

Lesson 4: Engaging Religious and Cultural Communities through the LEADER Process

Lesson Overview

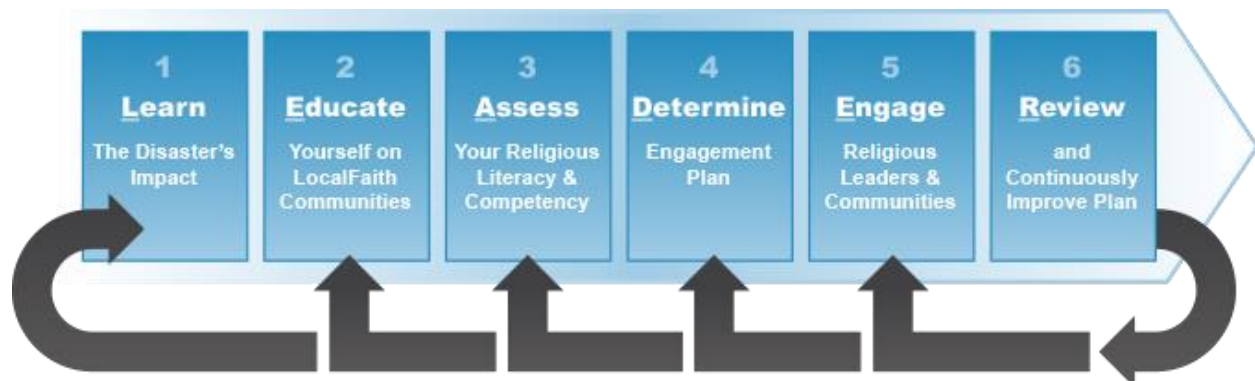
In this lesson, we will discuss the process for engaging faith communities during a disaster. As part of this discussion, we will introduce ways that faith communities can work with FEMA during recovery.

Upon completion of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Explain the six step LEADER process for successfully engaging faith communities
- Identify tools and resources for assessing disaster damage and religious and cultural communities in a geographical area
- Determine ways religious and cultural communities can serve as partners
- Determine how to approach religious and cultural communities
- Describe how using religious and cultural hierarchies and networks can serve as force multipliers

LEADER Process for Engagement

We will discuss the LEADER Process for Engagement, shown here.



Step 1: Learn the Impact of the Disaster

Let's begin by looking at the first step: **Learn** the disaster's impact.

First, you will want to determine the areas that were impacted. There are several resources available for this. One of the most widely available tools is Google Crisis Map (http://google.org/crisismap/weather_and_events). These online maps show the latest satellite imagery as well as storm paths, flood zones, shelter locations, and other disaster-related information.

For Federally declared disasters, another useful tool is GeoPlatform (<http://www.geoplatform.gov/>), which gathers data from a partner network of providers, including Federal agencies and their partners in State, local, regional, and Tribal governments, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, industry, and citizens.

Other resources that you may want to access include those made available by the states or localities. If possible, you can also access Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) and

Geographic Information System (GIS) maps from FEMA, state and local emergency management, or the American Red Cross.

Next, you'll want to determine how the people in those areas were impacted and what their current needs are.

You can obtain some of this information by reviewing the local government and/or voluntary agency Situation Reports that are available.

Step 2: Educate Yourself on Local Faith Communities

Now let's look at the second step: **Educate** Yourself on Local Faith Communities.

To obtain information regarding the local congregations and community, and how they may be able to assist, contact your local emergency management department regarding existing faith community relationships. You may also contact the State or Local faith community liaison in the offices of your Governor or Mayor.

As you receive this information, you may want to consider the types of data gathered by the congregations themselves and how this data can assist with ongoing reporting.

There are additional resources from which you can obtain data regarding local faith communities. These include:

- Local or county Emergency Management Divisions (EMDs)
- Emergency management office partnerships coordinator
- Faith-based social service providers
- Designated state and local faith-based liaison offices
- Designated county and city departments' faith-based liaisons
- Interfaith centers and disaster interfaiths
- Networks, associations, conferences, religious denominations, and governing bodies
- Faith leaders

At the state and Federal level, there are additional resources that can provide information regarding faith communities.

VAL

One resource is the State/Regional Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL). They can provide assistance in identifying key groups and existing partnerships, such as VOADs and Long-Term Recovery Organizations (LTROs). The Voluntary Agency Liaison Brochure can be found here: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/26074>.

DHS Center

For field support from headquarters, you can contact the DHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DHS Center). The DHS Center will assist you by compiling data on local faith communities. More information regarding the DHS Center can be found here: <http://www.dhs.gov/dhs-center-faith-based-neighborhood-partnerships>.

ASARB

A third resource is the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). They can provide county-level data regarding faith communities. Every ten years, they issue a Religious Congregations and Membership Study, which includes the number of:

- Congregations for different religious traditions
- Adherents for religious traditions

It should be noted, however, that the data they provide is self-reported and may underestimate minority or non-English speaking congregations. More information about ASARB can be found here: <http://www.asarb.org/>.

Once you've obtained your data, you will need to review the information received. As you do so, be sure to leave any assumptions behind. The language and cultural skills required might surprise you. For example, in Oklahoma, the most common country of origin other than Mexico is Myanmar.

As you continue to review your data, you should note some of the logistical considerations that may be necessary, such as language support or special dietary requirements.

Once you've reviewed the data you have collected, the first question will want to ask is:

What faith communities are in or serve the affected area?

As you do this initial assessment, you will want to determine the structure of these organizations.

- Do they possess a top-down structure?
- Are their congregations autonomous?

It's important to understand that some houses of worship and community organizations may be structured from the top down with the lead organization providing leadership, while the local house of worship or community organization is autonomous when it comes to specific programs and community outreach.

You will also want to answer several additional questions as you review the data. These questions include:

- Who are key religious leaders and communicators?
 - What are their titles?
 - Are they commissioned or lay?
- What networks and associations exist?
 - What is the role and expertise of each organization?
- What other government agencies work with these communities?
- What connections to national affiliates exist?
- Which groups are not being included or likely to be missed?

At any time, you can refer back to the **Tip Sheets** for more information when determining which questions to ask.

Step 3: Assess Your Religious Literacy and Competency

The third step is to **Assess** your religious literacy and competency.

Once you have determined the religious and cultural groups that exist in the impacted area, you should ask the following questions of yourself and your team:

- Which faith communities do you feel most competent working with?
- Which do you feel you need additional training or knowledge to work effectively with?
- What competencies and literacy knowledge can your team members contribute?
- Where else can you find information that will help you increase your team's religious/cultural literacy and competency?

Remember, you can always refer back to the **Tip Sheets** to help familiarize yourself with impacted groups. Take a look at the Cultural Competency Tip Sheet specifically for more cultural information.

One additional question that you will need to ask yourself is:

What personal biases or misconceptions might shape your perception of faith communities which differ from your own?

It is perfectly natural for each of us to have our own hidden biases based on human nature and early learning experiences in our lives. However, it is important to become aware of these biases in order to ensure they don't affect your work in the field.

There are many helpful resources online to help you consider the manifestation and impact of biases in our daily lives.

Step 4: Determine Engagement Plan

The fourth step is to **Determine** your engagement plan.

Before you go out into the field, you will want to create a formal process for engaging faith communities. Specifically, you want to answer the following questions:

- Who will be contacted/who is assigned?
- What you will do?
- When it will take place?
- Where it will happen?
- Why? Clearly state the purpose.
- How will you conduct meetings?
- How will you follow up?

In order to answer the questions of who will be contacted, you need to first understand the effect of force multipliers.

Force multipliers are those factors that dramatically increase, or multiply, the effectiveness of your efforts.

When you are trying to reach those in the community to provide assistance, it will make more sense and be far more efficient to employ the use of force multipliers rather than trying to reach out to each individual that has been affected.

As we discussed in Lesson 2, one of the assets that faith communities possess is that of their networks. By working with and getting your message to religious leaders, you implement a force multiplier that can reach multiple congregates and others more quickly than you would be able to on your own. For example, many Houses of Worship now have

their own Facebook pages and Twitter accounts that can be used to very quickly reach their congregants.

Keeping the effects of force multipliers in mind, you should first ask:

Who will you contact and in what sequence?

Start with your larger force multipliers before going to the individual congregations. Some examples include:

- Local or county Emergency Management Divisions (EMDs)
- Emergency management office partnerships coordinator
- Faith-based social service providers
- Designated state and local faith-based liaison offices
- Designated county and city departments' faith-based liaisons
- Interfaith centers and disaster interfaiths
- Networks, associations, conferences, religious denominations, and governing bodies
- Faith leaders
- FEMA VAL and/or State VAL as VOAD liaison(s)
- DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships via the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)

What will you do?

You will need to work with existing faith communities that convene and coordinate activities in the area. You will also need to share any information you've gathered about faith communities with your team members to eliminate duplication of effort and identify any existing gaps.

You will also want to discuss other people or entities that will attend to provide assistance as part of a town hall format. This may include local politicians, translators, FEMA Individual Assistance, and the Small Business Administration.

You will also need to determine how to best coordinate with faith-based organizations. To do so, you will need to ask:

- What are their core capabilities?
- How have they helped in past?
- What are they doing now?

By understanding this information and providing a continuing dialog with the organization, you can better tailor an approach that will align with their priorities and needs, as well as make the best use of their skills and resources.

Additionally, by understanding their priorities and their specialties, you can develop a customized outreach strategy for each organization. Depending on their strengths and preferences, you may ask them to help through in-person meetings, newsletters, emails, phone calls, or some combination of all these things.

As you approach these organizations, you need keep the following in mind:

Government *asks*, not *tasks*.

You cannot force these organizations to do things they may not want to do. Understand that you are asking them to help.

As you ask for assistance, you will want to ensure that you provide any resources that they may need. For example, if you asking a group to distribute information, then you will need to provide the flyers they are to hand out.

When will it take place?

When deciding when your engagement plan will be rolled out, you should request days other than holy days, days of congregational worship, and other major religious or cultural holidays. Keep in mind that many religious leaders have a second job or take a weekday as their day off.

Where will it take place?

When deciding where to hold community meetings, request a space that is neutral. If you choose one religious location, it may mean that groups from other faith traditions may not attend.

Why?

When you hold a meeting, it is important that you clearly state the purpose of the meeting what your objectives are. As part of this, you will need to be clear about what you can and cannot offer, and that you only offer what you can deliver.

As you make commitments, it is important that you follow up promptly and deliver what was offered.

How will meetings be conducted?

The most critical aspect of this is that you conduct meetings with religious and cultural competency. This means ensuring that the process does not favor one community over another. This also means that any speakers and presenters reflect the diversity of faith communities.

As we discussed in Lesson 3, outreach may be conducted in the context of a worship service.

Remember, you can always refer back to the **Tip Sheets** to help familiarize yourself with the faith communities.

Finally, **how** will you follow up?

As you wrap up the meeting, determine the need for subsequent meetings and develop a preliminary schedule. Once the meeting is concluded, share any information learned with

the leadership. Additionally, you will need to continue to communicate with community religious leaders to share any information learned after the meeting.

Step 5: Engage Religious Leaders & Communities

The next step is to **Engage** religious leaders and communities.

As you engage the faith communities and their leaders, you will need to carry out your plan in a religiously literate and competent way. This includes:

- Dressing appropriately
- Using correct titles with common courtesies
- Practicing active listening
 - Ask questions
 - Gauge impact and extent of unmet needs
- Leading from behind
 - Allow faith communities to define their own leadership and determine their representatives
 - Encourage leaders to do the talking when appropriate

In your first meetings, you will need to build relationships and ask about disaster-related needs. Keep in mind that while some may express their needs openly, others may need to be encouraged to do so.

As you work with survivors, you can collaborate with leaders on language translation and/or explaining answers to questions. Also, you will need to report any capabilities and remaining or emerging needs back to the leadership.

If you promised you would deliver something, you will need to return with those deliverables in subsequent meetings.

Step 6: Review and Continuously Improve Plan

The final step is to **Review** and continuously improve your engagement plan.

As your plan is underway, you will need to continue to report community resources using the appropriate mechanisms. As these are found, you can update your plan from Step 4: Determine Engagement Plan.

Also, you will want to keep the lines of communication open with all those involved in order to increase the effectiveness of your plan and to avoid any duplication of effort.

Finally, continue to work on and improve your religious and cultural literacy and competency, as well as improve the literacy and competency of your organization. There are several resources available that will enable you to do so:

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clear Communication (<http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/culturalcompetency.htm>)

- Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Culture, Language, and Health Literacy (<http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence/index.html>)
- HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) Center for Linguistic and Cultural Competency in Health Care (<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlid=34>)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) (<http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>)

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, we discussed the process for engaging faith communities during a disaster. As part of this discussion, we introduced ways that faith communities can work with FEMA during recovery.

You should be able to:

- Explain the six step LEADER process for successfully engaging faith communities
 - **Learn** the disaster's impact
 - **Educate** yourself on local faith communities
 - **Assess** your religious literacy and competency
 - **Determine** engagement plan
 - **Engage** religious leaders and communities
 - **Review** and continuously improve plan
- Identify tools and resources for assessing disaster damage and religious and cultural communities in a geographical area
- Determine ways religious and cultural communities can serve as partners
- Determine how to approach religious and cultural communities
- Describe how using religious and cultural hierarchies and networks can serve as force multipliers