

7 LOCAL PLANNING COORDINATION AND CAPABILITY BUILDING

Standard State Mitigation Plan Regulation Checklist
LOCAL PLANNING COORDINATION AND CAPABILITY BUILDING
S13. Does the plan generally describe and analyze the effectiveness of local government mitigation policies, programs, and capabilities? [44 CFR § 201.4(c)(3)(ii)]
S13-a. Does the plan provide a summary of current local government policies, programs and capabilities of jurisdictions to accomplish hazard mitigation?
S13-b. Does the plan describe the effectiveness of local government mitigation policies, programs and capabilities?
S14. Does the plan describe the process to support the development of approvable local government mitigation plans? [44 CFR §§ 201.3(c)(5) and 201.4(c)(4)(i)]
S14-a. Does the plan describe how the state supports developing or updating FEMA-approvable mitigation plans?
S14-b. Does the plan provide a brief summary of barriers to developing or updating, adopting, and implementing FEMA approved local government mitigation plans based on an analysis of plan and jurisdiction coverage data and trends across the state and steps to remove barriers to help local governments advance mitigation planning, including how plan and jurisdiction coverage data and trends inform those steps?
S15. Does the plan describe the criteria for prioritizing funding? [44 CFR § 201.4(c)(4)(iii)]
S15-a. Does the plan describe criteria for prioritizing jurisdictions to receive planning and project grants under available federal and non-federal programs?
S16. Does the plan describe the process and time frame to review, coordinate, and link local and tribal mitigation plans with the state mitigation plan? [44 CFR §§ 201.3(c)(6), 201.4(c)(2)(ii), 201.4(c)(3)(iii), and 201.4(c)(4)(ii)]
16-a. Does the plan describe the state’s process and time frame to review and submit approvable local and tribal mitigation plans to FEMA?
S16-b. Does the plan describe the state’s process and time frame to share risk assessment data and mitigation priorities with local governments for their plan updates, as well as integrate local risk assessment and mitigation actions into the state mitigation plan updates?

Source: FEMA, 2022

7.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT MITIGATION POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND CAPABILITIES

The State’s constitution provides a very diverse self-governance structure. Therefore, “formal” planning and land management capabilities throughout Alaska’s borough, city, and tribal governments vary widely due to their respective constitutional authorities. Table 7-1 describes local government policies and programs available in Alaska for hazard mitigation. Some policies and programs may not be available to all Alaskan communities, however, due to constitutional authority. The table provides: a description of the effectiveness of each policy and program; challenges to implementation, including gaps and disparities in serving underserved communities and challenges resulting from the impacts of climate change; and opportunities for implementing mitigation actions through local government capabilities, including technical assistance and funding. The policies and programs are listed alphabetically.

Table 7-1: - Local Government Mitigation Policies, Programs and Capabilities

Type	Summary
Alaska Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program	<p>The Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program operates under the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. The program assists federal, state, local and tribal governments with protection and restoration of watersheds. The WFPO program provides technical and financial assistance to States, local governments and Tribal organizations to help plan and implement authorized watershed projects for the purpose of: Flood Prevention, Watershed Protection, Public Recreation, Public Fish and Wildlife, Agricultural Water Management, Municipal and Industrial Water Supply and Water Quality Management. Statutory and regulatory criteria for eligibility in this program include public sponsorship; watershed projects protect up to 250,000 acres; and benefits that are directly related to agriculture, including rural communities, must be at least 20 percent of the total benefits for the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFPO may be an option for some local jurisdictions to implement High Hazard Potential Dams (HHPD) mitigation activities if needed. Because the requirements to address HHPD in HMPs are new as of 2023, there is limited awareness of how programs such as WFPO may be applied to HHPD mitigation projects.
Building Codes	<p>Building codes (where available) are typically implemented at the local or borough-wide level in Alaska. A building code is a set of rules that specify the standards for constructed objects such as buildings and non-building structures. The main purpose of building codes is to protect public health, safety and general welfare as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures. Building codes are generally intended to be applied by architects, engineers, interior designers, constructors and regulators but are also used for various purposes by safety inspectors, environmental scientists, real estate developers, subcontractors, manufacturers of building products and materials, insurance companies, facility managers, tenants, and others. Codes regulate the design and construction of structures where adopted into law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major obstacle to hazard mitigation in Alaska is that only commercial building codes are adopted and/or enforced statewide. Very few communities in Alaska enforce residential building codes. Local and borough jurisdictions may have their own residential codes to follow, and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation adopts the IRC for its residential standard and the IECC for its Building Energy Efficiency Standard. However, if a residential building is built outside of a jurisdiction with a residential code and without financing, it may not be built to meet the basic requirements of the IRC. Many rural Alaskan communities lack the personnel and technical experience to carry out code enforcement responsibilities because they are not fiscally feasible to implement or there is a lack of funding to bring residential structures into compliance with the minimum residential building code requirements. One solution to overcoming the lack of code adoption would be educate and encourage the use of template language in procurements that require builders to build to minimum required (IRC and IECC or other) codes and include inspection costs in their construction costs. The cost for inspections could be higher for areas with no residential building codes, or no code officials to conduct inspections. Opportunities to implement building codes locally or borough-wide typically occur through the general fund of the governing body and there are areas in Alaska with no local governing body.

Capital Improvement Plan	<p>A Capital Improvement Plan contains all the individual capital projects, equipment purchases, and major studies for a local government, in conjunction with construction and completion schedules, and in consort with financing plans. The plan provides a working blueprint for sustaining and improving the community’s infrastructures, including hazard mitigation projects. It coordinates strategic planning, financial capacity, and physical development. The plan/program is usually short-range, 4 to 10 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 communities in Alaska have Capital Improvement Plans as of 2023, including Juneau, Homer, Klawock, Akutan, Lake & Peninsula Borough, Kake, Angoon and Yakutat (DCRA Community Plans Library 2023). <p>It is an ongoing challenge for many communities to implement a Capital Improvement Plan. Administrative capacity may be lacking, especially in smaller rural communities, and there may be a lack of funding for positions to complete this work.</p> <p>The changing climate and resulting changes to infrastructure needs may also complicate work on Capital Improvement Plans. Opportunities to implement Capital Improvement Plans in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA: Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA), Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) • FEMA: HMA, Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)
Climate Action Plan	<p>A locally adopted Climate Action Plan is a comprehensive policy tool outlining specific actions that a community will undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or adaptation strategies the community will implement to counter the negative effects of climate change. Sometimes plans cover a single community, while others are regional in scope.</p> <p>A Climate Action Plan typically addresses the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through a series of local programs and policy measures related to transportation, land use, building energy, water, waste, and green infrastructure. Step-by-step technical resources can assist jurisdictions that are just undertaking the planning process or want to update and strengthen existing plans.</p> <p>In Alaska, few jurisdictions have plans for climate change, although some communities include the reduction of greenhouse gases in community or comprehensive plans. Challenges to implementing a Climate Action Plan include local funding and technical ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 communities in Alaska have Climate Action Plans. These include Homer, Pedro Bay, Anchorage, Juneau and Sitka. (UAF Center for Arctic Policy Studies 2020). <p>Challenges to developing a Climate Action Plan include the lack of human capital and human resources to write and exercise the plans, particularly for remote rural communities and underserved communities. There may also be limited awareness about the plans themselves and the purpose of the plans.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement Climate Action Plans in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives’ (ICLEI) Cities for Climate Protection Campaign.
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022-2027	<p>The CEDS correlates with the DHS&EM mitigation activities in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 6.1 - Resiliency Framework - DHS&EM sees support of the CEDS by annual development of mitigation plans for as many communities as possible. • Objective 6.3 – Resilient Infrastructure - DHS&EM comments on how the state supports those efforts. • DHS&EM sees the support of CEDS through programs such as BRIC and HMGP: - HMGP – Alaska Railroad mitigation projects such as mitigation ROW from washouts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BRIC C&CB - Akiak bulk fuel farm risk studies. (AKIAK specifically requested for PDM 19 to move bulk fuel farm away from river) - Dalton highway DOT project • Through other initiatives and actions DHS&EM is doing distribution management plans to support recognition of logistics needs for sections across Alaska. • Redundancy: DHS&EM has ability to elevate electrical substations within communities.
Comprehensive Plan	<p>A comprehensive plan is a guide for community land use development. It is based on a community vision and portrays the dynamics, unique qualities, and concerns of a community. It represents how residents see their community. A comprehensive plan promotes orderly growth by providing a framework for decisions about land use, transportation, public facilities, economic development, housing, and other factors that are vital to a healthy and livable community. It includes guidelines for determining the type and location of industrial, commercial, recreational, and residential development. It can also describe hazard areas and lists goals and policies to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, and economic damage resulting from natural and human-caused hazards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 109 communities, municipalities and boroughs in Alaska have Comprehensive Plans, though some of the plans are outdated (DCRA Community Plans Library 2023). <p>Challenges to developing Comprehensive Plans include the need for human capital and human resources to write and exercise the plans, particularly for remote rural communities and underserved communities.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement Comprehensive Plans in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denali Commission Village Infrastructure Protection (VIP) Program
Emergency Action Plan (dams)	<p>A dam Emergency Action Plan is a written document that identifies incidents that can lead to potential emergency conditions at a dam, identifies the areas that can be affected by the loss of reservoir and specifies pre-planned actions to be followed to minimize property damage, potential loss of infrastructure and water resource, and potential loss of life because of failure or mis-operation of a dam. The dam owner is responsible for development, maintenance, and exercise of the plan; however, there are guidelines, tools and assistance available to help owners. City, tribe, borough, and state emergency management directors and state dam safety officials can provide assistance with dam owners to create and exercise the plan. An owner can tap into this technical and emergency management expertise and can get additional support by using state and national educational materials, forms and examples, and step-by-step guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All High Hazard Potential Dams (HHPD) in Alaska have Emergency Action Plans, as required by law.
Emergency Response Plan/ Emergency Operations Plan	<p>An Emergency Response Plan or Emergency Operations Plan is a document that lays out the series of steps a community will take during a devastating natural hazard to ensure community members' safety and minimize the impact. Emergency response plans are meant to help jurisdictions address various types of emergencies, such as wildfires, winter weather, earthquakes, floods, disease outbreaks, and other hazards. The goal is to reduce or prevent human injury and property damage during hazard events. These plans also take the guesswork out of roles and responsibilities by specifying which community members should be part of the response team and who should be contacted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 communities in Alaska have ERPs/EOPs.

	<p>Challenges to developing an Emergency Response Plan include the lack of human capital and human resources to write and exercise the plans, and lack of governmental structure to respond and utilize the plans, particularly for remote rural communities and underserved communities. Changing conditions due to climate change may also increase the difficulty of planning for future hazards that a community may not have previously experienced.</p> <p>Opportunities to assist with implementation of ERPs/EOPs in local communities include the Small Community Emergency Response Plans (SCERP). The State's ERP provides a toolkit for the creation of SCERP (https://ready.alaska.gov/Plans/SCERP).</p>
FireWise Program	<p>The Firewise USA recognition program is administered by the National Fire Protection Association and provides a collaborative framework to help residents in a community get organized, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and to reduce wildfire risks at the local level. Alaska Firewise is a cooperative effort among local, state, federal, and private agencies and organizations to promote fire safety in areas vulnerable to wildland and community fires. Communities can become a Firewise Community by creating a Firewise Board and Firewise Task Force or Commission, developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, sponsoring Wildfire Days public events, volunteering or investing in community wildfire mitigation, and seeking certification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 communities in Alaska have implemented the FireWise program. <p>The FireWise program is a volunteer-based program. For many communities in Alaska, it was proven difficult to find and retain staff. The plans can be challenging to set up, and there is often a lack of human capital. Increased susceptibility to wildfires in some areas due to climate change may also increase the difficulty of planning for fires, particularly for communities that have not have previously experienced wild fires in their area.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement the FireWise Program in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA: Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) • FEMA: HMA, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post Fire (HMGP–Post-Fire)
Hazard Mitigation Plan	<p>Hazard mitigation is “any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards.” As such, hazard mitigation is any work to minimize the impacts of any type of hazard event before it occurs. Hazard mitigation aims to reduce losses from future disasters. It is a process that identifies and profiles hazards, analyzes the people and facilities at risk, and develops mitigation actions to reduce or eliminate hazard risk. The implementation of the mitigation actions—which include short- and long-term strategies that may involve planning, policy changes, programs, projects, and other activities—is the result of this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 107 communities in Alaska have FEMA-approved HMPs covering 155 jurisdictions. <p>Challenges to developing HMPs are a lack of funding for plan development and plan update, lack of data to have clear understanding of risks, and lack of funding to implement projects. Another challenge is that climate change as a profiled hazard or incorporated into other hazard profiles will need to be addressed in future plans and will require additional or updated mapping around climate change related hazards.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement Hazard Mitigation Plans in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA: HMA, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)	<p>The NFIP provides flood insurance to property owners, renters and businesses, and having this coverage helps them recover faster when floodwaters recede. The NFIP works with communities required to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations that help mitigate flooding effects. The NFIP is managed by FEMA and is delivered to the public by a network of more than 50 insurance companies and the NFIP Direct.</p> <p>As the NFIP Coordinator in Alaska, DCRA coordinates with other state offices to ensure policies and regulations are in place to meet the minimum NFIP standards, supports NFIP communities, provides technical assistance to local communities and state agencies, maintains a state floodplain mapping program through a cooperative agreement with FEMA for producing and providing flood hazard maps that include best available flood and erosion information as a tool for flood hazard mitigation and implementation of the NFIP used to regulate floodplain development and mitigate for flood losses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Alaska, approximately one-third (34%) of Alaska’s 164 incorporated municipalities participate in the NFIP. This participation includes 33 communities and boroughs and an additional 25 cities within the jurisdictional boundaries of participating NFIP boroughs. Most of Alaska’s population resides within the communities that participate in the NFIP; 85 percent reside in organized boroughs and 3 percent reside in the cities in the unorganized boroughs. <p>A major obstacle to participation in the NFIP is that many jurisdictions are ineligible to join the NFIP due to their inability to adopt and enforce a flood damage prevention ordinance. Many of Alaska’s federally declared disasters involving flooding have occurred in the Unorganized Boroughs within the Bethel, Kusilvak, and Yukon-Koyukuk census areas, where there are no residential building codes or flood damage prevention ordinances. See Section 5.3 for further discussion.</p> <p>Increased public outreach around the importance of the NFIP could increase code adoption, and thus increased NFIP participation. Funding opportunities to implement the NFIP in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA: HMA, Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)
StormReady Program	<p>The StormReady program, run through the National Weather Service, helps arm America's communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property—before, during and after a severe weather event. StormReady helps community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety programs. StormReady communities are better prepared to save lives from the onslaught of severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness. The program encourages communities to take a new, proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations by providing emergency managers with clear-cut guidelines on how to improve their hazardous weather operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 communities in Alaska have implemented the StormReady program. <p>Challenges to implementing the StormReady program include lack of leadership staff and significant staff turnover, especially in small rural and underserved communities.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement the StormReady Program in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWS Tsunami Financial Assistance
TsunamiReady Program	<p>TsunamiReady is a voluntary community recognition program that promotes tsunami hazard preparedness as an active collaboration among federal, state, local, and tribal emergency management agencies, community leaders and the public. The main goal of the program is to improve public safety before, during and after tsunami emergencies. It aims to do this by establishing guidelines for a</p>

	<p>standard level of capability to mitigate, prepare for and respond to tsunamis and working with communities to help them meet the guidelines and ultimately become recognized as TsunamiReady by the National Weather Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 communities in Alaska have implemented the TsunamiReady program. <p>Challenges to implementing the TsunamiReady program include lack of leadership staff and significant staff turnover, especially in small rural and underserved communities. To be eligible, communities also need to have an All Hazards HMP in place that includes tsunamis, as well as either a SCERP or an EOP.</p> <p>Opportunities to implement the TsunamiReady Program in local communities through local financial capabilities include the following grant programs (see Table 5-2 for further information):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWS Tsunami Financial Assistance • National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP)
Zoning	<p>Zoning refers to municipal or local laws or regulations that govern how real property can and cannot be used in certain geographic areas. For example, zoning laws can limit commercial or industrial use of land from building in residential neighborhoods. These laws can be modified or suspended if the construction of a property will serve to help the community advance economically. Communities can discourage or restrict development in vulnerable areas such as floodplains, landslide areas, the wildland-urban interface or other known hazard areas as a part of hazard mitigation. Zoning is typically implemented at the local or borough-wide level in Alaska.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74 municipalities (of 162) do not exercise planning and zoning powers (Alaska Mapping Business Plan, September 2022 Update) <p>Challenges to effective zoning in Alaskan communities include a lack of local hazard mapping that makes it difficult to zone for hazards, as well as challenges with enforcement of zoning laws.</p>

7.2 STATE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL JURISDICTION HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

The State of Alaska subscribes to a whole community approach to emergency management. It is expected that extensive collaboration with the public, all levels of government, government agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations will be required to address and build mitigation policies, programs, and capabilities analysis and effectiveness. The state's intent is to foster a cooperative relationship with each community and tribal government in order to build the most resilient Alaska possible.

Open dialogue between the community and state is fostered and assistance is offered at all HMP development stages. As described below, the State, in partnership with the community and assisted by a contractor, guides community and tribal planners through the planning process from grant application to plan approval, into mitigation project development. In addition, this section addresses barriers to developing or updating, adopting and implementing FEMA-approved local HMPs.

7.2.1 State Role in Local Planning Process

The State plays multiple roles in the local planning process. Some examples of State support for local plans include:

- Helping to provide funding opportunities through Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC);
- Conducting outreach for plan renewal if a plan is going to expire;
- Providing outreach and education on the importance of multi-jurisdiction plans;
- Running an annual Emergency Management Conference with presentations for communities;
- Running Resiliency Workshops; and
- Partnering with FEMA for hybrid Local/Tribal workshops on HMPs with opportunities for technical assistance.

Many Local and Tribal jurisdictions complete HMPs on their own or with their own contract support. In these cases, the State is notified of the process and used as a subject matter expert for specific issues and reviews the HMP before sending to FEMA for formal approval.

The State also manages the development and review of HMPs through a pool of contractors that are assigned a specific number of communities to work with. For these contracts, the Local and Tribal Jurisdiction planning processes begin with a kick-off meeting where a State of Alaska HMP planner and/or the State-selected contractor, and community leaders come together to discuss HMP goals and needs. New or updated HMP performance expectations are covered for both the contractor and the local and tribal community as applicable. Community HMP involvement levels, local planning team development, completion timelines, and incremental and final product deliverables are discussed. Future meetings are scheduled with the local planning team(s) and community council(s) to address new HMP information or to update existing HMP information. For HMP updates, discussions occur to define any changes in infrastructure, construction, or development as well as associated risk vulnerabilities to known hazard events that have occurred since the legacy HMP was implemented.

A state representative from DHS&EM can be present to build the state-city or state-tribe relationship. State participation ensures that the local government is aware of how the plan needs to interface with applicable state mitigation processes and priorities, their planning resources, hazards and associated vulnerabilities, and mitigation options.

Any information available from the state database can be used to guide the planning process and provide a framework for the early discussions with the community. If the state already has data from that community in the database, the executive summary sheet can provide a valuable starting point for the

planning process. For those communities that do not yet have entries in the database, the blank template can serve as a guide to show communities the types of information that will be needed for the plan.

From the kick-off meeting to the final draft edit, public feedback and input is not only encouraged but essential for developing a viable HMP. The State recognizes that the community's insight and collective history may provide valuable historical information. For instance, oral histories passed down from generation-to-generation of Alaska Native tribes may contain important data on natural hazards.

The community provides the draft plan to community members and interested stakeholders to solicit comments and ensure accuracy. It can be made available on city and/or tribal websites, at town offices or other community locations. Public comments are gathered and included within the plan content.

After the completed plan has been through public review and technical editing, the State, community, or tribal contractor finalizes the draft plan. The jurisdiction, tribe, or contractor then sends it for State (DHS&EM) review. The State confirms the plan fulfills FEMA regulatory criteria by ensuring communities are aware of their hazard data, their planning resources, and that the plan follows the state's mitigation priorities. The State then sends the plan to FEMA for formal review and approval.

The State strives to review and forward mitigation plans within 30 days of receipt from the community or contractor. To support timely review, the State has added review of HMPs to their procured contract services to enhance DHS&EM staffing if multiple reviews require additional support. If FEMA requires revisions, the State will coordinate with the local government or tribe to obtain the required information, amend the plan and resubmit to FEMA in a timely manner. Once the plan has fulfilled FEMA criteria, it will move to the Approvable Pending Adoption (APA) stage. The State will contact the jurisdiction encouraging them to formally adopt their HMP; knowing the adopted plan will be approved. The State will ensure the plan is adopted within one calendar year from the APA date. Once adopted, the State will forward community and tribal resolutions (as applicable) to FEMA to complete the final phase – plan approval. FEMA's approval letter starts the plan's five-year lifecycle as determined from the HMP's approval date.

The completed HMP along with all approval letters, resolutions, review tool, and HMP development or supporting documents are packaged and sent (electronically) to local and tribal communities. An electronic copy of the HMP is provided to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) to post on their Community Plans Library portal.

7.2.2 State Mitigation Planning Database for Local Mitigation Planning

To support local jurisdiction hazard mitigation planning, DHS&EM has been building an internal database since 2018 to help track local mitigation efforts. The state has loaded data from every local and tribal HMP on file with the State into the database. The database includes all the State disaster information, including all of the projects associated with each disaster, communities affected by disasters, and limited mapping.

The Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) previously maintained an older database with community information. This newer database would likely have increased capability to download information. The State DHS&EM has a memorandum with DCRA to share this community data.

The State Mitigation Planning Database includes community reports with data on:

- General overview of community (location community size, government, etc.)
- Cultural information (Federally recognized tribes, Village Corporations)
- Public safety (such as fire department/state trooper posts)
- Public Services (such as health care facilities)
- Transportation (such as airports)
- Hazard data (summarized into brief text and ranked by probability and severity)

- Activities (community plans, DCRA grants, Denali Commission Reports, State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) events [calls made], HMGP grants)
- Critical facilities data (currently limited)

As of 2023, DHS&EM continues to expand this database. DHS&EM would like to see the database grow to be able to quickly identify hazards and critical infrastructure within a community. The database would eventually be expanded to have interactive hazard mapping capabilities.

Executive Summary Sheet

DHS&EM will be adding a local requirement to future HMPs that an Executive Summary sheet is required when submitting for review. This will enable DHS&EM to enter consistent information into the database regarding hazards, populations, and critical facilities at risk as well as support prioritization of mitigation action funding.

The Executive Summary sheet would contain the following types of information for each community:

- Name of plan
- Year of plan
- Types of hazards addressed
- Number & financial value of critical facilities at risk by hazard
- Population & residential structures at risk by hazard
- Recent & planned development in hazard areas
- Mapping
- Data gaps
- Types of assets considered (i.e., land area, critical facilities, cultural facilities, population, vulnerable population, etc.)
- Types of mitigation actions included (i.e., retrofit, additional planning, public outreach, etc.)
- Funding needs
- Mitigation projects by hazard

7.2.3 Barriers to Developing or Updating Local Hazard Mitigation Plans

Rural Alaskan communities face unique challenges and barriers to developing, updating adopting and implementing local HMPs. Some of these barriers include:

- Lack of baseline local hazard data
- Lack of baseline state-wide hazard data
- Limited ability to gather new data
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of access to, and knowledge of, funding sources
- Lack of technical assistance
- Institutional barriers to accessing technical and financial barriers
- Lack of local training
- Lack of local specialists to translate technical data into informed and actionable decisions
- Lack of local funded positions

7.2.4 Steps to Remove Barriers to Developing or Updating Local Hazard Mitigation Plans

Steps to removing these barriers to help local governments advance mitigation planning include:

- Increased hazard data collection
- Increased availability of data at the local level
- Increased education and awareness of hazards

- Increased awareness of funding opportunities
- Increased technical assistance
- Fundable local mitigation coordinator positions to address technical assistance
- Increased and expanded training

DHS&EM has developed specific strategies to overcome these barriers in the 2023 SHMP Mitigation Strategy. See Section 6, Mitigation Strategy, for complete strategy information and details. In summary, these strategies include:

Data:

- Wildfire Exposure Map Expansion
- Risk MAP Expansion
- Coastal Community Flood Assessment Expansion
- Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program Expansion
- Landslide and Avalanche Susceptibility Map Expansion
- Tsunami Inundation Mapping Program Expansion
- Alaska Statewide Digital Elevation Model Update
- Wetland Map Expansion

Funding:

- Mitigation Planning Database Expansion
- Local and Tribal Hazard Mitigation Planning Support

Technical assistance and training:

- Rural Resilience Workshop Expansion
- Tsunami Operations Workshop Expansion
- TsunamiReady and StormReady Expansion
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan Outreach Expansion
- Alaska Firewise Expansion
- Continuation of Building Safety Month
- Volcano Awareness Month
- National Flood Insurance Program Expansion

7.3 STATE PRIORITIZATION PROCESS FOR LOCAL JURISDICTION FUNDING

Alaska State agencies prioritize projects and plans for local jurisdiction funding under federal and non-federal grant programs. Various factors are applied by the agencies to prioritize funding, including:

- Communities located in areas of highest risk
- Recent disasters in communities
- Communities where certain hazards may be exacerbated by climate change
- Disadvantaged communities
- Areas with more general impacts from climate change
- Public interest/high visibility hazard potential
- Communities where development may exacerbate hazards
- Communities with critical infrastructure at high risk
- Data driven prioritization; focus on areas with greatest history of hazard
- Communities with infrastructure that is failing/impacted by climate change
- Population density

- Vulnerability of communities, including underserved communities

7.3.1 State Prioritization Process - State Hazard Mitigation Advisory Committee

The State Hazard Mitigation Advisory Committee (SHMAC) was originally formed in 2002 as an essential inter-agency coordination process to determine prioritization of funding mitigation plans and projects with federal and non-federal grants.

SHMAC membership consists of agency-selected representatives with responsibility for agency-specific mitigation needs and priorities, which supports their agency's respective missions.

Members of the SHMAC are determined by the SHMO. The typical SHMAC team comprises:

- DHS&EM State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO)
- DHS&EM State Disaster Mitigation Officer
- Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Applicable Borough Emergency Managers
- Applicable state agency infrastructure subject-matter-experts

The SHMAC meets quarterly, or as warranted, to prioritize projects and plans. Under the guidance of the SHMO, the SHMAC reviews the prioritization of project and plans, and validates each project's potential effectiveness and priority. Factors considered by the SHMAC in the prioritization process include:

- Plans and projects for communities at highest risk
- Projects that reduce the threat to health and safety
- Projects that reduce the threat to critical facilities
- Projects that reduce the threat to high-risk properties, including repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss structures
- Plans and projects for areas of intense development
- Plans and projects for communities most vulnerable to climate change
- Projects and plans for underserved communities and socially vulnerable populations
- Projects that reduce the threat to private facilities or homes
- Projects that provide a long-term solution

7.3.2 State Mitigation Planning Database for Prioritization Process

Alaska's local and tribal HMPs inform and influence the state's risk assessment and mitigation priorities. The State uses information from these mitigation plans to supplement state data. It is this information that provides a broader understanding of regional vulnerabilities that will shape prioritization actions and policies to reduce risk most effectively.

The new state database will be a powerful tool for the state to track local mitigation plan activities and funding, and will thus aid in the prioritization process.

Once local and tribal communities fulfill FEMA HMP criteria, formally adopt their plans and receive FEMA final approval they can apply for FEMA and other federal agency grants.

To be eligible for HMGP funding, applicants must be: a state agency, a local government, a private non-profit organization, an Alaska Native Village or organization, or a federally recognized IRA tribe. An eligible applicant must apply to the State DHS&EM for funding, and may submit hazard mitigation plan development or construction projects to be considered by the State. Projects must meet the State's minimum criteria:

- Does the project conform to the State Hazard Mitigation Plan?

- Does the project provide a beneficial impact on the designated area such as RL/SRL locations?
- Is it cost effective?
- Will the project meet environmental requirements?

The State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) and DHS&EM mitigation staff sort project submittals and ensure that they adhere to the following:

1. Projects that address life safety concerns,
2. Local hazard mitigation plan development,
3. Other eligible mitigation projects, such as NFIP-identified RL or SRL properties,
4. Non-eligible projects or initiatives:
 - a. Other available funding sources – Non-natural hazards
 - b. Not mitigation projects: (e.g., aircraft, boats, or equipment)

Projects are then categorized according to SHMP goals, and prioritized in numerical order. The project list is then reviewed and tentatively approved by FEMA Region 10’s hazard mitigation staff to validate DHS&EM’s project eligibility assessment.

Specific projects could qualify as a FEMA “Expedited” or “Fast Track” project or initiative. FEMA “Expedites” or “Fast Tracks” projects to quickly fund state-identified priority projects that would not only fulfill SHMP goals, but also quickly relieve stress and hardship. This process is especially beneficial after minor disasters where minimal funding is available and proposed projects are not very complex. FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation staff support this simple easily approved process because it supports FEMA’s goal of quickly funding projects to protect lives and property while mitigating future disaster losses in high-hazard areas.

7.3.3 Challenges to Implementing Local HHPD Mitigation

Inclusion of hazards from HHPD in HMPs is a new requirement from FEMA as of 2023. Local communities are still becoming familiar with new requirements to address HHPDs for State and Local HMPs. Thus there may be additional challenges for prioritizing local communities’ HHPD-related mitigation activities, including:

- Lack of information about HHPD in Local HMPs
- The limited number of NFIP communities in Alaska may be prohibiting the potential use of HHPD funds or other funds for HHPD mitigation actions

To address and remove these challenges, the State is pursuing mitigation strategies to support a more comprehensive understanding of HHPD hazards, as addressed in Section 6, Mitigation Strategies. In particular, these two strategies will be pursued:

- Inundation Mapping Quality and Program Expansion for High Hazard Potential Dams
- High Hazard Potential Dams Remedial Investigations and Repair

Improved inundation mapping and investigations into HHPD will help develop a better understanding of HHPD hazards. This will help the State, local and tribal communities determine if there is a need to implement projects to reduce risks and increase resilience to potential dam failure.

7.4 STATE PROCESS TO REVIEW LOCAL / TRIBAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS AND FEMA SUBMITTAL

A component of updating the State's mitigation strategy is the consideration and inclusion of the local and tribal mitigation plan strategies. By reviewing, prioritizing, and incorporating the types or categories of actions identified by communities, the State can better understand how to support investments in local and tribal mitigation efforts.

Reviewing the local and tribal hazard mitigation plans informs and influences the state's risk assessment and mitigation priorities. The reviews determine whether HMPs follow and fulfill state hazard mitigation goals and priorities, and if it is integrated into the state and borough HMPs, as well as numerous agency mitigation initiatives as applicable.

The State uses the State Mitigation Plan Review Guide, released April 2022, to ensure it meets the requirements of the Stafford Act and Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and subsequently includes it with the completed Mitigation Plan.

The new state database will also serve as a powerful tool in the process of reviewing community and tribal plans. Having all the data available in one place will facilitate tracking the plans over time. The State will maintain records of the local mitigation plan executive summaries submitted by year to track mitigation projects and review them on 4 year cycle (a year before the local jurisdiction needs to update the plan). The State can provide local jurisdiction support based on the review cycle.

Outdated HMPs do not qualify the State for disaster assistance until the HMP has been updated and received FEMA final approval; only emergency assistance to avert direct hazard impacts will be allowed. Additionally, complete, unapproved SHMPs do not allow the state to receive funding until the SHMP has received formal State adoption, and subsequent FEMA final approval. Therefore, once the SHMP has fulfilled all FEMA criteria, Alaska's governor or designee is required to sign a formal SHMP Adoption Resolution or a Letter of Promulgation. The required documents are then sent to FEMA for final SHMP approval.

FEMA's final approval assures the State eligibility for applying for appropriate disaster assistance and mitigation grant program funding.