

**United States Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA)
Government Affairs Committee**

2010

Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)

Survey Summary Report

By

Jessica Jensen

Center for Disaster Studies and Emergency Management
North Dakota State University

On February 17, 2010, the Government Affairs Committee of IAEM-USA asked our regional presidents and the state associations of local emergency managers to distribute a link to a survey hosted by Survey Monkey to members in their respective areas. The survey was designed to learn about the use and value of Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) funds and the continuing impact of the economic downturn on local emergency management programs.

When data collection ceased on March 3, 2010, 314 emergency managers representing 30 states had completed the survey. Most of those who completed surveys were employed full-time (76 percent) as county emergency managers (84 percent). An additional 3 percent represented village or town jurisdictions and 13 percent represented city jurisdictions.

A majority (55 percent) of emergency managers represented jurisdictions with a population of less than 50,000; while, 18 percent represented jurisdictions with populations between 50,000 and 99,999, and 27 percent represented jurisdictions with a population of more than 100,000.

This year marks the third consecutive year the survey has been conducted; and, as in the past, our survey questions were intended to gather data about the use and value of EMPG funds. This year the survey also included a number of additional questions about EMPG funds to gain a better understanding of the EMPG funding process. The results of this survey provide some intriguing insights into EMPG funding as it relates to local emergency management in the United States.

Findings

The Vital Nature of EMPG Funding

EMPG funding is vital to local emergency management programs – 28 percent of emergency managers reported that EMPG funds allow their emergency management program to barely survive; 44 percent reported that EMPG funds allow their jurisdictions to maintain their current emergency management program; and, 15 percent reported that EMPG funds allow their jurisdiction to improve their current emergency management program.

As the small sampling of quotations from emergency managers below demonstrates, EMPG funds are making a difference in local government jurisdictions across the nation. In fact, EMPG funds represent *the* critical difference between having a person dedicated to emergency management activities at the local level and not, having a local

emergency management program and not, and the difference between decreasing, maintaining, and increasing preparedness.

EMPG makes it possible for local jurisdictions to have a dedicated emergency manager. Emergency managers suggested that without EMPG funding emergency managers in full-time positions may go to half-time positions; jurisdictions may eliminate the position of emergency manager altogether; and, jurisdictions may make emergency management responsibilities additional duties for another preexisting position in the jurisdiction.

- “Without EMPG, there would be no fulltime program. The heart and soul of our program is the staff and that is where the bulk of the costs are incurred”.
- “We probably would not have an emergency management function staffed by a full-time employee. And, while counties are required by state law to have an emergency management program, the function would likely be assigned as additional duties to one of the Sheriff’s Office employees. This was the situation in the county before my position was implemented with EMPG funds”.
- “These funds have allowed our county to have a one half-time certified emergency manager instead of an employee who is assigned the position by the county commission and only dedicates five percent or less of their time to emergency management duties”.
- “Basically, without the EMPG monies, our county would not have a part-time Emergency Management Director. This hat would be put on someone else’s shoulders and they might get things done, but probably will not”.
- “The EMPG funding is very vital, if it was not for these funds the Emergency Management position would be half-time and I can be sure of that. Emergency Management is so vital to first responders and nongovernmental organizations in our communities. Emergency Management brings all players to the table and allows the building of relationships”.
- “EMPG allows for the existence of a full-time emergency manager. Without it, emergency management would become a collateral police/fire function, languish, and eventually, die”.
- “If it were not for EMPG funding, I would not have a job as an emergency manager because my county could not afford to keep me”.

Personnel dedicated to emergency management at the local level are an integral component of our national emergency management system. By definition emergency management is “the managerial function charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters” (Principles of Emergency Management Brochure, 2007, p. 4). Thus, there must be a person at the local level to perform that managerial function.

The mission of emergency management is to coordinate and integrate “all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from threatened or actual natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters” (Principles of Emergency Management Brochure, 2007, p. 4). These activities must take place at all levels to fulfill the mission (i.e., federal, state, and local). EMPG enables local jurisdictions to have one person, even if funded only part-time, to coordinate essential emergency management activities.

And, related to making the difference between local jurisdictions having or not having a person dedicated to emergency management, EMPG funds also are making the difference between local jurisdictions having or not having an emergency management program.

- “The funding allows us to continue a program. It is the difference between a program and no program”.
- “Without the EMPG we could not provide even the simplest of programs”.
- “The Department of Emergency Preparedness would probably not exist without EMPG”.
- “The EMPG funding is what allows our department to operate. It supplies funds for personnel and public preparedness programs. It also helps pay for the Emergency Operations Center’s basic operations and administration costs. The funds also are used to pay for citywide planning and exercise for departmental personnel, outdoor warning sirens, and volunteer preparedness programs. Without EMPG funding the City’s Emergency Preparedness Office and would not exist”.

Perhaps most importantly, EMPG funds are making the difference between decreasing, maintaining, and increasing preparedness. Emergency managers were asked to identify the types of emergency management activities in their jurisdictions that were supported by EMPG funds from a list of possible activities. Emergency managers were free to choose as many activities as applied. The elements of emergency management programs most frequently identified as supported by EMPG funds included personnel (salaries and benefits), operational costs, and emergency operations center (maintenance and improvement).

Types of Activities Supported by EMPG Funds

Activity	%	#	Activity	%	#
Personnel (salaries & benefits)	83.8%	263	Public awareness and outreach	54.8%	172
Operational costs	64.3%	202	Software/technology improvements	39.8%	125
EOC (maintenance and/or improvement)	62.1%	195	Regional activities	29.9%	94
Local training	58%	182	Mitigation	29.3%	92
Equipment	57.3%	180	CERT/Citizen Corp development	22.9%	72
Exercises	55.7%	175	Mapping	12.1%	38

As one can see from the above table, EMPG funds are supporting basic and necessary preparedness and response related emergency management activities. Without EMPG funding to support these activities, preparedness and response capability and capacity would decrease in many local jurisdictions.

- “Training without first responders as far as NIMS, exercises, etcetera would have problems, as they are all volunteers. Other items designated by the state or federal government would not get done or at a bare minimum. There would be problems during a disaster, as no one specific would know what to do as far as how to start or get things going. No one would be prepared, except how to fight a fire, emergency management services for patients and law enforcement for their area. There would be no organization”.
- “Without the EMPG program funds, our emergency management program would essentially cease to exist. By receiving the funds, we have been able to develop a fledgling emergency management program that is thriving and beginning to receive recognition across the city as a viable entity. The program has already greatly improved our ability as a city to prepare for disaster response and recovery”.
- “The funding has directly contributed to expansion of the employee base and enabled us to develop and implement programs that directly impact the preparedness of Hernando County’s residents. Without EMPG it would be extremely difficult to sustain any emergency management activities. It is absolutely critical”!

Because of EMPG, many local jurisdictions are maintaining a minimum level of preparedness and response capability and capacity.

- “EMPG gives us the ability to survive a major emergency. Knowing the laws and rules of state and federal agencies to respond effectively to events is important. If no preparation or funding would be available on an annual basis, local emergency management would be less effective”.
- “We have been able to meet basic and fundamental emergency management operations with EMPG including emergency management planning, resource management, public education and outreach, participate/conduct exercises and drills, and attend training/education classes/courses. However, due to minimal staffing and funding and continuously increasing duties and responsibilities, we cannot expand or increase our program”.
- “Continuing daily operations, keeping the public informed, providing training for the public, and staying on top of changes in the emergency management program is absolutely necessary to prevent loss of life and protection of property in the case of a disaster”.

EMPG funds are allowing other programs to go beyond the simple maintenance of a bare bones emergency management program and instead to focus on increasing local preparedness and response efficiency and effectiveness.

- “Our funds cover one full-time employee to do all of the planning, training, organizing, operational readiness, and public education for our city of 54,000 people. It also allows for minimal materials and equipment. EMPG has allowed us to enhance this so we can invest in support systems; VISTA members to help do outreach into the community; upgrade our emergency operations center; and, provide radios to first responders among many other things”!
- “We have been able to conduct numerous exercises for hazardous materials, active shooter, emergency operations center/incident command post interface, wildfire, and tornado events. We have also completed our Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan, our Special Needs Population Plan, County Emergency Operations Plan, Evacuation and Sheltering Plan (including animals/pets), Damage Assessment Plan, Rapid Needs Assessment Plan, and we are starting on our Recovery Plan. We have conducted first responder training for emergency events as well as Incident Command System classes for all fire departments and police departments. We have upgraded our emergency operations center communications systems and information sharing capabilities. We have conducted numerous public education outreach programs as well as training for citizen volunteers. Without the EMPG funding, none of the above would have been possible”.
- “EMPG funding allows us to have a coordinated resource for training, exercising, planning, response and recovery. Without this program at the local level, volunteer responders in rural areas would not have the man-hours to coordinate these efforts, nor would there be time for them to incorporate regional efforts into local plans. By working together within regions, it becomes habit to collaborate on efforts, and local response, recovery and mitigation efforts are improved, as are regional thus improving the capabilities of states to move past disasters and towards long-term recovery”.

As the following stories from emergency managers describe, the investment in EMPG is making a significant difference in local communities and their capacity to handle hazard events.

- “EMPG is a program that informs, prepares, and provides training that the citizen and elected officials of Cedar County need. Prior to the flood of 2008, this county contracted out emergency management activities and was without guidance during the flood that cut the county in half, removed the bridge on I-80, and took over 150 residences. EMPG has helped this county develop a plan and put programs in place to guide personnel in future disasters”.
- “EMPG funds have allowed us to create, implement, and maintain a Community Emergency Response Team program, which in one incident alone saved the City more than \$20k in personnel costs. EMPG funds have allowed us to equip a dedicated emergency operations center facility and to maintain public education personnel on our staff”.

EMPG is making a significant difference in local communities and their capacity to handle hazard events.

- “I believe the EMPG program has been a wonderful thing for stimulating emergency programs at the local (city level). Our program has not been established based on large amounts of EMPG funds, but over a period of 10+ years we have been able to accomplish many small projects to sustain and bring our city emergency management program to a viable organization. Because of EMPG money over the past 10+ years that has been put into equipment, facilities, training, public outreach, and NIMS requirements our city was able to respond efficiently to a 5 day landslide event (3 deaths occurred when the hillside moved). The combination of equipment, facilities, and training over the past 10+ years has allowed us to become more resilient and ready at the "local" level!!!!!!! Thank you for your continual consideration and support in this great program”.

Local jurisdictions value EMPG funds. As the preceding discussion demonstrated, the funds are a vital resource for local level emergency management programs and recognized for their role in maintaining and building preparedness and response capability and capacity at the local level. Yet, more EMPG funding is needed.

EMPG Funding Amounts

According to most emergency managers, local emergency management budgets are currently falling short of allowing their jurisdictions to adequately prepare for, respond to, mitigate against, and recover from hazard events. One quarter of the emergency management programs represented in this survey had annual budgets of under \$50,000 and an additional quarter had annual budgets of between 50,000 and \$100,000, approximately. These budget figures include the costs associated with personnel.

From a quick glance at the table below one could think that local emergency management program budgets increased from 2008 to 2009; however, during that time period, there was not a statistically significant increase in the budgets for jurisdictions within any one state or for jurisdictions of any population size (i.e., populations of less than 50,000, between 50,000 and 99,000, more than 100,000).

Local Emergency Management Program Budgets		
Percentile	2008	2009
25	\$44,000	\$47,700
50	\$104,682	\$112,000
75	\$220,000	\$231,538

EMPG funds are a critical part of most local emergency management program budgets. In 2008, EMPG funds made up an average of 35 percent of local emergency management program budgets; and, in 2009, EMPG funds made up an average of 37 percent of local emergency management program budgets. Overall, EMPG funds made up a larger proportion of local emergency management program budgets in 2009 than in 2008 (statistically significant).

Emergency Management Performance Grant Funds

Percentile	2008	2009
25	\$12,000	\$14,025
50	\$27,270	\$30,606
75	\$46,791	\$54,310

EMPG as Percentage of Local Emergency Management Program Budgets

Percentile	2008	2009
25	11% or less	14% or less
50	23% or less	25% or less
75	41% or less	44% or less

Emergency managers were asked if their jurisdiction had already received EMPG funding for the 2010 fiscal year—89 percent had not received their EMPG funding as of March 3, 2010. Of this group, 75 percent did not know how much EMPG funding their jurisdiction was going to receive for the 2010 fiscal year.

In fact, only 80 out of 314 emergency managers (26 percent) knew how much EMPG funding they were going to receive/had received for the 2010 fiscal year. Of those who knew how much EMPG funding their jurisdiction was going to receive or had already received for 2010, there was not a statistically significant difference between the amount of EMPG money they received in 2009 and 2010.

The findings related to EMPG funding amounts lead to one primary question: *Given the importance of EMPG funds to local emergency management program budgets, is there a way to ensure that jurisdictions know how much EMPG funding they will receive each fiscal year more quickly?*

Even when jurisdictions know the amount of EMPG funds they will receive, many confront one of two issues: 1) They realize that they will be forced to overmatch EMPG funds; or, 2) They discover it is going to be a struggle to meet the 50 percent match required to receive EMPG funds.

Meeting the EMPG Match

Since its inception, the EMPG program was intended to be a 50 percent federal and 50 percent state and local matching program. This partnership recognized that every level of government has an interest in building emergency management capacity at the local level.

Our data suggests that local government jurisdictions are doing their share to support the success of this funding program. We asked emergency managers if their jurisdictions were overmatching the 50 percent match required to receive EMPG funds; and, 70 percent of emergency managers reported that their jurisdiction was overmatching EMPG funds (i.e., providing more than the 50 percent match required to receive EMPG). Very few jurisdictions reported receiving a 50 percent match in EMPG funds—only 35 emergency managers out of 316 in 2008 and 30 out of 316 in 2009.

Local government jurisdictions are doing their share to participate in this federal funding program even when it is difficult to do so. Meeting the required match is a struggle for 29 percent of responding jurisdictions.

Here is one of our noteworthy findings -- that jurisdictions with the lowest populations (i.e., less than 50,000 people) are frequently both overmatching EMPG funds and struggling to meet the match. Approximately 35 percent of them were struggling to meet the EMPG match while at the same time 67 percent of them were overmatching EMPG funding.

It would certainly seem logical to assume that these smaller jurisdictions, in their struggle to provide basic services in the face of low tax bases, should be the jurisdictions receiving the full 50 percent match. Our data shows that this assumption would be incorrect. As depicted in the table below, jurisdictions of all population sizes are actually overmatching EMPG funds.

Population of Jurisdiction	Struggling to Meet the 50% Match			Over-matching EMPG funds?		
	Yes	No	% Yes	Yes	No	% Yes
Less than 50,000	61	112	35%	115	58	67%
50,000-99,000	13	42	24%	41	13	76%
More than 100,000	18	68	13%	63	23	73%

The findings related to meeting the EMPG match lead to the question: *What can be done to ensure that local government jurisdictions can receive a 50 percent match in EMPG funds?* This question will be discussed later in the report.

Thus far, the survey data has shown that EMPG is a vital source of funding; that local jurisdictions do not know how much EMPG funding they will receive well into the fiscal year; and, that many jurisdictions are overmatching EMPG funds and/or struggling to meet the 50 percent match. The survey data also led to several discoveries regarding EMPG funding allocations and restrictions placed on the use of EMPG funding by some states. These discoveries are discussed in the following pages.

EMPG Funding Allocation

This year we asked emergency managers how their state determines the amount of EMPG funding each jurisdiction receives. There are two key findings with respect to this question. First, the sheer number of emergency managers who do not know how EMPG funding is allocated within their state is surprising; and, second, many emergency managers representing jurisdictions within the same states differed in their response to the question by indicating different formulas for allocation used by their state. These findings suggest that there is both a lack of transparency and a lack of knowledge about EMPG funding and the EMPG funding process.

The data related to other survey questions about EMPG funding allocation repeatedly reinforced the issue of a lack of transparency and knowledge about EMPG funding and the funding process. For instance, when asked if there was a state code, law, or regulation that determines the percentage of EMPG funding their state passes through to local jurisdictions, emergency managers from 26 out of 30 states replied in the affirmative while emergency managers from 29 out of 30 replied in the negative. With representatives from only 30 states participating, one can see the obvious problem—not all emergency managers within the same states understand what, if anything, dictates the amount of EMPG funds passed through to local governments from the state.

These findings suggest that there is both a lack of transparency and a lack of knowledge about EMPG funding and the EMPG funding process.

The question about whether states share data on the percentage of EMPG dollars passed through to local jurisdictions each year again evidences a lack of transparency and knowledge. Nearly three quarters (72 percent) of emergency managers replied in the affirmative indicating that their state shares data on the percentage of EMPG dollars passed through. Yet, there are three issues with this finding: a) emergency managers from the same states replied in both the affirmative and the negative, b) very few emergency managers knew the actual percentage passed through by their states, and c) emergency managers from the same states offered different percentages.

The findings related to EMPG funding allocations prompt the question: *What can be done to increase the transparency of the EMPG funding process and ensure that emergency managers are equally knowledgeable about a critical source of funding to their local emergency management programs?* This question will be explored at the end of the report.

Restrictions on EMPG Funding

When asked if their state restricts how EMPG funds are used beyond those restrictions identified in the Federal Program Guidance, 41 percent responded with a yes and 59 percent responded with a no. Again, disagreement was evidenced in the answers from emergency managers representing the same states. Moreover, a follow-up question about the things states require EMPG funds to be used for again demonstrates the same pattern—disagreement between the answers provided by emergency managers from within the same states.

The lack of knowledge about how the state restricts the use of EMPG funds is a disturbing finding in and of itself. Also, disturbing is the notion that the States are restricting how EMPG funds are used by local jurisdictions. For instance, in fiscal year 2007, the State of Kansas only allowed the EMPG Supplemental Funding to be used for National Incident

Management System (NIMS) Resource Typing. While Resource Typing is an allowable use of EMPG funds, the Supplemental should have been available for all of the uses allowed by EMPG Program Guidance—not just NIMS Resource Typing. Given the vital nature of EMPG funding to local jurisdictions and the federal intent behind the EMPG funding stream, it is concerning that states may be restricting the use of the funds.

We also asked emergency managers if jurisdictions in their state had to meet performance standards in order to receive EMPG funds. The vast majority of emergency managers (86 percent) reported that their state did require that local emergency management programs meet performance standards in order to receive EMPG funding. On this question, there was virtually no disagreement between emergency managers from the same state.

According to emergency managers, states are requiring local emergency management programs to meet performance standards in areas such as environmental and historical preservation compliance, NIMS compliance, Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) exercises, meeting attendance, risk assessment methods, special needs populations, Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP), regional activities, quarterly progress reports, and others. Again, the issue of restricting the use of EMPG funds in any way beyond what is stipulated in the Federal Program Guidance is raised by the data analysis.

The findings regarding the restrictions on EMPG funding lead to the inquiries: *Why are States placing restrictions on the use of EMPG fund beyond those in the Federal Program Guidance? Are the restrictions placed on EMPG funding consistent with the purpose/goals of this funding program?*

Returning to Key Questions

The importance of EMPG funding has not changed in the three years the Government Affairs Committee of the United States Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) has conducted this survey. EMPG is vital to local jurisdictions. EMPG makes not just a difference but *the* difference between having emergency managers at the local level and not, having local emergency management programs and not, and the difference between decreasing, maintaining, and increasing preparedness and response capability and capacity at the local level.

EMPG is effective in accomplishing its goal of supporting local emergency management efforts, but as with all things, there is room for improvement. When emergency managers were asked what they would change about EMPG if they could, the most frequent response was that they would like to see more EMPG funding available at the local level.

IAEM-USA believes that preparedness and response efficiency and effectiveness in the United States will continue to improve as local jurisdictions are able to complement their investments in emergency management with EMPG funds; and, therefore, the funds available must increase. As one emergency manager put it, “Increase the funding capability to allow an increase in emergency management programs. Increasing the funding will provide a greater opportunity to improve the all hazards program for meeting the needs of the citizens”.

Emergency managers would like to see more EMPG funding available at the local level.

This finding is particularly relevant during the economic downturn. Local jurisdictions are struggling to provide basic services, which makes it even more difficult to maintain functional emergency management programs. Please see IAEM-USA Government Affairs Committee’s 2010 Economic Downturn Summary Report for more detail.

After expressing the need for an increase in the amount of EMPG funding available, emergency managers identified the following areas where they would like to see improvement in the EMPG funding process (ranked in order of frequency mentioned):

1. Law or regulation that specifies the percentage of EMPG that states must pass through to local jurisdictions;
2. Make the allocation formula or process for EMPG funding within states more transparent and fair;
3. Provide more timely notification of EMPG award amounts;
4. Make the EMPG funding process more straightforward and efficient (e.g., paperwork, guidance);
5. Establish a minimum emergency management staffing standard for communities (i.e., a standard of one full-time emergency manager per county), then provide enough EMPG funds so that 50 percent of the salary and benefits would be covered through EMPG;
6. Standardize the requirements or expectations for how EMPG funding can be used across states; and,
7. Provide a full 50 percent match.

The aspects of the EMPG funding process where emergency managers would like to see improvement are closely related to the questions the data prompted us to ask. The questions included the following:

1. *Given the importance of EMPG funds to local emergency management program budgets, is there a way to ensure that jurisdictions know how much EMPG funding they will receive each fiscal year more quickly?*
2. *What can be done to ensure that local government jurisdictions can receive a 50 percent match in EMPG funds?*
3. *What can be done to increase the transparency about the EMPG funding process and ensure that emergency managers are equally knowledgeable about a source of funding critical to their local emergency management programs?*
4. *Why are States placing restrictions on the use of EMPG funds beyond those specified in the Federal Program Guidance? Are the restrictions placed on EMPG funding consistent with the purpose/goals of this funding program?*

As important as an increase in funding would be to local jurisdictions, the data indicated addressing additional, simple issues related to EMPG funding would also make a significant difference to local government emergency management programs. For instance, it would be helpful if local government jurisdictions were notified of the amount of EMPG funds they would receive each year in a more timely and consistent manner. At the very least, it would be beneficial to examine why there are delays in the process so that local emergency managers understand why delays in the notification of EMPG funding amounts are happening each year.

An additional issue to explore is how local government jurisdictions can receive a 50 percent match in EMPG funds. Ensuring that local government jurisdictions can receive a 50 percent match will involve increasing the amount of EMPG funds available. There are three ways to increase the amount of EMPG funding available to local jurisdictions: 1) Congress could significantly increase the amount of EMPG funding available overall; 2) States could voluntarily increase the amount of EMPG funding they pass through to local government jurisdictions; or, 3) FEMA could change the language in the EMPG Federal Program Guidance or issue a regulation, or Congress could pass legislation, that addresses the amount of EMPG funding to be retained by states as well as the amount to be passed through to local government jurisdictions.

Finally, IAEM-USA believes it is of the utmost importance to increase transparency surrounding EMPG funds and the funding process so that local emergency managers have more knowledge about such a basic and important funding stream for their programs. Specifically, IAEM-USA calls for improvement of transparency on an annual basis regarding

the percentage of EMPG funds kept by states, formulas for how funds are allocated within each state, performance standards attached to the receipt of EMPG funds by states, and restrictions added by states over and above those in the Federal Program Guidance.

Some of our state partners, such as Florida, Ohio, and Kansas, are making efforts to be transparent about the EMPG funding process by releasing a complete list of EMPG allocations (this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, merely several examples of a “best practice”). We recommend that each state, upon making the grant of public monies (EMPG), provide the following information – a list of every recipient of an EMPG grant; the amount received; and basic information on the funding formula.

Recently, a dialogue has begun regarding some of these issues. However, the best way to address the expanded list of issues identified in this research will be through the continuation and expansion of that dialogue in an open and inclusive manner. The key stakeholders in this process are clearly local government jurisdictions, our state emergency management partners, and our partners at FEMA. The dialogue should address the concerns raised in this research in an effort to further develop what has been called the “backbone of emergency management” funding for local governments.