



Federal wildfire recovery assistance: a database user guide

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[Access the database](#)

Introduction

The range of social and ecological impacts that can result from wildfire often exceed local capacity and necessitate a variety of resources, requiring practitioners and residents to explore federal recovery assistance programs that support post-fire recovery (Paveglio et al. 2015; Caruolo et al. 2026). Recovery assistance includes, but is not limited to, financial support, case management support, mental health resources, and provision of services that help impacted populations and landscapes address negative consequences from fire (Kreiser et al. 2018; Moloney et al. 2023; Edgeley 2026). Applying for, receiving, and utilizing federal recovery assistance is a complex undertaking that individuals, local governments, and state agencies navigate in stressful and time-limited situations, often with limited guidance about how the structure and requirements of the assistance programs align with the unique impacts of a given event (Edgeley and Paveglio 2017).

Documenting the types of assistance available to fire-affected populations can streamline access to sources of assistance and support monitoring of eligible impacts and losses as they emerge (Kapucu 2013; Steelman 2016). As such, there is a clear need for a more centralized, unified location where those affected by fires can access information when determining whether available assistance aligns with their recovery needs (Carney et al. 2025). We developed the Wildfire Recovery Assistance Database (hereafter the recovery database) to

better inform recovery assistance navigation by increasing accessibility to pertinent information (e.g., eligibility information, application windows, funding durations, etc.) about assistance programs.

The recovery database was created to assist recovery leaders who have varying levels of experience and familiarity with federal recovery programs. The [database is currently housed on Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network](#) (FAC Net), and it can be embedded on other websites to reach a larger number of users. The recovery database provides information about declaration requirements necessary to receive funding, application windows, eligible applicants and projects, funding types, amount of funding available, and a direct link to the current program and policy guides (PAPGs) for a variety of assistance programs.



Federal Wildfire Recovery Funding

Effectively find grant opportunities from federal agencies*

Funding Table	Funding Types	Funding Categories	Eligible Applicants
Agency Name	Agency	Funding Type	Category
Emergency Relief Fund	Federal Transit Administra...	Cost-Share	Infrastructure
Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)	Farm Service Agency	Payment	Agriculture & Natural Res...
Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP)	Farm Service Agency	Payment	Agriculture & Natural Res...
Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG)	FEMA	Cost-Share	Wildfire Response
Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post-Fire (HMGP-PF)	FEMA	Cost-Share	Agriculture & Natural Res...

Screenshot of the Federal Wildfire Recovery Funding database.

The Wildfire Recovery Assistance Database

Information collected from the 43 assistance programs included in the recovery database were guided by eight criteria (Table 1). The eight criteria shortlisted for the database represents information that was consistently present in the funding opportunities, when appropriate. For example, Immediate Disaster Case Management (IDCM) and Disaster Case Management (DCM) does not provide monetary assistance so there are no criteria for the columns about funding amount or type; however, there is a duration for the services to be utilized (FEMA 2025). Criteria from program guides, factsheets, and overviews from federally funded recovery assistance programs were analyzed to populate the database according to a pre-determined set of categories used within the database. These documents were collected from the corresponding federal agency websites and downloaded to ensure every available version since the start of data collection could be accessible if documents were removed.

The purpose of the recovery database is to provide critical information from the PAPGs and present it in a standardized format so that users can more readily identify potential avenues for requesting recovery support. PAPGs are comprehensive documents that can be difficult to navigate due to the nuances within and between programs about specific criteria, including application requirements, eligibility, and funding durations. FEMA and the USDA provide 34 of the 43 (79%) programs featured in the database, with the remaining nine programs overseen by the Federal Transit Administration, the US Economic Development Agency, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the US Department of Labor (DOL). Eleven agencies and departments provide the bulk of federally funded recovery assistance programs, with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) subsumed under the USDA. Programs featured in the recovery database fund community recovery, ecological restoration, public and private infrastructure rebuilding, mental

health assistance, legal assistance, agricultural assistance, and insurance assistance.

Only programs with an explicit focus on recovery funding were included in the recovery database, as well as other types of assistance that provide monetary or project assistance to applicants. Four programs that do not provide financial assistance (Mass Care and Emergency Assistance [MC/EA], Fire Management Assistance Grant [FMAG], DCM, and IDCM) to impacted populations were included because they are necessary to access recovery funding (FEMA 2021; FEMA 2025). Programs that do not require any type of disaster declaration but have limited funding for each fiscal year (e.g., the Livestock Indemnity Program provides benefits after eligible adverse weather or disease) were also included.

Anticipated users of the database are primarily professionals that navigate recovery processes and are responsible for applying for recovery assistance. The users include local, county, and state government personnel, representatives from local and national NGOs, non-profits, and, in some cases, individuals (e.g., homeowners, farmers/ranchers, business owners). Many programs require the state to mediate between individuals and the federal agencies, unless the program states otherwise (e.g., FEMA - Individual Assistance, NRCS - Emergency Watershed Program, SBA – Home Physical and Personal Property Loans).



Structure loss after the 2023 Gray Fire, WA (photo: Cat Edgley)

Database User Guide

How to use the Wildfire Recovery Assistance Database

There are four ways to view content when accessing the Wildfire Recovery Assistance Database on the FAC Net website. Below are a breakdown of each view and the information they provide:

1: Each assistance program is listed on the left side of the [“funding table” tab](#), with the following columns listed in order: agency, funding type, category, declaration requirement, eligible applicants, application window, and funding duration (see Table 1). This view allows users to see all database content in an abbreviated format.

2: The [“funding types” tab](#) allows users to organize and sort programs based on the mechanisms they use to provide funding to recipients (e.g. an award, cost-share, grant, loan, payment, payment forgiveness, or reimbursement).

3: The [“funding categories” tab](#) allows users to view programs based on the focal aspects of recovery they provide assistance for. Focal aspects include agriculture and natural resources, health and social services, individual assistance, housing, economic recovery, infrastructure, planning, and wildfire response.

4: The [“eligible applicants” tab](#) sorts assistance programs based on applicant eligibility. The twelve identified applicants are: agricultural cooperatives, banks and credit unions, business owners, Farm Service Agency enrolled producers, impacted individuals, landowners, local governments, nonprofits, recipients of FTA funds, states, territories, and tribal governments. This view allows users to shortlist programs based on their recovery role.

Users can access more detailed information for each program in all view options except the “eligible applicants” tab. At the bottom of each side bar is a link to more information about the full program guidelines via agency-specific sites. The linked websites include comprehensive explanations of the program and any fact sheets, overviews, or PAPGs provided by the funding agency that were used to inform the database.

User tips & tricks

- Timeframes related to application windows, reporting requirements, and completion of recovery projects vary within and between agencies.
- Application periods vary depending on the program; some periods begin on the day of a presidential disaster declaration, and others begin on the first day of the incident.
- Terminology used (e.g., applicant, recipient, subrecipient, etc.) are not always consistent across each program. Be sure to check the glossary at the end of each PAPG to prevent confusion around how each term is used.
- Refer to the PAPGs for more in-depth information about each program. The PAPGs are available on the respective agency websites and there are links to each in the database.
- Total funding amounts for programs fluctuates each fiscal year. Use the ‘advanced search’ bar at [this link](#) to learn more about total funding amounts for each program.
- Access to current and future policies related to federal wildfire recovery programs are available through the [online Library of Congress](#).
- Each federal agency that assists in recovery efforts has a [resource library](#) where the most current form of PAPGs can be accessed.

Insights for Developing Wildfire Assistance Databases

Improving access to wildfire adaptation assistance before and after wildfire requires continued upkeep and re-assessment of databases and other resources that help users navigate the growing number of options available for hazard recovery. Below, we provide suggestions for others considering developing similar databases on different elements of wildfire adaptation:

- Maintaining this database via regular updates is important so that users access the most up-to-date information. New programs are being created, and existing ones are being modified. Frequent review of database content will help ensure that emergent needs or opportunities will be added to the database, and that information will be assigned to existing categories in ways that help users discern their applicability to tailored conditions.
- Building a feedback loop between users and the database hosts (or direct contact with the person who is responsible for maintaining it) can ensure that this database or others are functioning and assisting users as intended. Ideal opportunities for feedback might include users' experiences with specific funding amounts and durations, differences between information presented in the database and the user experience applying for or receiving assistance, and suggestions about information within the database that could benefit from greater clarity or depth, including upcoming changes to programs.
- States can work with database hosts to provide complementary state-level wildfire assistance program summaries using similar categories for information. State-based information could be incorporated into the main body of the database or as separate tabs for each individual state. In addition to state resources, state-level points of contact for recovery assistance and database information could be added so that users can reach out to someone who has had experience navigating both state and federal resources. This could also help distribute database management workload and encourage state-federal collaboration on wildfire recovery.

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Appendices

Table 1. Criteria for published database with explanations

Name	The title of the grant.	Ex: Hazard Mitigation Grant Program-Post Fire (HMGP-PF)
Agency	The agency providing the assistance.	Ex: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Funding type	How the money is disbursed.	The different types of funding types with explanations of each are as listed below: • Loan: an amount of money borrowed from a person or financial institution with the agreement that it will be paid back later, usually with extra money added called interest (dependent on contract with agency). • Cost share: the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds or contributions (unless authorized by federal statute). This term includes matching, which refers to required levels of cost share that must be approved. • Payment: a direct financial disbursement or program benefit made by the USDA to eligible farmers, ranchers, or rural program participants via the Farm Bill or related to federal relief legislation. • Award: a grant of financial assistance for a specified purpose by the federal government to an eligible recipient. • Grant: an award of financial assistance, including cooperative agreements, by FEMA to an eligible recipient. • Reimbursement: a financial repayment made by the USDA to program participant, grantee, or agency for allowable, out-of-pocket expenses already incurred while performing approved program activities. • Payment forgiveness: a reduction or cancellation of a loan balance that results in a financial loss to the government.
Category	The sector for which the program most appropriately fits.	The different sectors are as follows: Agriculture & Natural Resources; Health & Social Services; Individual Assistance; Housing; Economic Recovery; Infrastructure; Planning; Wildfire Response.
Eligible applicants	The individual or entity that will go through the application process.	Ex: homeowner, business owner, local/state agency, etc.
Application window	The timeframe allotted by the federal agency to complete the application process.	Ex: Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DOL) allows 30 days after the announcement of program availability for applications.
Funding duration	The length of time recipients/subrecipients have to complete the projects approved for the program and how long they have to spend the awarded funding.	Ex: Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DOL) allows up to 26 weeks after the date of the disaster declaration to use funds.

Declaration Requirement	The declaration requirement in order for assistance to be accessible to impacted individuals.	The different declaration types and explanations of each are as follows: • Major Disaster Declaration: any natural catastrophe or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood or explosion, in any part of the US that, in determination of the President, causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant disaster assistance under the Stafford Act to supplement the efforts and available resources of states, local governments and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship or suffering caused thereby. • Emergency Declaration: any occasion or instance for which the president determines federal assistance is needed to supplement state, local, tribal, or territory (SLTTs) efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the US. • Agency Secretary or Administrator Decision: an official ruling or action made by department officers, employees, or committees that directly affects a program participant's benefits, loans, or applications. • Fire Management Grant Program Declaration: an official federal approval by FEMA that provides immediate. Financial and logistic assistance to state, local, and tribal governments to fight active wildfires threatening to become major disasters. • Not Applicable.
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Rebuilding after the Marshall Fire in Colorado, 2023
(photo: Cat Edgeley)







The Northern Rockies Fire Science Network (NRFSN) serves as a go-to resource for managers and scientists involved in fire and fuels management in the Northern Rockies. Funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, NRFSN is one of 15 Fire Science Exchange Networks across the country. The network facilitates knowledge exchange by bringing people together to strengthen collaborations, synthesize science, and enhance science application around critical management issues.