Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers

DRAFT – May 2024

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1. Introduction

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

1.1. Background

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

Expanding partnerships with faith-based and community organizations enhances collective action and bolsters preparedness efforts in communities. Serving as trusted sources of information and services, these organizations work to address the most pressing needs in communities. By engaging with faith-based and community organizations, emergency managers collaborate with expert partners to address whole community preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

2. Expanding Views of Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Faith-based and community organizations play a crucial role in providing support during and after emergency events. However, their potential as partners in enhancing overall community preparedness and resilience before an event should not be overlooked. These organizations may serve diverse segments of the population every day, including older adults, children, people with disabilities, those with transportation barriers, immigrants, individuals with limited English proficiency, those with low literacy levels, individuals experiencing homelessness, and low-income populations. Including these groups in planning and preparedness efforts supports the development of more comprehensive and effective approaches, while fostering long-term resilience in multiple areas. As communities continue to experience known and emerging stressors, it is imperative that emergency managers include the unique strengths and resources offered by faith-based and community organizations.

2.1. **Religious and Cultural Considerations**

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

Utilizing resources for religious literacy and collaborating with established outreach partners helps emergency managers effectively engage with a wide range of faith backgrounds, both locally and nationally. Building trust and understanding cultural traditions and practices, including those around funeral considerations, is crucial in engaging diverse faith communities to strengthen community resilience.

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**Culturally and Religiously Important Resources**

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

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

The [Heritage Emergency National Task Force](https://fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/heritage-task-force) (HENTF) and the federal [Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function](https://fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery/recovery-support-functions/natural-cultural-resources-rsf) provide additional information on planning and caring for culturally or religiously important resources.

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

**Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative**: Protects cultural heritage threatened or impacted by disasters and helps communities preserve identities and history.

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

Different religious faiths and cultural traditions conduct funerary services under varying timelines and requirements. Understanding what considerations and specific needs exist in communities is key to building trust and preparing responders for different scenarios. Respectfully discussing these needs prior to an event meaningfully includes faith and community leaders in planning efforts. A variety of trainings and resources are available to help prepare emergency managers for these discussions. For more information, see Appendix B: Training and Appendix C: Additional Resources.

Questions to Consider

- What culturally and religiously important resources exist in the community and how can they be included in event planning and mitigation efforts?
- How can emergency managers and other public officials work with faith-based and community organizations to respect different funeral considerations and traditions during potential events?
3. **Steps for Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations**

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

1. Assess;
2. Engage;
3. Plan;
4. Learn;
5. Exercise; and

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

- Development of new partnerships with organizations serving a diverse range of populations;
- Identification of areas to expand existing engagement strategies;
- Incorporation of faith-based and community organizations’ priorities in planning efforts; and
- Improvement of whole community preparedness through awareness, participation, and increased social connectedness.

Utilizing this engagement model, emergency managers include faith-based and community organizations as leaders and active participants in the whole community’s preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

### 3.1. Step 1: Assess

Emergency managers seek to better understand existing relationships in communities and identify areas to connect with new partners through initial assessments. This approach streamlines early engagement and helps identify key community resources, leaders, and information channels.
Regular coordination among organizations is essential for effective emergency preparedness. This is particularly important in recognizing how established organizations regularly engage with faith-based and community organizations. It is crucial for emergency managers to collaborate closely with offices dedicated to community engagement, faith-based outreach, or related liaison activities. State, tribal, territorial, and local public health offices, human services departments, public safety departments, service commissions, governor’s offices, mayor’s offices, and other organizations possess a range of expertise and established relationships in communities and may be helpful in identifying opportunities for leveraging existing relationships and resources. Additionally, national or regionally based faith-based networks, advocacy networks, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) may also provide details regarding groups active in or near the community. By partnering with other government, faith-based, and community organizations, emergency managers gain valuable insights into existing community relationships and potential partners.

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

Questions to Consider

- What government entities are already working with faith-based or community groups, and how can emergency managers expand on these partnerships?
- What established networks would provide introductions for new connections?
- What populations are represented by potential engagement partners?
- What services does the organization provide the community, and how would an emergency impact the delivery of those services?
- How might organizations address gaps in preparedness, response, or recovery efforts?

Assessing Resources

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

**American Community Survey**: Released by the U.S. Census Bureau, this regularly conducted survey provides information on population characteristics, housing, and demographics to the census tract level.\(^6\)

**Community Profile Builder**: The Association of Religion Data Archives is a mapping tool that assists faith and community leaders in locating facilities and information on social, economic, and religious information in the area selected.\(^7\)

**U.S. Religion Census**: Produced collaboratively by religious groups around the country, the decadal census includes formal congregational counts, attendance, and membership by county. Additionally, certain groupings of religious communities without formal national headquarters are included through the use of special data collection studies.\(^8\)

### 3.2. Step 2: Engage

After assessing existing organization efforts and utilizing available data, emergency managers may begin proactive engagement efforts.

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

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

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

\(^6\) For more information, visit: [census.gov/programs-surveys/acs](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs)

\(^7\) For more information, visit: [therarda.com/us-religion/community-profiles/build-a-profile-of-your-community](http://therarda.com/us-religion/community-profiles/build-a-profile-of-your-community)

\(^8\) For more information, visit: [usreligioncensus.org/](http://usreligioncensus.org/)
Ongoing communication. Ensure communication is open and ongoing with all partners. Additionally, seek to reduce barriers that may prevent organization members from attending events, such as transportation or timing, and offer solutions to increase participation. Scheduling recurring meetings or integrating sessions with existing community gatherings may further increase participation and ensure that emerging issues are proactively recognized and addressed.

Vignette: Anne Arundel County Seminar Series

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

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

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

Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

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

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

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

Questions to Consider

- How can outreach efforts be tailored to ensure partners have a clear understanding of emergency management terminology, resources, and infrastructure?
- In what ways can organizations' priorities and services to the community be supported?
- How can organizations' capabilities integrate with emergency management priorities?
- How can emergency management support the organization’s priorities?
- What legal or organizational approvals do faith-based and community organizations have, and how does this impact their engagement commitments?
- What barriers may prevent community members from participating in emergency management meetings, and how can they be addressed to promote more inclusive engagement?
- How can emergency managers promote open communication with faith-based and community organizations to encourage ongoing engagement?

Engaging Resources

- **Building Alliances for Equitable Resilience**: Information on insights and perspectives for effectively engaging with a range of groups.⁹
- **Cultural and Religious Literacy Tip Sheets**: Engagement guidelines and other helpful information for interacting with a variety of faith traditions.¹⁰
- **The Pluralism Project**: An academic research center providing interfaith dialogue resources and detailed information on different faith-traditions.¹¹

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¹⁰ For more information, visit: [fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/faith/cultural-and-religious-literacy-tip-sheets](fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/faith/cultural-and-religious-literacy-tip-sheets)

¹¹ For more information, visit: [pluralism.org/home](pluralism.org/home)
3.3. **Step 3: Plan**

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

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

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

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**Affiliate with Organizations**

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

Include legal counsel throughout the MOA or MOU development process to ensure strong and clear agreements which consider the unique governance structures, roles and responsibilities, funding, and resource needs of the organizations involved.
For additional information on developing MOAs and MOUs, visit FEMA's How to Develop Agreements for Mass Care Services: A Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations, or Disaster-Specific Memorandum of Understanding.

Questions to Consider

- How can active participation and open communication be encouraged?
- What is needed for accessible meetings and information sharing?
- What strategies exist to better understand partner organization priorities, capabilities, and restrictions?
- Who is required to review and agree to formal plans?

Planning Resources

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

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

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

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13 FEMA, “Disaster-Specific Memorandum of Understanding” (2020). fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Disaster-Specific_MOU.pdf
14 For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/plan
3.4. Step 4: Learn

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

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

Connect partners to available training programs. A variety of trainings on emergency management, community preparedness, and related topics exist from government, nonprofit, and other sources. Appendix B: Training and Appendix C: Additional Resources provide a selection of available trainings and other resources that may be most relevant to faith-based and community organizations. State, local, tribal, and territorial governments may offer additional training resources specific to their jurisdictions. As a best practice, encourage organizations to keep an official record of trainings completed by members, as well as any certifications or licenses held.

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

Questions to Consider

- How can emergency managers help identify training needs for faith-based and community organizations?
- What methods can be used to keep partners updated on evolving emergency management topics and best practices?
- How can faith-based and community organizations easily maintain records of completed trainings and certifications for their members?

Learning Resources

A variety of no-cost training options are available from federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and other organizations. The example below highlights one of the options provided by FEMA's
Emergency Management Institute\textsuperscript{17}, which offers general and topic specific emergency management courses.

**IS-505: Concepts of Religious Literacy for Emergency Management**

Available online, this self-paced course emphasizes the importance of collaborating with religious and cultural communities to enhance disaster resilience efforts. By the end of the course, participants are able to define religious and cultural literacy, and identify skills needed to engage religious and cultural leaders.\textsuperscript{18}

Additional training options are provided in Appendix B: Training.

### 3.5. Step 5: Exercise

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

**Incorporate faith-based and community partners in exercises.** Including a variety of organizations enhances exercise development, play, and overall preparedness efforts. Emergency managers may identify opportunities to progressively incorporate faith-based and community organizations in the development and participation of different types of exercises based on experience, interest, and exercise complexity.

#### Questions to Consider

- Are existing exercise programs available for partner organizations’ specific interests?
- What exercises are being planned where faith-based and community organizations may support development or participate in exercise play?
- Are organizations interested in adapting or developing exercises for their facilities or members?

\textsuperscript{17} For more information, visit: training.fema.gov/

\textsuperscript{18} For more information, visit: training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-505&lang=en
Drills and exercises provide excellent opportunities to practice, assess, and improve capabilities while keeping participants actively engaged. A variety of no-cost exercise resources available for use with faith-based and community organizations are provided below.

**Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Tabletop Exercise Packages:** Developed by CISA, these customizable packages include template exercise objectives, scenarios, discussion questions, references, and resources. Packages cover a wide-range of topics, including faith-based organizations and natural disasters.  

**Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Drills and Exercises:** This program educates volunteers on disaster preparedness and practices concepts through exercises.  

**Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program:** Fundamental principles for exercise programs and a common approach to program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.  

**National Exercise Program:** Provides exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation support, and other related resources to state, local, tribal, territorial, and other partners.  

**Preparedness Toolkit (Prep Toolkit):** Online portal providing a variety of tools, including exercise resources, to aid in implementing the National Preparedness System.

### 3.6. Step 6: Sustain

Sustaining partnerships established through engagement initiatives remains critical for the long-term success of community preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Using the iterative six-step engagement model provides a basis for maintaining meaningful partnerships over time.

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

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19 For more information, visit: cisa.gov/resources-tools/services/cisa-tabletop-exercise-packages  
20 For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-activities-webinars/community-emergency-response-team  
21 For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep  
22 For more information, visit: fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/about  
23 For more information, visit: preptoolkit.fema.gov/
Training and exercises present numerous opportunities for engagement with partners, allowing them to take on different roles based on their experience and interests.

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

Questions to Consider

- What activities or interactions would be meaningful for partners to sustain engagement?
- What partnership events and strategies are other government organizations planning that would benefit from faith-based and community organization participation?
- What partnerships would benefit from the development of MOUs or MOAs?

Sustaining Resources

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

4. Conclusion

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

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

A non-exhaustive selection of federal funding options with applicability to emergency managers and faith-based and community organizations are provided below. Emergency managers may share funding information with faith-based and community organizations to raise awareness for available programs. A more comprehensive resource on disaster related funding sources and financial management is provided in FEMA’s Disaster Financial Management Guide and at FEMA Grants.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FEMA)

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

Individual Assistance Program (FEMA)

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

Nonprofit Security Grant Program (FEMA)

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements or activities to nonprofit organizations at high risk of terror attack. The intent is to integrate nonprofit preparedness activities with broader state and local preparedness efforts. It is also designed to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives, as well as state and local government agencies.

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25 For more information, visit: fema.gov/grants
26 For more information, visit: samhsa.gov/dtac/ccp
27 For more information, visit: fema.gov/assistance/individual/disaster-survivors#case
Public Assistance Program (FEMA)

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

Disaster Loan (Small Business Administration)

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

28 For more information, visit: fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_private-non-profit-houses-worship-eligibility-fact-sheet.pdf
Appendix B: Training

A non-exhaustive selection of courses with broader application to faith-based and community organizations is provided below. Additional training resources are available from other federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and non-governmental partners. As course options change frequently, verify information with the training provider for the most current offerings.

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


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

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

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


**IS-366: Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters.** Guidance for emergency managers and implementers of children’s programs about meeting the unique needs that arise among children as a result of a disaster or emergency. [training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-366.a&lang=en](http://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-366.a&lang=en)
IS-0368: Including People with Disabilities and Others with Access & Functional Needs in Disaster Operations. Increases awareness and understanding of the need for full inclusion of people with disabilities, and people with access and functional needs. The course provides an overview of disabilities and access and functional needs and explains how disaster staff can apply inclusive practices. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-368

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

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

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


IS-0908: Emergency Management for Senior Officials. Introduces senior officials to the important role they play in emergency management. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-908

IS-909: Community Preparedness: Implementing Simple Activities for Everyone. Presents a model program for community preparedness. In addition, resource materials are available to help organizations conduct simple preparedness activities for everyone. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-909&lang=en

IS-1000: Public Assistance Program and Eligibility. Overview of Public Assistance project eligibility. By the end of the course, state, local, tribal, and territorial applicants and recipients are able to understand all aspects of Public Assistance Program and project eligibility. training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-1000&lang=en
Other Relevant Trainings (Variety of formats, free of charge)

MGT-405: Mobilizing Faith-Based Community Organizations in Preparing for Disasters. Provided by the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium, this 8-hour planning and management-level course trains faith-based community organization representatives, management-level emergency managers, and first responders from small and rural communities to strategically mobilize and engage members of these organizations, including religious charities, nonprofits, churches (both affiliated and unaffiliated), temples, synagogues, mosques, etc., in a reciprocal approach to disaster planning that is integrated into current local and statewide emergency management efforts.

ruraltraining.org/course/mgt-405/

G-426: Building a Roadmap to Resilience: A Whole Community Training. Provided by FEMA and requested through state, territorial, or tribal training officers, this 18-hour, in-person course focuses on implementing inclusive emergency management principles in local communities to increase resilience in the face of disasters. Course activities include examining social capital and preparedness in students' communities, developing strategies to leverage various community structures for resilience, and creating a roadmap for increasing community preparedness.

firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npcatalog?id=6412

Organizations Preparing for Emergency Needs (OPEN). Developed by FEMA, OPEN includes self-guided web-based training and a downloadable instructor kit to guide participants on how to identify risks, locate resources, and take disaster preparedness actions. When community organizations are unable to sustain operations during an emergency incident, individuals who rely on them are exponentially impacted. Because of their importance in keeping the community going, OPEN is designed to empower these organizations with emergency preparedness training to better prepare for incidents.

community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/open-training?language=en_US&tabset-bc2e8=e90c5
Appendix C: Additional Resources

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

Federal Emergency Management Agency

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

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

Emergency Food and Shelter Program: A non-disaster related grant, this program supplements and expands ongoing work of local nonprofit and governmental social service organizations to provide shelter, food, and supportive services to individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of hunger and/or homelessness. [fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program](fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program) and [efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/index.cfm](efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/index.cfm)

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


Guide to Expanding Mitigation: Making the Connection to Cemeteries: Learn how cemetery experts can help mitigation build community resilience by planning for the future while preserving the past and these important cultural resources. [fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_region-2-guide-connecting-mitigation-cemeteries.pdf](fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_region-2-guide-connecting-mitigation-cemeteries.pdf)

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This document contains references to non-federal resources. Linking to such sources does not constitute an endorsement by FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, or any of its employees of the information or products presented.
Guide to Expanding Mitigation: Making the Connection to Faith-Based Partners: Learn how leaders in hazard mitigation and in faith-based and religious organizations make communities stronger and more resilient. [fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_making-connection-faith-based_012024.pdf](https://fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_making-connection-faith-based_012024.pdf)


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

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

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

National Mass Care Strategy


National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

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

Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

**Tools for Equitable Communication**: Tools for improving information distribution after a disaster.  

**Other Organization Resources**

**Center for Disaster Philanthropy**: Philanthropic organization providing funds for disaster recovery.  
[disasterphilanthropy.org/](disasterphilanthropy.org/)

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

**Social Vulnerability Index**: Employs U.S. Census Bureau variables to help users identify communities that may need support in preparing for hazards or recovering from disasters. The tool is particularly useful for emergency response planners and public health officials, as it can identify and map the communities that are most likely to need support before, during and after a hazardous event.  
[atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html](atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html)

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

[aspeninstitute.org/programs/religion-society-program/religion-society-program-publications/](aspeninstitute.org/programs/religion-society-program/religion-society-program-publications/)

**U.S. Fire Administration Protecting Houses of Worship Against Arson**: Resources to help communities reduce the occurrence of arson and safeguard their houses of worship.  
Appendix D: Self-Assessments and Considerations

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

Before Disaster

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

Capabilities Assessment Considerations

- Verify and record organization information - points of contact, appropriate contact times, preferred communication methods. Include telephone number, email, role of designated points of contact, facility address, organization type, web address, and other relevant contact or organizational information, as appropriate.
- What services or resources does the organization provide on a regular, recurring basis for members or the larger community? (e.g., care for people with disabilities or access and functional needs, childcare, clothes distribution, community center, counseling, financial assistance, medical services, pantry, shelter, transportation, or other services).
- How is the organization equipped to provide these services? (e.g., facility space, kitchen, warehouse, equipment, trained staff)
- Are applicable licenses, credentials, or inspections valid (e.g., child/adult care centers, food services, shelter facilities, medical centers)
- Does the organization have a current inventory of facilities, equipment, and supplies?
- Are contact lists for members current?
- Do members have specialized skills that support the organization? Record relevant credentials. (e.g., spiritual care providers, counselors, interpreters (include languages and proficiency), medical and veterinary providers, care workers, educators, food service workers, equipment operators, construction-, logistics-, administrative-, marketing-, or nonprofit professionals.
- Does the organization accept donations?
  - If yes, what types and quantities does the organization regularly manage?
- How does the organization distribute donations or other resources?
  - Is a case management process used?
- Does the organization have a current disaster, emergency, or continuity plan?
- How does the organization communicate to staff, members, and the community served?
  - Does the organization have a formal communications or emergency contacts plan?
Are key facilities equipped with generators?
- How many hours of fuel is available on site?
What information would help the organization in improving preparedness? (e.g., continuity planning, communications, expanding partnerships, volunteer or donations management, mass care services, personal preparedness resources.)
Are there other organizations that provide similar services to the community?

**Actions and Considerations**

- Prioritize planning for disasters or other service interruptions.
- Work with emergency managers to review emergency operations plans and continuity of operations plans. Ensure plans are current and socialized.
- Develop an emergency communications plan with accessible messaging for the organization.
- Coordinate with any third-party entities who provide services to the organization, or rely on the organization for services, to discuss contingencies in the event of a service disruption.
- Review applicable legal authorities and responsibilities relevant to disasters and emergencies.
- Meet with emergency managers to share information and resources; learn about hazards for the community; and prioritize efforts.
- Learn about available preparedness, mitigation, and other disaster assistance programs.
- Create strategies to support preparedness, response, and recovery planning, as appropriate.
- Identify topics of interest to organization members and information sources, which may include preparedness activities, protecting houses of worship, trainings, exercises, or grants.
- Participate in emergency drills, trainings, and exercises. Encourage other community partners involvement.
- Coordinate with other faith and community organization leaders to review relevant emergency plans, share mitigation and planning strategies, or collaborate on preparedness, response, or recovery activities.
- Encourage individuals to develop personal emergency plans and kits for their household for the first 72 hours after an event.
- Register for weather alerts and public warning systems for the community.
During Disaster

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

Capabilities Assessment Considerations

- Will the organization be able to continue providing existing services during a community emergency?
  - If the organization is unable to provide existing services, what are the impacts to the community (Will needs be filled from another source? Is that other source aware of the potential increase in demand? How many people are impacted by unavailable or restricted services? What other impacts exist?)
  - If the organization continues offering services, can services be offered to additional community members temporarily during an emergency event?

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

- Does the organization have a communication plan or system to activate in response to an emergency event? If yes,
  - What type of system is used (e.g., messaging app, phone tree, amateur radio)?
  - Who does the system reach (e.g., community members, staff)?

- Are organization members, particularly those with specialized skills and applicable credentials, able and willing to support community needs, potentially as a volunteer?
  - Specialized skills may include but are not limited to spiritual care providers, counselors, interpreters (include languages and proficiency), medical and veterinary providers, care workers, educators, food service workers, equipment operators, construction-, logistics-, administrative-, marketing-, or nonprofit professionals.
  - Is any organization equipment available for use during an emergency event (e.g., chainsaws, radios, portable generators, water pump/filtration, vehicles/hitch, trailers)?

- Would the organization accept donations in an emergency?
  - If yes, what types and quantities would the organization be prepared to manage?

- How would the organization distribute emergency donations or other resources?
  - Would a case management process be used?

- Does the organization have the ability to distribute food or other commodities? If yes,
  - How many meals can the organization prepare and serve each day?
  - Does the organization have the ability to deliver food?
  - What supply or funding considerations exist for distributing and/or delivering items?
  - Are needed permits and/or licenses valid? (e.g., food handling, drivers’ licenses)?

- Is the organization able and willing to serve as an emergency shelter during an event? If yes,
  - Does the organization have an existing sheltering agreement in place? With whom?
  - Has the organization previously completed a shelter survey?
Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations

- Is the shelter space accessible for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs?
- Are non-service animals permitted in or around the shelter space?
- Does the organization have a licensed or certified childcare facility?
  - If yes, is the organization willing and able to serve community members and children who need assistance following an emergency event?
- Is the organization able and willing to provide mental or emotional counseling during an event?
  - If yes, what types of counseling? How many credentialed counselors are available?
- Is the organization able to mobilize volunteers to assist the community?
  - If yes, how many volunteers could the organization provide?
- Are there additional services the organization would be able to provide during an emergency event? If yes, please provide more information.

Actions and Considerations

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

- Verify the safety of staff, members, and community members served.
- Understand the situation and is it improving, stabilizing, or getting worse?
- What area is impacted and how are organization staff, members, and community affected?
- Ensure continuity of essential services—which may be provided or supported by third parties.
- Are healthcare, schools, transportation, utilities, or businesses (e.g., groceries) impacted?
- Are there immediate community needs (e.g., personnel, equipment, commodities, services)?
- How can the organization support the community and current response activities?
- Coordinate with emergency management or a designated point of contact to provide verified and accessible messaging to the community, including language interpretation as needed.
- Collaborate with emergency managers to support response efforts as needed (e.g., information distribution, sheltering services, feeding operations, commodity distribution, debris removal teams, childcare).
- As requested, assist in coordinating additional resources from organization networks.
After Disaster

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

Capabilities Assessment Considerations

- Do members have specialized skills that would support the recovery efforts in the community?
- Would the organization accept donations for long-term recovery efforts?
  - If yes, what types and quantities would the organization be prepared to manage?
- How would the organization distribute recovery related donations or other resources?
  - Would a case management process be used?
- What information would help the organization in improving recovery efforts? (e.g., grant management, communications, expanding partnerships, volunteer or donations management).
- Does the organization have a licensed or certified childcare facility?
  - If yes, is the organization willing and able to serve community members and children who need assistance during recovery efforts?
- Is the organization able and willing to provide mental or emotional counseling during recovery?
  - If yes, what types of counseling? How many credentialed counselors are available?
- Is the organization able to mobilize volunteers to assist the community during recovery?
  - If yes, how many volunteers could your organization provide at one time?
- Are there additional services the organization can provide? If yes, provide more information.

Actions and Considerations

- Assist in the recovery process or long-term recovery groups in coordination with emergency or designated recovery managers, as needed.
- Work collaboratively to promote inclusive and accessible community outreach and address relevant recovery and mitigation topics.
- Continue to assess unmet needs in coordination with government agencies and other partners.
- Host informational meetings for the organization and general public.
- Identify opportunities to rebuild the community to mitigate impacts of future incidents.
- Review what recovery and mitigation funding is available from public or private sources.
- If the organization manages any finances, donations, or other resources for the event, ensure accurate and complete records are maintained in accordance with applicable directives.
- Revise the organization’s plans based on lessons learned from the emergency event.
- Restock any supplies or goods used during the emergency event.
Appendix E: Acronyms

CCP  Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program
CERT  Community Emergency Response Team
CISA  Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
DCM  Disaster Case Management Grant
EIDL  Economic Injury Disaster Loan
FEMA  Federal Emergency Management Agency
HENTF  Heritage Emergency National Task Force
HMGP  Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
MOA  Memorandum of Agreement
MOU  Memorandum of Understanding
NSGP  Nonprofit Security Grant Program
NVOAD  National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
OEM  Office of Emergency Management
OPEN  Organizations Preparing for Emergency Needs
SBA  Small Business Administration
VOAD  Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster