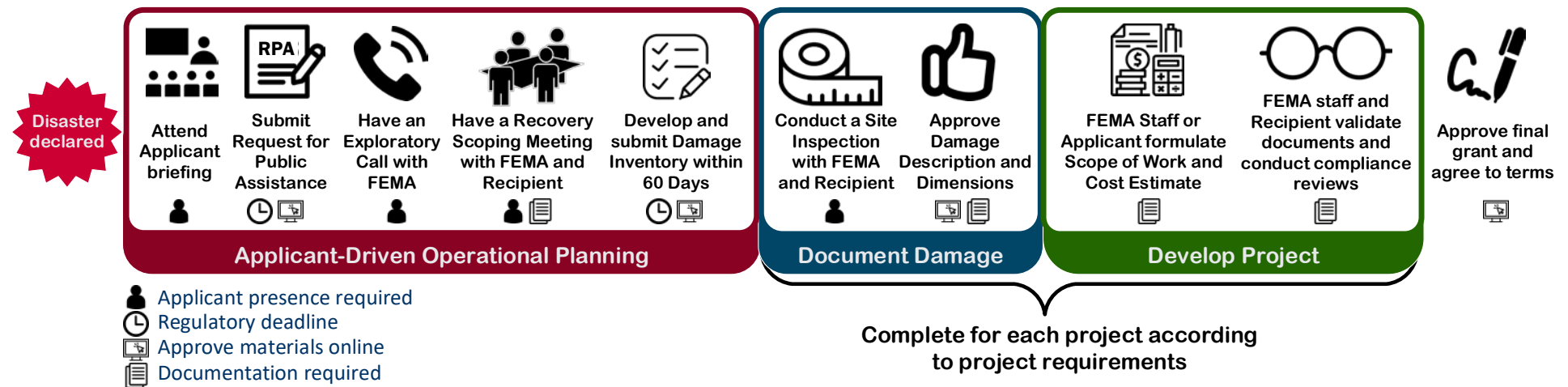# The Public Assistance Award Process Explained

The Public Assistance Program provides federal grant assistance to help communities quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. An **Applicant** is a non-Federal entity (a local, State, Tribal, or Territorial government or eligible private non-profit) submitting an application for assistance under a Federal award given to a **Recipient** (a State, Tribe, or Territory for whom a disaster declaration was made). This document provides an overview of the grant delivery process.

Applicant Briefing: Recipient-led meeting after a disaster declaration to discuss grant deadlines and requirements with potential Applicants.

Request for Public Assistance: Official mechanism by which a potential Applicant requests and is approved to receive Public Assistance funding from FEMA through the Recipient. Applicants submit requests through the online Grants Portal system within 30 days of the disaster declaration. The Request for Public Assistance will be reviewed by the Recipient and FEMA staff, who then assign a **Program Delivery Manager**, a programmatic advisor who serves as an Applicant's customer service agent and manages project processing.

Exploratory Call: Brief introductory phone call that the Program Delivery Manager will set up to introduce the program and discuss, at a high level, the nature and extent of the damage the Applicant has sustained. The Program Delivery Manager should initiate the call within 7 days of an Applicant's assignment to a Program Delivery Manager.

Recovery Scoping Meeting: First substantive meeting of the grant delivery process that should be conducted within 21 days after Applicant assignment to Program Delivery Manager. An Applicant's specific situation will be discussed in detail, including incident-related damage, emergency activities performed, related costs, and their plan for overall recovery.
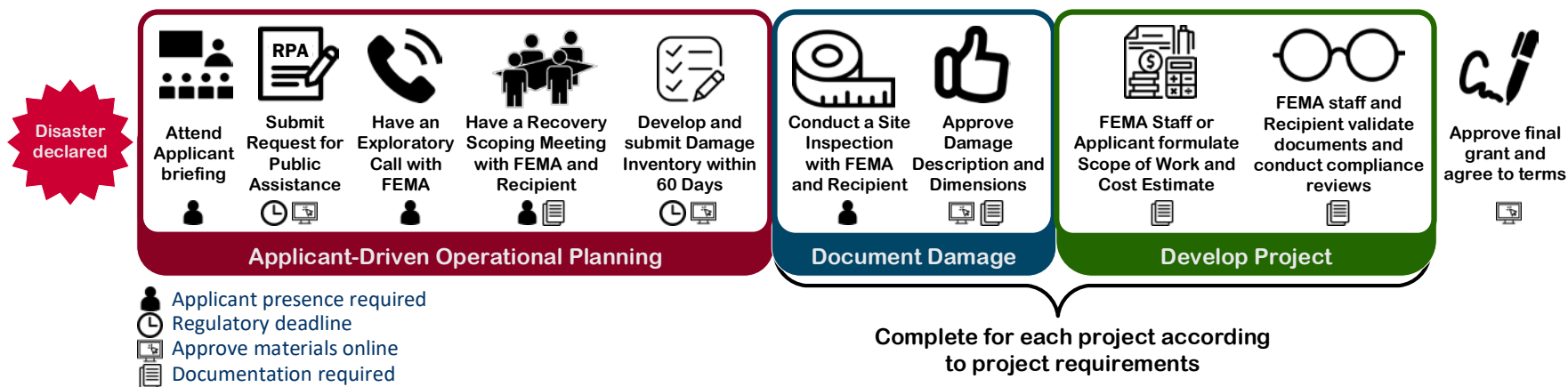
Damage Inventory: List of all emergency work performed and facilities, roads, and other infrastructure damaged by the disaster. This is the basis of Public Assistance projects. An Applicant must work with the Program Delivery Manager to identify and report all disaster-related damage and emergency work activities to FEMA within 60 days of the Recovery Scoping Meeting.

Site Inspection: Visit by FEMA staff to evaluate damaged infrastructure and collect information about the nature and dimensions of damage. Most damaged sites will require a physical inspection, which involves a FEMA site inspector and the Applicant (or Applicant's point of contact).

Damage Description and Dimensions: Description of information obtained from the site inspection. This is the foundational element of a FEMA subgrant document (called a Project Worksheet). Applicants must approve the Damage Description and Dimensions through Grants Portal.

Scopes of Work and Cost Estimates: Portions of the Project Worksheet that describe the work to be done and amount it will cost. Scopes of work and cost estimates are based on the Damage Description and Dimensions and may include efforts to reduce future damage. They can be developed by FEMA or Applicant staff.

Compliance Reviews: Validation by FEMA staff of documentation and information submitted by an Applicant to ensure compliance with Federal regulations regarding insurance, contracts, permits, and environmental and historical preservation. Additional information may be requested. Once all reviews are complete, an Applicant agrees to the funding terms, signs off on the grant and monitors project progress through closeout. Audits and appeals processes exist to review environmental and historic preservation, contract, and insurance matters.

Applicant-Driven Operational Planning

Disaster declared → Attend Applicant briefing → Submit Request for Public Assistance → Have an Exploratory Call with FEMA → Have a Recovery Scoping Meeting with FEMA and Recipient → Develop and submit Damage Inventory within 60 Days

Document Damage

Conduct a Site Inspection with FEMA and Recipient → Approve Damage Description and Dimensions

Develop Project

FEMA Staff or Applicant formulate Scope of Work and Cost Estimate → FEMA staff and Recipient validate documents and conduct compliance reviews → Approve final grant and agree to terms

👤 Applicant presence required
🕐 Regulatory deadline
🖥 Approve materials online
📄 Documentation required

Complete for each project according to project requirements

The *Quick Guide* series is a set of documents that explain the roles and responsibilities of Recipients and Applicants in key steps in FEMA's Public Assistance Program delivery process. The Public Assistance Program provides Federal grant funding to help communities quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. Read more about Public Assistance Program delivery in other Quick Guides, the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide, and resources available on Grants Portal.