



# MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING TOOLKIT

Mapping approaches to community engagement for  
preparedness in Australia

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# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS TOOLKIT

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

This toolkit builds on National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: Community Engagement Framework Handbook 6 (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2013) by providing details of:

- The Australian generative model of community engagement, a framework developed in 2019 based on current community engagement for preparedness approaches used by Australian agencies
- A series of emergency management-tested community engagement techniques ranging from information campaigns through to community development and community led approaches

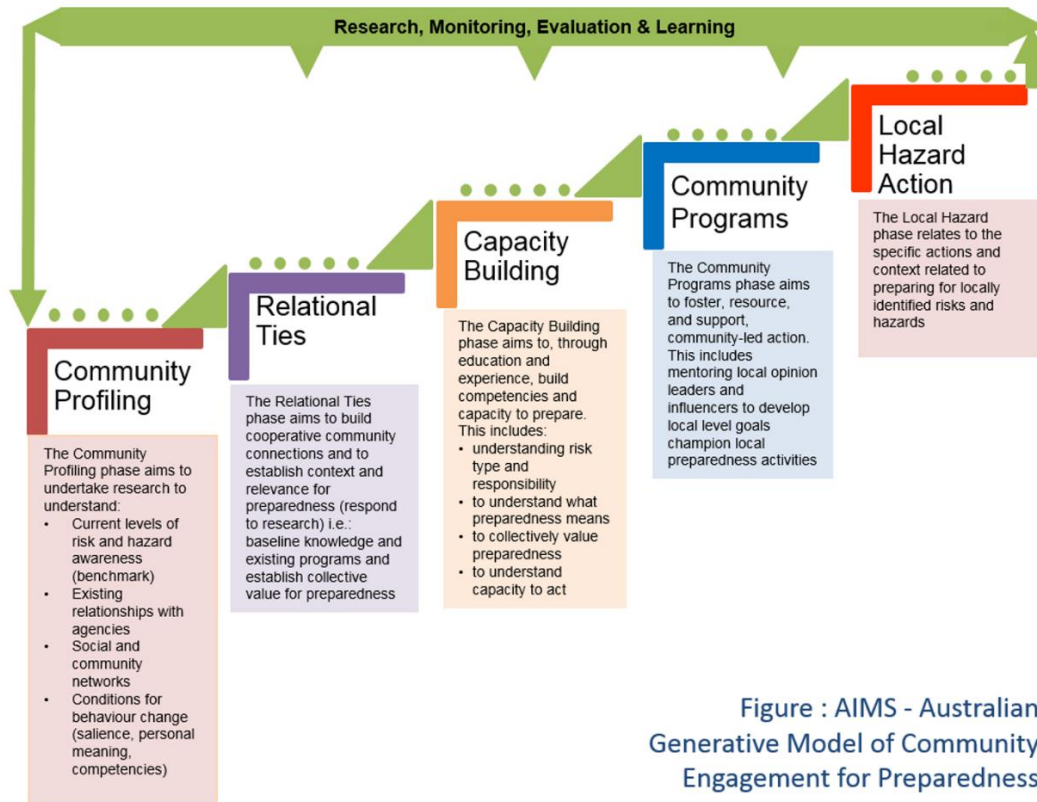
The model travels through a series of levels of community engagement planning and implementation, which helps practitioners to map and undertake the best community engagement approach for a specific community.

The base articles used to build the suite of techniques were found during a systematic literature review of preparedness activity. A systematic literature review is a rigorous, procedural approach to drawing out all available literature on a topic. The value of a systematic literature review is that it provides a wide-ranging view of the accessible knowledge around a topic. Articles were included based on whether they measured impact of engagement techniques (such as preparedness levels, lives saved), and the quality of the research. The full list of articles can be found in the references section.



## 1.2 AIM OF THE TOOLKIT

This monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) toolkit is used to measure the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the **Australian Generative Model of Community Engagement for Preparedness** (see figure 1). The 11 MEL tools and materials provide the foundational competencies for local agencies to track, report and use MEL data in preparedness activities.





## 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

How do you know that you are producing results in your project? This may seem like an easy question but it is one of the most difficult ones that you need to answer. Claiming results is one thing but proving those results is another matter. This monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) toolkit introduces the concept of MEL. It will explain how to plan, manage and report your engagement results. See Appendix 1: Glossary of MEL Terms for any terms that you may be unfamiliar with. Also see the Australian Disaster Resilience (ADR) Glossary for additional terms.

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

Monitoring is a continuous assessment of program implementation and outcomes related to agreed schedules. Monitoring provides managers and other stakeholders with continuous feedback on implementation, identifies actual or potential successes and problems as early as possible to facilitate timely adjustments to program operation.

Program monitoring usually occurs at many levels, in varying forms, and in close collaboration with an agency's partners and community stakeholders. In other words, monitoring is the daily or ongoing review of program activities. For your program, monitoring may include such activities as:

- Counting the number of people trained
- Counting the number of person days of training
- Counting the number of events, seminars or meetings completed
- Improved knowledge about a topic or hazard
- Improved understanding of some preparedness activity
- Improved capacity to do some preparedness activity

Monitoring activities help the agency's engagement team know WHAT they are doing. Evaluation is the second part of the MEL equation.

### 2.2 WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is a periodic assessment of a program's relevance, performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and outcomes (both expected and unexpected) in relation to stated objectives. Interim evaluations during implementation are a first review of progress, a prognosis of a program's likely effects, and a way to identify necessary adjustments in program design. End of project evaluations are part of a project's reporting responsibilities. These end of project evaluations include an assessment of a project's effects and their potential sustainability.



## **2.3 WHY MONITOR, EVALUATE AND LEARN?**

Monitoring, evaluation and learning are useful engagement tools because they allow organisations to step back and judge the quality of the accomplishments of a project and understand why and how progress is or is not being made. MEL guides planning, implementation, and review of your engagement activities.





### 3. KEY CONCEPTS IN MEL

There are a lot of terms in MEL but there are about a dozen that are fundamental to conducting meaningful MEL.

**Results** are often difficult to measure so we break them down into objectives. You can find more background in Appendix 2: How to Write Objectives to Measure Goals and Impacts.

**A goal** is an overall destination. It can be broad and aspirational.

**Objectives** are more concrete and viewed as stepping stones or targets to achieve that contribute to the general goal of a project. Many projects will have two or three objectives and if these objectives are met, then the project goal will be accomplished. For instance, a goal of a project might be enhanced preparedness for vulnerable communities.

This goal is hard to quantify but “enhanced preparedness for vulnerable communities” can happen from a causal chain of several related activities.

- Objective 1: To increase the number of people by x% in vulnerable communities who have information about emergency preparedness
- Objective 2: To increase the number of families by x% in vulnerable communities who have an emergency plan

Both of these objectives are measurable.

In order to achieve results, your project requires a meaningful mix of **Output and Outcome** indicators. Sometimes long-term projects also include **Impact indicators**.

**Indicators** are quantitative or qualitative variables that provide reliable means to measure a particular phenomenon or attribute. An indicator provides a sign or a signal that something exists or is true. It is used to show the presence or state of a situation or condition. There are three different kinds of formal indicators:

**Output Indicators:** The products, goods, and services that result from an intervention. These are short-term indicators.

- Number of people trained or attended an event

**Outcome Indicators:** A result or effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, program, or policy. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. Some projects may create process or surrogate indicators that provide evidence that although an outcome has not yet occurred, the team is on the right path.

- Increased capacity or knowledge about a hazard

**Impact Indicators:** A result or effect that is caused by or attributable to a project or program. Impact is often used to refer to long term or higher-level effects of a program that occur in the medium or long term, and can be intended or unintended and positive or negative.

- Youth have greater participation in emergency preparedness



In order to report on the accomplishment of an objective, programs must collect baselines and benchmarks on indicators.

All projects start at a **baseline** and then track progress over the length of the project. Agency staff must collect baseline information before they begin any new effort. The research conducted before an engagement effort is called formative research. Formative research is valuable because it identifies the beginning point, or baseline, from which you are starting. Baselines are also known as benchmarks. The value of collecting basic information during the formative or baseline stage is that it provides a mark of where you started. This process is the only real way to establish any type of causal relationship between your program's activities and real improvements in your community.

**Benchmarks** provide an important tool for monitoring program impact. A benchmark is a standard against which program results are measured. **See Appendix 1 for the Glossary of MEL terms.**

Benchmarks are a structured approach for identifying the best practices from industry and government, and comparing and adapting them to an organisation's operations. Benchmarks tell us how we are doing on different activities and how those activities contribute to program objectives. Benchmarks are valuable because they allow us to compare different programs.

Each project brings a unique mix of inputs. **Inputs** are the resources provided for program implementation. Examples include money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc. When a project schedules an activity, brings in a trainer, or uses its facilities to provide assistance to the community, it is creating an input.

**Targets** (setting, reviewing, and revising) are the specified objectives that you want to achieve. A target is set after the baseline or benchmark is determined. It is quantified by a number or an increase. Targets can be measured based on the required reporting period. Engagement projects may want to report on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis. Targets need to be realistic and achievable.

Targets should be reviewed yearly. In some reviews, you may need to revise the target upward (you can achieve more than you thought) or downward (certain assumptions about the indicator are not being met and you cannot achieve what you intended).

**Achievement** is what you accomplish in your activities. It is often a number representing how many, how much or how often something happened.

## 4. HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT FOR PREPAREDNESS EVALUATION

This toolkit is a supplement to the report on the BNHCRC 2019 Tactical Research Fund project: *Mapping Approaches to Community Engagement for Preparedness in Australia* (Johnston, Ryan, & Taylor, 2019).

It provides the 11 tools to monitor and evaluate **the Australian Generative Model of Community Engagement for Preparedness** (Johnston, Ryan, & Taylor, 2019) and the tools found in the Community Engagement Toolkit.

There are five stages of Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in the Australian Generative Community Engagement Model.

- **Community Profiling**- This stage allows agency staff to gain a sense of the strengths and areas for improvement in your community. This formative research provides a baseline to measure the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the later phases
- **Relational Ties** – This is a community that needs to build relationships and knowledge of risk and is one that your agency and other organisations have had little to do with. It will be low on the preparedness scale with either no or little recognition of risk, or is a community that is aware of the risk, but not sure where to start to get ready
- **Capacity Building** – This is a community that is ready for engagement. It is where relationships are forming or pre-existing, and there are segments of this community that are motivated, and on the verge of (or at) medium levels of preparedness
- **Community Programs** – Communities at this level are generally highly knowledgeable about their risk and are actively working to reduce the risk. These communities seek guidance and support, but the agency may be moving from the role of facilitator to critical friend
- **Local Hazard Action**- The local hazard action phase is a "tailoring" opportunity for specific hazards. Everything that goes before this phase is useful for all hazards. This model suggests that no matter where/what the risk or hazard is, there are fundamental approaches to CE that span all types of communities - and it is at the top of the model where communities seek or agencies give very specific hazard information and guidance on action

Each phase of the Generative Model of Community Engagement has a group of MEL tools to help your agency monitor and evaluate progress.

### 4.1 COMMUNITY PROFILING PHASE:



In this phase you will set baselines, develop benchmarks and set agency objectives. All projects start at a baseline and then track progress over the length of the project. The value of collecting basic information during the formative or baseline stage is that it provides a mark of where you started. This process



is the only real way to establish any type of causal relationship between your program's activities and real improvements in your community. You can collect baselines from:

- Past reports from your agency and other partner organisations such as IGEM QLD and other reports on previous hazards. Within these reports you will find benchmarks

A benchmark is a standard against which program results are measured. Benchmarks are a structured approach for identifying the best practices from government agencies, and comparing and adapting them to an organisation's operations. Benchmarks tell us how we are doing on different activities and how those activities contribute to program objectives.

There are a variety of existing databases for you to consult to establish baselines and benchmarks. For instance, we recommend that you visit:

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036)

These data will provide census data that can be used to profile your targeted community.

You should conduct a **social media analysis** of different groups in your community. For example, you can use analytics software like Hootsuite or analytics on your Facebook page to identify influencers or opinion leaders in the community. You can also join other community-focused Facebook pages to learn more about community influencers. Use this analysis to look at your engagement (comments, likes, shares) and to identify ways to improve social media outreach. See the **Social Media Analysis tool in the Appendix 3**.

You should also conduct a **Media Analysis** to examine past media coverage of hazard topics as well identify key influencers in the media who should be engaged as part of your relational tie strategy. **See the Media Analysis tool in the Appendix 4**. As you review news about hazards, your agency and other related topics, look at the themes and the storytelling strategies that emerge. Identify the messages, key themes, heroes, villains, and influencers who regularly appear in the news coverage.

We have found that Key Informant Interviews with community leaders, peer agencies and institutions, and aspirational peers (agencies that are ahead of you in terms of processes, outcomes and reputation) are useful MEL tools at this phase. A key informant interview (KII) identifies people with experience or knowledge for semi structured interviews. You can find more background on how to identify and interview experts and community members in **Appendix 5: Key Informant Interviews**.

Finally, you can use **Surveys** to gather baseline data about knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Survey data play a key role in monitoring and evaluating the later phases of relational ties, capacity building, community programs and local hazard action. Surveys are valuable monitoring, evaluation, and learning tools for emergency preparedness programs because they provide numeric data that answer questions about public knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, usage

patterns, and trends. Surveys are often required to provide data for outcome and impact level indicators.

See the Appendix 6 for **Survey Research Toolkit** for emergency management agencies and community engagement officers. It is written for field staff that must create a reliable survey on tight schedules and budgets. See Appendix 7 for an example of an engagement for preparedness survey.

Once you have collected the profiling data from the benchmarks, ABS, social media, news media, KIs and surveys, you can complete the **Community Competency Index** found in Appendix 9.

The Community Competency Index tool provides a structured approach to score your community on the different informational, capacities, and program competencies. You will use this tool during the Community Profiling stage and again at the end of the Community Capacity stage.

## 4.2 RELATIONAL TIES PHASE



Once you have a good handle on the demographic and psychographic composition of the community it is time to understand the existing relationships within the community.

The Relational Ties Phase uses MEL to measure community connectedness.

Using your community profiling data, media content analysis and social media analysis, you will look for trends and key messages identifying the major players in your community. Your agency should then conduct Relational Mapping to look for relationships across the community. An engagement approach to disaster preparedness supports and empowers a community. Using communication to build, maintain and change relationships is at the heart of engagement. There are different types of relationships that your organisation draws upon in its activities. Relationships provide information, resources, and access to people. Relationships fall along a continuum of strong, weak and absent ties.

**Strong ties**, like your friends, family, and co-workers, are well developed, high trusting relationships with those who share common values and objectives. These are the people and groups that you can count on. Examples of strong ties in disaster preparedness might include fire services, SES, or community partners dedicated to the same goals as your organisation. Engagement tactics can strengthen strong ties.

**Weak ties**, are more like acquaintances, and mean that individuals, groups or organisations are not well connected or only connect occasionally. Weak ties are not necessarily bad. Having a lot of weak relationships can be valuable as those weak ties often have resources and access to information that you do not have. For agencies to be effective, they need a range of strong and weak relationship ties. Engagement tactics may help convert weak ties to strong ties.

**Absent ties**, are like friends of friends, they are non-existent relationships, but you know that they exist. Although no relationship exists at the moment, there is a



recognition that this group could be a valuable partner in disaster preparedness. Engagement tactics may help convert absent ties to weak ties.

Relationship mapping allows you to understand the different groups, organisations and institutions that have a role in your community's disaster preparedness. Relationship mapping is a diagnostic tool for identifying new or enhanced relationships. Once you understand the current status of relationships, you can use communication engagement tactics to further develop these relationships.

As a MEL tool, **Relational Mapping** can be used twice each year to identify new relationships, identify opportunities to strengthen existing relationships, and find ways to connect unconnected groups and partners. You should conduct relational mapping each year during the annual strategic planning meetings and during the half way mark of the year to look for progress in building stronger, more diverse relationships across the community. You can find a **Relational Mapping Exercise in Appendix 8**.

A related mapping MEL activity is Influencer and Opinion Leader Mapping. Instead of mapping inter organisational relationships, you would use the **Relational Mapping Exercise in Appendix 8** to identify people: cultural leaders, business leaders, government officials, media, and other people who have respect in the community. By building stronger ties with influencers, your agency can have both a broader and deeper connection to the community.

You would also repeat your social media and media analysis in this phase to look at evolving storytelling and messaging.

In the Relational Ties phase, you should also consider facilitating **Focus Group Discussions** with community members. Focus group discussions (FGD) are guided discussions about a particular topic, commonly involving six to ten people. As a qualitative research technique, focus groups can explore topics in some depth and answer the "how" and "why" questions that quantitative techniques cannot. They are a relatively short-term and cost-effective MEL tool for understanding of the range of attitudes and practices within a particular location or cultural setting, or among a particular social or demographic grouping.

Focus groups aim to encourage participants to talk with each other, rather than answer questions directly to the moderator. Group interaction is important because it shows how participants are thinking about the topic. The questions asked of the group are usually "focused" on one or two main topics, to get a more detailed understanding of them. They are also focused because participants usually share common characteristics, such as age, sex, educational background, religion, or something directly related to the topic being studied. This commonality encourages the group to speak more freely. The best focus groups seem "natural," but they are actually meticulously prepared and require skilled moderators, focused questions, and careful write up. While focus groups may be fun, they are also one of the most difficult research methods, requiring enormous amounts of work before, during, and after the sessions.

**You can find the Focus Group Toolkit in the Appendix 10.**



### 4.3 CAPACITY BUILDING PHASE



It is at the Capacity Building Phase that the community is ready for higher level of engagement. Relationships are forming or pre-existing, and there are segments of this community that are motivated, and on the verge of (or at) medium levels of preparedness.

The Capacity Building Phase means that your agency (and its partners) has been successful in building relationships across the community that provide information and other resources for preparedness. MEL in this phase directly relates to preparedness (whereas the other two phases were about gaining a sense of the profiles and relationships in the community).

MEL tools include a variety of checklists and indices to set baselines, track progress and revise programmatic activities directly relating to preparedness. MEL will track the outputs and outcomes using tools such as surveys for pre- and post-tests, KIs and even FGDs for activities such as:

- School visits
- Field trips
- Networking events
- Workshops, seminars and meetings

A lot of the MEL activity will collect outputs such as counting the number of people who attend or the change in knowledge from pre to post tests. But, you will want to also look for outcomes such as behaviour change. This is a good time to re-run the survey, the focus groups, the KIs and the relational mapping. Use the data from the Community Profiling and Relational Mapping phases as baselines and compare results after the engagement tactics of the Capacity Building Phase.

You should also rescore the Community Competency Index tool to look for changes in community preparedness.

### 4.4 COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Achieving the Community Programs phase is a real accomplishment. In this phase communities are generally highly knowledgeable about their risk and are actively working to reduce the risk. These communities seek guidance and support, but the agency may be moving from the role of facilitator to critical friend.

It is also a good time to develop a long-term Milestone Index to track how outputs become outcomes and impacts. The Milestone Index Tool is perfectly suited for the Community Programs Phase of the Australian Generative Engagement Model of Preparedness. You will find the **Milestone Index tool in Appendix 11**.

The Milestone Index (MI) is used to track progress on outcomes and impacts from cumulative, labour intensive, complex activities. It is commonly used as a monitoring and evaluation tool for tracking progress toward high-level legal or



political changes. Its purpose is to have agency members and community members identify in advance the key or milestone events as success indicators that must occur en route for the accomplishment of a long-term activity such as a law or policy. The Milestone Index provides a qualitative and quantitative tool that helps project staff to plan and then evaluate how their activities are contributing to such an outcome.

A milestone is achieved when the project moves through various stages of development and ultimately attains a rating that suggests it has reached sustainability.

The **principles** that underlie the Milestone Index are simple. Agency managers and members of the community who co design the program must identify a variety of sequential and non-sequential benchmark activities that must occur and capacities that must be put into place before a high-level impact can be achieved. By identifying all of the potential activities that need to occur and capacities that must be built, the project staff has a clear roadmap for achieving the outcome.

The Community Program phase is also good time to rerun the survey and the focus groups to collect data and anecdotal evidence that can be used to measure the objectives identified in the Community Profiling phase.

#### 4.5 LOCAL HAZARD ACTION PHASE



This is an appropriate phase to conduct evaluations of the first four phases. Evaluation assesses the extent to which a program achieves its outcome-oriented objectives. It focuses on outputs and outcomes (including unintended effects) to judge program effectiveness but may also assess program processes to understand how outcomes are produced.

The Local Hazard Action phase relates to the specific actions and context related to preparing for locally identified risks and hazards. Tactics and tools useful for local hazard action phase include specific risk type communication, messaging and action – relevant to the local risk/hazard type.

Evaluation of the local hazard action phase include:

- Community-based evaluation - Compare with benchmarking (community profile)
- Repeat survey and focus groups
- Agency -based evaluation – how well they performed. Map to agency objectives

#### **Bringing it All Together: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

The five phases of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) phase envelopes all phases of the Australian Generative Community Engagement Model. The linking of the steps under evaluation and monitoring symbolises the importance of MEL to inform, guide and measure community engagement actions by both community members and agencies responsible for community





preparedness. MEL also plays a key role in community understanding of self-efficacy and capacity building through the diagnostic and regulation function. This means that community members can understand where they are at in terms of their levels of preparedness.

The following pages of the toolkit provide step by step instructions on how to use each of the 11 MEL tools.



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## APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF MEL TERMS

### **Anecdotal information**

Anecdotal information is information that comes in the form of stories people remember that are relevant to the indicators you are interested in. They do not have scientific validity, but they can provide useful qualitative information.

### **Baseline data**

Baseline information comes from a study done before an intervention. It provides you with data (information) about the situation before an intervention. This information is very important when you get to monitoring and evaluation as it enables you to assess what difference the intervention has made.

### **Indicators**

Indicators are a measurable or tangible sign that something has been done. So, for example, an increase in the number of students passing is an indicator of an improved culture of learning and teaching. The means of verification (proof) is the officially published list of passes.

### **Opportunity costs**

Opportunity costs are the opportunities you give up when you decide to do one thing rather than another. For example, if you spend your money upgrading teachers, you give up the opportunity of using the money to buy more text books. You have to decide which is the better use of the money.

### **Outputs**

Outputs here usually include a draft written report, a verbal presentation, a final written report in hard copy and electronic form (specifying programme compatibility). They can also include interim reports, interview schedules that must be signed off by the client and so on.

### **Qualitative**

Qualitative data or information deals with how people feel about something, opinions, experiences, rather than with numbers (quantitative data).

### **Quantitative**

Quantitative data is numeric data such as numbers or statistics.

### **Rigorous**

Disciplined, thorough and done with honesty and integrity.

### **Sampling**

Sampling is a way of selecting who to speak to, who to interview, who to survey when you are doing an evaluation, and cannot cover all the cases that exist.



### **Secondary data**

Secondary data is information that already exists, collected by other people, organisations. If it comes from your own organisation it is primary data. Primary data is information collected by you – from other project stakeholders, the general population, your own observation and so on.

### **Structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews**

Structured interviews follow a fixed set of questions, unstructured interviews do not have any pre-prepared questions and semi-structured combine structured and unstructured, with the interviewer asking some set questions but adding others in order to follow a line of inquiry that comes up.

### **SWOT Analysis**

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Dealt with in detail in the toolkit: Overview of Planning.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is a way of confirming data by using several sources to reflect on/measure the same thing. For example, if the teachers, learners and parents in a school all praise the principal for being open-minded, this information is more likely to be acceptable in an evaluation than if only the teachers said so.



## APPENDIX 2: HOW TO WRITE OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS TO MEASURE GOALS AND IMPACTS

Goals are broad, general statements of a desired end-state or impacts. Goals are statements of what we want to accomplish. The details and how to achieve goals come later. Do not be tempted to move to objectives or strategies until goals have been clearly articulated.

Projects, programs, or campaigns may have one big goal or several modest goals. The duration and complexity of a project determines how many goals you should have.

Small group theory and decision theory tell us not to move to solutions a problem has been defined and goals established.

Goals tend to be about the far future, years rather than months. Changing people beliefs, values, or attitudes (persuasion) takes times.

Objectives are the steps needed to accomplish agency goals. Influencing or changing the behaviours, knowledge, and attitudes of individuals and communities is what leads to achieving goals.

Objectives are specific to particular publics, measurable, and meet specific time constraints. Objectives need to be measurable, refer to a specific public/action, and achievable by a specific date/timeframe.

- Measuring objectives requires pre-test (benchmark) data and post-test data
- Quantitative objectives are preferable to qualitative objectives

**Behavioural Objectives** try to modify how people act or behave. Behavioural objectives represent the behaviours that are necessary to make the goals happen.

Often several objectives are necessary to accomplish each goal.

**Attitudinal Objectives** try to modify how people feel or what people believe about something or someone.

**Knowledge Objectives** try to modify what people know about something or someone.

All objectives should be written as specific, quantifiable, behaviours with specific timeframes for achievement: "to (verb) P (public) to do B (behaviour) by D (date)." E.g.:

- "To train 150 homeowners how to prepare their properties for bush fire season by January 15 2020."
- "To have local journalists repeat preparedness key messages in 90% of their by April 15 2020."
- "To have (via our Web site) 500 community members click through to risk information by March xx."



- “To achieve 500 new followers on (specific social media account) by June 20xx.”

**Objectives example:** If your goal is “To improve community preparedness for a hazard” several behaviours will be needed to make this happen and might include:

- “To have 100 local community members attend training seminars by 15 December 20xx”;
- “To have 300 local community members know the top 5 household risk preparedness activities by (date)”
- “To have 80% of the local community feel that preparing for the storm season is a priority, by (date).”

### Sample Engagement Indicators

Indicators need to be SMART.

#### Ensuring that your indicators are SMART

##### Specific

- The desired outcomes should identify concrete changes that will take place
- Answers the question, "Does the desired outcomes statement clearly specify what will change?"

##### Measurable

- The desired outcomes should specify the amount of change
- Answers the question, "Does the desired outcomes statement state how much change is expected?"

##### Achievable

- The desired outcomes should make logical sense, given the needs and goals identified and what a particular program can achieve
- Answers the question, "Does the desired outcome statement make sense in terms of what the program is attempting to do or is known to accomplish?"

##### Realistic

- The desired outcomes should specify how the change will be met with available resources and plans for implementation
- Answers the question, "Is the desired outcome realistic, given available resources and experience?"

##### Time-Based

- The desired outcomes should specify the time within which the desired outcome will be achieved.
- Answers the question, "Does the desired outcome statement specify when desired results will be achieved?"



## APPENDIX 3: SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS TOOL

### HOW TO TRACK SOCIAL MEDIA TRAFFIC WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS

You can gain insights into your agency's social media for free using Google Analytics. If you have a small budget, you can also pay for Hootsuite as a tool to analyse your social media traffic and engagement.

Google Analytics allows you to see where your visitors come from and if they engage with your content or leave immediately. With Google Analytics, you can get valuable insights about your visitors.

#### Getting Started With Google Analytics

1. Use the latest version of Google Analytics
2. Identify Your Main Traffic Sources
3. Understanding Social Media Traffic



Look at audience reports to determine their behaviour, how engaged they are with your site (how much time they spend reading your content), how frequently they come to your site or the ratio of new visitors to returning visitors.



## APPENDIX 4: MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS AS A MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOL

### WHAT IS CONTENT ANALYSIS?

Content analysis involves examining the message component of the communication process using as precise, objective and systematic measures as possible. It is used in MEL to analyse and strategize media and news coverage of emergency preparedness activities. It also gives insight into how the media may be influencing what community members understand about local risks.

### STEPS IN CONDUCTING CONTENT ANALYSIS

- Limiting the study – decide what sources to include and not to include. For example, you may only choose local media publications/outlets, if you are focused on a specific community
- **Sources and scope** - Decide on the purpose of your research. i.e.: If you are entering a community for the first time, you may want to understand what has been reported in the media about i.e.: bushfires and what community opinion leaders are speaking about this. Then decide:
  - a) Which sources should be consulted? (i.e.: local/regional/state media outlets. The tip here is to analyse the outlets you think community members are reading/watching/listening to)
  - b) What is the timeframe- decide if you need to go back only 2 weeks, or longer if relevant
  - c) Scope of your study – Decide on the terms/topics you are looking for. For example, is it any risk/hazard, or only a specific one?

### CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STATEMENT...

*“Extensive experience with tracking public opinion on government issues in Canada reveals a 5-7 day lag between a newspaper’s first articles on the event and editorial comment on the event. Thus to gain a full understanding of how newspapers have covered the event, the organisation may need to study the press coverage for a period of at least 2 weeks. Different patterns are present with television, in which agendas change rapidly, and the internet, discussions may continue for months or years, with participants entering and leaving the group” (Ferguson, 2000, 89)*

The following example table captures some key content areas that you may look for in content analysis. The headings, and information you collect can change depending on the decisions you make in the goal or scope of your study.

For example, this table is for a study that would be looking for key opinion leaders and influencers in a community about local bushfires: The goal is to identify the key opinion leaders and their views about these risks. It also allows you to identify





if a particular journalist is interested in a topic, or if they are consistently positive or negative in tone about a topic.

Date	Outlet	Journalist	Opinion leader quoted	Opinion/s voiced	Tone (positive/negative/neutral)	Comments



## APPENDIX 5: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW TOOLKIT

Key informant interviews (KIIs) are loosely organised conversations with individuals who have knowledge about a subject that you need to understand. A key informant is someone who has greater than average knowledge about a specialized topic or has experiences that provide insights into a situation. Key informants are those, because of their personal skills or position in society, “able to provide more information and a deeper insight into what is going on around them.” That is, key informant interviews help agencies to understand the nature of a problem through the perspective of the informants.

### WHEN TO USE / ADVANTAGES

Many programs identify key informant interviews as a data collection tool in MEL. Programs can use key informant interviews for qualitative data collection. They are especially good for gathering people’s experiences and narratives. Key informant interviews offer certain advantages over other forms of research. Unlike more formal research methods such as surveys, key informant interviews help us to understand an issue in depth. Key informant interviews are usually easier to arrange and less costly than focus groups or surveys, and they provide first-hand information that is often directly on topic. Key informant interviews can be used to solicit input to inform program design, planning, and implementation as well as for assessment and MEL purposes.

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS CAN BE USED WHEN THE GOAL OF THE RESEARCH IS:

- To learn about an issue or problem from local, well-connected, experts
- To gain insight into a problem when cultural or social issues might make survey research difficult
- To save time - Surveys take weeks or months to gather information and obtain data
- To help contextualize or explain the results of survey research
- To understand the motivation or behaviour of actors
- To identify specific recommendations about how to solve a problem

### NOT SUITED FOR / DISADVANTAGES

Key informant interviews can provide valuable insight into almost any situation or project. Despite the information key informant interviews may provide, there are some downsides to, and criticisms of, this approach:

- Time consuming
- Subject to bias
- Limited reliability and validity
- Requires skill to thematically analyse for useful themes/action

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### Step 1: Select Your Informants

Informally, anyone who tells you something important is a “key informant.” Formally, anyone who emerges as knowledgeable and helpful in the process of conducting research might be called a “key informant.” Although the description here suggests that those who become key informants is somewhat arbitrary, you do have great control over whom you contact for information and the type of relationship that you build with that person.

Key informants should be carefully selected. The kind of person you select for an interview will vary based on the subject of research. The informant should be someone who has first-hand, intimate knowledge or information about a certain issue. A good key informant occupies a strategic position in relation to the issue, is knowledgeable, credible, and willing to talk with you.

There is no explicit minimum or maximum number of people you should interview. The time and resources of the project will probably dictate the number of interviews you are able to conduct, but 10 interviews at minimum and around 30 at maximum should be your goal. The number will ultimately depend on how many interviews it will take in order to get a thorough sense of the situation and to identify commonalities and differences.

### Step 2: Prepare the Topics Guide

While key informant interviews should be casual and informal, they should not just be a friendly talk with no plan or structure. Developing a topics guide, sometimes called an interview protocol, ahead of the interviews will help you add some structure to the interview by identifying the specific things you need to learn, i.e. a guide to the topics you need to cover in an interview. A good topics guide “limits the universe to be studied” and provides a framework that logically guides the discussion through several issues. Using a topics guide will help you reap the most benefit from an informant’s knowledge and expertise.

Before beginning to write the topics guide, be sure to look at both social media and news media to identify people who might be good KIs (see appendix 3 and 4 in this toolkit).

Generally, key informant interviews should cover a few issues in depth, so the number of topics in a guide should, in most cases, be limited to around 10. For each topic, prepare a few questions. Begin with basic background and

### Steps In Conducting Key Informant Interviews

This section offers a step-by-step guide to key informant interviews. Generally speaking, key informant interview research is accomplished in five major steps:

1. Selecting the informants
2. Preparing the topics guide
3. Conducting the interviews
4. Analyzing the text
5. Preparing a report



contextual questions about the subject of interest. Make these questions broad enough so that you get the information you need. Ask the factual and easy questions before following up with questions about informant's opinions or beliefs about the reasons for certain behaviours and practices. Questions should be short, simple, and easy to understand. Avoid asking two questions at once. Questions should also be open-ended, that is, questions should be designed to solicit more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Your questions should prompt informants to provide detailed explanations of the issue, their perceptions, and experiences. Write questions that allow the informants to discuss the issue on their own terms.

Often, informants will end up discussing topics outside the scope of the guide. Keep in mind that the topics guide is, as its name suggests, just a guide. The interviewer should not feel so tied to the questions in the guide that it prevents the discussion of other important issues should they arise. Do not feel obligated to discuss every topic or to ask each question in order. Be open to the social dynamics of the interview. A topics guide (and the researcher using the guide) should be flexible and open to change. When unexpectedly interesting or important issues come up during an interview, changing the topics guide to include these new issues in future interviews is prudent. At the same time, if some questions on the guide turn out to lead to uninteresting answers, the researcher may want to consider dropping those questions, or modifying them based on the answers from previous respondents.

### Step 3: Interview Key Informants

There are two types of key informants. One type, discussed above, is more like a confidant who speaks to you when you need them to, not necessarily about gossip or secrets, but to help you negotiate cultural issues or features of your research or interview subjects that you do not understand. A second type of key informant is just that, a "key" person (policy-maker, opinion leader). Both types of interviewees are very different. With a confidant, you will (or should) probably develop a close relationship; while meetings with key officials and experts can lead to a relationship, they usually do not.

### Conducting Interviews

There are several things you should do at the outset of any interview:

- Introduce yourself and the project for which you are working
- Thank the informant for agreeing to give the interview and for their valuable time
- Try to set the interviewee at ease and establish rapport with some background information, friendly conversation, and small talk
- Explain the objectives of the interview—tell the informant the purpose of the project and why s/he is being consulted
- Be clear about the level of confidentiality you can offer, especially if you plan on discussing potentially sensitive or controversial issues



- If you are recording the interview, be sure to ask for the informant's permission. The best stuff may come at the end, after you have turned off the recorder. Be prepared to take notes throughout (in case your recorder fails) and at the end of the interview
- Use transitions to lead into new topics, such as "Your answers on this subject have been very informative. I want to move on to discussing the next issue..." End the interview by asking informants if there are any other important issues that you have not discussed

### Recording Interviews

Interviews should be documented in one of two ways: note taking or digital recording. Note taking can be done anywhere. The advantage of note taking is that the method does not depend on technological devices that may fail when you most need them. If you chose to record, be sure to ask for permission at the beginning of the interview.

### Step 4: Analyse the Interview Transcripts

#### Transcribing Interviews

In general, all interviews should be transcribed. The standard method is "loose transcription," which involves listening to your interview tapes after your interview while looking at your notes, and typing up responses (loosely): e.g., "believes that the main issue is how we use language." When an interviewee says something compelling or well spoken, take down an actual, exact quotation, and make note of where it appears on your interview take (note the time).

Try to transcribe the interview as soon after the interview as possible. The longer you wait, the less sense your notes and their answers may make. Include any non-verbal or other relevant issues in your notes as well.

You may need to speak with key informants repeatedly to ask for clarification of issues as you transcribe.

### Step 5: Write MEL Report

More often than not, interviews are conducted for the purpose of gathering background information or to provide qualitative support and feedback for quantitative data. Interviews help tell a story. Persuasion research suggests that just as many people are moved by emotion as they are by logic / reason. Your report's credibility can be enhanced by including the comments of experts. Thus, including the words of influential key informants in your report is an effective strategy to support the conclusions / findings of your research.

You will want to tell the reader that you selected a range of perspectives so that you avoid the appearance of bias and are able to explain or account for both or multiple sides of an issue. If you are reporting the results of the key informant interviews as a "stand-alone" research project, group similar answers to questions or present themes that emerged from responses. Be sure to note if there are a range of opinions or a lack of consensus around issues.



Again, be sure that you've obtained permission to use the comments of interviewees in your report and / or to attribute what they said back to them. Be aware of the repercussions of your reports and the possible impacts on people's careers and lives. You need to be cautious about answers that might readily identify someone, even if reported "anonymously."

## **BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Key informant interviews are recommended after you've already obtained all of the information that you can through regular information-gathering channels such as informal communication, meetings, and secondary research. Never begin with key informants unless you have developed a relationship with an insider, or confidant, who can help you with question wording and development and selection of interviewees before you begin the interview process.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Key informants should be told the purpose of the interview, what will be done with their data (information) and how you are treating their information in terms of disclosure and storage. Participants should also be told how their data will be used. Most interviews are reported in a de-identified way. Depending on your organisation's policies about this, some organisations require a consent form to undertake interviews.



## APPENDIX 6: SURVEY TOOLKIT

Surveys are valuable MEL tools for emergency management teams because they provide numeric data that answer questions about public knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, usage patterns, and trends. Surveys are often required to provide data for outcome and impact level indicators.

This toolkit introduces survey research for emergency management agencies and community engagement officers. It is written for field staff that must create a reliable survey, often on a small budget. The next sections of this toolkit will explain:

- When to use a survey
- How to structure a survey questionnaire
- How to write good survey questions
- How to conduct random sampling
- How to enter data, analyse and report data
- How to draw conclusions based on survey findings

The toolkit will help you report on MEL indicators that require a specific public's opinion, perceptions, satisfaction or behaviours regarding preparedness. It is important to recognize that this toolkit is an introduction to survey research. For a deeper or broader understanding of survey research, consult some of the sources in the bibliography.

### Surveys are Appropriate For:

1. Measuring knowledge, attitude and behaviour change
2. Message development and testing for development campaigns
3. Evaluation of campaign or project impacts

### Surveys are Not Appropriate For:

1. In depth understanding of a target group
2. Low budget, short term projects

## RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

### Time Commitment

Surveys take time. A new survey can take up to three months to develop, field, and analyse however we have created a draft survey for you. You can adapt the most relevant questions from the survey in the Appendix.

When deciding the best method of data collection, time is a prime consideration. If you require results quickly, that is within a month's time or sooner, the recommended methodology would be a telephone survey or online survey, given you have the ability to do either survey in the country or region in which you are operating.



## Human Resources

Surveys require the efforts of many people. For instance, someone needs to write the survey, distribute it, collect the responses, analyse the data, report the data and then come up with a plan to use the data.

## Cost and Budget Allocations

Surveys are almost always more expensive than you planned. A survey project will also unfailingly take longer than you planned. If a survey is part of your MEL, then be sure to budget for it.

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

This guide will break down the process of creating, implementing, and analysing a survey into 8 distinct steps. The steps are as follows:

- Step 1 Preparation and Considerations
- Step 2 How: Select the Best Survey Method
- Step 3 Who: Identifying a Sample
- Step 4 What to Learn: Writing Good Questions
- Step 5 Helpers: Training Interviewers
- Step 6 Doing: Fielding the Survey
- Step 7 Managing: Entering the Data
- Step 8 Using: Producing a Report

## STEP 1: PREPARATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

### Questions to Ask before You Begin:

- **What do you want to find out?**

Surveys collect quantitative data about a group. Surveys that use random sampling (each person in a target population has an equal chance of being selected to participate in the survey) allow you to generalize from a few to the larger target population.

Surveys can tell us about a target public's awareness, attitudes and behaviours. Understanding a target public's awareness is a precursor to understanding their attitudes. Understanding attitudes helps us to understand behaviour. Awareness, attitudes and behaviours are linked and no behaviour change can occur if people are unaware of something or have a negative attitude about it.

For MEL, surveys provide data to report outcome and impact indicators.

Example MEL indicators requiring survey research might ask for information about:

- Community members are more knowledgeable about hazard preparedness (knowledge)





- Youth have more positive attitudes about participating in hazard preparedness (attitude)
- More people in the community support a community led plan (attitude)
- Households use information to make better risk decisions (behaviour)
- Community members model preparedness behaviours learned from role playing (behaviour)

- **Who is your target population?**

Surveying should be strategic. You cannot possibly survey every person in a community so you want to identify a target public. The MEL indicator of interest should identify the target population. It is important to know the target population so you can draw a good sample. Ask yourself: who has the information I need to know? The answer to this question will help you identify the target population.

Once you have decided what you need to know and who knows it, you are ready to consider the best method to gain that information.

## STEP 2: SELECTING THE BEST SURVEY METHOD

There are a variety of ways to reach a target population. The choice of survey technique will depend upon the resources available and to the members of the population which need to be surveyed. You can do face to face surveys (including intercept "on the street" surveys, house to house surveys) phone surveys, online surveys, or mail surveys. The community of operation will determine the ways that you will reach your target population.

In this section, the toolkit describes the major methodologies currently used in survey research.

### 1. Face-to-Face Interviewing

Face-to-face or in-person interviewing is conducted typically when surveying by telephone is not appropriate or feasible. This is likely to occur in areas where telephone ownership is low or a reliable sample of telephone households is unavailable.

Face-to-face interviewing requires a well-trained and closely monitored interviewing force. **Questionnaire scripts** (see the Appendix for an example) must be followed completely, response entry must be done accurately, and respondent / household selection must follow the research design. Face-to-face interviews can be conducted in a person's home (subject to a safety assessment for the interviewer), workplace, or in a public space depending upon the research requirements and respondent availability. Face-to-face allows the interviewer to build a rapport with the respondent that is difficult to do on a telephone interview. Face-to-face interviewing usually allows for a longer interview, but not in all cases. And unlike telephone interviews, you can show respondents stimuli such as print advertising or information, video, or physical



items (products, medicines, etc.). The sampling technique used with face-to-face interviewing is **cluster sampling** or **area sampling** (discussed in Step 3).

Furthermore, a face-to-face interview can include a self-administered portion for more sensitive information, those things which the respondent might be uncomfortable sharing aloud or in front of others.

One major downside of face-to-face interviewing is a higher cost than with other methods. This is due to the time it takes to travel from respondent to respondent, especially if the research is taking place in a more rural area.

## **2. Telephone/device Interviewing**

Telephone interviewing can be undertaken over the phone or via online video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. Similar to a face-to-face interview, this method requires attention to the design, training, monitoring, and analysing the data from the interviews. If you conduct the interview over the phone, then more attention is required to manually record the data to avoid errors.

## **3. Mobile Phone/Personal Device Surveys**

One recent innovation is the use of mobile phones/personal devices (PDA) for surveying. Smart phones or Android systems can be used by the enumerator or the interviewee to read and answer the questions.

You will need to get a software package to upload your survey to the PDA or mobile phone. Text message survey technology is also starting possible for short surveys under 10 questions.

## **4. Mail Surveys**

Mail surveys should be considered when:

- You have to reach a large population
- Do not have short-term time constraints
- You have a reliable postal service in your country or region
- There is a literate population
- You have a large enough employment force to administer, collect, re-mail, code, process, and analyse large and numerous paper questionnaires

Response rates for mail surveys are generally lower than other types of methods, but with re-mailing (reminder postcards and re-mailing entire survey), marketing / publicity efforts (radio, television, or newspaper ads publicizing the survey), and small incentives, the response rate can increase.

Mail surveys, like any paper-and-pencil survey, require extremely careful construction of the survey codebook and proper numbering of interviews before the survey is sent out. In this way you can keep track of which interviews sent out are returned.



## 5. Online / Internet Surveys

With increased Internet penetration and computer ownership, online surveys are becoming more and more popular. Online surveys are useful if you need to obtain a pre-exposure / post-exposure measure. For example, you may be interested in testing a new persuasive communication message. With an online survey you can measure baseline questions, followed by showing the stimuli (ad/video/product), then follow with post-test questions.

Online surveys gather data similar to data collected from other modes of interviewing, except there are many concerns researchers should consider when using an online methodology. Generally, online surveys involve building non-probability and non-representative samples because those who take part in online surveys will **opt-in** or **self-select**.

### STEP 3: SAMPLING A POPULATION

The ideal method for collecting data on the entire population is to conduct a "census." A census takes place when you collect data from each member of a defined population. This method seeks 100% response and the results will be used to help plan the next year's programmatic activities.

Yet, for most organisations conducting opinion or MEL research, conducting a census is prohibitive for many reasons: cost, structure, time, and organisation. Therefore, a population can be estimated by conducting survey of a sampled population.

Good sampling is at the core of an effectively survey. Sampling means selecting the group of people to participate in the survey. Your survey findings are only as good as your sampling method. The reason for conducting any type of sample survey is to estimate some value of a population in the absence of conducting a true census.

This section on sampling briefly describes each major random probability and nonprobability sampling technique. First, you should understand the difference between probability and nonprobability sampling techniques. Next, this section covers several types of probability sampling methods: **simple random sampling, stratified sampling, random digit dialing, cluster sampling, and multi-frame sampling, to include cell-phones and landlines.**

### Probability versus Non-Probability Sampling

These general types of sampling represent the differences between a sample that generalizes to a population and one that does not. With **probability sampling**, each element in the population has a known chance of being selected for the sample.

To begin with the basics of sampling from an entire population, we start with the purest form of probability sampling. Again the primary and important distinction between random and non-random sampling is that each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. This is the reason that interviews with 1,000 Australian adults can accurately reflect the opinions of more than 210 million Australian adults within an acceptable margin of error.



Simple random sampling can involve something as basic as picking numbered-tags from a box or hat that represent an entire population, or for larger sample size the use of a computerized program chooses the sample.

But even a random sample cannot be purely random in practice as some people don't have phones, refuse to answer, or aren't home. Surveys conducted in countries other than the United States may use different but still valid scientific sampling techniques.

In contrast, with **non-probability sampling**, the researcher does not know the chance or probability for selection, and therefore we cannot assert that each population element has a non-zero chance of being selected.

If the purpose of the research is to generalize to a population then one must use a probability sampling method. Otherwise, agencies are making decisions based on a potentially biasing and inaccurate **convenience** or **voluntary sample**, such as an opt-in, and **self-selected sample**. The best known example of non-probability sampling in practice occurs when a radio program asks listeners to call into a special number or going online to vote on an opt-in internet survey. Other well-known methods of non-probability sampling include **quota sampling** and **snowball sampling**, which this toolkit will discuss later.

### **Stratified Sampling**

Research aimed at including a representative subgroups use stratified sampling techniques. In stratified sampling the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. For example, if the respondents need reflect the diversity of the population, the sample should include participants of various minority groups such as race or religion, based on their proportionality to the total population.

However, there are disadvantages to stratified samples, including greater effort to administer and control the sample, which could require more manpower and increase administrative costs. However, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, especially if your research requires you to estimate opinions among subgroups within the sample population. Stratified sampling ensures the presence of key subgroups within the sample. Further, stratified sampling allows the researcher to representatively sample the smallest and most difficult to reach subgroups in your target population.

### **Nonprobability Samples**

#### **Convenience Sampling**

This method occurs when you interview whoever is available in a non-systematic way. "Person on the street" interviewing is the most typical example of convenience sampling. Convenience samples are not representative of any population and using the results from studies using this design can lead to poor decision-making or policies. Try to avoid convenience sampling at all costs when conducting a survey since the sampling design will not provide generalizable results to plan and evaluate emergency preparation decisions.



## Purposive Sampling

Organisations can also use purposive sampling. Agencies may be interested in surveying a specific predefined group, such as mothers between the ages of 25 and 35 years old. Interviewers will observe individuals in a particular place such as a shopping area or town square and approach those people to ask for their participation after confirming they meet the criteria. While this type of purposive sampling will help if your objective is to reach a certain type of population quickly, it suffers from not being representative and biased toward those who happen to be available.

## Snowball Sampling

In snowball sampling, interviewees provide you with additional names. Ideally, snowball sampling works by asking someone who meets your sampling criteria to recommend someone else who fits the criteria. While snowball sampling is clearly not representative, it may be the best method available, especially if you are attempting to survey difficult to reach populations. If you go to an area where you find one or two of those who are difficult to reach, such as indigenous elders, they may know others in the vicinity and how you can find them.

There are a few questions that can help you decide on sample size:

1. What are you planning to do with the data?
2. Are you planning to disaggregate by gender, youth or location?
3. Are you using probability to generalize or nonprobability sampling to gain a snapshot of a group of people?

## STEP 4: WRITING THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Writing a survey is time consuming and takes many drafts. There are at least four distinct parts to each survey.

1. Opening and rapport
2. Questions
3. Demographics
4. Interviewer Information

### The Survey Opening Sets the Tone for the Interview

Surveys begin with a prepared opening statement to be read by the interviewer. This opening explains the purpose of the survey to the respondent. The opening also provides an understanding of how the survey will proceed, how long it might take, and the topics that will be discussed. The opening also reassures the respondent that their answers will be confidential and not analysed individually. The promise of confidentiality (or anonymity) is very important for any survey that asks about sensitive issues. People are more willing to answer truthfully if they are confident that they will not be singled out or have the answer traced back to them.

The opening sets the tone for the question and answers. Here is an example:



**Interviewer:** Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm conducting a survey about household preparedness. I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself, then about ways in which your family has prepared for a hazard like (a flood or bushfire). It might take about 30 minutes. By answering these questions, you will help our agency better serve the people in our community. We will not use your name. You may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering or end the interview at any time. Do you agree to be interviewed? Thank you.

Once the person agrees, then the interviewer begins to read the survey.

### **Good Structure and Good Questions Create Useful Data**

Questionnaires are not developed in a vacuum. In fact, survey researchers encourage and recommend using questions successfully used in prior surveys. Plagiarizing (or reusing previously successful) questions is acceptable. Conduct a search in data archives for existing questions and scales on the topics of interest (see References for such archival sources). Social science permits and encourages the repetition of questions, so prior results can be replicated. Prior questions, by themselves are unlikely to be sufficient to cover everything in a different survey, thus researchers need to draft new questions along with revising existing ones.

Surveys are by their very nature quantitative tools. They are not good at getting in-depth, long answers from respondents. There are other methods that are much better than surveys for gaining rich qualitative data such as Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups.

Survey questions should be mostly closed questions. Closed questions include the possible answers for the respondent to select from. Closed questions allow for easier data analysis and allow your agency to track quantitative MEL indicators such as:

- Improved knowledge of how to do something
- Improved acceptance of a behavior
- Improved satisfaction with a policy or training
- Improved public trust in agencies or government

### **Organizing the Survey**

Surveys should have an easy-to-follow structure. You want to:

1. Keep the survey as short as possible. Try not to write a survey that takes more than 20 minutes to complete. People lose interest and your data quality can be lower for the last questions as respondent fatigue sets in
2. Keep similar **topic questions** together such as all questions about pre or post disaster actions
3. Keep similar **question types** together (agreement questions, satisfaction questions, ranking questions)



4. **Demographic questions** should be kept together. They can go at the end or the beginning of the survey. See ANNEX for sample demographic questions
5. Create **transition sentences** between sections telling the respondent that you are not moving to another part of the survey
  - a. Example 1: Thank you for your answers about your family. Now, I will ask you questions about where you hear about hazard information that you use to keep your family safe

### Don't Make These Mistakes!

1. Avoid double-barreled questions such as:
 

Q: Do you favour or oppose laws that make it compulsory to keep your block clear of vegetation and laws that support a bushfire levy? (The respondent may have different answers about each of these topics)
2. Avoid long checklist questions. Too many possible responses can confuse respondents
3. Try to keep similar answer styles together: ie: ranking versus Likert (strongly agree to disagree), versus frequency (how many times....). This will make the format of the survey easier to follow and the interviewer will not have to keep repeating the instructions for each type of question
4. Minimize the number of open-ended questions. Surveys are not the best way to probe into people's reasons for doing things. There are too many time constraints and too many open questions makes the coding of answers very difficult. Focus groups or key informant interviews are the best way to capture in depth qualitative answers

All questions on the survey must be revised many times. Training the enumerators is an excellent opportunity to see how the questions work.

### Analysing the Data: What Conclusions Can We Draw?

Now that you have data, what kinds of conclusions can you draw from them? Here are some tips:

1. Identify in advance what counts as evidence of agreement. For instance, on a five point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), you should set a number in advance that indicates if you have met the standard. Generally, on a five point Likert scale with 5 meaning strongly agree, I see a score of 3.75 as indicating agreement to a statement. Mean scores between 3.74 and 2.75 are not very helpful and you should review the median (middle) and mode (most frequent) answers
2. Identify in advance the percentage of people that must select an answer for it to be counted as significant. If only 50% of people agree with a statement, you have a very divided population. However, if 66% (two-thirds) of the population agree with something, you have a much stronger case for arguing a population is generally in favour or against something



## Writing Up the MEL Results

There are many ways to write up the results of a survey. You can dedicate a stand-alone report to the results or you can include the most relevant information into a quarterly or annual report.

### *1. Stand-Alone Reports Provide Depth and Broad Analysis of the Findings*

For large scale surveys that use random sampling, it might be a good idea to create a stand-alone report to share the findings with other agencies and government stakeholders. Publishing a stand-alone report can be costly—you may need to have some design assistance, and pay the cost of designing/editing a professional looking document. Some questions to ask before you invest time and money in a stand-alone document:

1. Are we confident that we have reliable findings?
2. Who is the target audience for this survey data?
3. What form is best to present this information (print, online, local language)?
4. What is the budget and timeline?
5. Who will do the work and who will supervise the final product?

There are some benefits associated with publishing a report. First, you can release the report in a public setting to prompt discussions about the topic. Many organisations hold a news conference to release the findings and then hold round table discussions. This approach allows many different people and groups to learn about the findings.

### *2. Integrating Survey Findings into MEL Reports*

Smaller scale surveys may not meet the rigorous standards for publishing a stand-alone report but they are useful nonetheless for reporting MEL data. Even small surveys can provide information to improve or modify program activities. You would report the actual numbers in the quarterly or annual report reflecting the indicator, and then you can add an appendix explaining the method, the questions, the sample and the general findings in an appendix.





## A6.1 GLOSSARY OF SURVEY TERMS

**Census:** The ideal method for collecting data on the entire population is to conduct a “census.” A census takes place when you collect data from each member of a defined population. For most organisations conducting opinion or MEL research, conducting a census is prohibitive for many reasons: cost, structure, time, and organisation. Therefore, a population can be estimated by conducting survey of a sampled population. The accuracy and validity of an estimate depends on how the population is sampled; i.e., the sampling method used.

**Closed ended questions:** Questions where the answers are provided to the respondent.

**Copy test:** Having enumerators and or members of the target public read the survey and provide input on structure, questions and answers.

**Cross-sectional research:** This is a one point in time study. You have a snap shot of public opinion and behaviour. The baseline data collection is a cross sectional research design until you collect time 2 (mid-point or end of project).

**Enumerator:** The interviewers who conduct the research.

**Exit polls:** Exit polls are designed to represent the districts comprising a voting area like a county, region, state, or nation. Pollsters station themselves outside of polling places at legally acceptable boundaries and systematically interview voters as they leave the polling place. If the polling place has more than one exit, then the interviewer places himself at all three exits at equal time intervals. The survey begins when the polls open and ends just before poll closing, or at poll closing. Results can be called into a central location, or collected by a supervisor, or electronically transmitted throughout the day, usually at three specified periods: late morning, late afternoon, and poll closing time. Exit polling locations are drawn up to represent the voting makeup of the population being covered.

**Longitudinal survey:** This is a survey that collects data over time on the same questions. It allows the CE team or agency to see changes in public opinion, attitudes or behaviour. The data allows you to report on the indicators that ask for increased or enhanced knowledge and behaviours. You would report percentage increase from the baseline to time 2.

**Open-ended questions:** Questions where respondent provides the answers. These answers will need to be coded and organised into categories.

**Panel studies:** Researchers undertake a panel study when they are interested in **tracking changes in individual behaviour, attitude, or opinion over two or more periods of time.** This repeated interview technique is used for longitudinal studies and program evaluations, for example. Panel studies are more reliable than independent samples because of the repeated measures over time. The disadvantage is that the panels are difficult to recruit and maintain over time.

**Pilot test:** All surveys should be pilot tested after the copy test read. The enumerators go out to the field, collect a few completed surveys, and then suggest revisions to the questions, structure, format or answers.



**Probability versus non-probability sampling:** These general types of sampling represent the differences between a sample one can generalize to a population and one that does not. With **probability sampling**, each element in the population has a known chance of being selected for the sample.

If the purpose of the research is to generalize to a population then one must use a probability sampling method. Otherwise, researchers are making decisions based on a potentially biasing and inaccurate **convenience** or **voluntary sample**, such as an opt-in, and **self-selected sample**. The best known example of non-probability sampling in practice occurs when a radio program asks listeners to vote on an issue by calling into a special number or going online to vote on an opt-in internet survey. There may be a purpose for survey using non-probability sample but it can be considered only as a qualitative method. Other well-known methods of non-probability sampling include **quota sampling** and **snowball sampling**, which this toolkit will discuss later.

**Random probability sampling to reflect an entire population:** To begin with the basics of sampling from an entire population, we start with the purest form of probability sampling. Again the primary and important distinction between random and non-random sampling is that each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. This is the reason that interviews with 1,000 American adults can accurately reflect the opinions of more than 210 million American adults. Simple random sampling can involve something as basic as picking numbered-tags from a box or hat that represent an entire population, or for larger sample size the use of a computerized program chooses the sample.

But even a random sample cannot be purely random in practice as some people don't have phones, refuse to answer, or aren't home. Surveys conducted in countries other than the United States may use different but still valid scientific sampling techniques, for example, because relatively few residents have telephones.

**Sample:** The reason for conducting any type of sample survey is to estimate some value of a population in absence of conducting a true census. To state it quite simply, if a public opinion pollster conducts a survey to measure the level of support for raising taxes on the wealthiest one percent of Americans, if the sample is correctly structured to represent the population, the resulting number would be an acceptable estimate of the percentage of the population in support of such a measure. This section on sampling briefly describes each major random probability and nonprobability sampling technique.

**Sample size considerations:** The "right" sample size for a particular application depends on many factors, including Cost considerations (e.g., maximum budget, desire to minimize cost), Administrative concerns (e.g., complexity of the design, research deadlines), Minimum acceptable level of precision and Confidence level. How many is enough? It depends on how you will use the data. For instance, a random sample of 400 adults is often enough to show trends. Visit <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>

**Stratified sampling:** Research aimed at including a representative subgroups use stratified sampling techniques. In stratified sampling the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, and then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. We develop stratified



samples to decrease the sample variance and because we are interested in examining the subpopulations of the study. Most national public opinion telephone surveys employ stratified random sampling as a technique incorporated into its RDD model. For example, one may be interested in comparing regions of a country. A stratified random sample would be appropriate for this endeavour. Each region would be treated as separate strata with separate selection from each.

It is important to note that the strata must be non-overlapping. Having overlapping subgroups will grant some individuals higher chances of being selected as subject. This completely negates the concept of stratified sampling as a type of probability sampling. Equally important is the fact that the researcher must use simple probability sampling within the different strata.

Advantages of stratified sampling over simple random sampling include greater statistical precision, and therefore a smaller sample is sufficient, resulting in cost savings. A stratified sample, because of the way it is drawn to represent subgroups can prevent unrepresentativeness. However, there are disadvantages to stratified samples, including a greater effort is necessary to administer and control the sample, which could require more manpower and increase administrative costs. However, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, especially if your research requires you to estimate opinions among subgroups within the sample population. Stratified sampling ensures the presence of key subgroups within the sample. Further, stratified sampling allows the researcher to representatively sample the smallest and most difficult to reach subgroups in your target population.



## APPENDIX 7: EXAMPLE OF A SURVEY FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

In this survey we would like you to think about local hazard events. A local hazard event includes bushfires, fast moving floods, slow moving floods, storms, or cyclones.

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
A local hazard will affect my community this year						
A local hazard will affect my community next year						
A local hazard will affect my community within the next 3 to 5 years						
A local hazard will affect my community within the next 6 to 10 years						
A local hazard will affect my community within the next 20 years or longer						

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think about local hazard events more than other people						
I talk about local hazard events more than other people						
I get nervous when there is discussion about local hazard events						
When I see advertisements about local hazard events on TV, I change the channel or don't pay attention						
I avoid things that remind me of local hazard events						
If I believe a local hazard event is approaching, I make sure I know what I need to do to keep safe						
If I believe a local hazard event is approaching, I make sure I know where my shelter is.						



I avoid thinking about local hazard events

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Local hazard events are too destructive to bother preparing for						
A serious local hazard events is unlikely to occur during your lifetime						
Preparing for local hazard events will reduce damage to my home should a local hazard event occur						
Preparing for a local hazard event will improve my everyday living conditions						
Preparing for a local hazard event will improve the values of my house/property						
Preparing for local hazard events will reduce the disruption to family/ community life following a local hazard event						
Preparing for local hazard events is inconvenient for me						

**In regard to the issues and problems that you deal with in your everyday life, please describe the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have considerable control over what happens in my life						
I can solve most of the problems I have by myself						
What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me						
I can do a lot to change many of the important things in my life						
I can do just about anything if I really set my mind on it						
I rarely feel helpless in dealing with the problems of my life						



**In regard to dealing with problems in your everyday life, please indicate how much you agree or disagree**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I try to come up with a strategy about what to do						
I make a plan of action						
I think about how I might best handle the problem						
I think hard about what steps to take						

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following influence your ability to prepare for a local hazard event?**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The cost						
The skill or knowledge required						
Time to do them						
Other things to think about						
Need for cooperation with others						

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following with regards to local hazard event preparation actions:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Check your level of preparedness for local hazard events						
Increase your level of preparedness for local hazard events						
Become involved with a local group to discuss how to reduce local hazard event damage						
Seek information on local hazard event risk						



Seek information on things to do to prepare

**In regard to living in this community generally, please describe the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel like I belong in this community						
I believe my neighbours would help me in an local hazard event						
Even if I had the opportunity I would not move out of this community						
I feel loyal to the people in my community						
I often have friends over to my house to see me						
I plan to remain a resident of this Community for a number of years						

**In regard to preparing for local hazards, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel responsible for preparing for a local hazard event						
The local government is responsible for making sure that I am prepared for a local hazard event						



**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Local hazards hit this area hard						
Local hazards hit this area often						
Local hazards cause a lot of damage to my community						
People move out of this area because they fear another local hazard will come						

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
A local hazard event could pose a threat to my personal safety						
A local hazard event could pose a threat to my personal safety						
A local hazard event could pose a threat to my daily life						
A local hazard event could pose a threat to my property						

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Most people are basically honest.						
Most people are trustworthy.						
Most people are basically good and kind.						
Most people are trustful of others.						
I am trustful.						
Most people will respond in kind when						





they are trusted by others.

Most people tell a lie when they can benefit by doing so.

Some people do not cooperate because they pursue only their own short-term self-interest

Those devoted to unselfish causes are often exploited by others.

Most people are basically honest.

There will be more people who will not work if the social security system is developed further.

**Thinking about these statements, indicate how much you agree or disagree:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
If I do everything to prepare for a local hazard, I know I will be safe						
I know what I need to do to prepare for a local hazard						
I know that if I prepare properly, I will be safe						
People who are harmed in local hazard events are just unlucky						
People who are harmed in local hazard events because they made a mistake						
I have the knowledge to prepare for a local hazard event						
I would be able to help others to prepare for a local hazard event because I know what to do.						

**How many people are there in your household?**

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6
  - 7-9
  - 10 or more
- 

Select the option that characterises the children in your household.

- No children (1)
  - Young children (0-13) (2)
  - Teenage children (14-18) (4)
  - Older children (18+) (5)
- 

How many cars are in your household?

\_\_\_\_\_

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Which of the following best describes the area you live in?

- Urban (1)
  - Suburban (4)
  - Peri-urban (i.e. on acreage) (3)
  - Rural/farming (2)
- 

Do you rent or own the home you live in?

- Rented (1)
  - Owned / have a mortgage on the property (2)
-



Does your home have a garden?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

How long have you lived in your current area?

- less than a year (1)
  - 1 to 3 years (2)
  - 4 to 6 years (3)
  - 7 to 10 years (4)
  - More than 10 years (5)
- 

What is the highest level of education you have attained to date?

- Primary School (1)
  - High School (2)
  - Diploma / Certificate or equivalent (3)
  - Apprenticeship or trade certificate or equivalent (4)
  - Bachelor Degree or equivalent (5)
  - Postgraduate Degree or equivalent (6)
  - Other qualification (7)
- 

How could you describe your current employment?

- Retired (1)
  - Carer (2)
  - Full time student (3)
  - Unemployed and not seeking work (4)
  - Unemployed and seeking work (5)
  - Part time employee (6)
  - Full time work (7)
-



Which of following categories best indicate your annual household income?

- Under \$25,000 (1)
- \$25,001 to \$50,000 (2)
- \$50,001 to \$75,000 (3)
- \$75,001 to \$100,000 (4)
- \$100,001 to \$150,000 (5)
- \$150,001 to \$200,000 (6)
- Over \$200,000 (7)
- Prefer not to say (8)

---

Do you have any other comments or feedback about this research? (Optional)

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Would you like to receive a copy of the summary report?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)



## APPENDIX 8: RELATIONAL MAPPING

This is a visual exercise that you complete during annual strategic planning. Get a large piece of butchers paper (poster size) and draw concentric circles. Please your organisation's name in the centre.

### Step 1: Identify Your Strong Relationships In One Area Of Disaster Preparedness.

Using one green note per organisation, write answers to the following categories below for each "strong relationship": (use both sides of the sticky notes if needed)

- Name of person, group, organisation or institution
- The resources or benefits that they provide to you
- The resources or benefits that you provide to them
- The relationship type and level of trust
- One engagement tactic that you can employ to maintain and strengthen this relationship

### Step 2: List the weak relationships that you have with community partners on the blue sticky notes.

On one note per organisation write the following answers:

- Name of person, group, organisation or institution
- The resources or benefits that they might provide to you
- The resources or benefits that you could provide to them
- The relationship type and level of trust
- What you can do to initiate this relationship
- Who you know that has already has a strong relationship with this group

### Step 3: Think about new relationships that are needed in your community.

List all of the relationships that you need to initiate on the pink sticky notes. On one note per organisation write the following answers: (you can use the other side if needed)

- Name of person, group, organisation or institution
- The resources or benefits that they might provide to you
- The resources or benefits that you could provide to them
- What you can do to initiate this relationship
- Who you know that has already has a strong relationship with this group
- Three engagement tactics that you can employ to initiate this relationship

### Step 4: Visualize the Relationships Placing Your Organisation at the Centre

On the next page, please find the circular model. Place the strong, weak and absent relationships around your organisation. Stronger relationships are placed closer to the centre. Weak and non-existent relationships should be placed on



the periphery of the circle. The distance from the centre is an indicator of relationship strength.

### **Step 5: Draw Relational Connections among the Organisations**

As you identify relationships among organisations, draw lines of relationships that occur among your strong ties (solid lines), your weak ties (dotted lines) and your absent ties (squiggly lines). Their relationships provide opportunities for you to develop new relationships, gain new resources and create information networks.

### **Step 6: Set Relational Objectives**

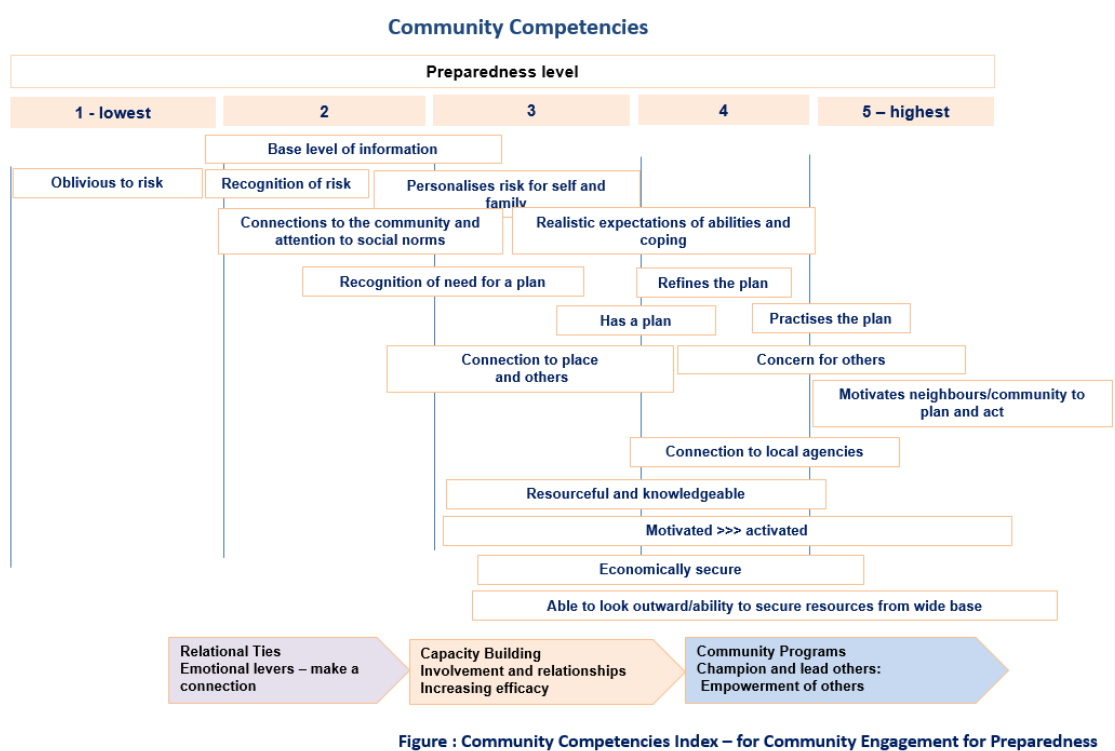
Review the engagement tactics that you identified in the earlier steps. Create a plan to enact at least three engagement tactics in the next six months with weak tie or absent tie organisations. Draw upon your strong ties to facilitate engagement activities with weak or absent organisations. Set clear objectives of what evidence would count as success in the engagement activities.

### **Step 7: Repeat Relationship Mapping Process Each Year**

Relationships change continuously so you should repeat the mapping exercise annually. Success means that you have strengthened relationships with existing ties and have developed new, diverse relationships. You should also continue to identify new relationships that provide information, access to diverse community members, and other key resources. Save each year's diagnostic relationship circles and compare them. Some organisations incorporate relational mapping into their annual strategic planning exercises.

## APPENDIX 9: COMMUNITY COMPETENCY INDEX

Community engagement for preparedness is not a linear process. There are many factors that influence where a community stands in its preparedness. The graphic below depicts the different levels of preparedness to show the evolution from community members being “oblivious to risk” to “motivate others to plan and act.” Community members may move between stages depending on hazards and other factors.



The team developed a Community Capacity Index to measure progress on these key competencies. The Index below provides a quantitative approach to creating a baseline of community competencies and then tracking the increased capacity over time.

This tool is scored based on the profiling data including the ABS, surveys, FGDs, KIs, media and social media analytics and any other baseline information. It is rescored at the end of the Community Capacity stage.



Community Competencies Index		
Scoring 1=low or non-existent 5=full achievement of competency	Community Profiling - Baseline	End of Capacity Building Phase -
<b>COMPETENCY</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>		
Personalises risk for self and family		
Recognition of potential emotional reactions (to event)		
Motivated and activated – individually		
Motivates others to plan/act		
Able to look outward		
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>		
Base level of information		
Perception of risk		
Accurate recognition of risk		
<b>PLACE and COMMUNITY</b>		
Connection to place and others		
Connections to the community and attention to social norms		
Connection to place		
Has a connection to local agencies		
<b>PLANNING</b>		
Recognition of need for a plan		
Has an appropriate plan		
Refines the plan		
Practices the plan		
<b>ABILITIES</b>		
Realistic expectations of abilities		
Resourceful and knowledgeable		
Economically sound		
Recognition of vulnerability		
<b>Score</b>		





## APPENDIX 10: FOCUS GROUPS AS MEL TOOLS

Focus group discussions (FGD) are relatively formal guided discussions about a particular topic, commonly involving six to ten people. As a qualitative research technique, focus groups can explore topics in some depth and answer the "how" and "why" questions that quantitative techniques cannot. They are a relatively short-term and cost-effective way of gaining an understanding of the range of attitudes and practices within a particular location or cultural setting, or among a particular social or demographic grouping.

Focus groups aim to encourage participants to talk with each other, rather than answer questions directly to the moderator. Group interaction is important because it shows how participants are thinking about the topic. The questions asked of the group are usually "focused" on one or two main topics, to get a more detailed understanding of them. They are also focused because participants usually share common characteristics, such as age, sex, educational background, religion, or something directly related to the topic being studied. This commonality encourages the group to speak more freely. The best focus groups seem "natural," but they are actually meticulously prepared and require skilled moderators, focused questions, and careful write up. While focus groups may be fun, they are also one of the most difficult research methods, requiring enormous amounts of work before, during, and after the sessions.

### WHEN TO USE/ADVANTAGES

Focus groups can be used as a major source of data at all stages of the project cycle, from planning through to monitoring and evaluation. For example, they can be used before an intervention to identify various social or cultural factors that need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of the program. They can be used during the intervention to provide an ongoing assessment of the program, or at the end of a hazard project to evaluate its impact. Focus groups can be used alone or with other research methods in a number of different kinds of projects.

Focus group discussions can often reveal more in-depth information than can formal sample surveys. Focus groups can generate new ideas and approaches because group members stimulate each other. Ideally a dynamic emerges that encourages participants to respond to each other's ideas and comments, opening up fresh lines of inquiry. For example, audience members may remark casually that since the council changed a policy, it is easier to park in the centre of town. This comment may have a "snowballing" effect in starting an interesting discussion of several issues that might not have occurred to the investigator during the research design. Group participation can also reduce individual inhibitions, thereby providing information that might not be otherwise shared (though the opposite can also be true - sometimes people will not want to share personal information or feelings with the group).

Focus groups are good for research among low literate populations because they do not require participants to write and can play to the oral strengths and traditions of group discussion.



### Focus groups are best used for the following purposes:

- Securing background information for program planning
- Generating ideas and hypotheses for the program design
- Getting feedback from project / program stakeholders
- Assessing responses to recommendations / messages given by the project
- Interpreting available quantitative data
- Investigating implementation problems
- Project monitoring

#### TIP – How Many Focus Groups Should Be Done ?

There is no golden rule, but at a minimum, you need one group for every "stratum" or population sector you want to separately report on (e.g., audience members should be broken down into the common variables of women / men, younger / older, rural / urban as a minimum). It is desirable to have several groups for each stratum, or population sector, to allow for chance variation. Ideally FGDs should be repeated with several groups of similar makeup until the discussions no longer reveal anything new or relevant to the research.

### Not Suited For:

Depending upon your research needs, focus groups may not present the best methodology under the following circumstances:

- Drawing generalized conclusions
- Collecting quantitative information
- Reaching a consensus about something or to make recommendations on an issue
- Confirming the researcher's hunches or hypotheses

## RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

### Time Commitment

Focus groups can be relatively efficient because they effectively group up to 10 individuals you want to hear from into one group, which takes much less time than interviewing each one individually. But beware: Doing focus groups properly takes time; they are not a short cut.

- Each focus group should last between one to two hours
- Moderators can conduct up to three FGDs in one day, but one to two FGDs per day is optimum. A tired moderator is not always effective
- According to some experts: "A study that seeks to answer one to two research questions and consists of six to eight focus groups... would take approximately two to three weeks to conduct and analyse."



Specifically:

- Focus group preparation, 4 days
- Conducting focus groups, 3-4 days (2 groups / day)
- Note expansion and preliminary coding, 2 hours per FGD (same day as the FGDs)
- Coding, organisation, and interpretation, 6 days
- Report writing 3 days

### Human Resources

You will need a facilitator and a note taker for every focus group. A team can only do 2-3 focus groups per day, depending on how spread out the focus groups are. In cases of gender-sensitive topics or locations, you will need a team of women and team of men. If you have a non-local person serving as the facilitator, you will also need a translator (although this approach would inhibit the flow of conversation).

### Cost and Budget Allocations

The biggest cost will be hiring a good moderator and covering their per diems and travelling expenses (if necessary), as well as those of the principle investigator (if different from the moderator), translator(s), and note takers. Other costs may include room rental, honoraria for participants, light beverages / snacks, recording or video expenses, and secretarial support.

### Steps in Conducting Focus Group Discussions

This section offers a step-by-step guide to focus group discussions (FGD). Generally, FGDs have 15 major steps:

- Decide if FGDs are an appropriate tool
- If yes, conduct background research
- Identify target population
- Select a moderator
- Write a discussion guide
- Define key concepts with the moderator
- Assign key tasks
- Undertake other preparations
- Open the FGD(s)
- Conduct the FGD(s)
- Record the FGD(s)
- Organise your notes
- Analyze your notes
- Write up your report

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FOCUS GROUPS

### Phase I: Planning

**Step 1 - Decide Whether FGDs are an Appropriate Tool.** Identify the questions that you want to answer. You may find that some questions are better answered by a survey or a literature review, or both. For example, if you want to explore voting patterns, focus groups will not tell you the socio-economic characteristics of most voters; this is best done with a survey. But focus groups will tell you, for example, about attitudes, concerns, and motivations of voters.



**Step 2 - Conduct Background Research.** Once you have decided to launch into FGDs, find out what you can about the issue in question by reading available materials and asking a few knowledgeable individuals.

**Step 3 - Identify Your Target Population.** From which population will you select your group or groups: e.g. home owners, farmers, landlords, etc.?

**Step 4 - Select a Moderator.** Be sure that the moderator:

- is trained in facilitation techniques
- understands the issue to be
- possesses a high degree of cultural sensitivity
- Ideally can operate in the local language

**Step 5 - Write a Discussion Guide.** The guide should be designed to be flexible and include lists of the main topics and sub-topics to be covered. Not more than six or seven items should be covered in one session. Having fewer items leaves more time to pursue leads before returning to the next topic. A few initial items often generate a fruitful chain of discussions not anticipated by the investigator.

**Step 6 - Define the Key Concepts with the Moderator.** Agree on definitions to avoid misunderstanding. For example, if the focus is about bushfires then ensure the moderator has a grasp of the key bushfire words and actions in layman's terms to the group if necessary. The moderator must also have a grasp of historic bushfire situations. Make a list of agreed definitions and clear up any possible confusion.

**Step 7 - Assign Other Key Tasks.** Decide who will take notes and operate the recording / filming equipment. This should not be the moderator, who should be able to devote all his / her energies on stimulating discussion and moderating. *N.B. take notes even if the session is being recorded.*

**Step 8 - Undertake Other Preparations.** Prepare any audio-visual aids beforehand and set up the room with appropriate seating, equipment, screen, flipchart / whiteboard, markers, etc.

## Phase II: Implementation

**Step 9 - Start the FGD with a Welcome, Introductions, and Instructions.** The moderator should welcome and introduce participants and stress that it is an informal and confidential group. Participants should be encouraged to express their views candidly. At this point, also ask participants to either turn off their cell mobiles or set them to silent. You can find some illustrative introductory remarks for the FGD in the Annex.

**Step 10 - Conduct the Discussion.** The moderator can kick off with something everyone will have a view on, such as "can everyone give a word or phrase to describe the weather situation in NSW?" The moderator then guides the discussions toward the issues identified in the interview guide and uses various probing techniques to elicit further information. The moderator uses queries such as what, when, where, which, how, and why.



**Step 11 - Record the Discussion.** Focus group interviews should be carefully recorded. The notes should include (1) records of the discussions, (2) the moderator's observations of the nonverbal behaviour of the participants, and (3) the moderator's own ideas, hunches, or thoughts generated during the interview. For example, the moderator might note that the best-dressed, well-off members of the group tended to favour one course of action while the seemingly less affluent members, favor something another course of action.

### Phase III: Data Analysis and Write Up

**Step 12 - Organise Your Notes.** The pile of notes and recordings that focus groups generate now need to be organised and interpreted systematically.

The first step is to write up the notes taken on paper and to decide whether or not to transcribe any recording word for word (time-consuming but important if every word needs to be captured) or to listen to the recordings and to make expanded notes (which means enriching your notes by listening to the tapes and receiving additional comments from the other members of the research team who participated in the FGDs). A practical compromise is to use expanded notes and transcripts of important quotes.

Transcribing takes time as it might take up to five hours of time to transcribe one hour of focus group talk (Taylor, 2010).

**Step 13 - Analyse Your Notes.** When the expanded notes have been written up and coded, the research team need to stand back from the data and look for patterns emerging from it, across all the focus groups. Sometimes this can be done by pinning all the information quotes and responses with the same code onto different areas of a wall or attaching different coloured stickers to them, and highlighting them with a marker pen; or coding of text can also be done on a computer screen.

For each coded theme, the team must then ask itself the following:

- What are the main findings?
- What similarities do we see across different groups?
- What differences do we see between different groups?
- Is there anything unusual in their answers?
- Which quotes capture important points?

Identify the recurrent ideas, themes, and issues that come out across all the focus groups. As one expert suggests: "The focus group transcript creates a text that can be studied. You could use content analysis to count key concepts".

Interpret these ideas based on other findings that came out of the focus groups (e.g. body language, whether or not there was consensus, unexpected ideas that emerged, the "feel" that the moderator and any observers or other researchers had during the session, etc.).

**Step 14 - Report Results.** In reporting the results of focus groups, the following components may be useful:

- Identify agreements (group consensus) and dissenting views



- Combine groups to yield a Synthesis Report
- Organise the report by issue (instead of by group)
- Discuss similarities and differences by groups and by individuals
- Restate and answer the research question(s)

There are two important aspects to the results of a focus group: intensity and frequency. Intensity refers to how strongly the opinions or beliefs are felt or articulated; frequency refers to how often they are expressed in the group.

Finally, write a report of your FGD findings and compare this, where applicable, to your other data collected by means of different tools to validate it.

### Best Practices

When planning FGDs, keep in mind the following best practices:

- Focus groups should not be used alone but should, ideally, be combined with other research techniques (e.g. quantitative surveys or in-depth interviews)
- Focus groups should be carefully prepared: they rarely work if done ad hoc. This means conducting a systematic review of the relevant documents, records, or studies and consulting with a few key informants before venturing into the field
- Not more than 12 people should take part; otherwise the discussion becomes unmanageable and, if everyone is allowed to have their say, too long
- Seating arrangements should facilitate maximum interaction, e.g. everyone seated around an oval table is ideal, or in a horseshoe shape
- The setting should be quiet and free from distractions
- Probing should be subtle, and the moderator should adopt a position of "sophisticated naiveté" to encourage the participants, e.g. "I wish I knew more about your experiences; can you explain them to me a little more so I can follow your discussions?"
- The moderator should encourage all members of the group with a quick comment of "good" or "thank you" after they speak
- To prevent a few individuals from dominating the discussions, the moderator can follow one of three strategies:
  1. Give nonverbal cues to the respondent to stop, such as looking in another direction, showing a lack of interest, or stopping note taking
  2. Politely intervene, saying that he has somehow missed the point and would like to summarize what the respondent was saying - then refocus the discussions
  3. Take advantage of a pause and say that the issues raised are of vital significance and should be discussed in a separate session



- The moderator should encourage dissenting views and discourage group pressure to suppress them by asking for new ideas or recommendations than those already discussed and by encouraging those who look skeptical to voice their opinions
- Notes should be as extensive as possible so nothing is missed
  - Notes should be written up and a transcript made of the recording as soon as possible afterwards, while it is still fresh in the investigator's / moderator's mind
  - Notes should be taken of the body language, asides, and jokes that are made in the session, as these are sometimes as important as the substantive material
- Analysing a focus group should be regarded as an art in which findings requiring a "sense" and a "feeling" for what the information is telling you. However, the write up should be done systematically, perhaps using the coding approach
- A debrief should be done after each day of conducting focus groups. The research team should ask itself:
  - How did the focus groups go today?
  - What were the most important themes or ideas discussed?
  - Were there unexpected / unanticipated findings, e.g. differences between groups?
  - What quotes should be remembered and possibly included in the report?
  - Do we need to change the wording of the questions for the next set of focus groups?

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Focus groups must not be viewed as an easy option or be entered into lightly without preparation. They must not be done opportunistically as part of a quick visit to a community
- Eliciting honest and open answers can be tricky if the moderator is known to the participants prior to the focus group session

## DOS AND DON'TS:

When conducting focus group discussions, remember:

- DO consider rewarding or compensating the group members for their time with snacks and beverages or a small gift (e.g. t-shirts) or, where appropriate, an honorarium
- DO consider using visual aids such as audio, films, and pictures to stimulate discussions on a specific subtopic, e.g. play audiences extracts of TV programs about past emergency events to elicit their views



- DO explain clearly to the participants that they should stay for the whole session
- DO consider recording or filming the whole focus group (after securing permission from participants to do so)
- DO urge the group members to discuss among themselves and not to just respond to questions from the moderator
- DO make an effort to select people who do not know each other, though in tight-knit communities or members of the same organisation this may not always be possible
- DO plan for a late start; either arrange to pick people up from their homes or workplaces or plan conversation topics for those who arrive on time - these informal moments can be fruitful and can establish rapport
- DON'T be tempted to do too many focus groups in a day - two is optimum for one moderator
- DON'T hold the session in a public place, e.g. in a community centre; there will usually be too many distractions and may be viewed by people as a social event that everyone and anyone can join
- DON'T assume that doing FGDs is always going to be the quickest option - they can be very time-consuming and require a lot of preparation and follow-up work in interpreting the results
- DON'T just rely on the recording or video for a record of the session - take back-up notes as well because the equipment is bound to let you down at some point
- DON'T include people who have previously participated in a focus group on the same subject, since repeat participants are not spontaneous in their responses
- DON'T pretend you are not recording the session if you are. Tell the participants candidly that you'd like to record, get their acceptance, then put the recorder in an inconspicuous place and hope that it does not make them too self-conscious
- DON'T expect transcribing recordings to be quick; it is very time-consuming. A typical transcript from a focus group of two hours can be 30-60 pages of text.
- DON'T assume that just because you may have gathered more information on one topic, it necessarily means that the population you are researching thinks it is the most important topic (e.g. your group members might have been shy about mentioning their media habits so did not talk about them much, but it does not mean they are not important, if you are researching the most trusted media)





## EXAMPLE- INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR A FOCUS GROUP

*"My colleague and I are grateful that you were kind enough to come to help us in the project. Let me mention the purpose of our meeting here. As you probably know, our job is to help community members prepare for hazards. We are interested in learning about your experiences around the topic of preparedness.*

*I stress that we want to know your real views; the best help you can give us is to be candid.*

*I have a few requests. Because all of us must participate in the discussions, we must be brief and to the point. Please remember that this is not a question-and-answer session. Each of us can make comments or raise questions about what others say. This is an informal discussion among friends. So do not hold back any ideas or information. Even if you disagree with the rest, please state your views.*

*We will be taking notes so that we can remember your comments. (We would also like to have your permission to record the discussions on a tape recorder.)"*

## SAMPLE GUIDE TO ANALYSIS

The following guide to analysing focus group(s) and tips for analysis are from Krueger, Systematic Analysis Process, (2002, pp. 10-11) (Krueger, 2002).

### 1. Start while still in the group:

- Listen for inconsistent comments and probe for understanding
- Listen for vague or cryptic comments and probe for understanding
- Consider asking each participant a final preference question
- Offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation

### 2. Immediately after the focus group:

- Draw a diagram of seating arrangement
- Spot-check digital voice recording to ensure proper operation
- Conduct moderator and assistant moderator debriefing
- Note themes, hunches, interpretations, and ideas
- Compare and contrast this focus group to other groups
- Label and file field notes and other materials

### 3. Soon after the focus group - within hours - analyse individual focus groups:

- Make back-up copy of recordings and send recording for transcription (if required)
- Analyst listens to recording, reviews field notes, and reads transcript if available



- Prepare report in a question-by-question thematic format with amplifying quotes
- Share report for verification with other researchers present at the focus group

#### **4. Later - within days - analyse the series of focus groups:**

- Compare and contrast results by categories of individual focus groups
- Look for emerging themes by question and then overall
- Construct typologies or diagram the analysis
- Describe findings and use quotes to illustrate

#### **5. Finally, prepare the report:**

- Consider narrative style versus bulleted style
- Use a few quotes to illustrate
- Sequence could be question-by-question or by theme
- Share report for verification with other researchers
- Revise and finalize report

#### **Sample Focus Group Write Up**

An example of a well-written focus group report can be found at:  
[http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/countryreports/CamFP-HIV\\_FGDs.pdf](http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/countryreports/CamFP-HIV_FGDs.pdf)  
(Waltson, 2005)



## APPENDIX 11: INTRODUCTION TO MILESTONES AS MEL TOOLS

There are a variety of ways to monitor progress toward program objectives.

Good program evaluation begins with a **baseline**. A baseline is the information collected before or at the start of a project that provides a basis for planning and/or assessing subsequent progress and impact. Baselines tell you where you are beginning. Baselines can be collected to describe qualitatively and quantitatively the existing levels of community preparedness. Once a baseline is collected, then the project staff can set targets for the different indicators.

It is essential that the initial benchmarks strike the right balance between high program expectations and realistic outcomes. Baselines and benchmarks allow project staff to report on progress toward achieving targets. It is important to report which programmatic activities are occurring and identify the impact of these activities toward accomplishing the overall program objectives. However, some indicators require many activities to occur before they are accomplished. These activities are known as **Milestone Events**.

### WHEN TO USE THE MILESTONE INDEX IN MEL

The Milestone Index (MI) is used to track progress on outcomes and impacts from large, time consuming and complex activities.

The Milestone Index is **commonly used** as a monitoring and evaluation tool for tracking progress toward high-level legal or political changes. **Its purpose** is to identify in advance the key or milestone events as **success indicators** that must occur en route for the accomplishment of a long-term activity such as a law or policy. The Milestone Index provides a qualitative and quantitative tool that helps project staff to plan and then evaluate how their activities are contributing to such an outcome.

A milestone is achieved when the project moves through various stages of development and ultimately attains a rating that suggests it has reached sustainability.

The **principles** that underlie the Milestone Index are simple. Program managers must accept that there are a variety of both sequential and non-sequential benchmark activities that must occur and capacities that must be put into place before a high-level impact can be achieved. By identifying all of the potential activities that need to occur and capacities that must be built, the project staff has a clear roadmap for achieving the outcome.

### RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

#### Staff

In many projects, one person is all that is required to score the Milestone Index. The same person should score the Milestone Index each reporting cycle. This will ensure that the scores assigned to each stage are consistent. This person,



however, should seek input from other team members, local partners, and experts.

### Time

The time actually spent assigning points to the different stages is quite short. However, several consultations may need to occur to inform the scoring.

### Cost

In most projects, there is no additional cost for administering the Milestone beyond setting it up.

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES FOR USING THE MILESTONE INDEX IN MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The Milestone Index tracks activities or benchmark events that will eventually contribute to a long-term, high-level objectives.

### Step 1: Using Milestones in Monitoring and Evaluation

Milestones are usually reported on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. The program manager will report both the numeric score and then write a narrative explaining which activities took place during the quarter. The Milestone Index identifies where there has been success and where little or no activity took place.

The MI is an excellent planning tool. If there has not been much activity on the Milestone Index, the program manager may need to contact partners or find new ways of achieving the desired results.

### Step 2: Milestones are Most Appropriate for Long Term Objectives

Remember that Milestones are best used to capture progress toward a long-term objective.

The Milestone Index is really a plan. It identifies all of the little steps that need to take place before a milestone event can happen. It can be a participatory process whereby the local partners are included in setting up the milestone events and scoring progress toward the objective.

Below is a guideline of potential milestones that often occur during this process, although these events may not necessarily occur in this order. Milestones allow for the non-sequential occurrence of key program activities.

**The Milestone Index (MI) is “Creating a Community Led Coalition for Emergency Preparedness.”**

Most MIs are scored on 100 points. This makes reporting easier for donors and missions to understand. Progress is reported as a raw score (0-100) and is accompanied by a narrative explaining how and why progress was made during the quarter. Scoring can be broken down into easy to explain categories. For instance, you can create two or three categories of achievement. The assigned score could be based on **Low achievement** (minimal progress that is given only a fraction of the total points for the stage), **Intermediate achievement** (a fair



amount of progress toward completing the stage) and **Advanced achievement** (the stage is complete and the outcome is clear).

If a Milestone event is a long-term activity such as a community coalition that plans, implements and revises community preparedness plans, it may take one to three years to occur.

**Step 3: Creating the Scorecard (please note that the language reflects writing on a MI and may not be perfect sentence structure)**

Ideal Illustrative Example:

**Stages for Year 1** "Creating A Community Led Coalition for Emergency Preparedness."

Agency staff should identify all of the stakeholder groups that have an interest in the topic.

The stakeholder groups are contacted and invited to a meeting (or series of meetings). This meeting should be participatory.

The meeting takes place. Input is solicited from stakeholders.

The problem(s) is identified. The solution(s) is articulated and agreed upon. This may take several meetings and negotiations. Note: you may never get 100% agreement to the solution.

The community groups work individually and together to address the identified problems. The community groups need to include members of different organisations. They should select leaders and delegate tasks so that their engagement is a localized effort. It is expected that this will be one of the more difficult parts of the process because local community engagement is often slow to start and sustain.

**Milestone Index 1** "Creating a Community Led Coalition for Preparedness."

Max. Score for Stage	Stage	Baseline 0	Value 1-5 Intermediate	Value 6-10 Advanced
10 points	<b>Stage 1.</b> Agency staff identifies all stakeholder groups that have an interest in policy or legal change. (Output)			
10 points	<b>Stage 2.</b> The stakeholder groups are contacted and invited to a meeting. The meeting takes place. Input is solicited from stakeholders. (Output)			
10 points	<b>Stage 3.</b> The problem(s) is identified. The solution(s) is articulated and agreed upon. (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 4.</b> The community coalition group conducts a formal assessment of the problem. (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 5.</b> The community coalition groups develop plans for addressing the problems from stage 4 (Outcome) A document is created that is shared with stakeholders, government officials, the media and other donors. (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 6.</b> Public debate is held on the proposed policy. There is interest by the			



Max. Score for Stage	Stage	Baseline 0	Value 1-5 Intermediate	Value 6-10 Advanced
	public in the input of the community coalition. (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 7.</b> The community coalition groups present a plan/proposal to the community and local agencies (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 8.</b> Local emergency management agencies provide input into the plans (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 9.</b> The plan is practiced (Outcome)			
10 points	<b>Stage 10.</b> The plan is implemented in a hazard.			
Total Score (maximum = 100):		Total Score = 0	Total Score Intermediate Column =	Total Score Advanced Column =

Total Score for all Columns:	Total Score for all Columns Combined = _____
TOTAL SCORE	= _____ (Out of 100 possible points)

Comments about this Quarter's Activities:

You will write your rationale for scoring in this box. This information will become a part of the narrative in the quarterly report. This section is useful for remembering why you scored a stage a certain way.

Please write the names and signatures of each person who completed this index. Please also include the date(s).

NAME  
DATE

SIGNATURE



#### Step 4: Reporting the Indicator

Milestone indicators are reported as a raw score (0-100). There are two ways to set targets:

1. Targets can be set yearly. Programs can set a target for one year and progress is reported in the quarterly reports. For instance, setting up a radio station or building the capacity of a partner might realistically take one year. Thus, the team may set up a target of 100 by EOY1
2. However, some engagement activities may take three years or the life of the project (LOP). The project team can set yearly targets based on an overall LOP total objective of 100 points (YR1=40, YR 2= 80, Y3=100) to track progress

Examples of reporting Milestone Index indicators in a two-year project:

Baseline:	0/ 100 (ie: June 2020) (reported semi-annually)
<b>Six Month Target</b>	60/100 (Dec. 2020)
Actual:	31/100 (Dec. 2020)
<b>One Year Target</b>	70/100 (June 2021)
Actual:	61/100 (June 2021)
<b>18 Month Target</b>	85/100 (Dec. 2021)
Actual:	74/100 (December 2021)
<b>EOP Target 24 months</b>	100/100 (June 2022)
Actual:	89/100 (June 2022)
Text box for comments	

## SAMPLE NARRATIVE REPORTING PROGRESS ON MILESTONE:

Our agency seeks to “Create a Community Led Coalition for Emergency Preparedness.” Agency staff worked closely with several community opinion leaders who expressed an interest in creating a community led coalition that would work on preparedness activities.

Over the course of two years, the community leaders worked together to create a sustainable community group. **Write details of the group here.**

To measure progress toward “Creating a Community Led Coalition for Emergency Preparedness” our agency and the community co-designed a Milestone Index tool. This tool tracks progress on the creation of the group and its outputs and outcomes.

The Milestone Index is a MEL tool for tracking progress toward high-level legal outcomes and impacts. It identified in advance the key or milestone events as success indicators that must occur *en route* for the accomplishment of a long-term activity. The Milestone Index provides a qualitative and quantitative tool that helped agency staff to plan and then evaluate how their activities and the activities of the coalition are contributing to the improved community preparedness.

The target for Milestone was set at 100 points. The project achieved 89 points and many important activities occurred to help create and sustain the community coalition. While the project did not achieve its overall Milestone target to create a fully functioning community coalition capable of leading hazard preparedness, there were many positive outcomes that set the stage for the eventual development of that community group.

**There are several lessons learned from this activity.** First, getting multiple community groups and leaders with a long-standing history of distrust to cooperate takes time and a clear plan for relationship building. Second, getting public input and support early in the project is key. Finally, the lack of hazards this year was problematic because the community coalition did not have a “testing” moment to allow us to evaluate the overall capacity of the group.

## BEST PRACTICES:

1. Identify clear objectives. Objectives should be timely, measurable, outcome specific, public specific
2. Understand the level of capacity of the local partners. Knowing which skills they need to develop to support your program's objectives will help your program to build up their long-term capacity that will last long after your program closes. Activities on the Milestone are often focused on capacity building of partners in the first year of a multi-year program
3. Score cautiously. Overly optimistic scores given to benchmark activities are hard to adjust later in the program. At the same time, scores that are too low are also problematic because it does not show progress. Ask trusted partners for their own assessment of how they are progressing in their work on this objective. They can provide you with examples of what is working and what needs to be addressed next in programmatic activities





4. The narrative is the key. Few people will understand what the numeric score on the Index means. The narrative will tell the story of which activities have taken place and what those activities mean for accomplishing the indicator. You may want to develop “tags” for numeric range such as low, intermediate and high as seen on the scorecard
5. Revise the Milestone benchmarks. Based on your experiences and on an annual basis, you may need to revise the activities, revise whom you work with (when possible), or even revise your objective after consulting with the donor
6. Celebrate the small achievements! If five organisations come together to advocate for a new law and their first event is a success then you have much to celebrate

### LESSONS LEARNED IN MILESTONE INDICES

The Milestone Index is an excellent tool for tracking progress toward legal or political reform and the development of organisational capacity. Lessons learned include:

1. You will need to explain the Milestone Index to your agency managers. You need to be an advocate for the tool and explain how and why it is a useful MEL tool
2. You need to identify all of the possible stages/steps that are necessary for the Milestone event to be accomplished. Some steps are not worth 10 points and therefore you will need to combine several related tasks if you want to keep 10-point categories
3. The same person needs to score the Milestone Index each reporting period. Too many cooks spoil the soup—too many people scoring the Index creates inconsistent measurement of progress
4. Be sure to explain the rationale behind the points clearly on the scorecard so that you can refer back to the card if anyone asks why you assigned a certain number of points. You can create two or three categories (low achievement, medium achievement and high achievement) to designate incremental points for movement on the benchmark activity
5. When writing up the narrative of the scorecard, tell the story of the quarter's activities. The points are not really that important—the activities that you undertook along the way are the real reason behind the scorecard. You can refer to the achievement categories (low, medium, high) in the narrative
6. If the project creates a new Milestone Index score for each year, then the project staff must create a new score card. In cases where the target begins anew each year, the staff person responsible will set the baseline to ZERO and identify the steps that need to be taken to move toward accomplishment of the indicator

If the project has one scorecard then the FINAL SCORE on the Milestone Index from year 1 becomes the baseline score for YR2.



## DOS AND DON'TS:

DO break down the end program objective into manageable activities or benchmarks

DO solicit feedback from program staff and local experts including agencies

DO assign points based on level of difficulty. Early stages (low difficulty) can be achieved easily and will help to show program progress. More difficult benchmarks can be assigned additional points so when they do occur, there is a noticeable increase in the MI score

DO NOT feel that you have over-score to achieve the targets each year. Targets are only targets. You are working in a complex environment and if it was easy to pass law, create a radio station, or build up the capacity of a sector, it would have already been done

DO NOT give full points to a milestone benchmark until it is clearly completed and the impact can be observed. Just because there is a round table does not mean that the round table has impact. Include impact statements into your stages. The activity is only an activity; the outcome is the real measure of change or impact.