

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Technical Evaluation Criteria

This Program Support Material (PSM) provides detailed information about the five technical evaluation criteria to be used in the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) National Competition. The purpose of the technical evaluation criteria is to offer incentives for priorities of the BRIC program.

The conditions that must be met to receive the point allotment for each criterion are described below. Generally, projects either receive the specified points allotted or zero points for each criterion. Additionally, application instructions are included for each respective criterion to guide information submission in [FEMA Grants Outcomes \(FEMA GO\)](#).

BRIC Technical Evaluation Criteria

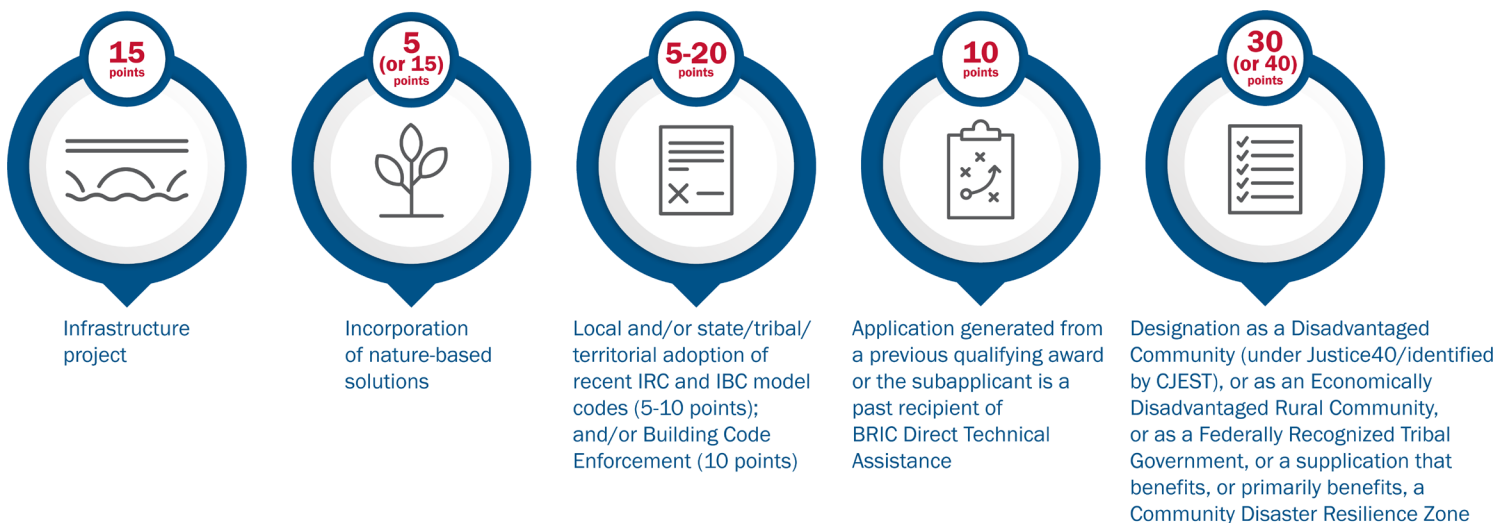


Figure 1: Technical Evaluation Criteria



Background

As described in the BRIC funding opportunity, FEMA will use technical evaluation criteria to score subapplications submitted to the National Competition. As referenced in the funding opportunity:

- 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 at five times the amount of available funding to the BRIC National Review Panel.
- At least one eligible subapplication from each applicant will be sent to the National Review Panel.
- The technical evaluation criteria offer incentives for elements valued by FEMA. In order to ensure transparency and efficiency in competition project selection, technical evaluation criteria awards binary points (full points or zero points) for each criterion or tiered points (points allotted for the element of the criterion met).

FEMA developed several of the technical evaluation criteria based upon factors required by statute and stakeholder feedback received during the development of the BRIC program. For example, comments indicated that stakeholders strongly support prioritizing projects that integrate [nature-based solutions](#), incentivize building code improvements, and promote previous Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant program efforts.

To achieve maximum points, applicants or subapplicants (as appropriate) are encouraged to describe clearly and completely how the project meets the following criteria:

- Infrastructure project
- Incorporation of nature-based solutions for hazard mitigation
- The applicant and the community where the project will be developed have adopted recent building codes and achieved a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) rating of 1 to 5 or is able to demonstrate a higher standard for the primary hazard identified in the subapplication that will be mitigated.
- Subapplication generated from a previous qualifying award or recipient of [BRIC Direct Technical Assistance](#)
- Designation as underserved and/or disadvantaged, including Economically Disadvantaged Rural Communities (EDRCs), and federally recognized tribal governments, or a subapplication that benefits or primarily benefits a [Community Disaster Resilience Zone](#)

Technical Evaluation Criterion 1: Infrastructure Project (15 points)

To receive the point allotment for this criterion, the subapplication must explain how the project mitigates natural hazard risk to critical physical structures, facilities, and systems that provide support to a community, its population, and its economy. This includes natural systems. The following are examples of statements that a community might submit in a subapplication to describe how its project is an infrastructure project:

- Through the proposed nature-based solution to reduce risk from high-intensity rainfall events, we will provide enhanced protection to our water treatment plant, which supplies fresh water to our community of 30,000 people.
- Retrofitting our food bank to have stronger structural integrity and the ability to operate off-grid will ensure a critical service in our community can remain operational following an earthquake.

Applicants or subapplicants (as appropriate) should include a statement describing the infrastructure project in the Scope of Work section of FEMA GO.

Technical Evaluation Criterion 2: Incorporation of Nature-Based Solutions for Hazard Mitigation (5 points or 15 points)

To receive the point allotment for this criterion, the subapplication must describe how the project incorporates one or more nature-based solutions. Applicants or subapplicants (as appropriate) should include a description and documentation of how the project incorporates a nature-based solution in the Scope of Work section and Location section, as applicable, of FEMA GO. Documentation can include stamped and sealed reports, design documents, technical drawings, surveys and studies, project site maps, historical data, etc.

FEMA defines nature-based solutions as sustainable planning, design, environmental management, and engineering practices that weave natural features or processes into the built environment to build more resilient communities and mitigate the impact of climate change. FEMA uses the term “nature-based solutions” to refer to an umbrella of strategies, including green infrastructure, hybrid gray/green solutions, and/or natural infrastructure.

Nature-based solutions are approaches that include, but are not limited to aquifer storage and recovery, bioretention systems, coastal wetlands, coral reefs, dunes, fire mitigation through vegetation management, floodplain restoration, green roof(s), green stormwater management, green streets, greenway, habitat restoration/enhancements, living shoreline, low-impact development (LID), native plants, oyster reefs, permeable pavement, property acquisition, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, sand trapping, setback levees, stormwater parks, stream restoration, tree canopy, tree trenches, urban greenspaces, vegetated swales, waterfront parks, wetland restoration and protecting, xeriscaping, and others.

To receive the full point allotment (15 points) for incorporating nature-based solutions, the subapplicant and/or the community where the project is located must include watershed or landscape scale nature-based solution(s) including those that support coastal resilience.

To receive partial points (5 points) for incorporating nature-based solutions, the subapplicant and/or the community where the project is located must include a neighborhood or site scale nature-based solution(s).

Please see the FY23 BRIC funding opportunity for details about project characteristics that could earn 5 points or 15 points. More information on nature-based solutions can be found in the following resources:

- [White House Roadmap and Resources documents](#)
- [2023 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#)
- [Mitigation Action Portfolio](#)

- [FEMA's Nature-Based Solutions](#)
- [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions: A Guide for Local Communities](#)
- [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions, Strategies for Success \(Nature Based Solutions Guidebook 2023\)](#)
- [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Digital Coast Natural Infrastructure](#)

Technical Evaluation Criterion 3: Building Code Adoption and Enforcement Requirement (5 to 20 points)

This criterion has the main objective of evaluating the status of building code adoption and building code enforcement. Evaluation is done in two steps: in Subcriterion 3.1, subapplications are evaluated for building code adoption and enforcement, and the maximum point allotment for this sub-criterion is 20 points. If the subapplication does not receive any point for Subcriterion 3.1, then it will be evaluated for Subcriterion 3.2, where it could receive a maximum of 5 points. The evaluation method for both subcriteria is defined below.

Subcriterion 3.1 Building Code Adoption and Enforcement (Maximum 20 Points)

Building Code Adoption (5 or 10 points)

To receive the maximum point allotment for building code adoption of 10 points, both the applicant and the community where the project will be conducted must have adopted building codes. FEMA acknowledges the importance of using the latest building codes at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels; therefore, only the two latest editions (2018 or 2021) of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) model codes published by the [International Code Council \(ICC\)](#) will be considered in this evaluation.

The subapplication will receive 5 points if the community where the project will be developed has locally adopted building codes.

FEMA will evaluate the local adoption status by reviewing the edition of the locally adopted codes in the community's Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) evaluation. If the community has adopted more recent building codes than those reflected in their BCEGS evaluation, or they do not have a BCEGS evaluation, in order to receive the 5-point allotment for local building code adoption, they must attach in FEMA GO a copy of the ordinance showing the latest building code adoption by the community or provide the link to where their ordinance can be found online.

The subapplication will receive an additional 5 points if the locally adopted building codes by the community are based on the applicant's mandatory state-, tribal-, territory-wide adoption of building codes.

If a federally recognized tribal government has not adopted the code as listed above, the tribe must demonstrate alternative compliance with IBC and IRC (2018 and 2021 versions) or be covered under another jurisdiction's (state or territory) code adoption status to receive the point allotment.

Information about applicant building code adoption status may be found in the following map provided by FEMA Building Science or in documentation of state, territory, or tribal legislation or code that demonstrates adoption status. FEMA Building Science updates this map regularly, and the adoption status at the time of the application

submission deadline will be used in the evaluation. Applicants should include details on their building code adoption status in the Evaluation section of FEMA GO. Additionally, subapplications should attach documentation verifying code adoption status of the applicant. Federally recognized tribal government code adoption status will be determined for tribal applicants after the close of the application period.

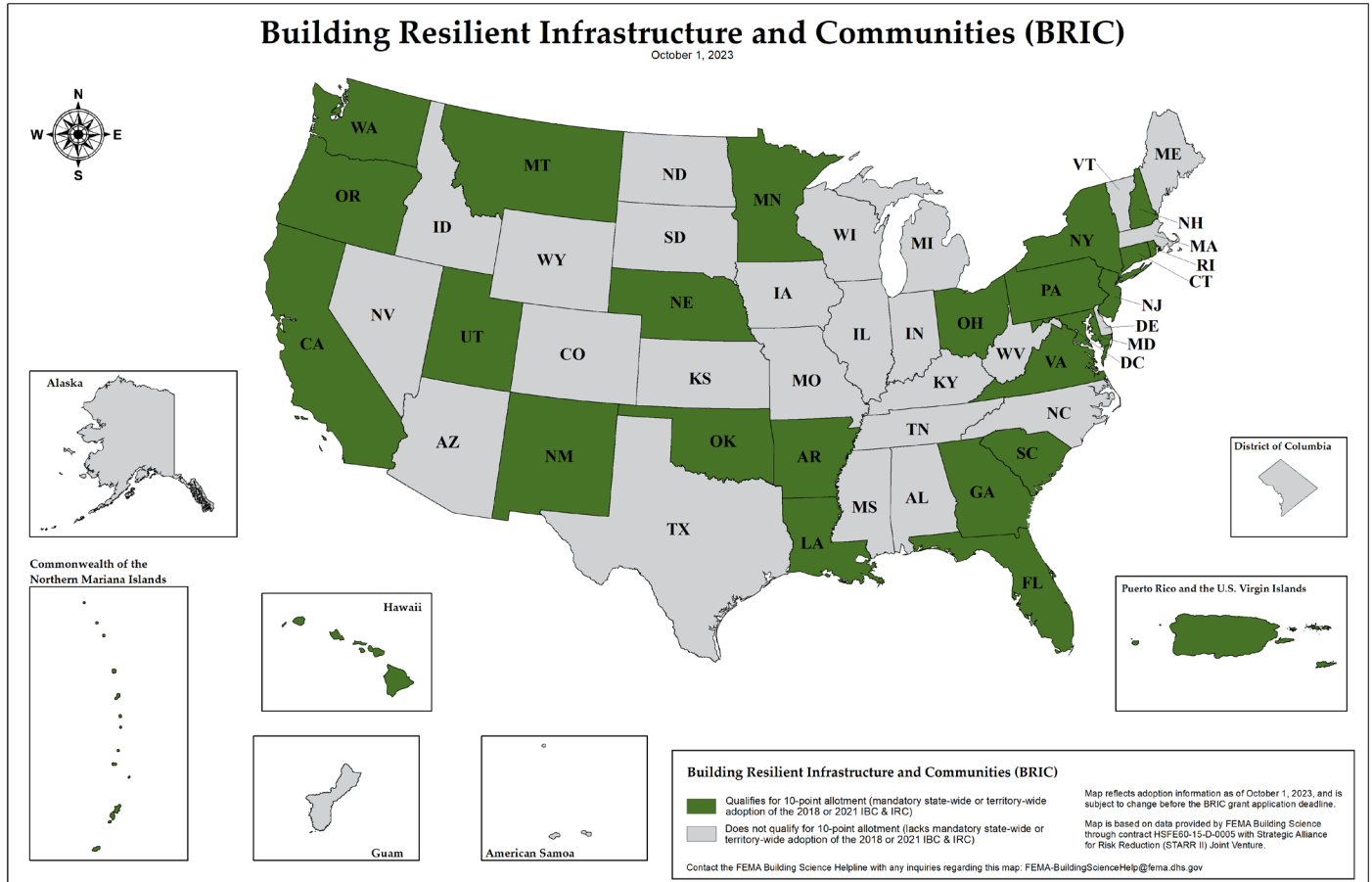


Figure 1: National Building Code Adoption Status Map

Building Code Enforcement (10 points)

Building code enforcement will be evaluated using the Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS), which is an independent assessment of a community’s building code adoption and enforcement activities, resulting in a score of 1 (best) to 5. This evaluation applies to subapplicants only.

To receive the point allotment (10 points) for building code enforcement, a subapplicant at the local level (including those located in territories) must have a BCEGS rating between 1 and 5 (considered by FEMA as a disaster-resistant code) when the application is submitted. To receive the point allotment for building code enforcement, a state or territory acting as a subapplicant must:

- Have a class ranking between 1 and 5 on both the Commercial and Residential BCEGS State Averages as indicated in the 2020 State Averages as published on the [Insurance Service Office \(ISO\) website](#); or

- Submit a BCEGS score provided by ISO (for territories and the District of Columbia).

Subapplicants at the state or territory level may submit documentation verified by ISO that provides updated information on their BCEGS rating, if applicable. BCEGS scores for tribal applicants and subapplicants are required but can depend on the relationship between the local municipality and the tribal entity that determines how building code requirements are managed.

The best source for relevant information at the community level is the local building inspector or code enforcement office.

Bureau States

Bureau states have their own insurance rating organization that is not part of ISO. To receive the point allotment for building code enforcement, a subapplicant at the state or territory level for the five Bureau states not included in: [2019 National Building Code Assessment Report – Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule \(2019 Edition\)](#) must provide a state-verified BCEGS score at the state level. For subapplicants at the local level within Bureau states, BCEGS scores should be provided by the state. BCEGS Bureau state contact information is as follows:

- Hawaii Insurance Bureau, Inc., 715 South King Street, Suite 320, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813, Phone: 808-531-2771
- Idaho Surveying and Rating Bureau, Inc., 5440 Franklin Road, Suite 101, Post Office Box 6430 Boise, Idaho 83707, Phone: 208-343-5483
- Property Insurance Association of Louisiana, 433 Metairie Road, Suite 400, Metairie, Louisiana 70005, Phone: 504-831-6930
- Mississippi State Rating Bureau, 2685 Insurance Center Drive Jackson, Mississippi 39216-5231 or P.O. Box 5231 Jackson, Mississippi 39296-5231, Phone: 601-981-2915
- Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau, 200 1st Avenue W, Suite 500, Seattle, Washington 98119-4219, Phone: 206-217-9772

If a subapplicant does not have a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule score, a survey to obtain one can be requested. BCEGS surveys are provided at no cost, do not negatively impact credit ratings, and can take two to four months to complete. Communities intending to apply for BRIC funding are encouraged to initiate the process as soon as possible. To request a BCEGS survey, please refer to the submission instructions referenced on the [ISO Mitigation website](#). Questions about the BCEGS survey can be directed to BCEGS_info@verisk.com.

Applicants and subapplicants should include their BCEGS score, or for Bureau states, a state-verified BCEGS score at the state level, in the Evaluation section of FEMA GO.

Subcriterion 3.2 Alternative Higher Standards (Maximum 5 Points)

If a project subapplication has not received any points in Subcriterion 3.1 (Building Code Adoption and Enforcement), 5 points could be allotted if the subapplicant can provide a narrative demonstrating that they hold

higher standards for the primary hazard they have identified in their subapplication and that their project intends to mitigate.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples for higher standards that could be considered under this subcriterion:

- Prohibition of fill within the floodway and/or floodplain
- Requiring at least 2 feet of freeboard in all Special Flood Hazard Areas
- Prohibition of siting/placement of critical facilities within the 0.2% annual-chance-floodplain (aka 500-year floodplain)
- Coastal zone (Zone V) development requirements, including open foundations, seaward of identified Limits of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA)
- Utilizing a higher risk category
- Utilizing a higher importance factor for the primary hazard

Subapplicants should submit the narrative in FEMA GO in a file with a title including the text “Alternative Higher Standards.”

Technical Criterion 4: Subapplication Generated from a Previous Qualifying Award (10 points)

To receive the point allotment for this criterion, a subapplicant must demonstrate and document that the subapplication was generated from one of the following programs:

- FEMA HMA Project Scoping award;
- Any other federal grant award; or
- The subapplicant is a past recipient of BRIC Direct Technical Assistance

HMA Project Scoping provides applicants and subapplicants with resources to develop mitigation strategies and obtain data to prioritize, select, and develop complete applications in a timely manner that result in either an improvement in the capability to identify appropriate mitigation projects, or in the development of an application-ready mitigation project for BRIC or another funding opportunity. FEMA HMA grants that are not Project Scoping or Advanced Assistance awards do not qualify for this point allotment.

Subapplicants should include information on their previous award in the Evaluation section of FEMA GO.

Technical Criterion 5: Designation as a Disadvantaged Community (under Justice40/identified by CJEST), or as an Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community, or as a Federally Recognized Tribal Government, or a supplication that benefits, or primarily benefits, a Community Disaster Resilience Zone (30 points or 40 points)

To receive the full point allotment for this criterion, subapplicants must document their designation as an [Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community](#) (EDRC) (as referenced in [Title 42 United States Code Section 5133\(a\)](#) as a small impoverished community) (40 points).

An EDRC is a community of 3,000 or fewer individuals as identified and validated by the applicant in the project subapplication, that is economically disadvantaged, meaning that residents have an average per capita annual income that does not exceed 80% of the national per capita income based on best available data. A state, territory, or federally recognized tribal government serving as a subapplicant must document the EDRC status of the community in which the project is planned to receive the point allotment for this criterion.

An application benefitting or primarily benefitting a Justice40 community or communities must be identified by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) (30 points).

To receive the full point allotment (40 points) a supplication must benefit or primarily benefit a Community Disaster Resilience Zone.

To determine if a project benefits or primarily benefits Justice40 tracts or Community Disaster Resilience Zone tracts, subapplicants should submit a map and associated geospatial file(s) (e.g., Shapefile, KML/KMZ, Geodatabase, or other GIS enabled document) delineating the estimated [area benefitting from the project as described in this job aid](#).

If the proposed benefitting area map, as described in this Program Support Material, is not provided or is not available (for example, for capacity-building activities that cover entire jurisdictions), FEMA will use the subapplicant jurisdictions listed in the Communities section of FEMA GO to make Justice40, Community Disaster Resilience Zone, and EDRC determinations. The BRIC applicant must include all the communities that will benefit from this mitigation activity by clicking on the “Find communities” button. Subapplicants can also use the “Please provide any additional comments (optional)” box to include any relevant information about the communities that could help to better define the overall disadvantaged characters of the benefitting community (as identified in CEJST), and/or attach any file as part of the “Attachments” option.

Population information can be referenced through the U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS) website, see [Explore Census Data](#). Per capita income can be found after inputting a location into the Explore Census Data search, then under the *Per Capita Income By Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Total Population, and Mean Income (Dollars)* column. Supporting documentation for population and per capita income should include an exported U.S. Census Bureau ACS data report in PDF format, indicating the most recent information. Subapplicants should include documentation of their status as an EDRC in the Budget section in FEMA GO and attach required supporting documentation.