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The Community Inventory Worksheet: Empowering Hazard Mitigation Planners

This research proposes a Community Inventory Worksheet as an element of FEMA’s risk assessment process outlined in the “Local Mitigation Planning Handbook” (2013) used as guidance in developing and updating Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs). The proposed tool, currently a fillable one-page Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) with a two-page accompanying guide and single page supplemental, permits planners to conduct comprehensive, whole community analysis for both natural and human-induced hazards. The purpose is to empower local planners and emergency managers to identify community components, bolster stakeholder involvement, detect vulnerabilities, and generate accurate, actionable mitigation strategies. The primary intentions of the Community Inventory Worksheet are five-fold: 1) allow any person (regardless of emergency and disaster management prerequisite knowledge) to use the form effectively, 2) make starting and sustaining an HMP easier and more attainable at the local level 3) help planners have a holistic understanding of all community components, their vulnerabilities, and interconnectedness, 4) identify and remedy stakeholder gaps, and 5) help enhance current mitigation planning guidance as well as the review process. With further development and implementation, the Community Inventory Worksheet may not only improve hazard mitigation planning, but community resilience as well.

Presentation Theme: The presentation theme is specific to empowering local hazard mitigation planners by utilizing the Community Inventory Worksheet to better create a comprehensive understanding of community components and stakeholder incorporation/participation. This tool can be applied universally by municipalities, counties, states, tribes, private industry, and/or institutions. It can be used to enhance existing HMPs or provide a starting point for beginning one anew. The purpose is for mitigation planners to better understand existing community vulnerabilities and interdependence in order to create more actionable mitigation strategies while also increasing stakeholder involvement.

History: Research was utilized to generate the proposed Community Inventory Worksheet. It was built upon existing published research and guidance, feedback from practitioners, and an examination of Oklahoma's Cleveland County 2014-2019 HMP. The concept was initiated as a graduate capstone project while the presenter earned her Master's in Emergency and Disaster Management from Georgetown University (2016-2017). The concept was presented both during a poster presentation at Georgetown in 2017 as well as a break-out speaking session at the 2018 National Tornado Summit in Oklahoma City. It was further developed while attending FEMA's National Emergency Management Advanced Academy (NEMAA) (2018-2019). Currently, the tool has transitioned from the concept stage to a working prototype being distributed to the field for further refinement and an understanding of any limitations associated with the Community Inventory Worksheet. Ultimately, the goal is to incorporate the Community Inventory Worksheet, if it proves successful, as an Appendix to FEMA's "Local Mitigation Planning Handbook".

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