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## *Preparedness: A Principled Approach to Return on Investment* **Overview**

### *The Problem*

Challenging economic conditions have meant that, in addition to the Federal government, local, state, tribal, and territory jurisdictions have also been carefully examining where they will invest their resources. All resource investments are being evaluated including those related to emergency management. Specifically, local, state, tribal, and territory jurisdictions, and Congress want to know “How can we tell if we are getting a return on our investments in emergency management?”

The answer to this question has been historically delivered through reciting anecdotal stories or visually displaying data related to the things we can count—what we have purchased and activities we have undertaken—in maps, charts, tables, and graphs. Unfortunately, these stories and data have had little meaning absent a framework against which to interpret their meaning.

Jurisdictions at all levels invest in emergency management preparedness activities to ensure, to the degree possible, that their jurisdiction is ready to efficiently and effectively respond to and recover from hazard events. Thus, the question we must answer when considering return on investment related to emergency management is, “To what extent are we prepared?” To this point jurisdictions at all levels have not been able to answer this question satisfactorily.

### *What A Measurement System Must Entail*

If we desire a system of measurement that allows us to assess the extent to which we are prepared as a result of our investments in emergency management, then we must ensure that the system must be simple, relevant, and valued across stakeholder groups (including Congress, FEMA and state, territory, tribal, and local jurisdictions). The system and any associated tools must facilitate the local jurisdiction’s understanding of the status of its preparedness and what remains to be accomplished as well as the federal government’s understanding of the extent to which the nation is prepared.

IAEM recently released a document entitled, *Preparedness: A Principled Approach to Return on Investment*, which tackles this important issue by articulating a meaningful system of measurement for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) that IAEM believes will also be simple, relevant, and valued. The EMPG program, in place since the 1950’s is intended to be a 50-50 matching program between the Federal government and participating local, state, tribal, and territory jurisdictions designed to build capacity at all levels of government.

### *The Proposal*

It may be easiest to introduce what a meaningful framework against which to measure preparedness would entail if we first begin at the end with IAEM’s vision of what a prepared jurisdiction (at any level) would be able to do in the aftermath of hazard events.

We know what we want. We want jurisdictions across the nation to be able to effectively mitigate, respond to, and recover from hazard events. We want to limit injuries and deaths, property and infrastructure loss,

and environmental damage after a hazard event. We want jurisdictions to manage hazard events at the lowest possible level and with their own resources if possible. We want jurisdictions that can efficiently and effectively utilize their resources and the resources of supporting jurisdictions to get what they need, when they need it, where they need it. We want jurisdictions to be able to quickly get their jurisdictions back to normal and better than normal if possible. And, we want to know that this vision will be consistently achieved in the wake of hazard events. Making this vision a reality is the job of emergency management.

How emergency management makes this vision a reality is not adequately captured through anecdotal stories or reports of the number of equipment purchased or plans produced. Simple stories and numbers do not alone paint a picture of preparedness nor do they get at the heart of what ultimately allow jurisdictions to achieve our vision.

Consider the following description of what a truly prepared community would look like.

A prepared jurisdiction is one that engages in preparedness actions guided by professional emergency managers and professional emergency management programs. The jurisdiction's preparedness actions are driven by the risks that they face. The jurisdiction has comprehensively considered all known hazards, vulnerabilities, and possible impacts and actively engages in preparedness actions related to mitigation, response, and recovery. The jurisdiction is progressive by incorporating innovations, technologies, and best practices as they ready themselves for future hazard events. The jurisdiction's preparedness actions have provided a legitimate basis upon which to act in the wake of hazard events but are not so rigid as to lack the flexibility to respond to unanticipated issues. The stakeholders in the jurisdiction (e.g., fire, police, public works, elected officials) are integrated by their use of common technologies, systems, and management processes. The jurisdiction operates in a collaborative organizational environment wherein inclusiveness, relationships based on trust, ongoing interactions between stakeholders, open communication, and consensus-based decision making are the norm. And, finally, the prepared jurisdiction would be coordinated; the stakeholders within the jurisdiction would know and accept their roles, have identified the procedures necessary to fulfill their roles, and have practiced the fulfillment of their roles in conjunction with other stakeholders.

A prepared jurisdiction is the goal of every emergency management practitioner and every emergency management program. Bringing about the description above is the reason emergency management exists. The EMPG program allows emergency management to work toward these outcomes; therefore, our objectives and measures associated with EMPG should be designed to measure progress towards these goals.

IAEM suggests in *Preparedness* that a framework of preparedness objectives based on the accepted *Principles of Emergency Management* (2007) should be used to derive meaningful objectives and measures for the preparedness grant program most valued by local emergency managers--the Emergency Management Performance Grant program (EMPG). This argument is supported by decades of disaster and emergency management research. The fact is the things we buy and the activities we undertake with preparedness funds *are* critical because they contribute to our ability to achieve these outcomes.

*Preparedness* suggests in part one a principle-based process to developing measures of return on investment for EMPG. The second part lays out a cohesive framework of outcomes. Appendix A illustrates these outcomes with sample objectives and measures. The full document is available at: <http://www.iaem.com/PreparednessROI/>.

#### *The Goal of the Document*

We encourage Congress to review and FEMA to adopt the framework presented by IAEM as a means to assess preparedness and return on investment for EMPG and derive appropriate objectives and meaningful measures.