Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers

April 2025

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Introduction

This guide provides a foundation for emergency managers to engage with faith-based and community organizations while building and maintaining sustainable partnerships. Faith-based and community organizations offer a wide variety of expertise and capabilities to address challenges in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. Collaborating with these organizations and their members strengthens engagement networks at all levels of society vital to community resilience.

Background

Recent research indicates that social connectedness plays a crucial role in communities' preparedness for and resilience to natural and human-caused hazards. Neighborhoods and communities where individuals are connected to one another and to community institutions, such as service organizations, religious groups, or community-based organizations, are shown to respond more effectively to and recover more quickly from disasters.[1]

The Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith[2] supports the expansion of partnerships with faith-based and community organizations to enhance collective action and bolster preparedness efforts in communities. By engaging with faith-based and community organizations, emergency managers collaborate with impactful partners to address whole community preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. These organizations often work to address the most pressing needs in communities and serve as trusted sources of information and services.

Expanding Views of Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Faith-based and community organizations are vital partners in enhancing community preparedness and resilience. These organizations serve broad segments of the population every day, providing connection and critical services to a wide range of communities and those in need. Faith-based and community organizations vary significantly in size, membership, resources, and geographic location, but consistently bring people together for a shared cause. Including faith-based and community organizations in preparedness activities, community planning, and continuity efforts supports the development of comprehensive approaches to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. As communities continue to experience known and emerging shocks and stressors, it is imperative that emergency managers include both existing and new capabilities offered by partner organizations.

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[1] Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, "Advisory: The Healing Effects of Social Connection" (2023). hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf

[2] For more information, visit: dhs.gov/faith

Religious and Cultural Considerations

Informed by lessons learned and in coordination with partners, emergency managers have taken significant steps to incorporate faith-based and community organization members into preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Through a variety of approaches tailored to meet the needs of specific communities, these partnerships are crucial for increasing religious and cultural considerations for emergency professionals. Simultaneously, these efforts improve awareness of key emergency management concepts for organizations, while encouraging participation in preparedness activities.

Building trust and understanding cultural traditions and practices is crucial in engaging faith-based organizations to strengthen community resilience. Emergency managers achieve this through collaborating with established outreach partners to help effectively engage with a wide range of backgrounds, both locally and nationally.

Culturally and Religiously Important Resources

Discuss and review locations, items, or resources in the community of cultural or religious importance to organization members. Items of cultural and religious value exist in many forms and may hold value not reflected in standardized disaster recovery dollar amounts.

These discussions allow for identifying potential options for mitigation, response, and recovery planning. Conducting this type of pre-event planning helps build trust among faith-based and community organizations and emergency managers, while increasing mutual understanding of each other's priorities and existing capabilities.

The Heritage Emergency National Task Force[3] (HENTF) and the federal Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function[4] provide additional information on planning and caring for culturally or religiously important resources.

- Heritage Emergency and Response Training: Provided by HENTF, this program allows professionals to gain skills and experience in disaster response for cultural heritage through training and exercises.[5]

- Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative: This initiative protects cultural heritage threatened or impacted by disasters and helps communities preserve identities and history.[6]

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[3] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/heritage-task-force
[4] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery/recovery-support-functions/natural-cultural-resources-rsf
[5] For more information, visit: culturalrescue.si.edu/what-we-do/resilience/heritage-emergency-and-response-training-heart
[6] For more information, visit: https://culturalrescue.si.edu/

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

When engaging with faith traditions, it is critical to consider dietary requirements as an integral part of respectful interactions. Many religious practices include specific guidelines around food consumption, preparation, and storage, which are deeply connected to religious beliefs and cultural identity. Acknowledging and accommodating these dietary and preparation needs not only demonstrates cultural sensitivity but also fosters a welcoming environment that honors the values of all participants. These considerations are particularly important in settings such as interfaith gatherings, community events, organizational meetings, sheltering, and feeding operations to build trust, promote collaboration, and ensure that all voices are heard and respected. By paying attention to these dietary and preparation practices, emergency managers reinforce a commitment to mutual respect, which is essential for meaningful and effective engagement with communities of different faiths.

FUNERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Different religious faiths and cultural traditions conduct funerary services under varying timelines and requirements. Understanding what considerations and specific needs exist in communities is key to building trust and preparing responders for different scenarios. Intentionally include faith and community leaders in planning efforts and ensure respectful coordination of needs. A variety of trainings and resources are available to help prepare emergency managers for these discussions. For more information, see [Appendix B: Training](#) and [Appendix C: Additional Resources.](#)

INTERPERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Understanding the needs of various populations and the dynamics of age and social interactions in different faith traditions are vital when engaging with members of the community. Faith-based communities often include those who are older adults, children, individuals with limited English proficiency, or people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Ensuring the meaningful access and participation of all members in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner is paramount in building sustained partnerships. Additionally, understanding the cultural and religious standards and customs surrounding age and social interactions is crucial to fostering respectful and meaningful engagement. In some traditions, an individual's age and sex may influence participation, seating arrangements, or leadership dynamics. By acknowledging and accommodating these considerations, emergency managers create an environment that is sensitive to the various needs of all community members, strengthening trust and cooperation in interfaith dialogues and activities.

SAFETY AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Faith-based and community organizations face a wide range of threats and hazards. In addition to local and regional hazards shared with the community at large, faith-based and community organizations may experience a variety of other safety and security concerns based on religious, cultural, or historic factors. Emergency managers are encouraged to work with faith-based and community organizations to better understand threats and hazards, while jointly developing strategies to mitigate risks. Emergency managers may also connect organizations to local law

enforcement and other trusted entities to provide additional support. By working together to identify vulnerabilities through risk assessments, develop emergency plans, and collaborate on other preparedness activities, emergency managers and faith-based and community organizations build strong relationships that are essential to enhancing local resilience. Resources related to safety and security considerations are provided at the end of this section.

Questions to Consider

- What culturally and religiously important resources exist in the community and how can emergency managers include them in event planning and mitigation efforts?

- How can emergency managers and other public officials work with faith-based and community organizations to respect different cultural considerations and traditions during potential events?

Safety and Security Resources

A range of resources exist to support faith-based and community organizations in planning and preparing for the wide variety of threats and hazards that they may experience. A selection of resources is provided below and includes links to non-governmental websites.[7] For additional information, see Appendix A: Federal Funding Programs and Appendix C: Additional Resources.

Continuity Resource Toolkit: This resource provides guidance and trainings to help organizations develop effective continuity plans that address critical operations, personnel, and facilities. Faith-based and community organizations regularly provide critical services and essential functions on which communities depend. Continuity planning and operations help ensure the continuation of essential functions across a range of emergencies and disruptions.[8]

Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith: Through outreach, training, and resource-sharing, the DHS Faith Center fosters partnerships between government and faith-based organizations while empowering faith-based and community groups to enhance their security and support their communities more effectively during times of crisis. [9]

Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization (FB-ISAO): A nonprofit dedicated to improving the security and resilience of faith-based organizations across the nation, FB-ISAO provides a platform for organizations to stay informed and share information about emerging threats, collaborate on security solutions, and access resources that help mitigate cybersecurity, physical security, public health, and disaster risks.[10]

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[7] This document contains references to non-federal resources. Linking to such sources does not constitute an endorsement by FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, or any of its employees of the information or products presented.

[8] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/continuity

[9] For more information, visit: dhs.gov/faith

[10] For more information, visit: faithbased-isao.org/

Protecting Houses of Worship: The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) provides guidance for protecting houses of worship against physical security threats. Available resources include strategies for conducting vulnerability assessments, enhancing access control, and developing emergency response plans for the unique needs of religious facilities.[11]

Protecting Houses of Worship Against Arson: The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) emphasizes the critical need for fire prevention and arson protection by providing resources to help faith-based and community organizations implement fire safety practices, including conducting risk assessments, enhancing physical security, and fostering community awareness.[12]

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[11] For more information, visit: cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/protecting-houses-worship
[12] For more information, visit: usfa.fema.gov/prevention/arson/houses-of-worship/

Steps for Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Refined from lessons learned by the Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith in collaboration with emergency managers, faith-based leaders, community leaders, and subject-matter experts, this model supports trust-focused relationships based on mutual priorities over the course of six steps:

1. Assess;

2. Engage;

3. Plan;

4. Learn;

5. Exercise; and

6. Sustain.

This customizable model provides important benefits to emergency managers, including the:

- Development of new partnerships with organizations serving a wide range of populations;

- Identification of areas to expand existing engagement strategies;

Figure 1: Six-Step Engagement Model

- Incorporation of faith-based and community organizations' priorities in planning efforts; and

- Improvement of whole community preparedness through awareness, participation, and increased social connectedness.

Using this engagement model, emergency managers include faith-based and community organizations as leaders and active participants in the whole community's preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Collaborating with faith-based and community organizations early further helps manage expectations for all involved and anticipate needs before, during, and after disasters.

Step 1: Assess

Emergency managers regularly seek to understand existing and emerging threats, hazards, and critical interactions within their communities. Current assessment activities and analysis, such as those related to Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) reporting, present opportunities to include faith-based and community organization risks in larger community assessments and help organizations understand how hazards may impact their people and facilities.

When identifying faith-based and community organizations, it is necessary to understand existing relationships and networks within communities to identify areas for further connection. Additionally, considering factors such as population density, location of every day and critical services, and transportation access may further identify key connection points. This approach helps identify key community resources, leaders, and information channels and streamlines early engagement.

Coordinate among organizations. This is particularly important in recognizing how established organizations regularly engage with faith-based and community organizations. It is crucial for emergency managers to collaborate closely with offices dedicated to community engagement, faith-based outreach, or related liaison activities. State, local, Tribal Nation, territorial, and public health offices, human services departments, public safety departments, service commissions, governor's offices, mayor's offices, long-term recovery groups, community resilience groups, and other organizations possess a range of expertise and established relationships in local communities and may be helpful in identifying opportunities for leveraging existing relationships and resources. Additionally, nationally or regionally based faith-based networks, advocacy networks, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) may also provide details regarding groups active in or near the community. By partnering with other government, faith-based, and community organizations, emergency managers gain valuable insights into existing community relationships and potential partners.

Use existing data sources. Verified information sources with recent data provide valuable information on the location of faith-based and community organizations and may include additional details on services provided to the community or local hazard impacts. A variety of publicly available data sets and tools, include resources developed regionally or locally, that may offer additional details on specific geographic areas. A selection of national data sets and tools are provided in the resource box below and in [Appendix C: Additional Resources.](#)

📑 Case Study: Virginia Emergency Management Association

Utilizing the web-based Capabilities Assessment Tool for houses of worship, the Virginia Emergency Management Association collects and shares survey data with local emergency managers to build connections and improve community resilience. Developed by the Association's Faith Based Caucus, houses of worship voluntarily complete the survey, providing administrative and demographic data, available disaster capabilities, and areas of interest to their organizations for future preparedness coordination.

Survey data is shared with emergency managers local to the faith-based organization that provided the information to encourage outreach and build local capabilities. Using this data driven approach to inventory existing capabilities and identify areas for enhancement, the Commonwealth of Virginia continues to support the incorporation of faith-based organizations into disaster preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives.

For more information on the Virginia Emergency Management Association, visit: [vemaweb.org/](#)

Questions to Consider

- What government entities are already working with faith-based or community groups, and how can emergency managers expand on these partnerships?

- What established networks would provide introductions for new connections?

- What populations are represented by potential engagement partners?

- What services do organizations provide the community, and how would an emergency impact the delivery of those services?

- How might organizations address gaps in preparedness, response, or recovery efforts?

Assessing Resources

The resources below are provided for awareness and include links to non-governmental websites. For additional information, see Appendix C: Additional Resources.

American Community Survey: Released by the U.S. Census Bureau, this regularly conducted survey provides information on population characteristics, housing, and demographics to the census tract level.[13]

Community Profile Builder: The Association of Religion Data Archives is a mapping tool that assists faith and community leaders in locating facilities and information on social, economic, and religious information in a selected area.[14]

U.S. Religion Census: Produced collaboratively by religious groups around the country, the decadal census includes county level congregational counts, attendance, and membership information. Additionally, the census includes certain groupings of religious communities without formal national headquarters using specific data collection studies.[15]

Step 2: Engage

After assessing existing organization efforts and using available data, emergency managers may begin proactive engagement efforts. Throughout all areas of engagement, consider that motivating interests and priorities will likely differ among emergency managers and faith-based and community organization leaders. Every organization has different requirements and measures of success. Respecting differences while advancing shared interests is key to establishing and growing successful partnerships.

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[13] For more information, visit: census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

[14] For more information, visit: thearda.com/us-religion/community-profiles/build-a-profile-of-your-community

[15] For more information, visit: usreligioncensus.org/

Initiate outreach. When possible, leverage existing connections and affiliations for introductions to new organizations. As appropriate, consider scheduling time with organizational leaders to first explain the outreach goals and review key concepts. These initial conversations create connections and set the tone for future collaboration efforts. Ensure conversations use plain language without technical jargon and are as relevant as possible for the organization's interests. Provide a dedicated point of contact for the organization to follow-up with and identify activities for future engagement, such as attending regular meetings or other events.

Identify top issues. Understanding the priorities and focus areas for a faith-based or community organization is key to effective engagement. Using a variety of methods, including conversations, interviews, surveys, or active participation in organization meetings, emergency managers gain valuable insights on the most pressing topics for organizations. Understanding these topics helps emergency managers better identify potential interests, capabilities, and barriers for collaboration before, during, and after events, while gaining awareness of motivating factors.

Select areas of alignment. Once top issues are identified, discuss holistic emergency management efforts and select topics of mutual interest based on known priorities and capabilities. By linking engagement and planning efforts to identified interest areas, organizations may set clear, realistic and mutually beneficial expectations. As part of these discussions, recognize faith-based and community organizations' legal and organizational approval requirements. Organizations use a variety of governance and funding structures and may need formal approval from designated bodies to officially engage in activities.

Communicate and coordinate. Ensure communication and coordination efforts are open and accessible among all partners to further build partnerships and foster connections. Emergency managers may consider scheduling recurring meetings with individual or groups of organizations. Alternatively, emergency managers may have the option of integrating with existing organization gatherings to increase participation. Newsletters, social media messaging, and other group communications may also provide options for multi-directional communication beyond physical gatherings. Regularly engaging with faith-based and community organization leadership, designated points of contact, committee chairs, and members helps ensure that emerging issues are proactively recognized and addressed. Above all, collaboration should be grounded in mutual respect, treating faith-based organizations as equal partners rather than subordinates to local government or other entities.

Identify and address barriers. To promote effective collaboration, it is crucial to identify and address potential challenges that may limit participation and engagement. By consciously addressing these challenges and fostering a respectful environment, emergency managers build resilient and effective collaborations that benefit the entire community.

- Communication barriers, including language differences, unfamiliar terminology, or technology limitations obstruct understanding and cooperation. Providing translation services, using clear language, ensuring that information is available in multiple formats, and learning specific terms used within each community enhances communication clarity and mutual understanding.

- Administrative barriers, including limited availability of staff due to work schedules or bureaucratic processes, should be minimized where possible. Options to alleviate these barriers may include providing staff during non-traditional hours or developing streamlined processes that promote additional participation in activities.

- Physical barriers may include inaccessible or inconvenient meeting locations or transportation challenges. Ensuring that meeting and event locations are accessible for everyone, offering alternative transportation solutions, and accommodating people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs are critical steps toward full participation.

- Personal and social barriers may undermine other engagement efforts if not acknowledged and addressed. These barriers may be mitigated by working through trusted community leaders, maintaining open dialogue, ensuring activities remain cost effective, and committing to building trust over time.

Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Ongoing engagement activities are essential for maintaining and expanding trusted relationships within the community. Capability and facility assessments serve as a valuable method for sustaining engagement, as well as identifying resources for integration into emergency planning, response, and recovery efforts.

Self-assessments conducted by faith-based and community organizations play a crucial role in providing up-to-date capability information and ensuring accurate contact details. Various assessment tools are available, or organizations may choose customized templates to suit specific needs.

These assessments are designed to collect information on an organization's current services and capabilities, as well as estimate availability during a community emergency. Organizations may choose to include details on facilities, services, member skills, or other key information in their assessments. Whether completed and stored as paper forms or as digital files, review and update information on a regular schedule or when significant changes occur to ensure records are accurate. For more information, visit Appendix D: Self - Assessments and Considerations.

Case Study: Fairfax County, Virginia

In Fairfax County, Virginia, county departments are working together to share resources and provide ongoing outreach to faith-based organizations in the community. While performing security assessments for houses of worship, the Fairfax County Police Department's nine district stations provide both initial outreach to faith-based and community organizations and provide connections to other county resources. Furthermore, district police stations provide space for local faith-based and community organizations to meet quarterly for local coordination and training on safety and security themes. During these sessions, the county's Department of Emergency Management and Security provides a range of emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery resources.

Created through the partnerships fostered during these sessions and further supported by the county's Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, the Faith Communities in Action network is comprised of local faith-based and community organizations. Partnering with local government departments to further strengthen community preparedness and protection for houses of worship, the network led the development of the "Plan, Prepare, Protect: A House of Worship Resilience Guide."[16] This guide, created by and for houses of worship, provides detailed steps on identifying risks, analyzing impacts, and developing a plan to help organizations prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

By coordinating community outreach efforts and sharing staff expertise, departments in Fairfax County not only support regular engagement with faith-based and community organizations, but also have empowered these organizations to create valuable community resources.

For more information on Fairfax County and Faith Communities in Action, visit: fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/

Questions to Consider

- How can outreach efforts be tailored to ensure partners have a clear understanding of emergency management terminology, resources, and infrastructure?

- In what ways can organizations' priorities and services to the community be supported?

- How can organizations' capabilities integrate with emergency management priorities?

- What legal or organizational approvals do faith-based and community organizations have, and how does this impact their engagement commitments?

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[16] County of Fairfax, "Plan Prepare, and Protect: A House of Worship Resilience Guide" (2023). fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/sites/emergency/files/Assets/images/Plan%20Prepare%20Protect1.pdf

- What barriers may prevent community members from participating in emergency management meetings, and how can they be addressed to promote more engagement?

- How can emergency managers promote open communication with faith-based and community organizations to encourage ongoing engagement?

Engaging Resources

The resources below are provided for awareness and include links to non-governmental websites. For additional information, see Appendix C: Additional Resources.

Cultural and Religious Literacy Tip Sheets: Engagement guidelines and other helpful information for interacting with a variety of faith traditions.[17]

The Pluralism Project: An academic research center providing interfaith dialogue resources and detailed information on different faith -traditions.[18]

Step 3: Plan

Planning is a process that requires the active participation and open communication of everyone involved. This structured dialogue builds additional familiarity with partner organization priorities, capabilities, and restrictions. Through planning-centered conversations, relationships are strengthened and overall community preparedness is enhanced.

Planning may take various forms based on the identified priorities and interests of organizations. For example, organizations may be interested in developing emergency or continuity plans for their memberships, connecting to larger community efforts, or committing to formal disaster roles. No matter which combination of interests exist, tailoring planning efforts based on each organization is crucial for long-term success. In developing plans, it is important to consider who is required to formally review and approve a plan for the organizations involved. Depending on the complexity and formality of the plan, this may include senior leadership, governing bodies, and legal counsel. Once established, regular reviews and updates of plans ensure they remain relevant and effective for achieving desired outcomes.

A central aspect of successful planning is effective communication. This may include holding regular meetings or informal conversations, designating primary points of contact, and being responsive to messages. Understanding when and how partners prefer to receive information is key to developing and maintaining productive relationships. Additionally, flexible meeting formats, times, and locations further encourages participation, while being respectful of organizations' differing needs.

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[17] For more, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/faith/cultural-and-religious-literacy-tip-sheets
[18] For more, visit: pluralism.org/home

💡 Affiliate with Organizations

Establishing formal relationships between organizations allows for more effective communication, coordination, and resource allocation when planning for, responding to, or recovering from an event. Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) are formal, written relationships that establish or clarify roles and responsibilities among different organizations. If appropriate, MOAs and MOUs may also help establish defined timelines and funding information. Faith-based and community organizations may benefit from developing clear MOAs or MOUs with partner organizations to aid in operational scoping and resource prioritization. Include legal counsel throughout the MOA or MOU development process to ensure clear agreements that consider the unique governance structures, roles and responsibilities, funding, and resource needs of the organizations involved.

While formal agreements are helpful in confirming planning assumptions, some faith-based or community organizations may be hesitant to sign formal agreements with government entities due to various historical, religious, or cultural experiences. In these instances, pursuing informal relationships that rely on personal connections rather than formal agreements may be beneficial. These relationships may still be documented through contact lists, asset inventories, and other tools to ensure ongoing communication and resource sharing for overall community resilience before, during, or after emergency events.

For additional information on developing MOAs and MOUs, visit FEMA's How to Develop Agreements for Mass Care Services: A Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations[19] or Disaster-Specific Memorandum of Understanding.[20]

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[19] FEMA, "How to Develop Agreements for Mass Care Services: A Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations" (2022). nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DvlpngMssCareAgrmntsGuide_20220727_508.pdf
[20] FEMA, "Disaster-Specific Memorandum of Understanding" (2020). fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Disaster-Specific_MOU.pdf

Case Study: Chatham County, GA

Since its inception in the fall of 2018, the Chatham Emergency Management Agency's (CEMA) Disaster Faith Network in Savannah, Georgia has been a cornerstone of Chatham County's approach to disaster preparedness and response. Born out of the challenges posed by hurricanes in 2016 and 2017, the Disaster Faith Network was established to enhance coordination with faith-based organizations in the area. Over the years, it has evolved and expanded to address the dynamic and growing needs of the faith-based community in Southeast Georgia. Today, quarterly workshops and annual summits offer regular collaboration opportunities and training on a range of preparedness, response, and recovery topics.

A key aspect of CEMA faith-based outreach and ongoing participation includes setting guidelines for success. In addition to promoting training, program guidance, and response activation processes, these guidelines emphasize the value and importance of signed MOAs. Following meetings with faith leaders, CEMA uses pre-approved MOA templates to confirm expectations and formalize commitments. A signed MOA outlines resources the faith-based organization is willing to provide, while also describing how CEMA will assist the partner organization. Examples of MOAs in place include those addressing shelter locations, volunteer housing sites, community feeding plans, points of distribution, volunteer reception centers, and emotional and spiritual support services. By consistently engaging and collaboratively planning with the faith community, Chatham County proactively works to enhance the overall resilience and preparedness of the communities they serve.

For more information on Chatham County Emergency Management and the Disaster Faith Network, visit: chathamemergency.org.

Questions to Consider

- How can active participation and open communication be encouraged?

- What is needed for accessible meetings and regularly scheduled information sharing?

- How can informal relationships be maintained and included in the planning process?

- Does the organization have existing services that would support community resilience, response, or recovery efforts?

- What strategies exist to better understand partner organization priorities, capabilities, and restrictions?

- Who is required to review and agree to formal plans?

Planning Resources

Effective planning builds everyday resilience while helping organizations prepare to respond during a range of situations. A selection of emergency management planning resources is provided below. For additional information, see Appendix C: Additional Resources.

FEMA Planning Guides: Planning resources on a range of topics providing a methodical way to engage the whole community in determining required capabilities and identifying roles and responsibilities.[21]

Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans: Foundational guidelines to develop emergency operations plans and promote a common understanding of community-based and risk-informed decision making to produce integrated, coordinated, and synchronized plans.[22]

Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship: Provides houses of worship with information regarding emergency operations planning for threats and hazards they may face.[23]

Step 4: Learn

Partners at all experience levels benefit from training to enhance skills in emergency management and related topics. Providing information and access to relevant training opportunities also encourages exploration of new interest areas, interaction with other partners, and long-term engagement efforts.

Understand training needs. Through ongoing conversations, gap analyses, and assessments with faith-based and community organizations, emergency managers help identify what training needs exist and the available options. Locations, accessibility for individuals with disabilities and other access and functional needs, and timing for trainings are key considerations. If offered, regular organization meetings may provide a convenient location for training. Similarly, emergency managers may have training space available for partners and be able to facilitate more technical emergency management courses.

Connect partners to available training programs. A variety of trainings on emergency management, community preparedness, and related topics exist from government, nonprofit, and other sources. Appendix B: Training and Appendix C: Additional Resources provide a selection of available trainings and other resources that may be most relevant to faith-based and community organizations. State, local, Tribal Nation, and territorial governments may offer additional training resources specific to

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[21]For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/plan

[22] FEMA, "Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101" (2021). fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_cpg-101-v3-developing-maintaining-eops.pdf

[23] FEMA, "Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship" (2013). fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/developing-eops-for-houses-of-worship.pdf

their jurisdictions and provide guidance on prioritizing available training options. As a best practice, encourage organizations to keep an official record of trainings completed by members, as well as any certifications or licenses held.

Keep partners updated on emergency management topics. Emergency management plans, policies, and processes evolve over time in response to changing needs. Establishing clear lines of communication and ensuring partners are updated on topics helps maintain common understanding and awareness of opportunities.

Case Study: New Hampshire

The state of New Hampshire's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) Training, Exercises, and Development Section continues to make significant efforts building whole community preparedness and resilience with faith-based and community organizations, along with their local emergency management, across the state. As part of the state's overall training program, HSEM provides a variety of in-person and virtual classes that emphasize the importance of including faith-based and community organizations in emergency preparedness efforts. Additionally, HSEM provides training for faith-based and community organizations on foundational and specialized emergency management topics, including the Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System, and working through official volunteer and donations management channels.

HSEM consistently works to connect faith-based and community organizations with local first responders and emergency management, while working intentionally with federal partners, including the U.S. Attorney's Office and CISA's Protective Security Advisors[24], to provide crucial resources for communities. Facilitated by state and federal officials who regularly engage with partners throughout the state, connections are further developed through flexibly scheduled formal and informal trainings, preparedness webinars, seminars, all-hazards exercises, and panel discussions on a range of volunteerism, safety, and security topics.

By prioritizing training, exercises, and other resource sharing events, HSEM continues to strengthen whole community preparedness and resilience across the state. These efforts ensure that individuals, first responders, local governments, and faith-based and community organizations are better prepared to respond and recover from emergencies.

For more information on the New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, visit: prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/.

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[24] For more information, visit: cisa.gov/about/regions/security-advisors

Questions to Consider

- How can emergency managers help identify training needs for faith-based and community organizations?

- How can training resources be shared to increase community access and participation?

- What methods can be used to keep partners updated on evolving emergency management topics and best practices?

- How can faith-based and community organizations easily maintain records of completed trainings and certifications for their members?

Learning Resources

A variety of no-cost training options are available from federal, state, local, Tribal Nation, territorial, and other organizations. The example below highlights one of the options provided by FEMA's National Disaster & Emergency Management University (NDEMU)[25], which offers general and topic-specific emergency management courses. Additional training options are provided in Appendix B: Training.

IS-505: Concepts of Religious Literacy for Emergency Management

Available online, this self-paced course emphasizes the importance of collaborating with religious and cultural communities to enhance disaster resilience efforts. By the end of the course, participants are able to define religious and cultural literacy, and identify skills needed to engage religious and cultural leaders.[26]

Step 5: Exercise

Exercises are a key component of preparedness and provide the whole community the opportunity to shape planning, validate capabilities, and address areas for improvement. Participating in local exercise development and play greatly enhances coordination and understanding among organizations. Additionally, observing or participating in exercises improves partners' understanding of how decisions are made in different scenarios and provides an opportunity to participate outside of a real-world event.

Incorporate faith-based and community partners in exercises. Including a variety of organizations enhances exercise development, play, and overall preparedness efforts. Emergency managers may identify opportunities to progressively incorporate local faith-based and community organizations in

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[25] For more information, visit: training.fema.gov/

[26] For more information, visit: training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-505&lang=en

the development and participation of different exercise types based on experience, interest, and exercise complexity. When incorporating partners, be mindful that individual organizations may not represent or be knowledgeable of other organizations, even if their work initially appears related. Including independent faith-based and community organizations in exercise activities provides a meaningful way to engage partners of all backgrounds in whole community preparedness efforts.

Case Study: Anne Arundel County, MD

The Anne Arundel County, Maryland Office of Emergency Management hosts an annual seminar series, *Protecting Our Houses of Worship*, culminating with a tabletop exercise that addresses emerging topics of interest for faith-based organizations. This non-denominational series invites faith-based organizations across the county to participate. To expand accessibility and opportunities for collaboration, the series offers both virtual and in-person sessions over the course of several months.

General themes for each year's series are selected in collaboration with local faith-based organizations. Previous focus areas included protecting houses of worship from acts of violence, the pandemic, and hate-based vandalism. Facilitated sessions are led by local, state, and federal emergency management, law enforcement, public health officials, cyber and infrastructure security experts, federal grant managers, and FB-ISAO representatives. The information provided encourages active discussions and strengthens partnerships. These relationships have resulted in increased peer-to-peer information sharing among faith-based organizations and increased collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management and other public safety entities.

By actively seeking out and engaging faith-based organizations on topics of interest, the Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management has effectively increased faith-based organizations' awareness of available assistance, hazard mitigation, resilience, and opportunities to collaborate.

Questions to Consider

- Are existing exercise programs available for partner organizations' specific interests?

- What exercises are being planned where faith-based and community organizations may support development or participate in exercise play?

- What skills, knowledge, or organizations were not appropriately represented in recent exercises that should be included in future efforts?

- Are organizations interested in adapting or developing exercises for their facilities or members?

> ### Exercising Resources
>
> Drills and exercises provide excellent opportunities to practice, assess, and improve capabilities while keeping participants actively engaged. A variety of no-cost exercise resources available for use with faith-based and community organizations are provided below.
>
> CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages: Developed by CISA, these customizable packages include template exercise objectives, scenarios, discussion questions, references, and resources. Packages cover a wide-range of topics, including faith-based organizations and natural hazards.[27]
> Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Drills and Exercises: This program educates volunteers on disaster preparedness and practices concepts through exercises.[28]
> Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP): Fundamental principles for exercise programs and a common approach to program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.[29]
> National Exercise Program: Provides exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation support, and other related resources to state, local, Tribal Nation, territorial, and other partners.[30]
> Preparedness Toolkit (Prep Toolkit): Online portal providing a variety of tools, including exercise resources, to aid in implementing the National Preparedness System.[31]

Step 6: Sustain

Sustaining partnerships established through engagement initiatives remains critical for the long-term success of community preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Ongoing relationships among partners is not limited to emergencies or disasters and all partners should feel empowered to initiate conversations and new activities over time. Continuing to use the iterative six-step engagement model provides a basis for maintaining meaningful partnerships over time.

The use of assessment strategies and collaboration with community outreach and liaison offices enable emergency managers to stay informed on changing needs and to identify new partners within the community. Working closely with existing liaison offices and associations may also create opportunities for joint outreach initiatives. Regularly reviewing and updating plans with faith-based and community organizations ensures that goals and activities remain aligned over time. Training

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[27] For more information, visit: cisa.gov/resources-tools/services/cisa-tabletop-exercise-packages
[28] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-activities-webinars/community-emergency-response-team
[29] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep
[30] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/about
[31] For more information, visit: preptoolkit.fema.gov/

and exercises present numerous opportunities for engagement with partners, allowing them to take on different roles based on their experience and interests.

Working together, emergency managers and faith-based and community organizations foster transparent communication and cooperation aligned with the priorities of each partner. By following these strategies, organizations continue to actively participate in collaborative emergency management efforts that enhance whole community capabilities.

Case Study: Whitfield County, GA

In Georgia, Whitfield County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) promote initiatives that support long-term engagement with faith-based organizations while enhancing local community preparedness.

Whitfield County's annual Places of Worship Safety Seminar provides essential training and resources for faith-based organizations, while encouraging collaboration to address community priorities. Through the seminar series and other preparedness activities, the county has identified new members for CERT, increased involvement in the County's Community Organizations Active in Disasters, and expanded partnerships that support other emergency management initiatives.

Another successful outcome of the annual seminar series, Whitfield County welcomed the first faith-based organization in the state to complete the Praise and Preparedness Certification. Offered collaboratively by GEMA/HS and Whitfield County EMA, this certificate program further equips faith-based organizations with the knowledge and tools necessary to prepare for and respond to emergencies. As part of the certificate requirements, faith-based organizations work with their local emergency managers to complete preparedness activities that focus on facility safety, congregant safety, and community involvement.

The partnership between Whitfield County EMA and GEMA/HS underscores the importance of governments working together to engage faith-based organizations in meaningful and ongoing efforts that enhance community preparedness.

For more information on Whitfield County EMA, visit:
whitfieldcountyga.gov/government/public_safety/emergency_management/.

For more on GEMA/HS and the Praise and Preparedness Certificate, visit:
gema.georgia.gov/plan-prepare/praise-preparedness.

Questions to Consider

- What activities or interactions would be meaningful for partners to sustain engagement?

- What partnership events and strategies are other government organizations planning that would benefit from faith-based and community organization participation?

- What partnerships would benefit from the development of MOUs or MOAs?

Sustaining Resources

A range of strategies are used to sustain meaningful partnerships based on the needs of individual communities and in alignment with the priorities and capabilities of partner organizations. In addition to the materials provided in Appendix B: Training, Appendix C: Additional Resources, and Appendix D: Assessments and Actions, community events and partner activities provide local opportunities for engagement.

Conclusion

Faith-based and community organizations play an important role in providing support and resources in communities before, during, and after disasters and events. By following the six-step engagement model outlined in this guide and utilizing available tools and resources, jurisdictions may effectively engage with organizations and enhance whole community preparedness for a range of threats and hazards.

The partnerships formed and strengthened during this process create an enduring foundation for overall community resilience. Incorporating faith-based and community organizations into emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts leads to more comprehensive and representative decision-making that addresses the specific needs of individual communities. Cultivating stronger relationships with faith-based and community organizations is an essential element of whole community engagement and supports ongoing emergency management practices.

Appendix A: Federal Funding Programs

A non-exhaustive selection of federal funding options with applicability to emergency managers and faith-based and community organizations is provided below. Emergency managers may share funding information with faith-based and community organizations to raise awareness for available programs. additional planning resources and information on financial management is provided at FEMA Planning Guides[32] and at FEMA Grants.[33]

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FEMA)

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides funding for eligible mitigation activities that protect life and property from future disaster damage. Certain private nonprofit organizations, houses of worship, and religious nonprofit organizations may be eligible for HMGP funding following a presidentially declared major disaster. Hazard mitigation includes long-term efforts to reduce risk and the potential impact of future disasters. HMGP assists communities in rebuilding in a better, stronger, and safer way to become more resilient overall. fema.gov/grants/mitigation/hazard-mitigation

Individual Assistance Program (FEMA)

Following a presidentially declared major disaster, the Individual Assistance program may provide a variety of financial and direct assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations. While the specific types of Individual Assistance available vary based on the needs of the disaster, options may include community service financial awards, such as the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP)[34] or the Disaster Case Management (DCM)[35] grant. These financial awards provide supplemental funding to assist disaster-impacted individuals and communities. fema.gov/assistance/individual

Public Assistance Program (FEMA)

Certain private nonprofit organizations, houses of worship, and religious nonprofit organizations may be eligible for FEMA's Public Assistance program following a presidentially declared major disaster. Provided eligibility conditions are met, funding provided under this program may address costs for emergency protective measures, debris removal, or repairing or replacing facilities damaged during the declared disaster. For information specific to private nonprofit organizations, visit FEMA Public Assistance: Private Nonprofit Organizations Factsheet[36], or for additional information on the Public Assistance Program, visit: fema.gov/assistance/public.

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[32] For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/plan
[33] For more information, visit: fema.gov/grants
[34] For more information, visit: samhsa.gov/dtac/ccp
[35] For more information, visit: fema.gov/assistance/individual/disaster-survivors#case
[36] For more information, visit: fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_private-non-profit-houses-worship-eligibility-fact-sheet.pdf

Disaster Loan (Small Business Administration)

The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides disaster loans to private nonprofit organizations, including charitable organizations and faith-based communities, to help recover from declared disasters. The SBA offers both the Business Disaster Loan and the Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). Business Disaster Loans may be used for assets including structural improvements, while EIDLs may be used to help meet working capital needs or normal operating expenses during disaster periods. sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance

Appendix B: Training

A non-exhaustive selection of courses with broader application to faith-based and community organizations is provided below. Additional training resources are available from other federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and non-governmental partners. As course options change frequently, verify information with the training provider for the most current offerings. For more information on NDEMU courses, visit: training.fema.gov. For more information on the National Preparedness Course Catalog, visit: firstrespondertraining.gov.

Independent Study Courses (Self-paced, free of charge)

IS-26: Guide to Points of Distribution. Detailed information on the planning, operations, and demobilization stages of a point of distribution. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-26&lang=en

IS-36.a: Preparedness for Child Care Providers. Provides child care providers in a variety of settings with information needed to identify, assess, and plan for hazards at child care sites. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-36.a&lang=en

IS-235.c: Emergency Planning. Designed for emergency management personnel, this training covers the fundamentals of the emergency planning process and enhances participants' effective participation in all-hazards emergency operations planning. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-235.c&lang=en

IS-244: Developing and Managing Volunteers. Strategies for identifying, recruiting, assigning, training, supervising, and motivating volunteers before, during, and after a disaster. Includes discussion of spontaneous volunteers and those affiliated with community-based, faith-based, and nongovernmental organizations. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-244.b&lang=en

IS-288.a: The Role of Voluntary Organizations in Emergency Management. Provides a basic understanding of the history, roles, and services of disaster relief voluntary agencies in providing disaster assistance. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-288.a&lang=en

IS-289: Voluntary Agency Liaison Overview. Familiarizes participants with the voluntary agency liaison role and provides a basic understanding of their responsibilities and importance in coordinating with partners across the disaster spectrum in support of survivor needs. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-289&lang=en

IS-317.a: Introduction to Community Emergency Response Team (CERTs). Designed for those wishing to learn more about the CERT program or as pre-requisite for additional training, this course provides information on CERT, what CERTs do, and how to become involved in local efforts. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.a&lang=en

IS-360: Preparing for Mass Casualty Incidents: A Guide for Schools, Higher Education, and Houses of Worship. Provides resources to assist elementary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education, and houses of worship in developing emergency plans to prepare, respond, and recover from mass casualty incidents. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-360&lang=en

IS-366: Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters. Provides guidance on meeting the unique needs that arise for children resulting from disasters or emergencies. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-366.a&lang=en

IS-0393: Introduction to Hazard Mitigation. Introduction for those new to emergency management or hazard mitigation who are interested in reducing hazard risks in their states, communities, or Tribal Nations. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-393.b

IS-403: Introduction to Individual Assistance Provides FEMA personnel and partners with a basic knowledge of the Individual Assistance Program and activities that help individuals and households recover following a disaster. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-403&lang=en

IS-0505: Religious and Cultural Literacy and Competency in a Disaster: Provides emergency managers and faith and community leaders with the religious literacy and competency tools needed to effectively engage religious and cultural groups and leaders throughout the disaster lifecycle. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-505&lang=en

IS-650.b: Building Partnerships with Tribal Governments. Provides a basic understanding of tribal governments in the United States, history of the relationship between the federal government and Tribal Nations, and general information about tribal governance and cultures. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-650.b&lang=en

IS-660: Introduction to Public-Private Partnerships. Introduces the role of public-private partnerships in emergency preparedness and planning. Provides a common vocabulary for public sector agencies and private sector organizations interested in utilizing partnerships to improve response, recovery, and resilience. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-660&lang=en

IS-904: Active Shooter Prevention: You Can Make a Difference. Focusing on actions that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of an active shooter in a workplace, this course shares tools and perspectives to help reduce the likelihood of an incident and save lives. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-904&lang=en

IS-908: Emergency Management for Senior Officials. Introduces senior officials to the important role they play in emergency management. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-908

IS-909: Community Preparedness: Implementing Simple Activities for Everyone. Presents a model program for community preparedness. In addition, resource materials are available to help

organizations conduct simple preparedness activities for everyone.
training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-909&lang=en

IS-1000: Public Assistance Program and Eligibility. Overview of Public Assistance project eligibility. By the end of the course, state, local, Tribal Nation, and territorial applicants and recipients are able to understand all aspects of the Public Assistance Program and project eligibility.
training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-1000&lang=en

Other Relevant Trainings (Variety of formats, free of charge)

Cultural Competency Program for Disaster and Emergency Management. Provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, this virtual program is comprised of several courses and prepares disaster and emergency management personnel with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services throughout the disaster lifecycle to all individuals and communities. thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education/Disaster-And-Emergency

AWR-228: Community Resilience: Building Resilience from the Inside Out. Participants learn about community resilience concepts, the impacts of natural hazards, and strategies to incorporate resilience into local hazard planning efforts using available resources and tools.
firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=622

AWR-329: Leveraging Tools for Coordinated Disaster Communications. Enhances participants' knowledge and skills in addressing the communication needs of their communities. The course emphasizes the importance of communicating with different groups and evaluating available tools to facilitate effective communication. firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=4029

AWR-330: Whole Community Emergency Management Planning. Teaches participants how to engage various stakeholders in emergency planning through discussions and group activities. Course emphasizes planning to strengthen community resilience and preparedness for all hazards.
firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=2582

MGT-310: Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and SPR. Introduces participants to the six-step process for assessing community risks and capabilities, helping them identify threats, evaluate current capabilities, and address gaps using the Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, and Exercises framework. Also includes resources to potentially address identified gaps.
firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=244

MGT-440: Enhanced Sports and Special Events Incident Management. Prepares emergency responders and event personnel to manage large-scale incidents during sports and special events through scenario-based exercises. Participants learn critical skills in event planning, incident management, crowd control, and crisis information management, while practicing coordinated response strategies from Multi-Agency Coordination, Emergency Operations Center, and Incident Command Post perspectives. firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=1801

PER-334: Disaster Preparedness and Survival: A Guide for Individuals, Families, and Communities. Teaches individuals and families how to prepare for, survive, and recover from disasters through a mix of classroom discussions and hands-on exercises. Participants learn key skills such as disaster planning, self-rescue, light search and rescue, and steps to aid recovery in the aftermath of both natural and human-made disasters. firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=2602

PER-352: Active Shooter Incident Management. Provides a framework to improve coordination between law enforcement, fire, and EMS responders during active shooter events, using a validated checklist and best practices from National Incident Management System, Tactical Emergency Casualty Care, and Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training. Through simulation exercises, participants from various disciplines learn key leadership roles, response strategies, and management of both active shooter events and complex coordinated attacks. firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=3909

PER-375: Surviving an Active Shooter: Run. Hide. Fight. Trains non-traditional first responders on the "Run, Hide, Fight" response paradigm for active shooter incidents. Through lectures, group discussions, and practical exercises, participants learn how to apply this model in any situation and incorporate it into existing emergency plans.firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npccatalog?id=4944

Appendix C: Additional Resources

The following resources and links to third party sites are provided for reference[37], but it is not a comprehensive list of possible resources. Emergency managers and partner organizations are encouraged to consider other materials as part of engagement and capacity development.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Case Study Library (FEMA): Search by title, keywords, or generally browse case study reports and best practice articles from across FEMA's areas of expertise. fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/case-study-library

Building Alliances: The FEMA Resilient Partnership Network collaborates with partners across the whole community to share stories of best practices and address challenges. fema.gov/partnerships/resilient-nation-partnership-network

Faith-Based and Volunteer Partnership Resources: Information to support faith-based and community organizations on issues related to natural hazards, security threats, training, exercises, capacity-building, and other topics. fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/faith-volunteer

Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship: Supports planning efforts against violence and emergencies in houses of worship. fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/developing-eops-for-houses-of-worship.pdf

Guide to Supporting Engagement and Resiliency in Rural Communities: Provides strategies for successful engagement with rural communities and their unique capacities and challenges. fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_rural-guide_jan-2021.pdf

Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool: A free, interactive web map allowing users to examine census data, infrastructure locations and hazards, including real-time weather forecasts, historic disasters, and projected hazard risk. fema.gov/about/reports-and-data/resilience-analysis-planning-tool

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

Protecting Houses of Worship: Resources to support faith-based organizations and houses of worship in securing physical and cyber infrastructure. cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/protecting-houses-worship

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[37] This document contains references to non-federal resources. Linking to such sources does not constitute an endorsement by FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, or any of its employees of the information or products presented.

National Mass Care Strategy

National Mass Care Strategy: How to Develop Agreements for Mass Care Services: Detailed information to better understand formal agreements and improve the delivery of mass care services and emergency assistance. Includes guidance and resources on developing agreements prior to an event. nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DvlpngMssCareAgrmntsGuide_20220727_508.pdf

National Mass Care Strategy: Multi-Agency Resource Center Planning Resource: Information on developing an effective centralized service delivery system in disasters. nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MultiAgency_Resource_Center_Planning_Resource_JT_V-1-0_2017_06_12-.pdf

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD): A national coalition of organizations responding to disasters. nvoad.org

Long-Term Recovery Guide: Resource for disaster organizations to support long-term recovery for survivors and communities. nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/National-VOAD-LTR-Guide-2023.pdf

Other Organization Resources

Aspen Institute Religion & Society Program Publications: Materials on building religious pluralism and strengthening partnerships. aspeninstitute.org/programs/religion-society-program/religion-society-program-publications/

Center for Disaster Philanthropy: Philanthropic organization providing funds for disaster recovery. disasterphilanthropy.org/

Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime: Resources to support victims, their families, and first responders and professionals providing support to them after a mass violence incident. ovc.ojp.gov/news/announcements/view-resources-victims-recent-mass-violence-incidents

International Association of Emergency Managers, Faith-Based Organizations Caucus: Advocates for the increased recognition and engagement of faith-based organizations within the emergency management community to build stronger and more resilient communities. iaem.org/groups/us-caucuses/faith-based-organizations

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery: Behavioral health materials for communities and responders to help them prepare, respond, and recover from disasters. samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness

U.S. Fire Administration Protecting Houses of Worship Against Arson: Resources to help communities reduce the occurrence of arson and safeguard their houses of worship. usfa.fema.gov/prevention/arson/houses-of-worship/

Appendix D: Self-Assessments and Considerations

The following information and considerations may assist faith-based and community organizations in completing capabilities-based self-assessments to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies in their communities. The considerations provided are not exhaustive, and assessments should consider a mix of organizational readiness, individual preparedness, and needs within the community. Customizing assessments to meet the needs of individual organizations and communities is expected and encouraged. Records of completed assessments should be kept with the organization and with emergency management partners. Suggested actions to improve preparedness are also provided for reference.

Before Disaster

Faith-based and community organizations regularly provide a range of services to their members and the broader community. Understanding what those services are and who relies on them prior to a disaster highlights critical lines of service and potential resources during or after a disaster.

CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Verify and record organization information-points of contact, appropriate contact times, preferred communication methods. Include telephone number, email, role of designated points of contact, facility address, organization type, web address, and other relevant contact or organizational information, as appropriate.

- What services or resources does the organization provide on a regular, recurring basis for members or the larger community (e.g., care for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, childcare, clothes distribution, community center, counseling, financial assistance, medical services, pantry, shelter, transportation, or other services)?

- How is the organization equipped to provide these services (e.g., facility space, kitchen, warehouse, equipment, trained staff)?

- Are applicable licenses, credentials, or inspections valid (e.g., child/adult care centers, food services, shelter facilities, medical centers)?

- Does the organization have a current inventory of facilities, equipment, and supplies?

- Are contact lists for members current?

- Do members have specialized skills that support the organization? Record relevant credentials for spiritual care providers, counselors, interpreters (include languages and proficiency), medical and veterinary providers, care workers, educators, food service workers, equipment operators, and other key skills.

- Does the organization accept donations?

- o   If yes, what types and quantities does the organization regularly manage?

- How does the organization distribute donations or other resources?

  - o   Is a case management process used?

- Does the organization have a current disaster, emergency, or continuity plan?

- How does the organization communicate to staff, members, and the community served?

  - o   Does the organization have a formal communications or emergency contacts plan?

- Are key facilities equipped with generators?

  - o   How many hours of fuel are available on site?

- What information would help the organization in improving preparedness (e.g., continuity planning, communications, expanding partnerships, volunteer or donations management, mass care services, personal preparedness resources)?

- Are there other organizations that provide similar services to the community?

Actions and Considerations

☐ Prioritize planning for disasters or other service interruptions.

☐ Work with emergency managers to review emergency operations plans and continuity of operations plans. Ensure plans are current and socialized.

☐ Develop an emergency communications plan with accessible messaging for the organization.

☐ Coordinate with any third-party entities who provide services to the organization, or who normally rely on the organization for services, to discuss contingencies in the event of a service disruption.

☐ Review applicable legal authorities and responsibilities relevant to disasters and emergencies.

☐ Meet with emergency managers to share information and resources, learn about hazards for the community, and prioritize efforts.

☐ Determine whether a long-term recovery group is active within the community. If yes, consider coordinating on identified goals.

☐ Learn about available preparedness, mitigation, and other disaster assistance programs.

☐ Create strategies to support preparedness, response, and recovery planning, as appropriate.

☐ Identify topics of interest to organization members and information sources, which may include preparedness activities, protecting houses of worship, trainings, exercises, or grants.

☐ Participate in emergency drills, trainings, and exercises. Encourage other community partners' involvement.

☐ Coordinate with other faith and community organization leaders to review relevant emergency plans, share mitigation and planning strategies, or collaborate on preparedness, response, or recovery activities.

☐ Encourage individuals to develop personal emergency plans and kits for their household for the first 72 hours after an event.

☐ Register for weather alerts and public warning systems for the community.

During Disaster

When disasters strike a community, faith-based and community organizations are often key sources of information for members and the populations they serve. Understanding how regular services may be impacted during a disaster, whether from reduced capability or from increased demand, is critical for organizations to effectively plan with emergency managers and other partners.

CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

▪ Will the organization be able to continue providing existing services during a community emergency?

   o If the organization is unable to provide existing services, what are the impacts to the community? Consider how many people would be impacted by restricted services, if other sources are able to provide services if needed, and if they are prepared for that possibility.

   o If the organization continues offering services, can services be offered to additional community members temporarily during an emergency event?

▪ Is contact information, availability of staff, members, suppliers, vendors, and community served accurate and current?

▪ Does the organization have a communications plan or system to activate in response to an emergency event? If yes,

   o What type of system is used (e.g., messaging app, phone tree, amateur radio)?

   o Who does the system reach (e.g., community members, staff)?

▪ Are organization members, particularly those with specialized skills and applicable credentials, able and willing to support community needs, potentially as a volunteer?

   o Specialized skills may include, but are not limited to, spiritual care, counselors, interpreters, medical and veterinary providers, care workers, educators, food service workers, equipment operators, and other key skills in construction, logistics, administration, or marketing.

- o Is any organization's equipment available for use during an emergency event (e.g., chainsaws, radios, portable generators, water pump/filtration, vehicles/hitch, trailers)?

- Would the organization accept donations in an emergency?

  - o If yes, what types and quantities would the organization be prepared to manage?

- How would the organization distribute emergency donations or other resources?

  - o Would a case management process be used?

- Does the organization have the ability to distribute food or other commodities? If yes,

  - o How many meals can the organization prepare and serve each day?

  - o Does the organization have the ability to deliver food?

  - o What supply or funding considerations exist for distributing and/or delivering items?

  - o Are required permits and/or licenses valid (e.g., food handling, drivers' licenses)?

- Is the organization able and willing to serve as an emergency shelter during an event? If yes,

  - o Does the organization have an existing sheltering agreement in place? With whom?

  - o Has the organization previously completed a shelter survey?

  - o Is the shelter space accessible for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs?

  - o Are non-service animals permitted in or around the shelter space?

- Does the organization have a licensed or certified childcare facility?

  - o If yes, is the organization willing and able to serve community members and children who need assistance following an emergency event?

- Is the organization able and willing to provide mental or emotional counseling during an event?

  - o If yes, what types of counseling? How many credentialed counselors are available?

- Is the organization able to mobilize volunteers to assist the community?

  - o If yes, how many volunteers could the organization provide?

- Are there additional services the organization would be able to provide during an emergency event? If yes, please provide more information.

Actions and Considerations

Faith-based and community organizations' most important responsibilities are ensuring the safety and well-being of organization staff, members, and the people they serve. Additionally, organizations should communicate clear, accurate, and verified information with their communities, and may consider offering expanded services to the general public. Faith-based and community organization leadership may consider the following actions and consult with emergency management to provide additional support as needed.

☐ Verify the safety of staff, members, and community members served.

☐ Understand the situation and if it is improving, stabilizing, or getting worse.

☐ What area is impacted and how are organization staff, members, and community affected?

☐ Ensure continuity of essential services—which may be provided or supported by third parties.

☐ Are healthcare, schools, transportation, utilities, or businesses (e.g., groceries) impacted?

☐ Are there immediate community needs (e.g., personnel, equipment, commodities, services)?

☐ How can the organization support the community and current response activities?

☐ Coordinate with emergency management or a designated point of contact to provide verified and accessible messaging to the community, including language interpretation as needed.

☐ Collaborate with emergency managers to support response efforts as needed (e.g., information distribution, sheltering services, feeding operations, commodity distribution, debris removal teams, and childcare).

☐ As requested, assist in coordinating additional resources from organization networks.

After Disaster

Faith-based and community organizations may return to regular activities or change the services provided after an incident. Whether considering options for restoring previous services or adding new activities as a result of an incident, organizations may proactively assess and plan.

CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Do members have specialized skills that would support the recovery efforts in the community?

- Would the organization accept donations for long-term recovery efforts?

  o If yes, what types and quantities would the organization be prepared to manage?

- How would the organization distribute recovery-related donations or other resources?

  o Would a case management process be used?

- What information would help the organization in improving recovery efforts (e.g., grant management, communications, expanding partnerships, volunteer or donations management)?

- Does the organization have a licensed or certified childcare facility?

  o If yes, is the organization willing and able to serve community members and children who need assistance during recovery efforts?

- Is the organization able and willing to provide mental or emotional counseling during recovery?

  o If yes, what types of counseling? How many credentialed counselors are available?

- Is the organization able to mobilize volunteers to assist the community during recovery?

  o If yes, how many volunteers could your organization provide at one time?

- Are there additional services the organization can provide? If yes, provide more information.

Actions and Considerations

☐ Assist in the recovery process or long-term recovery groups in coordination with emergency or designated recovery managers, as needed.

☐ Work collaboratively to promote accessible community outreach and address relevant recovery and mitigation topics.

☐ Continue to assess unmet needs in coordination with government agencies and other partners.

☐ Host informational meetings for the organization and the general public.

☐ Identify opportunities to rebuild the community to mitigate impacts of future incidents.

☐ Review what recovery and mitigation funding is available from public or private sources.

☐ If the organization manages any finances, donations, or other resources for the event, ensure accurate and complete records are maintained in accordance with applicable directives.

☐ Revise the organization's plans based on lessons learned from the emergency event.

☐ Restock any supplies or goods used during the emergency event.

Appendix E: Acronyms

CCP	Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program
CEMA	Chatham Emergency Management Agency
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
DCM	Disaster Case Management Grant
DFN	Disaster Faith Network
EIDL	Economic Injury Disaster Loan
EMA	(Whitfield County) Emergency Management Agency
FB-ISAO	Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GEMA/HS	Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency
HENTF	Heritage Emergency National Task Force
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
HSEM	(New Hampshire Division of) Homeland Security and Emergency Management
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDEMU	National Disaster & Emergency Management University
NVOAD	National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
Prep Toolkit	Preparedness Toolkit
SBA	Small Business Administration
THIRA	Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
USFA	U.S. Fire Administration
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster