

FY2023 Annual Report for the CNMI Office of Planning and Development



"Building a sustainable CNMI for current and future generations."

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2023 Annual Report – Director's Note

Hafa Adai yan Tirow,

The CNMI Office of Planning and Development (OPD) is delighted to present our annual report to CNMI leadership and provide updates on the recent exciting developments. FY23 marked a year of change for both the CNMI government as a whole and OPD, with multiple individuals assuming the role of OPD Acting Director and some staff members choosing to pursue other opportunities. Despite these changes, progress continues.

As of September 2023, the Marpi Landfill Cell 2 Rehabilitation Project, funded through the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (ASADRA), became the CNMI's first completed project under this grant program.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers \$56 million in ASADRA funding, and this funding does not expire. The full award is contingent upon the CNMI submitting a solid waste plan for EPA review and approval. We are pleased to share that the CNMI Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan (CISWMP) is nearly complete, with a final draft expected for EPA review in the first quarter of 2024.

In October 2023, OPD's Solid Waste Team secured an additional \$612,000 in EPA funding through the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program. These funds will support critical solid waste infrastructure, equipment investments, and staffing that benefits Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Progress was made on our U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)funded projects as well. In March 2023, we awarded and issued notices to proceed for the architecture and engineering design of the Oleai Sports Complex and Cultural Events Center projects. As of December 2023, the new two-way road at Paseo De Marianas has been paved and the CNMI Economic Recovery and Feasibility Carry Capacity Study is underway. These EDA-funded initiatives aim to position the CNMI as a premier destination for large-scale events, commerce, and sports tourism while ensuring a sustainable economic future.

For more detailed progress updates, key recommendations, and next steps, please refer to the full annual report. Here's to building a more sustainable CNMI together, for many more years to come!

Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Oloomway, and Thanks,

Elizabeth Balajadia, Acting Director of the CNMI Office of Planning and Development

Executive Summary

Overview:

This annual report outlines the Office of Planning and Development's (OPD) mission and objectives currently being pursued to achieve these and related mandates, as well as highlighting accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities and next steps as we work to achieve sustainable planning mandates and OPD's mission, established by Public Law 20-20.

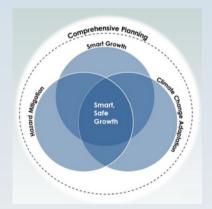
This includes the mandate to create a Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP) for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). CNMI's 2021-2030 CSDP is guided by "sustainable development" and "smart, safe growth" principles across planning elements and goals.

"Sustainable Development"



"Sustainable Development" planning emphasizes the intersection between environmental and ecological sustainability, economic prosperity, and social equity.

"Smart, Safe Growth (SSG)"



"Smart Safe Growth" (SSG) reflects principles of smart growth, hazard mitigation, and climate adaptation to more sustainable and safe, comprehensive planning and project implmentation.

OPD's Mission:

OPD's mission is to increase the effectiveness of government and private actions, to improve coordination among different agencies and levels of government, and to provide for wise use of resources and future development of the CNMI.



As further mandated by Public Law 20-20, OPD aims to:

Create the CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP);

CSDP Mission: "Build a sustainable CNMI for current and future generations."



The 2021-2030 CNMI CSDP was adopted by the Office of the Governor in 2021. Implementation is ongoing.

The progress thus far in

achieving these goals:



Establish and maintain a data library for the continual collection and storage of public information needed or utilized in the development planning process; and



The CNMI Data Library went live in 2019 and can be found at <u>https://opd.gov.mp.</u> Data collection and updates continue.



Institute an interagency framework within which OPD can support the development of policies and collection of data to achieve its mission and mandates.

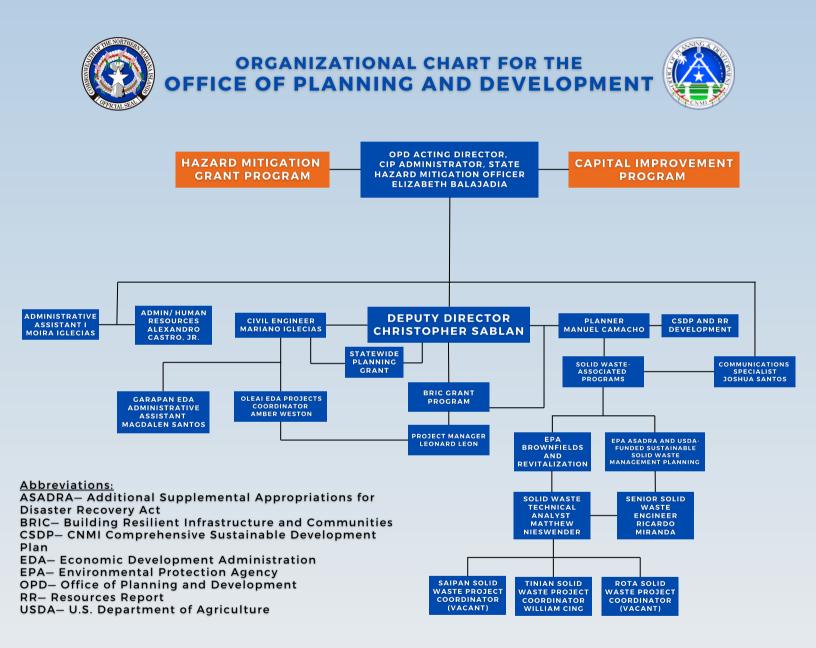


The **Planning and Development Advisory Council (PDAC),** Planning Taskforces, and the CSDP provide a framework to achieve the CNMI's sustainability mission.

<u>The Members of the Planning and</u> <u>Development Advisory Council (PDAC):</u>



PDAC membership was established through Public Law 20-20. OPD and PDAC in close collaboration with its numerous planning partners have identified, and are implementing, various priority projects that are in allignment with applicable visions, themes, goals, and objectives found within the 2021-2030 CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP). Team OPD's diverse and multi-faceted team manages some of the CNMI's premier government projects. Included below is an organizational chart for OPD.



OPD Priority Projects Highlights for FY2023:

OPD and its many Planning Partners work together on a variety of projects that seek to build a more sustainable CNMI for current and future generations. Summaries of the progress made on these projects in FY2023 are included here, and explained further in detail in this report.



2024 Resources Report data collection and 2025 CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP) update – Ongoing.

<u>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency</u> (EPA)-Funded Projects:



Marpi Landfill Cell 2 Rehabilitation Project— Construction and rehabilitation work complete.



CNMI Comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan (CISWMP) development—Latest draft of the plan is under review. OPD remains on track to submit the CISWMP to the EPA on or by May 2024 for final review and approval.



Emergency cleanup of Super Typhoon Yutu debris site on Tinian— Cleanup completed and equipment demobilized in 2022. Project is essentially complete.



Marpi Backup Power Feasibility Study— Phase I of the study was completed in May 2023. Phase II is ongoing.



Draft Emergency Response Plan for solid waste— Draft plan completed in 2023. Plan included in CISWMP as an attachment.



EPA Brownfields Program— With support from the EPA, work is ongoing to assess and eventually clean up identified brownfields on Saipan and Tinian.



EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program— Through a ~\$600,000 grant award from the EPA, OPD will oversee personnel hires and the purchase and repair of recycling equipment for Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

<u>U.S. Economic Development Agency</u> (EDA)- Funded Projects:



Oleai Sports Complex and Cultural Events Center Projects – OPD awarded A&E design contracts for both projects in March 2023. A&E design for both projects are 30% complete.



Garapan Revitalization Project— The project broke ground in November 2022 and remains on track for its November 2024 completion date. Paseo De Marianas was paved in December 2023.



CNMI Economic Recovery and Feasibility Carry Capacity Study— The contract to develop and conduct this study has been awarded. Study timeline is from October 2023 to May 2024.

<u>U.S. Federal Emergency Management</u> <u>Agency (FEMA) - Funded Projects:</u>



Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program: Blighted Buildings and Micro Beach Projects – OPD is a member of the working groups that are handling these two projects, which seek to identify and address select blighted buildings in the CNMI and to bolster the shoreline of Micro Beach.

<u>National Fish and Wildlife Foundation</u> (<u>NFWF)- Funded Projects:</u>



Enhancing wetlands and corals resilience in Saipan's Priority Management Watershed— OPD

alongside the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ) and the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) are overseeing projects focused on wetlands and coral reef restoration.

<u>U.S. Department of Agriculture</u> (USDA)- Funded Project:



Solid Waste Management Grant: Solid Waste Staff Training and Capacity Building—Through this USDA grant, OPD will facilitate in-person trainings for the CNMI's solid waste management staff focused on safety protocols and best management practices for various commodities, recyclables, and other materials and waste types.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS



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Identify funding sources for and consider other project roles as needed



FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) AND SMART, SAFE GROWTH (SSG) Continue collaborations with Planning Partners, revisit/ launch SSG Project Evaluation Tool, hold more SSG Trainings



MORE TECHNICAL SUPPORT/ ESTABLISHING A SYSTEM FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT Hire technical staff or work with consulting firms for RFP and project scope development



REVISITING REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENTS WITH THE CNMI'S FEDERAL GRANTORS



MORE COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR OPD'S PROJECTS Meet with grantors to discuss reimbursement issues, support legislative/ governmental actions to identify funding sources for "upfront" payments to contractors

Propose hiring additional communications staff in workplans and budgets for upcoming fiscal years

Under Public Law 23-04, the Office of Planning and Development (OPD) was appropriated **\$234,691** in FY 2023.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 APPROPRIATION							
Total Personnel		Total All Others			TOTAL		
\$	232,367.00	\$	2,324.00	\$	234,691.00		

OPD, in partnership with various local agencies, was awarded several multi-year grants for conservation, infrastructure improvement, and planning projects.

NATIONAL FISH & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (NFWF)

• **Coastal Resilience Project, \$1,679,215**— To build community resilience in Saipan's most populated priority management watershed through wetland and coral reef restoration.

U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

- Oleai Sports and Cultural Tourism Enhancement Project, \$21,160,000— Construction of buildings and associated infrastructure for use as a sports complex and cultural events center.
- Garapan Revitalization Project, \$11,177,918.00— A&E design and construction of improvements to the street infrastructure of the Garapan Core.

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

- Hazardous Waste Management Program, Disaster Relief Act, \$22,233,078

 The goal of this project is to increase solid waste management capacity to address post-storm solid waste issues including the cleanup of disaster debris from Typhoon Yutu, and develop long-term sustainable solid and zero waste programs and a comprehensive integrated waste management plan for CNMI.
- Garapan Brownfields Assessment, -\$300,000— In coordination with DPL and Zoning, this project supports environmental assessments in Garapan Core that will inform revitalization planning.

U.S. FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

• Flood Risk Mapping and Communications, \$210,000— Working with DPW, BECQ, and others, OPD is supporting FEMA in data collection and forthcoming updates of flood insurance rate maps to identify and reduce risk of flooding to the built environment and our community.

OPD continues to pursue competitive grants to obtain additional financial support to build internal capacity to support planning, data management, and project coordination mandates of Public Law 20–20. Long-term sustainable development planning and implementation support continues to be facilitated through local and federal funding in FY24.

BUILDING RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES (BRIC)

- Micro Beach Project, \$145,000— In March 2023, FEMA awarded OPD \$145,000 to conduct a scoping of Micro Beach's shoreline
 protection and stabilization. In addition, this grant allows for the planning and designing of risk reduction efforts in this highvalue tourist site, which align with the priority mitigation goals identified in the approved 2018 CNMI Standard State Mitigation
 Plan (2018 SSMP).
- Blighted Buildings Project, \$200,000— In March 2023, FEMA awarded OPD \$200,000 to assist the Zoning Office in implementing the Nuisance Abatement and Blight Property Maintenance Act of 2018, by conducting an assessment of blighted buildings, including mapping of structures, blight classification, hazard identification, property ownership and recommended remediation measures & estimate remediation costs.

STATEWIDE PLANNING GRANT

 CNMI Economic Recovery and Feasibility Carry Capacity Study, \$999,755— In FY 2023, EDA awarded the CNMI \$999,755 to conduct the CNMI Economic Recovery and Feasibility Carry Capacity Study. This study is anticipated to be completed by June 2024.

FY23 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: RESOURCES REPORT AND CSDP UPDATE



As mandated by Public Law 20-20, OPD and the PDAC created the Resources Report and the 2021-2030 CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP) to support ongoing sustainable growth planning. The 2021-2030 CSDP was adopted in October 2021. The Resources Report and CSDP will be reviewed and revised at least every five years in alignment with the vision, themes, and objectives and following the adaptive management approach outlined in the document in coordination with the PDAC.

CSDP Adoption and Updates Timeline:

2021 20

5 GENDER

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Governor, PDAC adopt the 2021-2030 CNMI CSDP.

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2023-2024

OPD, PDAC, planning partners compile and review additions and updates to the 2019 Resources Report. The 2024 Resource Report is anticipated to be circulated for public comment in FY24 to support the next CSDP update.

2025

Using data from the 2024 Resources Report, the CSDP is updated and published.

CO

2030-

The CSDP, and the CNMI's progress towards the sustainable planning targets within the CSDP, are reviewed and updated at least every five years.

The 2021-2030 CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP) adopts the UN's 17 SDGs and right-sizes them to set action plans to achieve them in the CNMI. More details on the SDGs and these action plans can be found in the CSDP, linked here: <u>https://opd.gov.mp/assets/2021-2030_cnmi_csdp.pdf</u>.

17 FOR THE GOAL

FY23 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: ASADRA-FUNDED SOLID WASTE PROJECTS

Through the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (ASADRA), 2019 the CNMI was appropriated \$56 million in federal funding for critical solid waste infrastructure investments and disaster recovery following 2018's Super Typhoon Yutu. There is no expiration on this \$56 million in funding, which is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the CNMI through OPD.

The EPA requires annual work plans and budgets for yearly allocations— the work plan for FY24 was submitted to and approved by the EPA.

MARPI LANDFILL CELL 2 REHABILITATION PROJECT

In September 2023, the Marpi Landfill Cell 2 Rehabilitation Project was completed. It was the CNMI's first critical solid waste infrastructure project funded through ASADRA that moved forward and reached completion.



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CNMI COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN (CISWMP)

Throughout FY23, the development of the CISWMP has been underway. OPD and the Inter-Island Solid Waste Management Taskforce (ISWMT) remain on track to submit the CISWMP EPA for final review and approval by May 2024.

<u>A</u>

EMERGENCY CLEANUP OF THE SUPER TYPHOON YUTU DEBRIS SITE ON TINIAN

Cleanup was completed and heavy equipment was demobolized in December 2022. The emergency cleanup has been completed, and OPD awaits final certification of the disposal of waste oils.

FY23 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: ASADRA-FUNDED SOLID WASTE PROJECTS



MARPI LANDFILL BACKUP POWER FEASIBILITY STUDY

This project is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the ISWMT, and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) that seeks alternative energy solutions to sustainably and continuously power the landfill operations at Marpi. Phase I of this study was completed in May 2023, and Phase II is ongoing.



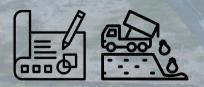
TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ISWMT PERSONNEL

With support from the EPA, the ISWMT continues to take part in trainings and capacity building activities in and outside of the CNMI. Requests for funding for these activities are regularly included in the ASADRA workplans.

DRAFT EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN FOR SOLID WASTE

A draft emergency response plan for the CNMI's solid waste was completed in 2023, and is included in the CISWMP as an attachment.

DEVELOPING COMPLIANT LANDFILLS FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF TINIAN AND AGUIGUAN



While Tinian's new landfill at the At Gidon site is being designed and developed, work will soon be underway to convert the existing open dump at the Puntan Diablo site into a federally compliant, small communities-exempt landfill.

FY23 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: OLEAI SPORTS COMPLEX AND CULTURAL EVENTS CENTER FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In 2021, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded OPD \$21.2 million for the Oleai Sports Complex and Cultural Events Center Facilities Development Projects. Once completed, these two projects will equip the CNMI with the means and facilities to explore sports tourism and cultural tourism for years to come, expanding socioeconomic sustainability as well as bolstering cultural cohesion and identity.

Through the Oleai Sports Complex Project, the goal is to develop a state-of-the-art sports complex that will make the CNMI a prime venue for large-scale regional sporting events, boost tourism, and allow Micronesia's athletes and the community to excel in the sport of their choice.

Through the Oleai Cultural Events Center, the goal is for the area to be a walkable, accessible space for the community to enjoy that will be codesigned for a variety of goals and will reflect principles of "Smart, Safe Growth" development.

In early 2023, OPD awarded A&E design contracts for both projects. OPD maintains close communication with the projects' primary stakeholders, ensuring that both facilities address the needs of the organizations and individuals who will utilize them the most.

> TOTAL GRANT AWARD FOR BOTH PROJECTS FROM THE EDA:

\$21.2 MILLION

TARGET COMPLETION DATE:

JUNE 2026

Birds-eye view mockup of the Oleai TRM Cultural Events Center prepared by:

TRMA

MI BELVMIN

FY23 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: GARAPAN REVITALIZATION PROJECT

In 2021, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded OPD \$11.2 million for the Garapan Revitalization Project (GRP) to improve vital sidewalks and roadways in the heart of Saipan's tourist district. The project broke ground in November 2022 and remains on track for its target completion date of November 2024.

As of December 15, 2023, the new two-way street at Paseo De Marianas is paved. Drivers now have limited access to the road and can drive across it via Coffee Tree Mall and Royal Palm Avenue. Be the first to know when the road is fully open to pedestrians and vehicles by following OPD on Facebook @cnmiopd670, Instagram @cnmiopd, Linkedin at CNMI Office of Planning and Development, and by monitoring the OPD website at https://opd.gov.mp.



The two-way street at Paseo De Marianas was paved on December 15, 2023.

TOTAL GRANT AWARD FROM THE EDA:

\$11.2 MILLION

TARGET COMPLETION DATE:



U.S. Economic Development Agency (EDA)

Statewide Planning Grant:



CNMI ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND FEASIBILITY CARRY CAPACITY STUDY

Transcends Consulting—who was awarded the contractfor this project is in collaboration with several marketing analytics and research firms to conduct this study. The goal of this study is to create a roadmap for stimulating economic recovery and provide a catalyst for economic diversification to improve the quality of life in the CNMI. The current timeline for this study is from October 2023 to May 2024.

EPA Brownfields Program:



BROWNFIELDS- GARAPAN

This ongoing project seeks to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct cleanup planning for brownfields on Saipan with a focus on abandoned commercial and industrial properties in the Garapan-Lower Base area.



BROWNFIELDS- PIÑA SITE ON TINIAN

This ongoing project seeks to clean up and assess the feasibility of potentially building a landfill on the Piña site in Tinian.

EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program



EQUIPMENT PURCHASES AND REPAIRS AND STAFFING

Through the EPA SWIFR Grant Program for States and Territories the CNMI was awarded \$612,441 which will be used to purchase and repair recycling equipment and hire additional operating staff. As of January 2024, an account has been established with the Department of Finance to manage this grant funding.

<u>FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and</u> <u>Communities (BRIC) Grant Program :</u>

BRIC BLIGHTED BUILDINGS PROJECT



In March 2023, FEMA awarded OPD \$200,000 to assist the Zoning Office in implementing the Nuisance Abatement and Blight Property Maintenance Act of 2018, by conducting an assessment of blighted buildings, including mapping of structures, blight classification, hazard identification, property ownership and recommended remediation measures & estimate remediation costs.



BRIC MICRO BEACH PROJECT

In March 2023, FEMA awarded OPD \$145,000 to conduct a scoping of Micro Beach's shoreline protection and stabilization. In addition, this grant allows for the planning and designing of risk reduction efforts in this high-value tourist site, which align with the priority mitigation goals identified in the approved 2018 CNMI Standard State Mitigation Plan (2018 SSMP).

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Coastal Resilience Project:

ENHANCING WETLANDS AND CORALS RESILIENCE IN SAIPAN'S PRIORITY MANAGEMENT WATERSHED



These two NFWF-funded priority projects seek to build community resilience in Saipan's most populated priority management watershed through wetland and coral reef restoration. Both projects are underway and are a collaborative effort among OPD, the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and the Department of Lands

and Natural Resources.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT GRANT- SOLID WASTE STAFF TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING



As of January 2024, an account to manage the funding OPD received from USDA for this grant has been established with the Department of Finance. The primary objective of this funding is to produce in-person training that assists the CNMI's solid waste facility operators to comply with regulations, operate safely, and reduce pollutants from entering the environment. OPD is currently looking into collaborating with the CNMI's trade school, the Northern Marianas Technical Institute (NMTech), to conduct and oversee these trainings.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS



As OPD's premier projects progress into implementation, additional staff is required, particularly in administrative, engineering, and project management roles. OPD is currently announcing and hiring for junior engineer, project coordinator, and technical analyst positions for its solid waste projects. Further expansion of staff in similar roles and others as needed for various projects is recommended.

<u>Next Steps:</u>

- Announce and hire for junior engineer, project coordinator, and technical analyst positions.
- Consider additional staff for other project roles as needed.



FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) AND SMART, SAFE GROWTH (SSG)

In accordance with Public Law 20-20 mandates and the CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP), OPD will closely collaborate with Planning Taskforces to ensure project alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Smart, Safe Growth (SSG) principles. OPD may revive and officially launch the SSG evaluation tool to assess project alignment with SSG.

Next Steps:

- Continue collaborations with planning partners
- Revisit and work towards launching the SSG evaluation tool
- Conduct more SSG trainings, similar to the trainings conducted in 2022



MORE TECHNICAL SUPPORT/ ESTABLISHING A SYSTEM FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Ensuring that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and project scopes are comprehensive and sound is crucial. OPD could consider hiring staff with technical expertise or potentially contracting consulting agencies for RFP and project scope development.

<u>Next Steps:</u>

• Hire technical staff or work with consulting firms for RFP development.



REVISITING REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENTS WITH CNMI'S FEDERAL PARTNERS

At this time, most if not all of the CNMI's federally funded projects—OPD's premier projects included— require that the CNMI pay its contractors before being reimbursed by the respective federal agency that is managing the grant. Given the CNMI's current financial circumstances, it is very challenging to make these "up-front" payments to contractors before receiving reimbursement from federal grantors. Recommendations include discussing potential amendments with federal agencies overseeing grants and supporting legislative/executive actions to secure alternative funding sources.

<u>Next Steps:</u>

- Coordinate meetings with federal grantors to discuss reimbursement issues.
- Support legislative/governmental actions that identify and secure the local funding needed to make these "up-front" payments to contractors to receive reimbursement



MORE COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR OPD'S PROJECTS

At this time, OPD has one Communications Specialist who was brought on to Team OPD through funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is primarily focused on OPD's solid waste projects. Hiring additional communications staff is recommended to enhance public relations and keep stakeholders informed about OPD's various projects.

<u>Next Steps:</u>

• Propose hiring additional communications staff in workplans and budgets for upcoming fiscal years.



Together, we can build a more sustainable CNMI.

VISIT R HTTPS://WWW.OPD.GOV.MP TO VIEW:

CNMI plans and reports compiled to date— Plans include the 2021 CNMI Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan (CSDP) and the 2019-2020 CNMI Resources Report (update coming ~2024)

Coastal Resilience Evaluation and Siting Tool (CREST) and Data Library

...and announcements, calendar, a contact form, and more!

