

Establishing the context and concept for managing exercises

Speed read

- Context defines how an exercise is managed and guides the phases in the exercise management cycle.
- Concept development will establish the needs, aim, objectives and scope of the exercise, and form the basis of an action plan, schedule, budget proposal, scenario development and evaluation strategy
- Consider prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and identify risks and consequences across all levels of government, industry and community when developing exercises.

Key points

Context

The exercise context includes: an organisation's management context (e.g. regulations; recommendations; strategies, plans or programs; capabilities and available resources) risk and uncertainty; community priorities and engagement; and resources.

Imagine the future. When exercising current capabilities, also explore potential climate change and disaster scenarios. Techniques such as forecasting, simulation or scenario planning can help work through future uncertainties.

Explore ethical considerations that arise in emergency management including decision making processes regarding priorities, funding and/or resource allocation; ethical and pragmatic triage decisions including which communities to help first, which individuals to treat first; policies and mandates of organisations.

Engage with senior management and relevant levels of government to provide strategic guidance and support integrating and linking the exercise with relevant programs (such as preparedness and disaster risk reduction).

Concept

Identify the needs, aim, objectives and scope of the exercise. Understand needs and potential gaps and the level of funding and resources available. Establish a scope that identifies who and what is to be included and not included, and the level of commitment of participating organisations. The scope should also be flexible and open to changes. The exercise aim is a statement of intent that gives direction to what will (or is desired to be) achieved by the exercise.

Form the exercise planning team. All exercises require a coordinated approach to design, conduct and evaluation, supported by an exercise planning team with functions that include risk monitoring, engagement, documentation, finance and budget, planning and logistics, evaluation.

Standards and performance measures. Early in the design of the exercise, develop a range of measures / indicators that allow the exercise to be evaluated and reported on by the evaluation team.

Take action

- Plan your concept development meeting – see the template in Appendix 1 - [handbook companion templates](#)
- Review the exercise concept document template in Appendix 6 - [handbook companion templates](#)
- Check out the suite of complementary resources in the [AIDR Knowledge Hub](#), including templates, case studies and toolkits for specialised exercising areas, such as recovery exercising and lessons management.

More information

- [Managing Exercises](#) (AIDR 2023) - Chapters 2 and 3
- The Department of Home Affairs [Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning \(CASP\) guidebook](#) has further guidance on understanding context
- [Recovery Exercising Toolkit](#) provides an in-depth exploration of recovery issues over time, and can be used to support exercise management programs to include a recovery considerations (AIDR 2023)
- [Systemic Disaster Risk](#) (AIDR 2021)
- [Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework 2018](#)
- [Lessons Management](#) (AIDR 2019)
- [The Arts House project, Refuge](#) demonstrated how community, arts and emergency services can work together to exercise local plans.
- Further guidance on ethical considerations can be found in [Mark Crowweller's presentation: The ethics of disaster risk reduction and resilience](#)