Planning Considerations: Putting People First

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1. Introduction

Emergency managers share the goal of saving lives and protecting property by mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. This goal applies to everyone within a community. Meeting the needs of these populations requires emergency managers to embrace and consider people first in the planning process by incorporating equity, inclusion, and accessibility in each step of the planning process.

1.1. Purpose

This document is intended to support state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency managers, and participants in their efforts to respond to the needs of their whole community including underserved populations throughout the planning process.

1.2. What Does Putting People First Mean?

Putting people first means taking a whole community approach to emergency management planning and using the lenses of equity, accessibility, and inclusion to identify the needs of populations who previously may have not had their needs met due to past policy decisions or other gaps in planning assumptions and considerations. People first also means including these populations in the planning process as the experts on their needs and potential unique risks and vulnerabilities. Emergency managers can learn about their community through research; or, ideally talking directly to underserved populations to hear their insights and perspectives and build relationships and trust with those populations. Accessibility means not only finding ways to enable people to be part of the process but also considering how to make information accessible to everyone including people with disabilities and other access and functional needs.

The process of weaving equity, inclusion and accessibility throughout plans, policy, and guidance is not a single effort or action. Truly being inclusive is an ongoing process involving the following:

- Listening to and empowering people from all parts of the community, particularly those from underserved communities, to participate in the planning process;
- Revising plans, policies, and other guidance to reflect the priorities and needs of the whole community; and
- Ongoing awareness and evaluation as communities’ characteristics and needs change over time.

People are complex and cannot be described by a single characteristic; therefore, emergency managers can consider how identities may combine or overlap in the lived experiences of individuals and communities (often referred to as “intersectionality”). Understanding how the concept of intersectionality can help emergency managers identify multi-layered challenges will result in plans and programs that allow flexibility in providing services that will be the best for each impacted individual.
Emergency managers should also be mindful of federal laws that may be applicable, such as **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, **Section 308 of the Robert T. Stafford Act**, **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**, **the Fair Housing Act of 1968**, **the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968**, **the Communications Act of 1934**, **the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975**, **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** and **the Age Discrimination Act of 1975**, all as amended as well as applicable state and local laws.

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**Guidance for Emergency Managers on Complying with Federal Laws**

*Guidance to State and Local Governments and Other Federally Assisted Recipients Engaged in Emergency Preparedness, Response, Mitigation, and Recovery Activities on Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*¹, provides guidance to recipients of federal financial assistance engaged in emergency management activities on compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Additionally, the [Department of Homeland Security’s website](https://www.dhs.gov) also has reference materials on disability access and emergency management.

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### 1.3. Guide Structure

This guide has five major sections:

1. **Introduction** describes the purpose of the guide.

2. **Putting People First in Planning** is the heart of the guide presenting a set of principles for planning to meet the needs of a community, followed by an explanation of how to incorporate the needs of underserved populations during the planning process, as described in the *Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans*.

3. **Community Engagement** covers how emergency managers can improve stakeholder engagement to encourage broader participation from the community.

4. **Conclusion** ends the guide with a short list of important concepts for emergency managers to keep in mind.

The guide also contains appendices that include more detailed information.

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¹ For more information visit: [Civil Rights Division | Guidance to State and Local Governments and Other Federally Assisted Recipients Engaged in Emergency Preparedness, Response, Mitigation, and Recovery Activities on Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](https://www.justice.gov)
Appendix A provides a series of community snapshots that will give emergency managers ideas on how to learn more about specific community segments.

Appendix B describes considerations for incorporating diverse and varied needs of the community into specific plan types including evacuation, continuity, and mitigation.

Appendix C gives a list of possible vulnerabilities and/or assets that emergency managers could consider.

Appendix D describes how emergency managers can use qualitative and quantitative approaches, geospatial analysis, and data visualization to inform and support inclusive planning.

Appendix E includes definitions of terms and acronyms used throughout the guide.

Anyone engaged in an emergency management planning process can use the information in this guide, not just those with the official title ‘planner’. This guide offers practical information on how to prioritize the needs of all populations in the community throughout the planning process and address the disproportionate impact of disasters on underserved communities.
2. Putting People First in Planning

Emergency managers should understand the composition, capabilities, priorities, and needs of the people they serve. Understanding a community’s demographics, geography, history, and resources can help identify unique needs and inform engagements. Additionally, understanding the potential barriers that may limit or eliminate an individual’s access to necessary resources, services, or successful outcomes in the wake of a disaster is key. Planning for, and the inclusive participation of, the broader community is essential to ensure an effective planning process and resulting plans.

This section introduces cross-cutting planning principles and considerations to support equitable and inclusive emergency management planning. Appendix B provides a series of self-assessment questions emergency managers can use to develop or review various types of emergency management plans and ensure they account for, and meet the needs of, the entire community.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The concepts of accessibility, equity, and inclusion are particularly important in emergency management because the firsthand experience of underserved communities and research about the distribution of disaster impacts have consistently shown that disasters affect those communities disproportionately. Disaster literature provides many examples of how factors such as race, income, age, disability, and gender run in parallel to outcomes in disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Examples include the following:

- Older adults are often at higher risk of death or injury during disasters because of a higher risk of health problems, reduced mobility, and fixed incomes.
- People living in rural areas, due to lack of access to local doctors and healthcare facilities among other factors, can be at greater risk for poor health outcomes that place them at greater risk in disaster situations.
- Low-income populations and communities of color are more likely to suffer property damage, injury, and death, in part because there is a higher likelihood of living in older, denser, disaster-prone neighborhoods with lower-quality housing and inadequate services.
- Government assistance programs are often based on pre-event home values. Due to redlining and other historical housing policies, people of color often live in housing markets with depressed values and, consequently, receive less post-disaster assistance.
- Underserved communities are less likely be able to respond to disaster-related warnings, including evacuation orders, due to a lack of resources needed to act (e.g., access to

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transportation, funds to pay for emergency housing, use of smartphones). Alert and warnings also may not reach underserved communities because these communications are not provided through trusted channels or in a language that they understand.

Other potentially underserved groups include individuals with disabilities, and people with access and functional needs such as literacy challenges and English comprehension. Access and functional needs can make adapting to extreme circumstances particularly challenging and stressful, especially when preparedness efforts have not accounted for these needs. If information is presented only in English, those with limited English proficiency will be at a disadvantage.

FEMA has developed a series of community snapshots, provided in Appendix A, that outline planning considerations, strategic questions, and resources to help learn more about specific segments of the population. These snapshots are based on experience, insights, and lessons learned from, and by, practitioners across FEMA and its partners.

Ensuring the needs of all populations in a community are met is multidimensional, however, it can be described and measured as having three key interconnected elements: access, process, and outcome.

- **Access** is the extent to which resources and services are distributed in the same or similar way across people or groups, and it encompasses the equitable distribution of costs, benefits, rights, responsibilities, and risk within and among groups from present and future generations. Improved access is the reduction of barriers to resources, services, and opportunities. Improved access can help in building community resilience and ensuring a stronger recovery across the community.

- **Processes** are characterized by the fair and intentional involvement and inclusion of all groups in rulemaking and decisions, including planning processes or the development of policy and regulation.

- **Outcomes** are characterized by increasing agency and opportunities for people to achieve their goals or meet their needs through appropriate access and inclusionary processes. It also refers to both consideration of the broad social, governance, economic, and cultural contexts, past and present (e.g., power dynamics, gender, education, ethnicity, age) that define underlying community conditions and dynamics, and the future result of equitable access and process participation.

In the emergency management context, the three elements of access, processes, and outcomes (Figure 1) can be seen as the following:

- **Access to Services and Benefits**—the distribution of costs and benefits is uneven, with underserved communities often bearing the burden or cost of policy decisions while also not receiving the benefits of projects and investments.
Participation in Community Decision-Making Process—emergency management planning efforts, programs or policies often do not give enough opportunity for the voices and interests of underserved communities to be heard or included.

Risk and Vulnerability as Outcomes—the impacts of disaster have a disproportionate impact on underserved communities, including disaster survivors, because of patterns of discriminatory political, economic, and social conditions. This dimension of equity is often thought of in terms of social vulnerability.

Figure 1: Access, Process, and Outcome Framework

The following sections explore these dimensions more fully. Understanding these dimensions will help emergency managers better address the needs of all populations within a community throughout the planning process.

2.1.1. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Underserved populations may have fewer resources and protections in general and even less access to services and benefits. Different population groups may face greater challenges in accessing public and private sector resources for a variety of reasons. Examples include the following:

Access to Government Services and Benefits. The benefits from public programs and services are not always evenly communicated or distributed within or across different communities, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. For example, the complexity of disaster assistance programs has been a barrier for some attempting to access disaster assistance. In

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addition, research indicates that income inequality has increased at greater rates in jurisdictions that experience more frequent and severe disaster losses than those that experience fewer disaster losses. Governments at all levels may use decision criteria that inadvertently direct resources away from those who need them the most. For example, benefit-cost analysis may be structured in a way that causes benefits for higher-value assets to outweigh potential benefits to lower-value assets, potentially giving preference to projects that protect higher-value assets.

- **Access to High-Speed Internet.** Communities need high-speed internet to learn about and access many public and private sector resources. However, significant differences exist in broadband access (or usage) based on race, ethnicity, income, and educational attainment. Similarly, broadband access is lower in rural areas than it is in suburban and urban areas. This disparity may impact awareness of and access to recovery programs. It may also impact emergency managers’ and government partners’ efforts to efficiently distribute public alerts and warnings with the most up-to-date information.

- **Access to Transportation.** Programs requiring in-person consultation or registration make it difficult for populations without access to reliable transportation to use them, especially when those locations are not located near underserved communities. Likewise, if a disaster disrupts transportation services, some populations may have difficulty accessing places of employment, or they may not be able to evacuate when necessary.

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2.1.2. PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Whole community participation is essential to ensuring that populations have their needs met during an emergency. Emergency managers should encourage active participation so those most impacted by disasters, particularly those in underserved populations, can begin to inform long-term decision-making and access critical resources. Without meaningful participation, officials and organizations responsible for distributing resources such as recovery support and mitigation funding may not be aware of areas or populations with disproportionate needs. Emergency managers should be aware of personal or social barriers to participation. These barriers are obstacles caused or increased by harmful stereotypes, stigma, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or others. Vulnerable people may not readily participate because of eroded trust in programs and public service structures. Other potential barriers to participation include government inaction to establishing meaningful connection with communities; a lack of time due to working multiple jobs; a lack of broadband; a lack of access to transportation; language challenges; and other access and functional needs.

Ensuring meaningful participation from members of the community during the planning process not only improves plan quality, but also leads to more effective implementation and builds trust. Broad and meaningful participation can also improve awareness for underserved communities about potential assistance, which in turn can enhance delivery of resources in an efficient and appropriately targeted way. Emergency managers should implement active engagement techniques, including working one-on-one and in small groups, as well as leveraging partnerships with businesses, non-profits, and faith-based organizations, which can improve participation both with the community-at-large and underserved communities. The ability to develop these trusted relationships and integrate the involvement of underserved communities will take time and resources, which is an essential part of inclusive planning.

When gathering information on communities, it is beneficial for emergency managers to have open discussions with community members to verify accuracy of the data gathered and analyzed, which will help build trust between emergency managers and the community. Members. It shows respect for the lived experience of the local community.\textsuperscript{6} It also enables emergency managers better understand local challenges and strengths, which is key for identifying community champions and action planning. It encourages open communication between community members.

Strategic Questions to Help Understand Needs of Different Communities - Process

Appendix A provides community snapshots. Each snapshot provides an overview of the community, strategic questions, and resources to learn more. Questions to help increase participation in community decision-making processes include:

- Have you previously provided the disability community the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to disaster planning efforts?
- How can you effectively communicate risks to children and youth and involve them in planning and recovery processes?
- What organizations, nonprofits, and agencies do older adults currently have strong relationships with?

2.1.3. RISK AND VULNERABILITY AS OUTCOMES

Pre-existing risk and hazard vulnerability directly influence disaster needs and outcomes. For the purposes of this guide, risk is defined as “the potential for an unwanted outcome as determined by its likelihood and the consequence.”7 Vulnerability is defined as “a physical feature or operational attribute that renders an entity...susceptible to a given hazard.”8

Certain populations (e.g., people of color, indigenous people, people who are incarcerated, infants, children, disabilities, older adults), households with low incomes, and individuals with access or functional needs are more vulnerable to the effects of hazards. Examples include the following:

- **Homeownership.** As of the third quarter of 2021, 74% of White non-Hispanic households owned their home, whereas only 44% of Black and 48% of Hispanic households owned their homes.9 From an income perspective, 79% of households with income at or above median family income own a home, whereas 51.7% of households below median family income own a home. Individuals who rent are at greater risk of housing disruption (i.e., eviction, trouble finding new housing) than homeowners. Reasons for this include delays in rebuilding rental property and decreases in affordable housing supply post-disaster, due to both loss of building stock and increases in rent due to limited supply.10 According to a poll in 2020, 57% of renters had renters

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8 Ibid.


\begin{itemize}
\item **Income and Wealth.** Nationally, median income for all households is $74,755, according to the 2022 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. When examining income data by race and ethnicity, disparities are clear. Median income for White non-Hispanic households is $79,933, compared to $51,374 for Black households and $65,882 for Hispanic households.\footnote{United States Census Bureau, \textit{Table S1903 Median Income in the Past 12 Months 2022 ACS 1-year estimates}. Accessed November 15, 2023. \url{https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S1903?q=median+income&moe=false}.} The average Black and Hispanic or Latino households own only about 15% to 20% as much net wealth as White non-Hispanic households.\footnote{Federal Reserve, \textit{Wealth Inequality, and the Racial Wealth Gap}. 2021. Accessed June 9, 2022. \url{https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/wealth-inequality-and-the-racial-wealth-gap-20211022.htm}.} Experience and research indicate that, on average, lower-income populations are at higher risk from natural hazards than higher-income populations. For example, counties with higher percentages of impoverished populations have higher hazard losses. This trend is most pronounced in locations with impoverished non-White populations.\footnote{Tate, E., and C. Emrich, “Assessing Social Equity in Disasters.” \textit{Eos}. February 23, 2021. Accessed June 21, 2023. \url{https://eos.org/science-updates/assessing-social-equity-in-disasters}.}

\item **Health.** Communities of color are disproportionately located near toxic chemical plants, breathe the worst air, and drink contaminated water.\footnote{Bullard, R.D., “Race and environmental justice in the United States.” \textit{Yale J. Int'l L.}, 18, 319. 1993. Accessed June 21, 2023. \url{https://openyls.law.yale.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.13051/6282/16_18YaleJIntL319_1993_.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y}.} This leads to worsening health, which then makes these individuals more susceptible to disaster impacts. Beyond differences based on race or ethnicity, increased vulnerability can manifest in multiple ways for different populations. Individuals with chronic health conditions may be more vulnerable to disruptions in healthcare services or critical lifelines. In addition, they may be more vulnerable to changing conditions due to climate change, such as increased instances of extreme heat. For example, power outages will have an outsized impact on individuals who rely on power-dependent medical devices. Children
and minorities are more vulnerable to prolonged behavioral health impacts from both natural and human-caused disasters.\textsuperscript{17}

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\hline
\textbf{Strategic Questions to Help Understand Needs of Different Communities - Outcome} \\
\hline
\textbf{Appendix A} provides community snapshots. Each snapshot provides an overview of the community, strategic questions, and resources to learn more. Questions to help understand the needs of the various communities relative to achieving successful outcomes include: \\
\hline
\begin{itemize}
\item Are there any features or challenges unique to your area that may have a significant impact on people with disabilities? \\
\item Has your community experienced a significant emergency or disaster that impacted child-serving organizations, including schools and childcare centers? If so, how were services quickly reestablished so that parents could return to work? \\
\item Has the LGBTQ+ community previously faced challenges in disaster preparedness and response? How was that experience? \\
\end{itemize}
\hline
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\subsection*{2.1.4. COMMON BARRIERS}
Due to the size and complexity of many programs, it is inevitable that some populations within a community may experience barriers to access programs and services, participation in processes, and successful outcomes. Historical policy decisions may have steered resources away from certain populations that led to inequities. However, barriers can take many forms, “barriers to access are conditions or obstacles that prevent someone from using or accessing knowledge or resources.”\textsuperscript{18} Figure 2 outlines four common types of barriers – Administrative, Communication, Personal or Social, and Physical.


Administrative barriers may include but are not limited to obstacles such as program sites being open only during specific hours on specific days, not providing adequate childcare services to allow for the application to programs, not providing for dietary or religious needs of the community through programs, and a complex and time-intensive application processes that create obstacles to accessing services. Governments at all levels also may use decision criteria that inadvertently direct resources away from those who need them the most. For example, benefit-cost analysis may be structured in a way that causes benefits for higher-value assets to outweigh potential benefits to lower-value assets, potentially giving preference to projects that protect higher-value assets. This approach emphasizes property, not people, as the most important thing to protect.
Communication barriers are obstacles to finding, understanding, and using information while administrative barriers are obstacles to accessing services and amenities. Communication barriers may include but are not limited to documents not compliant with accessibility standards, videos that do not have closed captioning, information that is inaccessible without a phone or computer, and information that does not have adequate accommodation for those who struggle to read, are hard of hearing, or have low vision.

Personal or social barriers are obstacles caused, or increased, by harmful stereotypes, stigma, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or others. These types of barriers may include, fear rooted in lived or perceived danger that may prevent someone from accessing government services, or a perception of a poor quality of life or limited intellectual capacity that may prevent access to information or prevent a meaningful connection between individuals in a community and emergency response officials. Barriers of this type may also include lack of time, resources or financial strain that prevent community members from participating in the planning process or accessing services.

Physical barriers also can limit access by creating obstacles to physically navigating a space. Physical barriers include locating services in a limited number of locations, locations with limited or no access to public transportation, or in areas far away from major community hubs. Other types of physical barriers include sites that are poorly identified or marked, not accessible to people who use wheelchairs or do not provide seating accommodation.

2.2. Applying the Planning Process to Overcome Barriers
Effective planning can help overcome barriers to access, process, and outcomes. FEMA’s CPG 101 provides guidance on the fundamentals of planning and developing emergency operations plans and presents a flexible six-step planning process (Figure 3) that communities can use to adapt to varying characteristics and situations.
This section provides an overview of people first considerations within each step in the planning process. The guidance builds on the whole community approach that the emergency management community has widely adopted, increasing the emphasis on whole community and equitable engagement, participation, and decision-making to effectively address the needs of underserved communities.

### Planning Principles – People First

CPG 101 outlines several planning principles, including that “planning should be community-based, representing the whole population and its needs.” The following principles provide additional considerations on how to address the needs of people in all phases of the planning process:

- Heed the adage “Nothing about us without us.” All populations that could be affected by the plan ought to have the opportunity to be engaged and represented in the planning process.
- Center the planning process on people and communities, not the built environment or things.
- Make a long-term commitment to partnering with underserved communities.
- Ensure no population is disproportionately impacted by decisions.
- Research your community and seek to understand how underserved communities were formed and how government policies, historical and current, impact these communities.
- Develop relationships with local non-profits who already work with underserved populations to better understand specific needs and identify solutions.
- Build trust through intentional, authentic engagement and a willingness to acknowledge past actions (or inaction) and the subsequent impacts.
- Question assumptions. Just because something has always been done a particular way or is a standard assumption does not make it true.

### 2.2.1. FORM A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM

The planning process starts with building the planning team. A key benefit of planning is in the relationships that planning team members build through the process. Including voices from across the community in the planning process helps ensure the needs of underserved communities are understood, represented, and addressed. It is also an opportunity to build trust and long-term relationships that are critical before, during, and after disasters.

Emergency managers can use available demographic data to understand the socio-economic characteristics of their communities and identify potentially at-risk or impacted underserved populations whose interests can be represented on the planning team. Once those underserved
populations have been identified, emergency managers should engage with community leaders to select appropriate representatives to join the collaborative planning team and represent the interests of those populations. Inviting members of community groups, professional associations, and equity-focused task forces (e.g., health, transportation, water) to participate in the planning process can be an effective way to ensure the needs of the community are clearly identified, understood, and addressed. These representatives may also leverage knowledge of the populations they represent or be able to better identify knowledge gaps in the population.

The team should also ensure it has a strong understanding of the history and current concerns of underserved populations. In addition to accessing demographic data, members of the planning team can meet and talk with members of the community to understand their needs and priorities; the planning team may have to work through formal and informal networks, such as faith leaders and advocates that already support the community. The planning team may also need to change or expand over time as more voices are heard and more understanding of the situation is gained. Emergency managers should remain flexible and adapt the process to be inclusive. Ensuring that the planning team represents all members of the community requires that outreach efforts are tailored to be effective at reaching all potential stakeholders.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the Social Vulnerability Index. Natural disasters and infectious disease outbreaks can pose a threat to a community’s health. Socially vulnerable populations are especially at risk during public health emergencies because of factors like socioeconomic status, household composition, or housing type and transportation. To help public health officials and emergency management planners meet the needs of socially vulnerable populations in emergency response and recovery efforts, the Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program created and maintains the CDC/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Social Vulnerability Index, or SVI.

Questions to Consider When Forming the Collaborative Planning Team

- Who will the plan impact most, and are they represented at the table?
- Does the planning team itself have diverse perspectives?
- How can the planning team be creatively structured to include all voices but also be manageable and practical? Are additional voices needed in this planning process?
- How will the jurisdiction use participatory methods, including accessible communications, to ensure decisions are informed by diverse perspectives and represent consensus views?
2.2.2. **UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION**

Identifying and understanding a community's composition and the specific needs of different population segments, is a fundamental part of the “Understand the Situation” step in the planning process. Having a clear picture of the community's composition can also reveal additional planning team members, as well as potential assets, capabilities, and resources for consideration later in the planning process. At this stage, the planning team can look at how risk and vulnerability vary across different socio-economic groups and incorporate considerations for meeting the needs of high-risk and high-vulnerability populations into the decision-making process. Appendix A provides more in-depth information on how to research specific segments of the community and a list of sample vulnerabilities and assets to consider is in Appendix C.

Emergency managers can develop the information needed to clearly articulate the needs of underserved communities through input from the planning team and direct engagement with those populations, non-profits, and other community-based organizations. The planning team, at this stage, can also consider how exclusionary practices may have played a role in past policy decisions. Emergency managers can also use available data sources to improve understanding of their communities. Appendix D covers the methods of data analysis and potential sources for planning.

### Resources for Understanding Communities

- **Appendix A** provides community snapshots. Each snapshot provides an overview of the community, strategies questions and resources to learn more. Resources include:
  - Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)
  - IS-0366.a: Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters - Course Overview
  - American Community Survey Data and Language Maps – LEP.gov
  - Queer and Present Danger: Understanding the Disparate Impacts of Disasters on LGBTQ+ Communities. (September 2021)
  - A Guide to Supporting Engagement and Resiliency in Rural Communities (Sept 2021)
  - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Preparedness Resources for Tribes

### Questions to Consider When Examining Risk and Vulnerability

- What beliefs and values inform the planning assumptions?
- How have historical practices and trends led to current conditions, and what could that mean for the future?
- What are the historical challenges that this community’s underserved populations face?
2.2.3. DETERMINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The planning team sets operational priorities during this step of the planning process, along with goals (or desired outcomes) and objectives (or specific actions) to achieve those priorities. Ensuring the incorporation of equitable and inclusive considerations into development of goals and objectives involves taking the knowledge of the situation, such as the needs and priorities of the underserved communities gained in the “Understand the Situation” step, and using that to shape broader community priorities, goals, and objectives.

Questions to Consider When Identifying Goals and Objectives

- Do identified goals and objective account for and address the anticipated needs of all members of the jurisdiction?
- Do the identified objectives help overcome known barriers to access for those unique needs (e.g., limited English proficiency, individuals with access and functional needs, LGBTQ persons, older adults, rural populations)?
- Do the identified goals and objectives make services to at risk and underserved communities available in an equitable manner?

2.2.4. DEVELOP THE PLAN

Next in the planning process, the planning team identifies, evaluates, and selects the courses of action that best achieve the priorities, goals, and objectives that the planning team identified. This includes conducting a thorough evaluation of proposed courses of action in compliance with applicable laws and including different perspectives. The planning team can look for opportunities to address current inequities during this evaluation. Tradeoffs are inevitable; by including considerations for all populations within a community, the planning team can evaluate those tradeoffs and determine the most feasible and appropriate courses of action to meet the unique needs identified within the jurisdiction.

During this step, the planning team also identifies the resources (e.g., personnel, equipment, material) needed to implement the plan and determines what resources are available through existing mechanisms. Ensuring equitable delivery of information, support, and resources to survivors is key to successful outcomes. Considering capability and resources at various levels of granularity will help the planning team understand how local governments can best ensure underserved communities are able to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate an event.
### Questions to Consider When Selecting Courses of Action

- Has the planning team included diverse perspectives that have led to creative solutions being proposed and considered?
- Are the capabilities and resources distributed across the community adequate to be responsive to needs? Are known shortfalls addressed through support of external partners?
- How are the impacts of known resource gaps and shortfalls distributed across the jurisdiction and its comprising communities?
- Do the planning decisions produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for underserved communities?

### Questions to Consider When Writing the Plan

- Is the written plan clear, concise, and easy to understand?
- Is the plan written in a way that reflects the needs of the whole community?
- Are diverse voices part of the team reviewing the plan for adequacy, acceptability, completeness, and compliance?

### 2.2.5. PREPARE AND REVIEW THE PLAN

In this step, the planning team uses the information from the previous four steps to write the plan, using plain language that avoids jargon and conveys information simply and clearly. Review of the draft plan may benefit from recommendations, insights, and varied perspective of the diverse community. The planning team may also consider how to make the final plan widely available, including publishing in the languages of the community if a significant population has limited English proficiency, and using community-based organizations to distribute printed copies to those who may not have reliable internet access. Reference Appendix D for guidance on ensuring data are presented accessibly.

### Questions to Consider When Writing the Plan

- Is the written plan clear, concise, and easy to understand?
- Is the plan written in a way that reflects the needs of the whole community?
- Are diverse voices part of the team reviewing the plan for adequacy, acceptability, completeness, and compliance?

### 2.2.6. IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN THE PLAN

The planning process does not end with the completion of the written plan. Plans are socialized through training, exercises, and other outreach activities in this last step of the planning process. The planning team can use existing trusted structures to reach underserved communities and engage them in training, exercising, and implementing the plan. The planning team can establish a process for tracking implementation and evaluating and updating the plan on a regular basis with an emphasis on meeting the needs of various populations within the community. Most importantly, the
planning team can consider how it plans to stay engaged with underserved communities and maintain relationships developed through the planning process.

### Questions to Consider When Implementing and Maintaining the Plan

- Has the planning team provided underserved communities with meaningful opportunities for continued involvement? Have they engaged communities to coordinate or participate in exercises?
- How does the planning team keep the trust it has built?
- How will the planning team monitor and evaluate equitable outcomes resulting from the plan and build consideration of it into the continuous improvement program?
- Are the plans and supporting materials accessible in the languages that the community uses?

### Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility in Exercises

FEMA released the *Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility in Exercises: Considerations and Best Practices Guide* in May 2023 to help exercise program managers and exercise planning team members recognize and include multiple distinct stakeholder perspectives, concerns and characteristics. The guide is consistent with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP), which provides a flexible, scalable, and adaptable approach for planning and conducting exercises.
3. Community Engagement

This section provides methods of incorporating whole community participation into planning processes with an emphasis on providing meaningful opportunities for underserved populations to participate.

3.1. Understanding Forms of Community Engagement

Engaging with community members is critical to successful planning by emergency managers. The planning team may need to use multiple lenses to understand and engage with all aspects of their community. Leveraging the expertise of your community to understand the current circumstances and potential needs of underserved populations within a community is the most direct way to build partnerships and begin to meet the needs of the whole community. Appendix A provides community snapshots that outline various underserved communities that may be relevant to your population. Using these community snapshots to begin building your community-specific lens, as well as talking with community members to understand their experiences and challenges, will help ensure that all planning products are written to address the needs and challenges of your community’s population.

Emergency managers can use community participation models to choose the right form of engagement based on the situation and the purpose of the engagement. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed a Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 4) based on multiple forms of community engagement. All modes have value and should be selected to match the context of the engagement. The spectrum begins with the least collaborative form of engagement: inform or one-way communication, where the emergency manager informs the public but does not request feedback. An example of this would be sending alerts and warnings or distributing preparedness information. Next is consult, where input on an issue is gathered from community members but there is no active participation in subsequent decision-making by the community members. The first two forms involve informing and/or informing and gathering feedback on decisions that have already been made or are further along in development. Community members have more influence in decision-making in the other three forms of engagement on the spectrum. Involvement requires that the public is more engaged in providing their own concerns and needs that directly influence decision-making. Fourth is collaboration, which is a partnership and there is shared decision-making between the emergency manager and the public. The final form of participating is empowering the public to make the decision, which emergency managers then implement.
If emergency managers rely too heavily on the one-way, prescriptive modes of communication, they will miss opportunities for meaningful, sustained engagement that is needed to build trust between public officials and community partners. Engagement also must be consistent over time and not done just during the crisis time of a disaster.\(^{20}\)

It is often easier for people with more time and resources to attend meetings or otherwise provide input. For instance, neighborhood groups like homeowners’ associations are often an efficient forum for engagement. However, many members of underserved populations, whether low-income or rural populations, do not live in neighborhoods with a homeowners’ association and may not be reached using this strategy.\(^{21}\) Lack of engagement or participation by members of underserved communities does not mean lack of interest. Instead, emergency managers may need to identify what accommodations are needed to make the process inclusive of all populations and remove barriers to participation.

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\(^{19}\) Graphic adapted with permission from ©International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org).


3.2. Engagement in Planning Best Practices

Community participation in planning processes is critical to ensuring that preferences and priorities that reflect the whole community can be fully integrated into plans and projects, and they are also critical to creating buy-in and support for initiatives.\(^22\) However, having an inclusive planning process, and allowing every interested party to participate, poses logistical, linguistic, and cultural challenges that must be understood and addressed.\(^23\)

Emergency managers can leverage relationships with community and cross-cultural partners to make participants feel welcome to engage in the planning process.\(^24\) Emergency managers can identify opportunities for community members to act as full members of the planning process, including participating in defining the vision and scope of engagement. Emergency managers can also engage in expectation management discussions with the community so that it is clear what is within the scope of the plan and what realistic outcomes look like. Throughout the planning process, it is important to be accountable and transparent about outcomes of engagement and next steps.

Effective engagement relies on several key elements. Firstly, it is essential to define the purpose of engagement to ensure that opportunities for engagement are fruitful and that everyone involved has a mutual understanding from the outset. Understanding the interests, values, and engagement possibilities within the community is crucial. Having a basic grasp of your audience and their roles in planning efforts ensures that engagement opportunities are beneficial for both participants and planners alike. Ensuring engagement is inclusive and respectful creates a comfortable environment for attendees, fostering feelings of value and understanding. Reviewing and interpreting engagement outcomes to identify gaps in who has been reached and trends in the feedback offers clear and valuable input for the planning process. Applying the results of the engagement through providing data and information to the planning team for consideration in writing the plan and sharing the results of the engagement with partners can maximize the usefulness of the engagement efforts. Finally, reporting feedback aids in improving future engagement opportunities, while evaluating success and sharing lessons learned continually enhances future engagement strategies.

One critical challenge that emergency managers must overcome is providing materials and services in all relevant languages and in culturally appropriate ways. To do this, emergency managers need to understand the composition of populations within the community, including the demographics of the community and, when possible, community assets and resources, relationships, and institutional or cultural barriers. Emergency managers can ensure that translation is available both for events and


written materials and consider how different stakeholder groups may receive the content of communication and channels used to promote planning engagement events. The cost for these services should be identified by the emergency manager ahead of the start of the EOP development or revision process so that any contract services can be coordinated in advance.

In addition to making the materials themselves accessible, emergency managers can look for ways to make sure outreach materials effectively reach their communities; for instance, they can tailor messages to social media platforms that will best reach the people in the community (e.g., some social media platforms use visual messages and are favored by young adults; others rely on short messages and have a more even age distribution). These also may include using trusted agents to post messages on neighborhood or community forums to reach populations.

Emergency managers could consider contacting local nonprofit organizations that work with a wide variety of community members and involve them in creating outreach materials. Local organizations such as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD/COAD) may provide a streamlined mechanism for reaching groups that are deeply involved with a multitude of underserved communities.

In addition to taking steps to address cultural and linguistic barriers, emergency managers may consider potential logistical barriers, including physical, temporal, and transportation-related barriers.

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Make Meetings Accessible to Diverse Voices

Public participation in decision-making often favors the people who have the time and resources needed to attend meetings, submit comments, and participate in surveys. Emergency managers may consider what other approaches would make public input processes more accessible to underserved communities. Examples include the following:

- Include community liaisons from your community’s underserved communities who can serve as a conduit for needs and concerns.
- Partner with community-based organizations to identify community members interested in participating.
- Arrange onsite childcare.
- Offer a meal or transportation to the meeting.

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Planning Considerations: Putting People First

- Host meetings virtually or host them in locations and at times convenient to underserved communities. If meetings are primarily virtual, ensure there are other methods of attendance to meet the needs of underserved populations who may struggle with access to technology.
- Choose accessible locations both from a transportation access perspective and a disability perspective and provide appropriate assistive technology or specialized support staff in addition to any requested reasonable accommodations.
- Hold multiple events on different days and times for people who have scheduling challenges.
- Ensure all communication (written and verbal) is in plain language, available in multiple languages and accessible to people with disabilities.

3.3. Whole Community Partnerships

Community-based and social service organizations serve communities within jurisdictions that may have relevance to a people first-focused planning process approach. Some of these communities include immigrants or people with limited English proficiency, people experiencing homelessness, low-income individuals, older adults, children, and people with disabilities. Community organization partners can help reach and engage these populations to ensure that their needs are met and that their resources can be leveraged.

Partnerships with faith-based organizations can also help engage hard-to-reach communities within jurisdictions. FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships have produced a guide on Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations. Faith-based organizations can help emergency managers access and build trust with religiously, economically, racially, and ethnically diverse communities within a jurisdiction. These organizations may have specific resources that can be included in emergency management plans, including communications support, sheltering facilities, feeding operations, and health care.  

How Do You Build and/or Restore Community Trust?

- Engage with and listen to the community, be open to understanding their firsthand experiences and incorporate community input whenever appropriate.
- Have the necessary difficult conversations.
- Mirror the diversity of the community you're engaging with.

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Work with partners who the community already trusts.

Meet people where they are and engage stakeholders firsthand.

Bring resources, not words.

Do not make promises you cannot keep.

Celebrate small wins.

Private sector partners may be engaged during the planning process and/or during plan implementation. Private-public partnerships (P3s) are “any type of collaboration between private and public organizations to coordinate prior to, during and after a disaster affecting their jurisdiction.”

P3s recognize the interdependence of the public and private sectors in delivering services to communities, and they can help address hazard-related community concerns, including infrastructure and supply chains, resilient community lifelines, and health and safety assets. Working with private partners can expand the network of stakeholders involved in planning processes and improving access to resources. At the core, a P3 connects people, builds relationships, and breaks down barriers so that representatives from private, nongovernmental, and public organizations know each other prior to an incident affecting their jurisdiction. The activities of the P3 typically grow in complexity as the partnership matures; early-state P3s often focus on information sharing, while more mature P3s may undertake joint projects such as economic development. The jurisdiction’s need drives the complexity of the P3. FEMA has created Building Private-Public Partnerships, a guide that focuses on creating and maintaining these relationships.

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28 Ibid.
4. Conclusion

Putting people first requires emergency managers to want to deeply understand their communities and the varying needs and challenges of those within it. Being open to learning about historical context, hearing personal stories, experiences, and concerns from neighbors, and working with them to create plans, policies, and programs that truly make a positive impact for diverse neighbors, is the central goal.

Takeaways for Emergency Managers

- To improve outcomes and build resilience for communities, emergency managers can work with leadership to ensure a people-first approach has the time and resources needed to effectively implement and maintain changes.
- Emergency managers need to understand the limitations of the data and methodologies they use and how those limitations can be overcome.
- Emergency managers can foster effective participation so those most impacted by disasters can begin to inform long-term decision-making and access critical resources.
- Emergency managers should avoid assuming that lack of engagement or participation by a particular portion of the jurisdiction means lack of interest.
- Emergency managers can implement active engagement techniques, including working one-on-one and in small groups, as well as leveraging partnerships with businesses, non-profits, and faith-based organizations, which can improve participation both with the community-at-large and with underserved communities.
- Emergency managers can ensure that translation is available both for events and written materials, and they should also consider how different stakeholder groups may receive the content of communication and channels used to promote planning engagement events.
- Emergency managers can engage with local nonprofit organizations that work with a wide variety of community members and involve them in creating outreach materials.
Appendix A: Community Snapshots

FEMA has developed a series of community snapshots that give emergency managers suggested planning considerations, strategic questions, and resources to help learn more about specific segments of the population. These fact sheets can be found on FEMA’s website and are included in this document.

- Children & Youth

**COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**

Children comprise approximately 25% of our Nation’s population. The following include unique considerations related to youth and children that emergency managers and stakeholders should account for when developing and updating disaster preparedness, response, and recovery plans.

- On any given weekday, nearly 69 million children and youth are away from their parents and caregivers at childcare, school, medical, juvenile justice, or recreational facilities. This can create challenges for disaster preparedness planning and crisis communications.

- Families may face barriers to accessing shelters if their children require age-appropriate supplies, such as infant formula or diapers. Governmental or other organizations responsible for the provision of these supplies may be necessary partners to ensure families feel comfortable accessing shelters with their children.

- Children at different ages have different needs. They also may have intersectional needs such as a disability, language, and access needs, live in a rural community or within foster-care and have very different systems of support available to them. Consider all these needs when developing disaster messaging and resources for children and the institutions and systems that reach them.

- Children and youth are less likely to understand disaster and emergency situations and often have less experience coping with very stressful situations. Disaster preparedness language should be age appropriate. Older children can be involved in the preparedness process, in an age-appropriate way, to increase their confidence and awareness.

### Strategic Questions – Children and Youth

Families, children, and youth in your area may face additional or different challenges. The following strategic questions can help guide your understanding and engagement with the families, children, and youth in your area.

- Has your community experienced a significant emergency or disaster that impacted child-serving organizations, including schools and childcare centers?

- If so, how were services quickly reestablished so that parents could return to work?
Planning Considerations: Putting People First

- How can you effectively communicate risks to children and youth and involve them in planning and recovery processes?
- What kinds of disasters are most likely in your area?
- How can teachers and caregivers with previous disaster experience share their experience and practices?
- Do you currently have relationships with child-serving organizations to guide the development of comprehensive emergency preparedness plans?

Comprehensive plans should address any challenges, including the transport of critically injured children to medical facilities outside of a given jurisdiction, coordinating with law enforcement to establish evacuation and reunification plans, and collaborating with disability experts to ensure that plans are inclusive.

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section provides suggestions for you to consider when incorporating the needs of children, youth, and families into whole community emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. These actions help to lessen disaster response and recovery efforts, expedite individual and community recovery, and stabilize the economy.

- Encourage temporary care facilities, such as health care, childcare, and educational facilities, to develop emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plans in collaboration with local emergency managers and other key stakeholders.
  - These plans can include practicing evacuation and sheltering procedures, making reunification plans with parents and caregivers, and ensuring first aid kits and supplies are stocked to meet all children’s needs. Plans should consider the physical, mental, and legal differences between children and adults.

- Share resources and communication materials that provide age-appropriate disaster preparedness and response instructions for children, so they learn about disaster risks and how to respond to emergencies.
  - These materials can involve children in the planning process and help them process their emotions during and after a disaster as they are likely to be frightened, confused, and insecure.

- Explore the idea of appointing a Children’s Liaison or Coordinator into emergency management efforts.
  - This role could include streamlining communications and the provision of resources through applicable governmental organizations such as the Departments of Health, Children and...
Families, Education, Housing, Justice, Environmental Protection, private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

- Collaborate with local partners to address resource gaps and maintain a pre-disaster mechanism for acquiring age-appropriate supplies, such as formula, bottles, diapers, books, and toys.

### Other Resource – Children and Youth

- [Ready Kids](#)
- [Youth Preparedness Council](#)
- [Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans](#)
- [IS-0366.a: Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters - Course Overview](#)
- [Community Preparedness: Integrating the Needs of Children](#)
- [Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operation Plans (EOP)](#)
- [Emergency Planning for Juvenile Justice Residential Facilities](#)
- [Post-Disaster Reunification of Children: A Nationwide Approach](#)
Individuals with Disabilities

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Ensuring that members of the disability community have the same access to resources as other survivors can best be ensured through planning and coordination to anticipate barriers in the disaster response and recovery processes.

People with disabilities may use aids and services such as, sign language, mobility aids, wheelchairs, sensory-friendly environments, service animals, or personal care attendants to help facilitate their independence, daily living, and community participation before disasters. The following describes some considerations for the disability community:

- Broad communication methods and messaging may be inaccessible to members of the disability community.
  - Disaster warnings, alerts, and updates are not always accessible to people with sensory overload or communication needs.
  - Communication and assistive aids that are not 508-compliant, available in multiple languages, configured with accessibility in mind (e.g., screen readers), or available to facilitate access to the FEMA registration process represent barriers to communication for people with disabilities.

- People with disabilities often experience medical and mobility challenges that make it more difficult to evacuate or find a shelter that meets their health or accessibility needs. Some survivors may be homebound and unable to access resources or services.
  - Lack of access to clean water and foods that meet special dietary needs threatens the hygiene and health of people with certain chronic medical conditions.
  - Power outages present a life-threatening situation for people on kidney dialysis, oxygen, ventilators, and people who rely on powered prosthetic devices. People who are deaf or hard of hearing and require light to read lips or communicate through sign language are also impacted by low light or power outages.

- Registering to receive timely and complete disaster assistance may be more difficult for people with sensory, cognitive, or physical disabilities due to mobility, communication, administrative, or procedural barriers.

- Inequality throughout the disaster cycle can disrupt a return to pre-disaster independence and community participation.
Strategic Questions – Disability Community

People with disabilities may face additional or different challenges than the general survivor population. Use the following strategic questions to guide your understanding and engagement with your local disability community stakeholders:

- What does the disability community look like in your locality?
- Are there any features or challenges unique to your area that may have a significant impact on people with disabilities (e.g., structural community inaccessibility, lack of accessible housing, few to no accessible public transportation options, shortage of personal care attendants, sign language interpreters)?
- Have you previously provided the disability community the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to disaster planning efforts?
- If yes, was a cross-section of disabilities represented (e.g., blind, deaf, mobility, developmental, cognitive, psychosocial)?
- What are the disability community’s current barriers to accessing routine and emergency critical resources?
- What information sources does the community trust? What local and state organizations, nonprofits, and agencies currently have strong relationships with the disability community?
- What local and state organizations, nonprofits, and agencies are positioned to engage and assist survivors with disabilities during and after disasters?
- For example, local Centers for Independent Living, Developmental Disabilities Councils, Area Agencies on Aging, and Protection & Advocacy Systems.

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section includes opportunities to incorporate lessons learned about people with disabilities in your community into your planning efforts to foster more equitable and inclusive engagement.

- Foster relationships with community-based organizations that work with the disability community to educate individuals on risks, help them create personalized disaster plans, and connect them to medical, mobility, shelter, language, and transportation resources during and after a disaster.
  - Trusted organizations and leaders can include disability service agencies, advocacy organizations, caregivers, congregate living spaces, and other local organizations.
- Create emergency management resources and information that is accessible and available in multiple modes. This includes, but is not limited to, live captions, braille translations, accessible fonts, and screen reader accessibility.
Planning Considerations: Putting People First

- Include the disability community in emergency planning to support preparedness and recovery actions that consider full structural accessibility and the needs of people with a wide range of disability-related needs.
  - Support community engagement by planning meetings in accessible buildings, providing language assistance and communication aids, and utilizing multiple feedback methods.

- Support individuals who are homebound by developing plans that share emergency contact information, document their specific needs, and plan for support during an emergency.
  - For example, collect phone numbers and addresses for community members who are most likely to require wellness checks during power outages.

- Ensure that transportation, shelters, and post-disaster housing options are accessible and meet the needs of the people with disabilities or other access and functional needs in your community.
  - Support co-habitation with families, personal care attendants, and service animals.
  - Ensure bathrooms and common areas are accessible for wheelchairs, walkers, and other mobility supports.

- Create supports to access life-sustaining medical care, prescribed medications, refrigeration for certain medications (e.g., insulin, chemotherapy drugs), and medications to prevent an exacerbation of serious conditions (e.g., heart, psychotropic, immunodeficiency).
  - Share information on how to fill prescriptions before a disaster.
  - Ensure shelters have refrigeration or provide generators in the case of a power outage.

- Leverage data sources such as the U.S. Census, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) emPOWER Program data to learn more about disability demographics in your community.

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**Other Resource – Disability Community**

- [Office of Disability Integration and Coordination | FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov)
- [People with Disabilities | Ready.gov](https://ready.gov)
- [Guide to Expanding Mitigation: Making the Connection to People with Disabilities](https://www.ready.gov)
- [At-Risk Individuals (hhs.gov)](https://www.hhs.gov)
### Planning Considerations: Putting People First

| 859 | Community Living and Olmstead | HHS.gov |
| 860 | The Americans with Disabilities Act | ADA.gov |
| 861 | Disability Data (census.gov) |
| 862 | CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) |
| 863 | HHS emPOWER Program |
| 864 | Disaster Preparedness Guide for Older Adults |
| 865 | Disaster Preparedness Guide for Caregivers |
People with language barriers, also known as limited English proficiency, are likely to be disproportionately impacted by disasters due to challenges with understanding emergency messaging and information. It is important to understand the language needs and unique characteristics of underserved communities that may be present in your area, so you can adequately address these when developing and updating plans. The following describes considerations for addressing needs of people with language barriers:

- People with language barriers are less likely to respond to emergency alerts, warnings, and evacuation orders because information may not reach them if not provided through trusted channels or in a language they understand. Not everyone in the population will receive critical, life-sustaining information and may lack basic understanding in an emergency.

- History, cultural background, and migratory status of some members of this community may influence willingness to seek or receive aid from government officials.

- Language barriers limit access to available resources and services. Groups with language barriers may not know the location of shelters, food, or other critical resources in an emergency. Lack of in-language information further hinders survivors from accessing resources and assistance programs after a disaster.

- Populations with language barriers have been historically underserved, marginalized, and lack the economic resources to prepare and recover. A low-income limits access to transportation, funds to pay for emergency housing, use of smartphones, and internet access. Economic recovery is further hindered due to lack of access to resources necessary to get back on their feet.

### Strategic Questions – Language Access

People with language barriers in your area may face additional or different challenges during an emergency. The following questions may help in guiding your understanding and engagement with these groups within your community:

- What is the demographic profile of this population? Do you know which languages are spoken within your community?

- Are there other linguistic and regional dialects among those groups (e.g., indigenous languages, Spanish speakers from Mexico, Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico)?

- What resources are available in your community to communicate with limited English proficiency groups? How will you scale up or leverage resources to meet language access needs?
Planning Considerations: Putting People First

In an emergency or evacuation? Are there local interpretation and translation companies that you can leverage?

- How do you engage with limited English proficiency groups? How do these groups prefer to get information? Are there trusted communicators within the community?
- What are historical, economic, and cultural characteristics of underserved groups within your community? How might cultural background and/or life experiences impact your community during an emergency?
- What is the community’s experience working with local government agencies? Are there language or culture barriers to understanding processes or personnel? How can these barriers be addressed?

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section provides ideas for emergency managers and community leaders to consider when establishing a foundation for incorporating the disaster related needs of people with language barriers in their communities.

- Learn the demographic profile for members of your community. Provide emergency messaging and instructions in languages that mirror the diversity of your community.
- Identify local interpretation and translation companies that can support language services, including translation of vital documents, in your area. Establish relationships with these companies before disaster strikes to ensure services can be provided quickly.
- Identify and foster relationships with local volunteer, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations within your community who can assist people with language barriers in emergencies.
- Engage diverse community members in discussions and planning. Make these activities accessible by providing interpreters and/or translated materials.
- Learn how underserved groups with language barriers prefer to receive emergency information. Keep in mind that traditional and social media platforms are not always the best way to reach these groups.
- Learn about the history, patterns of discrimination, and cultural characteristics of the populations within your community—cultural awareness will lead to increased trust and collaboration.
Limited English Proficiency - LEP.gov
American Community Survey Data and Language Maps – LEP.gov
FEMA in Your Language | FEMA.gov
Preparedness information in multiple languages – Ready.gov
I Speak Cards and other language identification resources
Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101
Executive Order 13166 – Improving Access to Services for People with Limited English Proficiency
DHS Language Access Plan 2023
LGBTQ+ Community

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The needs of the LGBTQ+ community must be carefully considered before, during, and after disasters due in part to pre-existing marginalization before disasters. The following describes some unique considerations for the LGBTQ+ community:

- LGBTQ+ communities are overrepresented in populations most impacted by disasters, such as the unhoused, those who are low-income, and those with chronic illnesses\(^2^9\) and disabilities\(^3^0\). This intersectionality creates heightened disaster risk for this community.
  - An estimated 2.5 million people were displaced by weather-related disasters in 2023, with rates of displacement highest for communities facing discrimination and lacking political power, such as LGBTQ+ individuals.\(^3^1\)

- LGBTQ+ people often experience “disaster before disaster,” meaning they experience hardships in their day-to-day lives that are exacerbated during disasters.

- The LGBTQ+ community may also face barriers in accessing aid.
  - Many in the LGBTQ+ community face barriers to accessing shelters. It is not clear which shelters are welcoming, safe, and gender-affirming spaces. LGBTQ+ families also may not be recognized by shelters.
  - LGBTQ+ individuals’ names may not match their legal documents, making access to shelters or financial assistance difficult or impossible.
  - Given the intersectionality present in this community, many LGBTQ+ persons have more than one identity, often from other socially vulnerable groups, which can make the impacts of a disaster even more devastating.

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\(^2^9\) Out for Sustainability. Inclusive and Equitable Emergency Management for LGBTQIA+ Communities (June 2023).

\(^3^0\) GLAAD Media Reference Guide 11th Edition: LGBTQ People with Disabilities

\(^3^1\) The New York Times:
Strategic Questions – LGBTQ+ Community

LGBTQ+ individuals in your area may face additional or different challenges. Use the following strategic questions to guide your understanding and engagement with your local LGBTQ+ community:

- Are there any features unique to your area, such as disasters or risks, that may have a significant impact on the LGBTQ+ community?
- What are the community’s barriers to accessing resources?
- Has the community previously faced challenges in disaster preparedness and response? How was that experience?
- What information sources does the community trust?
- What organizations, nonprofits, and agencies does the community currently have strong relationships with?

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section includes ways that you can incorporate lessons learned about your local LGBTQ+ community into your planning efforts to foster more equitable and inclusive engagement.

- Empower local, trusted LGBTQ+ community-based organizations and leaders as disaster preparedness message ambassadors throughout the disaster planning cycle.
  - Organizations and leaders can include local LGBTQ+ community centers, libraries, bookstores, or drag performers.
  - Trusted community-based organizations can direct community members to additional services to aid recovery.
- Seek opportunities to connect with community-based organizations trusted by the LGBTQ+ community and help them understand how they can be a resource after a disaster.
  - Provide training, such as Until Help Arrives, to increase community preparedness and resilience.
- Uplift voices within the community by gathering stories and data regarding disaster and emergency preparedness.
- Regularly participate in events and remembrances during Pride month, but also on Transgender Visibility Day, Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, World AIDS Day, and other dates important to the community.
Planning Considerations: Putting People First

- Consider the specific healthcare, accessibility, and other needs that LGBTQ+ people might need access to.

- Provide financial and in-kind resources for LGBTQ+ organizations to be resilient before, during, and after disasters.

- Examine religious exemptions to understand how religious freedoms may be evoked to limit services to LGBTQ+ individuals.

- Foster interagency collaboration, where possible, to share best practices, reduce redundancy, and leverage capacity and funding.
  - For example, share with partners the ways this community may experience discrimination or barriers before, during, and after a disaster if an individual’s legal name does not match their chosen name.

- Incorporate safety signaling (i.e., make statements or publicly display symbols of allyship) into communications and programs to demonstrate to the LGBTQ+ community that the organization is safe and welcoming.
  - For example, emphasize when shelters have accessible all-gender bathrooms.
  - Include pronouns on materials, when possible, to demonstrate an inclusive and safe space for all members of the community.

Other Resource – LGBTQ+ Community


Older Adults

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
Older adults are likely to be disproportionately impacted by disasters and are often at a higher risk of injury and death due to a combination of communication, health and mobility, and resource barriers. The following describe some unique considerations for older adults:

- Older adults may be less experienced or comfortable with smartphones, applications, and internet-based emergency alerts. These tools are important for preparing for a disaster and knowing how to respond when an emergency is occurring.
- Older adults often experience medical, mobility, and disability challenges that make it more difficult to evacuate or find a shelter that meets their health or accessibility needs.
- Older adults frequently live on fixed incomes, which may limit their access to resources. They may need additional assistance finding free and affordable preparedness resources and accessing aid after a disaster.
- Older adults often have community knowledge of previous disasters, experience working with community partners, and a desire to maintain independence that can be leveraged for disaster preparedness.

Strategic Questions – Older Adults
Older adults in your area may face additional or different challenges. Use the following strategic questions to guide your understanding and engagement with your community:

- Do the older adults in the community face additional barriers, such as disability, limited English proficiency, or limited resources, that affect their plans to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster?
- Are there any features unique to your area, such as frequent disasters or being in a rural area, that may have a significant impact on older adults?
- Has the community previously faced challenges in disaster preparedness and response? How was that experience?
- What information sources do older adults trust? How do these sources’ channels and messaging reach older adults?
- What organizations, nonprofits, and agencies do older adults currently have strong relationships with?
EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section includes ways that you can incorporate the lessons learned about older adults in your community into your planning efforts to foster more equitable and inclusive engagement.

- Foster relationships with community-based organizations that work with older adults that can educate older adults on new emergency risks, help them to create personalized disaster plans, and connect them to medical and transportation resources during a disaster.

  - Trusted organizations and leaders can include Area Agencies on Aging, Adult Protective Services, assisted living communities and nursing homes, houses of worship, and caregivers.

- Support older adult participation in community planning and decision making by ensuring their input is heard.

  - This may include emergency managers and planners going to assisted living facilities, nursing homes, or community-based organizations that work with older adults to engage older adults in disaster preparedness discussions as well as providing virtual options or transportation support to community engagement events.

- Develop a communications plan to reach older adults without smartphones, such as using emergency alert systems on the radio and television stations or connecting them with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and neighborhood watches.

- Ensure emergency and congregate shelters are accessible and support older adults’ needs.

  - For example, bathrooms are accessible for wheelchairs, walkers, and other mobility supports, and there are accommodations for service animals.

- Empower older adults to assess their physical, medical, and support needs and create strategies with their caregivers and support networks to prepare for disasters by engaging them in conversations about their experiences, knowledge, and concerns. Provide resources like worksheets and checklists to create digital and print copies of their needs to share with first responders.
Other Resource – Older Adults

- FEMA Ready Campaign for Older Adults
- Disaster Preparedness Guide for Older Adults
- Disaster Preparedness Guide for Caregivers
- AARP
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- National Association for Area Agencies on Aging
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers’ Disaster Preparedness Toolkit for Caregivers of Veterans
Rural Communities

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Rural areas face challenges and have strengths that are distinct from urban settings. These unique characteristics should be referenced to help inform disaster preparedness and response efforts. The following considerations can help inform planning efforts in rural areas:

- Rural areas typically have fewer healthcare facilities, emergency services, and support systems, making it difficult to access necessary care and assistance during disasters.
- The geographic isolation of many rural communities can hinder emergency response efforts and delay recovery. Isolation also contributes to difficulties in accessing information and resources.
- The isolation of rural communities may be so extensive that certain rural areas do not utilize traditional addresses or, road names, house numbers etc. This may further delay emergency response efforts or may cause additional issues accessing resources.
- Many rural economies are dependent on agriculture, mining, and other industries susceptible to disruption following a disaster, leading to long-term economic challenges.
- Rural areas often have higher proportions of older residents who may require specialized support during disasters, including healthcare, transportation, and social services.
- Infrastructure in rural areas, including roads, bridges, and communication networks, may be less developed or maintained, increasing vulnerability to disaster impacts.
- Rural communities often exhibit strong bonds of community cohesion and resilience, and these strengths should be leveraged in planning and response efforts to enhance outcomes.

Strategic Questions – Rural Communities

Rural communities are not a monolith, and planning considerations should not be seen as “one-size-fits-all.” Engagement with rural communities should be guided by strategic questions that consider their unique challenges and strengths:

- What are the specific vulnerabilities of this rural area to disasters, and how can these be mitigated?
- How can disaster response and recovery plans be adapted to address the geographical and infrastructural challenges of rural areas?
- What strategies can support continuity of the rural economy, particularly in agriculture, forestry, and mining, following a disaster?
In what ways can the needs of vulnerable populations, including older adults and those with limited access to transportation and housing, be addressed?

What are the most effective channels and methods for communicating with rural communities before, during, and after disasters?

How have rural communities in your area previously responded to disasters, and what lessons can be learned from these experiences?

What organizations, nonprofits, and agencies do you have strong relationships with? Is there Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) and/or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) established?

Where are gaps in relationships and how can you collaborate across organizations, nonprofits, and agencies to build resilience in rural communities to be more effective? For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), trusted businesses, and community service organizations.

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

Incorporating insights from rural communities into disaster planning efforts can lead to plans that address the unique strengths and challenges of rural communities while significantly enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience.

**Strengthen Local Capacities:** Look for opportunities to invite and engage local groups, such as community centers, agricultural cooperatives, and volunteer emergency services, in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

- Provide opportunities for rural communities to lead disaster preparedness efforts, leveraging local knowledge and networks to develop and implement plans that reflect the community’s specific needs and capacities.

**Connect to Funding and Grants:** FEMA grants can be an important way rural communities can build resilience. Identify ways to leverage grants to improve critical infrastructure, such as roads, communication networks, and healthcare facilities, to enhance accessibility and response times.

**Tailor Communication Strategies:** Develop communications plans that utilize local radio, community bulletin boards, community or recreation centers, and other accessible methods to ensure widespread information dissemination.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources – Rural Communities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Guide to Supporting Engagement and Resiliency in Rural Communities (Sept 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Equitable Recovery: A Post-Disaster Guide for Local Officials and Leaders (fema.gov) (Nov 2023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rural capacity map - Headwaters Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Health Information Hub. Emergency Preparedness and Response Resources for Rural Communities (2023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rural Health Association. Policy Brief on Disaster Preparedness in Rural Areas (2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tribal Community Members and Tribal Nations

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Tribal Community Members, especially tribal elders and tribal youth, and Tribal Nations are likely to be disproportionately impacted by disasters due to a combination of factors, including communication infrastructure issues (e.g., broadband), geographical isolation, underdeveloped housing conditions, access to health care facilities, and other resource barriers. The following describe some unique considerations for Tribal Community Members and Tribal Nations:

- More than 50% of Tribal Community Members live in rural and small-town areas that lack the infrastructure of urban areas.

- Tribal Nations have not received annual consistent funding to build their emergency management capacities and often lack dedicated tribal emergency management departments to prepare Tribal Community Members.

- The lack of reliable broadband across Indian Country presents a barrier for those Tribal Community Members who need to access the Internet, smartphones, applications, and internet-based emergency alerts. These tools are important for preparing for a disaster and knowing how to respond when an emergency is occurring.

- Tribal Community Members, especially those living in rural areas, frequently live on fixed incomes, which may limit their access to resources. They may need additional assistance finding free and affordable preparedness resources and accessing aid after a disaster.

- Tribal elders often experience medical, mobility, and disability challenges that make it more difficult to evacuate or find a shelter that meets their health or accessibility needs.

- Some Tribal Community Members will not talk about disasters under the sincere religious belief that it will bring the disaster. First identify if Tribal Community Members can talk about disasters directly and if not think creatively about how to speak about the disaster in a round-about way. For example, in planning, plan for your neighbor and not yourself.

32 Tribal Community Members can include anyone that the Tribal Nation considers part of their community. This includes enrolled tribal citizens, tribal descendants, tribal employees, spouses of tribal citizens, and any non-Natives in the community.
Strategic Questions – Tribal Community Members and Tribal Nations

Tribal Community Members may face additional or different challenges. Use the following strategic questions to guide your understanding and engagement with your community:

- Have you ever tried to work with a Tribal Nation that helps protect its community? If not, why not? Go to the Tribal Nation’s website and learn about the Nation before reaching out to staff.

- Do Tribal Community Members face additional barriers, such as homelessness, lack of mobility, or limited resources, that affect their plans to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster?

- Are there any features unique to your area, such as frequent disasters or being in a rural tribal area, that may have a significant impact on Tribal Community Members?

- Has this community previously faced challenges in disaster preparedness and response? How was that experience?

- What information sources do Tribal Community Members trust? How do these sources’ channels and messaging reach them?

- What tribal leaders, organizations, nonprofits, religious institutions, and agencies do Tribal Community Members currently have strong relationships with?

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING IN ACTION

This section includes ways that you can incorporate the lessons learned about Tribal Community Members and Tribal Nations into your planning efforts to foster more equitable and inclusive engagement.

- Foster relationships with Tribal Nations, community-based organizations, religious institutions, and regional Tribal Emergency Management groups that work with Tribal Community Members to educate them about new emergency risks, help them to create personalized disaster plans, and connect them to medical and transportation resources during a disaster.

  - Trusted organizations can include Tribal Nations, Inter-Tribal Emergency Management Coalition, Tribal Emergency Management Association, Association of Village Council Presidents (Alaska), National Indian Council on Aging, Bureau of Indian Affairs health clinics, tribal fire departments, and tribal law enforcement offices.

- Support tribal elders’ participation in community planning and decision making by ensuring their input is heard.

  - This may include emergency managers and planners going to assisted living facilities, tribal nursing homes, or tribal-based organizations that work with older adults to engage older
adults in disaster preparedness discussions as well as providing virtual options (that include connectivity support) or transportation support to community engagement events.

In conjunction with Tribal Nations, develop a communications plan to reach Tribal Community Members that lack access to broadband connectivity, such as using emergency alert systems on the radio and television stations or connecting them with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and neighborhood watches.

Ensure emergency and congregate shelters are accessible and support the needs of tribal elders and tribal youth.

- For example, bathrooms are accessible for wheelchairs, walkers, baby strollers, and other mobility supports, and there are accommodations for service animals.

Other Resources – Tribal Community Members and Tribal Nations

- Tribal Nations and the United States
- FEMA Tribal Declaration Process Resources and Tribal Recovery Video Series
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Preparedness Resources for Tribes
- Ready.gov (FEMA): Indian Country
- Public Health Emergency: American Indian & Alaskan Native Disaster Preparedness Resource
- Emergency Declarations and Tribes: Mechanisms Under Tribal and Federal Law
Appendix B: Considerations for Putting People First by Plan Type

While the planning process described above forms the basis for most emergency management plans, the following questions are meant to help emergency managers think about the diverse and varied nature of the people in their jurisdiction within the context of specific plan types. The questions below are not exhaustive but are examples of how emergency managers can start to consider overcoming barriers to access and ensure equitable distribution of information, resources, and services in various contexts.

Questions to Consider When Developing Emergency Management Plans

Deliberate/Strategic Plans

Emergency Operations Plan

- How will the jurisdiction build trust with underserved communities to ensure help reaches those who need it most?
- How will the jurisdiction ensure that the emergency operations plan continues to meet the needs of all members of the community, even as the community changes?

Continuity Plan

- What data sources could you use to understand the varying needs of essential functions throughout your community?
- How can you ensure that underserved communities including those communities with limited transportation options are able to access critical government services during a continuity event?

Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Has the hazard mitigation planning process included meaningful consultation with representative stakeholders from across the community?
- Does the plan include an evaluation of historical sources of inequity, including housing conditions or practices, underinvestment, and the siting of polluting or hazardous materials, and how those inequities increase the vulnerability of the built environment and
the people who live there?33,34

- Were mitigation priorities determined using community input and preferences?
- Have mitigation and equity considerations been incorporated into new and existing capital improvement and other community mitigation projects?

**Recovery Plan**

- Has the planning team considered how to balance a desire to quickly get back to “normal” with the opportunity to achieve a more equitable future through incorporating local voices, and especially those from underserved communities, in a deliberate recovery planning process?
- Has the planning effort included an evaluation of how recovery efforts might address historical inequities that have increased the vulnerability of the built environment and the people who live there?

**Functional Plans**

**Alert and Warning Plan**

- Has the planning team considered a range of alert and warning modes, media, and methods to reach as many people as possible?
- Has the planning team considered how to reach people with limited English proficiency? Without broadband access or cellular service? With access and functional needs?
- Has the planning team built relationships with trusted community leaders who can amplify alert and warning messages?

**Evacuation and/or Shelter-In-Place Plan**

- How does the plan ensure that individuals with limited access to transportation resources (including fuel) know what evacuation options are available to them and how to access them in an emergency?
- Has the planning team considered the needs of individuals with access and functional needs to ensure that medical and other services provided in an emergency are accessible to all who may need them?
- How does the plan ensure that the homes of residents who have evacuated from areas near hazardous materials sites or other potential hazards are safe to return to after an emergency?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Action Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How is the diversity of the jurisdiction reflected in the Essential Elements of Information and used to inform situational awareness for the incident?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How are the needs of underserved communities reflected in the incident objectives, strategies, and tactics?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Mass Care Plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>• How has the planning team worked with community organizations to understand the variety of housing and sheltering needs in an emergency and in temporary housing programs? Some examples include separated quarters for single individuals versus families, the need for personal assistance services, accommodation of service animals, and enhanced cots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can food service providers ensure all dietary considerations, including halal and vegetarian, among others, are accommodated to the greatest extent possible?</td>
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<th>Cross-Sector Plans</th>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have all relevant stresses, especially those affecting underserved communities, such as historical inequities that have increased the vulnerability of the built environment and the people who live there, been included in evaluations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has an appropriate range of resilience projects been considered as part of the planning process? Have these projects been evaluated for their potential effects on underserved communities?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Climate Adaptation Plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>• How are community composition addressed when determining who sits at the table when climate adaptation plans are being written?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are individuals from underserved communities invited to participate in the planning process?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have interactions between climate adaptation policies and other economic and social policies that may disproportionately impact underserved populations been considered?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do implementation strategies reduce climate impacts on underserved groups?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Emergency Management, Resilience, Mitigation and Adaptation Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Have diverse perspectives been included in proposing and considering projects?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does the project make existing disparities better, worse, or stay the same?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does the project produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for underserved communities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Vulnerabilities and Assets in Communities

Communities in jurisdictions across the nation possess both strengths and assets that can help them during a disaster while also containing vulnerabilities that may put these populations at greater risk of being impacted by an incident. Understanding the assets and vulnerabilities or populations within a community can help the planning team ensure that the needs of those populations are met while leveraging population assets to increase the effectiveness of response and recovery efforts. A vulnerability in this context is an attribute that may be associated with reduced health, financial, or other negative impacts from disasters. An asset in this context is an attribute that may be associated with improved health, financial, or other results of disasters. Depending on the situation, an attribute could be both a vulnerability and an asset. For example, older populations may have difficulties evacuating due to difficulties with health, mobility, or communications. However, older populations may be able to recover more quickly from a disaster due to higher financial resources, including homeownership and insurance.

Table 1: Vulnerabilities and Assets in Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Possible Vulnerabilities and/or Assets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>- Age</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- English as a second language</td>
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<td>- Immigration status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Incarcerated populations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Income/wealth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Persons with criminal records</td>
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<td>- Race/color/ethnicity/indigeneity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Religion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Sex/gender/sexual orientation</td>
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### Category: Housing Security
- Availability and access to vouchers for flood insurance assistance
- Domestic violence shelters
- Homelessness
- Homeowners
- Homeowners with homeowner’s insurance
- Homeowners with flood clause in homeowner’s insurance
- Homes in floodplains
- Homes with flood-proofing
- Number, location, and populations of prisons
- Quality of housing stock (e.g., mobile homes, housing age)
- Renters
- Renters with renters’ insurance
- Shelters for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth and adults

### Category: Food Security
- Farmers’ markets/community markets per capita
- Households identify as food insecure
- Households with an easily accessible grocery store
- Use food assistance programs (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children)

### Category: Mobility
- Evacuation routes
- Homes with vehicles
- Public transportation availability and access

### Category: Health System and Services
- Doctors per capita
- Domestic violence hotline
- Durable medical equipment and consumable medical supply availability
- Household distance to nearest hospital
- Individuals with health insurance coverage
- Mental health services
- Nurses per capita
- Persons with pre-existing health conditions
- Persons with substance abuse
- Substance abuse services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Possible Vulnerabilities and/or Assets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Environmental Hazards** | ▪ Adequate/effective sewage  
▪ Adequate/effective waste management systems  
▪ Air quality  
▪ Homes within a 10-mile radius of a chemical plant  
▪ Homes within a 10-mile radius of a nuclear reactor  
▪ Homes within a 10-mile radius of other hazardous facility, including brownfields/toxic sites  
▪ Proximity to areas prone to natural hazards  
▪ Proximity of schools to brownfields/toxic sites  
▪ Water quality |
| **Emergency Services**  | ▪ Availability of hazardous material (hazmat) certification programs  
▪ Disaster plans in place (e.g., schools, businesses, churches) and quality of plans  
▪ Hazmat-certified individuals  
▪ Household distance to nearest emergency medical services, including ambulance  
▪ Households’ distances to nearest fire station  
▪ Household knowledge level of disaster resources  
▪ Households with disaster kits  
▪ Pre-disaster mental health preparation for first responders |
| **Businesses/Jobs**     | ▪ Businesses with floodproofing  
▪ Businesses with insurance  
▪ Employment rate  
▪ Locally owned/community-based businesses  
▪ Non-White-owned businesses  
▪ Size of local businesses  
▪ Union jobs  
▪ Women-owned businesses  
▪ Wages  
▪ Businesses in Agriculture, Forestry, and other industries |
| **Public/Private Utilities** | ▪ Households with water shut offs in the last 12 months  
▪ Households reliant on well water  
▪ Households with electricity shut offs in the last twelve months  
▪ Telecommunications—availability and access (e.g., phone/texting, television/cable, radio, broadband) |
## Planning Considerations: Putting People First

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Possible Vulnerabilities and/or Assets</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Social Services           | - Availability and accessibility of services for undocumented persons  
                           | - Availability and accessibility of social services                                                                                                                                           |
| Governance Policies       | - Extent to which decision-makers match the demographics of the community make-up (somewhat subjective but measures should be identified like race, class, income, disability, and gender minimally)  
                           | - Inclusive governance with appropriate representation in stakeholders given meaningful authority  
                           | - Labor policies (including local hire provisions)  
                           | - Policy landscape (e.g., health codes, building codes, zoning codes, ordinances) along with enforcement of codes  
                           | - Voting participation in the last presidential and local elections                                                                                                                        |
| Community Knowledge/Attitudes | - Knowledge of and views on disaster services and protocols  
                               | - Knowledge of financial literacy  
                               | - Neighborhood cohesion-attitudes (e.g., transient, multigenerational)                                                                                                                     |
| Culture                   | - Local populations have meaningful ties to community land/water  
                           | - Level of engagement in community-based associations and faith-based institutions                                                                                                             |
Appendix D: Community Data Analysis

This section provides guidance on how to analyze demographic and socio-economic characteristics in the context of emergency management planning. It addresses examples of relevant data, indicators, and methods of analysis (e.g., quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, geospatial analysis, data visualization).

Data analysis is one critical element for understanding and incorporating the unique needs across a jurisdiction’s populations, to include underserved communities, into planning. It is helpful for rooting a plan within the context of the community and the populations affected by the plan. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods can be used together to provide an informed view of the characteristics of any community.

Planning for an equitable and inclusive community analysis process requires an intentional approach towards data collection, analysis, and communication. Implementing a robust data-planning process, where a project scope is clearly articulated, is important; all needed stakeholders are identified, integrated, and listened to respectfully. Accounting for the characteristics and composition of the population in the data collection, analysis, and visualization phases is crucial to identifying the requirements of the community and treating topics of analysis in a dignified manner, considering their historical context, and incorporating their lived experience.

The following sections highlight information pertaining to community characteristics in data-collection strategies, analytical phases, and visualization.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Visualization

- Understand the background and potential limitations of selected data sources. Some data sources may not be disaggregated and may mask important variations.
- Look for data sources that provide data at the smallest possible geographic level (e.g., census tract, neighborhood). Larger geographic area data may mask important local variations.
- Avoid “measurability bias,” which overvalues the importance of things that are easily measured (e.g., hazard impacts to buildings over wellness).
- Be mindful of the story that the data visualization tells and how it could be interpreted depending on an individual’s perspective.

Data Collection

Planning relies on assumptions pertaining to baseline community conditions, which are often constructed using federal survey data, local administrative data sources, and input from local community-based organizations. Although this network of data sources is constantly expanding,
recognizing that such sources may contain limitations, and that they may not sufficiently represent all facets of a community, is important. This is especially true across administrative and survey data.

- **Administrative data**, or organization-specific data that are collected for operational purposes, is crucial, as it may help uncover trends in program use across various groups over time. However, such data are not randomly collected, and instead reflect only those individuals who opt in, qualify for, or are placed in certain programs. As such, the resultant data only reflect a subset of individuals at a certain point in time and may not fully reflect an entire population. Examples of administrative data from a disaster recovery perspective may include Individual Assistance applicant data or National Flood Insurance Program policy data. While these data are useful and may guide future planning activities, without context they may inadvertently reinforce historical patterns or overlook portions of the community. Adding more dimensions (e.g., racial, and ethnic characteristics, age, educational attainment) to administrative data so the data may be analyzed across various population groups is important for ensuring an equitable approach.

- **Survey data** are supposed to provide population insights based on a representative sample; however, sampling methods may be unsound, and missing values may persist throughout the dataset. Surveys may also employ population-level data-collection techniques, including techniques to estimate missing data to conduct a population-level survey. Common examples of survey data outputs include racial/ethnic proportionality estimates and education attainment estimates, among others. The most famous survey example in the United States is the Decennial Census, which seeks to provide an accurate count of all individuals throughout the United States. Emergency managers may choose to conduct surveys to collect data specific to programs, policies, plans, or projects that they are considering implementing. Surveys can be an effective tool to elicit feedback from community members, but unintentional bias in the survey process must be considered. When designing surveys, emergency managers should consider the target population, sample size, question design, and how the survey will be conducted and disseminated.

### Data Analysis

Emergency management planning relies upon the outputs from several different data analyses to support and guide decision-making. These analyses range from simple summary statistics to more complex modeling and predictive analysis. Regardless of the type, all analyses and their inputs and outputs must consider the whole community in their design and execution. Emergency managers should try to understand the limitations of the data and methodologies they use and how those limitations can be overcome. The following section provides an overview of how to analyze data through an equity lens, specifically through data disaggregation, qualitative data analysis, and community interpretation.
Quantitative data are data that are characterized by numeric values. Two types of quantitative data exist: discrete and continuous. Discrete data may be neatly grouped and binned together and can only take on certain values. For example, if field responders are asked to quantify local damages on a scale of one to five, where one indicates less damage and five indicates more damage, then they are providing a discrete value. Continuous data, on the other hand, are not fixed. If, for example, the field responders were asked to provide the actual economic impact data, instead of responding to a fixed scale, then they would be providing a continuous data point, as the data can take on any value. Importantly, both continuous and discrete data may be used to generate descriptive statistics, such as the mean, median, and mode damage values.

Aggregated data provide high-level overviews of large groups over time and help demonstrate general trends. However, such high-level information may conceal trends within subsets of the population, which may lead to insufficient planning outcomes for underserved communities. Accordingly, analysts must disaggregate or drill down on the data as much as possible while simultaneously protecting individuals and their personally identifiable information.

Qualitative data are any type of data that are not numerical but are observed and recorded. Qualitative data, collected through long-form surveys, focus groups, open houses, and other community meetings, allow analysts to weave community perspectives into the analytical process and reflect on historical actions/policies that a quantitative dataset may not represent. Quantitative data processes can miss the experiences and stories that shape how individuals and communities perceive and interact with programs and influence the resulting analysis. This challenge may be partially mitigated through the integration of qualitative data. For example, a survey on personal preparedness would give insight into true levels of community preparedness that might be overlooked if only census data were relied on. It may also help to identify the root causes that lead to certain population subgroups not using assistance programs, such as misconceptions about repayment, service, and more. Identifying the need for qualitative data during the data planning and collection process is important in order to effectively incorporate it into analyses. It should also be considered in the context of disaggregation, as noted in the previous section.

Consider a community that has a high percentage of residents that are below the poverty line, as evidenced by a quantitative number (i.e., the poverty rate). Looking qualitatively and sourcing data through a wide variety of personal anecdotes and experiences, however, shows that the community has broad, well-supported social service programs that bridge the gap for many community members. While the quantitative view emphasizes the outcome (i.e., poverty rate), the qualitative
data help signal that existing support services and mitigation strategies are employed to support vulnerable community members.

Qualitative data may be collected in several ways. During the actual data collection phase, one-on-one interviews help provide data based on individual experiences. Similarly, open-response text boxes in surveys augment the quantitative data collection that is already planned. When looking to validate findings, however, one may need to take different approaches. Local archives, for example, serve as a wealth of information for historical qualitative data. Alternatively, validating qualitative data through community feedback sessions may be beneficial.

GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS

A Geographic Information System (GIS) allows emergency managers to understand the make-up of their community by exploring and visualizing data layers within a map interface. A GIS can be used to help identify patterns and problems, monitor change, or manage and respond to events. As a result, it can be a valuable tool in understanding the diverse considerations of a community or jurisdiction through mapping, where data related to a specific issue (e.g., access to public transportation) are shown in conjunction with social, economic, or demographic data to illustrate patterns, trends, or problems. When looking at the different dimensions of putting people first, such as risk and vulnerability, access to services and benefits, and participation in community decision-making, emergency managers need to understand the makeup of their community. Visualizing community makeup on a map can help an emergency manager understand at a glance where additional resources should be deployed.
The Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT) is a FEMA-sponsored, publicly available GIS tool to help emergency managers and community partners at all GIS skill levels to visualize and assess potential challenges to community resilience. The tool allows emergency managers and other community leaders to examine the interplay of census data, infrastructure locations, and hazards, including real-time weather forecasts, historical disasters, and estimated annualized frequency of hazard risk. RAPT can assist in developing a community resilience profile that visualizes risks and challenges to resilience and help provide information needed to tailor outreach strategies for a community. It can also identify collaborative planning team members who represent diverse community interests.

RAPT contains map layers showing the distribution of some underserved groups at both the county level and at the more discrete census tract level. Many of the data points suggested in Appendix D can be found in RAPT. RAPT can provide emergency managers with a way to examine their jurisdictions in search of population groups that may need assistance accessing services and benefits.

EJScreen is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators. EJScreen users choose a geographic area; the tool then provides demographic and environmental information for that area. All the EJScreen indicators are publicly available data. EJScreen simply provides a way to display this information and includes a method for combining environmental and demographic indicators into Environmental Justice (EJ) indexes. EJScreen includes twelve environmental indicators, seven demographic indicators and 12 EJ indexes. Each EJ index combines demographic indicators with a single environmental indicator.

To get the most thorough understanding of a community, emergency managers should engage community members to validate the data analysis and the conclusions made from it. Engaging the community helps develop trust and a mutual understanding of needs and outcomes between emergency managers and the community. Working with community members to validate information collected about them also builds trust.
One of the most important elements of any data analysis is data visualization. Data visualization helps to translate raw, tabular data into something that is intelligible for a broader audience through a visual medium. It is incredibly important to be intentional about data visualization and how it is employed, specifically when considering color, orders, labels, and iconography/images. A good guiding principle is, “If I was part of a group described by the data point, would I feel offended?” The following section describes different inclusive considerations relative to data visualization.

**COLOR**

Color is a powerful visual cue that can be used to trigger emotions, both positive and negative, in an audience. Due to its powerful nature, being careful when selecting a color palette is crucial. Some key considerations include the following:

- **Colors associated with stereotypes.** A common example is blue and pink, which since the 1950s, have been come to represent men and women, respectively. Using this type of gendered palette may reinforce stereotypes and may also box out individuals.

- **Unintended messages.** For example, red is often used to denote danger, anger, or aggression, while green denotes health and vibrance. While color can be used to bring individual groups forward, it can also be used to erase, including those represented in visuals as well as those in the audience. This problem is clear when relying upon a diverging color palette, where light grays represent the median values. The map shown in Figure 5 illustrates the percent of population that is Non-Hispanic Black in the State of Alabama. Dark red indicates a greater percent of the population is Non-Hispanic Black. As shown in Figure 5, gray colors can often fade when surrounded by more saturated hues. Accordingly, analysts must select color palettes that include all individuals and

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groups in a visualization, rather than exclude or deemphasize. Also, the blue and red in Figure 5, also may be confused with notation of political parties.

- Accessibility. It is important that visuals meet accessibility guidelines (e.g., Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ADA standards) for visually impaired persons, for instance, by having descriptive alternate text or using colorblind-friendly color palettes. Colors like red and green, for example, can be difficult for people with colorblindness to differentiate. Many resources are available to assist analysts in choosing accessible color palettes.

ORDERING OF INFORMATION

In addition to color, order of information plays a key role in data visualization and interpretation. When used intentionally, order can help better tell the story of a visualization. However, when used improperly or without intention, it may obscure the perception of different elements and create a sense of conflict between groups.

Order is commonly associated with hierarchy in data collection, analysis, and design. Ordering groups using a standardized, judgment-free methodology is important. One common approach is alphabetical ordering, where keys are sorted on an ascending or descending alphabetical basis. This helps reduce the sense of prioritization while maintaining a sense of order and organization. Order can also be created through different fields (e.g., ascending or descending by population size) or impact/magnitude values. These approaches help to clarify the ordering of information without applying any moral weight to the information.

LANGUAGE

One of the most important elements of data visualization is language. Language manifests in data labels, titles, and annotations. It allows the audience to better understand the visualization, and provides the narrative required to contextualize data.

One way to consider specific and unique needs of various communities with respect to language is to consult with members of the groups being described in their preferred language. Another way to employ equitable language is by using person-first language for people with disabilities. Person-first language centers on the individual or group that is being discussed, rather than their diagnosis, to

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emphasize their whole personhood. For example, “disabled people” shifts to “people with disabilities,” which deemphasizes the label.43

In addition to person-first language, analysts should integrate alternate text descriptions into data visualizations. Alternate text provides context to people who are visually impaired and rely on screen readers to understand visualizations.44 Importantly, alternative text needs to effectively communicate the primary message of the original image.

**IMAGES AND ICONS**

Images and icons can help clarify the intent of a visualization and can even be used as the primary focus of a visualization. However, they can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes, mischaracterize groups, and flatten individuals. Accordingly, taking care when selecting which images and icons to use to ensure they do not perpetuate bias or stereotypes is important.

Images and icons should empower and uplift, rather than devalue and degrade. Analysts should be careful not to use images that convey individuals as caricatures of their identity or that portray individuals as helpless. Although caricatures may appear as innocuous heuristics for groups, they are often negative.45 Similarly, individuals should not be shown in extreme distress or in ways that perpetuate stereotypes.

Icons can easily reflect biases that we carry every day. Using icons that reflect total populations and/or key functions of a group, rather than individuals, is important. For example, using icons that focus on function or trigger associations (e.g., for a nurse, using a medical cross rather than a female with a nursing cap) may help combat bias. Alternatively, using an image that contains a diverse group of individuals, rather than a single person, can help ensure the profession is not reduced to a single race or gender.

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Appendix E. Definitions, Acronyms, and Abbreviations

Definitions

Community: the people with common interests living in a particular area; the area itself; a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society; a body of persons or nations having a common history or common social, economic, and political interests; a group linked by a common policy.46

Demographics: the particular characteristics of a population. Examples of demographic characteristics include age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, income, education, home ownership, sexual orientation, marital status, family size, health, and disability status, and psychiatric diagnosis.47

Equity: consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons (LGBTQ); persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.48

Intersectionality: the combined effects of one's multiple identities, which includes identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and employee status.49

Redlining: a discriminatory practice of denying loans or services within a specific geographic area due to the race or ethnicity of its residents. On maps, these high-risk areas were outlined in red. The practice was deemed illegal with passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.50


Risk: The potential for an unwanted outcome as determined by its likelihood and the consequences.\(^{51}\)

Underserved communities: populations who share a particular characteristic (e.g., race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation), as well as geographic areas that “have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life.”\(^ {52}\)

Vulnerability: Physical feature or operational attribute that renders an entity open to exploitation or susceptible to a given hazard.\(^ {53}\)


Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
EJ Environmental Justice
EPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency
GIS Geographic Information System
Hazmat hazardous material
IAP2 International Association for Public Participation
MOAs Memorandums of Agreement
MOUs Memorandums of Understanding
P3 private-public partnership
RAPT Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool
SVI Social Vulnerability Index