

# **Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition: Questions & Answers**

## **What is the Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition?**

The Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition is a grant program to support projects that will make Texas communities—in this case communities in southeast Texas impacted by Hurricane Harvey—more resilient to future natural disasters. Areas that have been identified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and by the state of Texas as “Most Impacted and Distressed” (MID) areas were eligible to seek grant funding.

## **Why is HUD making this funding available?**

The purpose of these Community Development Block Grants for Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) grants is to foster strategies to reduce future losses. Overall, HUD seeks to: 1) support data-informed investments in high-impact areas; 2) build the capacity of States and local governments to evaluate disaster risks; 3) support the implementation of policies that reflect local and regional priorities that will have long-lasting effects on community risk reduction; and 4) maximize the impact of available funds from other sources.

## **Who could participate in the competition?**

The competition was open to cities, counties, COGs, state agencies, Indian Tribes, Port Authorities, River Authorities, and special purpose districts.

## **What kind of mitigation projects was the Texas General Land Office (GLO) looking to fund?**

As the agency responsible for distributing the grants, GLO sought applications for project that include flood control and drainage improvements, infrastructure improvements, green infrastructure, public facilities, and buyouts.

## **How many applications were received and how much money will be distributed for the first round of funding?**

GLO received 220 extensive applications totaling more than \$5 billion in requests for the \$1 billion in available in this first round of funding.

## **How many projects were funded?**

Based on the scoring results, the GLO has identified more than 80 projects in 40 counties across southeast Texas that will receive anywhere from \$4 million to \$54 million in funding. Many of the communities receiving support have never had access to this kind of funding; the projects made possible from these grants will benefit the residents of these communities for generations.

## **How were the winning projects selected?**

Grants were awarded through a transparent and fair process approved by HUD. Grantees selected in this first round of funding represent the highest-scoring applications meeting program eligibility requirements based on published criteria. The scoring criteria was first made available in the State Action Plan in November 2019, after which it was available for public comment through January 2020. The GLO also held several public meetings across the impacted area to

take input and proposed a final plan to HUD, which was approved in March 2020. In May 2020 GLO launched the competitions with application guides, scoring criteria, FAQs, and videos.

### **How will the funding be distributed?**

At least fifty (50) percent of funds must address identified risks in MID areas identified by HUD; the remainder will go to MID areas identified by the state of Texas (HUD-MID and State-MID, respectively). Also, all of these funds are going directly to projects that will benefit areas that are at least 51% low-to-moderate-income Texans.

### **How many applications were accepted to receive grant funding?**

This first round of funding will support 81 projects in 40 counties across the state impacted by Hurricane Harvey - a storm of extraordinary proportions and immeasurable disruption to the lives of Texans.

### **Will more funding be available?**

Yes. This historic first round of funding represents \$1 billion of a total \$2.14 billion the GLO will be distributing for Harvey mitigation grants. Information in the next round of funding will be announced in the coming months. Overall, the GLO is responsible for administering more than \$4.2 billion in funding from HUD for infrastructure, housing, and planning programs.

### **Why did Houston and Harris county not receive any funding?**

Many projects in Harris County scored well, but the 81 awards we are able to announce represent the highest scoring projects in the first round of funding. We received more than \$5.5 billion in requests from 220 applications for \$1 billion. Four projects totaling \$90.4 million in Harris County were amongst the highest scoring projects, which are:

- City of Pasadena: Flood Mitigation Project - \$47,278,951.21
- City of Baytown: East District Wastewater Treatment Plant Phase II - \$32,394,113.86
- City of Galena Park: Water Plant Improvements Project - \$5,482,123
- Jacinto City: Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Project - \$5,319,717

These four projects are in addition to another four projects awarded in March bringing Harris County's total funding allocation to more than \$117 million in the first round. We will be holding a second round for \$1,144,776,720 in remaining funding in the coming months.

### **How did the GLO create its scoring process?**

The scoring criteria was based on HUD's requirements as outlined in the Federal Register. Where the nearly \$1.4 billion in funding Houston and Harris County received from FEMA was based on the number of assets – such as homes and other buildings – within a jurisdiction, HUD requires the scoring criteria to score based on the social vulnerability of the community and a cost benefit analysis targeting populations of low-to moderate income individuals within the jurisdiction that is applying for funds.

### **What do you have to say to those that think this was politically driven decision?**

HUD does not allow applicants to be graded on a curve. The GLO set clearly defined scoring criteria that was made available to all eligible applicants for more than 6 months before the application opened. The process was transparent, and applicants were scored equally based on the information they provided in their applications.

### **Why weren't Houston and Harris county advised that their applications were on a path to score poorly?**

Under federal laws and requirements, the GLO cannot show favoritism to any applicant. All applicants receive the scoring criteria well in advance of the competition kick off and was even provided the scoring calculator to determine the scores of all applications. Both Houston and Harris County could have used these tools to know what their score would be prior to submitting their applications.

### **If we claim our formula was fair, why would you say you might change it?**

Changes to the scoring criteria must be submitted to HUD for approval through an action plan amendment process. This is commonly done several times for HUD allocations.

This is the first time HUD has allocated mitigation funding and it was also the first time HUD required a cost benefit analysis. We may consider changes that will be applied equally across all applicants that make adjustments within HUD requirements.

### **How much unspent money do Houston and Harris County have?**

To date Houston and Harris County have only drawn down about \$66.5 million of the \$2.3 billion in direct allocations of HUD CDBG-DR funds. Which means Houston and Harris County have yet to administer \$2.2 billion in their original allocation. Compare this to the GLO's successful draw down of more than \$1.3 billion of its approximately \$3.3 billion in the same allocation of funds. The GLO has drawn down more than 20 times the amount of funding in the same amount of time as Houston and Harris County.

**For More information:**

**<https://recovery.texas.gov/mitigation/>**