

Plan Development Guide

For Local Health Departments



September 2023

Overview

Planning provides a methodical way to engage the whole community in examining the lifecycle of a potential crisis, determining the required capabilities and establishing a framework for roles and responsibilities. Planning shapes how a community envisions and shares a desired outcome, selects effective ways to achieve it and communicates the expected results.

Planning Principles

Effective plans tell those with operational responsibilities **what to do and why** while identifying tasks and allocating resources to accomplish those tasks. Plans should:

- Include all stakeholders in the community (the general public, elected and appointed officials, private sector, etc.)
- Consider all hazards and threats
- Be community-based, representing the whole population and its needs, and emphasizing care for individuals with access and functional needs
- Address equity in all phases of the planning process
- Serve as a fundamental process to manage risk
- Use analytical approaches to address uncertainty
- Account for time, uncertainty, risk and experience
- Identify the mission, supporting goals and desired results
- Depict the anticipated environment for action

Common Pitfalls

While developing plans, planning teams should avoid:

- Starting from scratch
- Developing lengthy, overly detailed plans that are not useful in guiding actual operations when incidents occur and that response personnel do not use
- Failing to account for the whole community's needs
- Planning exclusively for response by emergency professionals and not factoring in capabilities of the whole community and the desire of individuals and organizations to help
- Basing plans on inaccurate information and assumptions in general, but particularly regarding threats, hazards, risks, resources and capabilities
- Jurisdictions should train on and exercise their plans to identify common mistakes and gaps. This helps to mitigate problems with plans emerging during incident.

Steps in the Planning Process*

- **Step 1** — Form a Collaborative Planning Team
- **Step 2** — Understand the Situation
- **Step 3** — Determine Goals and Objectives
- **Step 4** — Develop the Plan
- **Step 5** — Prepare and Preview the Plan
- **Step 6** — Implement and Maintain the Plan

*Written by FEMA CPG 101

The planning process and the resulting relationships are just as important as the resulting document.

Effective plans convey the goals and objectives of the intended operation and the actions needed to achieve them.

Planning Approaches

- **Capabilities-based planning** focuses on a jurisdiction's capacity to take a course of action.
- **Function-based planning** identifies the common functions that a jurisdiction should perform during emergencies and the government agencies or departments responsible for their performance
- **Scenario-based planning** creates scenarios for hazards or threats enabling planners to analyze the impacts of the scenarios to determine appropriate courses of action.

Serving the Community

Emergency preparedness plans and activities should address health disparities and ensure that they are not inadvertently created or exacerbated during disasters. To incorporate equity in each phase of the emergency management cycle, organizations should:

- Integrate principles of inclusion, transparency and accountability in emergency preparedness plans
- Ensure equitable access to resources and supports before, during and after a disaster
- Cooperate with individuals through knowledge and resource sharing and mutual aid agreements
- Be intentional to ensure representation is reflective of the community served

Plan Development Resources

- [Local Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinators](#)
- [Planning Guides | FEMA.gov](#)
- [Access and Functional Needs Toolkit: Integrating A Community Partner Network to Inform Risk Community Strategies](#)
- [Public Health Workbook](#)
- [Planning for an Emergency: Strategies for Identifying and Engaging At-Risk Groups](#)

For additional information on Emergency Preparedness:
[in.gov/health/emergency-preparedness](https://www.in.gov/health/emergency-preparedness)

