

## How to Guide: Steps to Establishing an All-hazards Hub

This guide offers steps on setting up an all-hazards hub project in your jurisdiction.

### Why was the Hurricane Response Hub project needed?

One year after the 2017 hurricane season, many affected communities were still in the midst of recovery from the extensive damage and destruction caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. To ensure disaster-related environmental and occupational health best practices were applied to ongoing recovery efforts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health provided funding to NNPHI in 2018 to establish a Hurricane Response Hub (HRH) initiative that would provide technical assistance to the ongoing recovery efforts.

### How did the project come about?

To support recovery activities, NNPHI, through a competitive process, selected five hurricane-impacted jurisdictions for Technical Assistance Centers (Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, Texas) and activated a Hurricane Recovery Hub within its National Coordinating Center for Public Health Training. Over the 33-month project period, each of the five HRH Technical Assistance Centers expanded their local jurisdictions' hurricane preparedness, response, and recovery capacity by providing public health and emergency responder professionals and community organization staff and volunteers with resources, trainings, and other tools.

### What did the project intend to do?

The goal of this initiative was to identify environmental health and occupational health needs and to address those needs by providing technical assistance, workforce training and related resources. Specifically, the project set out to deliver:

- A needs assessment for each jurisdiction specific to workforce training and public health information sharing,
- A workplan for each jurisdiction that addressed recovery needs,
- Responder training on disaster-related environmental and occupational health concerns,
- Improved disaster morbidity and mortality surveillance,
- Improved capacity for public health information sharing, and
- Well-coordinated recovery activities related to environmental health and occupational health.

### What were the project accomplishments?

NNPHI leveraged the disaster preparedness and response capabilities of its network of public health institutes, public health training centers, and additional partners including universities, contractors, and consultants to create a hurricane recovery hub with five technical assistance centers.

Accomplishments of the Hurricane Response Hub project include:

- Establishment of five HRH Technical Assistance Centers,
- A workforce needs assessment for five hurricane-impacted jurisdictions,
- Work plan and training and sustainability plans for each jurisdiction,
- Nine Project ECHO® series on disaster resiliency and communications,
- Hurricane Response Hub Community of Practice,
- Publication of six editions of *The Hub Speaks* e-newsletter,
- On-line repository of reports and other resources developed, and
- Examples of several successful local projects:
  - Louisiana: Disaster-related human trafficking awareness training,
  - Puerto Rico: Disaster death reporting training for healthcare professionals,
  - Florida: Mental health first aid training for responders,
  - Georgia: An all-hazards dashboard developed to assist emergency management with monitoring hospital capacity, and
  - Texas: Creation of eight online training courses through a partnership with Tulane University.

During the course of the project, several disasters occurred in the host jurisdictions including additional hurricanes, earthquakes in Puerto Rico, a massive ice storm/power failure in Texas, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. The five HRH Technical Assistance Centers were able to leverage the partnerships and networks they had created to quickly pivot and respond to local needs during these crises showing that the hurricane-focused technical assistance center model could be easily transitioned to additional threats and hazards.

### What was the impact of this project?

- Increased awareness of the environmental health and occupational health issues that professional and volunteer disaster responders face.
- Deep connections and partnerships between the five agencies that formed Technical Assistance Centers and their respective state and local public health agencies, and community organizations concerned with disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Enhanced preparedness for future disasters.

### Steps to accomplishing a similar project

The preparedness, response, and recovery challenges posed by more frequent and more intense climate-related disasters highlight the utility of an all-hazards hub/technical assistance center that is supported by public health and emergency management agencies and community-based organizations. Using the successes and lessons learned from the Hurricane Response Hub initiative, NNPHI recommends the steps below for the establishment of an all-hazards hub/technical assistance center.

### RECOMMENDED STEPS

1. Investigate which other agencies and organizations are working in the emergency preparedness/resiliency/climate and health areas. Engage with potential partners on mutual interests, goals, and resources. Leveraging what already exists, adding value and seeking inclusion are the keys to forming new partners and alliances.
2. Form an advisory committee made up of representatives from public health agencies, emergency management agencies and other organizations that can guide project development and implementation. Engage stakeholders in the initiative.
3. Conduct a needs assessment considering vulnerability to future disasters and existing capabilities. Vulnerability varies due to environmental, social, and demographic factors, including existing inequities that can be exacerbated during emergency conditions. Disaster preparedness capacity also varies, communities with high vulnerability and low capacity can be expected to experience a heightened and prolonged recovery period following a crisis. Resources useful for conducting a needs assessment may include existing climate mitigation/adaptation plans, hazard mitigation plans, emergency plans, post-disaster after action reports and improvement plans, interviews with key contacts, and workforce surveys.
4. Seek appropriate sources of funding to support an all-hazards hub/technical assistance center. This may include existing public health emergency preparedness program funding, grant funding from federal agencies including the US EPA, FEMA, CDC, state agencies, public health organizations, and private funders. Also consider forming a coalition of agencies and organizations that have disaster-related roles and responsibilities and can support a joint hub/technical assistance center.
5. Meet with elected officials to provide information and education on the jurisdiction's vulnerability to disaster, existing preparedness and response capabilities, and legal authorities and responsibilities.
6. Build capacity within the professional and volunteer public health and emergency management workforces through the promotion of existing disaster-related training courses, resources, and guidance materials. Consider developing location and topic-specific materials when needed, and the needs of disadvantaged communities.
7. Increase disaster-related information sharing by a variety of methods that include webpages, newsletters, social media posts, communities of practice, and meetings between partner organizations. A communications and dissemination strategy/plan will be useful to ensure deep reach of messages intended for partners and the public.
8. Participate in after-action reviews to learn from each disaster as it occurs to identify where gaps exist in resources and responder training. Develop/revise plans and address identified gaps with the intention to build response and recovery capacity for future disasters.

## Helpful resources

- NNPHI website Hurricane Response Hub page  
<https://nnphi.org/focus-areas-service/hurricane-response-hub/>
- Community Preparedness Toolkit  
<https://www.ready.gov/community-preparedness-toolkit>
- A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action  
[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/whole\\_community\\_dec2011\\_2.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/whole_community_dec2011_2.pdf)
- FEMA All-hazards Planning Guides  
<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/plan>
- US Government Agency Funding Opportunities  
[www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – About CDC Grants  
<https://www.cdc.gov/grants/about-cdc-grants/index.html>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant Programs  
<https://www.epa.gov/grants>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs  
<https://www.fema.gov/grants>
- U.S. Health resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Grant Programs  
<https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/index.html>