

Capacity to implement FEMA-HMA grants: A survey of State Hazard Mitigation Officers

Student Name(s): Samata Gyawali, Olivia Vilá, Samiksha Bhattarai, Brian Vaughn, Claire Henkel
 Research Mentor(s): Dr. Gavin Smith



Homeland Security Challenge

The research assesses the capacity of states and territories to assist local governments apply for and implement Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grants. As HMA grants address a range of risk reduction activities in both pre- and post-disaster timeframes, the findings of this research can help address identified shortfalls in HMA grants management and therefore increase resiliency, to include applying the results and associated recommendations to the new Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program.



77% Response Rate
Representation from Each FEMA Region with best participation from Regions 1, 6, and 7.

Research Question:

- How do states and territories enable local governments to develop and implement HMA grants?
- What are SHMOs' perceived capacity and effectiveness in assisting local governments to develop and implement HMA grants?

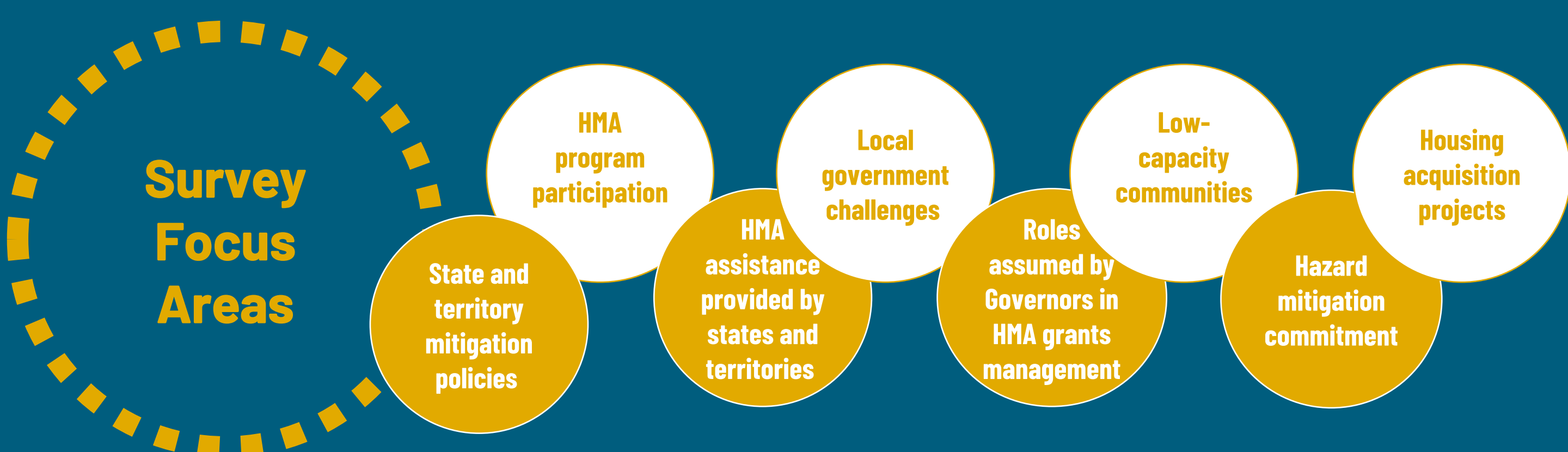
Approach / Methods

Research Instrument: Online Survey developed in collaboration with NC State researchers, FEMA mitigation officials, and other subject matter experts.

Population: All State Hazard Mitigation Officers (n=56).

Recruitment: Email and telephone based on publicly available contact information.

Survey Questionnaire: Likert scale, multiple-answer, multiple choice, ranking, and open-ended questions.

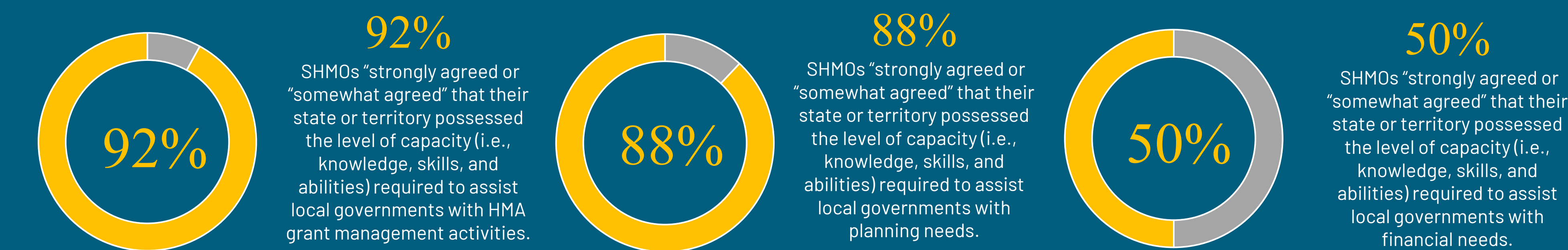


Outcomes / Results

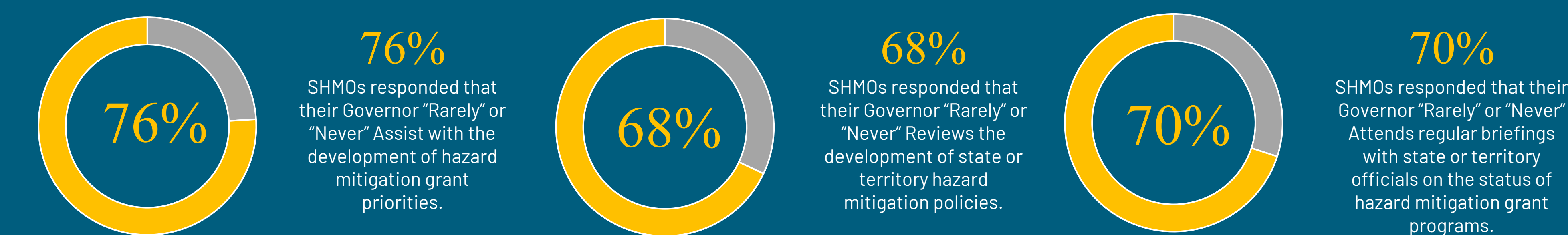
1. HMA Program Participation



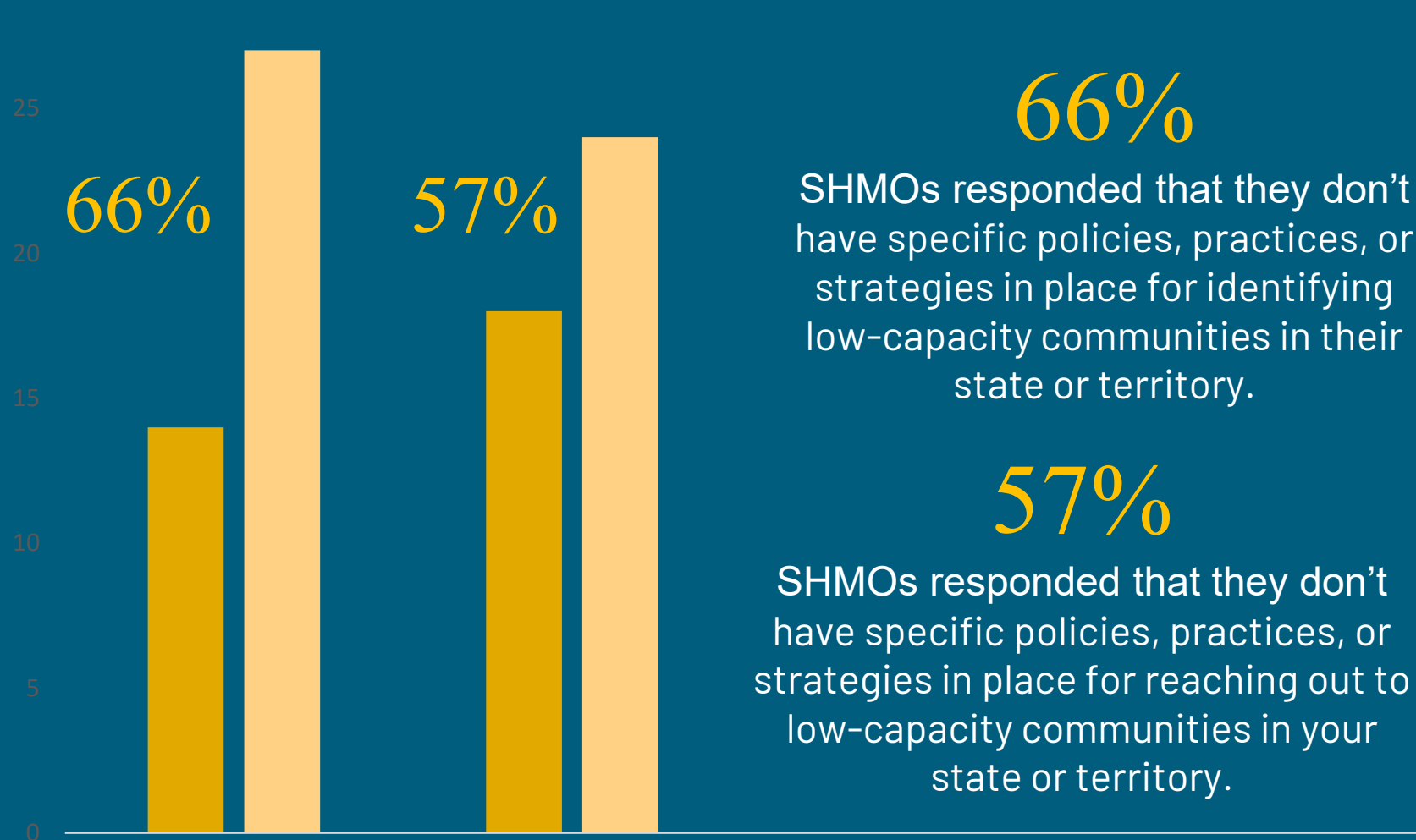
2. Perceived State and Territory Capacity



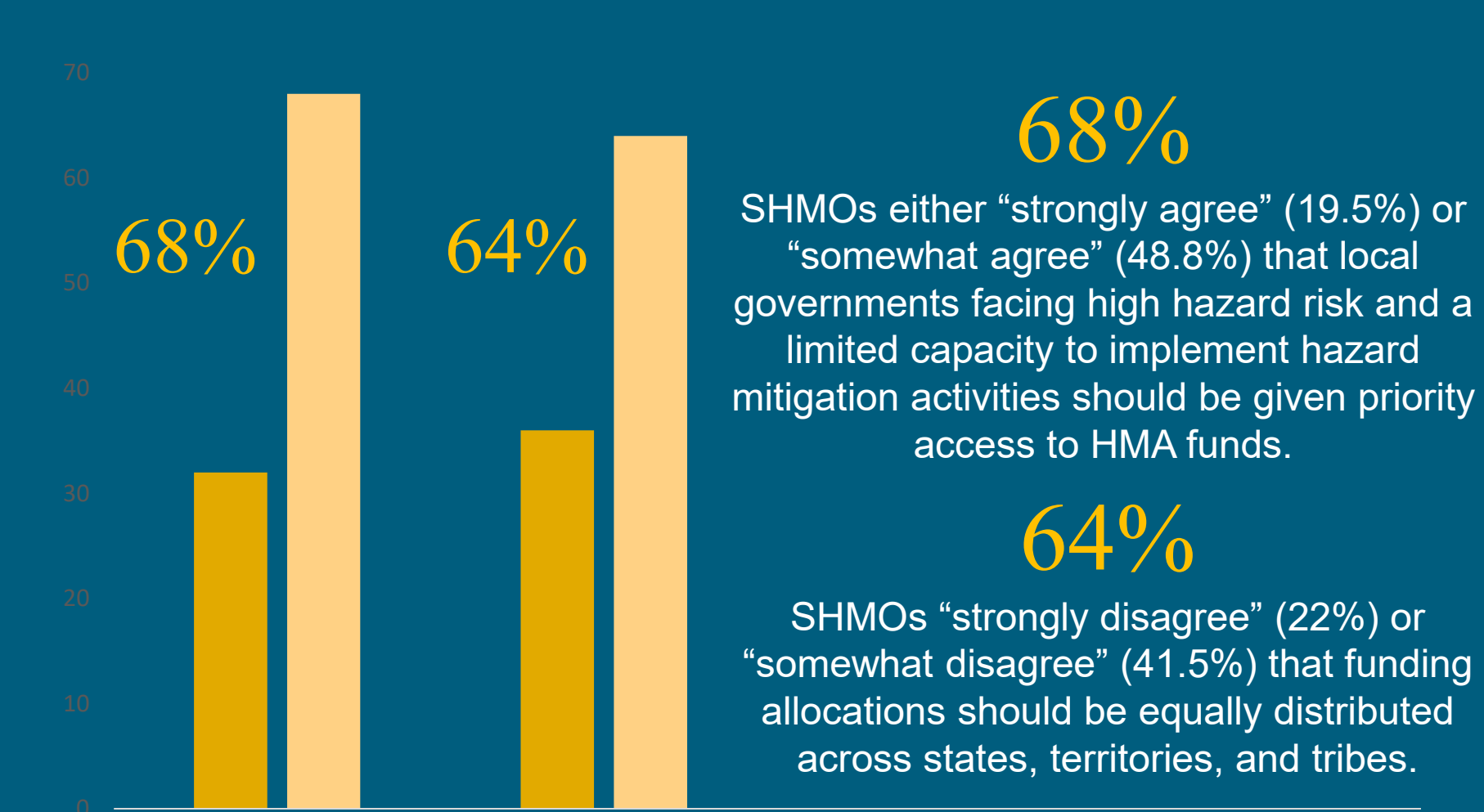
3. State and Local Commitment to Hazard Mitigation



4. Working with Low-Capacity Communities



5. Attitudes on Mitigation Funding Strategies



Conclusion

- Supplemental FEMA capacity-building programs (PAS and AA) are underutilized. Participants express interest in programs, yet express barriers in participation.
- State and territory-level assistance is centered on completing tasks required by HMA programs versus enhancing capacity and self-sufficiency of local governments.
- There is low confidence in local governments' ability to fulfil HMA responsibilities on their own.
- A greater emphasis on leadership is needed to tackle limited engagement in HMA-related activities and limited commitment to hazard mitigation among local governments.
- Limited authentic engagement with low-capacity communities despite expressed need.

Recommendations

- Place a stronger emphasis on capacity building initiatives that focus on technical aspects of HMA grant management.
- Provide consistent funding and support to sustain base level staffing for grants management administration and technical experts.
- Create initiatives that bring together jurisdictions currently implementing innovative and successful programs/practices to mentor jurisdictions in need support.
- Establish formal networks and communication channels between jurisdictions and their local universities, engagement specialists, NGOs, regional organizations, and other agency partners.
- Establish state and territorial mentorship programs to educate and engage local leaders, advocates, champions, and citizens.
- Develop strategies to identify and engage with low-capacity communities in their jurisdictions, based on in-depth knowledge of and collaboration with communities.

References

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 Vilá, D., Smith, G., & Gyawali, S. (2021). Capacity to Implement FEMA HMA Grants : SHMO Survey Report. Internal report delivered to the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA).
<https://www.fema.gov/about/organization/regions>

Acknowledgements

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