5.1 LOCAL FUNDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The 44 CFR 201.4 (c)(4)(i) requirement maintains the state should include a description of the process to support, through funding and technical assistance, the development of local mitigation plans.

Hazard mitigation planning determines how to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and property damage resulting from natural and human-caused hazards. The rising recovery costs from the annual hazards plaguing Ohio made it apparent that a pre-disaster project focus and ongoing risk analysis by local communities could reduce these costs. The State of Ohio utilizes any available Federal Program funds for mitigation projects and has documented success stories proving the necessity and effectiveness of the programs. The DMA2K stipulates that the State and Local jurisdictions need to have an approved All Hazards Mitigation Plan to remain eligible for any Federal funding for mitigation projects. Ohio has taken a very proactive role in the involvement with local jurisdictions to secure the availability of the funding programs.

OEMA distributed PDM and HMGP funds to any jurisdiction with the ability and willingness to complete a Hazard Mitigation Plan. The OEMA Mitigation Branch staff is responsible for interaction with counties, cities and villages working on Local Mitigation Plans. An explanation of the initial planning requirements and recommendations on the usage of planning funds were achieved through planning meetings. As the planning process evolved, so did the involvement of the State. The availability of a technical assistance consultation throughout the process and a final review of the draft plan provide communities with several opportunities to produce an approvable plan.

5.1.1 PLANNING BRIEFINGS

When the plan requirements were initially distributed, local jurisdictions were unsure about the creation and significance of the plan. Communities applied for State funds to assist with the planning process. OEMA Mitigation staff met individually with all recipients of PDM FY2002 funds for planning. All recipients of PDM FY2003 funds were invited to one of four regional meetings for assistance with their plans. Any jurisdictions requesting funds for planning, after the all the PDM funds were allocated, were funded through HMGP. The State offered guidance for those recipients at a meeting in the State office.

The meetings provided an opportunity for OEMA staff to verbalize their expectations for the communities to create an approvable plan. Approval of the plans is normally done by FEMA. Ohio, as a Managing State, is able to pre-approve the plans before they are sent to FEMA. All the plans must meet the standard requirements, but the pre-approval allows Ohio flexibility. The plans are technical documents that require in-depth examinations of the risks and vulnerabilities to hazards. OEMA is cognizant of the resources available to communities and expects more from urban areas versus limited less developed jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction receives several technical assistance tools at the Planning briefing to assist with the process.
Mitigation Branch staff conducting the meeting distributes and explains the relevance of each document.

The informational packet includes:

- A copy of the Law listing the requirements for the Local Mitigation Plan
- An outline of OEMA expectations and additional planning resources
- FEMA publications 386-1 thru 386-4, part of the Getting Started Series
- FEMA’s DMA2K Mitigation Plan Guidance
- Ohio’s Mitigation Planning Guidance
- An extensive list of contractors who have assisted other communities with Plans
- A copy of the Crosswalk that outlines the requirements and method for assessment of the plan

Local Community planning is a priority for FEMA since they provide the funds for the mitigation programs. Ohio utilizes and distributes FEMA documents to assist communities with their Plans. The primary publication series specifically providing information on the Local Mitigation Plan process is the “Getting Started” series (386-1 thru 386-4). The four sections present the requirements of the Plan and assist with capability assessments that walk the communities step-by-step through the process. These informational planning assistance documents include:

- Planning for Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction
- FEMA’s "Multi-Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment" Document
- Planning for a Sustainable Future: The Link Between Hazard Mitigation and Livability
- Rebuilding for a More Sustainable Future: An Operational Framework

Ohio’s Mitigation Planning Guidance is a collaborative effort between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the OEMA. The guidance outlines requirements relevant to Ohio communities. Local governments, due to Ohio’s strong home-rule form of government, regulate land use management, building codes and zoning. Current Ohio law contains minimal information concerning statutory land-use planning requirements. Communities with an adopted plan regarding hazard analysis, land use policies, regulations and programs not only are eligible to receive mitigation funds, but they have more credibility in the public and legal systems.

5.1.2 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COORDINATION

The Mitigation Branch Staff are available for consultation on any issues or concerns from a Community throughout the planning process. If a community is struggling with their plan, they can request a technical assistance visit with a member of the Mitigation Branch. The technical assistance visit begins with an assessment of the
jurisdiction’s progress. The reviewer outlines the portions of the plan, which meet the requirements and those that need further attention. Guidance is provided for any future direction or additional resources the community could employ to ensure an approvable finished product. The Mitigation Branch staff is available for any assistance regarding the community’s concerns about the local mitigation plan and encourages the communities to utilize the resources from other state departments for additional information for the plan.

Flooding is a major hazard for the State of Ohio. As the administrator of the NFIP, ODNR – Division of Water provides access to several technical assistance resources to communities regarding flood issues. The administrator of the NFIP program in the State is required to ensure compliance through CAV and CAC. Through a CAV and CAC, ODNR conducts a comprehensive assessment of the local floodplain management program and assists the community in understanding and implementing effective flood loss reduction measures. The information a community receives should be utilized in their Local Mitigation Plans.

Through the Appalachian Flood Risk Reduction Initiative ODNR provides grants to selected Appalachian Region communities to develop local natural hazard plans that focus on flooding. A 50/50 cost share is required and the Community must participate in the NFIP and be in good standing to receive funds. The participating community is provided engineering and mapping services to generate a flood map and study for a selected reach of stream. The study not only fulfills the Plan requirement for the flooding hazard, but it provides imperative technical information for future Community development and planning initiatives.

5.1.3 DRAFT CONSULTATION

A jurisdiction sends their final drafts to OEMA for approval. A reviewer in the Mitigation Branch uses the Crosswalk provided by FEMA to evaluate the plan according to the requirements. If the plan meets all the requirements, the community receives an approval letter informing them the state has pre-approved their plan.

If a plan does not meet the requirements, the community receives a letter informing them the plan cannot be approved. The letter outlines the areas requiring additional information and provides resources for the communities to attain assistance for the future draft. The community may request a meeting with a staff member of the Mitigation Branch to review the comments and address the communities concerns.