



COVID-19 Initial Response

AFTER ACTION REPORT(AAR)/IMPROVEMENT PLAN

January 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The title of this document is the COVID-19 Initial Response After Action Report and Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)
2. COVID-19 is complex, given the various phases and action required thereof. This AAR/IP will focus on the Initial Response. However, additional AAR/IP will be conducted to highlight actions in Stabilization, Resurgence, Vaccination and Ongoing Recovery which will be facilitated and drafted accordingly.
3. The information gathered in this AAR/IP is classified as For Official Use Only (FOUO) and should be handled as sensitive information not to be disclosed. This document should be safeguarded, handled, transmitted, and stored in accordance with appropriate security directives. Reproduction of this document, in whole or in part, without prior approval from GOHSEP or participating agencies is prohibited.
4. At a minimum, the attached materials will be disseminated only on a need-to-know basis and when unattended, will be stored in a locked container or area offering sufficient protection against theft, compromise, inadvertent access, and unauthorized disclosure.
5. Points of Contact:

State Point of Contact:

Michael Zaruba
Workforce Development & Standards Manager
7667 Independence Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-358-5236
Michael.Zaruba@la.gov

Rubby Douglas, LCSW-BACS
Preparedness Section Chief
7667 Independence Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-358-5656
Rubby.Douglas2@la.gov

Chris Guilbeaux
Assistant Deputy Director of PRI
7667 Independence Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-715-3191
Christopher.Guilbeaux@la.gov

CONTENTS

ADMINISTRATIVE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS	2
CONTENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
PURPOSE	6
SCOPE	6
AAR STRUCTURE.....	6
PARTICIPANTS	7
PARISH VIRTUAL AFTER ACTION	7
PARISH PRIMARY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	7
STATE AGENCY AFTER ACTION CONFERENCE	8
STATE AGENCY PRIMARY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.....	8
CONCLUSION	10
APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN (IP).....	11
APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS	13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisiana confirmed its first COVID-19 presumptive positive case on March 9, 2020. COVID-19 is a unique disaster that is unlike any event Louisiana has ever experienced. The State is no stranger to dealing with the immediate aftermath of other crises such as a flood or hurricane. In fact, response and recovery has been phenomenal as communities are united and come together to support one another. However, this pandemic, by its very nature, prohibits individuals from connecting to social supports such as family, friends and faith community. For Louisiana, a State that prides itself on a genuine culture of hospitality, our social and physical connections are priceless and valued above all things. It is rare to not have a gathering, hug and other special connections to share the love we have for people and each other.

Due to rapid contagious conditions of this virus, the State of Louisiana escalated its efforts to address this threat. Continued cases increased and on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 Louisiana Governor Jon Bel Edwards issued a State of Emergency Declaration for Louisiana to combat the spread of COVID-19. Being bombarded with an abundance of media, news and other information outlets, citizens became overwhelmed with excessive worry, fear and anxiety about the certainty regarding a threat that seemed to instantly change guidance regarding prevention and protection from contracting this virus.

Two days later, on March 13, Governor Edwards amended the State of Emergency and closed all public schools in Louisiana, in addition to cancelling or postponing gatherings of 250 people or more. Schools sent children home and hurriedly implemented home schooling strategies, i.e., work packets and distance learning, in an attempt to continue education. Parents' stress level increased as they began to telework and also were helping kids with instruction lessons too. As Louisiana citizens took precautions to avoid contact in attempts to stop the spread. Frustration, stress, and increased fear intensified causing major interference with individuals' activities of daily living and normal habits of life as quick plans for isolations from family, friends and normal peer supports began. Other concerns and worries set in for citizens and vulnerable populations that may have had limited resources to compete and battle for basic supplies as increased panic buying occurred at stores and grocers.

All of these measures also began to impact daily lives and routines, which also impacted normal businesses practices. Businesses began experiencing significant impacts to unusual operations, i.e., only delivery or take out, and some employees were terminated. This situation created compounded worry and anxiety on how people were going to make ends meet, provide and shelter their families. The State of Louisiana gathered data about economic impact. On Monday, March 16, 2020, Governor Edwards submitted a request for a Small Business Administration Economic Injury Declaration, certifying business concerns that have suffered substantial economic injury as a result of COVID-19. Louisiana received that first statewide Declaration for SBA for economic injury due to COVID-19. This effort was intended to provide working capital so that employers could have working cash flow to pay fixed debts, e.g., employees, to keep their business afloat.

On Sunday, March 22, 2020 Governor Edwards amended the State of Emergency to issue a Stay at Home Order directing all Louisiana residents to shelter at home and limit movements outside

of their homes beyond essential needs to further combat the spread of COVID-19 in Louisiana. Citizens were stressed and frustrated with feelings of hopelessness as they faced the unknown of COVID-19 and its impact for the future.

This same Order put some limits on business operating in Louisiana. Businesses consistent with guidance from the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) may remain open and individuals may leave their residence to perform any work necessary to operate and maintain these businesses. The following business categories are consistent with the CISA guidance:

- Healthcare workers and caregivers
- Mental health and Social Service workers
- Pharmacy employees
- Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies and other retail sales of food and beverage products
- Restaurant carryout and quick-serve food operations and food delivery employees
- Farmworkers
- Electricity and Utility Industry Employees
- Critical Manufacturing Employees (medical supply chains, energy, transportation, food, chemicals)
- Petroleum, Natural and Propane Gas
- Worker Transportation and
- Logistics Workers
- Communications and Information Technology Employees

Despite emergency protective measures being in place, the capacity at the state and local level continued to be strained. The jobs of essential personnel and volunteers became even more stressful due to possible exposure, infections and even death. This impact weakened the State's capacity in its attempt to be more creative to maintain critical infrastructure. Limitation on supplies due to competition with other states and supply chain disruption produced added frustration on responders and others to support the needs of its citizens. This spiraling rise of stress, grief and anxiety levels continued to escalate each day as did the number of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases and death toll.

On March 24, 2020 Gov. John Bel Edwards requested and received a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Louisiana as the number of cases of COVID-19 projected with expedient speed and the state's efforts to combat the spread of illness intensified. All of the State's 64 parishes and tribal and territorial governments are designated under LA-4484-DR. Parishes include: Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Chitimacha Indian Reservation, Claiborne, Concordia, Coushatta Indian Reservation, De Soto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, La Salle, Lafayette, Lafourche, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Terrebonne, Union, Vermilion, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana, and Winn Parish. Designated Tribal and

Territorial governments include Apache Choctaw (TDSA), Clifton Choctaw (TDSA), Jena Band of Choctaw (TDSA), United Houma Nation (TDSA), and Tunica-Biloxi Indian Reservation

COVID-19 yielded complexities to maintain continuity of operations as well as significant personal protective equipment and essentials for response. This AAR IP will focus on the Initial Response Phase. Parish, state, federal and nonprofit partners were provided a survey monkey questionnaire to complete before two after action conferences were held via the Zoom platform. This document captures the information collected from both the surveys and the virtual conferences.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the COVID-19 Initial Response AAR/IP is to capture which elements of emergency operations plans and procedures worked well and the elements that need to be improved upon for future response and recovery efforts. The improvement table provides a comprehensive list of those elements for improvement and assigns entities responsible for completing the plan changes.

SCOPE

The scope of this AAR is to capture response and coordination efforts between local, state, federal and non-governmental partnerships. Parishes and state agency partners conducted their own internal AARs to capture elements specific to their COVID-19 response efforts. The surveys specifically highlighted the following functional areas for reflection and evaluation:

- Initial Response Efforts
- Operations
- Logistics
- Finance/Purchasing
- COVID-19 Efforts on Personnel and Operations
- Additional issues/comments

AAR STRUCTURE

The AAR surveys as well as the virtual meetings were held separately for parishes and ESFs to ensure all parties had the ability to express their opinions and/or concerns openly. The links to the online survey tools were sent to all Parishes and ESF leads via the GOHSEP email distribution lists and were open from 11.30.2020 through 12.04.2020. During this time a combined 96 responses were recorded. With the data collected from the surveys, PowerPoints with key notes were created and used to facilitate the virtual AAR meetings. On 12.09.2020, the virtual AAR meetings for parishes and ESF leads were held to review and collect additional data not captured in the surveys as well as discussions of how to improve the State's response to future events.

PARTICIPANTS

113 combined (49 parish/64 ESF) responses to the survey monkey.

Parish Zoom call: 72

Agency Zoom call: 83

Total combined (without duplicates): 142

PARISH VIRTUAL AFTER ACTION

81% of parishes reported that the State's initial response to COVID-19 was organized and efficient, and information communicated between GOHSEP and parish partners was conducted in a timely and effective manner. Conference calls were considered useful in the parishes' decision making process. WebEOC was adequately used and most users were trained to utilize the system.

COVID-19's major impact on the parishes' decision making processes in response to the multiple storms are as follows:

- PPE Resources
- Continuity of Operations
- Volunteers



PARISH PRIMARY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Parishes did highlight several opportunities for improvement in the overall response efforts of the State. The primary areas for improvement are as follows:

PPE

- Due to demands, many vendors wanted payment up front and did not want to commit to a delivery date or taking a Purchase Order. It is best to ensure you have the goods before sending the money.
- Donations from local companies provided good resources. For example, Lowes donated items which were helpful to the needs. However, engaging these partnerships in advance with business on local and state level may yield positive opportunities.

Continuity of Operations

- Many parishes needed to rethink equipment as some needed to get laptops for staff to work remotely as they only had desk units.
- Some parishes needed teleworking policies to support remote working options.

Volunteers

- Parishes found that there was an overall reduction in volunteer resources due to COVID-19 as those human resources were considered to be in the high risk population of exposure with terminal outcomes.

STATE AGENCY AFTER ACTION CONFERENCE

State Agency After Action Conference

Sixty percent of agencies did not have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) stocked in case of a pandemic situation before the COVID-19 outbreak. This required additional actions to acquire needed equipment and supplies to support overall operations. While some agencies purchased PPE and supplies directly, the majority submitted WebEOC requests through GOHSEP.



PPE included N95 masks for personnel that have direct or may have direct contact with COVID-19 positive patients as well as masks and gloves for indirect contact for added precautions. All agencies and organizations, even private sector infrastructure, required additional support to procure needed PPE. This required public-private partnership engagement to support the needs as it hindered our state and was a challenge nationally. For example, efforts to make gowns and hand sanitizer were produced through these partnerships and provided supplies to both the state and parish stakeholders.

COVID-19's impacts on state agencies' ability and level of response for the COVID-19 Initial Response Phase included the following

- Over 89% of agencies had a Continuity of Operations Plan to support daily operations during a pandemic.
- Many agencies had to expedite teleworking policies to allow staff to work from home to limit exposure.
- Even the State Emergency Operations Center required additional provisions to maintain temperature checks, physical distancing and sanitization to support operations even at a modified level, such as 91% indicated that it did not impact effectiveness.

STATE AGENCY PRIMARY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Logistics

- Agencies received an appropriate amount and type of PPE needed and handling, delivery and storage was rated as effective.
- PPE was short in supply and not easily available at the beginning. Even after months, gloves were still an issue as there was a worldwide shortage.
- PPE that was outsourced from vendors did not meet all medical industry standards that medical staff and hospitals required.
- There were numerous counterfeit items that were delivered that challenged our inventory team to stay on top of CDC guidelines and recommendations on PPE.
- Warehouse space was limited until space was procured. New warehouse space was procured.
- Delivering to 64 parishes posed a challenge for daily small to large deliveries. To fix this issue, an outside vendor was sourced to solve the shipping solution.



Finance & Purchasing

- Future planning to identify needs, contracts and vendors could expedite faster receipt of commodities at the parish level.
- Considerations for state contracts to be weekly versus monthly rentals would require further deliberations based on the need.
- Renewal of contracts from the State and sharing the contract information with locals would allow parishes to procure commodities directly.
- Utilization of the LaBEOC could facilitate expanded option with vendors as well as engage joint partnerships for critical shortages to leverage industrial opportunities.

Volunteers

- COVID-19 drastically reduced the number of available volunteers as many volunteers were considered in the high-risk population. This created more demands on State assets to support recovery options, e.g. food bank distribution and warehouse support.



COVID-19 Effects on Personnel and Operations

- Over 75% of staff was exposed to or contracted COVID-19, with 19% of agencies experience death among personnel. It was noted that many agencies were not aware of any grief counseling or stress management support for this need.
- 14% indicated that they believed that COVID-19 exposure or contraction negatively impacted their abilities to perform essential functions.

CONCLUSION

The state and nation continues to fight COVID-19 and manage the balance between protecting the populace and reopening the economy. The rapid distribution of effective vaccines nationwide looks promising but this must be tempered with the reality that we have been in this pandemic for a year and may continue for some time. We cannot wait until an unforceable date to conduct After Actions and expect to accurately capture relevant information and implement improvements. The lessons learned from this AAR and the actions needed will be disseminated at the earliest opportunity. In conclusion, additional After Action Reports will be conducted for this pandemic periodically after transitioning phases or significant milestones are achieved.

APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN (IP)

This IP has been developed specifically for the State of Louisiana COVID-19 Initial Response AAR conducted in December 2020. These recommendations draw from observations made during the After Action Meeting held via the Zoom platform.

Table A.1: Improvement Plan Matrix

Observation Title	Recommendation	Corrective Action Description	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Agency	Agency POC	Start Date	Completion Date
1.0 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff and for public	1.1 All hazards planning to support PPE pandemic and bioterrorism threats should be assessed at the local and state level.	1.2 Provide planning, guidance and training to create a formula to account for PPE needs and to maintain inventory or logistics plans to secure items when needed.	Planning/ Training	Parish and State	Parish OHSEP ESF Leads	March 22, 2021	June 1, 2021
2.0 Continuity of Operations needs for staff and for public	2.1 Develop plans including equipment and policies to support teleworking and operations during a pandemic or bioterrorism threat/event.	2.2 Planning is needed at the local and state level to develop procurement priorities for equipment such as laptops, internet connectivity, ZOOM accounts and even policies and training for employees to maintain daily operations of duties	Planning/ Equipment/ Training	Parish and State	Parish OHSEP ESF Leads	March 22, 2021	June 1, 2021
3.0 Volunteer Shortages	3.1 Develop opportunities to recruit and expand volunteer base. 3.1.1 Provide for PPE and mitigation safety protocols for volunteers. Many were in the high-risk populations due to COVID19 and could	3.2 Planning is needed at local and state level to identify additional non traditional volunteer resources. 3.2.1 Develop plans to adequately provide PPE and other actions to support volunteer efforts for both response and recovery.	Planning	Parish and State	Parish OHSEP ESF-14	March 22, 2021	June 1, 2021

	not report.						
4.0 Logistics	4.1 Various elements of logistics need to be reviewed from ordering, receipt of quantity needed, accountability and delivery.	4.2 Protocols, processes and procedure need to be examined to better support logistical elements from order to delivery.	Planning	ESF-07 GOHSEP	Pat Griffin Steven Buccholz	March 22, 2021	June 1, 2021
5.0 Finance and Purchasing	5.1. Identify pre-contracts and vendors to support expedited procurement at local and state level as well as best practice guidance as some vendors wanted payment before receipt.	5.2 Outlined best practice guidance and procurement contracts/vendors to expedite procurement. This will allow local and state agencies to trigger procurement on their own behalf for sustainment and enhance inventory as needed.	Planning	GOHSEP	Christina Dayries	March 22, 2021	June 1, 2021

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations
Federal
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
United States Public Health Services
State of Louisiana
Governor’s Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP)
Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal (LSFM)
Louisiana National Guard (LANG)
Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)
Louisiana Department of Health Office of Public Health-Public Drinking Water (LDH/OPH)
Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC)
Louisiana Workforce Commission (WFC)
Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)
Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF)
Louisiana State Police (LSP)
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ)
Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development (DOTD)
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (LDWF)
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)
NGO
American Red Cross (ARC)
Louisiana VOAD
State of Louisiana
Acadia Parish
Allen Parish
Ascension Parish
Assumption Parish
Beauregard Parish
Calcasieu Parish
Cameron Parish
East Baton Rouge Parish
East Feliciana Parish
Evangeline Parish
Iberia Parish
Iberville Parish
Jefferson Parish
Jefferson Davis Parish

Lafayette Parish
Lafourche Parish
Livingston Parish
Orleans Parish
Plaquemines Parish
Pointe Coupee Parish
Rapides Parish
St. Bernard Parish
St. Charles Parish
St. Helena Parish
St. James Parish
St. John the Baptist Parish
St. Landry Parish
St. Martin Parish
St. Mary Parish
St. Tammany Parish
Tangipahoa Parish
Terrebonne Parish
Vermilion Parish
Vernon Parish
Washington Parish
West Baton Rouge Parish
West Feliciana Parish