

**Governor's Office of Homeland Security
And Emergency Preparedness
State of Louisiana**

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Director Jacques Thibodeaux GOHSEP Strategic 180 Day Summary- June 18, 2024

Background: GOHSEP is classified in the Louisiana Budget as agency 111 and has an average operating budget of over \$3Bil (with 100 Louisiana Full Time Equivalents-FTE and 215 FTE tied to federal programs). The new GOHSEP structure (April 15, 2024) breaks down the agency into five different divisions: Emergency Management, Financial Operations & Administration, Hazard Mitigation, Public Assistance and Security & Interoperability. In addition, there are Nine Regions which fall under three different Areas, which comprises the Regional Support Operations Team. In the interview process with the transition team, numerous items arose as to GOHSEPs current situation, challenges and potential improvements moving forward. The first key strategic element was to bring GOHSEP back to the original intent of the organization since inception in 2006. The simplest way to describe it, is to focus on the title: GOHSEP is the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. My belief was that GOHSEP had become slow and cumbersome as an agency and we needed to adopt a mindset in all endeavors- "MOVE QUICKER." We needed a new vision, mission and set of goals to clearly identify the organizational identity:

Vision: To serve as an extension of the Office of the Governor and provide sound leadership during crisis events while also enhancing the day-to-day state agency programs servicing Louisiana residents, businesses and organizations.

Mission: The mission of GOHSEP is to utilize three priorities to save lives, protect property and maintain infrastructure:

- Priority Number One: Ensure that GOHSEP serves as the emergency arm of the Governor and works hand in hand with all emergency support/recovery function agencies as part of the U.S. National Response Framework and the Louisiana Homeland Security, Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act in preparation, response, recovery, mitigation and prevention of crisis events.
- Priority Number Two: Ensure that all Municipalities, Parishes/Parish Organizations, Sub-Recipients and State Agencies have a voice and an agency to champion for them in obtaining maximum funds in all applicable federal and state programs in an expeditious manner.
- Priority Number Three: Consistently review internal best business practices and potential for Improvements. It is essential to review the actual mission and output of internal departments to ensure elite levels of support to all stakeholders in Louisiana.

Goals:

- GOHSEP will apply leadership directly towards lifesaving measures, mitigation efforts to protect public/private property and establish/maintain a safety net to protect, operate and improve our infrastructure.
- GOHSEP will quickly and efficiently move resources through the emergency management cycle: preparation, response, recovery, mitigation and prevention. The definition of resources at each stage involves all five divisions and changes depending upon the stage. The five divisions will all operate in support of each other in a deliberate, synchronized fashion.

- GOHSEP will internally hold ourselves accountable as an operational arm of government with a strategic directive: GOHSEP will be unwavering in our efforts to save lives, protect property and maintain infrastructure.
- GOHSEP will standardize internal strategic concepts in a specific format to streamline communication into clear concise products. The format is task, purpose, issue, discussion and recommendation:
 - Task- What is this situation?
 - Purpose- What is the real problem? What is likely to happen? What is the center of gravity of the issue?
 - Issue- How should I think about this situation to define the problem or opportunity? How could this situation happen? What do I know about situations like this? What do I not know that I should?
 - Discussion- What other situation is like this one? What is this situation not like? What else could this situation or solution be? How should I prepare for future situations?
 - Recommendation- What needs to be accomplished? What is the solution or plan? Is there a specific path to decide the solution? Does the solution support the purpose (center of gravity)?

In quantifiable terms, we established a “first 100 days” plan that used strategic action plans (SAP) in the specific format above of task, purpose, issue, discussion and recommendation. The overall goal was to use the SAPs to change the culture in the team and employ the mindset of moving faster. We conducted 16 strategic action plans in the first 100 days:

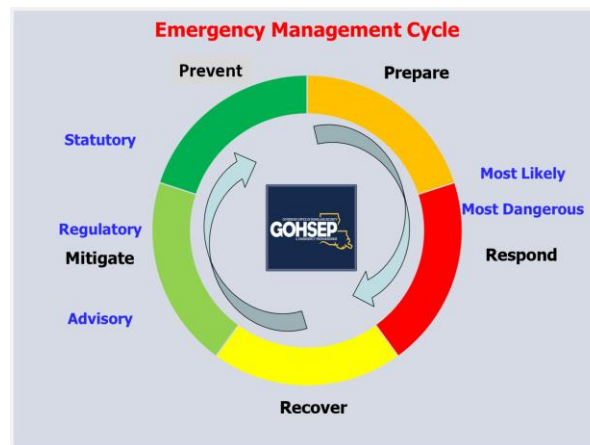
1. **Vision, mission & goals:** Refocus the organization
2. **First 100 Days Concept:** Transition in the “first 100 days”
3. **Organizational Restructuring:** Restructure the team
4. **Field Visitation Schedule:** Get senior leaders in the field
5. **Employee Engagement Program:** Improve engagement
6. **90/10% Reimbursement:** Expedite reimbursement
7. **Website Redevelopment:** Streamline the website
8. **Quality Control Monitor Position:** Establish a QC Monitor
9. **30 Day Financial Payments:** Expedite payments
10. **QR to Annual Certification:** Change an internal policy to help parishes and municipalities
11. **Emergency Hiring Procedures:** Modify the hiring process when staffing drops below 85%
12. **Procurement Restructuring:** Ensure senior leaders are involved in the process
13. **LABEOC Partnership Expansion:** Expand the LABEOC partnership
14. **Cyber Program Restructuring:** Reorganize the state cyber program
15. **Emergency Cycle Evolution:** Use a most likely and/or most dangerous course of action to determine if a statewide or regional response is required, then act accordingly.
16. **GOHSEP Executive Leadership Program:** Provide a central location for agencies to train leaders

There was one key deliverable and two main goals at the end of the first 100 days. The deliverable was a new organizational chart and it was achieved. The first goal was to transition organizational control to the five divisions in order to assess GOHSEP’s ability to continue to move at a faster pace while also employing the three priorities of the mission statement in the absence of Executive Leadership guidance. The second goal was for each of the five Assistant Directors to complete a strategic plan that would address the next 80 days from their own perspective. The intent was to compress the timeline from 100 days to 80 days, assess divisional strengths & weaknesses, create a collaborative discussion environment and then develop a plan for the final 185 days of year one.

Assessment: All five Assistant Directors (AD) developed excellent plans for the 80 days and all demonstrated organization improvement. In addition, the Regional Support Operations Team demonstrated vast improvements. There were additions to the core executive leadership team and/or transition to new job titles as part of the reorganization. These elements either evolved from current assignments or had TO positions reclassified. They consist of Directors in functional areas: Cyber Operations, External Affairs, Strategic Engagement, Human Resources, Individual Assistance and General & Executive Legal Counsel Duty Separation.

The organization improved overall, yet there are some areas needing additional leadership attention. There is an apprehension to take the initiative on leadership tasks, which is a by-product of the previous leadership climate. The issue rests with a portion of the mid-level and first line supervisors who utilize policies and SOP's as an element of control with Parishes, Municipalities, State Agencies and Sub-Applicants. Although the percentage is small, GOHSEP comes in contact with so many agencies that the adverse actions grow quickly over short periods of time. Some employees take their cues from leaders, exacerbating the issues into major problems. In the next 185 days there will be a deliberate Executive and Senior Leadership initiative to exhibit a customer service mindset. We expect and will demonstrate a high level of common courtesy and professionalism in all GOHSEP employees towards our customers. We will continue to refine the organizational chart to provide leadership at the Executive, Senior, Mid-Level and First Line Supervisory Levels.

The next element is the ability to move faster. The first 100 days was purposely very intense. GOHSEP simply does not have the time to be the emergency operational arm of the state and rest on an administrative mindset. It is why the current GOHSEP emergency management cycle focuses on only five elements: most likely, most dangerous, statutory (legal), regulatory (policy) and advisory (SOPs) requirements.



GOHSEP's speed reduced in the past 80 days, despite the fact of numerous operational and administrative events required deliberate leadership and action. Some of this is to be expected, as the AD's developed and implemented new strategic initiatives based on their respective vision, mission and goals; however, emergency management will never get easier due to the nature of the emerging man-made threats, as well as the cyclical natural disasters we face as a state. In order to ensure an expected level of operational speed, GOHSEP will employ a cross training of leaders. The five ADs, the Executive Officer (XO), Functional Area Directors and the Personnel on the Regional Support Operations Team will serve as the continuity in the team. All five Divisional XOs, Section Chiefs, Branch Chiefs and Team leads are subject to rotation to other divisions in order to improve overall effectiveness, knowledge and speed. If an operational element is unable to sustain speed, we will conduct a review and determine corrective action as required. The intent is to improve all elements as a whole versus an equalizer effect where improvement varies dependent upon the respective division.

Day 180-365: GOHSEP will continue to use the Vision, Mission and Goals to achieve mindset of moving faster. We will approach the regional concept with our customers at the forefront of everything we do. There were some specific items raised in the transition process where GOHSEP needs to address. In the strategic calendar all of these elements fall in the 180-365 day range for targeting, coordination and implementation.

The **first issue** was raised by the Governor and it pertains to GOHSEP having a resident climatologist on staff. On February 22, 2024 GOHSEP approached LSU with a proposed partnership to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between LSU and GOHSEP. The gist is for Jay Grymes (Current State Interim Climatologist) to work as a GOHSEP employee while LSU maintains the State Climatology Program, provides secondary office space and support personnel as part of the LSU educational/research mission. On June 3, 2024 GOHSEP issued an offer letter to Jay Grymes. GOHSEP is close to executing the CEA with LSU. GOHSEP will utilize a vacant TO, reclassify it and apply current funding for the resident climatologist position.

The **second issue** was raised directly by the transition team as a major issue, was vetted and approved by the Governor in the transition process. The issue is the element of Human Resources (HR) internal to GOHSEP. GOHSEP is all unclassified service and therefore responsible for all HR functions and oversight. The elements below explain how the current singular Employee Relations GOHSEP employee is overwhelmed with the requirements. In addition, the DPS HR personnel do not have full understanding of the critical GOHSEP nature of unclassified employees and subsequently how the internal GOHSEP HR system works. Here is the snapshot on January 8, 2024:

- GOHSEP had 87 vacancies overall (43 TO and 44 Federal Positions) leaving GOHSEP staffed at 72%.
- Two of the five ADs were vacant for extended periods of time, leaving the executive leadership levels at 60% of assigned strength.
- Of the five GOHSEP divisions and executive division- one of the six XOs vacant, meaning the Executive Officer Staffing was at 50%.
- All 11 GOHSEP School Safety positions were vacant, including the Director of the Center for School Safety. This is despite the fact that the Louisiana Legislature created the Center for School Safety under GOHSEP’s purview.
- All five of the GOHSEP Cyber positions were vacant despite the continuous cyber-attacks across the state.

GOHSEP is the hiring agency, we handle our own employee relations, we are our own disciplinary board and our employee benefits team with just one person. GOHSEP will utilize vacant TO’s and reclassify them for one HR Director, one HR Supervisor and three HR Specialist TOs. GOHSEP will also move one General Counsel TO direct to handle HR matters specifically. We have taken the past six months and compiled all of the HR actions to highlight this need for reclassification of vacant TO’s:

GOHSEP Personnel Actions Report as of 6/18/2024	
Total Positions (315)	
TO	100
Non-TO	215
Personnel Actions	
New Hires	33
Separations	14
Promotions	21
Reallocations	19
Salary Adjustments	228
Retirements	3
Disciplinary Actions	
Written Reprimands/Improvement Plans	5
Internal Investigations	2
Terminations	4

The **third issue** was raised as an operational issue by the transition team. The question was how the state responded to emergencies in the past. Here is the issue from the SAP: *A new administration has not occurred in eight years. In addition, the GOHSEP structure has not evolved over the past 18 years. This results in an organization that is compliant with regulatory requirements but a bureaucracy in nature. It is cumbersome and often slow in the decision process as applied to parishes, municipalities, state agencies and sub-applicants. In order to keep up with the speed of homeland security (HS) and emergency preparedness (EP) issues, the GOHSEP team must evolve into a faster, more agile agency. And here is the subsequent recommendation on how GOHSEP is fixing it: The State of Louisiana will use a most likely and/or most dangerous course of action to establish a set of parameters to determine if it is a statewide or regional response, then act accordingly. If there is a regional response, it will be based on the FEMA model of the hardest hit area gets the majority of commitment of resources. This type of response puts pressure on GOHSEP to produce based on the intent of the Louisiana Legislature when they created the State Emergency Response Fund (SERF). GOHSEP will quickly and efficiently move resources through the emergency management cycle: preparation, response, recovery, mitigation and prevention. In short, GOHSEP will meet the challenge!*

Louisiana RS 39:100.31. State Emergency Response Fund

The State Emergency Response Fund, hereinafter referred to as the "fund", is hereby created in the state treasury. Any money donated to the fund or appropriated to the fund by the legislature shall be deposited in the fund. Monies in the fund shall be invested in the same manner as monies in the state general fund. Interest earned on investment of monies in the fund shall be deposited in and credited to the fund. Unexpended and unencumbered monies in the fund shall remain in the fund. Monies in the fund shall be appropriated, administered, and used solely as provided in Subsection B of this Section.

Monies in the fund shall be appropriated and used to provide a source of funds to pay expenses incurred as a result of activities associated with the preparation for, response to, and recovery from an emergency or declared disaster. The expenditure for such a purpose from another source may be eligible to be repaid from the fund if the using agency has certified the necessity of such action to the commissioner of administration. Monies in the fund may also be utilized to provide bridge funding in anticipation of reimbursements from the federal government or other source. Any reimbursement received for expenses paid from the fund shall be returned to and deposited into the fund.

Transfers of monies from the fund may be made from one agency to another prior to obtaining approval by the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget in the event of an emergency and if certified by the commissioner of administration to the governor that any delay in the expenditure of such monies would be detrimental to the welfare and safety of the state and its citizens. The Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget shall be notified in writing of such declaration and shall meet to consider such action, but if it is found by the committee that such funds were not needed for an emergency expenditure, such approval may be withdrawn and any balance remaining shall not be expended.

The **final issue** is the most significant and it relates to a recurring issue that the transition team identified, which is the backlog of actions and funding residing in GOHSEP. This entire strategic process has been focused on this issue, from the first 100 days, to the 16 SAPs, to the next 80 days and now to the final 185 days of year one. There is a systemic issue within GOHSEP that minimizes the element of time as an operational and strategic factor in decision making. Time is not utilized or calculated in the decision cycles. Operational tasks may have timeframe deadlines attached to them, yet they are routinely missed. From a functional prospective the resistance to move faster is not a resistance to change, it is a resistance to value the time of our customers. Actions, tasking elements, project worksheets, funding requests and internal workflow items are all examples of time related causes, which results in significant second and third order effects.

In the past 80 days, there was a panel of OEP Directors, vendors and elected officials that we asked to track progress and give us an assessment of the first 100 days versus the next 80. To a person, the majority acknowledged improvements but also identified a reduction in speed in the 80 day time period as a significant detractor. The essential piece of this information is: In the absence of Executive Leadership attention, the agency reverted to the old ways of a slower pace. Move quicker is not a temporary mindset, it is a culture in the team. It circles around to the assessment in the first paragraph. *“The simplest way to describe it, is to focus on the title: GOHSEP is the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. My belief was that GOHSEP had become slow and cumbersome as an agency and we needed to adopt a mindset in all endeavors- “MOVE QUICKER.”* Until we can empower employees to feel a part of the team, embrace the pace of the new GOHSEP and take ownership of this agency, we will not achieve true success as a team. We will be successful because of our employees and we will achieve the speed that organizations, businesses and people deserve!