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Interview

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SRIA INTERVIEW GUIDE

**CUSTOMER SURVEY AND ANALYSIS SECTION
(CSA)**

Pages 2-4 emailed to interviewees ahead of time to let them know purpose of interview, assure confidentiality, and what to expect. Information is again summarized at beginning of interview, and respondents are asked if they have any questions before interview begins.

Introduction

The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, passed in January 2013, added Section 428 to the Stafford Act and authorized the Public Assistance program to implement alternative procedures pilot programs that affect the way that the PA program provides assistance for the repair, restoration, and replacement of damaged facilities (i.e., permanent work projects). Additionally, the PA Alternative Procedures set new guidelines to expedite and increase funding for debris removal projects. For **permanent work**, the law authorized FEMA to pilot the following alternative procedures:

- Grants on the basis of fixed estimates for public assistance permanent work projects;
- Alternate projects, also called in-lieu contributions, without the 10 percent reduction in eligible costs that is normally applied;
- Consolidating the repair, restoration or replacement work on damaged facilities as a single project based on estimates; and
- The use of all or part of the excess grant funds for cost-effective activities related to mitigation or PA program planning.

The law also emphasized that FEMA would accept cost estimates for fixed costs projects that were prepared by professionally licensed engineers; or at the request of a subrecipient, provide estimates to an independent expert panel for validation.

For **debris removal**, the law authorized FEMA to pilot the following alternative procedures:

- Use of a sliding scale to determine the Federal share for removal of debris and wreckage, based on the time it takes to complete debris and wreckage removal;
- Use of program income from recycled debris without offset to the grant amount;
- Reimbursement of base and overtime wages for PA applicants performing or administering debris and wreckage removal; and
- Cost-share incentive to a state, tribal or local government to have a debris management plan approved by FEMA and have pre-qualified one or more debris and wreckage removal contractors before the date of declaration of the major disaster.

Purpose of the Research

In order to understand the effectiveness of the Alternative Procedures program (also known as the Sandy Recovery Act, SRIA, Debris Pilot, 428 Projects, or PA Pilot), we are collecting insight from participants. The goals of the Alternative Procedures program are to increase flexibility for applicants, expedite the public assistance process, and provide financial incentives for timely and cost-effective completion of projects. We are interested in discussing your experience and feelings associated with participating in the Alternative Procedures program so we can identify successes and shortcomings in the new process. We are in **no way** evaluating or auditing your application for assistance. This is simply to better inform FEMA whether the changes made to the Public Assistance program are benefitting applicants.

Method

This research will involve your participation in a one-on-one interview that will take about one hour to complete. The Customer Satisfaction Analysis (CSA) Section created the survey design and carried out the study in order to be an independent, third party to conduct interviews and analyze data. Grounded Theory method will be utilized to conduct in-depth interviews and analyze data. Two members of CSA will be present during interviews, one will serve as interviewer, the other as a note-taker. Interviews will not be recorded.

Participant Selection

You have been selected to participate in this research because you took part in the SRIA procedures and can offer insight into the process. Participants have been taken from a sample all over the country to represent varying disaster types, locations, and regions. Information gained from participants will be compiled into reports, presentations, etc.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate, there will be no bearing on current or future FEMA applications.

Procedures

A. We are asking for your help in learning about your experience in the Alternative Procedure process – how you made the decision to participate, comparing this process to previous disasters (if you have prior experience), and how the overall experience has been. Overall, we are looking for your opinion on the process, lessons learned, and future improvements for the program.

B. During the interview you will be asked a series of questions pertaining to your experience. These are open ended questions which we will document your opinion. Though many people may have been involved in the process, we ask that you limit the interview to those most knowledgeable. We will not be recording the interview, and will need to take detailed notes during the interviews, too many people in the interview will make this very difficult.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and we will move on to the next question. The information is confidential and only CSA will have access to the information documented during your interview.

Duration

We expect this interview to take 45 minutes to one hour.

Risks & Benefits

We don't anticipate any risks from participating in this study. We hope to collect information to improve the PA program, and SIRA in particular, to enhance the program for future disasters.

Confidentiality

We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that we collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will be assigned a number instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what your number is. Your personal responses will not be attributed to you when we make our final reports for our FEMA counterparts, or outside of FEMA.

Sharing the Results

Results will be used for various reports within FEMA and to report to Congressional committees concerning the SRIA program.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research and you can stop or withdraw at any time during this interview. Your answers will not affect the outcome of FEMA assistance, or future FEMA assistance.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact one of us or Chad Faber at (940) 891-8956 or at Chad.Faber@fema.dhs.gov

You can ask me any more questions about any part of the research study, if you wish to. Do you have any questions?

Notes:

- For all – distinguish between debris removal and permanent work as necessary. They may call alternative procedures by a few different names: Alternative procedures, Sandy Recovery Act, SRIA, Debris Pilot, 428 Projects, or PA Pilot.
- Capture transcript/verbatim, don't worry about if it fits in the question that was asked – we can pull that out during analysis.
- If a respondent does not want to answer/does not know a question, move on to the next one. The next question may jog their memory.
- If the respondent has a question about their case, or a problem, ask if you can share their information and concern/problem (not their interview data) with someone who can help. We will pass their information along to the right person.
- Assign an interview number based on state and sequential number for each state, ex. NY01.

Disaster #:
 Interviewee Number:
 Organization Represented:
 Interviewer & Note taker:
 Date and Time:
 Location of Interview (City, State):

Which specific PA Alternative Procedures did the applicant use? Check all that apply:

Debris Removal		Permanent Work	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased Federal Cost Share	<input type="checkbox"/>	Subgrant Based on Fixed Estimate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recycling Revenue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidation of Fixed Subgrants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Straight-time Force Account Labor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternate Project (No Reduction in Costs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Debris Management Plan Incentive (2%)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Excess Funds

1. Please walk me through the process you went through to participate in the PA alternative procedures pilot program.

Probe: Who offered you Alternative (SIRA) Procedures? AND Why did you decide to participate in the program? If you did not participate, why not?

2 a. For those with previous disaster experience or some projects that use PA alternative procedures and others that don't:

Comparing this experience to previous disasters, what is different from prior experiences? What is the same?

Probe: What challenges did you face pertaining to PA alternative procedures?

OR

2 b. For those without other disaster experience or projects that don't use PA alternative procedures: What aspects of the PA alternative procedures did you find most valuable?

Probe: What do you see as the challenges to alternative procedures?

3. Would you recommend these procedures to others? Why or why not?

4. Thinking about future disasters, what could be done to improve or enhance the program?