

## **LONG TERM RECOVERY – HELPING TEXAS REBUILD**

Cynthia Hudson,  
Infrastructure Grant Manager  
General Land Office, Austin, Texas

### **Abstract**

As Commissioner Bush says, at the Texas General Land Office Community Development and Revitalization Program, “We work to rebuild communities, to put Texans back in their homes, and to help businesses recover after the trauma of disaster.” The long term assistance our division provides is conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), via Special U.S. Congressional Appropriation for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery.

As with any such Federal funds, these funds must adhere to a host of regulations. As we all know, each disaster event requires its own specific set of responses. HUD publishes a Federal Register appropriate for each Congressional Appropriation.

Our task, in the Community Development and Revitalization Program, is to work with HUD and the victims to do just as Commissioner Bush said. To rebuild communities, to put Texans back in their homes, and to help businesses recover ... while also ensuring that State laws and regulations are also properly addressed.

You may wonder why our assistance is long term since the funding is a direct result of the initial event. The basic answer is that, since there are already agencies such as FEMA and the Texas Department of Emergency Management designed for immediate response, these funds can provide a natural follow up to the frantic immediate recovery.

And it's true that it can take up to two years for the Federal, State and local wheel to turn from event to fund allocation to actual projects. During this time, our Federal and State leadership are gathering loss data from the immediate responding agencies and stricken communities to assess what unmet needs remain and what funds will be made available. When the Federal Register is published, our Program works with the affected communities to determine local priorities and provide guidance on program regulations and eligibilities.

Once the State Action Plan has been fully vetted and executed, applications have been created, submitted by the eligible victims, approved or rejected, and projects have finally gotten underway, our Program guides funding recipients through the process all the way to closeout.

**Lessons Learned**

- Each event brings its own set of circumstances and players.
- Each event must be treated with respect, compassion, and patience.
- The interests of the victims, Texans in general, U.S. taxpayers, and the future of efficient disaster recovery will be best served by a spirit of cooperation and open communication among all the agencies and entities whose purpose it is to serve. That's why forums such as this one today are so helpful. Cooperation and communication allows us to avoid duplication of any benefit some agency before us may have already provided. We are better able to guide communities if we understand how they were effected and what relief they still need.