



Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

Terminology, Methodology, and Compliance Guidelines

HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE AND EVALUATION PROGRAM (HSEEP)

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) is a capabilities and performance-based exercise program which provides a standardized policy, methodology, and terminology for exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. The HSEEP Policy and Guidance is presented in detail in HSEEP Volumes I-III. Adherence to the policy and guidance presented in the HSEEP Volumes ensures that exercise programs conform to established best practices, and helps provide unity and consistency of effort for exercises at all levels of government.

This document provides terminology, methodology, and compliance guidelines for all entities involved in exercises, including Federal, State, and local governments, departments, and agencies; private sector entities; and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The purpose of this document is to define the key requirements for an entity to be considered HSEEP-compliant. Section I of this document describes the key elements of the HSEEP exercise terminology and methodology. Section II provides a check-list which an entity can use to ensure its exercise program is HSEEP-compliant.

SECTION I: HSEEP TERMINOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

A consistent terminology and methodology for exercises is critical to avoiding confusion, and to ensuring that entities can exercise together seamlessly. This section provides a high-level overview of key components of HSEEP terminology and methodology.

Exercise Types

There are seven types of exercises defined within HSEEP, each of which is either discussions-based or operations-based.

Discussions-based Exercises familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreements and procedures, or may be used to develop new plans, policies, agreements, and procedures. Types of Discussion-based Exercises include:

- *Seminar*. A seminar is an informal discussion, designed to orient participants to new or updated plans, policies, or procedures (e.g., a seminar to review a new Evacuation Standard Operating Procedure).
- *Workshop*. A workshop resembles a seminar, but is employed to build specific products, such as a draft plan or policy (e.g., a Training and Exercise Plan Workshop is used to develop a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan).
- *Tabletop Exercise (TTX)*. A tabletop exercise involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. TTXs can be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures.
- *Game*. A game is a simulation of operations that often involves two or more teams, usually in a competitive environment, using rules, data, and procedure designed to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation.

Operations-based Exercises validate plans, policies, agreements and procedures, clarify roles and



responsibilities, and identify resource gaps in an operational environment. Types of Operations-based Exercises include:

- *Drill*. A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually employed to test a single, specific operation or function within a single entity (e.g., a fire department conducts a decontamination drill).
- *Functional Exercise (FE)*. A functional exercise examines and/or validates the coordination, command, and control between various multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., emergency operation center, joint field office, etc.). A functional exercise does not involve any "boots on the ground" (i.e., first responders or emergency officials responding to an incident in real time).
- *Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)*. A full-scale exercise is a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline exercise involving functional (e.g., joint field office, emergency operation centers, etc.) and "boots on the ground" response (e.g., firefighters decontaminating mock victims).

Exercise Documentation

The list below briefly describes the important document types associated with most exercises. The types of documentation described here are all discussed in more detail in *HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct*.

- A *Situation Manual (SitMan)* is a participant handbook for discussion-based exercises, particularly TTXs. It provides background information on exercise scope, schedule, and objectives. It also presents the scenario narrative that will drive participant discussions during the exercise.
- The *Exercise Plan (ExPlan)*, typically used for operations-based exercises, provides a synopsis of the exercise and is published and distributed to players and observers prior to the start of the exercise. The ExPlan includes the exercise objectives and scope, safety procedures, and logistical considerations such as an exercise schedule. The ExPlan does not contain detailed scenario information.
- The *Controller and Evaluator (C/E) Handbook*¹ supplements the ExPlan for operations-based exercises, containing more detailed information about the exercise scenario and describing exercise controllers' and evaluators' roles and responsibilities. Because the C/E Handbook contains information on the scenario and exercise administration, it is distributed only to those individuals specifically designated as controllers or evaluators.
- The *Master Scenario Events List (MSEL)* is a chronological timeline of expected actions and scripted events (i.e., injects) to be inserted into operations-based exercise play by controllers in order to generate or prompt player activity. It ensures necessary events happen so that all exercise objectives are met.
- A *Player Handout* is a 1-2 page document, usually handed out the morning of an exercise, which provide a quick reference for exercise players on safety procedures, logistical considerations, exercise schedule, and other key factors and information.
- *Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs)* help evaluators collect and interpret relevant exercise observations. EEGs provide evaluators with information on what tasks they should expect to see accomplished during an exercise, space to record observations, and questions to address after the exercise as a first step in the analysis process. In order to assist entities in exercise evaluation, standardized EEGs have been created that reflect capabilities-based planning tools,

¹ For large-scale/complex exercises, a separate *Controller Staff Instruction (COSIN)* and *Evaluation Plan (EVALPLAN)* may be necessary; but for most exercises a combined *Controller/Evaluator Handbook* is appropriate.



such as the Target Capabilities List (TCL) and the Universal Task List (UTL). The EEGs are not meant as report cards. Rather, they are intended to guide an evaluator's observations so that the evaluator focuses on capabilities and tasks relevant to exercise objectives to support development of the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).

- *An After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)* is the final product of an exercise. The AAR/IP has two components: an AAR, which captures observations and recommendations based on the exercise objectives as associated with the capabilities and tasks; and an IP, which identifies specific corrective actions, assigns them to responsible parties, and establishes targets for their completion. The lead evaluator and the exercise planning team draft the AAR and submit it to conference participants prior to an After Action Conference (see below). The draft AAR is distributed to conference participants for review no more than 30 days after exercise conduct. The final AAR/IP is an outcome of the After Action Conference and should be disseminated to participants no more than 60 days after exercise conduct.

Planning and After Action Conferences

The HSEEP methodology defines a variety of planning and after action conferences. The need for each of these conferences varies depending on the type and scope of the exercise. They include:

- Concepts and Objectives Meeting
- Initial Planning Conference (IPC)
- Mid-Term Planning Conference (MPC)
- Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) Conference
- Final Planning Conference (FPC)
- After Action Conference (AAC)

HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct provides details on the outcomes, products, and associated timelines for each of these planning conferences.

SECTION II: HSEEP COMPLIANCE

For the purpose of this document, HSEEP Compliance is defined as adherence to specific HSEEP-mandated practices for exercise program management, design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. In order for an entity to be considered HSEEP compliant it must satisfy four distinct performance requirements:

1. Conducting an annual Training and Exercise Plan Workshop and developing and maintaining a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan.
2. Planning and conducting exercises in accordance with the guidelines set forth in HSEEP Volumes I-III.
3. Developing and submitting a properly formatted After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP). The format for the AAR/IP is found in HSEEP Volume III.
4. Tracking and implementing corrective actions identified in the AAR/IP.

The checklist provided below is intended to serve as a guide entities can use to assess whether or not their particular exercise program is HSEEP compliant.



1. Training and Exercise Plan Workshop (T&EPW)

- All HSEEP compliant entities conduct a T&EPW each calendar year in which they develop a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan, which includes:
 - The entities' training and exercise priorities (based on an overarching strategy and previous improvement plans).
 - The capabilities from the TCL that the entity will train for and exercise against.
 - A multi-year training and exercise schedule which:
 - Reflects the training activities which will take place prior to an exercise, allowing exercises to serve as a true validation of previous training.
 - Reflects all exercises in which the entity participates.
 - Employs a "building-block approach" in which training and exercise activities gradually escalate in complexity.
- A new or updated Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan must be finalized and implemented within 60 days of the T&EPW.
- All scheduled exercises must be entered into the National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System.
- The Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan must be updated on an annual basis (or as necessary) to reflect schedule changes.

2. Exercise Planning and Conduct

- The type of exercise selected by the entity should be consistent with the entity's Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan.
- Exercise objectives should be based on capabilities and their associated critical tasks, which are contained within the EEGs. For example, if an entity, based on its risk/vulnerability analysis, determines that it is prone to hurricanes, it may want to validate its evacuation capabilities. In order to validate this capability it would first refer to the "Citizen Protection: Evacuation and/or In-Place Protection" EEG. Tasks associated with this capability include: "*make the decision to evacuate or shelter in place;*" "*identify and mobilize appropriate personnel;*" and "*activate approved traffic control plan.*" An entity may wish to create its own Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Task-oriented (S.M.A.R.T.) objectives based on its specific plans/procedures associated with these capabilities and tasks, such as: 1) "Examine the ability of local response agencies to conduct mass evacuation procedures in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures; and 2) Evaluate the ability of local response agencies to issue public notification of an evacuation order within the timeframe prescribed in local Standard Operating Procedures.
- The scenarios used in exercises must be tailored toward validating the capabilities, and should be based on the entity's risk/vulnerability assessment.
- Exercise planners should develop the following documents, in accordance with HSEEP Volume IV, to support exercise planning, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning:
 - For Discussion-based Exercises:

- Situation Manual (SITMAN)
- For Operations-based Exercises this requires:
 - Exercise Plan (EXPLAN)
 - Player Handout
 - Master Scenario Events List (MSEL)
 - Controller/Evaluator Handbook (C/E Handbook)

Templates and samples of these documents can be found in *HSEEP Volume IV: Sample Templates and Formats*, available on the HSEEP website (<http://hseep.dhs.gov>).

- Exercises should adhere to the planning timelines laid forth in HSEEP Volume I.
- Exercises must reflect the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

3. After-Action Reporting

- AAR/IPs created for exercises must conform to the templates provided in *HSEEP Volume III: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning*.
- Following each exercise, a draft AAR/IP must be developed based on information gathered through use of Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs).
- Following every exercise, an After-Action Conference (AAC) must be conducted, in which:
 - Key personnel and the exercise planning team are presented with findings and recommendations from the draft AAR/IP.
 - Corrective actions addressing a draft AAR/IP's recommendations are developed and assigned to responsible parties with due dates for completion.
- A final AAR/IP with recommendations and corrective actions derived from discussion at the AAC must be completed within 60 days after the completion of each exercise.

4. Improvement Planning

- An improvement plan will include broad recommendations from the AAR/IP organized by target capability as defined in the Target Capabilities List (TCL).
- Corrective actions derived from an AAC are associated with the recommendations and must be linked to a capability element as defined in the TCL.
- Corrective actions included in the improvement plan must be measurable.
- Corrective actions included in the improvement plan must designate a projected start date and completion date.
- Corrective actions included in the improvement plan must be assigned to an organization and a point of contact (POC) within that organization.
- Corrective actions must be continually monitored and reviewed as part of an organizational Corrective Action Program. An individual should be responsible for managing a Corrective Action Program to ensure corrective actions resulting from exercises, policy discussions and real-world



events are resolved and support the scheduling and development of subsequent training and exercises.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The HSEEP website, <http://hseep.dhs.gov>, provides additional information regarding HSEEP Policy and Guidance. Available on the website are the revised versions of HSEEP Volumes I-III, which provide detail and context regarding many of the terms, processes, and requirements described above. Volume IV is a searchable library that provides many of the sample materials described above. The HSEEP Toolkit, which includes the National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System, Design and Development System (DDS), and Corrective Action Program (CAP) System, allows users to schedule, plan, evaluate and track corrective actions from exercises. In addition, there are several exercise training courses, including independent study (IS-120a, IS-130, etc.), mobile (HSEEP Mobile Course), and residence courses (Master Exercise Practitioner Program) that teach students the principles of exercise planning, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.