

Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Unveils New Transparency Website

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New Orleans, LA -- The Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), today unveiled a major initiative on government transparency.

The new Transparency Initiative is a web-based mapping tool that provides the public with accurate, up-to-date information on the status of public assistance funding that goes toward the rebuilding effort in the Gulf Coast.

Established by FEMA and the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding, the Public Assistance Transparency website (www.FEMA.gov/gcro and www.dhs.gov/gulfcoastrebuild) will make it easier to distinguish between responsibilities at every level of government.

"We are happy to provide the citizens of the Gulf Coast with this valuable resource for tracking the flow of public assistance funding into their local school systems," said Acting Associate Deputy Administrator for FEMA's Gulf Coast Recovery Office Jim Stark.

"Using this website, families can pinpoint where schools are in the rebuilding process and use this knowledge to make their own recovery decisions," Stark said.

The first phase, unveiled today at the Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana, focuses on mapping recovery schools in New Orleans, so that parents, teachers and local leaders will know the status of individual schools in their community.

"We are honored that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School was selected as the location to unveil the Transparency Initiative web tool," said Doris Hicks, Principal of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School.

"This important initiative brings greater accountability to everyone involved in rebuilding our schools and will go a long way in equipping parents, educators and students with invaluable information as we seek to improve our schools and continue to move forward together," Hicks said.

Tulane University President, Scott Cowen said, "This website is a step in the right direction to help families make important decisions based on which schools are open and the status of the ones that aren't. This tool also provides greater transparency in the process of rebuilding our public schools."

Today's unveiling of the education component, is the first phase in what's to come for each sector of the recovery and rebuilding process. Federal staff conducted a demonstration of the interactive map that allows the user to zoom in to find individual projects at the neighborhood scale.

"This initiative marks a critical step forward by infusing a greater level of transparency in the rebuilding process, providing helpful information to parents, teachers, and all New Orleanians," said Paul Pastorek, State Superintendent of the New Orleans Public Schools.

"We are very pleased to partner with Federal Coordinator Don Powell, his office and FEMA on this project," Pastorek said.

"We have always maintained that government functions best when it operates in a manner that is open to scrutiny from the people," said Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Regional Director Marc Roy.

"Information sharing with the state and local government will be a critical component in this effort, and we look forward to the continued partnership," Roy said.

The Office of the Federal Coordinator sought feedback and assistance from a number of Federal agencies in the development of the site including the Government Accountability Office (GAO), The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), as well as education establishments such as The Mercatus Center at George Mason University, and local stakeholders including The Cowan Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University and New Schools for New Orleans. Information and features on the site will be updated to reflect feedback from interested parties as the site develops further.

Over the last two years, the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding has been engaged in facilitating and streamlining various components of the recovery effort, providing key federal support and resources to local leaders, and reinforcing the federal government's commitment to the people of the Gulf Coast.

www.dhs.gov/gulfcoastrebuild

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