

# Oregon COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise Resource Packet for Local Public Health

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The contents of the exercise resource packet are intended to be a tool for Oregon's Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs) to conduct COVID-19 related tabletop exercises (TTX) and to aid in advance planning efforts. The discussions should take place around understanding and determining staffing needs, recognizing who might be impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks in different scenarios, resource requests and how to ask the State COVID-19 Response and Recovery Unit (CRRU) for assistance.

The exercise resource packet includes the following contents:

- The Basics and How to Get Started
- Key Steps to a Successful Exercise
- Participant Roles and Responsibilities
- Overall Goals and Objectives
  - PHEP capabilities
- Sample Exercise Schedule
- Resources
  - OHA Playbooks
  - FEMA Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program Doctrine

See posted {insert link}:

- ICS 203 Call Center Organization Assignment List template
- ICS 203 Contact Tracer and Case Investigation Availability template
- ICS 203 IMT JIC Organization Assignment List template
- ICS 203 IMT Staff template
- ICS 204 template
- Incident and Exercise Summary Short Form template
- COVID-19 TTX talking points (PowerPoint)
- Evaluation

## **The Basics of a Tabletop Exercise and How to Get Started**

A tabletop exercise (TTX) is a facilitated discussion utilizing a scenario to review and test decision-making processes and existing plans. The TTX design process facilitates conceptual understanding, identifies strengths and weaknesses and/or achieves changes in policies and procedures. The success of the exercise depends largely on group participation in the identification of problem areas and the resolution of those problems.

Participating in exercises, simulations or other activities helps you identify gaps in your plans and capabilities. It also helps you see progress toward meeting preparedness goals. Exercises are conducted to test and validate plans and capabilities. FEMA provides several tools to aid communities in the planning and conduct of exercises.

Tabletop exercises are discussion-based, and typically follow seminars among the building block progression of exercise planning. Participants should already be familiar with their plans through a seminar or orientation. Participants will review the scenario and discuss likely actions in response to injects.

A moderator or facilitator guides players through a discussion in response to a scenario. Problems are discussed as a group, and resolution may be reached and documented for later analysis. All participants should be encouraged to participate in the discussion.

Tabletops are conducted for various purposes. These can include:

- For players to learn and better understand interagency capabilities of agencies
- To identify potential gaps that need to be developed in a new plan
- To test and uncover issues or validate a new procedure or plan
- Assess the capabilities of existing resources
- Increase critical thinking among players to identify new solutions or ideas
- Foster coordination and decision making among agencies before a real-world situation

***Tabletop exercises are to test the plans and processes, NOT to test the participants.***

## **Key Steps to a Successful Exercise:**

1. Identify Exercise Planning Team. This can be as small as three people and will change depending on exercise scope and participating agencies.
2. Host an initial planning meeting. Kick off meeting to define objectives, determine exercise scenario and any other initial planning considerations.
3. Determine the goal and objectives of the exercise.
4. Determine what the exercise scope will be: how focused the exercise will be to meet the objectives.
5. Identify agencies and roles needed to participate in order to meet objectives. Focus on agencies that have a primary or secondary role in the plan.
6. Schedule the exercise. Consider travel time if appropriate. Two hours is a good length of time.
7. Identify discussion topics. Draft exercise outline and scenario outline. Ensure details are accurate. Identify additional resources or visuals needed.
8. Develop evaluation materials.
9. Select a moderator. The moderator should be someone who can lead a discussion and encourage participants to be engaged.
10. Identify other possible roles.
11. Conduct a final planning meeting.
12. Schedule after action review.
13. Conduct tabletop exercise.
14. Complete after action report.

## Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *Participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

- **Players.** Players are personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
- **Observers.** Observers do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of Player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.
- **Facilitators.** Facilitators provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required. Key Exercise Planning Team members also may assist with facilitation as subject matter experts (SMEs) during the exercise.
- **Evaluators.** Evaluators are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document Player discussions, including how and if those discussions conform to plans, policies, and procedures.

## Overall Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the exercise is to identify areas in the organization's emergency response plan that needs improvements to address the COVID-19 outbreak scenario. The objectives should address one or more of the [PHEP Capabilities](#).

Objectives should be SMART\* and may include:

1. Assess the validity of the current Emergency Response Plan in the context of an outbreak of COVID-19.
  - a. Clinical response
    - i. Screening, diagnosis and treatment
  - b. Supply issues
  - c. Resource requesting
  - d. Staffing contact training and case investigations
2. Asses how the existing emergency response structure will address the challenges posted by a COVID-19 outbreak.
  - a. Essential services and personnel
  - b. Crisis communications
3. Identify gaps and issues.
4. Specimen Collection and Testing samples:
  - a. Isolation and quarantine
5. Review responder safety and health

### \*[SMART](#) Objectives are:

Specific – outline in a clear statement precisely what is required.

Measurable – include a measure to enable you to monitor progress and to know when the objective has been achieved.

Achievable – objectives can be designed to be challenging, but it is important that failure is not built into objectives. Employees and managers should agree to the objectives to ensure commitment to them.

Realistic – focus on out comes rather than the means of achieving them.

Timely (or time-bound) – agree the date by which the outcome must be achieved.

## **Sample Tabletop Exercise Schedule**

1:00 Welcome and Introduction

1:05 Narrative

1:10 Scenario Discussion

2:00 Break on own, as needed

3:00 Debriefing

3:25 Review and Conclusion

3:30 Adjourn

## Resources

- OHA Playbooks
  - The Playbooks describe the joint collaborative agreement between the Oregon Health Authority, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Unit and other state agencies with the intended goal of stabilizing the spread of a COVID-10 outbreak in a facility or workplace. The Playbooks describe the roles and responsibilities of each agency and program mas stabilization efforts are coordinated.
  - <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>
- FEMA Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program Doctrine
  - <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Capabilities
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/00\\_docs/CDC\\_PreparednesResponseCapabilities\\_October2018\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/00_docs/CDC_PreparednesResponseCapabilities_October2018_Final_508.pdf)
- Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates
  - <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>
- Governor Brown's COVID-19 website
  - <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19>