TIPS ON FACILITATION

When planning for your first coalition meeting, you want to consider the fact that you will be bringing a diverse array of individuals with varying personality types, backgrounds, and experience levels into one room. Because of this, you will want to make the meeting environment as positive as possible for everyone involved, and you should provide ample opportunities for input on coalition formation and direction as the team moves forward. Here are some tips to help ensure that your first meetings run smoothly and effectively:

- **Meeting Design:** People will usually sit with work mates or colleagues from the same facility or with people for whom they have an affinity, if given the choice. Pre-assign tables with numbers and give people a number on their name tag that corresponds with a table number. This will help attendees get to know new people. Try to arrange the tables so that each one is composed of individuals with varying backgrounds and experience levels.
- **Room Setup:** Try to use round tables, which allow for easy verbal and non-verbal communication. Use techniques for group exercises that permit people to move around. This gives attendees the opportunity to talk to a variety of participants and prevents some attendees from feeling isolated. Set aside certain areas of the room for collecting comments, questions, or meeting input on pre-hung poster boards. This allows participants some privacy of expression by being able to attach their thoughts (anonymously, if they so choose) to the board on a sticky note. When trying to capture participants' ideas or experiences, have them write directly on poster paper or use technology to capture information for easier synthesis and documentation. A variety of activities and room setup options keeps people from sitting too long and improves interaction.
- **Welcome and Introductions:**
    - Introduce the facilitation team. Have them explain why they are present, what their purpose is, and the importance of the participants' presence and input.
    - Allow time for people to introduce themselves, where they are from, and a quick one or two sentence summary of their organization. Alternatively, you could have people write their name, business, and key roles at work on an index card. Pair people up and allow them to introduce each other to the rest of the group.
- **"Who Is In the Room" Survey:**
    - Use a participation survey tool for registration and to produce a few slides to show who is in the room.
    - Have 2-3 people introduce themselves and speak for 10 minutes about a disaster or disease outbreak event that affected their facility or required their participation.
- **Interactive Participation:** Design one or two interactive sessions with attendees who do not work at the same location. For example, you could include a communication exercise or an activity where attendees will be matched up with and get to know someone new. Here are some other ways that you can make your meeting more interactive and engaging:
    - Break attendees up into groups and walk them through a contingency planning exercise. Give each group a poster board and a marker, and have the group appoint a speaker to share the group's thoughts and

ideas at the end of the exercise. Lead the groups through this activity by asking them questions such as: Who needs to be involved in this planning process who is not present? What resources are missing? How do we know that our efforts are succeeding? What are our goals and accomplishments, and what should we prioritize? This is a great way to encourage collaboration and groupthink!

    - Using colored dot stickers, assign each organization "type" to a different color. For example, non-governmental organizations may be represented by green dots, and state government officials might be represented by yellow ones. Each of the attendees will receive a sheet of the color dots that corresponds to their organization type. Give attendees time to mingle and encourage them to talk to people with different sticker colors. Have attendees exchange stickers with each person they talk to, then come back together to determine where more intermingling is needed.
- **Workgroup Sessions**: For this activity, rearrange attendees so that colleagues are seated at the same table. While in groups, discuss the following:
    - Identify capabilities and capacity for possible response scenarios. For example, how many members do you have that you can mobilize? How long will these members be available for?
    - Discuss gaps in the capabilities and capacity identified above.
    - Discuss how the group might close gaps identified above and report out to the rest of the attendees so that all participants have a better understanding of what each organization is capable of.
- **Presentation**: It will be helpful to give attendees a very basic overview of how to integrate into an existing natural disaster or disease outbreak. This presentation should also include the "lite" explanation of the Incident Command System and should note the most important elements of a successful response.
- **Close Out**: Before you wrap up the meeting, make sure you complete the following tasks, if necessary:
    - Set goals and a date for the potential next meeting.
    - Assign out any tasks that need to be completed prior to the next meeting.
    - Acknowledge all attendees and thank them for making time to contribute to the coalition's efforts. Recognize their vital role in keeping the coalition functional, even in times when there are no disasters or events.
    - Decide on the best form of communication to keep the potential coalition members connected and share information.