



Tabletop Exercise Planning Guide

HOMELAND AND SECURITY Exercise Toolkit





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Planning Guide Introduction

This Planning Guide is the core “how-to” document in the **Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Toolkit** package.

Materials in the toolkit are designed to be customized and adapted for repeated use based on the changing needs of the community. In addition, the Toolkit provides planning considerations and discussion questions to help guide decisions around conducting a tailored tabletop exercise.

This Planning Guide component of the Toolkit provides an overview and explanation for all materials included in the complete Toolkit package.

The Planning Guide is structured into four sections:

➤ **Planning Guide Introduction**

- Explanation of the document and navigation.

➤ **Toolkit Introduction**

- Provides an explanation for the complete toolkit including background information and structural and use recommendations.



Toolkit Contents

- Simplified list of all the materials included in the toolkit.

➤ **Materials Overview**

- A short explanation for each of the materials in the toolkit including content and use recommendations.



Toolkit Introduction

How to Use the Toolkit

The Toolkit consists of templates and “starter” documents. These are intended to ease the planning process but do not replace the need for an Exercise Planning Team (EPT) to determine the best fit for the needs of the jurisdiction at the time of the exercise.

For each item, the EPT **must**:

1. Review all the template material.
2. Validate or modify the material the EPT wishes to include in the exercise.
3. Remove materials that do not apply. This includes removing exercise development guidance such as “insert x here” and other toolkit artifacts.
4. Use final documents to plan for and conduct exercises that are relevant to the identified participants.

Background

The State of Hawaii faces the challenge of response preparations for events and incidents as homeland security threats increase in the modern world. The changing operating environment in the State of Hawaii and the world presents an ongoing need for flexibility and creativity in preparing for the next big disaster.

State, local, private sector, and non-governmental organization (NGO) partnerships remain integral to supporting homeland security preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts across Hawaii. The framework of a locally-executed, state-managed, and federally-supported approach to incident stabilization remains the gold standard for all responses and building an exercise program to support an integrated response is a priority for all jurisdictions.

Using a whole-community approach, we must continue to prepare for threats to homeland security by facilitating inter-and intra-agency tabletop discussions and exercises that explore the realities and challenges of our new normal.

This Hawaii Homeland Security Toolkit reflects several options to execute a tabletop exercise (TTX). It is designed to be easily modified prior to execution and repeatedly used to enhance exercise availability. This toolkit was developed according to the US Department of Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) guidance.¹

Purpose

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide pre-developed materials to conduct regular tabletop discussions/exercises with a homeland security threat related scenario.



These materials are referred to as a “toolkit” because they:

- Provide pre-developed materials to conduct tabletop discussions/exercises for various homeland security-related hazards.
- May be used repeatedly in different ways for multiple exercises.
- Provide raw material that must be tailored prior to use.

The Toolkit is scalable, adaptable, and flexible to meet the needs of various Hawaii communities in preparedness efforts. The Toolkit and related materials follow HSEEP doctrine set forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). HSEEP provides a set of fundamental principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.¹

Homeland Security Threat Definitions

The topic of homeland security and threats to it is a constantly evolving landscape. The Toolkit provides opportunities to address a range of homeland security threats based on the scenarios chosen by the EPT. Various common types of threats and their definitions are outlined in the following table. The EPT should take these into consideration when developing the exercise. By using a range of threat types, the EPT can help exercise participants improve preparedness and response for all threats.

Threat	Definition
Cyber Threats	Cyber threats refer to persons who attempt unauthorized access to a computerized control system device and/or network. Access can be from within an organization by trusted users or from remote locations. Threats can be due to malicious intent such as nation-state actors or non-malicious circumstances such as environmental/mechanical failures or inadvertent actions of an authorized user. Common planning for homeland security types of cyber threats occurs around hostile governments, terrorist groups, hackers, crime syndicates, disgruntled employees, and malicious intruders. Threat activities could include espionage, hacking, identity theft, crime, and terrorism. ²
Terrorism	Terrorism is defined as violent criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups. To be considered foreign or international terrorism, the act needs to be inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations (state-sponsored). For an incident to be considered domestic terrorism, the act must intend to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature. ³

¹ HSEEP Doctrine. <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>

² Cyber Threat Source Descriptions, CISA, <https://us-cert.cisa.gov/ics/content/cyber-threat-source-descriptions>

³ 18 US Code. § 2331 (1)(5), <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title18/part1/chapter113B&edition=prelim>



Threat	Definition
<p>Complex Coordinated Attack (CCA) or Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack (CCTA)</p>	<p>A CCA (also sometimes known as a CCTA) is a violent assault or series of assaults that involve synchronized and independent team(s) at multiple locations, sequentially, or in close succession, initiated with little or no warning, and employing one or more weapon systems that are intended to result in large numbers of casualties.⁴ Attacks can include firearms, explosives, using fire as a weapon, and other nontraditional attack methodologies.</p> <p>These types of attacks take a lot of coordination and planning from the assailants and, as a result, require corresponding cross-jurisdictional response. The complexity of response for these attacks frequently includes large numbers of fatalities over a prolonged period of time.⁵</p>
<p>Emerging Threats</p>	<p>“Emerging threats” is used as a general term to include a threat that is newly recognized, an existing threat that has developed new attributes, or a previously recognized threat that may affect a new or different population, industry, or geographic area. It is impossible to predict all threats; however, educated guesses can help direct resources towards possible future threats.</p> <p>The broad categories of emerging threats identified to Congress in 2018 included Adversaries’ Political and Military Advancements, Dual-Use Technologies, Weapons, Events, and Demographic Changes.⁶</p>
<p>Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE)</p>	<p>DVE is defined as domestically based person(s) without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power and who seeks to further political or social goals through acts of force or violence.⁷</p> <p>Currently, the most persistent threat is racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism, with white supremacist extremists being the most persistent and lethal threat nationally. At different times, we also see spikes in DVE threats dependent on political or social issues such as immigration, environmentalism, and police-related policy issues.⁸ The target of the DVE groups can be racial and religious minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, politicians, and those they believe promote multiculturalism and globalization.</p>
<p>Targeted Acts of Violence</p>	<p>The goals of a targeted violence attack lack a political or ideological motive but inflict similar types of trauma on communities as a terrorist type of attack.⁹</p> <p>Targeted acts of violence that have no direct connection to terrorism may employ tactics that mimic CCAs and would require the same level of coordination to be managed effectively. Common targets of these locations include schools, workplaces, public gatherings, and other commonplace settings.</p>

⁴ Complex Coordinate Attacks: Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places, Department of Homeland Security: CISA, <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Action%20Guide%20CCA%20508%20FINAL%2020190905.pdf>

⁵ Planning Considerations: Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attacks, July 2018, Department of Homeland Security, <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/planning-considerations-complex-coordinated-terrorist-attacks.pdf>

⁶ Long-Range Emerging Threats Facing the United States As Identified by Federal Agencies, December 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/qao-19-204sp.pdf>

⁷ (U) Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021, March 01, 2020, Department of Homeland Security, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/21_0301_odni_unclass-summary-of-dve-assessment-17_march-final_508.pdf

⁸ Homeland Threat Assessment October 2020, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Homeland Security, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf

⁹ Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, Department of Homeland Security, <https://www.dhs.gov/CP3>



Toolkit Contents

In addition to this Planning Guide, the Toolkit contains:

Logistics and Administration Templates

- Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Sign-In Sheet Template
- Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Exercise Flyer Template

Planning Meeting Templates

- Concepts & Objectives (C&O) and Initial Planning Meeting (IPM) Agenda Template
- Concepts & Objectives (C&O) and Initial Planning Meeting (IPM) Notes Template
- Midterm Planning Meeting (MPM) Agenda Template
- Midterm Planning Meeting (MPM) Notes Template
- Meeting Notes Final Planning Meeting (FPM) Agenda Template
- Meeting Notes Final Planning Meeting (FPM) Notes Template

Exercise Delivery Templates

- Situation Manual (SitMan) Template
- Facilitator/Evaluator Guide Template
- Exercise Delivery PowerPoint Presentation Template

Exercise Evaluation Templates

- Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG) Template
- Participant Feedback Form Template

After-Action Templates

- After-Action Report (AAR) Template
- After-Action Meeting (AAM) Agenda Template



Materials Overview

Logistics and Administration Templates

Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Toolkit Planning Guide

The Planning Guide is the core document of the Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Toolkit and serves as a “how-to guide” for the rest of the toolkit materials. Each toolkit document is outlined in the Planning Guide with instructions for use and additional background information, if necessary.

Hawaii Homeland Security TTX Flyer

The TTX Flyer is an important advertising tool when socializing and recruiting participants for the exercise. The flyer should provide a brief overview of the intended purpose and scope of the exercise, as well as general exercise logistical information, such as the time, date, and location. Ideally, a well-crafted exercise flyer should provide prospective participants with enough information to understand the intent of the exercise and the capabilities that will be tested.

Suggested information to portray on the flyer includes:

- Time/date
- Location/address
- Purpose and scope
- Objectives
- Exercise structure
- Topics to be discussed
- Educational presentations/briefings
- Registration information

The flyer can be attached as a formal invitation to specific agencies/individuals or released as a general recruiting tool to the response community.

Sign-in Sheet Template

It is helpful to provide a sign-in sheet to use with all Planning Meetings and the exercise itself to record attendance and contact information for all participants. The sign-in sheet includes:

- Name
- Organization
- Email
- Phone

The specific Planning Meeting or exercise day information should be included on the document, including the event name, date, and time.



Planning Meeting Templates

Exercise Planning Meetings are used to guide the design and development of the TTX by considering major concepts and planning considerations. Planning meetings are structured events designed to help the EPT advance major milestones of exercise development and are critical for handling decision points. Generally, the following structured planning meetings are held during the exercise design phase:

- Concept & Objectives Meeting (C&O)
- Initial Planning Meeting (IPM)
- Midterm Planning Meeting (MPM)
- Final Planning Meeting (FPM)

C&O/IPM Meeting Agenda

For many EPTs, the C&O is combined or held in conjunction with the IPM. The C&O/IPM is the “beginning” of the exercise planning process. It is held with initial members of the EPT and is used to identify exercise priorities, including scope, core capabilities, objectives, and any additional EPT members.

Outcomes of the C&O/IPM often include a decision on exercise concept, objectives with defined and aligned capabilities, the exercise planning timeline, and additional EPT members.

At a C&O/IPM, EPT members should be provided with an agenda as a reference for discussion throughout the meeting. Suggested topics for meeting discussion include:

- Purpose and scope
- Objectives, tasks, and aligned core capabilities
- Logistics including exercise format, structure, and duration
- Participation
- Exercise Logistics
- EPT members

A combined C&O/IPM Meeting Agenda Template is included as a part of this toolkit. Additionally, supplemental information on core capabilities and proposed exercise purpose and objectives can be found in the Facilitator/Evaluator (F/E) Guide.

MPM Agenda

The Midterm Planning Meeting (MPM) is used to develop exercise scenario details and evaluation details. The MPM is also used as a check-in for exercise documentation development. Outcomes of the MPM include a well-defined scenario and a thorough review of the Situation Manual, Facilitator/Evaluator Guide, and Exercise Evaluation Guides.

At an MPM, EPT members should be provided with an agenda as a reference for discussion throughout the meeting.



Suggested topics for meeting discussion include:

- Purpose, scope, and objectives review
- Approve scenario
- Finalize draft SitMan
- Finalize EEGs, including tasks
- Feedback, hotwash, and AAM strategy
- Participation update
- Finalize exercise logistics

FPM Agenda

The Final Planning Meeting (FPM) is the end of official exercise planning and development processes. The focus of an FPM is to finalize exercise documentation and logistics. Prior to the FPM, all EPT members should receive final drafts of all exercise documentation and materials. Ideally, no major changes are made to the exercise design, scope, and documentation following the FPM. Outcomes of the FPM include final approval of exercise documents and resolution of final logistical items prior to exercise conduct.

At an FPM, EPT members should be provided with an agenda as a reference for discussion throughout the meeting. Suggested topics for meeting discussion include:

- Comprehensive final documentation review
- Facilitation and Evaluation finalization
- Final logistics review
- Final feedback, hotwash, and evaluation review
- Resolution of any open planning or logistical items

C&O/IPM, MPM, and FPM Meeting Notes

It is important to distribute to the EPT a summary or meeting minutes covering the discussion. This ensures that any EPT members who could not attend the meeting understand any decisions that were made. This also reminds individuals assigned with follow-up items. It is recommended that the notes summary includes the following:

- List of meeting attendees
- Highlights of the discussion among meeting participants
- Decision points/decisions made by meeting participants
- Follow-up items and assignments of responsibility

A template for meeting notes for each of the planning meetings is included as a part of this toolkit. The meeting notes templates mirror the meeting agendas for ease of tracking discussions and decisions made. Any updates to a meeting agenda topic may need to be updated in the meeting notes template as well.



Exercise Delivery Templates

Facilitator/Evaluator (F/E) Guide

The F/E Guide is provided to exercise staff, including exercise facilitators, evaluators, and notetakers. The document contains the information in the Situation Manual (SitMan) provided to exercise participants and observers and has been augmented with additional information intended only for exercise staff. It also provides guidance to assist the exercise facilitator and evaluators and should not be provided to the exercise players. Further, the F/E Guide provides the approximate timing of delivery for all information, supplemental questions/issues to raise during TTX conduct, and evaluation guidance. Finally, it provides limited talking points for facilitators and questions to be raised during exercise discussion.

The F/E Guide contains the raw material for exercise planning and should be completed prior to the other exercise materials.

The F/E Guide includes:

- Multiple exercise schedule options to build a short or long exercise
- Scenario options
- Modules based on FEMA's Community Lifelines

There is instructive material **highlighted** throughout the template that **must be deleted** prior to finalizing the F/E Guide for exercise staff use. In addition, any material that the EPT elects to not use for the exercise (e.g., schedules, surplus scenario options) should be deleted.

Exercise Schedule

An important component of exercise planning is the schedule. This gives participants parameters on what to expect. As a part of this Toolkit, multiple schedules are provided for the EPT to consider. One of these should be chosen as a part of the planning process based on the needs of the jurisdiction at the time of the exercise. The schedule that is selected should be included in the SitMan.

Although the schedules are flexible, it is important to stay within a reasonably close timeline to the one presented to participants. Therefore, it is the responsibility of facilitators to keep the discussion on track and productive within the timeline provided.

Scenario Options

The scenario sets the storyline and parameters for the exercise discussion. The scenario should be focused on providing enough information for players to stimulate discussion and to reflect on their own organizations' capabilities and gaps. Overloading players with information at the onset of an exercise can be a detriment to discussion if players begin to focus too much on the details. Therefore, the scenario should always balance providing enough information to instigate response, but not so much that discussion is stymied. The facilitator can always provide additional context if it is needed to continue discussions.

Draft scenario options are provided. The EPT should select at least one scenario option—using multiple options for a complex incident—and tailor each option to fit the needs of the exercise and the local environment.



Modules

There are several options for a module-based exercise structure. Each module provided can be used based on the EPT assessment at the time the exercise is planned. The EPT must choose the number of modules based on the time available and the depth of the discussion desired.

Each module includes a list of potential discussion questions around a single FEMA Community Lifeline. A good discussion question provides an open-ended opportunity for players to talk about potential solutions or ideas. The discussion questions may spur additional ideas, and the facilitator should use them as a framework rather than a script. In addition, questions can be disseminated among the breakout groups in whole or in part and can be used as an opportunity for each group to have its own disparate solutions.

Situation Manual (SitMan)

The exercise SitMan is the primary reference document for exercise participants and provides all necessary tools for their respective roles. The SitMan provides background information, the exercise agenda, core capabilities, purpose, and objectives to be tested. As the core document for discussion-based exercises, the SitMan also provides scenario information and key issues and sample discussion questions for participants to consider.

The SitMan is meant to be built using information from the F/E Guide. The SitMan template provided as a part of the toolkit will need to be carefully reviewed by the EPT for updates relevant to the exercise. Some considerations should include removing objectives and Core Capabilities not being tested, adding specifics regarding scheduling and discussion expectations, and removing modules not being discussed during the exercise.

There is a limited amount of instructive material highlighted throughout the template that **must be deleted** prior to finalizing the SitMan.

Exercise Delivery PowerPoint Presentation

A slide presentation helps support all participants with the initial introduction to the exercise. This slide deck should support any information provided, both in written and oral forms. The presentation should follow a logical format for the lead facilitator and should be visually interesting without being distracting. Most presentations are broken down into an introduction to the exercise, the scenario, discussion questions by module, and a closeout series.

The following topics should be presented:

- Opening remarks, including from any VIPs in attendance
- Introduction of participants
- Introduction of the exercise, including schedules, guidelines, and assumptions
- Exercise overview, including purpose and scope
- Exercise objectives and goal accomplishments
- Scenario overview
- Module instructions
- Module discussion questions
- Hotwash questions
- Closing remarks



Exercise Evaluation Templates

Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG)

An Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG) is used by evaluators to guide data collection, capture performance results during the exercise, and support After-Action Report development. EEGs align to core capabilities and list the relevant capability targets and critical tasks for each related objective.

The EEG captures information specific to evaluation requirements developed by the EPT as related to its jurisdictional plans, so they are unique to participating entities. An EEG template is provided as a part of this Toolkit and can be modified by the EPT, as desired. The primary contents of the EEG are explained in more detail below, with sample content located in various appendices to this Toolkit Planning Guide.

Organizational Capability Targets

Organization capability targets are performance thresholds established by the jurisdiction for each Core Capability. When used as exercise evaluation criteria, capability targets can measure how effectively a plan meets the goal and how well the participants perform the tasks in the plan.¹⁰ Capability targets are generally composed of a critical task, an impact, and a timeframe.

Critical Tasks

Critical tasks are included in EEGs as specific benchmarks to evaluate participating agencies. Critical tasks represent the specific actions needed to achieve the corresponding organization capability target.

Source

The source field on an EEG is a location to list the full name of any plans, policies, procedures, or frameworks that were used to guide organizational capability or critical task development.

Participant Feedback Form

Participant Feedback Forms allow all participants to comment candidly on exercise activities and exercise design and share their observed strengths and areas for improvement. Participant Feedback Forms should be collected at the conclusion of the hotwash.

The following information should be collected as a part of the Participant Feedback Form:

- Name (make this optional for more candid responses)
- Role (player, observer, etc.)
- Identify strengths
- Identify areas of improvement
- Scaled statements reflecting the participants' experience
- Open space for additional feedback

¹⁰ <https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1582669862650-94efb02c8373e28cadf57413ef293ac6/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>



After-Action Templates

After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) summarizes key information related to evaluation. The AAR primarily focuses on analyzing core capabilities, including capability performance, strengths, and areas for improvement. AARs also include basic exercise information, including the exercise name, type of exercise, dates, location, participating organizations, mission area(s), specific threat or hazard, a brief scenario description, and the name of the exercise sponsor and point of contact. The Improvement Plan (IP) identifies specific corrective actions, assigns them to responsible parties, and establishes target dates for their completion. It is created by leadership from the organizations participating in the exercise and is discussed during the After-Action Meeting (AAM).

The following should be included as a part of a complete AAR/IP:

- An executive summary with a brief overview of the findings.
- An introduction describing the purpose, scope, and intent of the exercise.
- Description of the planning process.
- Description of the exercise itself.
- Findings in a narrative format, including both positive items identified and things that can be improved.
- An Improvement Plan that identifies the findings from the narrative, as well as the priority and responsibility for updating.

After-Action Meeting (AAM) Agenda

The After-Action Meeting (AAM) is where the exercise is debriefed, and the AAR/IP is reviewed and refined. The AAM usually includes leadership and decision makers from the exercising organizations, as well as the lead evaluator and members of the EPT. The AAM should be an interactive session that provides attendees with the opportunity to discuss and validate the observations and corrective actions in the draft AAR/IP.

The following should be included as a part of an AAM:

- Overview of the draft AAR document
- Review of all findings
- Assigned responsibilities and deadlines for corrective actions

