

Billions in Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Subgrants Remain Unawarded

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A report to congressional addressees

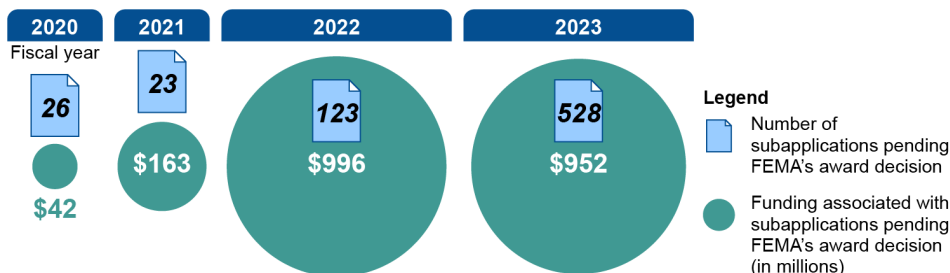
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What GAO Found

As of March 2025, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded 1,245 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) subgrants to communities over its first four grant cycles in fiscal years 2020 through 2023. These subgrants were for mitigation activities to address hazards, such as floods. FEMA allocated about \$2.5 billion for these subgrants, half the \$4.8 billion available. FEMA reimbursed \$62 million, and 37 subgrants had completed work and initiated the closeout process. From April 2025 to March 2026, FEMA did not award subgrants nor obligate funds.

GAO found the median time for FEMA to finalize its review of subapplications and award BRIC subgrants was 7 to 9 months. As of March 2025, FEMA had not made award decisions for 700 subapplications because it had not completed the second of its two review stages. These subapplications were associated with about \$2.2 billion of the \$4.8 billion. Communities said these review timeframes could extend project timelines and increase costs. Identifying efficiencies to shorten FEMA's review may enable communities to begin hazard mitigation activities sooner and minimize additional costs.

Number of BRIC Subapplications Pending FEMA's Award Decision and BRIC Funds Associated with These Subapplications, Across Four Grant Cycles and as of March 2025



Source: GAO analysis of data and information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program. | GAO-26-107774

FEMA announced it was ending BRIC in April 2025, but it did not communicate key information internally and externally until March 2026 when it announced it was restarting BRIC. For example, FEMA did not clarify which subgrants would be terminated. Officials and stakeholders said the lack of actionable information from FEMA headquarters created challenges and delayed mitigation efforts. State officials told GAO that some subrecipients stopped work due to funding uncertainty, which may increase project costs. Moving forward, identifying and applying lessons learned from this period will help ensure FEMA communicates relevant, timely program information internally and externally.

FEMA established performance goals, but it did not consistently establish methods and targets to measure results. For example, one of FEMA's goals in fiscal year 2023 included a goal to spread grants across the U.S. but FEMA did not set a target to determine if it had achieved its goal. FEMA officials also told GAO it did not use performance information to inform its announcement ending BRIC. By establishing results-oriented performance goals and generating annual performance information, FEMA could use this information to determine BRIC's effectiveness and inform agency decision-making.

Why GAO Did This Study

Disasters caused by natural hazards have become costlier and more frequent in recent years. Independent research has found that investing in disaster resilience can reduce costs of future disasters. FEMA launched its BRIC grant program in 2020 to fund activities that enhance resilience and lower disaster costs. In April 2025, FEMA announced it was ending BRIC. In March 2026, FEMA announced it was restarting BRIC.

GAO was asked to review FEMA's implementation of BRIC, and explanatory statement language includes a provision for GAO to conduct oversight of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which made appropriations for BRIC. This report examines (1) communities that applied for and received grants and activities funded, (2) challenges that communities identified and the extent to which FEMA addressed them, (3) the extent to which FEMA communicated BRIC's status and the impact of announcing its end, and (4) the extent to which FEMA measured the program's performance and used this information to inform agency decisions.

GAO reviewed FEMA documentation, analyzed BRIC data from four grant cycles as of March 2025, interviewed a nongeneralizable selection of 6 states and 6 communities, and interviewed FEMA officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations to FEMA, including to identify efficiencies in its subapplication review process, identify and apply lessons learned to improve internal and external communication, and establish effective performance goals and use performance information to determine program effectiveness. DHS concurred and identified actions it plans to take.