

## Lesson 4: Sustaining a Partnership

### Lesson Overview

This lesson will explore methods to sustain public–private partnerships, including how to keep partner engagement high, develop partnership capabilities over time, and continually assess the value of the partnership.

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe strategies to sustain public–private partnerships
- Identify methods to assess partnership effectiveness

### Sustaining Public-Private Partnerships

Maintaining high levels of partner participation over time is a huge challenge for partnerships. Throughout this lesson, we will discuss various activities partnerships can use to sustain and develop the partnership's capabilities. To learn more, read the story below.

#### Jim Turner

*Private Sector Liaison, City and County of San Francisco Department of Emergency Management*

To really ensure sustainability, I generally recommend three different factors.

First of all, don't recreate the wheel. Make sure that whatever it is that you're doing or that you would like to do: a) is not being done by somebody else already, and b) has not been done, tried before, and failed. Or tried before and succeeded. That's the first thing.

The second thing is communication is key. That is making sure that people are reminded of the energy, reminded of what began over and over and over again.

And then, the third thing is really about actionable items. It's all well and good to get 100 people into a room and have a conversation. Very often those conversations are great and they need to be had. But if you want something to result from that conversation that is concrete, people need to be given things to do.

### Activities to Sustain Partnerships

As you learned in the previous lessons, once partnerships are established, partners can work together by sharing information and resources. However, partnerships should also take steps to ensure that partners develop their own capabilities, which in turn helps the partnership to sustain itself. Partnerships can develop their capabilities when:

- Best practices are regularly shared
- The partnership conducts joint exercises
- Partners engage in business continuity planning
- Individual partners consider accreditation and certification

These actions will be discussed on the following screens.

## Joint Exercises

One way public–private partnerships can develop their capabilities is by engaging in joint exercises to increase preparedness and test the effectiveness of any joint emergency response plans. These exercises can include physical drills, training courses, and tabletop exercises.

The FEMA Private Sector Division has several tabletop exercises with facilitator notes for partnerships and the private sector, which focus on a variety of different scenarios. Scenarios include a catastrophic earthquake, chemical spill, critical power failure, and a hurricane. These scenarios will challenge partnerships to find innovative ways to address critical needs in different disasters. More information is located here: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-planning-exercises>

## Accreditation and Certification

When individual partners take steps to develop their capabilities, the partnership benefits as a whole. One way that private sector groups can improve their ability to respond to disasters is by obtaining accreditation and certification, which will in turn strengthen the partnership.

Private sector groups can obtain accreditation and certification from the Voluntary Private Sector Preparedness Accreditation and Certification Program (PS-Prep). Through this program, businesses and other private sector organizations can assess their preparedness for all hazards. Information on PS-Prep, including the related standards, can be found here: <https://www.fema.gov/voluntary-private-sector-preparedness-program-ps-preptm-small-business-preparedness>.

To learn more about how PS-Prep can support individual partners, read the story below.

### **Suzanne Mencer**

*Senior Advisor, Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership*

I think PS-Prep is a program that really helps define and focus the business community on how they should be organized and what they should be doing to be better prepared. Some of them may have plans in place already that go beyond what PS-Prep requires or requests, but I think a lot of businesses need guidance in that area, so that they know what they need to focus on, how they need to assess their risks, and then how are they going to address those risks and those vulnerabilities so they can be better prepared. So anything that focuses them more and defines for them what the situation is and how they can be better prepared is a good tool.

## Business Continuity Planning

Public-private partnerships will also benefit when private sector organizations conduct business continuity planning.

Through business continuity planning, individual businesses can enhance their preparedness by conducting risk assessments, identifying ways to minimize this risk, and creating emergency preparedness and response procedures.

The standards in PS-Prep outline ways businesses can engage in this kind of planning. To learn more about how business continuity planning supports public–private partnership goals, read the story below.

**Hollis Stambaugh**

*Director of the Center for Public Protection, System Planning Corporation*

“Up to 25% of businesses that are affected by disasters do not recover or reopen. One study showed that approximately 60% of businesses indicated that loss of revenue and loss of customers were the biggest impacts of a disaster to their businesses and to their community. So, it’s imperative to make sure your business is able to sustain itself during a disaster. The loss of power is common to many types of disasters, along with possible structural damage. It might be difficult for employees to get to the office, depending on the nature of the disaster. So, some simple planning up front, whether you call it business continuity, business resilience, or loss prevention planning...can go a long way.

**Engaging in Business Continuity Planning**

Businesses that have conducted continuity planning and are in a partnership may want to form a Business Emergency Operations Center (BEOC). BEOCs allow for collaboration, communication, and planning between private and public sector groups partnership, and support private sector partners’ ability to prepare for, respond to and mitigate risk.

For example, Target partnered with the public sector and other businesses to form the Corporate Command Center (C3), which allowed for emergency communication and information sharing between partners.

The private sector should leverage the use of a business continuity framework since it provides the principles and attributes the private sector can administer to improve their partnerships. This framework can address the processes that need to be incorporated into the partnership to ensure they are effective, sufficient, and optimized to assist in restoring any community. For more information on this framework, explore the Public–Private Partnership Continuity Planning Document below.

**Public-Private Partnership Continuity Planning Document**

The sample checklist below lists areas an organization should consider when making business continuity plans. Regardless of whether the organization is planning for effective information sharing and communication, or deciding on how to share resources and capabilities, there are common issues that must be considered if the effort is to be successful.

<b>Business Preparedness/Continuity “A BCM standards base management systems approach”</b>	<b>Do you have a standard approach or plan?</b>
Leadership and Commitment	
Program Coordinator	
Program Committee	
Program Administrator	
Performance Objectives	
Laws & Authorities	
Finance & Administration	
Records Management	
Planning & Design	
Risk & Vulnerability Assessment	
Business Impact Analysis	
Incident Prevention	

Mitigation	
Planning Process	
Common Planning Requirements	
Resources Management	
Mutual Aid & Assistance	
Communications & Warning	
Operational Procedures	
Emergency Response	
Business Continuity & Recovery	
Crisis Communications, Public	
Information & Education	
Incident Management	
Emergency Operation Center (EOC)	
Training & Education	
Testing & Exercises	
Program Improvement	
Program Review	
Corrective Action	

### **Sharing Best Practices**

Partnerships should seek to strengthen collaboration by communicating and working with all partners regularly to sharing best practices through forums, discussions, or other formats. Partners value the chance to learn and discuss other partners’ techniques. It is a way to sustain partnerships and strengthen partners’ abilities to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate against disasters.

When sharing best practices, partners should recognize one another’s contributions. This will demonstrate that those contributions are noticed, appreciated, and effectively support emergency management efforts. Overall, it fosters a positive environment and encourages collaboration, trust, and sharing of information.

### **Reevaluating the Partnership**

As partnerships develop over time, they should reevaluate the value proposition after their initial establishment.

In order to reevaluate the value proposition, the partnership should solicit input on partners’ needs and assess partners’ current capabilities. These changing needs and capabilities will become evident by engaging in the activities above, as well as emergency communications, and information and resource sharing.

Possible changes include:

- Risks faced by partners
- Available resources
- Increase/decrease in partners
- Effectiveness of original plan

- Priorities

## **Assessing Partnership Effectiveness**

In order to assess their effectiveness, partnerships should ask themselves the following questions regularly during the partnership's lifetime:

- Do partners communicate regularly?
- Do all partners regularly contribute their expertise and resources?
- Does the partnership have regularly scheduled activities?
- Is the partnership working to meet actionable goals and objectives?

If the answers to these questions are negative, partnerships should reevaluate how they engage partners.

## **Being Prepared to Make Changes**

Partnerships may need to revise their purpose and objectives after reevaluating their value. They may need to update their joint emergency plans to reflect changes in needs and capabilities.

Imagine how the mission and joint plan would change in this scenario.

A strong partnership between State, local and private organizations focuses primarily on disaster preparedness for severe weather and flooding in a Midwestern U.S. city. However, this city had been chosen to host a major political convention involving many high-profile, national candidates, which changes the partnership's priorities and the risks involved. An event like this would require shifts in resources, additional training, increased communication between agencies, and a high level of coordination.

## **When is a Partnership in Trouble?**

When assessing the effectiveness of partnerships, there are several signs that a partnership may be in trouble. If a partnership sees one of the following, immediate action to correct the issue should be taken:

### **Increased cost to a partner**

Conflicts and disputes between partners can occur when one or more partners feel that they contribute more to the partnership than they previously agreed upon. This occurs when unexpected costs arise and there is a need to increase use of a partner's resources. Costs may be caused by external circumstances or because other partners are not doing their share. In either case, the cost of engaging in the partnership may be inequitable among partners. As a result, some partners may feel taken advantage of in the partnership.

### **Lack of communication**

If communication is poor or infrequent or if partners become less responsive to requests for participation or resources, then partner engagement is likely low. Poor communication may be a result of partners' disinterest in the partnership or merely a function of an internal change in the partner organization. Whatever the case, a lack of communication can also contribute to misunderstandings over roles, expectations, and responsibilities.

## **Addressing Partnerships in Trouble**

Partnerships where partners do not communicate efficiently or contribute will have a harder time meeting its objectives and effectively supporting emergency management efforts. These problems can be addressed by reengaging partners in a positive way and reevaluating the value proposition, as enumerated earlier in this lesson.

This will give them a chance to voice their own needs and priorities, and bring up any conflicts or problems. Furthermore, constantly communicating with and engaging partners will help to head off conflicts or problems in the partnership.

## **Lesson Summary**

This lesson presented the following topics:

- Strategies to develop partnership capabilities
- How to assess the partnership effectiveness