



Forum Planning Handbook

*A Guide to Bringing Together
Emergency Responders and Cultural Institutions
in Your Community*



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Alliance for Response is an initiative of Heritage Preservation in support of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. Heritage Preservation is a national non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of the United States. By identifying risks, developing innovative programs, and providing broad public access to expert advice, Heritage Preservation assists museums, libraries, archives, historic preservation and other organizations, as well as individuals, in caring for our endangered heritage. The national Alliance for Response project has been made possible by Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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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 Forum Sample Documents Web page. The URL appears at the bottom of every even-numbered 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 Heritage Preservation and other members of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force.

A Heritage Preservation 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, 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. By the end of 2009, Alliance for Response Forums had been held in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Raleigh, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Savannah, Seattle, and the State of Vermont. A model for a half-day Forum was undertaken with local funding in Harrisburg, PA.

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/sites, and historical societies. The cultural heritage community also includes historic preservation organizations and neighborhoods.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services provided funding for Forums in California cities. All other Forums were sponsored with support from Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation.

For each Forum, strong local planning committees contributed not only to the success of the Forums, 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 conservation and preservation to curation and security; 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 the Dallas Museum of Art and the Denver Public Library.

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, will have 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 created two active committees. The steering committee develops a program series to bring members together regularly, and the collections committee is exploring ways to inform emergency responders about the needs of collecting institutions and making plans for a corps of trained collections professionals.

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 list-serve; it meets semi-annually and hosts two educational programs per year. Following a tornado in 2008, HERA brought together people and resources to aid cultural organizations affected by the disaster.

The Philadelphia Alliance for Response steering committee has been meeting since the Forum in June 2007, and it has sponsored six educational programs. It enjoys an excellent relationship with the City's Office of Emergency Management. Before the Forum, the City's "Alert Philadelphia" emergency message service reached only 11 cultural institutions. Now more than 100 collecting institutions are signed up for incident advisories.

Just months after their 2009 Forum in Savannah, members of local cultural institutions and emergency officials organized to form the Savannah Heritage Emergency Response (SHER). The SHER executive committee plans to hold regular meetings and workshops, and SHER members have been invited to staff a workstation at the Chatham County Emergency Operations Center.

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."

Forum Facts

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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."

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Forum Facts

The Forum held November 17, 2003, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, resulted in a seat for cultural heritage at the city's Emergency Operations Center, a first in the country.

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 posted on the Sample Documents page.

Heritage Preservation may have funding available to help support administrative costs for Forums. E-mail TaskForce@heritagepreservation.org to inquire.

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

Venue. Most of the Forums have secured donated space. Institutions usually welcome the opportunity to be associated with a worthy endeavor and draw in a new audience. Inviting the institution’s director to make opening remarks can help. Institutions have also donated security, staff time for tours and other activities associated with the Forum, and free museum admission. If parking is not free, investigate whether you can negotiate vouchers.

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, Web space), 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 a 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. 8.)

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.

Another resource for finding local emergency responders is the Internet. State and local emergency management agencies are listed at www.ready.gov/america/local/index.html. Every state has its own Web site, which should have a link to the state emergency management agency. Your city or county may have a Web site with similar information. Government listings in the phone book are another resource.

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 at <https://www.heritagepreservation/catalog>. Heritage Preservation developed this poster with tips on communicating with first responders and emergency managers. It is available for a nominal charge and can also be downloaded 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. Give them a copy of the program brochure and this handbook. 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.

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

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.”

goals of the Forum. (See “Goals,” p. 4.) 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 high-

Sample Timeline

Seven to three months out:

- Planning committee begins meeting, selecting the 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 out on meeting day.
- Set up the venue space(s) and test the audiovisual equipment.
- Send e-mail reminders to local media contacts.

lighting 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. 8) 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.

IV. Anatomy of a Forum

Forum Facts

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The second round of Alliance for Response Forums began in Seattle at the Museum of History and Industry on June 15, 2006. A municipal firefighter who attended the Seattle Forum said that thanks to the day's discussions, he would begin "asking where high value and rare articles are located so the fire department can address them as early as possible in an incident."

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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.

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.

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 Prado at Balboa Park, San Diego

The Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh

Denver Public Library

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

The Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah.

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 institutions have strict requirements for catering (e.g., allowing only certain vendors)?

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. 4) 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.

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 at www.fema.gov/about/contact/regions.shtm.

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-

Forum Facts

The California series of four Forums in September 2006 marked the first time Alliance for Response Forums have been underwritten by a state emergency management agency. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services was pleased with the results and sponsored a second series of Forums the next spring.

Forum Facts

One of the Key Speakers at the 2009 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.

only event, letting the invitees know they are vital to making the alliance successful.

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 to identify and attract 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 brochure, as well as the Alliance for Response logo in electronic formats, is available on the Sample Documents page.

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 or by phone, fax, or mail.

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.

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

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 the speakers when their allotted period is ending. Small signs with large, easily readable numbers indicating 10, 5, and 1 (minutes left) will help.
- 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.

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 on the Internet for anyone who might be searching for information about your Forum. See stories about past Forums at www.heritagepreservation.org/afr/index.html.

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.

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 2009 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 the part of the program of most interest to them.

- sponsoring a series of “table top” 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.

Heritage Preservation and the rest of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force welcome you to this vital national initiative.

VI. 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.

- The Alliance for Response Tool Kit has sample documents, contacts, and advice from previous Forum planners:
www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/ForumPlanningToolkit.html

- News and information about Alliance for Response communities: www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/
- Alliance for Response News Archive: www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/Archive.html

Sample Documents

The following are templates, based on documents used by various planning committees for previous Forums, are available at www.heritagepreservation.org/Forum.

Please remember to credit Heritage Preservation on your program materials as follows: “Alliance for Response is a national initiative of Heritage Preservation. For more information, visit www.heritagepreservation.org.”

General

Alliance for Response brochure (PDF)

Logos

Alliance for Response logo for electronic use (gif)

Alliance for Response logo for print use (CMYK tiff)

Sponsors

Solicitation Letter
Confirmation Fax
Acknowledgement
Thank-You

Planning Committee

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

Program

- Agendas
- Breakout session worksheet
- Group Discussion Questions

Acronym list

- Cooperative Disaster Networks
- Evaluation Form
- Sponsor Acknowledgement

Speakers

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

Media

- Media Advisory
- Press Release

Evaluation

- Evaluation Form

Save the Date

- Postcard
- E-mail

Invitation

- Invitation List Template
- Letters of Invitation
- Venue Facts

Program Packet Materials

- Agendas
- Alliance for Response brochure (PDF)
- Logo for Folder Labels and Nametags
- Participant List
- Break-out Session Worksheets

Notes

Notes

Notes

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The Heritage Emergency National Task Force is a partnership of 41 national service organizations and federal agencies created to protect cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies. The Task Force was founded in 1995 and is co-sponsored by Heritage Preservation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Heritage Preservation

The National Institute for Conservation

www.heritagepreservation.org



www.heritageemergency.org

