

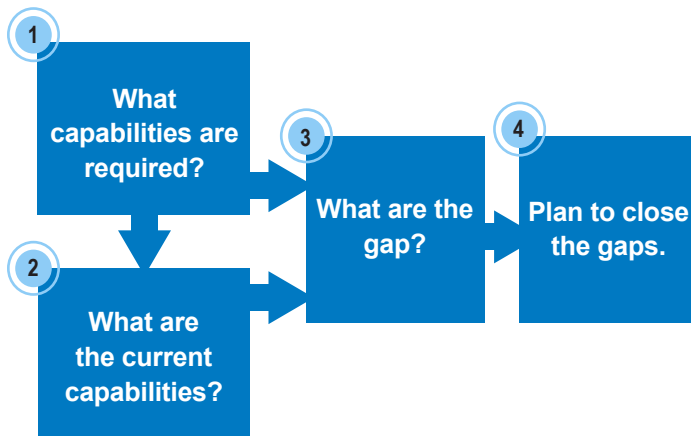
TAILORED CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

THE PROBLEM: BUILDING CAPABILITIES

Since 9/11, federal, state, and local agencies have made significant efforts in preparedness, spurred in part by requirements such as the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act and Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness. The latter established the National Preparedness Goal and National Preparedness System to identify, build, and improve the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation. As agencies continue to invest in building capabilities, it becomes increasingly important to be able to assess where capabilities have been achieved and maintained, and where gaps still exist.

THE CNA APPROACH

CNA pioneered operations analysis with the military as a way to understand and improve operational capabilities. We have tailored these analytic techniques to define and assess civilian capabilities, providing agencies with knowledge and tools to articulate capability gains, monitor capability levels, and make sound resource decisions to maintain and further build capabilities. The figure below describes the key steps in capability assessment.



We draw on our extensive toolbox of qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a capability assessment approach tailored to the specific characteristics and requirements of the particular jurisdiction, agency, or organization. Each step of the process is explained in more detail below.

1. What capabilities are required?

The first step is to define the universe of capabilities the organization determines is necessary to be successful in its mission. This step in the capability assessment process answers the question, “What capabilities do I need?” Typically, this step begins by defining the mission space or what the organization needs to do in the context of specific scenarios, threats, and hazards. Next, the organization defines the capabilities needed to carry out that mission. We tailor this process to provide the appropriate level of detail. For example, capability definitions may take the form of a hierarchical description of activities and tasks coupled with qualitative and quantitative standards, and measures. Or, the capability definition can be more descriptive or strategic in nature, defining general requirements for organizations to achieve higher levels of competency, but allowing the flexibility for stakeholders to set individualized goals at each level.

We tailor an approach and level of detail that meets specific needs, drawing from existing sources (e.g., National Preparedness Goal, National Planning Frameworks) and filling in gaps through a structured process that may include collecting data on capability needs from stakeholders, eliciting input from subject matter experts, and conducting workshops to refine, validate, and build consensus on a standardized definitions.

2. What are the current capabilities?

What gets measured gets done; we use a variety of methods to collect data to measure current levels of capability. Examples include self-assessment questionnaires and tools to collect capability data, conducting workshops with stakeholders to elicit information on capabilities, observing capability performance during exercises or real-world incidents, and developing resource models. The approach taken in defining capabilities, and the resources available to conduct the assessment, are key factors in tailoring our data collection approach. For example, if the capability definition has discrete measures and metrics, then the assessment should be designed to examine how a stakeholder fulfills those measures and metrics. In addition, different methods of assessment can be tailored for different stakeholder groups, depending on their needs, preferences, and resources to perform the assessment. Some examples of assessments

include the following:

- **Voluntary self-assessment through a structured tool.** This approach works well to gather information from stakeholders that are participating on a voluntary basis, such as State and local jurisdictions or the private sector.
- **Scenario-based discussions or exercises.** This approach is useful to gather data from multiple stakeholders that must collaborate to perform a single mission, such as explosives screening.
- **Direct observation of operations.** This approach works well for assessing stakeholders that routinely respond or practice operations in exercises (e.g., bomb squads).

3. What are the gaps?

A primary output of the capability assessment is the information necessary to compare current, baseline information against the capability requirements from the capability definition to identify gaps. The next step is to analyze the gaps and prioritize the activities—based on risk, funding, or other factors—that they will need to implement to close gaps. These activities can include additional resources and other materiel solutions, or non-materiel solutions, such as planning, training, or organizational restructuring. We have developed several different approaches to assist in efforts to analyze capability gaps.

- Stakeholders may work together through structured workshops to identify and prioritize solutions and to develop implementation plans. This approach may work well for developing non-materiel solutions that involve multiple stakeholders.
- The capability models discussed in the previous section can also assist efforts to evaluate both material and non-material options to optimize solutions to address gaps.
- Materiel solutions may also require additional research, such as analyses of alternatives, to determine the best solution.

4. Plan to close the gaps

Once gaps are identified and prioritized, it is important to develop a plan to close those gaps, and track progress against that plan. Plans can take the form of strategies with goals and objectives as well as implementation or resource plans. We work with the particular organization to tailor the specific planning product to its needs.

BENEFITS OF THE CNA APPROACH

Given the significant investments in preparedness that have occurred, it is critical that jurisdictions across the nation are able to accurately define the specific capabilities they need, measure whether or not they have achieved these capabilities, and plan effectively to address any gaps. CNA's approach to capability assessment will provide organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions with the knowledge necessary to take specific actions to build and maintain capabilities.

ABOUT CNA CORPORATION

CNA is a not-for-profit research and analysis organization with 75 years of experience providing government agencies with data-driven insights and real-world, actionable solutions grounded in our direct experience with the operational environments where these solutions are applied. CNA developed the foundational techniques for operational analysis to address complex challenges facing government programs. We have applied these techniques successfully in areas ranging from defense to aviation, education, justice, and homeland security.

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