

BRIC Qualitative Criteria

This program support material provides detailed information about the six qualitative evaluation criteria that will be used in the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) national competition. Information to both guide Applicants and subapplicants in the development of their subapplications and to assist panelists in the qualitative review of projects is described below. Additionally, application instructions are included for each respective criterion to guide information submission in FEMA Grants Outcomes (FEMA GO).



BRIC National Competition Qualitative Criteria and Point Values

Background

As described in Section E.1.a (Application Review Information – Application Evaluation Criteria, Programmatic Criteria) of the BRIC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), FEMA will convene a National Review Panel to score subapplications submitted to the national competition based on a qualitative review. The BRIC national competition National Review Panel will include FEMA Regional Office and Headquarters staff, as well as representatives from state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments and other federal agencies. As referenced in the NOFO:

“If needed based on the number of subapplications submitted to the BRIC program, FEMA will use the technical evaluation criteria scoring as a program priority screening tool for the qualitative evaluation review. FEMA will send subapplications valued up to twice the amount of available funding to the BRIC qualitative evaluation panel. FEMA will ensure that at least one eligible subapplication from each Applicant will be sent to the qualitative evaluation panel for review.”

In order to increase transparency in decision-making while building capability and partnerships, FEMA will convene a National Review Panel (NRP) to score subapplications based on qualitative evaluation criteria. The qualitative criteria are narrative submissions to allow subapplicants the flexibility to fully explain the strengths of the proposed project. Qualitative evaluation criteria have graded scales of point scoring.”



FEMA

FEMA developed the qualitative evaluation criteria based upon comments received through summer of 2019 stakeholder engagement efforts. For example, comments indicated support for holistic project evaluation beyond economic metrics alone as well as for incentivizing partnerships and high-quality community engagement.

For more information on BRIC and stakeholder engagement efforts, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/bric>.

Evaluation Process and Scoring

The panelists will leverage their mitigation experience and expertise during the review to assess the degree to which subapplications meet the six BRIC qualitative evaluation criteria (based on the scoring in Table 1). The subapplication's final qualitative score will be calculated by averaging the qualitative scores from each panelist. The six criteria include the following: (1) Risk Reduction/Resiliency Effectiveness, (2) Future Conditions, (3) Implementation Measures, (4) Population Impacted, (5) Outreach Activities, and (6) Leveraging Partners.

Table 1: To what degree does the subapplication meet the criterion?

Scoring Option	Description
Not at all	The subapplication does not address the criterion at all, or minimal references to the criterion are made that include no substantive information.
Minimally	The subapplication addresses the criterion, but information in the subapplication may be confusing, unclear, and/or incorrect. The degree to which the subapplication demonstrates the criterion has been met is weak.
Partially	The subapplication addresses the criterion, but the subapplication may lack clarity and/or strong support, have some minor inconsistencies, or not address all components of the criterion. The degree to which the subapplication demonstrates the criterion has been met is mediocre.
Mostly	Although the subapplication may include a few minor inconsistencies or areas that need more clarity, there is strong support for most components of the criterion. The degree to which the subapplication demonstrates the criterion has been met is acceptable.
Entirely	The subapplication is clear, concise, and complete; provides examples; and is supported by data. It addresses all components of the criterion and may have a particularly compelling narrative. The degree to which the subapplication demonstrates the criterion has been met is excellent.
Exceeds	In addition to addressing all components of the criterion and being clear, concise, complete, and supported by data, the subapplication articulates the transformative impact of the project in catalyzing broader efforts (such as legislative action) as they relate to the criterion. The degree to which the subapplication demonstrates the criterion has been met is beyond excellent.

The National Review Panel will apply the scoring options listed in Table 1 to all six qualitative criteria. However, point values associated with each scoring option vary among criteria, depending on the total possible points for each criterion. The graded scoring and point scales for each criterion are included below.

Application instructions are included below for each respective criterion to guide information submission in FEMA GO. More information on navigating the new FEMA GO system and the full application process can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/grants/guidance-tools/fema-go>.

Prompts are outlined for each qualitative criterion to serve as a helpful starting point for Applicants and subapplicants. These prompts are designed to clarify terms and provide guiding questions for Applicants and subapplicants to consider as they write the subapplication. This information will be provided to panelists to foster a common frame of reference. Please note that answering every question, while informative, will not necessarily guarantee an “Exceeds” score. Finally, prompts included here are by no means mutually exclusive or exhaustive; any additional information to support the merit of the subapplication is welcome. This information supplements the information regarding qualitative evaluation criteria that can be found in Section E.1.a (Application Review Information – Application Evaluation Criteria, Programmatic Criteria) of the BRIC NOFO.

Qualitative Criterion 1: Risk Reduction/Resiliency Effectiveness (35 possible points)

The subapplication details how the project will effectively reduce risk and increase resiliency (including the benefits quantified in the BCA), realize ancillary benefits, and leverage innovation.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	7	14	21	28	35

Applicants and subapplicants should include Risk Reduction/Resiliency Effectiveness information in the Scope of Work Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Risk Reduction/Resiliency Effectiveness Criterion

- Resiliency refers to the ability to prepare for anticipated hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruption.¹ How will the proposed project improve resiliency? For example, a project designed to retrofit a library to serve as a tornado shelter could include tornado (and other hazards) preparedness, resiliency, and mitigation information. This could enhance the community’s resiliency by educating the public about the natural hazard risks they face, as well as build a culture of preparedness.
- How will the proposed project reduce risk(s) and to what level? For example, a proposed project could be designed to provide 100-year-level flood protection to a neighborhood with 250 people, 135 homes, 15 publicly owned structures that support several Community Lifelines, and a variety of cultural, historic, and environmental resources. Additionally, subapplicants may have high Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) scores that show a commitment to reducing risk through strong building code adoption and enforcement activities.
- Ancillary benefits refer to benefits other than the project’s primary risk reduction objective which may be identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Scope of Work, and Benefit-Cost Analysis. These are benefits related

¹ This definition is used by the [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#).

to water/air quality, habitat creation, energy efficiency, economic opportunity, reduced social vulnerability, cultural resources, public health, mental health, etc. What ancillary benefits will the project provide and how? Does the project consider multiple hazards (e.g., wind/storm surge, wildfire/mudslides) to address risks beyond the proposal's primary risk reduction objective?

- Innovation in one community can look very different from innovation in another community. How does the project leverage or demonstrate innovation for your community? What new ideas or approaches is the project incorporating? For example, a proposed project in a rural community that has seen an increase in development and impervious surface might include nature-based solutions that have not previously been used.

Qualitative Criterion 2: Future Conditions (15 possible points)

The subapplication describes how the project will anticipate future conditions (population/demographic/climate changes, sea level rise,² etc.) and cites data sources, assumptions, and models.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	3	6	9	12	15

Applicants and subapplicants should include Future Conditions information in the Evaluation Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Future Conditions Criterion

- What anticipated future conditions are relevant for the project? Examples of future conditions include, but are not limited to, the following: expected population growth or shrinkage, land use and development shifts, aging population, shifts in income or employment, changes in housing needs, sea level rise, more intense rainfall events, increasing storm frequency, etc.
- How is the project responsive to any identified anticipated changes? Does the project integrate the consideration of future conditions into design, planning, and operations workflows?
- How was the project informed by, or connected to, plans and planning efforts and their assessment of future conditions? Relevant plans may include Hazard Mitigation Plans, Comprehensive Plans, Climate Adaptation Plans, Long-Range Transportation Plans, Small Area Plans, etc.
- What data sources and assumptions are used to guide the project? For example, when citing a sea level rise projection, what time period and what scenario of sea level rise are assumed?

² Applicants and subapplicants may use any valid source that is based on recognized sea level rise estimation methods for sea level rise. Several federal government sources are available for relative sea level rise data along coastal areas. Some of these sources include, but are not limited to, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services' Mean Annual SLR Trend Data (<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sltrends/sltrends.html>) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sea-Level Change Curve Calculator (Version 2019.21) (http://corpsmapu.usace.army.mil/rccinfo/slc/slcc_calc.html).

Qualitative Criterion 3: Implementation Measures (15 possible points)

The subapplication adequately describes how the costs and schedule will be managed, how the project will be successfully implemented, and how innovative techniques to facilitate implementation will be incorporated. The project's Scope of Work identifies sufficient technical and managerial staff and resources to successfully implement this project.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	3	6	9	12	15

Applicants and subapplicants should include Implementation Measures information in the Scope of Work Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Implementation Measures Criterion

- Does the application inspire confidence that the project can be completed successfully as designed, given the stated implementation measures?
- What potential implementation challenges and obstacles are identified (e.g., technical, political, financial, public support) and what innovative implementation solutions are proposed? Innovative implementation techniques in one community can look very different from those in another community.
- Are the proposed project costs and schedule realistic? How do project cost estimates and the schedule identify and properly address potential challenges and obstacles?
- What pre- and post-implementation monitoring strategies are proposed for the project? What specific evaluation elements are proposed to measure progress and ensure the project is executed as designed?
- What technical and managerial staff and resources are available to successfully implement the project? How will anticipated staff and resource gaps be filled?
- Are examples of successfully completed projects included to demonstrate effective implementation measures?

Qualitative Criterion 4: Population Impacted (15 possible points)

The project subapplication demonstrates community-wide benefits and identifies the proportion of the population that will be impacted. The application also describes how impacts (positive or negative) to socially vulnerable populations informed project selection and design.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	3	6	9	12	15

Applicants and subapplicants should include the Population Impacted information in the Scope of Work Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Population Impacted Criterion

- Community size, scale, and definition can look very different in different local contexts. What does “community-wide” mean in the context of the proposed project?
- What percent of the population will directly benefit from the project (i.e., experience direct community-wide benefits)? How is this estimate calculated?
- What is the extent of the project’s expected direct and indirect impacts? How will the project reduce cascading impacts to Community Lifelines, residents, businesses, public services, infrastructure, and natural systems?
- Who are the most vulnerable members of the community where the project is proposed? How will the project negatively impact vulnerable members of the community? How will the project positively impact vulnerable members of the community? Impacts can be directly related to the risk reduction activity or indirectly related, such as with ancillary impacts (i.e., social, environmental, economic impacts).

Qualitative Criterion 5: Outreach Activities (5 possible points)

The subapplication describes outreach activities appropriate to the project that advance mitigation. The application also outlines the types of community planning processes leveraged during project conception and design and identifies the level of public support obtained during the engagement process.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	1	2	3	4	5

Applicants and subapplicants should also include information about their Outreach Activities in the Scope of Work Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Outreach Activities Criterion

- To what extent did stakeholders and/or stakeholder groups contribute to this project?
- What planning processes were leveraged during the development of the project proposal to advance mitigation? How did the project planning process ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community were involved in the planning and decision-making processes?

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- What information (e.g., resiliency goals and outcomes, partnership opportunities, project implementation progress) will be shared with the public? What public outreach and engagement strategies will be used to disseminate project information to and gather feedback from stakeholders and members of the community?
- What support or conflicts emerged through the project planning process? How will conflicts be resolved as the project is implemented?
- What are the linkages between your hazard mitigation plan and local land use requirements and how does the linkage make your community more resilient?

Qualitative Criterion 6: Leveraging Partners (15 possible points)

The project subapplication incorporates state, tribal, private, and local community partnerships that will enhance its outcome and describes the extent of those partnerships such as having an increased non-federal cost share, multi-jurisdictional projects, etc.

Not at all	Minimally	Partially	Mostly	Entirely	Exceeds
0	3	6	9	12	15

Applicants and subapplicants should include information about Leveraging Partners in the Evaluation Section of FEMA GO.

Prompts for Leveraging Partners Criterion

- Partnerships can take many different forms. For example, partners may contribute financially, support and promote the proposed project, help generate community-wide awareness of the risks the proposal is designed to address, etc. What partners were involved in the project design? How did partners contribute to the application? What partners will contribute to the implementation of the project?
- To what extent were non-governmental organizations, universities, private organizations, or other government entities consulted for advice or assistance? How has collaboration with surrounding jurisdictions supported project development?
- To what extent have other federal programs or funding sources been leveraged for the project? To what extent have partners provided funding that increases the non-federal cost share?
- How have partnerships been used to increase community resiliency? What potential exists for partnerships to continue beyond implementation of the project?