# Chapter 8

# Conclusion

## What Happens Next?

Congratulations! You have completed the *Framework*! You and your planning team should be proud of the work that you and your community planners have accomplished to prepare for public health emergencies of all types and sizes. Now that you have completed the *Framework*, what happens next? What do you do with all of this planning? The answer to these questions can be found by looking at the preparedness cycle.

## The Preparedness Cycle

NIMS[[1]](#footnote-1) defines the *preparedness cycle* as "planning, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking action to correct and mitigate." The preparedness cycle (shown to the right) is similar to a continuous improvement cycle:

* It starts with the identification of a need for emergency preparedness and response planning.
* Once this need has been identified, plans are developed, and those entities having roles and responsibilities prescribed in the plan are organized and trained on the plan.
* When this training is complete, the plan is then exercised to evaluate not only this training but also the effectiveness of the plan in meeting the need that was identified at the beginning of the preparedness cycle.
* After the exercise, the plan is evaluated and improved, when necessary, and the preparedness cycle starts over.

This approach would apply to the work you and your planning team have done in the *Framework*. You need to

* Train pertinent people on their roles and responsibilities prescribed in the plans you have developed in the previous chapters.
* Exercise these plans to evaluate the training and the viability of the plans.
* Use exercise results to make improvements to the plans.

Another way to evaluate your plans is through responses to real-life emergencies. Whenever your community experiences a disaster or public health emergency, you and your planning team should compare the actual response to the event to the response prescribed in written plans. This comparison will reveal gaps in planning or other issues that need to be addressed. As with exercising, necessary improvements should be made to the plans.

## Exercise Planning

In 2002, the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) was created to address the response needs of the nation and to standardize methodologies and terminologies relative to exercises. HSEEP provides a set of guiding principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.

HSEEP recommends that community planners develop a multiyear training and exercise plan to strengthen their emergency response capabilities. Now that you and your planning team have completed the *Framework*, you should consider developing a multiyear training and exercise plan for your community. Naturally, you will need input from your core and noncore partners and your community coalition, but now is the time to start rather than taking a break and waiting to do it later. Use *Worksheet 8.1* below to help you develop a multiyear training and exercise plan.

**Worksheet 8.1 – Community Multiyear Training and Exercise Plan**

| **Plan Name** | **Date Last Trained or Exercised** | **Date Next Training or Exercise** | **Type of Training** | **Type of Exercise** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |
| To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in | To be filled in |

## Exercise Documentation

Whether evaluating your plans through exercises or the response to real-life emergencies, you and your planning team should always document your observations on the simulated or actual response to the event and your recommendations for making improvements to existing plans. Two tools to help you with this are an after action report (AAR) and an improvement plan (IP). The AAR summarizes key information about an exercise or an actual response, such as observations and outcomes. The IP is a structured document outlining improvements that need to be made to a plan and delegating responsibilities and timelines for making the improvements. For more information about these two tools and for useful templates, see the latest HSEEP guidance.

## Final Suggestions

As a final suggestion, you and your planning team should schedule regular meetings to accomplish these tasks:

* Review the makeup of the planning team and the community coalition to see if more members need to be added or members need to be replaced.
* Periodically conduct a hazard vulnerability analysis to determine if the two or three scenarios identified as likely to impact your community are still valid.
* Periodically review the work done on a particular chapter to see if it needs to be updated.

## Ending Note

Because all of the work you and your planning team have done in completing the *Framework* is part of a continuous improvement cycle, your work is not finished. It will always be ongoing. However, you have completed an extraordinary task that will make your community better prepared to respond to different emergencies. Moreover, the work you have accomplished here certainly will lead to saved lives in your community. That in itself is a noteworthy accomplishment.

## References and Resources

**Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)**

<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/32326>

HSEEP provides a set of guiding principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. Exercises are a key component of national preparedness—they provide elected and appointed officials and stakeholders from across the whole community with the opportunity to shape planning, assess and validate capabilities, and address areas for improvement. Through the use of HSEEP, exercise program managers can develop, execute, and evaluate exercises that address the priorities established by an organization's leaders.

1. NIMS—the National Incident Management System—is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management. For more information, got to <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)