two FEMA Extensions requested
  ► #1 December 31, 2014
  ► #2 March 31, 2015
### Project Timeline and Milestones

**Contract signed**

- 6/26 HMGP Deadline 1
- 8/29 FEMA Extension 1
- 12/28 FEMA Extension 2
- 3/31 2015

#### Application Development
- Assign community liaisons and project leads
- Aggressive outreach
- Mentoring, coaching
- Scopes, budgets, BCAs, attachments
- NEPA coordination
- BCA coordination

#### State and FEMA RFI
- Upload applications and BCAs to Sharepoint
- Request missing details/revise applications
- Planning and generator app formal submittal to FEMA
- NEMIS entry each month

#### FEMA RFI and Final Application submittal
- Wildfire and Flood applications submitted to FEMA
- Continued assistance with RFIs and refinement of applications
- Progress tracking and reporting

- 96 Applications in 65 days!
- All applications in NEMIS
- Final applications and ongoing RFI

**Take a deep breath!**

- Happy Holidays!
- Spring Break!
NEPA Coordination and Compliance

► Worked with Region VIII to identify agency contacts based on ‘green sheet’
► Developed letter templates
► Best done early in the process
► Provide adequate detail on scope and proposed location and full disclosure
► Reference existing background documents
  ▶ Jamestown Programmatic Environmental Assessment
  ▶ Preble’s Meadow Jumping Mouse assessment
► Cost for EA should be included in application
► State NEPA questionnaire, while lengthy, helped sub applicant identify potential environmental concerns
Challenges with Acquisitions and Elevation Project Applications in Colorado

- Elevations not practical in many CO watersheds
- Loss of tax base for small communities
- Complexities of application process
- Mobile home park complexities – ownership, comparable housing
- Timeframe – both too short and too long
- State required two independent appraisals with application

**Benefit Cost Analysis Streamlining**
- New alternative BCA memorandums applied where possible
- Pre-calculated Benefits for Acquisitions and Elevations in Special Flood Hazard Areas – AKA ‘$276K Memo’
- ‘Expedited cost-effectiveness methodology’ AKA ‘Substantial Damage Waiver’
- Many homes damaged not in SFHA, vacant lots not applicable
  - Used ‘Best Available Data’ floodplains for communities such as Jamestown
Post Submittal Requests For Information

 ► **State RFI**
   ► Initial RFI before formal FEMA submittal
     ★ Ensured completeness
     ★ Allowed DHSEM-MARS staff to become familiar with applications

 ► **FEMA RFI**
   ► Typically clarifying requests for more details scope on scope and budget
   ► 30 days to respond or dropped from consideration
   ► Most issues being handled with only 1 RFI
47 individual communities submitted 88 applications for DR 4145.

33 projects awarded thus far

- Includes planning, 5% Initiative, and generator projects
- Remaining projects in FEMA RFI process or currently being reviewed by FEMA
Keys to Minimizing RFIs

► Clear and thorough scope of work
  ► Explain the need, the what, where and why
► Document, document, document
► Develop detailed budgets based on reliable sources
  ► Standard construction cost estimating methods (R.S. Means etc.)
  ► Engineering or contractor cost estimate
  ► Justify and provide details for any pre-award and admin costs
► Identify any potential environmental issues early and up-front
  ► Include photographs of structures, site
► Include site maps and latitude longitude
► Leverage technical assistance where available!
Lessons Learned – DHSEM MARS Perspective

► 12 months goes quickly - have your application materials and processes ready

► Consultant assistance allowed state to focus on the big picture, e.g.
  ► Overall program delivery, guidance development and key issues while consultant handled one-on-one technical assistance with local governments
  ► Get on board sooner than later (before applicant briefing)

► Getting access to NEMIS is difficult and takes time

► Thorough scopes and budgets help minimize RFIs

► Use of new, streamlined BCA methods helpful but had limitations

► Vital to stay in communication with subapplicants and manage expectations for timeframes
Lessons Learned – Project Manager Perspective

► Having a top notch team with expertise from outside Colorado was key
► Regular project coordination/communication takes time but absolutely necessary in fluid disaster recovery environment
► Despite the hoops and headaches a brighter, more resilient future will result from the flood of funding!
Acknowledgements

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  Antares – Steve Pardue

► FEMA Region VIII
Questions?

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