

Assemble a Planning Group

- ❑ Assemble the Planning Group or Team
 - Diverse community representation (see handout)
 - Team dynamics
 - Clear roles and responsibilities
 - Communication protocol
 - Governance structure
 - Subcommittees

Identifying and gathering the right people to be part of the planning team is extremely critical, as all EM activities (planning, training, and responding) will somehow be shaped by this group of people. The following broad criteria were shared with you to identify Planning Academy participants:

1. Those who desire to be involved in emergency management planning activities through committee participation.
2. Those who can commit to being involved in planning activities for at least 2 years.
3. Representatives of partner organizations and agencies that are not traditionally part of the core emergency management response organizations (e.g., leaders from churches, schools, city council, city administration, interested citizens, business community, etc.)--those who understand and appreciate how their organization has a stake in effective emergency management would be good candidates.
4. People who are team players and understand that significant planning efforts require teamwork and effective communication.
5. People who represent diverse perspectives based on their geographic location, cultural heritage, professional capacity, or other factor positively diversity.
6. People who are good at building relationships with others and who can see the forest, not just focus on their own tree.
7. Any participant in your Regional governance structure who is committed to furthering the planning capacity and understands the need to share the planning tasks among more people.

Some specific community roles that would be good to include on the planning team are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chief Elected Official ▪ Fire Chief ▪ Police Chief ▪ Public Works Director ▪ EMS Director ▪ Hazardous Materials Coordinator ▪ Mutual Aid Partners ▪ Health Department Director ▪ DOT Director ▪ Department of Agriculture Director ▪ Tax Assessor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building Inspector ▪ School Superintendent ▪ Voluntary Agency Directors and Faith Based Representatives ▪ Air/Seaport Managers ▪ Representatives from Local Industry ▪ Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services Coordinator ▪ Social Services Agency Representatives ▪ Veterinarians/ Animal Shelter Representative ▪ Respected Community Champions
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Key questions to guide the planning team's formation efforts in Step 1:

1. Who will lead the planning team, and what are the specific roles of each planning team member?
2. What governance structure gives credibility and authority to the planning team?
3. How will the planning team communicate, and how often? What are the communication responsibilities of each planning team member?
4. Are there special cultural considerations that require representation on the planning committee?
5. Are there underrepresented groups or resources that could contribute to the planning team?
6. What community dynamics need to be considered when creating the planning team?
7. How can the networks of planning team members be leveraged, and what networks need to be accessed?
8. How will we establish subcommittees, and what rules/guidelines will govern them?
9. What will our EM Vision be for our Region?
10. Can we partner with neighbor Regions to share resources and accomplish better planning?

Fostering positive team dynamics:

Understand the individual strengths of each team member. Have each person complete a profile and share it with the team and discuss his or her experiences so that fellow team members can develop an understanding and appreciation for each person's assets. But don't forget the personal information! Sometimes rapport and positive dynamics come from shared common interests, stages in life, etc. The team will experience some stressful moments, so all members need to be able to genuinely rely upon each other.

For a profile, consider the following questions:

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you lived here, and where have you lived previously?
3. What do you consider are your strongest professional talents? Can you tell us a story about them?
4. What would you prefer other people to do on this team because it's not your strongest asset?
5. What do you expect of yourself, and what do you expect of everyone else?
6. What really energizes you when it happens?
7. What really gets you down when it happens?
8. Have you lived through an emergency as a responder or as a victim, or both? Can you share your story?
9. What do you like to be known for? (personal, professional, serious, humorous... your choice)

Since everyone on the planning team is "in it together," the best way to foster a high-performing team with positive dynamics is for each member to be an effective team member, and hold each other accountable to be the same. Keep these indicators in mind, and use them, and you'll be an effective team member who not only contributes, but who knows what to expect of the other team members:

1. Take responsibility for the success of the team
2. Follow through on commitments you make
3. Contribute to discussions
4. Actively listen to others
5. Get your message across clearly
6. Give useful feedback
7. Accept feedback easily

Tried and true facilitation techniques for productive meetings:

1. Ground rules... Ask the planning team to create their own communication ground rules, and then document them and commit to honoring them as well as holding each other accountable. A nickel jar for violations can work well. Also, as leader, tell your participants that you will be using techniques like the ones in the list below, and that you hope that they do not take your facilitation controls personally if you address them, but rather value your attempt to make it productive for everyone.
2. Redirect questions back to the larger group when appropriate and possible, so that more opinions are shared
3. Ask for commitment... "I've heard a general theme that we want to support this. Is there a commitment among this group to support this?"
4. Preface invitations to speak with a time limit: "John, please limit your response to two minutes." Make sure to be consistent, and let the group know ahead of time that you will be placing time limits on responses for that particular discussion or part of the meeting.
5. Acknowledge those who have spoken by summarizing their main point back to them, and then invite others to respond.
6. To help prevent people from repeating and repeating, write the points of speaker on flip chart paper so that they can see their point in writing, and then refer to it if that speaker tries to dwell on the same point. Don't be afraid to ask, "John, we heard and acknowledged this point earlier, and I would like to know if there is something deeper that you need us to consider, otherwise I would like us to hear from other people."
7. Don't try to do committee work or plan writing in administrative/governance meetings; save governance meetings for information sharing and discovery, as well as decision-making, and set expectations for committee milestones to be reached in between governance meetings.