Chief’s Corner: Strategic Planning

By: Bryan Murdie, Planning and Mitigation Branch Director

The State of Kansas Emergency Management Strategic Plan is currently being updated. This document serves as the guiding strategy for the emergency management program within Kansas. Since this is a programmatic plan for the emergency management community, input from all stakeholders is welcomed and encouraged by contacting bryan.d.murdie.nfg@mail.mil. Through the process of developing the plan, I’ve encountered a wide range of incomprehension and unfamiliarity with strategic planning from program partners and stakeholders. The majority within the emergency management profession, and most certainly the business sector, will acknowledge that strategic planning is challenging to say the least. In fact, studies suggest that the success rate of implementing strategic plans is only 10% to 37%. I want to breakdown why I believe it’s so difficult and suggest tactics for your own success.

In order to address any lack of understanding, let’s discuss the purpose of a strategic plan. In short, it applies focus to improve the program. To expand on this, the plan identifies critical areas within the program and designs a way of coordinating and focusing action on improving them. The act of strategic planning is the recognition of the program’s biggest challenges to forward progress and devising an approach to overcoming them. While this may appear straightforward, and make note that all good strategy should be simple and obvious, there is a high failure rate for strategic implementation. Let’s look at the reasons why.

Program implementation of strategy becomes difficult due to the fact that it is reliant on multiple stakeholders or, within the emergency management discipline, an entire community. The necessity of teamwork and the existence of stakeholders who are resistant to change are challenges to forward progress. Additionally, organizations typically only have enough human and financial resources to sustain current operations which can make it difficult to take improvement actions. Finally, while some programs may easily identify desired improvement areas and outline objectives to be accomplished, the difficulty exists in planning the sequence of tactics or implementation steps to achieve success. This last difficulty proves insurmountable for many programs and the result is a plan that has “high-sounding, amorphous goals” instead of a true problem-solving strategy. The plan should do more than urge the program towards a goal. It should instead acknowledge chal-

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In recognizing that strategy is more than a big-picture, overall direction defined by broad concepts, a program can begin to close the chasm between “strategy” and “implementation.” All strategic plans should have this logical structure: a diagnosis (challenge), a guiding policy (strategy), and coherent actions (implementation steps). The guiding policy specifies the approach to address the obstacles identified within the diagnosis while coherent actions execute the guiding policy through coordinated policy, actions, and commitments. Having discussed the purpose of strategic planning and the difficulties in their implementation, I’ll provide some advice for success.

- Do not embrace the language of broad goals, ambition, vision and values. This approach within strategic planning is often used to cover up a plans failure. Remember that strategy is an exercise in problem solving rather than goal setting.

- Identify only a few critical issues and then concentrate action and resources on them. A plan that covers everything has lost its effectiveness. You must denote what the plan focuses on and what it does not.

- The strategy should consist of coherent and cohesive actions. Unlike a stand-alone decision or goal, a strategy is a set of actions that respond to a high-stakes challenge. Avoid pursuing multiple goals and objectives that are unconnected or, worse, that conflict with one another. This often happens within programs placate to internal and external interest, spreading the concentration of resources and doing little to advance the program. For strategic success, programs must be willing to say no to a wide variety of actions and interests.

- Note that there is a difference between “actions” and “implementation” details. Implementation details should be determined specifically by organizations supporting the programs strategic actions. Involve organizations and people in establishing how they will implement the strategy instead of dictating them. Success will be achieved through commitment, not compliance.

To summarize, a strategy should be able to be shortened to one page with simple words and concepts. Initial discussions should focus on defining challenges and then apply focus to the most promising opportunities. The Strategic Plan is ultimately a selected path to forward progress and you are certain to experience challenges of inertia. By involving stakeholders, building complementary actions, overcoming the desire to placate to other interests, and avoiding fluff that masquerades as strategic concept, you will have a chance of beating the odds of successfully implementing your own Strategic Plan.

Building Local Resilience: Through Resource Management

By: Bryan Murdie, Planning and Mitigation Branch Director

Resource Management is a key component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) that focuses on ensuring incident managers receive timely and appropriate resources during an incident. This article will condense multiple reference documents highlighting the concepts of resource management to include NIMS, the National Response Framework, NIMS Credentialing and Typing Guides, Emergency Management Accreditation Program Standards, and NFPA 1600: Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management. The common theme within these various documents is the emphasis placed on the need for consistency in the resource management process. The emergency management community should embrace and conform to the basic concept, principles, and policies of NIMS to ensure consistency is established and ultimately aid in our ability to effectively respond to disasters.

The NIMS states that the “resource management process can be separated into two parts: resource management as an element of preparedness and resource management during an incident.” Too often the focus is solely applied to resource management during an incident, however there are several essential elements to resource management preparedness that should be in place prior to an incident to facilitate effective response. These elements are:

Planning and Procedures: The planning process includes discussing strategies to operationally address consequences of an incident, identifying resource needs, and developing procedures for the mobilization, dispatching, and demobilization of resources. This process should include key public and private stakeholders within the resource management program.
Resource Needs Assessment: Organizations should determine resource requirements to respond to hazards or threats to their jurisdiction and compare those requirements to available resources to establish resource needs or gaps. The assessment should focus on the required functions or critical tasks to be performed during the incident to save lives, protect property, and stabilize the incident. These identified gaps should be filled through contracts or agreements and further communicated to potential resource providers (e.g., State, NGO, Private Sector) to support appropriate planning on their part. The Kansas Capability Assessment Tool (KCAT) is available to support counties in conducting a resource needs assessment and is discussed in more detail within this newsletter’s Resource Highlight article.

Agreements: Commitments for resource support should be solicited in advance of an incident for identified needs/gaps to ensure an adequate and effective response. As a preferred best practice, agreements should consider inclusion of roles and responsibilities, requesting procedures, tort and liability, and allocation of cost for reimbursement. Kansas has an intrastate mutual aid compact that allows intrastate sharing of resources and assists jurisdictions with establishing thorough agreements. For more information visit: http://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=617

Resource Identification: Resources must be properly identified to ensure they can perform a specific function needed during an incident. This is done through typing and credentialing. Equipment typing is the categorizing and defining of resources by capacity and/or capability. For an example of why this is necessary, consider an ambulance. Everyone recognizes an ambulance, but the capabilities within can be vastly different. A Basic Life Support (BLS) Ambulance cannot adequately support the transport of a critically ill or injured individual the same as a Critical Care Transfer Unit that is specially equipped. The credentialing of personnel is the objective evaluation of one’s ability to meet an accepted standard. The act of credentialing is performed to ensure that responders meet recognized minimum requirement standards that allows them to perform a task safely and effectively. The credentialing process should link the qualification/certification/licensing requirements with identity verification. Both typing and credentialing of resources within Kansas are supported by the Comprehensive Resource Management and Credentialing System (CRMCS). For more information visit: http://kansas.responders.us/

Inventorying: Resources (both personnel and equipment) should be inventoried to provide visibility of available assets and ensure quick coordination of resources when needed within the emergency management community. The act of inventorying is simply depicting organizational assets with information about their capabilities by using the aforementioned typing and credentialing.

Information Systems: Information systems allow for the collection, analyzing, and processing of data. If used properly, information systems can expedite and aid in the coordination of emergency management tasks. This holds true with resource management. The above elements compound their effectiveness when coupled together within a comprehensive information system that the entire emergency management community utilizes. Kansas has a system in the CRMCS which allows for the inventorying, typing, credentialing, badges, coordination, and tracking of resources during an incident. This system is available to the entire emergency management community and if you have interest in using it please contact brian.m.rogers.nfg@mail.mil.

Kansas SAR USNG Map Project

By: Mike D’Attilio, GIS Coordinator

The KDEM Planning Section’s GIS group recently delivered a statewide set of US National Grid-based maps for wide-area search and rescue to the 7 Search-And-Rescue (SAR) Task Forces across the state. This two-year project, supported by the State Fire Marshall’s Office, consisted of developing and generating ½ km maps covering the entire state – approximately 950,000 individual maps in total. Each map is a one-page 8 ½” x 11” PDF file with USNG lines overlaid. The group also developed 24” x 36” maps of each township along with 105 county level maps and delivered these as PDFs as well. We built a browser-based program used to browse and select the individual maps needed and provided the system on external USB hard drives. Once selected, the maps can be printed on nearly any available laser printer. This program is designed to be used in the absence of an internet connection and can run on any computer that has a modern browser installed. The ½ km maps are divided into 100m squares using national grid lines to facilitate defining search areas. A Romer scale can be used with the maps to determine a USNG coordinate, but it is not required. A USNG coordinate can be determined from the grid lines and tic marks on the map. A pilot version of this project was used by Task Force 4 over the past 18 months in two exercises as well as last summer in responding to the Eureka tornado with the project exceeding expectations.

CRMCS Printer Sustainment

The Kansas Division of Emergency Management is currently in the process of creating a state contract that will support the sustainment of established Comprehensive Resource Management and Credentialing (CRMCS) printers. The intent behind the state contract is to standardize printer purchases with a thoroughly researched and analyzed printer option that’s competitively priced. The contract is expected to be in place for stakeholder use in 2017.

Having a state contract for system printer acquisitions will provide greater purchasing ease to stakeholders replacing dated printers. Additionally, by ensuring that the system printer infrastructure is standardized this will allow for more expedient and thorough vendor technical assistance for troubleshooting issues. The contract is also establishing an option to utilize regional printer maintenance workshops to ensure the longevity of our current CP80 infrastructure and replacement printers. All supplies for the CP80 and new printer will be included in the contract for stakeholder purchasing.

Once the contract is established and ready for use all stakeholders will be notified.

>> FOR ACCESS OR AGENCY USE OF THE CRMCS PLEASE CONTACT brian.m.rogers8.nfg@mail.mil

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The GIS group continues to work on updating the KansasMap suite of software applications. We’ve recently added federal qualifications to the KansasMap: Deployable Resources app and continue to work on expanding its capabilities. If you haven’t looked at the new KansasMap: Deployable Resources application released March 31, 2017 (https://maps.kansastag.gov/kansasmap/deployableresources/), we encourage you to do so. If you don’t have a KansasMap login or if you’ve forgotten your user name or password, call or email us and we can get you set up.

We are starting work on developing further tools to assist county Emergency Managers in planning and resource management. Some of the functionality we are looking at building include ways to facilitate mutual aid, sketch and save evacuation routes, and other map drawing and analysis tools.

Download the KansasMap: Deployable Resources Updated Flyer!

For additional information about KansasMap contact michael.g.dattilio.nfg@mail.mil.

Open Disasters:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

Open Projects:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

Projects Approved YTD:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

YTD Approved Projects Amount:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

Current Portfolio Management Amounts:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

Recent (4 mos.) Federal Disasters Declarations:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)

Significant Upcoming Dates:
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)
How long have you been an Emergency Manager? “I have been an Emergency Manager for a year now.”

Do you have a best practice within your county for emergency preparedness? “I would say that since I have started with Meade County a best practice for emergency preparedness is being proactive. We tell the public to be prepared so it is important to set the example of being proactive in all the areas we can.”

Based on your experience, what within emergency management would you like to see improved and how do you believe this could happen? “Since moving into emergency management I have seen a lot of misunderstandings of roles and relationships between state and local partners. I have learned so much from taking the time to talk to others about their roles and how their job description relates to mine as an emergency manager. I think the only way to reduce these misunderstandings is to remember the human element. Get to know the state employees, first responders, and others that you have interactions with by having real conversations. We all talk about communication being an issue at training and exercise gatherings, so why don’t we communicate to better play our parts.”

Share an experience that you have had as an emergency manager, good or bad. If applicable, what would you have done differently? “Since becoming the Emergency Manager for Meade I have had to file 3 disaster declarations. This last was with the Starbuck Fire as it crossed southern Meade County. I had been struggling to find how best to help and connect with my fire departments and the whole community as well. I ended up working the second day of the fire from the Fire Chief’s truck, helping with radio traffic, keeping track of food, water, and damage reports, and just getting to know the responders and the families who were impacted. At the end of the day the only way to get home without interrupting the fire crews was to get a ride from the Road and Bridge department as one of equipment operators was leaving the scene. This ended with me riding in a motor grader back to the county pick up a few miles up the road but man did it do a lot for my relationship with the crew. The fire also provided me with opportunity to get to meet more members of the community that I had been unsuccessful in reaching. I am grateful for the ability to engage with the community but I would much prefer that a disaster had not been the reason for the sudden surge in my popularity.”

Rants, Raves, Cuss and Discuss Letters To The Chief

Want to ask the Chief a question, vent frustrations, or praise our efforts? Simply email bryan.d.murdie.nfg@mail.mil and potentially have it addressed here within the newsletter for full transparency or recognition.