Guidelines for Lead Evaluator

I. The Lead Evaluator’s Role

The lead evaluator oversees data collection, analysis, and reporting. This includes recruiting peer assessors, administering the Incident Management Team Survey, and communicating results with IM team members and other relevant stakeholders. The lead evaluator is responsible for

- coordinating the activities that occur before, during, and after the assessment
- identifying IM team members, distributing the survey, and answering any questions that team members might have
- maintaining confidentiality of responses
- interpreting and sharing the results.

If a peer assessment will be completed, the lead evaluator is also responsible for identifying and recruiting a peer assessor and arranging a visit on a typical day when relevant personnel will be present. If the peer assessor needs to visit remotely, the lead evaluator should discuss which meetings the peer assessor can join and how they can interview staff and access information virtually.
II. Lead Evaluator Timeline of Activities and Resources

Pre-Assessment (Steps 1–7)

*Pre-assessment* refers to the period before fielding the survey or peer assessment. It consists of the following steps.

- **Step 1:** Learn about the tool by reviewing the “READ ME FIRST” materials

- **Step 2:** Review the Incident Management Team Survey and Peer Assessor Protocol
  Familiarize yourself with the Incident Management Team Survey and the Peer Assessor Protocol.

- **Step 3:** Record background information
  Record incident background information using the Incident Background Information template in this toolkit. Focus on a single incident that occurred within a reasonable period and that all respondents would recall easily. This template is intended to outline basic information that will be helpful for contextualizing key results. The information can be gathered from a variety of sources, including but not limited to SITREPs, discussions with senior leaders, and IM forms.

- **Step 4:** Recruit peer assessors
  Peer assessors should (1) be familiar with public health-related IM but also (2) provide an objective external perspective that comes from being outside the current IM team. For example, the peer assessor may come from another agency or division or be retired from IM team duties. If an external assessor is not available, someone within the IM team could play the role of a peer assessor (e.g., a member of the Incident Command System structure’s planning section tasked with taking the long view on the response). However, they must be able to step back and assess the management of the incident objectively.

  Peer assessors play an observational role and should generally not take part in or influence IM processes.

  Provide peer assessors with the following four sections from the toolkit:
  1. READ ME FIRST
  2. Guidelines for Peer Assessor
  3. Peer Assessor Protocol
  4. Incident Background Information (complete before giving to the peer assessor).
Step 5: Select dates for survey administration and, if appropriate, peer assessment

Work with site-level leadership to identify appropriate dates for conducting the Incident Management Team Survey. If a peer assessment is also being done, coordinate with the peer assessor regarding dates for implementing the protocol.

To reduce burden and help facilitate two perspectives during the same period of operation, administration of the Incident Management Team Survey and Peer Assessor Protocol should occur simultaneously. An effective assessment should ideally be carried out after an emergency operations center has been set up, response teams have been activated, and response activities have been ongoing for a reasonable amount of time. For example, assessment could be carried out at the midpoint of emergency operations center activation or after incident recovery activities.

To obtain information on change over time during the exercise or response, the survey and peer assessment can be repeated at a later time during the same incident.

Step 6: Identify survey respondents

Select a broadly representative sample of IM team members. For some departments and incidents, all IM team members may be included. In other cases, doing so may create unreasonable burdens. Lead evaluators should ensure that each of the following three groups are well represented:

- **IM chiefs or leads:** If possible, include at least one lead responsible for incident command, logistics, operations, planning, and finance. You may also include deputies who work with and assist these individuals in their leadership roles or other members considered part of the response leadership team.

- **IM technical leads:** Include technical leads (e.g., epidemiology, toxicology, environmental science). When technical leads are not used, select up to five staff representing other roles, including but not limited to safety and liaison officers.

- **IM team members:** Additional non-leads representing the above-mentioned roles in the IMS.

In addition, lead evaluators should consider the following when constructing the survey sample:

- **The sample should include those with IM responsibilities and those reporting through the IMS.** Those who are in frontline operational roles (e.g., administering vaccines, triaging survivors) but *without* IM duties should not be included. If in doubt, however, it is better to be over-inclusive.

- In developing the sample, lead evaluators may find it helpful to consult the IM team duty roster.

- If large numbers of individuals are in any one of these groups, consider sampling randomly within them—such as by selecting every other or every third, fourth, fifth, etc., name from a roster.
Step 7: Draft communiqué to selected respondents

- Draft a communiqué to IM team members explaining the purpose of the survey, the referent incident, how data will be used, and provisions for data privacy (see Communication Templates).

Clearly state the scope and time frame of the response. If a response is long, choose a specific aspect of the response or time frame so that findings from the assessment are more actionable.

During Assessment (Steps 8–9)

These activities pertain to the period of assessment when the Incident Management Team Survey and Peer Assessor Protocol are conducted.

Step 8: Field the survey

Share the Incident Management Team Survey with sampled members of the IM team. The following are options for distributing the survey:

- Create an electronic version of the survey and distribute the link via email or other electronic messaging platform. This has the advantage of automatically collating responses into a single data file that can be exported and analyzed.
- Send an electronic copy of the survey as an email attachment and compile results manually as respondents return them.
- Distribute a paper version of the survey and collate the results manually as respondents return them.

Step 9: Follow up with nonrespondents

It is important to get responses from a broad range of team members. Send a reminder to those who have not responded within 48 hours. Send additional reminders, as needed.

Aim for a 100% response rate (meaning all invited team members participate in the survey) and note response issues when interpreting the results.

Post-Assessment (Steps 10–11)

Post-assessment refers to the period after the Incident Management Team Survey and/or Peer Assessor Protocol have been fielded and respondents have provided their responses.

Step 10: Review data and compile results

Consider the guidance on interpreting the data provided in the Using the Data section of the toolkit.
Step 11: Share the results

Share the results with leadership and IM team members for additional feedback and discussion of next steps. Use the results as appropriate in hot washes, briefs, AARs, etc.

Communication Templates

These templates can be used to recruit and communicate with members of the IM team participating in the IMMT process. As noted above, the lead evaluator is responsible for coordinating all communication. Versions are provided below for three situations: (1) survey only, (2) peer assessment only, and (3) survey and peer assessment. They should be customized as needed.

When Conducting Only the Incident Management Team Survey

Dear [team member],

As part of the [name of department]’s efforts to improve, we are requesting your participation in a survey regarding the [name of exercise or response], which occurred from [time frame of incident]. We ask that you complete the survey by [date]. It should take about 15 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary but appreciated. Your responses will be used for improvement purposes, not to evaluate the performance of any individual.

CLICK HERE to access the survey. All data will be kept confidential, and results will be anonymized. Please contact [name of lead evaluator] if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
[your name]

When Conducting Only the Peer Assessment

Dear [team member],

As part of the [name of department]’s efforts to improve, we will be hosting [name of peer assessor] to observe our operations and evaluate our team’s response to [name of exercise or incident]. [Name of peer assessor] may request to meet with you or ask for documentation. Please assist them as best as you are able. Participation is voluntary, but we would appreciate your cooperation.

Information collected by [name of peer assessor] will be used for improvement purposes, not to evaluate the performance of any individual. All data will be kept confidential. Please contact [name of lead evaluator] if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
[your name]
When Conducting Both the Incident Management Team Survey and the Peer Assessment

Dear [team member],

As part of the [name of department]’s efforts to improve, we will be hosting [name of peer assessor] to observe our operations and evaluate our team’s response to [name of exercise or incident]. [Name of peer assessor] may request to meet with you for a short discussion or may ask for documentation related to our team’s response. Please assist them as best as you are able. Participation is voluntary, but we would appreciate your cooperation and honest feedback.

We are also requesting your participation in a survey regarding the [name of exercise or response], which occurred from [time frame of incident]. We ask that you complete the survey by [date]. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. CLICK HERE to access the survey.

Information collected by [name of peer assessor] will be used for improvement purposes, not to evaluate the performance of any individual. All data will be kept confidential. Please contact [name of lead evaluator] if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[your name]