

Steps to the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning and Review Process

The Program Administration by State (PAS) agreement between VEM and FEMA has been in place since 2019, giving VEM the authority to FEMA-approve Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. The modified steps below reflect the review process under this program. Please refer to the Plan Review Tool for specific elements required in the planning process and final planning document.

1. **Secure Funding:** The municipality can request funding to create or update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) from FEMA through VEM. This may take one year to process through FEMA's grant programs. Apply for funding 2-3 years before the LHMP expires to allow for application review, execution of agreements, soliciting bids, and reaching plan approval and adoption. Requests for assistance for LHMP funding should be submitted anytime throughout the year. VEM advises that municipalities hire a consultant to assist the community in conducting community outreach and drafting the plan.
2. **Draft the Plan:** The municipality/community and a planning consultant (the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) or private consultant) work together to draft the LHMP. Plan developers are encouraged to contact the State Hazard Mitigation Planner during plan development for any technical assistance needs or to review components of the LHMP as it is being developed. Planning guidance is available at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/hm-planning-resources>
3. **Submit the Plan for Review:** Once a draft is completed, the LHMP and FEMA Review Tool are submitted to the State Hazard Mitigation Planner (caroline.paske@vermont.gov) for review. The review tool must have the top section filled in as well as the relevant sections or page numbers where each element is addressed. Plans are required to be reviewed within 45 days of receipt by VEM.
4. **Make Requested Revisions:** Plans are typically returned with comments on how to meet the Federal requirements. Notes will be included within the Review Tool with additional guidance on how to meet the requirements. The State Hazard Mitigation Planner is available to answer questions or meet with the plan developer to review comments and assist them in meeting the requirements.
5. **Resubmit the Plan:** Once necessary revisions are completed the plan is submitted back into State review with updated page numbers/sections noted in the review tool.
6. **Approval Pending Adoption:** If all requirements are met, VEM will notify the plan developer and the community that the plan is Approvable Pending Adoption (APA). If all requirements are not met, the Review Tool will be returned with updated comments.
7. **Adopt the Plan:** When a plan receives the APA notice, the plan developer should not make any changes to the plan, with the exception of removing any references to the plan being a draft and update any dates (e.g. the APA date) on the cover page. The plan developer then works with the local jurisdiction to adopt the LHMP.
8. **Submit the Plan for Approval:** Following local adoption, the plan developer submits the final plan to VEM. The State Hazard Mitigation Planner will then issue a notice to the plan developer and the community that the plan has been Approved. The approval date will be the date that this approval is issued.
9. **VEM Notifies FEMA:** VEM will then notify FEMA that the LHMP has been approved and FEMA will issue an official approval letter to VEM. VEM will send the formal approval letter to the community and plan developer to be included in the final planning document. The LHMP should be made available to the public.
10. **Implement and Maintain:** The community then has five years from the date of approval to implement the LHMP before the plan expires and an updated plan is due for approval.