

MAXIMIZING FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Funding Steps for Local Governments

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Federal agencies are working to provide resources and flexibility to communities in support of efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. To help ensure that hospitals meet eligibility and compliance requirements for FEMA funding Witt O'Brien's experts are working with hospital administrators to understand what FEMA will and won't cover under Category B, EMP, along with an emphasis on how to get these much-needed dollars in an expeditious timeframe.

Unlike typical FEMA declarations for storm damage, the COVID-19 pandemic adds different requirements needed to substantiate costs. FEMA published guidance on March 19, 2020 indicating basic types of eligible emergency protective measures required by the COVID-19 response.

Below is a timeline which depicts how long it may take to access FEMA funding under the COVID-19 streamlined process.



It's imperative that when applying for FEMA reimbursement, hospitals always remain one step ahead to cut down on any lag time in between the steps of the process. Obviously, this is easier said than done, especially during a pandemic, however there are approaches which may help hospitals get the dollars more quickly, including the following:

- Develop an estimate for eligible and expected costs by type for the next 60-90 days.
- Request an expedited Project Application with an advancement for up to fifty percent of the total approved project value.
- Avoid the back-and-forth with FEMA on 'Requests for Information' by submitting complete and accurate documentation.
- Provide clear descriptions of each action taken to protect public health safety and then produce detailed cost estimates.
- Ensure submitted items are in the correct format, use the right terminology and include only eligible items.

Most of all, to save the much-needed time during a crisis like this, hospitals need to take the time needed to prepare for such a disaster and now is as good a time as any to get processes put into place. We recommend the five key preparations:

- Be familiar with the type of expenses eligible for reimbursement.
- Know the hospital's Human Resources/Labor policy.
- Create record-keeping procedures for disaster-related expenses in a separate cost center.
- Establish a preapproved vendor list in accordance with FEMA requirements.

We look forward to the opportunity to guide our healthcare clients. Please contact us at covidhelp@wittobriens.com for information or to schedule a step-by-step webinar which will provide details on costs that are potentially eligible for reimbursement under the emergency declaration.