

Key Components of Project Applications for Safe Room Rebate Projects

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) funding can be sought for “grouped” safe room projects. These projects typically consist of multiple buildings for which a safe room for less than 16 people is desired on the building property to protect occupants from extreme wind events. The subapplication may be developed by a local or State agency with outreach to owners of potentially participating properties. These projects are done using “rebates”: each building owner obtains a contractor to install the safe room and is reimbursed for 75-percent (up to a predetermined limit) of the individual safe room project cost. A subapplication that is requesting funds for a safe room rebate project should understand the specific requirements for this type of project to be able to be fully reviewed by FEMA. The following items are some of the key components of a thorough safe room rebate subapplication.

Participating Properties

- The participating properties must be identified. During the subapplication development stage, the community should be engaged to determine how many safe rooms will be constructed through the subapplication. Due to potential changes in the list of participating properties (e.g., owners backing out of the project), it is recommended that a list of alternate participating properties also be developed. Clearly identifying the number of participating properties is critical to determining an accurate cost estimate and performing a benefit-cost analysis (BCA).
 - FEMA recommends using a spreadsheet or database to organize participating properties and relevant data.
 - By compiling a complete set of relevant data, clearance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can be achieved early in the subapplication approval process.
- Individual property data should include: owner name, physical address, date of construction for residence receiving the safe room, photograph of main structure, and the number of people that will be protected at each address, whether the safe room will be located within 100 feet of an existing structure, and whether the residence is in a historic district.
- The location of each participating property must be identified on a legible Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), where available, to determine the safe room location in relation to the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). The SFHA, also known as the 100-year floodplain, is the area of a community identified on a map that may experience flooding by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event. When possible, safe rooms should be located outside of the SFHA. When located in an SFHA, the community must be a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)-participating community, and all applicable floodplain requirements must be met.
 - When there is no option but to install a safe room in a SFHA, FEMA 320 Section II, provides the appropriate siting criteria.
 - The flood zone and depth of expected flooding at the site (per the FIRM) must be identified for each property located in an SFHA.

Safe Room Details

- For each participating property, the safe room type (above- or below-ground), construction (whether the safe room will be site-built or a pre-manufactured unit), and location of the safe room (latitude and longitude) should be provided.

NOTE: The structure of the rebate program means that the safe rooms to be installed typically have not yet been selected when the subapplication is submitted. This means that the owner may not yet know the specific type of safe room that they will choose. However, the owner should be capable of identifying whether it will be above- or below-ground and what the exact location will be (e.g.,

whether it will be within the main building, attached to the main building, or separate from the main building but located on the property).

- The subapplication *must* include documentation identifying how the grant will be administered and ensure compliance with FEMA design criteria found in FEMA 320, *Taking Shelter from the Storm: Building a Safe Room for Your Home or Small Business*, (2008 edition) and FEMA 361, *Design and Construction Guidance for Community Safe Rooms* (2008 edition).
 - In all cases, these projects must result in a completed safe room constructed to meet or exceed the criteria in FEMA 320 or FEMA 361 and verified by a licensed design professional.
 - If a pre-manufactured safe room is to be used, it should have a marking or label identifying the level of protection being provided (i.e., the criteria contained in FEMA 320). Further, documentation must be provided noting that the safe room is installed on an appropriate foundation.
- While the safe room rebate subapplication typically does not have a specific safe room identified for each participating property, the subapplication must select a representative safe room to use for cost estimate and BCA purposes. The representative safe room must be a prescriptive solution from FEMA 320 or meet or exceed the design criteria of FEMA 361. The subapplication must provide clear documentation of the cost of the safe room and the source of matching funds. Typical individual safe room subapplications identify the homeowner as the source of the 25 percent match. The subapplication should demonstrate that the subapplicant has informed the homeowners of their responsibility for the match.
 - FEMA *strongly* recommends including information on the matching funds in a notice of interest (NOI) form. The NOI can be used to identify the number of willing participants and inform homeowners of their responsibilities.
 - Owners are allowed to spend as much or as little as they desire on the safe room (provided it meets or exceed the criteria contained in FEMA 361), so the maximum reimbursement amount should be defined at the outset of the project and the homeowner may not receive the full 75-percent reimbursement if the cost exceeds an amount determined by the subapplication. The maximum reimbursement amount should be clearly communicated to owners when they are solicited for the program.
 - The cost estimate should include line items for all potential costs associated with implementing the proposed project, including permitting, inspection, construction, and administrative costs.
- The subapplication must include documentation that participating homeowners have been informed of their responsibility to maintain their safe room to be easily accessible and free of clutter at all times.
- The subapplication must include a comprehensive work schedule that includes milestones for individual work line items (this is typically not the responsibility of the homeowners). Generally, the work schedule should include line items for project planning, design (if necessary), contractor bidding (if necessary), construction steps, inspections, and project closeout. The Period of Performance cannot exceed 36 months including 6 months for State and FEMA closeout activities.
 - The subapplicant may find it advantageous to allow individual property owners bid out the work for their individual safe room.

If the subapplicant intends to pursue this route, the subapplication should demonstrate that property owners have been informed that it will be their responsibility to find a suitable contractor who understands and will comply with FEMA safe room design criteria and standards described in FEMA Publications 320, *Taking Shelter from the Storm: Building a Safe Room for Your Home or Small Business* and FEMA 361, *Design and Construction Guidance for Community Safe Rooms*.