

# Importance-Performance Analysis of the FEMA Next-Generation Core Competencies

Kimberly Campbell, Sarah Custer, Mary Jo Flynn-Neveins, Robert Granzow III, Kristy Moore, and Alex Schubek

Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Emergency Training Center, National Emergency Management Executive Academy Cohort XI Group 3



Non-Competitive

## ABSTRACT

Future investment in Emergency Management (EM) as a profession needs to include champions and a clearly defined leading sponsor to (a) facilitate a review process to confirm existing core competencies, (b) implement a systematic or periodic review to ensure their relevancy and currency, and to (c) connect them with the proper audiences to serve the diverse frameworks of today's Emergency Managers. Research into this matter asked if the current Next Generation Core Competencies (NGCC) for the Emergency Manager are relevant to the workforce of today and that of tomorrow. The team used a mixed-method approach to study the importance and performance of the current Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) NGCC knowledge with (a) current practitioners, (b) higher education programs, and with (c) National Emergency Management Academy (NEMA) curriculums. A review of current related literature, interviews with key stakeholders and practitioners in the field, an evaluation of thirty (30) colleges and university programs and the three (3) NEMA curricula, and a survey reflecting the participation of 388 professionals in the field were conducted to identify if gaps exist in the current NGCC and what they need to be in 2023 and beyond. The survey validates the thirteen (13) NGCCs in Feldman et al. (2017) as vital to today's profession. Recommendations emerging from this study include (a) opportunities for further research on how to standardize the EM profession and (b) requiring a coordinated effort to ensure the involvement of various stakeholders, including higher education institutions, professional associations, accrediting bodies, and government agencies in the furtherance of this study's effort to assure programmatic accuracy and relevancy of the NGCC initiatives in the future.

## INTRODUCTION

As a profession and distinct workforce in the United States (U.S.), EM is not recognized for the specialized skills, knowledge, and training required to serve in the 10,600 EM director positions held in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Contributing to this quagmire, EM does not possess an accrediting body or oversight to govern a set standard to practice within the profession. Emergency Managers today work in a distinct and organized manner that requires specialized training. Our findings indicate a need to reassess and reevaluate the core competencies required in the current professional environment.

### Competencies that Build the Individual

- Operate within the Emergency Management Framework, Principles, and Body of Knowledge
- Possess Critical Thinking
- Abide by Professional Ethics
- Continual Learning

### Competencies that Build the Practitioner

- Scientific Literacy
- Geographic Literacy
- Sociocultural Literacy
- Technological Literacy
- Systems Literacy

### Competencies that Build Relationships

- Disaster Risk Management
- Community Engagement
- Governance and Civics
- Leadership

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Are the 2017 Next Generation Core Competencies for EM Professionals relevant for Emergency Management practitioners to successfully operate in the evolving work environment, and what additional investments may be required to further professionalize the career field?

## METHODOLOGY

The research focuses on evaluating the relevance of the 2017 Next Generation Core Competencies for Emergency Management Professionals published by Feldman et al. (2017). A survey was distributed electronically and included 12 quantitative questions and one qualitative. Distribution was via email to known network contacts as well as listservs and social media to a sum of 139,713, inclusive of duplicate memberships. A snowball sampling method asked survey respondents to assist in distributing the survey to known emergency management contacts.

## RESULTS

### Respondent Demographics

Respondents were predominantly mid-career, local government with master degrees (n=388).

- 73.06% government employees
- 39.90% local government
- 57.51% mid-level employees
- 52.59% master degree
- 23.62% had 6-10 years of experience
- 51.3% no academy training
- 26 different states represented
- 34.97% were somewhat familiar with core competencies
- 41.49% had not heard of the competencies before the survey

### Importance-Performance Analysis

Three questions used the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) on a seven-point Likert scale. The data were graphed on an Importance-Performance quadrant chart (Figure 1).

All respondents' competency means were plotted in Quadrant II, "Keep Up the Good Work" (Figure 2). EM Framework had the highest Performance rating (M= 6.77), and Critical Thinking (M=6.77) had the highest Importance rating.

Additional IPA were plotted for Basic Academy, Advanced Academy, Executive Academy, and Non-Academy participants. Of the remaining groups, the only group that had points plotted in a quadrant other than Quadrant II was the Executive Academy Respondents (n=28) (Figure 3). Three competencies appear in Quadrant I, "Concentrate here" within the Executive Academy responses, include: Governance (M=6.74, 3.77), Sociocultural (M=6.29, 3.91), and Scientific (M=6.07, 3.74). The remaining responses appear in Quadrant II, "Keep up the good work."

Figure 1  
Importance-Performance  
Quadrant Description

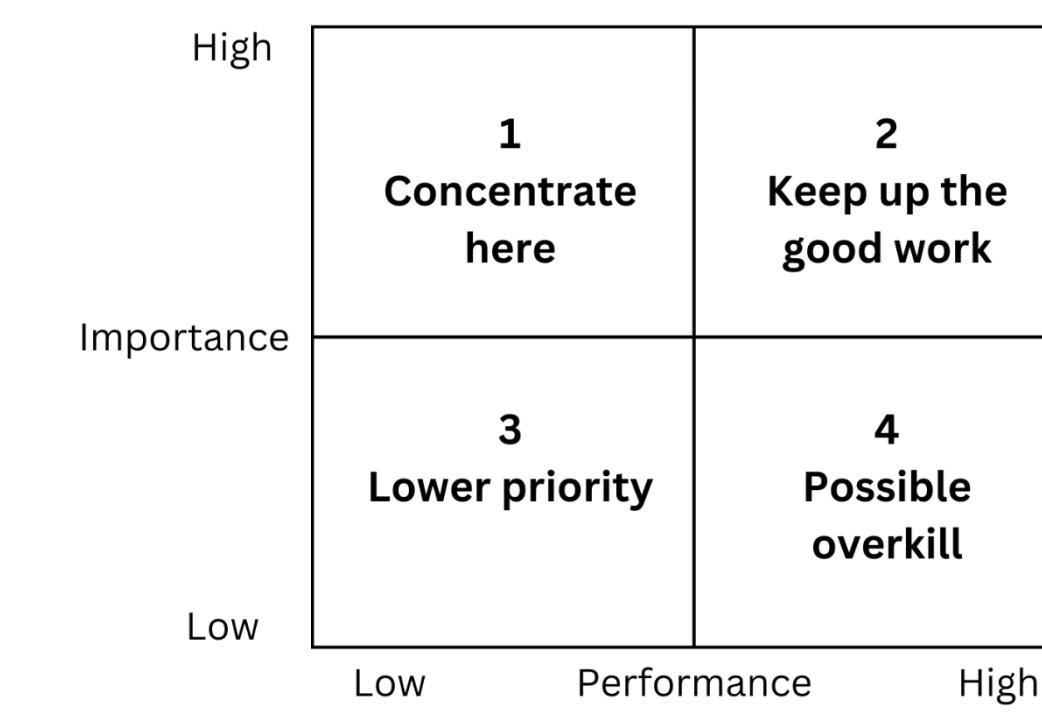


Figure 2  
All Respondents

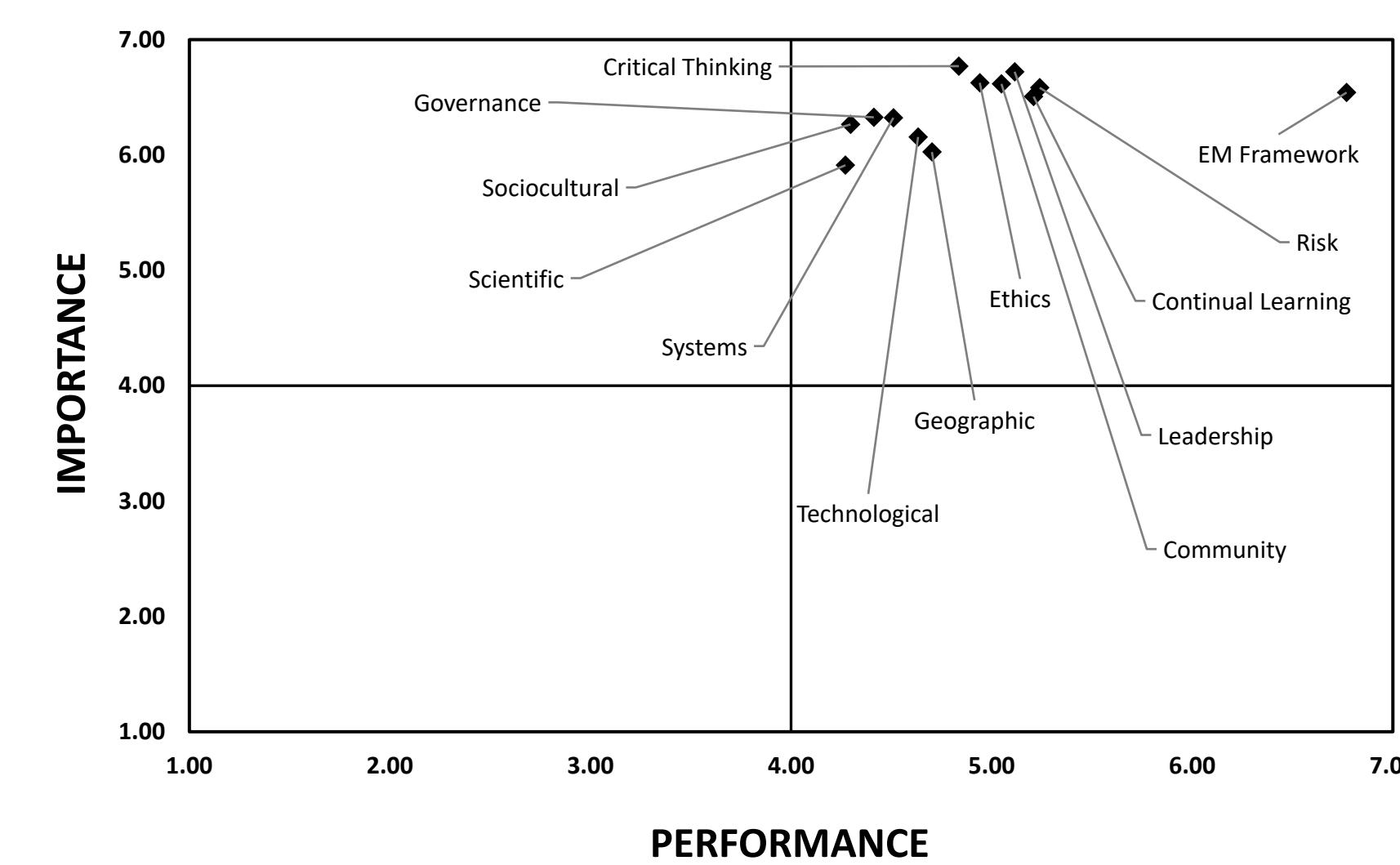


Figure 3  
Executive Academy Respondents

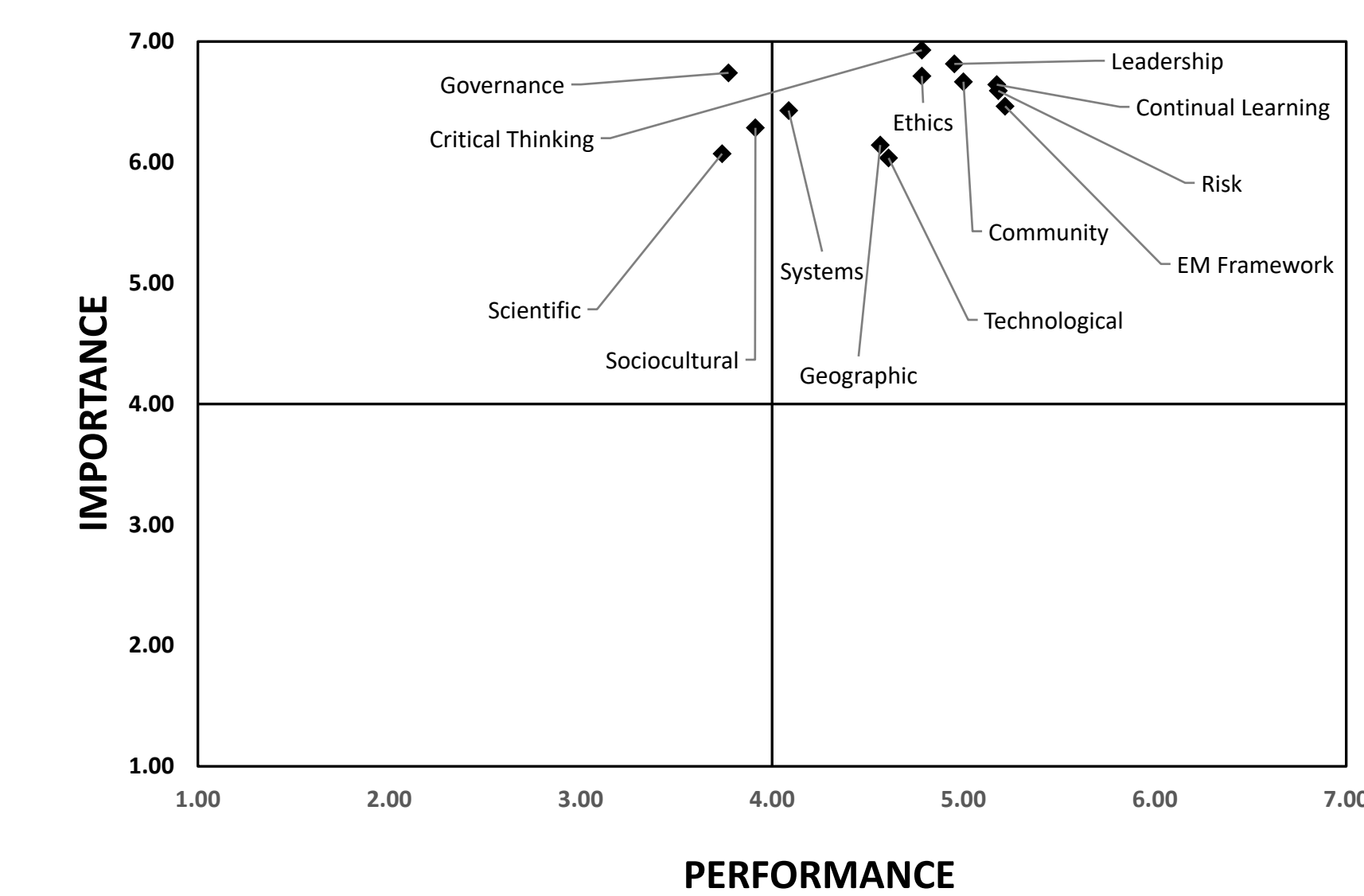
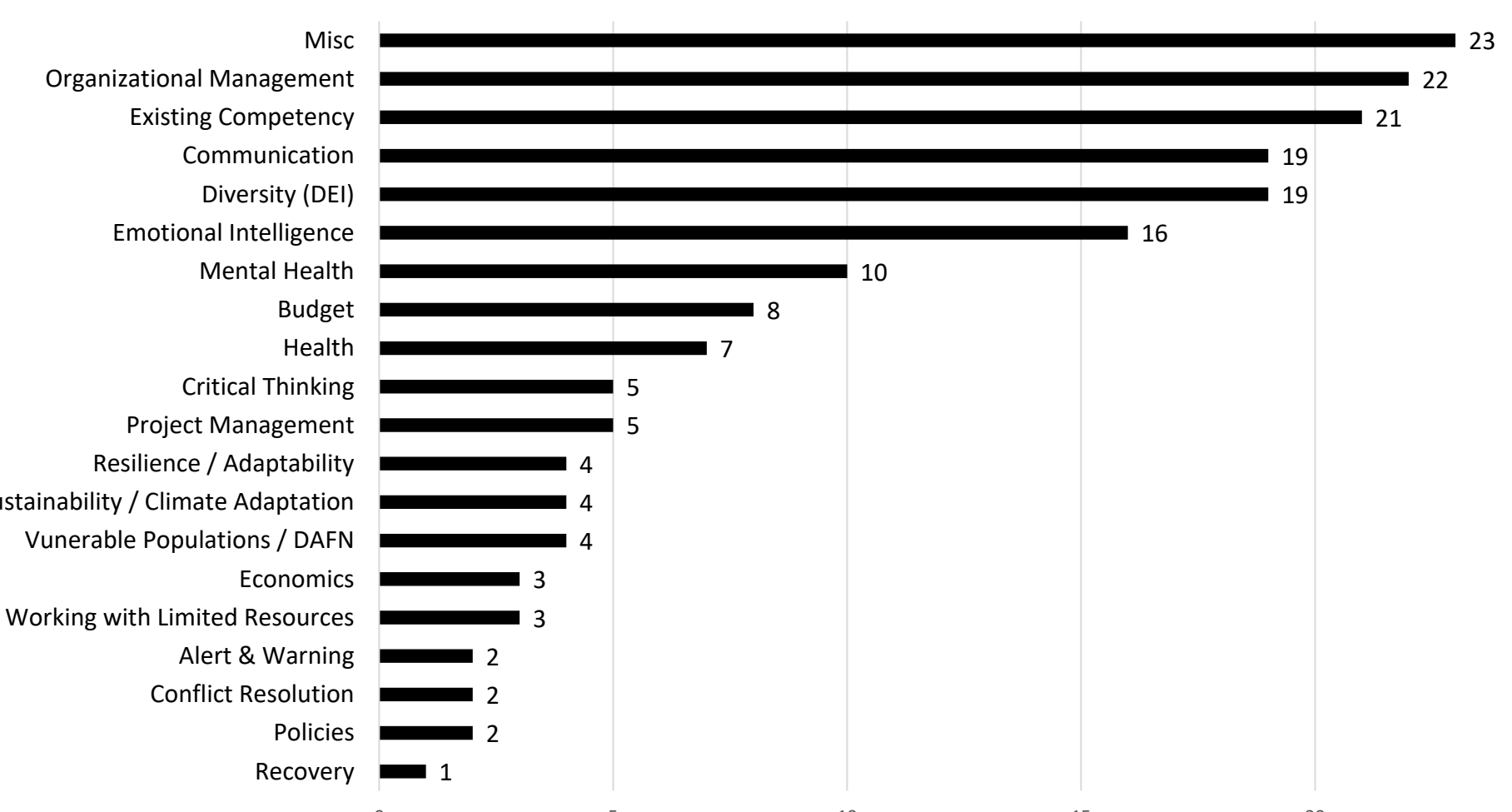


Figure 4  
Recommended Competencies



## CONCLUSION

Future investment in Emergency Management (EM) as a profession should include more champions and a clearly defined leading sponsor to (a) facilitate a review process to confirm existing core competencies, (b) implement a systematic or periodic review to assure their relevancy and currency, and to (c) connect them with the proper audiences to appropriately serve the diverse frameworks of today's Emergency Managers. The research conducted for this paper explored the relationship among the existing core competencies, how professionals perceive the industry is meeting these competencies, and how higher education and the NEMA curriculums integrate competencies in program design. The literature review revealed that there is an effort behind linking the EM core competencies and higher education and training institutes. The Importance Performance Analysis showed there is agreement among professionals in the elevated levels of importance and performance of each NGCC, validating that the 2017 NGCC remains relevant to EM practitioners to perform in the current and evolving work environment. The interviews revealed how key educational and professional organizational (IAEM) stakeholders use the NGCC to champion certification improvements and professionalization for Emergency Managers. Finally, the sample survey of the colleges and institutes and the review of the NEMA curriculum showed how the NGCC is incorporated into program design. Overall, this research effort shows a large investment has, and is, being made in the use of the NGCC across stakeholders in the community. However, with a joint effort and a clearly defined leading sponsor, the investment becomes a strategic approach that can be used toward the larger goal of professionalization.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for investments

- Establish a task force involving academia, professional associations, practitioners, and stakeholders to review, research, and standardize frameworks related to core competencies for EM.
- Investment in the development of an academic accreditation body that incorporates the standardization of core competencies.
- Incentivize colleges and universities to standardize curriculum around core competencies through accreditation.
- Incorporate core competencies into the criteria for the IAEM-USA Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) and Associate Emergency Manager (AEM) programs.
- Consider future development of a professional license for EM professionals, integrating NGCC and aligning with a standardized core curriculum, similar to the Nursing Profession.

### Recommendations for future research

- Identify the barriers of the EM practitioner to acquiring core competencies through training or higher education.
- Include further analysis on the potential new competencies identified in the survey.
- Further investigation into the variance between Executive Academy and all other groups Importance-Performance Analysis.
- Core competencies were based on higher education perspective, evaluate the model applicability to EM practitioners.
- Work with HiEd through FEMA to gain access to their annual survey data and incorporate that data into future recommendations.