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Biden Administration Waiving Cost Share For Federal Grants Below \$200,000

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The Biden administration on Wednesday announced what it said were new efforts to reduce the financial burden on U.S. territories including the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam.

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has directed all federal agencies and departments to waive local cost share requirements under \$200,000 for grants for the four U.S. territories. For local matching funds \$200,000 and greater, agencies and departments may waive the matching requirement for these four territories.

The administration said Mr. Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act are providing once-in-a-generation climate and infrastructure resources to the U.S. territories,

including investments in ecosystem restoration and climate resilience. Today's announcement will help ensure U.S. territories have the investments they need to develop a long-term plan to facilitate conservation, resiliency and economic growth.

At the Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) annual conference for territorial governors, members of Congress and other federal government officials today, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced that the Interior Department will extend the waiver of all match requirements, regardless of amount.

Governor Albert Bryan, who is seeking a waiver of the 10 percent match that the local government must meet to access the \$12 billion in federal, disaster recovery funds provided to the territory following the storms of 2017, also participated in today's IGIA.

"Accelerated by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, the Interior Department is making coordinated investments in the U.S. territories to conserve public lands and ecosystems, bolster climate resilience, and safeguard the environment for future generations," said Ms. Haaland. "In implementing this new policy, territorial governments will have greater flexibility to access these funds, further equipping them to upgrade critical infrastructure and invest in climate resilience."

Ms. Haaland and Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Julie Chávez Rodríguez serve as the IGIA co-chairs and delivered remarks at today's event, which was moderated by Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor. Senior Advisor to the President and White House Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu and Interior Department Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator Winnie Stachelberg also participated.

"President Biden is committed to expanding access to federal programs and breaking barriers for disadvantaged and underrepresented communities," said Ms. Chávez Rodríguez. "This policy will help level the playing field and enable access to new resources for the territories."

At today's IGIA meeting, representatives from the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency shared updates related to ongoing implementation of these historic laws. They highlighted how these resources are helping assist the territories in upgrading critical infrastructure and bolstering resilience against climate change and extreme weather events.

Established by Executive Order 13537, the IGIA convenes the leadership of the U.S. territories to advance key issues such as climate change, economic development, energy and infrastructure, health, education, public safety, justice and other issues as prioritized.