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ODR Giving Nonprofits Access to \$13.4 Million in Funding for Stalled Recovery Projects Through Advance Funding Program

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The V.I. Office of Disaster Recovery announced Tuesday the development of a new initiative to assist non-profits with expending its FEMA disaster recovery funding.

According to the release, the Public Assistance Advance Funding Program will allow eligible charitable organizations who received FEMA funding to apply for advances to begin their disaster recovery projects.

O.D.R. said several non-profits expressed hardships surrounding getting their projects started despite having funds obligated to their organizations. The FEMA Public Assistance Program is a reimbursable program requiring non-profit organizations to expend funds up front and then submit

receipts for reimbursement. However, many non-profits do not have the working capital to commence projects. Thus, many projects are still sitting in disrepair despite having funds obligated, the release stated.

According to O.D.R., currently, \$18.9 million has been obligated to non-profits for the recovery of Hurricanes Irma & Maria, and a total of \$13.4 million remains unspent. The Public Assistance Advance Funding Program is expected to address this shortfall. Non-profit community leaders also expressed these challenges to Governor Albert Bryan, who charged the Office of Disaster Recovery to develop a solution to address the problem.

“The non-profit community is an important stakeholder filling many voids that our government cannot fulfill. It is important for us as an administration to support them as they provide those much-needed services. As we continue to rebuild, our non-profit entities cannot be left behind,” said Governor Bryan.

The Landmarks Society served as a demonstration project for this initiative. Sonia Jacobs-Dowe, Executive Director, shared her organization’s gratitude. “The Landmarks Society is very appreciative of the kind assistance provided by the team at the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR). We are ecstatic that the Whim Museum, research library, and every eligible structure on our 12-acre site in Estate Whim will finally begin the process of being repaired,” she said. “In 2017, Landmarks re-opened the museum less than two months after Hurricane Maria. Now our community can look forward to every space being accessible as we continue our work to preserve St. Croix’s cultural heritage. Landmarks Society’s trustees, staff, and volunteers are thankful to Governor Bryan, ODR, and all who believe in and support our work.”

The Office of Disaster Recovery has invited all non-profit entities with open projects to participate in a virtual training session scheduled for Wednesday, August 17, from 2:00 to 3:00 pm to explain how to request an advance of public assistance funds for awarded projects. Applicants are required to submit a written request, not to exceed \$50,000, before initiating procurement action or executing a contract.

“The Office of Disaster Recovery is eager to share this new opportunity with all of our non-profit organizations. Establishing new policies to move projects forward is a critical part of our mission and our goal to facilitate the start and completion of recovery projects,” said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, Director of the Office of Disaster Recovery. “Invites have already been circulated to non-profit applicants with open project worksheets, and those who are not registered are encouraged to do so.”