



JURISDICTIONAL GUIDANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES



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Preface

An AFN Advisory Committee enables jurisdictions to be more inclusive in the way they plan, prepare, respond, and recover with the needs of the whole community in mind. Successful Committees are established using a scalable process that accounts for such factors as locality size, demographics, and specific needs

Consisting of whole community representatives affiliated with non-government agencies, CBOs serving individuals with access or functional needs, disability organizations, and community advocates with lived experience; an AFN Advisory Committee provides a platform for the whole community to partner with emergency managers in meaningful ways.

An AFN Advisory Committee recognizes the disproportionate impacts disasters have on underrepresented communities and counters the history of marginalization that has excluded the whole community from fully participating in the emergency management process.

An AFN Advisory Committee helps foster trust between the whole community and emergency managers, creates better products, and promotes preparedness and resilience among individuals at greatest risk for negative outcomes associated with disasters. It provides the whole community with a voice and a seat at the planning table while supporting emergency managers with additional perspectives, experiences, and expertise. It also serves as a mechanism to access untapped community resources and generates whole community support for local emergency management efforts.

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to support emergency managers with the knowledge, information, and best practices needed to establish an AFN Advisory Committee. There is no singularly correct construct for the makeup of an AFN Advisory Committee. Each should be established using a scalable approach that incorporates, and meets, the unique needs of a given jurisdiction. For example, while most AFN Advisory Committees exist at the county level, some jurisdictions, based on whether they are small, rural, or encompass large metropolitan areas, choose to adopt a city or regional approach.

A successful Committee incorporates whole community considerations and perspectives within the products jurisdictions use to promote the safety, security, and independence of all individuals, including people with access and functional needs.

- The first section of this guide outlines a detailed approach to establishing an AFN Advisory Committee.
- The second section of this guide outlines strategies for the recruitment and orientation of individuals, representatives, and organizations to serve on an AFN Advisory Committee.

Section 1: Establishing an AFN Advisory Committee

Committee Mission and Objectives

When establishing an AFN Advisory Committee, jurisdictions should consider the specific mission and objectives they want to serve as the group's guiding light. The mission and objectives provide stability, direction, and accountability to members as they navigate Committee-related activities. While the mission will remain unchanged, the objectives may vary depending on specific lines of effort, lessons learned, and evolving needs. Having a clearly defined mission, and outlining specific objectives, will help ensure the Committee's efforts remain focused.

An example mission statement for an AFN Advisory Committee is:

*The mission of the **[INSERT JURISDICTION]** Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee is to provide feedback and recommendations – through meaningful partnership – on the best ways to integrate, identify, and address whole community considerations throughout the emergency management process.*

Below are examples of potential objectives jurisdictions may want to consider when developing their AFN Advisory Committee.

1. Ensure the considerations of individuals with access and functional needs are reflected within emergency management products and plans.
2. Identify access and functional needs-related gaps in emergency communication, evacuation, transportation, sheltering, and recovery-related planning considerations.
3. Identify challenges impeding the physical and programmatic accessibility of emergency-related operations.
4. Explore whole community resources that can be utilized to support emergency management-related efforts.
5. Promote the socialization of emergency management-related products and information among the whole community.

Identifying AFN Advisory Committee Members

When establishing an AFN Advisory Committee, jurisdictions should strive to ensure diverse representation, including individuals with lived experience from across the access and functional needs spectrum.

Because the history and relationship between emergency managers and the whole community varies by jurisdiction, some localities have well-established partnerships with individuals, representatives, and organizations supporting underrepresented populations and others do not. So, while many jurisdictions will have a strong sense of which partners to appoint to their AFN Advisory Committee, others may find it difficult to identify appropriate participants.

Jurisdictions facing uncertainty regarding the best approach to reach out to whole community partners about inclusion on their AFN Advisory Committee should, as a

first step, begin by connecting with a local Independent Living Center, a Regional Center, or the local branch of the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities. These entities have a broadly proven track record of partnership; conducting outreach to them is a good starting point.

Once a core group of partners has been identified, local emergency managers should meet with them to discuss the establishment of the AFN Advisory Committee. Doing so enables jurisdictions to gauge their interest in participating and to solicit feedback from them regarding recommendations about additional potential participants from throughout the community. Depending on how many people live within a given jurisdiction, the size of each AFN Advisory Committee will vary. It is up to each jurisdiction to determine the appropriate number of Committee members necessary to meet their unique needs.

Committee members should be prepared to advise the jurisdiction regarding emerging issues, lessons learned, and best practices. As such, AFN Advisory Committee members should have:

- Familiarity with emergency management concepts, access and functional needs-related planning considerations, and whole community disaster response challenges.
- An understanding of the disproportionate impacts disasters have on individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with access or functional needs.
- Knowledge of community organizations/programs serving individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with access or functional needs.
- A proven track record of partnership and collaborative achievement with community and government groups.

Committee Member Roles and Responsibilities

When establishing an AFN Advisory Committee, roles and responsibilities should be expressed clearly. The articulation of AFN Advisory Committee member roles and responsibilities is essential for ensuring meaningful engagement and productive outcomes.

It is crucial that members understand the AFN Advisory Committee **is not a decision-making body**. AFN Advisory Committee members do not vote or make executive decisions. Instead, they partner with emergency managers to broaden, enhance, and validate existing or updated plans, policies, and procedures.

Common Committee member roles and responsibilities may include:

- Providing input on current or updated jurisdictional plans to ensure the needs of individuals with access and functional needs are integrated.
- Sharing whole community resources that can be utilized in support of emergency managed-related efforts prior to, during, or after an emergency.
- Socializing emergency management-related products and information throughout the whole community.
- Identifying barriers or gaps in current emergency management-related products that impact individuals with access and functional needs.

It is important to memorialize and share roles and responsibilities with new or existing Committee members. To support this effort, the sponsoring jurisdiction should develop a charter and a letter of commitment for all Committee members. Example documents are included within the appendices of this guide.

Committee Meeting Schedules

Jurisdictions should convene their AFN Advisory Committee regularly such as on a quarterly or monthly basis as needed. The projects, initiatives, and operations of emergency management agencies are ongoing. Meeting at regularly scheduled intervals promotes consistent engagement and enables key opportunities to solicit feedback from whole community partners throughout the development cycle of products. This helps ensure emergency managers benefit in real time from partner feedback.

Providing advance notice and reminders regarding upcoming meetings increases the likelihood members will attend and participate. Meeting correspondences should include information regarding location, Zoom/Teams links, date, time, instruction on how to request reasonable accommodations, etc.

Committee Administrative Support

The sponsoring emergency management agency should designate a single internal point of contact to manage/oversee the AFN Advisory Committee. This individual is responsible for coordinating meetings, spearheading the development of each agenda, organizing relevant documentation (including the charter and meeting materials), etc. It is important that all Committee members know who the central point of contact is and know how to correspond between meetings.

Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity

AFN Advisory Committee meetings should utilize a hybrid approach that enables participants to gather in-person and virtually. Depending on their specific access or functional need, some Committee members may need reasonable accommodations to participate fully in meetings.

The location/venue for meetings should account for each member's accessibility and inclusivity needs. Factors such as accessible parking, access to public transportation, ramps, accessible restrooms, language access, and assistive listening devices should be considered when planning in-person meetings and activities.

All electronic documents and materials should be made available in a variety of languages, as needed, and provided to Committee members using 508 compliant accessible formats that can be utilized via screen readers and assistive devices.

Section 2: Recruitment and Orientation

Strategies for Recruiting Committee Members

By harnessing the collective talents and energies of its members, the AFN Advisory Committee can advance accessibility, inclusion, and equity for individuals with access and functional needs within the community.

Jurisdictions should consider the following strategies when recruiting individuals for membership to the AFN Advisory Committee:

- **Community Outreach:** Recruit Committee members from diverse backgrounds and communities from throughout the jurisdiction. This may include partnering with local organizations such as Independent Living Centers, representatives from the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Regional Centers.
- **Personal Invitations:** Personally invite individuals and organizations who have a demonstrated commitment and expertise in areas related to inclusive emergency management, disability rights, and community engagement.
- **Networking and Referrals:** Leverage existing networks and relationships to identify additional qualified candidates to serve on the Committee.

Orientation Process for New Members

The orientation process for AFN Advisory Committee members is an essential step to ensuring successful integration into the emergency management process. The following best practices should be included within the orientation process of new members:

- **Training:** AFN Advisory Committee members need to understand the foundational principles associated with the emergency management system. As a condition of their appointment, all Committee members should complete a variety of available online emergency management training courses covering such concepts as the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and inclusive emergency management. The exact courses needed should be determined by each respective local jurisdiction.
- **Briefing the Committee on Process and Procedure:** The orientation process should include a thorough briefing on the Committee's mission, goals, operating procedures, purpose, objectives, and key priorities. Meeting protocols and expectations for participation and engagement should be addressed in detail.
- **Welcome from Emergency Management Leadership:** It is important for Committee members to be welcomed by, and to meet with, the local emergency management leadership team. Committee members need to see the commitment to inclusive emergency management is an agency priority. The opportunity to hear from, and interact with, leadership sets an important tone.

Conclusion

The integration of access and functional needs-related considerations within local emergency plans, procedures, and operations is not just a regulatory requirement; it is a best practice for fostering trust and building resilience throughout the whole community. An important voluntary step in achieving this mission is for jurisdictions to establish an AFN Advisory Committee to partner with throughout the development cycle of emergency management-related plans, products, and operations.

The recruitment strategies used by jurisdictions to establish their AFN Advisory Committee should include outreach to participants from diverse backgrounds and communities, personal invitations to individuals and organizations representing people with access and functional needs and leveraging existing networks to identify additional qualified candidates from community-based organizations.

All AFN Advisory Committee members should receive a comprehensive orientation that includes training on the fundamentals of emergency management, a thorough review of all Committee processes, procedures, and documentation (e.g., charter and letter of commitment), and a formal welcome from local emergency management leadership. Jurisdictions should outline clear roles and responsibilities for new and existing members to ensure the work they are conducting aligns with the Committee's mission and objectives.

Jurisdictions should utilize their AFN Advisory Committee to address whole community needs through thoughtful, inclusive emergency planning. This partnership will help ensure the creation of better plans, products, and operations while building greater credibility and trust.

Appendix A: AFN Advisory Committee Charter Template

[INSERT JURISDICTION] Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee

Background: The **[INSERT JURISDICTION]** Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee, hereafter referred to as "Committee," is comprised of jurisdictional agencies, community-based organizations, and other individuals and non-profit organizations with expertise supporting individuals with access and functional needs.

Mission: To advocate for the full inclusion, accessibility, and empowerment of individuals with access and functional needs within emergency management.

Roles and Responsibilities: The Committee is, among other things, responsible to:

- Provide suggestions, knowledge, and experience on how to improve emergency management through inclusiveness and whole community planning.
- Provide recommendations and feedback in developing emergency operations plans and outcomes that serve the whole community.
- Provide recommendations and feedback regarding the delivery of emergency services to ensure consistency and access to transportation, sheltering, communication, and evacuation services.
- Provide a means for partners to exchange ideas and facilitate participation in all phases of emergency planning, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.
- Advise on programs and initiatives that increase the individual and community resilience of individuals with access and functional needs.
- Provide and promote positive outcomes for individuals with access and functional needs through meaningful engagement in After Action initiatives.
- Share lived experience to assist the jurisdiction in implementing relevant inclusive emergency management initiatives.

Membership: The membership of this Committee shall include local officials and members of the community with lived experience or expertise in assisting individuals with access and functional needs.

Governance: The Committee shall advise and provide feedback to the jurisdiction. The AFN Advisory Committee is not a decision-making body.

Meeting Intervals: The Committee meets **[MONTHLY, BI-MONTHLY, QUARTERLY, etc.]**.

Administration: [INSERT JURISDICTION] staff, on behalf of the Committee, will maintain a permanent record of meetings and materials.

Staff will:

- Publish agendas for meetings.
- Record and distribute meeting minutes.
- Track Committee tasks and deliverables.

A list of all Committee records may be found at: [INSERT HYPERLINK TO COMMITTEE MATERIALS].

NAME, AGENCY/ORGANIZATION

Appendix B: AFN Advisory Committee – Letter of Commitment (Example)

[MONTH DAY, YEAR]

[INSERT PARTNER NAME]

[INSERT DEPARTMENT/AGENCY]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME],

To better support integrated planning throughout [INSERT JURISDICTION] emergency management systems, the [INSERT JURISDICTION DEPARTMENT] established the [INSERT COMMITTEE NAME]. This Committee serves as an official forum/mechanism for engagement and collaboration between [INSERT JURISDICTION] and the diverse cross-sections of the whole community.

It is the intent of [INSERT JURISDICTION DEPARTMENT] to ensure broad and appropriate representation of key constituents on the Committee. Having [INSERT PARTNER DEPARTMENT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATIONS] on the Committee would complement and help serve that mission. On behalf of [INSERT JURISDICTION], I invite you to serve as a member of the [INSERT COMMITTEE NAME].

Please acknowledge your acceptance of this invitation by emailing the [INSERT JURISDICTION DEPARTMENT] at [ENTER DEPARTMENT EMAIL ADDRESS].

Members of the Committee serve as key advisers to [INSERT JURISDICTION] on the development, implementation, and maintenance of the local programs and activities. The Committee is not a decision-making entity, but advises [INSERT JURISDICTION] regarding emerging issues in the community, lessons learned, and best practices.

The [INSERT COMMITTEE NAME] is comprised of members with a broad range of experience and expertise in fields relating to emergency management, community partnership, and access and functional needs.

Committee members have:

- Specific knowledge of integrated emergency planning and disaster response outcomes for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with access or functional needs.
- An understanding of the disproportionate effects disasters have on individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with access or functional needs.
- Familiarity with organizations/programs serving individuals with disabilities, older adults, individuals with access or functional needs, or an emergency management organization.
- A proven track record of partnership and collaborative achievement with community and government organizations.

Committee members are expected to complete all assigned training assignments and participate in [INSERT MEETING CADENCE] via conference calls, webinars or in-person settings.

For more information about this effort, or if you have any questions, please contact me directly by email at [INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS] or phone at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]

[INSERT TITLE/POSITION]

[INSERT JURISDICTION DEPARTMENT]

Appendix C: Acronyms & Abbreviations

Table 1. Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AFN	Access and Functional Needs
Cal OES	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CBO	Community-Based Organization