# Exercise Planning Workbook

## Directions:

This Exercise Planning Workbook is a tool to help exercise planners organize information and plan for a successful exercise. Completion of the workbook is not a requirement of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) or Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grants; it is a guide to assist planners through the exercise design process.

A thorough and well thought-out exercise design process will support the success of exercise participants during the exercise play (i.e., exercise conduct) and the evaluation and improvement planning processes. Supporting documents for the conduct and evaluation of exercises includes:

**Discussion-Based Exercise Documents** (seminar, workshop, tabletop, and game):

* Situation Manual (SitMan)
* Multi-Media Presentation (e.g., Power Point)
* Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs)
* Participant Feedback Form
* After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)

**Operations-Based Exercise Documents** (drill, functional, and full-scale exercise):

* Controller/Evaluator (C/E) Handbook
* Exercise Plan (ExPlan)
* Master Scenario of Events List (MSEL)
* Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs)
* Participant Feedback Form
* After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)

Links to Additional Resources:

* [Public Health Preparedness Capabilities](http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/capabilities/)
* [Healthcare Preparedness Capabilities](http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/hpp/reports/Documents/capabilities.pdf)
* [MDH Training and Exercises](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/training/index.html)
* [KDHE Exercise & Training web site](http://www.kdhe-exercises.org/)
* [KDEM Exercise web site](http://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=193)
* [Homeland Security Digital Library](https://www.hsdl.org/?search&collection=public&fct&advanced=&submitted=Search&tabsection=LLIS+Collection)
* [HSEEP Preparedness Toolkit](https://www.preptoolkit.org/web/hseep-resources)

# 8 Steps in Exercise Design

[Step 1: Needs Assessment](#_Step_1:_)

[Step 2: Scope](#_Step_2:_)

[Step 3: Purpose Statement](#_Step_3:_)

[Step 4: Exercise Objectives](#_Step_4:_)

[Step 5: Narrative](#_Step_5:_)

[Step 6: Major / Minor Events](#_Step_6:_)

[Step 7: Expected Actions](#_Step_7:_)

[Step 8: Messages](#_Step_8:_)

# Step 1: Needs Assessment

The *Needs Assessment* provides an opportunity to analyze potential hazards within the jurisdiction and identify gaps that need to be addressed. With a strong focus on capability–based planning, it allows jurisdictions to take a comprehensive view of the overall operational effectiveness of the current system and identify ways to improve it. This step establishes the reason(s) or need(s) to do an exercise while defining critical activities needed to improve the overall emergency management program.

A Needs Assessment may reveal:

* Problems that need to be solved
* Issues/gaps that need to be reviewed or resolved
* Activities that need to be accomplished
* Skills that need to be practiced or improved upon
* Plans and/or agreements that need defining, improvements, or clarification
* Plans and/or agreements that need to be assessed or analyzed for strengths/areas of improvement
* Certain capabilities or type of exercise identified in grant guidance
* Training needs of response partners
* New facilities, equipment, personnel, or other resources requiring attention
* Need to clarify roles and responsibilities
* Recent emergency responses that identified gaps/areas of improvement
* Personnel limitations
* Specialized resource needs

The *Needs Assessment* is the most important step of all when developing an emergency management exercise. The entire exercise process will build from this assessment.

Sample Needs Assessment Questionnaire

(Sample only intended to stimulate some assessment ideas.)

Answering “no” to any of these questions could be an area in your plan that needs to be exercised.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes/No | Sample Questionnaire |
|  | Is the emergency operations plan (EOP) and/or Standard Operating Guide (SOG) up-to-date? |
|  | Have all sections of the EOP and/or SOG been executed in the past year? (either in an actual occurrence or an exercise) |
|  | Are all policies and guidelines for response to an emergency spelled out clearly in the EOP and/or SOG? (e.g., mutual aid agreements, etc.) |
|  | Has the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Department Operations Center (DOC), and/or Hospital Command Center (HCC) been activated in the past year? |
|  |
|  | Has the Incident Command System (ICS) or Hospital ICS (HICS) been activated in the past year? |
|  | Have notification / alternate warning systems been tested in the past year?(either in an actual occurrence or an exercise) |
|  | Are all appropriate personnel (including new staff, leadership, elected officials, etc.) familiar with the EOP and/or SOG and the defined authorities? |
|  | Are identified personnel familiar with their role in emergency operations? Do employees know where to get current information? |
|  | Do current personnel possess the knowledge and skills necessary to respond as indicated in the EOP and/or SOG? |
|  | Have volunteer organizations been actively participating in current programs? |
|  |
|  | Have new resources been identified and incorporated into the EOP and/or SOG? |
|  | Have all resource constraints or limitations that could create problems in an emergency been addressed? |
|  | Are personnel familiar with available resources? |
|  | Are personnel capable of managing their resource function in an emergency situation? |
|  |
|  | Has an exercise been conducted within the past year? |
|  | Have improvements been made and documented from past exercises? |
|  | Have you exercised with external community partners in the past year? |
|  | Have critical infrastructure and private sector partners been involved in any exercises? |

|  |
| --- |
| Step 1: Needs Assessment |
|  |

# Step 2: Scope

The *Scope* defines the parameters for the exercise, such as capabilities, target audience, and type of exercise. It helps to identify those areas of highest priority that can be realistically tested and evaluated in an exercise, and assists in determining who should be involved.

Identifying the Scope includes:

* Functions or tasks that need to practiced, tested, or evaluated
* Agencies that need to be involved
* Personnel necessary to carry out the exercise play
* Type of exercise that matches the exercise capabilities of the jurisdictions and that will produce the desired degree of realism
* Hazard scenario(s) that will trigger those functions or activities to be tested
* Most logical location for the hazard(s) to occur

|  |
| --- |
| Step 2: Define the Scope |
| Personnel to be Involved (Which Agency/Agencies) |
| Functions or Capabilities to be Tested: (Be clear and specific. Refer to the Public Health and Healthcare Capabilities for additional guidance on functions, tasks, and capabilities.) |
| Type of Incident/Emergency and Related Issues/Events |
| Geographic Area/Location: |
| Date and Type of Exercise: |

# Step 3: Purpose Statement

The *Purpose Statement* succinctly identifies what you want to achieve from the exercise. It summarizes the information developed during the first two exercise development steps and is the last step to tackle before announcing the exercise.

The information contained in the *Purpose Statement* is used to help gain Chief Elected Official (CEO) support and assure participation by other departmental personnel. It is also a broad-based statement that can be shared during media interviews.

|  |
| --- |
| Step 3: Statement of Purpose |
|  |

# Step 4: Exercise Objectives

The *Objectives* describe the expected performance from exercise participants in order to demonstrate competence. *Objectives* must be written in a format that is clear, measurable, and observable.

*Objectives* ensure that those working on designing the exercise will have a common understanding of what is to be accomplished. Without o*bjectives*, there would not be established expectations or a basis to determine whether those expectations were met during the exercise. *Objectives* are the cornerstone for exercise design, conduct, evaluation, and follow-up (improvement planning).

There are a number of useful approaches to developing *objectives*. An *objective* should include the following characteristics:

* *Who* is going to *do what* under *what conditions* and according to *what standards*?

These characteristics are:

* *Performance*: The objective states what is to be done. It sometimes describes the product or the result of doing something.
* *Conditions*: An objective describes the important conditions under which the performance is to occur.
* *Criteria*: An objective describes the criteria of acceptable performance by describing how well or what the participant must perform in order to be considered acceptable.

|  |
| --- |
| SMART Objectives |
| Simple | A good objective is simply phrased. It is brief and easy to understand. |
| Measurable | A good objective sets the level of performance so the results are observable and everyone can agree on whether or not the objectives are achieved. |
| Achievable | A good objective should not be too difficult or impossible to achieve. |
| Realistic | A good objective should present a realistic expectation for the exercise. |
| Task Oriented | A good objective should focus on behavior or procedure. |

|  |
| --- |
| Exercise Objectives |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

#

# Step 5: Narrative

The *Narrative* is a brief description or “story” of events that have occurred leading up to the exercise. It captures attention and motivates exercise participants to proceed to make decisions or take action based on events that have occurred.

**The Narrative should include:**

* Type of event
* Time of occurrence
* Location/where the event occurred
* What has happened leading up the exercise
* What may happen
* Weather conditions

**Narrative Checklist**: (To aid in the development of…)

* What events have happened?
* How did you find out?
* Was there advance warning? What time?
* What happens in sequence?
* Does the event move geographically? Where?
* How fast, strong, deep, or dangerous is the situation?
* What damage is reported?
* What are the weather conditions now and in the future?
* When was the onset of illness? How many cases have been reported?
* What additional resources, personnel/volunteers may be needed?

|  |
| --- |
| Narrative Outline |
| Type of event |
| How fast, strong, deep and/or dangerous |
| How you found out |
| Response(s) made so far |
| Damage reported (or onset of illness for biological events) |
| Sequence of events |
| Current times |
| Advance warning, if any |
| Location |
| Relevant weather conditions |
| Other factors that would influence emergency procedures |
| Predictions |

# Step 6: Major / Minor Events

*Major* *Events* and *Minor Events* are those that may generate action to test the objectives. A Master Scenario of Events List (MSEL) is created from the *Major Events* and *Minor Events*.

There are usually different events that might trigger certain actions; a conscious selection of how these events unfold will help to test each exercise objective. *Expected Actions* begin forming at this stage of the development process.

* *Major Events*: These are big problems resulting from the disaster situation. These should be likely events that will call for realistic action. The best way determine a list of *Major Events* is to decide what events may generate situations that would test the objectives.
* *Minor Events*: Oftentimes called *Detailed Events*, these are situations that may cause other events to happen. A list of *Minor Events* would include a number of specific problem situations to which emergency personnel would have to respond. This list makes it easier to write messages that will create the flow for the exercise.

**\*\*Note\*\***

In practice, exercise designers may identify *Events* in different ways:

* Some designers first think of an *Expected Action* they want someone to perform, and then list a problem connected with a *Major Event* that would motivate such action.
* Others work backward by making a list of specific problems that are likely to occur in connection with each *Major Event* and think of the *Expected Actions* that would be expected as a result.
* Others outline the *Minor Events* and *Expected Actions* at the same time.

|  |
| --- |
| [Initial] Master Scenario of Events List (with Minor Events) |
| Time | Major Event Summary | Minor Event Summary | Time |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Step 7: Expected Actions

*Expected Actions* are what exercise designers want to see or hear participants perform in order to evaluate whether plans, policies, procedures, and/or agreements are effective and meet the exercise objectives, as well as the true capabilities of the jurisdiction.

In practice, there are various ways to think about *Expected Actions*, as they relate to *Major Events* and *Minor Events*. There are several ways to identify *Expected Actions*.

* Some exercise designers first think of an *Expected Action* they want someone to perform, then list a problem connected with a *Major Event* that would motivate such action.
* Others work backward by making a list of specific problems that are likely to occur in connection with each *Major Event* and think of the *Expected Actions* that would be expected as a result.
* Others outline the *Minor Events* and *Expected Actions* at the same time.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Event Description | Expected Action | Objective Addressed |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

# Step 8: Messages

*Messages* are used to provide ongoing information about the event to exercise participants and to motivate actions and decisions based on the jurisdiction’s plans, policies, procedures, and agreements.

*Messages* can be provided to the participants in a variety of ways:

* Landline telephone
* Cellular phone/text
* Email
* Portable radio
* Hand-delivered messages
* Fax machine
* Video
* Dispatch
* Bulletins
* Web-based systems (e.g., MNTrac, MN Responds, MN-HAN, etc.)

|  |
| --- |
| Components of a Message |
| Source of the messageWHO | This should raise questions of who sent the message and how credible is the source. Did sender actually see event or is it hearsay? Raises questions for the need to verify information. |
| Method of TransmissionSENDS | How is the message getting to the recipient? Matching how it is sent to everyday reality will keep the exercise realistic. |
| Content of MessageWHAT | Is it complete? Does it provide all the necessary information to make the decision or take action? |
| Recipient/ReferralTO WHOM | If first recipient is not the decision maker or action taker, what path of action does the message have to take? How many interpretations of the message will there be before a decision or action is made? |