Alliance for Response

Forum Planning Handbook

A GUIDE TO BRINGING TOGETHER EMERGENCY RESPONDERS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Foundation for Advancement in Conservation

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Alliance for Response is an initiative of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC).

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Preface

Are you as prepared for an emergency as possible? Even if you have a solid disaster response plan that your staff practices regularly, you may be missing one important element: a relationship with the first responders and emergency personnel who will play a vital role in your institution's survival and recovery.

The Alliance for Response initiative is designed to help you reach out and form partnerships with your local emergency responders, beginning with a one-day Forum. The Forum provides an opportunity for cultural heritage stewards, from executive directors to curators to conservators, to exchange important information with and get to know their community's firefighters, police, and local, state, and federal emergency managers.

This handbook provides guidance for people inspired to bring Alliance for Response to their communities. It offers a general framework for organizing a Forum, assuming that program specifics will be tailored to local needs. You will find templates and samples to help you on the Plan an Alliance for Response Forum web page,

I. Introduction

The Importance of Partnerships

When an emergency strikes your institution, you know to dial 911. But will you know the responders who arrive, who is in charge, and how to communicate your priorities? Likewise, will the first responders know which collections are most important, how to handle them safely, and where hazardous materials are located?

Addressing these issues before disaster strikes can significantly increase your chances of a successful recovery. At Alliance for Response Forums around the country, emergency responders and cultural heritage stewards have been sitting down together, explaining their priorities and methods, and designing ways to ensure the best possible outcomes for collecting institutions in emergencies.

Emergency responders' first priority is saving lives, but they also want to protect community treasures. After the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers, the grandson of sculptor Alexander Calder printed flyers with a photo and description of Calder's sculpture *Bent Propeller* (at first assumed completely destroyed.) Once the workers knew what to look for, they began finding pieces, eventually recovering over 35 percent of the artwork. It is not known how much may have been hauled away as debris before the flyers were distributed.

The benefit of knowing your emergency responders was also illustrated in April 2007, when a three-alarm fire at the Georgetown branch of the District of Columbia Public Library destroyed the roof and much of the 1935 building's second floor, including the Peabody Room. When the assistant fire chief was told of the precious historic records and artifacts in the Peabody Collection, he sent in a team to cover the collections with protective tarps and bring whatever paintings and artifacts they could carry on the way out. Communicating your collection's needs and importance to the community can invest responders in its survival.

Alliance for Response: The National Initiative

Working with emergency responders to safeguard collections and historic sites has been a priority for the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation (FAIC).

A study of Lower Manhattan cultural institutions after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks confirmed the importance of preparedness. Museums, libraries, and archives with emergency plans were better able to protect their collections from dust and debris. Institutions that had established relationships with emergency responders were able to gain earlier access to their collections after the tragedy. Emergency

responders also gained a better appreciation for the cultural heritage community when several institutions opened their doors as rest and supply centers.

In 2003, the non-profit Heritage Preservation launched Alliance for Response to address one of the study's major recommendations: building bridges between the cultural heritage and emergency response communities before disasters happen. In 2015, FAIC took over management of the program. In 15 years, more than 30 Forums have been held in cities and regions across the United States.

Definitions

The term **first responders** normally refers to professionals dispatched by the 911 system: firefighters, police, and paramedics. In larger events, this might also include the National Guard or Coast Guard. **Emergency managers** play a coordinating role before, during, and after disasters and are usually affiliated with city, county, or state government. Representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are in this category. In this guide, the term **emergency responders** encompasses both groups.

Cultural heritage institutions refers to organizations that collect and care for cultural or historic objects and records, such as museums, libraries, archives, historic houses/site, and historical societies. The cultural heritage community also includes historic preservation organizations and neighborhoods.

For each Forum, strong local planning committees contributed not only to the success of the event, but to continuing networks and cooperative projects. Participants included leaders of museums, libraries, archives, and historic preservation organizations, as well as federal, state, and local emergency responders. Cultural heritage representatives ranged from conservators and preservation professionals to curators and security staff; emergency responders included representatives from FEMA, the U.S. Coast Guard, law enforcement, fire departments, local governments, and the American Red Cross. The Forums have been hosted by major cultural institutions such as leading museums and public library systems.

The Alliance for Response initiative goes beyond holding a Forum. Its ultimate goal is sustaining cooperation, both between the cultural heritage and emergency response communities - and among cultural institutions. Below are a few examples.

Boston Forum participants formed the Cultural Emergency Management Team (CEMT), which has since become Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness: Massachusetts (COSTEP MA). The group, trained and deployed through the State Archives and State Library Commission, has an official role in responding to emergencies. Thanks to COSTEP, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts added a new annex for cultural heritage to its emergency plan.

Since its 2004 Forum, Alliance for Response New York City has held regular programming for its membership and built a strong relationship with the city's Office of Emergency Management. Following Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the group trained a team of cultural heritage responders who are prepared to assist damaged heritage throughout the city. The network went on to apply for - and receive - official 501(c)3 status as a registered nonprofit.

The Atlanta Alliance for Response Forum resulted in the establishment of the Heritage Emergency Response Alliance (HERA). The HERA steering committee has created a successful structure and local listserv; it meets semi-annually and hosts two educational programs per year. Over the years, HERA has organized conference calls to check in with cultural institutions after regional disaster events including hurricanes and tornadoes.

Seattle Heritage Emergency Response Network, or SHERN, developed in the years following the initial Seattle Forum in 2006. SHERN has developed a mutual aid agreement between its member institutions, providing advice, guidance, and/or actual recovery assistance when requested.

After the 2013 Forum, a local emergency manager stepped up to serve as co-chair of the South Florida Alliance for Response. The network holds frequent meetings and trainings, and a representative was invited to serve in the Emergency Operations Center upon activation. In 2017, a group of thirty individuals completed cultural heritage responder training, creating a team prepared to respond to events in the region.

Forum Facts

The first Forum was held November 14, 2003, at the Dallas Museum of Art and featured a tour of the museum's collections and storage areas to point out what local treasures are at risk. One attendee wrote, "What a wonderful conference! This was like receiving a college education in one day."

What a Forum Can Do for You

Alliance for Response Forum attendees have often noted that the meeting brought to light issues they had never thought about. Emergency responders said they learned about the importance of cultural heritage and why it needs to be protected; cultural heritage attendees learned how emergency responders operate and what they can do to help in an emergency.

A cultural heritage attendee wrote that she learned about "the hierarchy of local— state— federal emergency management; most importantly, that local offices are interested in hearing from me." A museum staffer discovered some simple steps, like closing doors, that could help in a fire.

One participant from a fire department wrote that he learned to "take a proactive approach to asking about where high value/rare articles are located so that the fire

department can address them as early as possible during an incident."

An archivist noted that "the [state emergency management] folks were especially accessible and I now feel more confident in reaching out to them and working with them."

Another participant from a state archives wrote that the Forum helped her understand "not just the importance of the relationships but how to go about building them."

After the Alliance for Response Forum in New York City, a FEMA regional environmental officer wrote, "The entire day was very worthwhile and beneficial to planning. From my perspective, the meeting was an eye opener in terms of response and coordination in a disaster."

An Alliance for Response Forum benefits both groups by establishing lines of communication: emergency responders tell cultural institutions how to make their jobs safer, and cultural heritage stewards tell first responders what should be saved first and how items should be handled. Perhaps most importantly, the Forum will ensure that in an emergency, you'll have the help you need.

II. What You Need to Get Started

Goals

An Alliance for Response Forum is different from a hands-on workshop or educational seminar; its focus is on leadership, policy, and ongoing relationships. It can influence your trustees, raise your institution's standing in the community, and create lasting partnerships with people who are critical to disaster recovery.

The overall goals of the Alliance for Response initiative are to:

- Provide education on local disaster management issues and protocols
- Raise awareness of the need to protect cultural and historic resources
- Encourage disaster planning and mitigation
- Develop strong, ongoing networks to facilitate effective local response

Funding and Budget

The costs associated with a Forum can vary widely. Yours will depend on the general cost of living in your area, whether you can secure donations of space, materials, or catering, and whether you pay honoraria for speakers.

Be creative about funding—think locally and nationally. Will a potential speaker already be in town for another engagement? Is there an organization or company in your community that may have much to gain from this new alliance of the cultural and emergency response communities? Has a local institution dealt with an insurance agency or disaster recovery firm that would be willing to support this initiative? Also, check with your local or state government to see whether funding might be available—the California Forums were supported by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Put together a packet of information to give to prospective funders. This may include any material you have developed to date, from a proposed agenda to confirmed speakers. Solicitation and confirmation document samples are included with the Sample Documents.

FAIC may have funding available to help support administrative costs for Forums. E-mail foundation@culturalheritage.org to inquire.

It's best to break your budget into categories and consider the costs for each:

Speakers. Decide up front whether you will offer honoraria for speakers; if so, include those costs in the budget. If you invite speakers from out of town, you may need to cover travel and hotel expenses. Most of your speakers should be local, but you may decide to splurge on an out-of-town keynote speaker.

(The travel of federal employees, such as FEMA regional officials, is usually covered by the government.)

Catering. Previous Forum planners have found sponsors for lunch and snack breaks. Ask local representatives from disaster recovery firms or the chamber of commerce; point out that it is a great way for them to reach both the local cultural heritage and emergency response communities. An acknowledgement of their support should appear on the program and in the welcoming remarks.

Administration. Even if you secure donations to support some direct administrative costs (printing, mailing, conference calls), staffing resources will still be needed. Ask your committee members to enlist volunteers from their respective institutions—you can spread the work, and thus the cost, among several institutions.

Lead Time

Planning such an ambitious gathering can be daunting, so be realistic about the amount of time you need – usually five to seven months. If you have a framework in place, such as cultural heritage network group that can help with the planning process, you will need less time than if you are starting from square one. (See "Sample Timeline," p. 14).

A Wide Circle of Friends

An Alliance for Response Forum brings together several communities that normally have little or no contact. Making connections within new communities, particularly with emergency managers and first responders, can be challenging. You'll need to network and be prepared to do some legwork to find the right people to join you in the endeavor.

III. The Local Planning Committee

Who Should Be Involved

Assembling an effective planning committee is the single most important action to ensure your Forum is a success. In general, a planning committee should consist of 8 to 10 people from the cultural heritage and emergency responder communities.

Planning committees from past Forums have included executive directors of major art and history museums, directors of public libraries, state archivists, emergency management officials, insurance industry representatives, and preservation or conservation professionals (see roster in the Sample Documents). To make sure your Forum will attract a wide array of cultural and emergency responder professionals, seek out planning committee members from diverse institutions and organizations. Members bring different audiences and connections. Varying perspectives on program needs can lead to a stronger and more interesting agenda.

Recruiting Committee Members

When speaking with potential planning committee members, be clear that this project will require consistent and enthusiastic support, even after the Forum is over. Committee meetings will most likely take place at least once a month leading up to the Forum, possibly more often depending on the timeline. Members' attendance and involvement is key to hosting a Forum that will perpetuate cooperation between the cultural and emergency management communities.

Perhaps a group of cultural or preservation professionals already meets regularly in your community, either for workshops and training or just to share information and expertise. This might be a good place to start looking for planning committee members. These people already demonstrate their interest in the preservation of cultural heritage and most likely work well together.

Be sure to recruit committee members from the emergency response field. This can be the most challenging part of putting your committee together. Ask other recruits for emergency manager and first responder contacts in their areas—networking is the best and easiest way to find these professionals. The local city emergency management agency or a university campus emergency planner should be able to offer good leads.

You can also look for emergency responders online. Every state has its own website, which should have a link to the state emergency management agency. Your city or county may have a website with similar information.

When you make contact with emergency responders, explain who you are, what you do, and why cultural institutions and historic sites need special attention. For further talking points, see Working with Emergency Responders: Tips for Cultural Institutions. This poster has helpful tips on communicating with first responders and emergency managers. A printed poster is available at our online store https://store.culturalheritage.org/site/ and can be downloaded for free as an 8.5 x 11-inch booklet.

When making your pitch to potential committee members, be sure to explain in general terms what an Alliance for Response Forum is. Mention that they will be an integral part of shaping the Forum and follow-up activities. Committee members will be involved in refining the goals and setting the Forum agenda.

Don't be discouraged if some of your first recruits turn you down. Ask them for recommendations of others in their institution or field who might be interested in contributing to the success of the project.

Forum Facts

At the Triangle Alliance for Response Forum, Raleigh (NC) Fire Chief John McGrath told the cultural community to step up and "identify yourself. We will be grateful for your expertise, and we are looking for your guidance to do the right thing."

Responsibilities

In general, the planning committee should begin meeting about six months before the Forum date. For the inaugural meeting of the committee, find a convenient time and place, which does not need to be where the Forum will actually be held. It is important that everyone attend, since this will be the first time many of these people meet each other.

At this meeting, the first priority is to set the goals of the Forum. (See "Goals," p. 9.) Your particular goals will depend on the hazards in your area (natural disasters as well as industrial and environmental risks), the number and nature of your cultural heritage treasures, and other needs of local institutions. You should frame your Forum's objectives within the overall Alliance for Response goals.

Such goals might include highlighting the need for cooperative disaster planning or expanding the membership of a response network that is already in place. Thinking through your goals will help shape the program and ensure an effective follow-up to the Forum.

A suggested agenda for this first meeting is included in the Sample Documents. Future planning committee meeting agendas will be determined by what you decide during this first meeting. Suggest that committee members bring their calendars and appointment books to discuss the date for the Forum and schedule future planning meetings. Be sure to create a timeline for when tasks need to be accomplished (see

"Sample Timeline," p. 14) and begin to develop a budget.

The committee should meet regularly until the Forum date and undertake the following tasks:

- design a program to meet the Forum goals
- identify and recruit the speakers
- Set a date that doesn't conflict with cultural or emergency responder events
- decide on the size of the meeting
- secure an appropriate venue at a local museum or library
- identify participants, media contacts, and potential funding sources
- issue invitations
- encourage decision-makers to attend
- keep track of registrations and follow up as necessary
- work with the speakers to ensure effective content
- provide assistance to the host institution to guarantee a successful meeting day

Many Hands Make Light Work

Each member of the committee should be encouraged to contribute talent, knowledge, and time. Assignments may include drawing up and reviewing the invitation list, making logistical arrangements, composing e-mails and correspondence, designing promotional pieces such as a save-the-date postcard or an informational brochure, identifying and inviting speakers, arranging for catering, identifying and soliciting additional funding, registering participants, and assembling Forum packets.

Some jobs will require more than one person but be sure everyone has an assignment and knows when it has to be finished. You may want to draw up a "job chart" that includes deadlines.

If committee members are unable to meet physically on a regular basis, consider conference calls.

Sample Timeline

Seven to three months out:

- Planning committee begins meeting, selecting program, venue, and date
- Select and invite speakers
- Begin contacting potential sponsors
- Send letters of agreement to speakers and sponsors immediately once they agree to participate

Four to two months out:

- Shape the list of invitees. Remember that not everyone you invite will come, so build some redundancy into your list
- Send save-the-date postcards or e-mails to invitees

One month out:

- Send speakers a list of talking points for their presentations to ensure minimal overlap and adequate topic coverage. Ask for any audio-visual requirements
- Send invitation letters with details about the Forum, including the agenda and any special activities being offered by the host institution. Be sure to specify the RSVP date

Two weeks out:

- Host a conference call to coordinate presentations and panels

One week out:

- Registration closes
- Send reminder to participants
- Assemble materials for attendee packets; collate the list of participants and include it in the packets
- Confirm arrangements with the caterer and host institution
- Send a media advisory to local reporters
- Have speakers send any audiovisual materials for testing
- Confirm hotel and travel arrangements for out-of-town speakers

One day out:

- Give a tour of the facilities for planning committee members and others helping on meeting day
- Set up the venue space(s) and test the audiovisual equipment
- Send email reminders to local media contacts

IV. Anatomy of a Forum

Planning a Forum requires some multitasking. Several basic decisions need to be made simultaneously. The committee should select a general target date for the Forum, outline the program, identify one or two key speakers, and select some possible venues. Members of the planning committee should tackle these issues in coordination with each other.

Selecting a Date and Venue

Pick the date and reserve a venue as early as possible so you can begin speaker recruitment and logistical arrangements. When picking a date, keep these factors in mind:

Weather. If people are traveling any distance to your Forum, weather can play a big role in its success. Avoid times of the year when problematic weather (like snowstorms) are likely to occur. You may wish to consider a "rain date" to allow for unexpected weather conditions.

Conflicts. Find out the schedules for other conferences and meetings your audience might be interested in and avoid those dates. This takes some work, especially in the case of emergency responders. Also, keep in mind that preparedness campaigns (e.g., your state's emergency preparedness month) are usually a busy time for emergency responders.

Forum Facts

Savannah's Forum, held in 2009, proved to be an inspiration to a member of the state EMS/fire department, who noted that "preservation of the archives is a must; we can no longer look at the archives as only a piece of paper of no value. The history and the information these documents provide are essential for society to function."

Speakers. If you have in mind the "perfect" keynote speaker, consider his or her availability.

The date you select will also depend on where you want to hold the Forum. A central, accessible, and iconic setting is ideal. For example, past Forums have been held at:

- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- Cincinnati Art Museum
- Dallas Museum of Art
- The Jewish Museum, New York City
- Museum of History and Industry, Seattle
- The Getty Center, Los Angeles
- The Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh
- Denver Public Library
- North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh
- Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts

- Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami
- Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum, Biloxi

All these venues are prestigious, high-profile, and conveniently located. Most of them donated meeting and dining space. Several venues offered free admission, free parking, and tours of collections storage areas or areas where disaster hit.

Consider how events will flow when you choose the venue; be sure to consider accessibility issues. Some Forums used one room all day for presentations, lunch, and general discussions. Others reserved additional rooms for lunch and break-out sessions. You will also need registration space and a display area for materials from participants and sponsors. Pick the setting that best suits your Forum's unique needs.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Are the space(s) for the presentations, break- out sessions, and lunch/snack breaks adequate for the number of people you anticipate at the Forum?
- Will the institution donate the space or will a fee be charged?
- Is the location easily accessible, either by car or public transportation?
- Is parking free, or can vouchers be negotiated?
- Will the institution donate security and other needed staff?
- Will the venue also serve as an incentive for people to attend?
- Does the institution have strict requirements for catering (e.g., allowing only certain vendors or only allowing food in certain areas)?

Structuring the Program

There are two elements of the Alliance for Response Forum program that your planning committee will need to consider: the content and the structure.

Content. The content should address the Forum goals (see p. 9) and provide a learning experience for representatives of both the cultural heritage and emergency response communities. All panels, presentations, and break-out groups should help participants understand one another better.

There are several basic topics that Alliance for Response Forums have found useful to cover:

- how cultural heritage contributes to the community
- what hazards particular to the community or region put cultural heritage at risk
- how local and state emergency protocols work
- how to integrate cultural heritage into local planning efforts
- how to build and sustain a successful local network

Break-out sessions should be designed with follow-up activities in mind; specific topics can help you identify and refine future efforts. Sample issues include promoting

cooperative efforts in disaster planning, identifying local resources, developing strategies for working with emergency managers, building a local network, or addressing training needs. See Sample Documents for break- out session worksheets.

Structure. Your mission is to fully engage the Forum audience and encourage them to learn about each other's contribution to the community. The structure of the program can be as helpful in this regard as the topics you select and the quality of the presentations. Avoid too lengthy a program and build in many opportunities to network.

The typical Forum begins with a welcome from the host institution and local planning committee and a keynote address. It is also a good idea to allow participants to briefly introduce themselves. It requires less time than you'd think and encourages networking. Panel presentations usually follow. Some of the most successful panels have featured a mix of local, state, and regional emergency responders; offered case studies of emergencies at local institutions; or provided an overview of local resources and networks.

A facilitated discussion of a disaster scenario is a good way to illustrate how communication between cultural institution staff and emergency responders can affect the outcome of an emergency. Recruit an experienced facilitator and use a "mixed" panel of both emergency responders and cultural heritage staff to highlight their respective roles and responsibilities.

Use lunch and breaks to enhance networking. Ideally, attendees will be assigned to tables to ensure diversity among lunch companions. Your goal is to facilitate a dialogue about the morning's content that can fuel ideas and enthusiasm for a more permanent alliance.

Although you may have one presentation after lunch, most of the afternoon should be devoted to break-out sessions. Reconvene participants at the end of the day to hear reports from the break-out groups and make plans for following up. Sample Forum agendas are included in the Sample Documents.

Forum Facts

Following the Minneapolis/St. Paul Forum, a state emergency manager proclaimed that "we are here as a resource and encourage cultural institution representatives to reach out to local contacts and tap into available training/exercise resources to strengthen/build contacts and capabilities."

Selecting Speakers

Draw on committee members' experiences at national meetings as well as their knowledge of local experts to get the right speakers for this program. Committee members themselves might be the best possible choice. Keep in mind the budget for paying travel expenses and honoraria.

Be sure to secure emergency managers and first responders as speakers, along with representatives from the cultural community. The audience has much to learn from both fields. Other possible types of speakers include government officials qualified to talk about the federal disaster relief process (such as FEMA regional officials or someone from the area who has been through the procedures). You can find out your FEMA region and contact information online.

Representatives from insurance companies and disaster recovery firms who have worked on cultural projects may make good speakers. Forums have also featured presentations by meteorologists from the National Weather Service, a water and sewer commissioner, and an earthquake specialist.

When a speaker has been recruited, send a confirmation letter. Be sure to tell speakers how much time they will have for their presentations. An outline of talking points is very helpful, and a pre-Forum gathering or phone call will guarantee strong presentations. See Sample Documents for a template of the confirmation letter and talking points.

Defining the Audience

A key element of the Forum to discuss at the first meeting of the planning committee is the intended audience. The audience will help achieve your Forum's goals, so its composition is crucial to success. The mix of participants is very important. You need institutional leaders who can approve new disaster planning efforts and meet with local officials, as well as facilities, security, and collections staff to implement plans and forge ties with emergency responders. A diverse planning committee should be able to identify key people to invite from:

- the cultural community (directors, collections managers, conservators, and facility managers, as well as representatives from the regional National Archives and Records Administration office and National Park Service units)
- emergency responders (firefighters, police officers, and representatives from FEMA, local or state emergency management, universities, and colleges)
- local government (mayor, building inspectors)
- business (insurance agents, representatives from recovery firms and suppliers, corporate curators)
- sponsors (local foundation or business representatives)

Aim for an invitee list with 25 percent to 30 percent from non-cultural institutions. Attendance at past Forums has ranged from 60 to 120 people after inviting from 90 to 250 people. The invitee list and actual attendance will be determined by how ambitious you are. Past Forums have usually focused on metropolitan areas, but any town or even a college campus could benefit. Statewide and regional Forums are considerably more difficult to coordinate. Making Alliance for Response Forums invitation-only events ensures that each Forum attracts people who can make a

difference in communications between the cultural and emergency response communities. An open-invitation Forum might result in a lopsided audience, since cultural heritage representatives are likely to be more familiar with the goals of the program. The Forum also takes on more importance as an invitation-only event, letting the invitees know they are vital to making the alliance successful.

Forum Facts

One of the Key Speakers at the Vermont Forum was Barbara Farr, Director of Vermont Emergency Management. Director Farr later extended an invitation for participants to take part in VEM's second annual Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference.

While creating the invitation list, pay special attention to well-known or highly respected institutions; their participation could lead to more buy-in from others. Note in the invitations that if the invitee can't come, someone else from the institution is welcome; if you can, specify which person or position would be most appropriate. If your pool of invitees is small, encourage a team from each institution to attend, such as a curator and a facilities manager or security chief.

Past Forum planners have said one of the biggest challenges is identifying and attracting emergency responders. They are busy with many other priorities. One way to identify likely participants is to ask your cultural heritage invitees to recommend emergency managers or first responders they know. Invite many first responders—several are likely to drop out at the last minute to respond to emergencies.

First responders are members of the community and care about its heritage and economic well-being. They can do their jobs better if they know what to expect when they enter a building, especially if it houses collections that may contain hazards when exposed to heat or water (such as ethnographic or industrial objects). The opportunity to be better informed will appeal to them. Also, investigate whether the Forum can count as a continuing education credit for emergency responders or other professions as an added incentive.

Issuing Invitations

Once the invitation list has been finalized, consider sending a "save-the-date" postcard or e-mail, then a letter of invitation containing more details. A follow-up e-mail containing logistical information is also a good idea. (You can find templates for these in the Sample Documents). Many of the people you are inviting have busy schedules; plan on sending the save-the-date information at least two months in advance of the Forum date. Be sure to also send a reminder one to two weeks before the Forum.

With the invitation, enclose background information about Alliance for Response. A PDF version of a flyer, as well as the Alliance

for Response logo in electronic format, is available in the Sample Documents online.

Consider dividing the invitee list among planning committee members and placing phone calls or sending personalized e-mails to key invitees. Many times, the only motivation a person needs to attend the Forum is more information about what is going to be accomplished. If someone cannot come, ask who should attend in his or her place.

Managing Registration

A volunteer or group of volunteers is necessary to staff the advance registration process. Decide how it will be handled—online, by mail, or by phone.

In addition to name, title, and contact information, collect any special meal or accessibility requirements. Keeping track of responses in a spreadsheet or database makes the data more accessible and portable.

Review registrations periodically to ensure the correct mix of attendees. If one target audience is unresponsive, you may want to follow up with e-mails or phone calls.

Tips for a Successful Meeting

- Assemble extra meeting packets to have on hand
- Plan for all audio-visual equipment needs and make sure someone is on hand who can help if problems arise. If speakers are using visual presentations (such as PowerPoint), get them in advance so you can test them. Load presentations onto one computer to be used all day
- Assign someone to keep track of the time to signal speakers when their allotted period is ending. Small signs with large, easily readable numbers indicating 10, 5, and 1 (minutes left) will help speakers manage their time
- Include evaluation forms (see Sample Documents) in the packets. The information gathered will help you tailor future meetings. Collect as many evaluations as possible – ask for them as one of the final activities of the day. Be sure to ask whether attendees want to participate in follow-up activities
- Decide ahead of time how you want to keep in contact with the attendees after the Forum and make sure you get the appropriate information. Don't rely on them to provide business cards or send e-mails; get the information during the Forum

Set up a staffed registration table at the Forum. When participants arrive, they should check in and receive a name badge and program packet. The packet should contain the agenda, lists of all participants and sponsors, brief biographies of the speakers, speaker presentation handouts, discussion questions for the break-out session they are assigned to, and an evaluation form (see Sample Documents).

Alerting the Media

Although the Forum is invitation-only, publicity can attract broader participation in your follow-up activities. An article in the paper or a piece on a local radio station can help spread the word and might even attract some funding for future efforts.

Identify appropriate local media contacts in advance and send them information about the Forum (see Media Advisory in the Sample Documents). Specify which part of the day to attend; they will probably not have time to spend the entire day, and there may be sections, such as the break-out sessions, that would be of less interest. Occasionally a presentation contains sensitive information; make sure speakers are comfortable with a media presence.

Assign someone with media experience as the Forum spokesperson and supply them with talking points for interviews. After the Forum, send out a press release (see Sample Documents). This may gain you coverage in outlets that did not send a reporter and will act as a reminder and additional source of information for those that did. Post your press release online for anyone who might be searching for information about your Forum.

Conducting an Evaluation

An evaluation form can help you discover more about Forum participants and plan follow-up activities effectively. Although it is good to get feedback on the Forum itself, the evaluation form is really a tool for future planning. Design it to elicit information about the interests of participants, the needs of their institutions, and their commitment to future cooperative efforts. The form gives attendees the opportunity to sign on to a new partnership in their community. You will find a good example in the Sample Documents.

The evaluation form should be included in the meeting packet attendees receive at registration. Encourage them to complete the form. Emphasize its value several times during the day and station volunteers at exits to collect the forms as participants leave the meeting.

Forum Facts

At the Denver Forum, a panel of local emergency response professionals was a big hit. Participants remarked on the evaluation that “learning about first responders’ priorities and expectations,” was part of the program of most interest to them.

20/20 Hindsight

We asked people involved in planning Forums what they would do differently next time based on their experiences. Here are some of their replies:

- Coach speakers and have more contact with them before the Forum
- Network more with cultural institutions to identify people in the emergency response community. Include emergency responders and representatives of insurance companies and other for-profit companies with art collections, such as banks, on the planning committee
- Ask the state emergency management association to encourage their members to attend
- Publicize earlier and better, explaining the benefits of attending in ways that appeal to each of the target participant groups
- Recruit media representatives to cover the Forum

V. Follow-up Activities

At the end of the Forum, you should come away with a strategy for the future. Following up with the audience and planning next steps are vital to accomplishing the Forum goals. An Alliance for Response Forum is the first phase in a process, not an isolated event.

As quickly as possible, send thank-you letters to speakers, planning committee members, sponsors, the host institution, and anyone else who contributed to the success of your Forum (see Sample Documents).

Send a summary of the meeting and next steps to attendees promptly. Be sure to thank them for coming and making your Forum a success.

Make some follow-up calls to the media contacts to whom you sent press releases. Publicity may attract new participants vital to your goals— perhaps even funding.

Send your Forum information to FAIC so we can share your experiences with others planning Forums around the country.

Several days after the Forum, your planning committee should de-brief. What went well? What didn't? What would you do differently next time? Review the program evaluations and decide what they mean for future activities.

Forum Facts

Following the New York Capital Region Forum, the group held a three-part workshop series titled "Building Your Institution's Disaster Preparedness Plan." Participants completed a disaster plan, shared a risk assessment with their county emergency manager, and learned the Incident Command System.

Make arrangements to continue the dialogue begun at the Forum. Start with a meeting or conference call for those who indicated interest on their evaluation forms. Invite local institutions that weren't able to come to the Forum.

It is important to agree on realistic goals for follow-up efforts. Don't be overly ambitious; select strategies and projects that are doable. As with Forum planning, spread responsibilities among committee members. Examples of follow-up activities include:

- adapting Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) for cultural institutions and historic sites
- incorporating cultural institutions in a city-wide emergency access communications system
- developing a local disaster supply cache
- building an online database of local disaster prevention, response, and recovery resources and vendors

- designing a mutual aid agreement for neighboring cultural heritage institutions
- creating a mentoring plan to help smaller institutions prepare for disasters
- sponsoring a series of “tabletop” training exercises adapted to the needs of museums and libraries
- creating a census of all cultural institutions within a metro area

VI. Conclusion

Planning an Alliance for Response Forum can be a rewarding experience. Bringing members of the cultural heritage and emergency response communities together is one of the best ways to make sure your community's treasures are as safe as possible in any situation.

Your first task is to gather a group of people who are enthusiastic and committed to the goals behind Alliance for Response. From there, it becomes a cooperative effort—a model for the kind of partnership you will build between the cultural and emergency response communities.

Remember, the Forum is only the beginning. Building networks is the ultimate goal of the national Alliance for Response project, and communities around the country have continued to build on the relationships their Forums began.

FAIC welcomes you to this vital national initiative.

VII. Resources

These are resources to help plan Alliance for Response Forums, work with emergency responders, identify allies in your community, and help sustain local disaster networks.

Sample Documents

The following are templates, based on documents used by various planning committees for previous Forums, available at www.culturalheritage.org/resources/emergencies/alliance-for-response/tool-kit/plan-an-alliance-for-response-forum.

Please remember to credit FAIC on your program materials as follows: "Alliance for Response is a national initiative of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation. For more information, visit www.culturalheritage.org/afr

General
- AFR flyer

Logos
- AFR logo

Sponsors
- Solicitation Letter
- Confirmation Letter
- Thank You

Planning Committee
- Pre-Forum Checklist
- Committee Roster
- Meeting Agenda
- Planning Outline

Program
- Agendas
- Group Discussion Questions

Speakers
- Invitation letter
- Confirmation Letter
- Talking Points
- Thank You Letters

Invitation
- E-mail Invitation
- Save the Date Postcard

Program Packet Materials
- Break-out Session Worksheets
- Acronym List
- Evaluation Form
- Sponsor Acknowledgement

Media
- Media Advisory
- Press Release