

Toolkit Overview



I. Description and goals of the CIFOR Guidelines

The CIFOR *Guidelines for Foodborne Disease Outbreak Response*, originally published in 2009 and revised in 2014 and 2020, were developed to help local and state public health, environmental health, and food regulatory agencies and laboratories improve their foodborne disease outbreak response activities and to help harmonize foodborne disease investigation work across the United States.

The *Guidelines* were developed by an interdisciplinary workgroup from around the country with expertise in epidemiology, environmental health, food regulation, and laboratory science. The workgroup included representatives from local, state, and federal government and from academia.

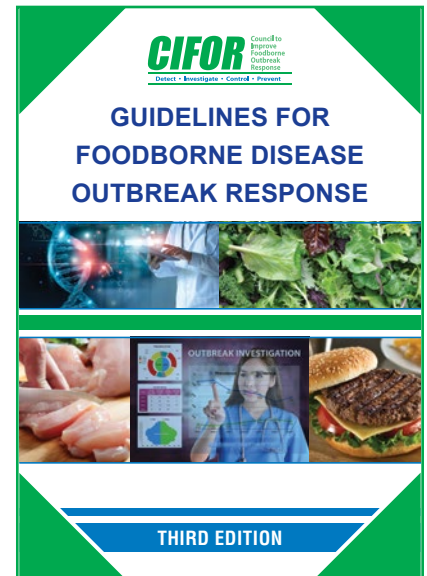
The CIFOR *Guidelines* describe the major functions that should be performed before, during, and after a foodborne disease outbreak. These functions include planning and preparation, disease surveillance and outbreak detection, investigation of clusters and outbreaks, and control measures. The *Guidelines* provide useful background information on these functions and the rationale for various activities. The *Guidelines* also describe a range of actions, applicable to the investigation of and response to food-related emergencies of local, state, and national significance, which agencies and jurisdictions might choose to use as models to improve the effectiveness of their foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response.

Appropriate and effective foodborne disease outbreak response activities for a particular agency or jurisdiction depend on a host of factors including staff expertise, organizational structure, and resources, as well as the unique circumstances of each outbreak. Given the number and breadth of recommendations included in the CIFOR *Guidelines*, determining which recommendations would be most helpful and feasible to implement in each agency or jurisdiction can be challenging; the CIFOR *Guidelines* Toolkit has been created to help make that determination possible.

II. Goals of the CIFOR Guidelines Toolkit

The goals of the CIFOR *Guidelines* Toolkit are to help public health, environmental health, and food regulatory agencies and laboratories

- Better understand current foodborne disease outbreak response activities in their agency or jurisdiction,
- Become more familiar with the CIFOR *Guidelines* and recommended practices,
- Help jurisdictions identify specific activities and procedures that need improvement
- Identify specific CIFOR recommendations that address those areas in need of improvement during future foodborne disease outbreak responses, and
- Make plans to implement those recommendations.



III. Target audience

The CIFOR *Guidelines* Toolkit has been developed for staff in local and state public health, environmental health, and food regulatory agencies who have some expertise and experience in foodborne disease outbreak response and knowledge of their agency or jurisdiction, activities, and resources.

Ideally, the Toolkit will be used by an interdisciplinary team within a jurisdiction with knowledge and practical experience in epidemiology, environmental health, food regulation, laboratory science, and communication (i.e., the team that works together to investigate, control, and prevent foodborne disease outbreaks in the jurisdiction). The team's use of the Toolkit will provide a broader context for assessing a jurisdiction's current foodborne disease outbreak response and potential areas for improvement, especially with respect to cross-agency and cross-discipline activities.

Use of the Toolkit by this team will also allow participants to become more familiar with the roles and responsibilities of each team member, facilitate communication, and engender team-building in the process. Knowing and understanding each other's roles before an emergency event is critical to the rapid implementation of outbreak response and effective control measures.

Although an interdisciplinary team is the ideal target audience, individuals from a single program, agency, or discipline, or even a single individual within an agency who acts as a "champion" for the cause can also use the Toolkit. However, because outbreak response is a team effort, using the Toolkit in this manner will be more limited in scope and might best be viewed as the initial steps for a more inclusive process that involves others at a later time.

IV. Approach

The Toolkit has been developed to guide teams through identifying and implementing recommendations in the CIFOR *Guidelines* that are appropriate for their program/agency/jurisdiction. It promotes a simple process in which users prioritize areas of outbreak response (called Focus Areas) that are most important to their program, agency, or jurisdiction and then systematically undertake three steps for each prioritized Focus Area:

1. Describe current activities and procedures in the Focus Area and identify those needing improvement.
2. Prioritize CIFOR recommendations to address needed improvements.
3. Make plans to implement prioritized CIFOR recommendations.

This approach will allow teams to identify areas needing improvement and identify recommendations in the *Guidelines* that address these areas. Each jurisdiction can decide if the recommendations are feasible for their program based on limited resources.

V. Overlap with other national initiatives

Several other initiatives address foodborne outbreak response capacity development or improvement of program quality and performance at local and state public health, environmental health, and food regulatory agencies and laboratories. Most of these initiatives provide standards (i.e., goals) toward which participating agencies work without specifying activities required to meet the goals.

The CIFOR *Guidelines* offer concrete ways to achieve compliance with many of the standards in these other initiatives (concerning foodborne diseases and many other infectious diseases) and should be considered for use by agencies involved in these other initiatives. For example, the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standard 5 requires that participating programs maintain logs or databases for all complaints or referral reports on food-related illness, food-related injury, or intentional food contamination. The CIFOR *Guidelines* describe the key determinants of successful complaint systems and model practices related to these systems and, therefore, can be used to formulate steps to achieve that particular requirement.

The CIFOR Toolkit will help users integrate the implementation of the CIFOR *Guidelines* with these other national initiatives including the FDA Voluntary National Retail and Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards, the Public Health Accreditation Board Standards, and the National Public Health Performance Standards.

VI. Toolkit materials

The Toolkit includes the following materials:

- Instructions describing the Toolkit process.
- Worksheets that help users get started with the process, identify areas needing improvement, and identify CIFOR *Guidelines* recommendations specific to the program, agency, or jurisdiction needs.
- A list of tips for persons who facilitate or lead the process.
- Sample worksheet pages completed by a local health department to demonstrate how to complete the worksheets; and
- A participant evaluation form to provide feedback on the process.

Electronic versions of all toolkit materials are available at the CIFOR website at www.CIFOR.us. Users can modify any of these materials to meet their particular needs.

VII. Use of the Toolkit

As previously mentioned, ideally the Toolkit will be used by an interdisciplinary team in a jurisdiction, brought together specifically for this task. However, the team can use the Toolkit in other ways. For example, the Toolkit might be used as part of the after-action review of an outbreak response—a setting in which problems related to the response will be fresh in the minds of participants and motivation will be high to make changes to improve future response. The Toolkit can also be used as an adjunct to meetings arranged for other purposes (e.g., annual statewide public health meetings, foodborne disease outbreak trainings, or gatherings of particular professional groups) or for capacity development efforts (e.g., FDA Retail Food and Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards).

VIII. Contacts for Toolkit

The CIFOR Toolkit was developed by the CIFOR Toolkit Workgroup. The developmental process was supported by staff and consultants from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and was funded by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38OT000297 with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CIFOR Toolkit and its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

For more information about the CIFOR Toolkit or developmental process, please contact:

CIFOR Staff Lead
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
2635 Century Parkway NE, Suite 700
Atlanta, GA 30345
770.458.3811
info@cifor.us