

Nonprofit Security Grant Program: Bipartisan Push to Unfreeze It

04.03.25 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD



These days, there are few issues on which average Americans as well as lawmakers with diverse political affiliations can find common ground. There is a strong consensus, though, that messing around with FEMA is a terrible idea.

Yet here we are, just two months into the new administration, with executive orders in place doing just that: dismantling the agency's federal core and freezing funds desperately needed for disaster relief and so much more.

There is cause for cautious optimism – perhaps more than just a glimmer of hope – that some or all of these White House decisions on FEMA can be rolled back.

Specifically, in connection with one of the lesser known FEMA programs – the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) – a bipartisan coalition of 79 members of the U.S. House of Representatives is “urging the Trump administration to lift a pause on drawdowns for federal grant funding through the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), including the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#) (NSGP).”

In addition, California has its own state-funded program security-grant program to augment (or partially replace) the federal program if FEMA becomes marginalized due to shifts in federal priorities.

Background: What Is/Was the NSGP?

Much less well known than the primary aid and assistance function of FEMA that many of us have seen – close up – in our own communities when disastrous weather events strike, is the federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP).

“Introduced in 2019 to address the threat of terrorist attacks” on nonprofit entities and institutions, the NSGP was created to be a “key component of FEMA’s strategy to improve the readiness of nonprofits—as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial governments—to anticipate, prevent, and defend against the threats posed by malicious actors intent on causing harm.”

The website is still up – (dated November 2024) – giving a view into what was in place before the White House stalled it in its tracks. At the top of the first page is the (now ubiquitous) caveat on many federal URLs: “FEMA.gov is being updated to comply with President Trump’s Executive Orders. Thank you for your patience and understanding.”

“The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack. The intent is to integrate nonprofit preparedness activities with broader state and local preparedness efforts. It is also designed to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives, as well as state and local government agencies.”

The Program had already allocated millions of dollars to enhance safety and protect lives.

“In 2024, the program allocated \$274,500,000 to assist nonprofits and churches in enhancing their security measures to safeguard their communities. Additionally, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program National Security Supplemental (NSGP-NSS) adds \$210 million to further support facility hardening and cybersecurity enhancements for nonprofits facing elevated risks.”

New for 2024-2025 is expanded eligibility to include “consortia” of nonprofits – groups of organizations working collaboratively to improve security measures. This change would allow “a lead nonprofit to apply for funding on behalf of its members, fostering a broader, community-wide approach to safety.”

Letter From Congress

On March 21, 2025, a group of U.S. House lawmakers “representing a broad cross-section of districts and political ideologies,” wrote a letter to the FEMA Acting Administrator, Cameron Hamilton. Led by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D: NJ-05), and jointly co-led by Reps. Mike Lawler (R: NY-17), Gabe Amo (D: RI-1), Michael McCaul (R: TX-10), Jared Moskowitz (D: FL-23), and Max Miller (D: OH-07), these lawmakers had obtained the signatures of 79 total Members of Congress.

“The Administration has made clear its goal to protect Americans from terrorist threats both foreign and domestic, as well as to respond to the rise in hate crimes....Supporting the NSGP is critical to fulfilling that goal. The program has long enjoyed bipartisan support, with lawmakers across the political spectrum recognizing that protecting places of worship and community institutions is not a partisan issue.” See Gottheimer 3/21/25 Press Release.

The Press Release includes the full text of the letter to the FEMA Acting Administrator which begins: “We are writing to express our concern following the Administration’s recent decision to immediately pause the drawdown of funding for federal grant programs supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to conduct an additional review of projects, including the Non-Profit

Security Grant Program (NSGP)... At a time when hate and violence against faith-based communities across this country are at historic levels, the NSGP has provided life-saving funding to protect faith-based communities and institutions.”

“From bollards to prevent vehicular attacks, reinforced doors to keep intruders out, CCTV cameras to monitor threats, and emergency alert systems that allow rapid response, the NSGP has ensured faith-based institutions are equipped with vital tools to prevent loss of life in the case of an attack. It is critical that those institutions that *have already been awarded an NSGP grant are allocated the expected funding.* (emph. added).

In the letter, the representatives set out a timeline for response (by no later than April 1, 2025) to a set of questions, as follows:

- Not all states have put out guidance to NSGP grant applicants and awardees informing organizations that reimbursements have been frozen and are not being processed. Can you confirm that FEMA has disseminated this guidance to all state administrators?
- Why was the decision made to conduct a review of all grant allocations? Do you anticipate a change to the applicant review process for the next grant cycle?
- Will all awardees who are awaiting reimbursement receive payment? And if not, what is your justification for withholding this funding?

The representatives also requested a briefing for Members of Congress.

California Grant Program

Separately, there is a program called the [California State Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#) available to 501(c)(3)s there.

Since its creation in FY 2015, awards totaling \$228,750,000 have been made to 1,271 high-risk organizations. The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) administers these funds which [directly support physical security measures](#) such as reinforced doors, gates, high-intensity lighting, access control systems, development and enhancement of security plans and protocols.

California is in the middle of its annual six-month budget process which begins by January 10th of each year and must result – under constitutional mandate – in a balanced budget approved by the legislature and signed by the governor by June 15, 2025 ready for the start of the new fiscal year on July 1st. See [CA Budget Time Again: Small Surplus is Back But Catastrophic Needs Ahead](#) (January 11, 2025) *FPLG Blog*.

For the new funding cycle for FY 2025-2026, the Governor’s office just announced it has, “in partnership with the Legislature,” agreed on “... the largest-ever funding award of \$76 million to 347 community groups and nonprofit organizations to protect them from hate-motivated violence.” See [Governor Newsom announces record-breaking \\$76 million to safeguard local faith communities and nonprofits](#) (March 24, 2025), [gov.ca.gov](#).

Conclusion

We'll follow-up on any news about the federal or any state programs.

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