Establishing and Maintaining
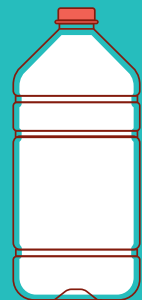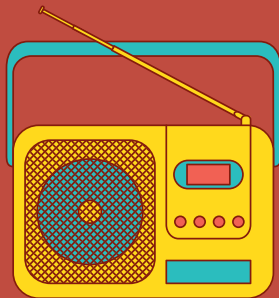# INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
with Immigrant and Refugee Populations

你好

¡Hola!

WELCOMING AMERICA

I-DIEM
Institute for Diversity and Inclusion
in Emergency Management

USING THIS CHECKLIST

The Establishing and Maintaining Inclusive Emergency Management with Immigrant and Refugee Populations Checklist is designed to help strengthen existing emergency preparedness plans by ensuring immigrants and refugees are part of any emergency response.

History demonstrates that residents of color are disproportionately impacted by disasters. In the Great Floods of 1927, over 330,000 African Americans were interned into 154 relief camps resulting in mass migration for basic shelter. Communities of color also have yet to fully recover from Hurricane Katrina (2005). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been significantly greater on communities of color across the U.S. with higher rates of infection and death than other demographic groups.
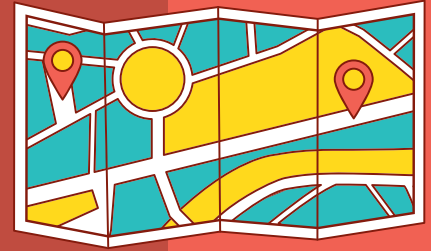
These cases and many others demonstrate time and again that the failure to establish and maintain inclusive emergency management can have disastrous consequences for both individual residents and for the community at large. Communities that prioritize an inclusive response to disasters are more resilient and less vulnerable due to equitable approaches to preparedness.

DEFINING INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Inclusive emergency management requires that emergency planning, response, and recovery efforts consider the unique needs of a community's diverse residents, including immigrant and refugee residents. According to the United Nations (UN, 2015)[1], a key priority for emergency management is to "strengthen the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, including through community involvement, integrated with livelihood enhancement programmes, and access to basic services to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters" (p. 19). Inclusive emergency management prioritizes community involvement in the design and implementation of emergency response, and in identifying sustainable solutions after the immediate response throughout government and nonprofit emergency plans and programs. Ultimately, communities invest in inclusive emergency management to reduce risk and improve resilience.

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1   United Nations. (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. 19. https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf
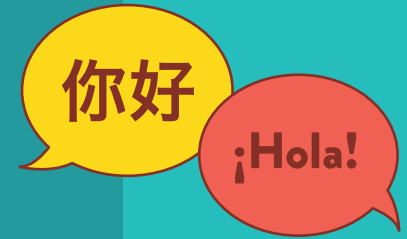
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Inclusive emergency management practices include conducting community assessments to identify the unique needs and assets of different community groups, including immigrants and refugees, in the context of an emergency.

Community assessments help identify the adverse impacts of race, immigration status, country of origin, language, income, ZIP code, identity, and ability. Assessments can vary, but should include some combination of vulnerability assessments (such as potential damage of a disaster and resources available to respond), risk assessments (likelihood of damage and loss of life), and community-based participatory research (CBPR) practices to achieve equitable outcomes.

○ Annually conduct vulnerability assessments and identify needs and vulnerabilities for improvement.

○ Conduct demographic analysis to identify key information on reaching immigrant and refugee community members, including, but not limited to: primary languages of English learners, prominent neighborhoods with high immigrant or refugee populations, and cultural and historical context of community members.

○ Create processes to receive direct feedback from community members about their needs and priorities.

○ Identify and build a repository of resources and relationships with community-based immigrant and refugee service organizations. These may include refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant rights organizations, faith-based organizations or houses of worship, local businesses, among others. Begin building relationships with those that are not yet established. For example, through a partnership with a refugee resettlement agency you may learn of an increase in refugee residents in a particular neighborhood. Update your practices to include building relationships with community leaders, ensuring information is available in their language, etc.

○ Ensure decisions are made transparently and that data is shared publicly.

BUILDING TRUST WITH IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

Inclusive emergency management practices include building trust and long-lasting relationships with all community members, including those who have historically been left out of planning, response, and recovery processes.

○ Proactively cultivate relationships with immigrant community leaders. Recognize that relationships and trust take time to build. Commit to establishing relationships by investing time and resources so that you are prepared when a crisis hits.

○ Partner with local immigrant and refugee community-based organizations to create shared activities to build trust and disseminate information on emergency preparedness.

○ Inform and invite immigrant and refugee community members to events. Likewise, make a point to attend their events as well.

○ Establish a network to prepare for and respond to emergencies that include immigrant and refugee community-based organizations, such as a Community Emergency Management Partnership Network (CEMPN). A CEMPN, according to Lapsley (2018)2, "sets the direction and provides a process that assists businesses, nonprofits, and community groups to collaborate with each other and emergency management organizations through all stages of an emergency. It is an end-to-end system that begins prior to an emergency" (p. 3).

○ Ensure immigrants and refugees are appointed to councils, oversight committees, and other bodies that inform emergency planning, response, and recovery.

○ Communicate regularly with immigrant and refugee leaders to maintain those relationships before and after a crisis.

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2   Emergency Management Victoria (2018). Australia. *Emergency Management Partnership Network.* https://asial.com.au/documents/item/1276

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Inclusive emergency management practices include using diverse and inclusive communication methods in order to reach and engage the intended audience.

◯ Provide meaningful language access throughout all communication materials by providing interpretation, translation, and content that is easy to understand.

◯ Ensure all communications materials are culturally relevant and appropriate.

◯ For example, when creating documents and interpreting or translating information consider the countries of origin in your community. Words and pronunciation in Arabic may differ if your community members are from Sudan or Saudi Arabia. Identify community members who can assist with review of information before it is published.

◯ Use bidirectional communications methods that allow individuals to both receive and respond to information.

◯ Utilize diverse sources of media, including social, print, radio and/or TV to share out information. Immigrant and refugee leaders may be able to point you to the platforms most read by members of their community.

◯ Think broadly about how and where people get information they trust. Restaurants, schools, hair salons and barbershops, houses of worship, and other spaces may be more effective than traditional outreach methods.

◯ Inform community members of how to access and participate in public meetings, policy discussions, planning meetings, and other spaces where you share information.

EVALUATION AND MAINTENANCE OF INCLUSION

Inclusive emergency management includes continuous evaluation to improve methods. Community members should also have the opportunity to provide feedback on programs.

◯ Regularly evaluate community feedback and how often feedback opportunities were presented and impacted policies or programs.

◯ Establish performance metrics for goals and objectives that measure inclusiveness and reflect the needs and priorities of immigrant and refugee community members.

◯ Utilize a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that allows immigrant and refugee communities to inform approaches for improving emergency management.

◯ Develop a logic model to guide emergency management programs and evaluation processes. Regularly review the logic model metrics to evaluate your programs.

◯ Conduct after action reviews (ie. debriefing processes that identify what happened and how to improve it) with immigrant and refugee community members to ensure alignment with community values and priorities.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FROM WITHIN

Inclusive emergency management includes reflecting on one's own organization or department, identifying opportunities, and enacting policies to create more equitable outcomes. Creating equitable outcomes requires that existing inequities are acknowledged and understood.

◯ Conduct an equity assessment of current policies, plans, programs, and standard operating procedures. Use this assessment to identify gaps in your organization or department and create a plan to address them.

◯ Conduct an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of internal and external capabilities and resources when working with immigrant and refugee communities. Use this assessment to advocate for additional resources to reach these groups.

◯ Recruit, hire, and retain employees who reflect the demographics of the local community. Diversify personnel to include bilingual and multilingual staff, with an emphasis on staff that speak languages within your region.

◯ Ensure all emergency management committees reflect the local community demographics, including members of immigrant and refugee communities.

◯ Provide professional development and training for employees on implicit bias and working with diverse populations.

◯ Leverage assets, resources, and services available in respective regions to ensure equitable outcomes for emergency planning, response, and recovery.

◯ Create meaningful language access for your department or organization to services by establishing language access plans, policies, and procedures; providing language access training for public-facing employees and communications teams; and informing English learners of their rights to language access through signage in public spaces. Establish a staff member to oversee language access services and serve as a community liaison for disseminating information.

◯ Facilitate ongoing community training and tabletop exercises where groups are presented with emergency scenarios, and then compare and update current plans, policies, and procedures to identify gaps with diverse stakeholders including immigrants and refugees. This supports inclusive preparation and improves the preparedness for practitioners.

ABOUT THIS TOOL

This checklist builds upon both I-DIEM's approach to inclusive emergency management and Welcoming America's approach to creating inclusive communities by leveraging diversity, inclusion, and equitable practices in order to strengthen community resilience and improve disaster outcomes.

I-DIEM's in-depth research and years of experience in equitable emergency management practices provide government, nonprofit, and private sector leaders with the tools needed to sustainably advance community resilience-building goals with measurable results. Welcoming America provides community leaders with the roadmap and support they need to ensure diverse communities become more inclusive of immigrants and refugees.

From May to December 2020, Welcoming America hosted an Inclusive Emergency Management Community of Practice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants included Welcoming Network members and local emergency management practitioners. Feedback from the Community of Practice participants indicated a need for a tool that community-based organizations, city and county governments, and emergency management practitioners could use to institutionalize inclusive policies and practices beyond the pandemic.

Find more on Welcoming America at welcomingamerica.org

Find more on I-DIEM at i-diem.org