

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Technical Evaluation Criteria

This Program Support Material (PSM) details the five technical evaluation criteria that will be used for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) National Competition. The following details each criterion and the conditions that must be met to receive the point allotment.

This is not a request for information.

BRIC Technical Evaluation Criteria

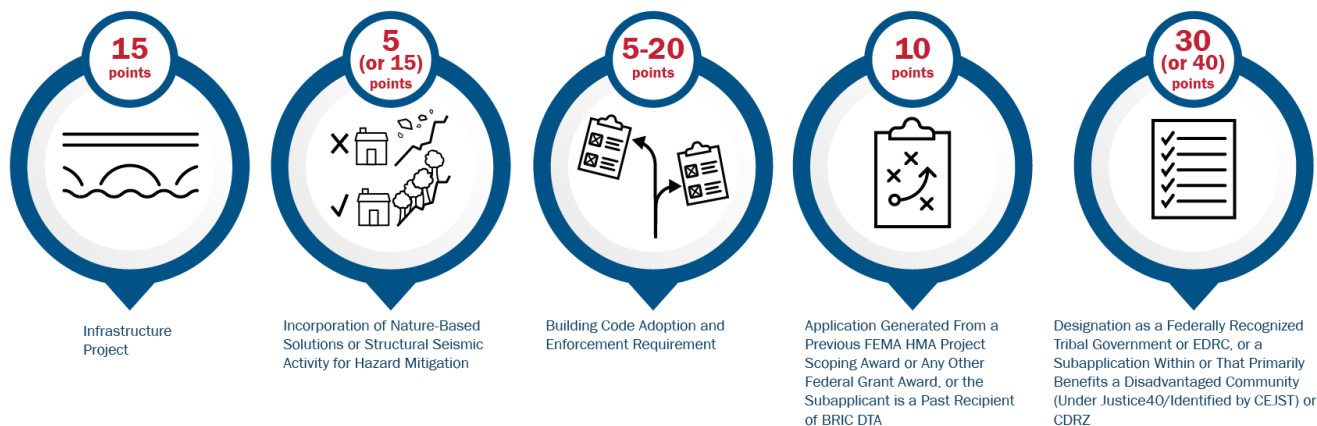


Figure 1: Technical Evaluation Criteria

Background

FEMA will use technical evaluation criteria to score subapplications submitted to the National Competition. FEMA will send subapplications valued at three times the amount of available funding, and all subapplications for projects within or primarily benefitting Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZs), to the BRIC National Review Panel. Should FEMA receive more than three times the available funding, the technical evaluation scores may be used to prioritize which subapplications are sent to the BRIC National Review Panel. At least one eligible subapplication from each applicant will be sent to the National Review Panel.



FEMA

The technical evaluation criteria offer incentives for elements FEMA values. To ensure transparency and efficiency in competition project selection, the technical evaluation criteria use one of two different point systems. The first awards binary points (full points or zero points) for each criterion, and the second uses tiered points (points allotted for the element of the criterion met).

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

To earn the points, applicants or subapplicants should clearly and completely describe how the project meets the following criteria:

- Is an infrastructure project.
- Incorporates nature-based solutions for hazard mitigation or is a structural seismic activity.
- The applicant and the project's community adopted recent building codes and have achieved a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) rating of 1 to 5, or they are able to demonstrate a higher standard for the primary hazard identified in the subapplication that will be mitigated.
- Subapplication generated from a previous HMA project scoping award or any other federal grant award, or the subapplicant is a past recipient of [BRIC Direct Technical Assistance \(BRIC DTA\)](#).
- The community is underserved and/or disadvantaged. This includes Economically Disadvantaged Rural Communities (EDRCs) and federally recognized tribal governments. It also includes a subapplication within or that primarily benefits a [CDRZ](#).

Applicants and subapplicants should carefully review each of the sections below. They describe how to thoroughly address each criterion to achieve a high score.

Technical Evaluation Criterion 1: Infrastructure Project (15 points)

To earn the points 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—including natural systems. The following are examples of how a community might describe how its project is an infrastructure project:

- Our proposed nature-based solution will reduce risk from high-intensity rainfall events. This will better protect our water treatment plant. The plant supplies fresh water to our community of 30,000 people.
- We want to retrofit our food bank to have stronger structural integrity and the ability to operate off-grid. This will ensure a critical service will stay in operation after an earthquake.

Applicants or subapplicants must include a statement in the “Scope of Work” section of FEMA GO describing how the project agrees with how infrastructure is defined in [BRIC Policy FP-104-008-05](#) as “critical physical structures, facilities, and systems that provide support to a community, its population, and economy.” This definition includes natural systems.

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

To earn the points for this criterion, the subapplication must describe how the project uses one or more nature-based solutions. Applicants or subapplicants must:

- In the “Scope of Work” section of FEMA GO, select the appropriate nature-based project type when asked, “Does the mitigation activity incorporate nature-based solutions?”
- Include in the “Additional Comments (Optional)” section of the “Scope of Work” the name(s) of the document(s) where the nature-based solution is described as part of the project (Note: documentation can include stamped and sealed reports, design documents, technical drawings, surveys and studies, project site maps, historical data, cost estimations, etc.).

FEMA defines nature-based solutions as sustainable planning, design, environmental management, and engineering practices. These provide benefits for people and the environment to build resilient communities and mitigate the impact of climate change at the same time. FEMA uses the term “nature-based solutions” for an umbrella of strategies. These include green infrastructure, bioengineering, and/or natural infrastructure.

Nature-based solutions are approaches that may 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 roofs
- Green stormwater management
- Green streets
- Greenways
- Habitat restoration/enhancements
- Living shorelines
- Low-impact development
- 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 protection
- Xeriscaping

To obtain the full points (15 points) for using nature-based solutions, the subapplication must include watershed, landscape-scale, or coastal resilience nature-based solution(s).

For partial points (5 points), the subapplication must include a neighborhood or site-scale nature-based solution(s).

Eligible projects that consist of structural seismic activities generally do not use nature-based solutions, which is due to the type of solutions that are needed for this type of project. Therefore, projects that are made up of structural seismic activities will get partial points (5 points) under this criterion.

More information on nature-based solutions can be found in the following resources:

- [White House Roadmap and Resources documents](#)
- [2024 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#)
- [2023 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 \(Nature Based Solutions Guidebook 2023\) \(fema.gov\)](#)
- [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Digital Coast Natural Infrastructure](#)
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Green Infrastructure](#)
- [Engineering With Nature International Guidelines on Natural and Nature-Based Features for Flood Risk Management](#)

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

This criterion is about assessing 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. The maximum point allotment for this is 20 points. If the subapplication does not get any points for Subcriterion 3.1, then it will be evaluated for Subcriterion 3.2, which can give up to 5 points. The evaluation method for both is defined below.

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

Building Code Adoption (5 or 10 points)

This criterion can yield up to 10 points. To obtain the full points (10), both the applicant and the project community must have adopted building codes. FEMA understands the importance of using the latest building codes at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels. Because the 2024 edition was published recently, the three latest editions will be considered. These are 2018, 2021 and 2024 of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) model codes published by the [International Code Council \(ICC\)](#).

The subapplication will receive 5 points if the project community has locally adopted building codes based on both the IBC and the IRC model codes. To obtain these points, both codes must be 2018, 2021 or 2024.

FEMA will evaluate the local adoption status by reviewing the edition of the locally adopted codes in the community's BCEGS evaluation. If the community has adopted more recent building codes than those shown in their BCEGS evaluation, or they do not have a BCEGS evaluation, they must attach a copy of the ordinance in FEMA GO that shows 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 community's locally adopted building codes are based on the applicant's mandatory state-, tribal-, or territory-wide adoption of building codes. These are based on both the IBC and the IRC model codes published by the ICC. To obtain these points, both codes have to be 2018, 2021 or 2024.

If a federally recognized tribal government has not adopted the code as listed above, the tribe must show alternative compliance with IBC and IRC (2018, 2021 and 2024 versions). They may also be covered under another jurisdiction's (state or territory) code adoption status to obtain the point allotment.

You can find information about applicant building code adoption status in the following map provided by FEMA Building Science. There may also be documentation of state, territory, or tribal legislation or code that demonstrates adoption status. FEMA Building Science updates this map regularly. 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. Subapplications should also attach documentation verifying the 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.

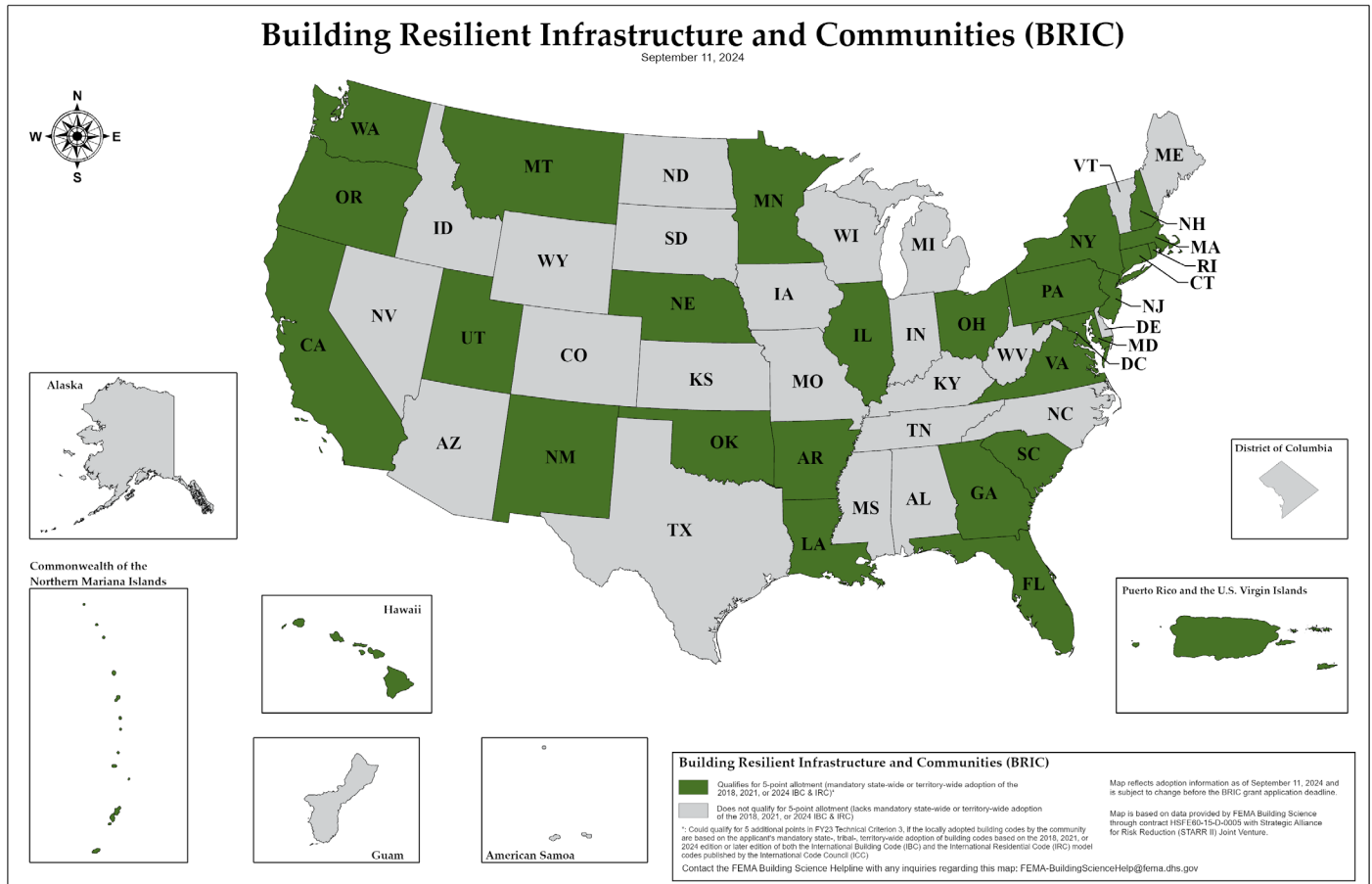


Figure 2: National Building Code Adoption Status Map

Building Code Enforcement (10 points)

Building code enforcement will be evaluated using the BCEGS. This is an independent assessment of a community’s building code adoption and enforcement activities. It gives a score of 1 (best) to 5. This evaluation applies to subapplicants only.

To obtain the 10 points allotted for building code enforcement, a subapplicant at the local level must have a BCEGS rating between 1 and 5 (considered by FEMA as a disaster-resistant code) when the application is submitted. This is also true for those in territories. To earn 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. These are 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 gives updated information on their BCEGS rating, if applicable. BCEGS scores for tribal applicants and subapplicants are required. However, they may 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 generally 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 obtain the points for building code enforcement, a subapplicant at the state or territory level for the five Bureau states not included in the [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 in 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., 1871 South Cobalt Point Way, Meridian, Idaho 83642, Phone: 208-343-5483.
- Property Insurance Association of Louisiana, 433 Metairie Road, Suite 400, Metairie, Louisiana 70005, Phone: 504-836-7980.
- Mississippi State Rating Bureau, 6455 Wirtz Road Flowood, Mississippi 39232-7801 or P.O. Box 5231 Jackson, Mississippi 39296-5231, Phone: 601-981-2915.
- Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau, P.O. Box 1188 Renton, Washington 98057-1188, Phone: 206-217-0101.

If a subapplicant does not have a BCEGS score, they must ask for a survey to get one. BCEGS surveys are provided at no cost; they do not negatively impact credit ratings and can take two to four months to complete. Communities that want to apply for BRIC funding are encouraged to start the process as soon as possible. To request a BCEGS survey, please refer to the submission instructions on the [ISO Mitigation website](#). Questions about the BCEGS survey can be directed to BCEGS_info@verisk.com.

Applicants and subapplicants must include their BCEGS score in the “Evaluation” section of FEMA GO. Bureau states should use their state-verified BCEGS score at state level.

Subcriterion 3.2 Alternative Higher Standards (Maximum 5 Points)

Some project subapplications may not get any points in Subcriterion 3.1 (Building Code Adoption and Enforcement). In that case, 5 points could be given if the subapplicant demonstrates that they hold higher standards for the primary hazard they have identified in their subapplication and that their project intends to mitigate. They can do this with a narrative.

Below are examples for higher standards that could be considered under this subcriterion. This list is not exhaustive.

- Prohibition of fill within the floodway and/or floodplain.

- Requiring at least two feet of freeboard in all Special Flood Hazard Areas.
- Prohibition of siting/placement of critical facilities within the 0.2% annual-chance-floodplain. This is also called the 500-year floodplain.
- Rules for development in the coastal zone (Zone V). These could include open foundations, seaward of identified Limits of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA).
- Using a higher risk category.
- Using a higher importance factor for the primary hazard.

To receive the 5 points allotted for alternative higher standards, subapplicants must submit the narrative as an attachment in the “Evaluation” section of FEMA GO. The title of the file should include the text “Alternative Higher Standards.”

Technical Evaluation Criterion 4: Application Generated from a Previous FEMA HMA Project Scoping Award or Any Other Federal Grant Award, or the Subapplicant is a Past Recipient of BRIC Direct Technical Assistance (BRIC DTA) (10 points)

HMA Advance Assistance or project scoping award gives applicants and subapplicants the resources to develop mitigation strategies. It also helps them get data to prioritize, select and develop complete applications in a timely manner. This improves their ability to identify appropriate mitigation projects. It can also help in the development of an application-ready mitigation project for BRIC or another funding opportunity.

To obtain the 10 points allotted for this criterion, a subapplicant must:

- Answer “Yes” to “Was this application generated from a previous FEMA HMA Advance Assistance or Project Scoping award or any other federal grant award, or the subapplicant is a past recipient of Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) non-financial Direct Technical Assistance?”
- Attach a signed PDF of the award letter to the application under “Attach a PDF of the previous award and indicate which funding opportunity was provided,” and provide the name of the attached file in the description field.
- Select the previous grant award program from the following drop-down menu:
 - BRIC Project Scoping
 - BRIC Direct Technical Assistance
 - FMA Project Scoping
 - FMA Advance Assistance
 - PDM Advance Assistance

- HMGP Advance Assistance
- Other Federal Grant Program

If the selected program is “Other federal grant award,” the subapplicant must enter the name in the box under “Please provide the name of the other federal grant award.”

Technical Evaluation Criterion 5: Designation as a Federally Recognized Tribal Government or Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community (EDRC), or a Subapplication Within or That Primarily Benefits a Disadvantaged Community (Under Justice40/Identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool [CEJST]) or Community Disaster Resilience Zone (CDRZ) (30 points or 40 points)

This criterion assigns points to subapplications that benefit communities that are designated as EDRC or as a federally recognized tribal government, or subapplications within or that primarily benefit a CDRZ or disadvantaged community (under Justice40/identified by CEJST).

The following is a description of the information that subapplicants must provide to evaluate their designation as one of the disadvantaged community types considered under this criterion.

Federally Recognized Tribal Government

To obtain the 40 points allotted in this criterion for a project that benefits a federally recognized tribal government, the subapplicant must:

- Answer “Yes” to the question, “Is this an Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community or Community Disaster Resilience Zone?” in the “Budget” section in FEMA GO.

FEMA will confirm that the subapplicant is included in the [list of federally recognized tribal governments](#).

Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community

To obtain the 40 points allotted in this criterion for a project that benefits an [EDRC](#) (as referenced in [Title 42 United States Code Section 5133\[a\]](#) as a small impoverished community), subapplicants must:

- Answer “Yes” to the question, “Is this an Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community or Community Disaster Resilience Zone?” in the “Budget” section in FEMA GO.
- Include documentation of EDRC status in the “Budget” section in FEMA GO, attaching required supporting documentation of population and per capita income for the community or communities benefiting from the project claiming EDRC status. Subapplicants can find population data on the [U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey \(ACS\) website](#). A community’s population and per capita income can be found under the “Per Capita Income By Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Total Population, and Mean Income (Dollars)” columns (Figure 3) by adding the community information into the search bar (i.e., S1902: Community, State). Supporting documentation for population and per capita income should be based on the most recent information and

include an exported U.S. Census Bureau ACS data report. Communities may submit alternative population and per capita income documentation validating their designation as an EDRC community.

Label	Number		Percent Distribution		Mean income (dollars)	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
1 worker	235	±78	38.2%	±11.1	N	N
2 workers, both spouses worked	187	±107	30.4%	±12.0	N	N
2 workers, other	99	±69	16.1%	±10.1	N	N
3 or more workers, both spouses worked	6	±7	1.0%	±1.2	N	N
3 or more workers, other	14	±19	2.3%	±3.1	N	N
PER CAPITA INCOME BY RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN						
✓ Total population	2,445	±518	2,445	±518	25,560	±4,572
▼ One race--						
White	1,369	±402	56.0%	±12.2	31,716	±8,595
Black or African American	855	±334	35.0%	±10.7	19,098	±5,413
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	±13	0.0%	±1.6	-	**
Asian	25	±41	1.0%	±1.7	N	N
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	±13	0.0%	±1.6	-	**
Some other race	67	±81	2.7%	±3.5	N	N
Two or more races	129	±120	5.3%	±4.3	14,243	±9,168
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	89	±95	3.6%	±4.2	6,079	±3,543
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,347	±405	55.1%	±12.2	32,120	±8,824

Figure 3: Community Census Data

- If the subapplicant has answered “Yes” to the question in the first bullet, but they did not provide the required documentation in the second bullet, FEMA will use the ACS S1902 1- or 5-year table values as of the application close date to determine the EDRC designation of the subapplicant jurisdictions listed in the “Communities” section of FEMA GO. The subapplicant must include all the communities that will benefit from this mitigation activity. Select them by clicking on the “Find Communities” button. Subapplicants can use the “Please provide any additional comments (optional)” box to add any relevant information about the communities. Subapplicants can also attach any file as part of the “Attachments” option.

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 being planned in to obtain the points for this criterion.

Community Disaster Resilience Zone

To obtain the 40 points allotted in this criterion for a project that is located within or primarily benefits a [Community Disaster Resilience Zone](#), the subapplicant must:

- Answer “Yes” to the question, “Is this an Economically Disadvantaged Rural Community or Community Disaster Resilience Zone?” in the “Budget” section in FEMA GO.

- Submit in the “Project benefitting area” section of FEMA GO 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 the [Creating Benefiting Maps](#) and this [job aid](#).
- If the subapplicant did not submit a map and associated geospatial file(s) in the “Project benefitting area” section of FEMA GO, the jurisdictions listed in the “Communities” section of FEMA GO will be used to verify if a project is within or primarily benefits a CDRZ. The subapplicant must include all communities that will benefit from the mitigation activity. Select them by clicking on the “Find communities” button. Subapplicants can use the “Please provide any additional comments (optional)” box to add any relevant information about the communities. Subapplicants can also attach any file as part of the “Attachments” option.

Disadvantaged Community (Under Justice40/Identified by CEJST)

To obtain the 30 points allotted in this criterion for a project that is located within or primarily benefits a Justice40 community or communities as identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), the subapplicant must:

- Submit in the “Project benefitting area” section of FEMA GO 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 the [Creating Benefiting Maps](#) and this [job aid](#).
- If the subapplicant did not submit a map and associated geospatial file(s) in the “Project benefitting area” section of FEMA GO, the jurisdictions listed in the “Communities” section of FEMA GO will be used to verify if a project is within or primarily benefits Justice40 communities. The subapplicant must include all communities that will benefit from the mitigation activity. Select them by clicking on the “Find communities” button. Subapplicants can use the “Please provide any additional comments (optional)” box to add any relevant information about the communities. Subapplicants can also attach any file as part of the “Attachments” option.