

Puerto Rico to receive \$113 million in FEMA and Commerce, Education and Agriculture department funds

SAN JUAN – Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González Colón announced the assignment of a combined \$113.7 million for Puerto Rico from the U.S. Commerce, Education and Agriculture departments, as well as from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Two of the Commerce Department dependencies granted funds to seek to boost economic development.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding a \$3.5 million grant to Iniciativa Tecnológica Centro Oriental, Inc. (Inteco) of Caguas to construct the Business Disaster Response Center. According to grantee estimates, the project is expected to create 324 jobs, retain 360 jobs, and spur \$660,000 in private investment.

“This project will help accelerate the island’s recovery by allowing the private sector access to the resources required for sustained growth,” Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said in a release Thursday.

The investment supports the establishment of a 14,000-square-foot center to assist industries affected by hurricanes Irma and Maria. The center will support businesses across 12 municipalities with disaster recovery, incubation space, business education and access to capital through regional Community Development Financial Institutions.

The recipients of the funds have been selected through a competitive process based on the merit of the application, the eligibility of the applicant and the availability of funds.

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) awarded \$273,793 to the Minority Business Resource Development of Puerto Rico for preparation before natural disasters to respond to contractual opportunities.

The MBDA is the only federal agency established solely to create jobs through minority-owned businesses in the United States. It coordinates and leverages public- and private-sector resources to provide access to capital, contracts and markets.

USDA Rural Development allocated \$900,000 to the Solid Waste Authority to reduce and eliminate water pollution, improve the planning and management of solid waste sites in 28 municipal landfills and the rural communities of Ancones-Arroyo; Flamenco-Culebra; Demajagua-Fajardo, Pozo Hondo-Guayama, Gurabo Arriba-Juncos, Llanos Costa-Lajas, Centro-Moca and Puerto Diablo-Vieques,

The Solid Waste Authority, in collaboration with professors from the Mayagüez campus of the University of Puerto Rico and the State University of New York will work on technical assistance and training in budget analysis, market analysis, public information, awareness campaign, development of an efficient collection system, segregation of recyclable materials in the source of origin, correct waste management and recycling, and maximizing the use of the material recovery facility and a compost center.

The effort seeks to help conserve natural resources, extend the useful life of municipal landfills, guarantee health and safety by reducing solid waste by means of recycling and composting, improve the quality of life of approximately 4,123 families and encourage the economy.

To make it easier for parents to continue with higher education, the U.S. Education Department allocated \$60,336 to Universidad Central de Bayamón under the Child Care Access Program Means Parents in School Program. It supports the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education programs by providing childcare services on campus.

In addition, FEMA approved reimbursements totaling \$108.9 million.

These reimbursements are given under the FEMA Public Assistance program for expenses incurred by agencies and municipalities, as well as institutions, for reconstruction and recovery work due to the impact of Hurricane Maria.

The funds come from assignments that the commissioner has worked on from Congress, the release reads, through budget bills or disaster supplement measures.

Under category A, for debris removal expenses, the municipality of Fajardo will receive \$1.6 million; Aibonito will receive \$5.8 million; Naguabo was awarded \$5.5 million; and Camuy was granted \$1.1 million.

Category B covers measures taken to provide “essential assistance” to face immediate threats to life and property resulting from a major disaster. Under this category, the National Guard will receive \$12.2 million; the Electric Power Authority will receive two reimbursements, the first of \$25.5 million and the second of \$24.7 million; the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority will receive \$1.1 million; and the University of Puerto Rico will receive \$3.2 million for generators at its 12 campuses. The Housing Department will receive \$28.3 million for administrative costs. The funds are granted under category Z of FEMA’s Public Assistance Program.