

STATEMENT
OF
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ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
GRANT PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BEFORE
THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS, PREPAREDNESS
AND
RESPONSE
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“FEMA’S GRANT PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE”

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Chairwoman Richardson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the Committee, my name is Elizabeth Harman and I serve as the Assistant Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD). On behalf of Administrator Craig Fugate, it is a privilege to appear before you today to discuss GPD's present and its future.

Madame Chairwoman, I have served as GPD's Assistant Administrator since March 2010. I have spent much of these last several months becoming better acquainted with GPD, with its people and how it works on a day-to-day basis.

GPD's role is one of great responsibility. Its mission is to ensure that through the strategic use of federal funding, our Nation is well prepared to respond to and mitigate all-hazards. Moreover, GPD must ensure that FEMA's grant programs are administered responsibly and economically, and that each grant dollar improves our nation's capabilities and provides a strong return on our investment.

The Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) centralized most of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) grant programs under GPD's administration and oversight, allowing for a more integrated and coordinated system of grant management. Under PKEMRA, GPD became the one-stop-shop for grants management, providing credible leadership of FEMA's grant programs, a more transparent processes, and collaborative partnerships with our stakeholders. GPD currently administers 52 distinct disaster and non-disaster grant programs. Each year, we award between 6,000 and 7,000 individual grants, totaling \$7 to \$10 billion each year.

PKEMRA also presented FEMA with many challenges; most notable is the ongoing effort to build our capacity as we administer a new, different and much larger portfolio of grant programs. We are taking on the challenge by improving how we do business. This includes improving our systems for collecting, managing and reporting data, improving how we operate on a daily basis – including a thorough review of our most basic functions such as program and financial monitoring – and maintaining a highly skilled, motivated and dedicated staff.

Also critical to GPD's ability to achieve its mission is being able to show how each grant dollar improves our nation's capabilities and provides a strong return on our investment. We must work with our partners at the state and local level to provide both the outputs and outcomes of grants, underscoring how our investments are increasing preparedness.

Lastly Madame Chairwoman, GPD must be able to carry out this mission within a new and evolving FEMA structure. This new structure, a key goal of Administrator Fugate, will not just empower the FEMA Regions, but more actively involve them in the day-to-day administration of FEMA's programs.

These then, are the four key principles for GPD:

- (1) To administer FEMA's grant programs responsibly and economically.
- (2) To build and sustain the internal capabilities to ensure success.
- (3) To show how each grant dollar improves our nation's capabilities and provides a strong return on our investment.
- (4) To carry out our mission within a new and evolving FEMA structure.

Since March, I have dedicated a good deal of time and energy into looking at how GPD does business. I have reviewed our processes, our operating procedures, and how GPD staff interacts internally and externally with our customers – our state and local partners and stakeholders. The goal is to ensure that GPD’s grant administration procedures are effective and responsible –beginning the process with the development of grant guidance and concluding with the close-out of individual grants. While we are still in the preliminary phases of this review, I believe that with the support we have from FEMA and DHS leadership, we can greatly improve our grant process and how we do business.

In our efforts to improve GPD operations on a day-to-day basis, we must ensure that we have the proper capabilities in place. One of our most valuable assets is an exceptional staff with the skills, knowledge, and motivation, to succeed. There is no question that GPD is comprised of dedicated professionals with years of experience in the planning, execution, management and monitoring of federal grant programs.

While decreased staffing levels in recent months have been a challenge, with the support of FEMA and DHS leadership, we are moving quickly to meet GPD’s staffing requirements. We are actively recruiting additional federal employees: we currently have 48 advertised staff position announcements and a new senior management position that will be announced shortly. Once these positions are filled within the next few months, GPD’s staffing level will be at its full authorized level of 192.

Another critical component of GPD’s success is its ability to ensure that federal grant dollars have been accounted for, and that those grant dollars are meeting critical security needs across the country. Given the size of this investment, it is important for GPD, as stewards of the taxpayers’ money, to assess what these dollars have bought, and what our investment has returned. At the end of the day, we need to be

able to show how each grant dollar improves our nation's capabilities and provides a strong return on our investment.

Madame Chairwoman, as this Committee is aware, those of us at FEMA and at DHS are committed to doing this. Intuitively we can say that we are better prepared today than we have been in the past. We can point to such things as the amount and type of equipment that has been purchased. We can look at the improvements in physical security that we have made and the improvements in planning and training that we have put in place, and we conclude that we are better prepared. However, we are and will continue to do even more. Through the development and assessment of metrics, connecting the dollars we've spent to the results that our grant money has achieved, we can better evaluate our preparedness.

Recognizing that it is important to take a comprehensive look at all our past efforts, the DHS Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriations Act instructed FEMA's National Preparedness Directorate (NPD), in cooperation with the Department's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, to create and lead an effort to help us better understand preparedness and how best to invest preparedness dollars. With the creation of the Local, State, Tribal and Federal Preparedness Task Force (Task Force), FEMA and DHS are undertaking a comprehensive look at these questions. The report and recommendations of the Task Force are due later this year and will help move us closer to understanding how prepared we are and how best to dedicate preparedness resources.

Further, as part of this effort, we are exploring new ways and systems to manage and report the data we collect from our grantees. GPD currently maintains several systems that were created at different times and collect different types of information. Too often, pulling and organizing data from these different

systems is cumbersome and time-consuming. We are committed to creating a more efficient and accurate system of collecting and reporting information. We are currently discussing system requirements with both FEMA and DHS leadership and are in the process of determining time lines for implementation and funding requirements. Once these changes are implemented, they will provide us and the American people with a clearer understanding of how our grant dollars are being used and what results are being achieved. It will also give us a more effective tool to monitor the spending decisions made by grant recipients.

Lastly Madame Chairwoman, GPD must be able to carry out this mission within a new and evolving FEMA structure. Administrator Fugate strongly believes that emergency management organizations are most responsive and effective when the authority to make operational decisions is delegated to those command levels in the field with boots on the ground. FEMA is putting in place a structure in which Headquarters is responsible for the “rules and tools” of the programs we manage, while the regions are becoming increasingly responsible for implementing those programs in the field. The responsibility of headquarters is to prescribe and develop systems in support of our national policy. Personnel in the regions and the field are responsible for the actual policy implementation as well as preparing for, responding to, recovering from and mitigating all hazards.

I recognize that there has been much discussion over the impact of empowering the regions as part of our strategy. Allow me to address this. Grant regionalization (that is, empowering the regions by providing them with increased responsibilities in the management and administration of the homeland security grant programs) is still in an early stage. It is a work in progress. We are currently assessing how FEMA’s grant programs will be structured and administered, and how accompanying roles and

responsibilities will be defined. These determinations will be made based on a careful study of each grant program's requirements, and after we have a clear understanding of the benefits derived from having the program administered by the regions.

In Fiscal Year 2010, FEMA assigned full responsibility for the implementation of six homeland security grant programs to the regions: the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program, the Emergency Operations Center Grant Program, the Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program, the Citizen Corps Grant Program, the Metropolitan Medical Response Systems Grant Program, and the Drivers License Security Grant Program.

These programs have traditionally been characterized by high levels of local involvement in their development and administration through the use of local working groups, community councils and state and local agencies. For example, there is the Citizen Corps Grant Programs' reliance on state and local Citizen Corps Councils to determine uses of funds and to establish local program goals and objectives. Similarly, the Metropolitan Medical Response Systems (MMRS) Grant Program relies on local MMRS Working Groups to determine local program activities. The Emergency Management Performance Grant Program is also directly administered by state and local emergency management agencies.

Moving these six programs to the regions provides FEMA the opportunity to step back and assess the success of grant regionalization, to study the grant process and the various parts of the grant cycle, and to better understand how roles and responsibilities may be best shared between headquarters and regional staffs.

Moving these six programs to the regions also will provide the opportunity for detailed discussions between headquarters and regional staff to better understand opportunities for improvement, establish corrective actions, and identify best practices. This process will allow us to pilot the regionalization of these six programs with our state and local partners.

I also cannot emphasize enough how critical the inclusion of our state and local partners will be to our examination of regionalization and regional empowerment. At the end of the day, our decisions on regionalization will be driven by the same key concern that drives all FEMA and GPD decisions – how do we better prepare our nation for a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Madame Chairwoman, in conclusion I would like to add a personal note. As a former volunteer and paid fire fighter and paramedic, I have seen firsthand how these homeland security grants are spent. I understand how important federal funding is for preparing our communities, building capabilities at the local level, and ensuring the safety of our citizens and our first responders. My experience as a fire fighter and paramedic gives me insight into the importance of including front line responders of all disciplines in the design and planning of these grant programs. I am committed to keeping our stakeholders informed throughout the decision making process. The inclusion of our stakeholders, the transparency of our processes, and our ability to work closely with our state and local partners is critical to the success of GPD's mission.

Madame Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I am happy to respond to any questions that you, Congressman Rogers and the other Members of the Committee may have.