

Mankato, Minnesota, Has Adequate Policies, Procedures, and Business Practices to Effectively Manage Its FEMA Public Assistance Grant Funding





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

Mankato, Minnesota, Has Adequate Policies, Procedures, and Business Practices to Effectively Manage Its FEMA Public Assistance Grant Funding

August 21, 2015

Why We Did This

The City of Mankato, Minnesota (City) received a \$939,719 grant for damages from a June 2014 disaster. We conducted this audit early in the grant process to identify areas where the City may need additional technical assistance or monitoring to ensure compliance with Federal requirements.

What We Recommend

The report contains no recommendations.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

What We Found

The City has established policies, procedures, and business practices to account for and expend Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance grant funds according to Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines.

FEMA Response

Because the audit did not identify any issues requiring further action from FEMA Region V, we consider this audit closed.



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Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

August 21, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: Andrew Velasquez, III
Regional Administrator, Region V
Federal Emergency Management Agency

FROM: John V. Kelly
Assistant Inspector General
Office of Emergency Management Oversight

SUBJECT: *Mankato, Minnesota, Has Adequate Policies, Procedures, and Business Practices to Effectively Manage Its FEMA Public Assistance Grant Funding*
Audit Report Number OIG-15-129-D

We audited Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance grant funds awarded to the City of Mankato, Minnesota (City). We conducted this audit early in the Public Assistance Program process to identify areas where the City may need additional technical assistance or monitoring to ensure compliance with Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines. In addition, by undergoing an audit early in the grant cycle, grant recipients have the opportunity to correct noncompliance before they spend the majority of their grant funding. It also allows them the opportunity to supplement deficient documentation or locate missing records before too much time elapses.

As of March 2015, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (Minnesota), a FEMA grantee, had awarded the City \$939,719 for damages resulting from severe storms and flooding beginning on June 11, 2014, and continuing through July 11, 2014. The award provided 75 percent funding for 14 projects for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and permanent work. To assess the City's policies, procedures, and business practices, we reviewed costs for three FEMA-approved projects totaling \$277,281 (see appendix A). At the time of our audit the City had completed seven projects, was working on five, and had not started two.



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Background

During the incident period of June 11, 2014, through July 11, 2014, torrential rain impacted the State of Minnesota. Rivers and streams crested at near record levels. As a result, the City closed roads because of flooding, landslides, and mudslides. The storm brought down electrical wires and trees, disrupting services and emergency assistance to citizens stranded in their residences, and disabled vehicles in the flooded areas (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Entrance to Elks Nature Center



Source: City of Mankato, Minnesota

Results of Audit

The City has adequate policies, procedures, and business practices to account for and expend FEMA grant funds according to Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines. The City accounted for disaster costs on a project-by-project basis and adequately supported the costs. Further, the contracts the City awarded for flood-related damages met Federal procurement standards.

Project Cost Accounting

The City has an effective system in place to ensure it accounts for disaster costs on a project-by-project basis and can adequately support disaster-related costs as the following Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines require:



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- Grantees must account for large project expenditures on a project-by-project basis (Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 206.205(b)). FEMA requires subgrantees to keep records for all projects on a project-by-project basis (*Public Assistance Guide*, FEMA 322, June 2007, p. 137).
- Subgrantees must maintain accounting records that adequately identify the source and application of Federal funds and maintain source documentation to support those accounting records (44 CFR 13.20(b)(2) and (6)).

The City set up individual project numbers in its general ledger financial software. The City used each project number to track expenditures for payroll, vehicle costs, and vendor payments. We assessed the adequacy of the City's policies and procedures for \$277,281 of claimed cost documentation for three projects consisting of contract costs and force account labor, equipment, and materials. We determined that the City properly segregated costs by project and maintained sufficient detailed documentation to support the costs.

Procurement Practices

The City has adequate procurement practices in place to ensure compliance with Federal procurement standards at 44 CFR 13.36. We discussed procurement practices with the City's contracting officials and reviewed the City's contracting files. The City properly awarded procurements; conducted cost or price analyses; maintained adequate records documenting procurement history; and monitored contractors to ensure they met the contract terms, conditions, and specifications. The City also has affirmative steps to ensure the use of minority firms, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms when possible. The City awarded its largest disaster recovery contract to a women's business enterprise.

Discussions with Management and Audit Follow-Up

We discussed the results of our audit with FEMA, Minnesota, and City officials during our audit. We also provided a draft report in advance to these officials and discussed it at an exit conference with Minnesota officials on June 16, 2015. Because there were no findings, FEMA, and City officials declined the final exit conference. Because the audit did not identify any issues requiring further action from FEMA, we consider this audit closed.



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The Office of Emergency Management Oversight major contributors to this report are Paige Hamrick, Director; Patti Smith, Acting Audit Manager; Sharon Snedeker, Senior Auditor; and Patricia Epperly, Auditor.

Please call me with any questions at (202) 254-4100, or your staff may contact Paige Hamrick, Director, Central Regional Office - North, at (214) 436-5200.



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Appendix A

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

We audited FEMA Public Assistance grant funds awarded to the City of Mankato, Minnesota, Public Assistance Identification Number 013-39878-00. Our audit objective was to determine whether the City’s policies, procedures, and business practices are adequate to account for and expend FEMA grant funds according to Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines for FEMA Disaster Number 4182-DR-MN. As of March 16, 2015, the cutoff date of our audit, Minnesota had awarded the City \$939,719 for damages resulting from severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on June 11, 2014. The award provided 75 percent FEMA funding for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and permanent work for 3 large and 11 small projects.¹

As of the audit cutoff date, Minnesota had paid the City \$658,978 (70 percent of its award) in disaster costs reimbursements for 13 projects. To assess the policies and procedures the City used for this disaster, we reviewed costs for one large and two small FEMA-approved projects totaling \$277,281 (see table 1).

Table 1: Projects Reviewed

| Project Number | Category of Work | Award Amount |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 80 | C – Roads and Bridges | \$ 15,316 |
| 715 | B – Protective Measures | 105,215 |
| 628 | A – Debris Removal | 156,750 |
| Total | | <u>\$277,281</u> |

Source: FEMA project worksheets

We interviewed FEMA, Minnesota, and City officials; assessed the adequacy of the policies, procedures, and business practices the City uses or plans to use to account for and expend Federal grant funds and to procure and monitor contracts for disaster work; judgmentally selected and reviewed (generally based on dollar amounts) project costs and procurement transactions for the projects included in our audit scope; reviewed applicable Federal regulations and FEMA guidelines; and performed other procedures considered necessary to accomplish our objective. As part of our standard audit procedures, we notified the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board of selected contracts the City awarded under the grant to determine whether the contractors were

¹ Federal regulations in effect at the time of the disaster set the large project threshold at \$120,000.



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Appendix A (continued)

debarred or whether there were any indications of other issues related to those contractors that would indicate fraud, waste, or abuse. As of the date of this report, the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board's analysis was ongoing. When it is complete, we will review the results and determine whether additional action is necessary. We did not perform a detailed assessment of the City's internal controls over its grant activities because it was not necessary to accomplish our audit objective.

We conducted this performance audit from March 2015 to June 2015, pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objective. In conducting this audit, we applied the statutes, regulations, and FEMA policies and guidelines in effect at the time of the disaster.



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Appendix B

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