

Increasing Resilience Using THIRA/SPR and Mitigation Planning

This document describes the similarities and differences between mitigation planning and the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)/Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) process and provides an overview of an optional approach to streamline state, territory, and tribal submissions of the mitigation plan and the THIRA/SPR. This optional approach may reduce duplication and maximize efficient use of these processes.

Overview

Hazard Mitigation Plans and the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)/Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) are both critical tools for improving resilience. Both processes assess risks and capabilities for managing risks and potential impacts. While mitigation plans and THIRA/SPRs have distinct purposes, requirements, and outcomes, they share some similar elements.

As states, territories, and tribes become more familiar with the connections between mitigation planning and the THIRA/SPR, they may recognize opportunities for leveraging information and results from each in a complementary fashion. With each subsequent update cycle, there are opportunities for alignment to better understand threats and hazards, assess risks, build and sustain capabilities, reduce vulnerability, identify ways to increase resilience, and avoid duplication of effort.

The following table outlines an optional unified approach for aligning mitigation planning and THIRA/SPR processes. States, territories, and tribes may choose to follow one or more of these steps, as needed.

Target Audience

States, territories, and tribes are the primary audiences for this job aid. All 50 States, five territories (Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands), and the District of Columbia have FEMA-approved state mitigation plans and submit a THIRA/SPR.

Since local governments may be part of a single jurisdiction or multi-jurisdictional mitigation plan and may or may not be part of an Urban Area Security Initiative region, they may also be able to use the concepts presented in this job aid, as appropriate.



Aligning Mitigation Planning and THIRA/SPR Processes

Mitigation Planning Process	Unified Approach	THIRA-SPR Process
Mitigation Planning Step 1: Organize the Planning Process and Resources	Step 1. Involvement Across the Planning Area	Involve the Whole Community throughout each step of the THIRA/SPR process
Mitigation Planning Step 2. Assess Risks	Step 2. Threat and Hazard Identification	THIRA Step 1: Identify the Threats and Hazards of Concern
	Step 3. Risk Assessment	THIRA Step 2: Give the Threats and Hazards Context
Mitigation Planning Step 3. Develop a Mitigation Strategy	Step 4. Develop Capability Targets	THIRA Step 3: Establish Capability Targets
	Step 5. Identify Gaps	SPR Step 1: Assess Capabilities and SPR Step 2: Identify and Address Capability Gaps
	Step 6. Develop, Prioritize, and Operationalize Strategies	SPR Step 2: Identify and Address Capability Gaps
Mitigation Planning Step 4. Adopt and Implement the Plan	Step 7. Monitor and Adjust	THIRA/SPR Process

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 1: INVOLVEMENT ACROSS THE PLANNING AREA

Both mitigation planning and THIRA/SPR processes require involvement from multiple stakeholders. If the time frames of the five-year HMP update, THIRA update (every six years for Mitigation targets, and every three years for targets in other mission areas), and annual SPR update permit, it may be beneficial to leverage existing meetings for these processes to ask for input on the HMP and THIRA/SPR at the same time. Coordinating stakeholder engagement and information collection across both processes can improve data quality and increase efficiency, combining efforts and reducing the amount of time necessary to complete the mitigation plan and THIRA/SPR.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 2: THREAT AND HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

For the THIRA, states, territories, and tribes consider all types of threats and hazards (natural, technological, and human-caused), while mitigation plans only require them to address natural hazards. Despite these differences, states, territories, and tribes can use a single coordinated process to consider all their potential threats and hazards and then use that risk data to inform both the THIRA and HMP. Though it is not required, states, territories, and tribes can consider threats and hazards in both their THIRA and mitigation plan.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 3: RISK ASSESSMENT

States, territories, and tribes use THIRA and mitigation planning processes to better understand the likely impacts of potential threats and hazards. The mitigation plan also includes an assessment of vulnerability, which states, territories, and tribes can incorporate into THIRA Step 2, as appropriate. For example, states, territories, and tribes

can use the number of repetitive loss properties, found in the risk assessment of an HMP, to describe the impact of a flooding event in the THIRA. If these two documents require the same data points, and the timelines align, states, territories, and tribes could collect that data once and use the same information to complete both assessments.

State of Wisconsin's Experience

Before 2016, two different sections at Wisconsin Emergency Management completed the THIRA and mitigation plan. The Planning Section, responsible for the THIRA, wanted to include the mitigation plan's more thorough analysis of natural hazards in the THIRA. The Hazard Mitigation Section, responsible for the mitigation plan, wanted to include the THIRA's technological and human-caused hazards in the mitigation plan. Both sections met five or six times over the course of approximately a year to set up an outline and assign tasks for a THIRA that would meet the requirements of both the traditional THIRA and the mitigation plan's risk assessment. The result met the needs of both sections with no duplication of effort.

The timelines for the two documents aligned because the THIRA was due December 31, 2016, and the SHMP needed to be approved by December 6, 2016. Completing a THIRA that met the requirements of both a traditional THIRA and the mitigation plan risk assessment before December provided the Planning Section with enough time to complete the SPR and allowed FEMA to review and approve the mitigation plan before the deadline.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 4: DEVELOP CAPABILITY TARGETS

The meaning of the word "capabilities" is different in the two processes. However, the targets set in THIRA Step 3 for Mitigation capabilities and the goals in the mitigation plan can and should inform and support each other. The following example highlights how the two processes differ in their approaches to "capabilities" while underscoring how they can be used together.

In the mitigation plan, capabilities refer to authorities, policies, programs, and resources available to implement specific mitigation strategies and goals. For example, a state, territory, or tribe may lack the authority to adopt or enforce building codes or standards that would allow for greater risk reduction, and the mitigation strategy might reflect steps toward adopting and/or enforcing the latest disaster-resistant building codes.

In the THIRA/SPR, capabilities refer to the capacity to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from a threat or hazard. Communities set targets that reflect their goals in each mission area. For example, a capability target might focus on increasing the number of jurisdictions within a state, territory, or tribe that review their building codes and (as necessary) enact or update to the latest disaster-resilient building codes, and/or on increasing the frequency with which jurisdictions undertake these efforts.

In this case, working to adopt and better enforce building codes in the long term aligned with the mitigation plan. Increasing the number of jurisdictions that review, enact, or update building codes is the short term target from the THIRA/SPR. These two goals illustrate using the HMP and THIRA/SPR together to take a more holistic approach to achieving strategic mitigation goals.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 5: IDENTIFY GAPS

This step aligns two steps from the SPR process and one from mitigation planning to identify capability gaps. In SPR Step 1, communities estimate their current capabilities using the same language as their targets to help track their annual progress towards meeting their goals. SPR Step 2 requires communities to identify and describe planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise gaps between its targets and its current capabilities, including those related to the Mitigation mission area. Developing the mitigation strategy for the mitigation plan includes understanding capabilities and their impact on setting an action plan for risk reduction. These steps together help communities to develop a more comprehensive understanding of capability gaps and vulnerabilities.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 6: DEVELOP, PRIORITIZE AND OPERATIONALIZE STRATEGIES

In mitigation planning Step 3, states, territories, and tribes identify specific mitigation strategies, prioritize them, and commit to implement those strategies to reduce risks. In SPR Step 2, states, territories, and tribes indicate and describe their intended approaches for addressing their gaps by building and sustaining capability. States, territories, and tribes can use their mitigation plan and THIRA/SPR together to take a more holistic and comprehensive strategic approach to becoming more resilient, prioritizing and carrying out approaches for both reducing impacts and addressing capability gaps to improve disaster outcomes.

UNIFIED APPROACH STEP 7: MONITOR AND ADJUST

The 5-year mitigation planning update cycle is an opportunity for the state, territory, or tribe to assess previous goals, evaluate progress in implementing hazard mitigation actions, and adjust actions to address the current and projected realities. The THIRA process likewise affords an opportunity for states, territories, and tribes to re-evaluate goals on a regular basis. While communities set their Prevention, Protection, Response, and Recovery targets every three years, they set their Mitigation targets every six years to better align with the long-term strategies and goals associated with mitigation actions. States, territories, and tribes can use the annual SPR process to monitor and track progress in achieving capability targets over time. They can also use SPR results to prioritize efforts, like training and exercises, to build and sustain capabilities. States, territories, and tribes can use best practices and lessons learned to continuously improve both the THIRA/SPR and HMP.

OVERVIEW OF MITIGATION PLANNING AND THIRA/SPR PROCESSES

	MITIGATION PLANNING	THIRA/SPR
PURPOSE	Mitigation planning guides decision makers on long-term mitigation policies and actions to reduce risk and future losses from natural hazards, taking advantage of a wide range of resources.	The THIRA and SPR help states, territories, and tribes better understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What they need to prepare for ▪ What level of capability they need to be prepared ▪ Their current level of preparedness ▪ Gaps between the capabilities they have and what they need ▪ How to address gaps by building and sustaining capabilities

	MITIGATION PLANNING	THIRA/SPR
METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW	<p>The mitigation planning process has four phases and is vulnerability-based, focusing on reducing risk from natural hazards through policies and programs that influence long-term land-use, growth, and development decisions, in addition to mitigation projects for existing assets. Those phases are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizing the planning process and resources to engage stakeholders 2. Assessing risks 3. Developing a mitigation strategy 4. Adopting and implementing the plan 	<p>The THIRA has three steps, is capability-based, can include all threat and hazard types, and is flexible and scalable so that any type of community can use it. Those steps are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the most challenging potential threats and hazards 2. Describe and estimate the potential impacts of those threats and hazards 3. Set capability targets that reflect the desired level of preparedness <p>The SPR also has three steps, is capability-based, can include all threat and hazard types, and is flexible and scalable so that any type of community can use it. Those steps are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Estimate and describe current prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities 2. Identify and describe capability gaps between capability targets and current capabilities and determine approaches for addressing those gaps by building and sustaining capability 3. Assess the impact of relevant funding sources on building and sustaining capabilities
RISK ASSESSMENT	<p>State HMP risk assessments summarize the natural hazards that can affect the state. The summary must include information on location, extent, and previous occurrences for each natural hazard. The risk assessment must include an analysis of the potential impacts of hazard events to state/territory/tribal assets and a summary of the assets most vulnerable to the identified hazards.</p>	<p>During the risk assessment (THIRA) process, states, territories, and tribes develop a list of most challenging threats and hazards that could affect them using a combination of experience, forecasting, subject matter expertise, and other available resources. Using standardized impact language, they then describe and estimate the quantifiable impacts from those threats and hazards. In the final step of the THIRA, states, territories, and tribes use standardized language to set targets that reflect the level of capability they realistically seek to build and sustain within a certain period of time.</p>
CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT	<p>State HMPs evaluate a variety of authorities, policies, programs, and resources to assess planning and regulatory, administrative and technical,</p>	<p>During the capability assessment (SPR) process, states, territories, and tribes identify their current capabilities (assessed against the capability targets set in THIRA Step 3) and identify capability gaps and intended approaches to fill those gaps. They also</p>

	MITIGATION PLANNING	THIRA/SPR
OUTCOMES	financial, and education and outreach capabilities for implementing mitigation strategies. This helps provide a better understanding of the types and numbers of mitigation actions the state, territory, or tribe can undertake.	estimate and describe the extent to which they built, lost, and sustained capabilities over the previous year, and the funding sources – including FEMA mitigation grants – they used. As of 2019, states, territories, and tribes also indicate if they made investments in support of a project identified in their HMP.
	The mitigation planning process enables states, territories, and tribes to engage stakeholders and balance competing priorities and limited resources with strategies to reduce risks from natural hazards that threaten people, property, housing, infrastructure, economies, as well as natural and cultural resources.	The THIRA/SPR helps states, territories, and tribes better understand what they need to prepare for and how, leveraging investments in planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercises to build and sustain capabilities across all mission areas.

Resources

Preparedness

- [Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 201, Third Edition](#)
- [Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment](#)
- [Stakeholder Preparedness Review](#)
- Contact the Preparedness Analysis & Planning Officer/Preparedness Analysis & Planning Specialist of the appropriate FEMA Regional Office or the THIRA/SPR helpdesk at FEMA-SPR@fema.dhs.gov.

Mitigation Planning

- [Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations Part 201 Mitigation Planning](#)
- [State Mitigation Plan Review Guide \(March 2015\)](#)
- [State Mitigation Planning Key Topics Bulletins \(2016\)](#)
- [Hazard Mitigation Planning](#)
- Contact the Senior Mitigation Planner in the Mitigation Division of the appropriate [FEMA Regional Office](#).