

Effective Regional Coordination and Engagement Approaches, 9/24/20

Wareesha Tariq: I hope everyone can hear me. Welcome to the Effective Regional Coordination and Engagement Approaches webinar. Today is September 24, 2020 and this is the final webinar in the eight-part 2020 CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT summer webinar series. I cannot believe it's September already, time has passed in a very unique way this summer but thank you to everyone who has attended and participated in our past seven other webinars in this series. We love the interaction and feedback from everyone involved and I'm hoping that today's presentation will also clarify some very important topics for you.

Just like Chantel mentioned, if you want any more updates, please stay tuned to HUD Exchange where we will post announcements regarding any other future webinar series.

Now let's start by giving a little background on all of our presenters today so you have an idea of who's speaking and what they're all about.

A little about myself. My name is Wareesha Tariq and I'm a community planning and development specialist, a CPD specialist with the Disaster Recovery and Special Issues Division of the Office of Block Grant Assistance at HUD. I have a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations from Penn State and a master's in education policy, organization and leadership from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Specifically, I work with the policy unit within DRSI and our unit is responsible for producing things like the Federal Register notices, policy guidance and regulations, webinar series like this one, presentations, clinics, and technical assistance products related to disaster recovery.

Our unit is here to assist with any policy related questions, and I will be happy to guide you or point you in the right direction when it comes to any policy matter.

Your first presenter today will be Lauren Nichols who has extensive experience in CDBG-DR program management as well as policy implementation. Lauren's background includes design, public policy development, budgeting, implementation and compliance monitoring across multiple recovery programs including economic revitalization, public services, infrastructure, affordable rental housing and single-family homeowner programs. She has also worked on multiple planning programs and capital projects that are focused on transforming practices and strategies around resilient recovery and disaster mitigation.

After Lauren we will hear from Ann Schmid, who is the disaster recovery team leader and historic preservation specialist for the Iowa Economic Development Authority and primarily assists grant recipients with the expenditure of federal disaster assistance grants in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

She is an expert in Section 106 of the NHPA consultation process. She has a master of science in historic preservation from the Art Institute of Chicago and a bachelor of art's degree from St. Olaf College. And has been practicing disaster recovery and historic preservation for over a

decade and she has worked in Iowa since 2010 prior to moving to Iowa and working a variety of preservation roles in Chicago.

After Ann, our last presenter will be Evelyn Campo, who is a certified floodplain manager and a resilience planning specialist for the state of Louisiana Office of Community Development. In her position, Evelyn focuses on watershed planning, flood risk reduction policy and long-term regional resilience. Prior to this position Evelyn worked on municipal permitting, zoning ordinance, comprehensive plan development, local coastal management and local flood plan management.

So that's a little bit of information about all of our presenters today. At the end of the presentation you will see all of our contact information on the last slide, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have follow-up questions after our Q&A ends and we will be happy to assist you.

Now, let's move on the agenda for today. We will start the presentation by going over an overview of community development, block grant disaster recovery as well as community development, block grant mitigation. We will go over coordination requirements as well as case studies from the state of Iowa and the state of Louisiana. After that we will have some time set aside for questions and then finally, we will have highlights on important resources related to this topic.

I think it's going to be a very exciting presentation and I'm really hoping that you will all take this opportunity to ask us questions and let us know if we can further assist you in any other way.

Now, that will be all from me and I'm going to pass the baton to Lauren next who will go over CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT overview and coordination requirements.

Lauren Nichols: Thank you Wareesha and yes I'm very excited to hear from Ann and Evelyn today. But before we hear from them, I'm just going to provide a high-level overview of what is included in the Federal Registers from HUD and through their guidance as well as it relates to coordination. All these requirements are routed in a fairly common-sense concept of making sure that there's consistency across recovery and mitigation programs and projects to help stretch all resources and have a maximum impact with what is available.

So with that, for CDBG-DR and assistance disaster recovery, within the Federal Registers -- so this is one of the more recent Federal Registers but -- and the language may vary slightly across the registers but the idea here is that within an action plan as grantees are putting their action plans together there's a requirement for internal and interagency coordination.

So the grantees have to describe how the grantee will ensure effective communication between different departments and divisions within the grantee's organizational structure, that are involved in all of their recovery efforts. Also, between its lead agency and then subrecipients are ultimately responsible for implementing programs and activities in the action plan. And then also with other local and regional planning efforts to ensure consistency across those efforts.

The action plan also talks about planning and coordination that promotes sound, sustainable long-term recovery planning that's informed by a post disaster evaluation of hazard risks especially as it relates to construction standards and land use decisions. Also coordinating with other local and regional planning efforts to ensure consistency across those plans and then initiatives that are coming from those plans. And then also looking at the history of FEMA flood mitigation efforts to take those into consideration and also their projections into consideration.

And so still kind of going through the CDBG-DR register and the requirements related to action plan there's also this requirement not only within CDBG-DR but across all CDBG programs that have a certain level of consultation as you're designing the program. And so here in particular HUD outlines disaster affected local governments, Indian tribes, local public housing authorities, the federal partners, non-governmental organizations, private sector and other stakeholders and affected parties, and just to make sure that there's consistency of the action plan with the applicable regional redevelopment plans.

And then also with NDR, grantees are encouraged to create a representative multi-sector taskforce that pulls in representatives from all those stakeholders that are described above.

So here are a few other areas of opportunity for coordination for grantees that HUD describes in Federal Registers. This really is as they get into the implementation of their programs, so coordinating with HUD certified housing counseling organizations, working with Indian tribes who have jurisdiction over the tribal areas when providing CDBG-DR assistance to beneficiaries in tribal areas and then also coordinating around environmental and historic preservation reviews to expedite planning and decision making for projects or the Unified Federal Review.

So today you're going to be hearing a lot about mitigation and resilience as the catalyst for effective coordination strategies, at least in the context of Iowa and Louisiana, so we wanted to add this slide as a reminder for how HUD defines mitigation. And they just define it as those activities that increase resilience to disasters and reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of loss of life, injury, damage to and loss of property and suffering hardship by lessening the impact of future disasters.

So in the context of CDBG-MIT the consultation requirements are very similar as under CDBG-DR. Then they have this additional information also that there will be coordination across agencies responsible for recovery, long-term resilience. And for mitigation efforts, the multiple jurisdictions, private public partnerships and then all the local state and federal agencies who are responsible for administering other federal mitigation funds like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA, EPA, etcetera.

There's also a requirement to maximize the impact of funds by ensuring effective communication and coordination between all these entities and encouraging leverage, private public partnerships and coordination with other federal dollars. So here HUD emphasizes the critical importance of coordinating investments across multiple jurisdictions, ensuring that there's effective communication and coordination between State, local departments and divisions involved in all phases of mitigation planning and projects.

And then also within their action plan describing how they partnered with and will continue to coordinate with other partners who manage FEMA and core funds and aligns the MIT activities with other federal, state and local mitigation projects and planning processes.

And then also within the Federal Register there's this real emphasis on enhanced planning and engagement in order to help grantees maximize the opportunity to make sound decisions that are rooted and thoughtful in comprehensive community planning. They describe the working toward an enhanced State hazard mitigation plan. That's a FEMA term that has its own requirements, but it's an enhanced hazard mitigation plan.

Developing and creating a citizen advisory committee to advise on how activities are funded and planned and prioritized with the CBDG-MIT funds similar to this concept of a task force that was encouraged in CBDG-DR funds. And then promoting community level and regional planning for current and future disaster recovery efforts in mitigation investments. And then modernizing building codes, regional land use plans, upgrading mapping data and other capabilities to better understand evolving risks. And then grantees critically must also demonstrate the ability to operate mitigation projects for the useful life of the project which in and of itself can require additional coordination.

So with that, understanding the requirements and how this is all laying the foundation, we're going to hear from Miss Ann Schmid first on the impressive work that's been going on in Iowa over the years and how they've really stretched their CDBG-DR funds.

Ann Schmid: Okay, great. Thank you so much for having me. As I said at the beginning my name is Ann Schmid and I'm the disaster recovery team leader at the Iowa Economic Development Authority. I've been working in CDBG-DR for about eight years now and in the state of Iowa. I'll go through a little bit of a history to give some background of the state and sort of how we've gotten to a point of really maximizing those coordination requirements found in the newer Federal Register notices.

So I want to go all the way back to 1993 and the primary disaster that the state of Iowa faces is flooding, an historic flooding. And if we look at this map, you can see that when we talk about Midwest flooding, we have a huge regional impact. So unlike maybe tornados or even hurricanes that have rather specific points of primary impacts, we're looking at really regional impact or statewide impact when we have these historic floods.

So going all the way back to 1993, that was a very early time in the CDBG-DR program. You can see that the state received \$38 million and then entitlements received a separate appropriation of 15.8 but the primary objective -- the reason I talk about '93, is that the after action report really focused on returning to pre-disaster condition, repairing and restoring and replacing facilities that were damaged in the flood.

So as we move forward to our second largest flood impact in 2008, which actually financially because of the impact on our second largest city, Cedar Rapids, we ended up receiving through multiple appropriations just under a billion dollars of CDBG-DR funding at the state level which

we then awarded out and were able to fund projects across the state including in our entitlements with a focus on buy outs to prevent future loss, infrastructure improvements and housing.

As we look at that 2008 flood effort, as I said, it was statewide, but the primary impact was in the Cedar River Watershed affecting our second most populated city in Iowa. So 60 percent of the flood damage was a result of flooding in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

We did have rural flooding as well. As I said, it was statewide and we have entire communities, the communities of Oakfield and Palo fully inundated with flooding in 2008. So really a wide variety of needs. We had 85 of our 99 counties were included in the federal disaster declaration, but the majority of those counties receiving both individual assistance declarations and public assistance declarations.

As we look at how to best implement the CBDG-DR program after the 2008 flood, we realized that there would be an administrative burden to contracting with subrecipients or local municipalities for every affected county or city. So we began sort of our consideration of regional coordination by looking at how we could affectively offer programs, particularly in our housing awards in a more regional approach.

So we found our local councils of government, so that -- we call them COGS here in Iowa but they have different names throughout the country, but essentially they are the administrative arm of the counties and cities that don't have local capacity who collect a membership coordination and there's a structure in Iowa code to allow the COGS to represent those municipal structures. We identified the COGS, the councils of government, with the greatest capacity in multi-county areas and entered into contracts with them to then implement programs in those regions.

So it was kind of our first attempt at this regional coordination. It worked pretty well for the beginning. I think in the beginning of disaster response everyone is willing to chip in and participate in a collective approach for efficiency. What we found is down the road that structure began to wear thin as elected officials in the counties that were representing projects outside of their county area struggled to kind of understand their role in that process, but it was something that we definitely learned a lot from.

So you know the pros of that regional collaboration or that we reduced the administrative burden, we were able to provide consistency to just having six councils of government that we reported to. They could implement the program efficiently in their regions. And it really increased our timing. But again, as I said, the cons are the turnover of elected officials. It becomes very confusing. We did have a few projects that ended up in some form of litigation or issue and it took a long time to explain why a project in one county was being overseen by a county board of supervisors in another county. So just sort of lessons that we learned early on from that regional coordination approach.

In 2008 -- this is just a summary to kind of show you where we are today and how we've progressed through the state of Iowa. So we really worked on new housing production with our CBDG-DR repair and rehab, rental rehab, homebuyer assistance and interim mortgage assistance. And these programs worked pretty well because the disaster recovery funds actually

arrived relatively quickly after the disaster event. I think as we've learned, housing programs vary depending on in success depending on how soon after the event the CBDG-DR funds are made available.

Eighty-eight percent of our housing went into the production of new housing, mostly multi-family rental. We have a significant housing shortage in Iowa. I think there's a struggle with the market and building housing as I'm sure most of the country has an issue with affordable housing. And so we really did try to use our CBDG-DR to fill those unmet needs. In Cedar Rapids we've spent 34 percent of our housing program funds on new housing assistance.

And this is just an example of the programs we've provided. We supported a lot of historic preservation, rehab or conversion projects. We've focused on sustainable and affordable housing.

But recovery alone is not sufficient. As we moved through that we realized that national flood damage had nearly doubled between 1995 and 2004. The population of Iowa in flooded areas had increased by 18 percent between those two floods. Development is increasing the risk of flood threat with non-sustainable development and reducing the amount of permeable surfaces. And a dollar of every flood mitigation spending yields \$3 to \$5 to avoid future flood damage. So as we looked towards implementing our housing programs and other programs with our '08 funding, we sought ways to be more resilient and to support flood mitigation.

We looked at the old model of dams and levees and determined that gray or hardened defense wasn't keeping up with the threat. So having design limitations, not being able to anticipate or predict future inundation levels, really created a struggle. And we found that we needed to treat the symptom of flooding rather than the cause. Increased runoff, once a raindrop becomes torrent it's very difficult to stop; so how can we hold water in place.

So we funded mitigation activities with our 2008 CBDG-DR including an effort for floodplain mapping. We found that in our state, our maps were woefully out of date with many of our FEMA maps originating in the '70s and '80s. So we worked closely with FEMA and our Department of Natural Resources to enhance and upgrade our floodplain mapping. We offered floodplain education, we offered planning grants for the development of reducing risk in flood prone areas. We sponsored some flood insurance promotion with those funds to really make people aware of what opportunities were available and where they were located within the remapped areas. We did some sustainable building training, so teaching general contractors in our areas what are techniques and tips for sustainable building.

And then we got into watershed planning and this is something that you'll see for the balance of my presentation and then it will I think evolve into the work that Louisiana is doing. And we really started to look at water and how water flows within our state at the watershed level and how we can plan at that watershed level to really improve the quality and the runoff of water. And then after those plans were generated, we were able to do some pilot projects that we called the Iowa watershed projects to install small scale green flood mitigation projects in three selected Iowa watersheds.

So here the breakdown of where our mitigation funding went, those programs that I recently talked about with the second largest being the implementation of those watershed management practices.

And here's just a summary of those results including increased mapping, what those watershed management practices in the field looked like, as well as some other conservation design components that we sponsored.

For all of you CDBG-DR or even CDBG annual program managers out there, this is one of my favorite slides. I know it's impossible to read but we worked with a graphic designer to show the change in the lifespan of action plan. So note here on the far left shows our original action plan as initially approved by HUD at the time of our grant agreement. And then every amendment that we went through, whether it was a substantial or non-substantial amendment, but it showed how the funding changed.

And so it's very interesting to me that new production of housing was a moderate size program when we started disaster response and we thought that the buy-out of residential structures in the floodplain would be our largest program. And as we went through the lifespan, the buy-out program shrank, and the new housing became much larger. So I think this is just an interesting story to tell, sort of where the money goes as you move through a very large disaster recovery CDBG-DR grant.

So how did that funding help Iowans? So we really focused on recovering from the disaster but more importantly allowing folks to permanent remove structures from the floodplain and move to safer areas, dramatically improve the quality of housing and affordable housing and avoid billions of dollars in future losses.

We were also able to create the world class Iowa Flood Center, that's the national model for mitigation modeling and you'll see their role in upcoming projects that we continue to collaborate on.

So again, as we took that model of those three pilot watersheds with our 2008 funds, when HUD issued the National Disaster Resiliency competition project, we partnered again with the Iowa Flood Center and submitted an application. So just in terms of timing, as you heard earlier about the MIT or the mitigation program, that was something that HUD launched slightly more recently, but one of their first attempts at sort of competitive grant programming for resiliency and mitigation, with the partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation with Sandy funds, so 2013 CDBG-DR funding of National Disaster Resiliency program.

So we as a state identified many regional partners, especially the flood center, and we demonstrated that we could prevent significant flood loss if we were to implement that same small watershed program but on a larger scale. So we identified nine additional Iowa watersheds and we were awarded \$96.9 million with NDR funds to implement the Iowa watershed approach.

In doing so, we had to submit a phase one application which included framing all of our programs and identifying our partners. And then our phase two application was submitted in

October of 2015 that outlined our performance matrix and we specifically negotiated the anticipated successes of those programs with HUD.

This is just a brief timeline of the award to the State was received in January of 2016 and by statute with Sandy funds we have until September of 2020 to get all of the National Disaster Resiliency funds expended.

As I said earlier, with this program, we really looked to reduce flood risks. We looked at what does it mean to be resilient. How do we improve water quality, engage stakeholders through collaboration, improve the quality of life and health especially for vulnerable populations, and develop a program that was replicable throughout the Midwest and the United States?

So we've looked at water resiliency from a water perspective: How it flows, not by municipal boundaries. We needed to identify as a requirement of NDR, areas that had been subject to repetitive damage through presidential declarations in 2011 through 2013. We did look at urban areas that would qualify and found one urban watershed that we incorporated into our application. We considered housing rehabilitation as a resilient component in our urban watersheds. And we used the watershed management authority model, which you'll hear about a little bit more, to provide that local boots on the ground capacity to implement our program through providing planning and technical assistance as well as design and engineering for the practices.

So the Iowa watershed approach provided a collaborative planning with more than a dozen partners and organizations to do all of those things that we had anticipated to improve water quality, to reduce flooding and to reduce repetitive damage. We also integrated into that housing resiliency for residential housing, rehabilitation and resiliency in the city of Dubuque, as well as urban infrastructure projects. So more of our traditional water sewer projects but with a resilient design to them.

So here's just an image of the many partners that we worked with in collaboration on the Iowa watershed approach. So a combination of local municipalities, state agency partners, university partners, private public non-profits throughout the area that all came together to provide not only technical assistance to the implementation of our practices but also modeling and education and connection with land use and land owners.

So again, we focused on eight rural watersheds and one urban watershed within the city of Dubuque and here they are throughout the entire state. All of them meeting those qualification of having repetitive disasters in declared counties between 2011 and 2013. So again, as I said, the infrastructure was within our city, City of Dubuque, Coralville and Storm Lake. The housing rehab was limited to the city of Dubuque and then we did have a component of planning partners who provided both watershed plan support as well as technical assistance to implementation and modeling of the effectiveness of the practices post installation.

The watersheds themselves were represented by eight counties that took the lead for each watershed, one for each watershed and they were able to fund a watershed coordinator who could sell practices, speak with land owners, talk to the public about the positive benefits of these

activities. And here's just a little bit of a breakdown of how that \$96 million was expended with those funds.

The challenges of resiliency here were the limitations on location. So we were limited to HUD's CDBG-DR standard, you know MID-URN areas, declared counties and municipal boundaries. And we just found that water doesn't want to stay within municipal boundaries. And so putting the practices in the eligible areas wasn't always the best location within the watershed.

You can see one of our watersheds here, the only eligible area was at the very bottom of the watershed and as we all know, holding water above in the watershed provides much better resiliency downstream.

So that leads us into our 2019 flooding event. For those of you who don't know the state of Iowa was severely impacted when the Missouri River burst multiple levy breaches along that area significantly inundating communities that had otherwise been protected by levies and considered in the 500-year flood risk. They were under eight to nine feet of water for four to six weeks at record heights in southwest Iowa.

We knew that CDBG funding would be coming but we also knew that other federal resources would be available, and the state took a new and unique approach of actually applying to the Federal Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration for a regional planning grant. And so we took what we learned from the Iowa watershed approach and with CDBG-DR and put together a collaborative application for a multi-county land use plan to really look at how we can improve the land and the areas that were inundated by the flood with the hope that with this pre-CDBG-DR planning activity in place, we would be able to then better identify new projects that we could fund.

So we partnered again with our state partners, the Iowa DNR, the Department of Transportation, the flood center and then our local regional council of governments, metropolitan area of planning, and southwest Iowa planning. We partnered with the public private partnership in the state of Iowa that provides resiliency training and business continuity training to communities, as well as partnering with our state's homeland security who manages the FEMA grant and the Iowa Department of Ag and Land stewardship.

So all of those partners together came up with a concept where each partner could contribute to an overall substantial land use plan that would make the region more resilient and reduce future flooding. That plan is currently ongoing, but we hope to generate approaches to river and stormwater management to change the way that the land is currently used to better protect the assets that will remain after the buyouts and other sort of land use changing activities occur as a result of disaster recovery.

So one thing that we really looked at as we then received our HUD allocations for the CDBG-DR funds is making sure that we were fitting the right funding source with the right need. And having that regional collaborative planning partnership in place already allowed us to really identify where would CDBG be the best fit. I think as we struggle with action plan development post-disaster, one of the most important things is to really know all the sources of funds.

You have to [quote ?] for your duplication of benefits anyway, but you also want to know what are the strings which each of those and what is the -- which are easily fit into their right-size spot and which ones are the more challenging fit. I used my children's toy as an example of making sure that the shape fits as you put it in the box because we want to maximize our federal funds.

And so having that economic development authority plan in place, allows us to identify where the CDBG funds can best be used and where we're not. So planting other federal funds or not maximizing maybe state available resources that could be used for something that is more challenging to do with CDBG funds.

So that is the Iowa experience in a nutshell, just talking about regional coordination through both our 2008 flooding, our national disaster resiliency grant and now our 2019 flooding and planning response. And I'm very excited to hear from Evelyn Campo as she presents to us from the Louisiana office where they are also doing really exciting watershed work. Evelyn.

Evelyn Campo: Thank you so much, Ann. I think you're going to want to pass that presenter circle to me so that I can just click through the slides.

Ann Schmid: Did I do it? Oh I think it moved on me. Hold on. Sorry.

Evelyn Campo: Thanks so much. I see it, just [inaudible], thank you.

Ann Schmid: Okay.

Evelyn Campo: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this webinar. Please let me know if my audio is unclear, if you're having any trouble with it. With that I will continue Zoom.

I'm Evelyn Campo with the Louisiana Office of Community Development. And on the agenda for my part of the presentation, we're just going to do a little overview of the Louisiana watershed initiative, we call it the LWI. We're going to talk about some program development, programs we have under way, our experience with coordination and collaboration and some engagement that we've been doing with our community.

So just an overview of the program, I wanted to put this right at the front to bring up this issue that we contend with every day. Many of us in Louisiana are lucky because we get to live near a great water feature, either a river or a lake or the gulf. But that is also a tremendous challenge in that it puts many of our communities at intense flood risk. And so a lot of what we do with the initiative is try to identify those challenges and then turn them into an opportunity for the greater community and for the state.

So a lot of the kind of the birth of the initiative came from the 2016 March and August floods. So in Louisiana we were hit twice in one year with intense rainfall, more than 7.1 trillion gallons. And you can see that the events overlapped in some areas and what was really kind of interesting about these event, but extremely harmful, is that the rain may have fallen in one part of the state

but then because our conveyance systems are so interconnected and our topography is so flat, that water moves and it was flooding houses all along the way.

So we had this really devastating event, it's very fresh in many people's minds still and that motivates a lot of the work that we do. You know, the state has had a history of a lot of coastal flooding challenges. And so that was just kind of part of how we operate is we respond to that coastal threat. But the the 2016 flood really highlighted the inland and the riverine and even the transition zone challenges where you have rainfall and conveyance issues, but you also couple that with a coastal threat in some areas. So it's complicated.

And so that 2016 event also highlighted for us that we have watersheds that we all are fitting in but our political boundaries really don't align with the boundaries of those watersheds. So you can see in this slide the colors are showing you the watershed but the gray lines when the cursor over these gray lines show you where our political boundaries are so those are our parishes which would be like a county in another state.

And so what we realized is if you're taking action and you're just looking at your peers or your community and you put in a flood control structure, it may have an unintended impact to a neighboring community and same thing with your development pattern because you all share one watershed that expands beyond that parish boundary. And so that was a really motivating concept for us informing this initiative.

So some of the guiding principles for us are we want to focus on scientific tools and approaches, and you'll hear more on that in some following slides, transparent and objective decision making, maximizing the natural functions of the flood plans and regional water management. And again we're going to revisit that idea of the regional water management in the following slides.

So getting into our program development, we submitted an action plan for the MIT funds in December 2019. That action plan was approved in February and it details how we would spend 1.2 billion approximately in the MIT funds and that's really targeted at our flood risk. So it also includes a sizeable amount of that funding would go specifically to projects and programs, but we also have less significant focus on data gathering and H&H needs modeling for the watershed.

And one excellent piece of news that is recent for us is that we recently gained access to that line of credit for those funds. We had a grant agreement just recently executed for that so we're so excited to get this rolling. As you can hear from this information that I just presented on this slide, we're pretty early in some of these efforts, right? We're really lucky in that we had time to lay the groundwork for this to really be successful. And so you'll see in some of our engagement slides we had that opportunity to build support before we even got this line of credit.

So this kind of gets more into how these funds will be spent. There's kind of three lanes that we look at in the initiative. One is watershed modeling, so that's that H&H modeling. This was a clearly identified gap in the state. So we talked to many stakeholders in putting together this program and one thing that we heard really clearly from everyone was that we need better data

and we need better models because when we make decisions without the best data and models, we don't know that we might be making decisions incorrectly.

We might be looking at old data and just not realize that things are changing. And so our program focuses on building out that gauge network, creating watershed models and maps and then hosting them in a way that is user friendly and accessible to more than just the technical experts.

So moving on to our projects, of course that is the main focus here. We are looking at a lot of retention, drainage and flood protection projects. Again, our focus here is on flood risk with our programs. And then we're also looking at ways to move people out of harm's way and really adjusting those land use changes that have that kind of compound impact of protecting people.

And then the last element here is our regional programs. Now one thing that we have really focused on in starting up the initiatives is we want this to be a catalyst for widespread and longstanding policy changes in the direction of better development patterns so that we're not fixing mistakes tomorrow that we're making today, right? And so a lot of our program wants to use projects and programs to spur like a new way of thinking about watershed management. And so some of our regional components really get to that aspect of the program.

So now we're going to go through some of our programs that are currently under way. So as I mentioned, we realized pretty early on that we had some gaps where we were undermonitored within the state. And so one thing that this program focuses on that is currently getting mobilized, is building out that river and rain gauge network.

So just a little bit of background on this. We always hear from all of the technical experts that are involved in this that your models aren't going to be good if you don't have good data going into it, you're going to get out of it what you put in. And so that's why this is one of our early focuses in the program.

So just building on the concept of this gauge network, one thing that I thought was really cool that we did recently with the program is we had a lot of outreach from stakeholders in all different fields all across the state to identify new gauge locations. And so that was really helpful because we're trying to eliminate where we may have a [barn stop ?], if these areas are undermonitored you really need to know from the people who are working on the ground in those areas where you should put these gauges.

And so we got a lot of really robust input from all across the state from people with different backgrounds and expertise. And it was really a good exercise, I think. And we're also working with our state agencies across a couple of agencies and with our federal partners to execute this part of the program.

So just getting more into the modeling effort. Again, this was something that was a very clearly identified need and so this program is setting out to address this immediately, very early on in the program. We knew that we needed H&H models everywhere across the state. We had some

degree of sophisticated modeling right at the coast, but we definitely have areas where we have old data or data that is just not there. And so we needed to build out that model statewide.

And one important component of this is that the models are based on, again, that watershed perspective and so they're kind of built within the huck but they're also interconnected. And so the goal is that when we produce these models, if you're trying to see the impacts of a project or an intervention, you don't just see where it affects your community, you could see all those interrelated impacts in the nested watersheds.

So this part kind of speaks a little bit more to that regional component of the program that I mentioned. In addition, all these technical tools that we need, the data and modeling, we also realized that we really need to break down our silos, right. Right from the state we need to go ahead and start working on that.

So one early thing that we've done in this program is we began working on what we're calling the regional capacity building grant program and that's where we took these eight different watersheds in the state and we worked with our local staff the parishes and the municipalities and the planning districts, to figure out how can we start to set up a regional steering committee and fund additional staff so that we're not just working within one jurisdiction, so that we have like consistent communication and coordination and even long-term shared governance of these watersheds.

And then this is very exciting for our folks in the state. One of our main project programs is launched; we're calling it the round one program for short. But it's exciting because this is bringing out kind of the innovations of each locality and each region. It's a funding program that has up to \$100 million as a potential award. The first \$60 million would go to projects that kind of rank the highest on a set of criteria that we came up with with some of our technical experts, which I'll get into in just a minute in the program. And that criteria covers a lot of the kind of forward thinking aspects of watershed management, things like encouraging natural floodplain restoration and emphasizing projects that don't have a negative unforeseen impact that aren't going to just kind of move your flood risk to a different location.

So that first \$60 million goes to the projects selected by score. And then after that point the project the remaining unfunded projects would be forwarded to the region and then the regional steering committee who are -- they're set up now but they're still pretty early in their work, they would have an opportunity to coordinate together to do a regional selection process.

So then more on coordination and collaboration. So we love this quote you can see to the left-side here. What's kind of unique about our program is I'm speaking to you from the Office of Community Development, but that's just one of five state agencies that is heavily involved in this program. So early on the folks working on this program realized, okay, there's a bunch of state agencies that have a hand in this work but if we don't work together, we're going to be missing out on doing it in the best way possible, coordinating with each other. So that is a really successful element of this program that Council on Watershed Management is composed of those agencies. And you can see here that the council really isn't just operating on their own either they're informed by those technical experts that I was referencing.

We have technical advisory groups, those are made up of people in the project field or working on outreach or in policy, and so those are the people who really can speak from their expertise. They also include staff policy agencies. So they can help the council understand what are the implications of different decisions that the council may make. And then in addition to that you have the regional steering committee here on the right and so that's how you get your regional input and your local input. And so that is ongoing throughout the whole initiative.

And we found that the regions are really taking this to another level, like they have great participation on those committees. They have not just folks that they have placed in the seats on the board, but they also have participation from the public and from different fields and interest groups in their community so that's been really successful as well.

So this gives a little bit more information on how we are organizing the work within the region. So we have these eight regions, but we didn't just come up with them and then start working that way, there was quite a process. So we wanted to make sure that we're truly managing within the boundaries of how the water's going to flow within the huck boundaries; but we also wanted to make sure to consider existing relationships within the jurisdiction and things like structural flood protection and all of those elements in deciding, okay, how are we going to work together as a region for the future years for going forward.

And so the watershed initiative has technical experts look at this map of the state and try to figure out how do we split into these different kind of units to work together and then we brought that input to the leaders in each of the parishes and municipalities and so we showed them this map and we said, what do you think? Can you work together this way? And you'll see more on that input on a following slide. But the end result was the parishes came together to pick organizations in their region that they thought could kind of keep them organized with the regional steering committee meeting on time and facilitate those discussions. And so that's what you're seeing here in these state agencies.

So moving to engagement. So this initiative is very much known for meetings and in a good way. What I mean by that is, we're very much known for public participation and stakeholder input. And so one thing that I just want to kind of call out as we move through these slides is, I know we have requirements per our HUD requirements to conduct engagement. But we really started this even before we had the Federal Register notice. We started meeting with stakeholders just following the 2016 event to hear, okay, this is on everyone's mind, flood control is really like everybody's issue in Louisiana so it's not hard to get people engaged in the process.

And so early on, like even in 2018, you can see we had some regional conferences, very well attended, and our main objective was, okay let's get all around the state, let's make it easy for people to get here and give their input on a wide range of issues and they really helped the initiative envision what the program was going to be. So that was a very successful process and a lot of people, I think, that attended took some of that with them like they learn things at these meetings too and they made new connections that they're still building on.

So moving on to another event that we had, this shows an event from winter 2019, it was called the best practices summit. Again, very well attended. And then one thing I want to highlight too is not only were we having these meetings in person, but we've been very attentive to making sure that people can attend virtually even before Coronavirus kind of derailed our in-person attempts. And so that's also been a really successful component of this, right. We want to make sure that we're going to people and meeting them where they are but also that people can kind of follow along.

Like we have a website where people can view videos from past events and kind of catch up on what's going on with the initiative. And so it's brought people into the conversation that maybe didn't want to jump all the way into modeling 101 and like learn all this technical information. They just want to see what's going on and so they're able to engage. So more engagement.

This represents that event in spring and summer of 2019 that I was mentioning where we brought this map around to leadership in all of our different jurisdictions to ask how best can they work together. And so these meetings were very well attended, again, and we got a lot of good feedback from not just the leaders we got feedback from their staff and organizations affiliated with them.

And so this has been not just a critical part of envisioning what to do with the MIT funding, but it's been a critical part of visioning how do we govern even after this funding runs out. And so that's the kind of concepts that we're talking about when we say we want to catalyze change that outlasts project funding that happens; you know the project is done, the funding is complete but you still have those remaining legacies of changing your policy for the better.

And then just real quick before I pass the mic, I do want to also point out that even after these leadership meetings, our regions have really taken the ball and run with it. And so again their meetings are public and accessible and frequent and they're making great progress.

We had a couple meetings where we had an interactive flood risk viewer and so we were showing people what does your flood zone actually look like on a map. Not everybody looks at that every day. And so again it's bringing this conversation to folks that maybe want to call in some [punts ?] but they don't want to learn engineering. They just want to have an influence and explain what their community is going through and it's really giving them a good opportunity to engage with that.

I see some questions coming in and so I'm wondering -- I want to go ahead and pass this along to Brandi so that we can start the Q&A. And thank you guys again.

Brandi: Hi there, yes, this is Brandi. Thank you so much both of you for those excellent presentations. I just see one question in the Q&A box so participants if you have additional questions, please definitely put them into the Q&A box and we can definitely get to them, we have plenty of time. But if we only have the one question, we can also end early which is great as well.

So one of the questions that we have actually come for Ann is given the challenges you've listed with elected official turnover and the learning process required, what might you have done differently to counteract that? So we agree that regional contract worked early on but we think it's [inaudible] for initial programs to get fund out quickly, but any long-term recovery like new construction should be contracted at the relevant local municipal level rather than in a larger regional contact.

So I think that was a good comment from Ann as well. But do you want to take that, given the challenges you listed, like elected official turnover and learning [inaudible] what you've done differently. I think that may be a good question for both of you.

Ann Schmid: Yeah. It looks like [inaudible] question came to me personally so I tried to [inaudible]. Sorry.

Evelyn Campo: No worries.

Ann Schmid: But, yeah, that was my answer that we -- I mean I think for initial things like rehab or reimbursement costs that can be processed quickly, the regional worked well because again everyone's kind of willing to commit to disaster response initially. But I do think for longer term recovery contracting at the appropriate municipal level is what we plan to do moving forward with our 2019 CDBG-DR.

Brandi: Thank you. And Evelyn, did you want to address anything about that as well? I know Ann talked about it quickly but maybe you have some ideas about that as well given all the public engagement I believe you did?

Evelyn Campo: Of course. Thank you so much. It's great to hear from Ann on that. I really appreciate that. So I see what this question is saying, and it totally makes sense. You can plan sometimes on a regional level and coordinate but still some actions are definitely within the realm of the parish or the municipality and so I think that's a great point.

I mean I think that as our regional steering committees are navigating these challenges, the answers can be different from one place to a next and in different context and so I think that we are seeing kind of growth in those relationships with our program but it's definitely still the case that some projects are our local projects, right? And so yeah, I definitely agree with that sentiment that you don't want to skip administering something locally and do it through the region when that's not appropriate.

Brandi: Yeah, that's a good point and then again it kind of highlights the additional need for this coordination because you figure out maybe there's different needs depending on which areas you're working and you can -- if you don't have that coordination on the ground, then you don't know that, you don't do that type of engagement. Good. Thank you both.

We actually have another question that came in that I think is really excellent and timely given what's going on in the world. Myra Adams is asking can the presenters talk about their virtual

processes. She said we have a lot of very rural areas that struggle with engaging online and through webinars. I'd like to learn more about how you overcame the issue.

Ann Schmid: I guess I can start. This is Ann Schmid. As we actively moved into our 2019 CDBG-DR action plan development and public comment period right as COVID was affecting our state, we did struggle a bit with this and I'm not sure that we're at the point to say that we've overcome the issues. I think what we tried to do and as Evelyn indicated, making access as easy as possible and trying to focus or communicate with local representatives who maybe have the ability to get into communication streams that we might not at the state level necessarily know.

So what I did is I worked closely with some local officials and just members of the public who were members of local Facebook groups. So a lot of times communities, even rural communities have their Facebook network or even post disaster a lot of times they'll create sort of a survivor Facebook page to share information. And, so what we try to do is we hosted a public and virtual public hearing for our action plan.

We worked with our IT team to make it as easy as possible a technology where you wouldn't need to download anything or have plug-ins where it was just a link to access. We used the Microsoft Teams Live feature. It's not great for people to submit verbal comments so we did learn from that, but it was a really good platform for just sort of easily sharing information. And then we had that link because it was open and available to anyone, we had it shared in those sort of regional or city or rural Facebook pages so that we could try to get to as many people as possible. So like I said, I don't know that we overcame the issue. I think we did the best we could under the circumstances.

Evelyn Campo: That's a great point, Ann. That's really interesting. I want to add to that too. Similarly, I mean everybody is dealing with this so it's great to hear from others their tips and tricks. We've also been challenged by this for sure in Louisiana.

I mean one of our kind of benefits, one thing that's been to our benefit is that we were already trying to make our meetings very accessible for people who maybe could just call in by phone or were coming in remotely by virtual attendance. And so we did already have that framework kind of in place that ended up being very helpful, but then also we dedicated a lot of our efforts in the capacity building program specifically to facilitation and outreach staff at the regional level. And so that's paying off I think now that we have this special challenge.

You know sometimes meetings can take longer on Zoom or sometimes they need to follow up individually to answer questions but they can't just get everybody in a room or sit down with someone and so you do kind of lose what would have been a really nice person-to-person conversation. But they are able to make a lot of phone calls and have a lot of discussions because that's a huge component of their job and because we've added people to the initiative specifically for that. So that helped us in retrospect you know dealing with COVID was of course we did foresee being an issue when we first designed the program.

Chantel Key: Thank you, Evelyn. And thank you, Ann. So I just wanted to go ahead and give folks one last chance to ask any questions. It's just been really helpful information that Ann and

Evelyn are moving through right now, and I know a lot of different states and local governments are getting ready for their CDBG-MIT and DR engagement and coordination initiatives. So if not, Brandi, do you mind handing me the ball and I'll move forward to show folks the resources that we have available.

Brandi: Yeah, we actually did get one additional question that just came in so we can --

Chantel Key: Oh, good.

Brandi: -- yeah. So can either presenter provide examples of where action within an individual's jurisdiction had regional impact. I think that's a really interesting question.

Evelyn Campo: That is a good question, for sure. And this is something that gets talked about a lot in Louisiana, so I can definitely provide that.

Our river system is like a spider web there's like tons of conveyance channels and rivers and waterways that are all connected across the jurisdiction. And one thing that we do hear come up in regional discussions is, if I take some action in my watershed to, say, clear a channel that has had filth in it, has been otherwise kind of reduced in capacity, is going to have an impact on the neighboring jurisdiction that's right across the [inaudible] but shares that same conveyance channel. And so those types of issues are definitely things that come up pretty regularly and it's kind of startling sometimes to realize that maybe these two communities had not had a ton of discussion about these things in the past.

And so it is I think really beneficial that we're providing a venue for communities to plan projects together rather than just what can we get done in our municipality and we didn't realize that we were going to have this whole unforeseen impact until many years down the line. One thing that we've done is we built project inventory tools that each of the regions use. And so local staff and folks working at the regional level can enter information on what they have, either like a conceptual design or a project that is working through the funding pipeline or is built and they can share those details looking at easy kind of map, like a visual way and so that's how they know, okay, maybe I need to talk to this other jurisdiction who may have an interest in this project as well.

Ann Schmid: Yeah, that's great. I would say from an Iowa example, sort of a little bit before and somewhat concurrent with our nation disaster resiliency program, the city of Des Moines, which is our largest population city, capital city located in the center of the state, actually sued the water district up river from us for nitrate challenges because of the contamination of the ag water that was coming in to the city of Des Moines' drinking water system and the cost to the city to purify.

And now even though our program, the NDR, was not politically motivated or driven, those political sort of decisions of a urban center suing upstream watersheds, set a really interesting tone. And I think, as Evelyn said, there wasn't a lot of communication before that, it was just sort of an action, but what we've tried to do, that watershed is actually one of our participating

watersheds in the NDR. And so we've worked in a smaller city, Storm Lake is at the top of that watershed and we've done urban infrastructure there with a lot of holding water in place.

They have quite a few sort of meat packing plants and agricultural runoff up in Storm Lake and we've worked with them on ways to improve holding water in locations through ponding or permeable pavers through many of their urban or city streets. And then also providing watershed management practices within the watershed there. So we're still waiting to see how we can model the impacts but I think that's a really good example of sort of despite the urban rural negative political tone, we're seeking ways through the NDR program to make those watershed improvements upstream to have a really substantial statewide regional affect downstream.

Brandi: Thank you both. And we actually have two more questions. One I'll start with I think should be pretty easy for you, Evelyn. In Louisiana are the project inventory tools publicly available?

Evelyn Campo: They are just kind of a link to a GIS viewer. So they are publicly available but then we also have links that really don't have any -- there's nothing for [inaudible] public policy links to enter projects. So we do have a quality control check on just making sure that we don't have like duplicates and things like that. But yeah, they've been a really great tool and the steering committees are sharing them among each other and bringing them to their networks. And some of the steering committee have had these really great workshops where they're bringing in members from all over their communities and kind of brainstorming on what they want to put in the inventory and they're doing that together, which is really cool.

Brandi: Thank you. And the last question we have, which again I think it's a sign of the dimensions within rural areas. Is there a difference in local level participation in areas that are more rural or small towns and having that challenges in capacity building in some of those areas and how have you overcome some of those challenges? Again, another excellent question.

Ann Schmid: Yeah, I guess for Iowa in terms of rural engagement, I think while the numbers are going to sort of naturally be lower, I think the folks in our rural communities that are flood impacted or even stormwater management impacted are pretty passionate about their land use and about their regional functionality sort of as they interact with their land. And so we've actually seen, while it may be fewer people they're certainly engaged. So the engagement level I think doesn't really decline from rural to urban. So I think we're seeing really positive engagement in our rural communities.

Evelyn Campo: I agree Ann. We've had a lot of success with the rural communities as well. And I think some of that is just at the outset making sure that we had contact lists that very specifically included incorporated areas that, even though they may not have a ton of population, they are definitely critical to decisions. So we just made sure to be very thorough on that in our communications. But then also our steering committee format enables people who are kind of representatives of their area in a rural area to have the same voice as those in the areas with more population. And so it does kind of draw out a lot of really quality participation from all the different ranges, the urban and rural areas.

Brandi: Awesome, thank you both. Those are all the questions we have in the que, Lauren.

Lauren Nichols: Thank you. So at the end of this presentation, we just have a couple resources I would like to show you. Hold on a second, sorry. Brandi, do you mind just advancing to the next couple of slides?

All right, so here we go. On the HUD Exchange is the CDBG-DR page and there's also the CDBG-MIT page. Then we also have included Iowa Economic Development's site where they have some additional information on what Ann presented today and then a lot more additional information on what Evelyn presented today can be found on the Louisiana Watershed Initiative site.

And just on this last slide, I think we have our contact information if you want to reach out to anybody and ask any additional questions. My email's up there, then Ann and Evelyn's emails and then also the HUD policy unit where you can reach Wareesha and other folks from HUD if you have any specific questions.

So I would like to thank our presenters again today for taking the time to give this excellent information and experience that they've gone through. And I hope everybody has a wonderful day.

(END)