

Toolkit User Instructions



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. The CIFOR Toolkit has been developed to guide you through the CIFOR *Guidelines* to identify recommendations that are appropriate for your program, agency, or jurisdiction and help you take the first steps toward implementation of those recommendations.

I. Preliminaries

To begin using the CIFOR Toolkit and to make the best use of staff time, please complete the “**Preliminaries Worksheet**”.

A. Identify program, agency, or jurisdiction for which decisions will be made.

Making this decision up front will allow you to concentrate your efforts, involve the right people in setting priorities, and identify changes that will be implemented.

B. Brief decision-makers from program, agency, or jurisdiction.

Obtaining a commitment from decision-makers will help define the resources and constraints that should be considered when using the Toolkit and creating implementation plans. Use the “**CIFOR Toolkit Overview**” to help introduce decision-makers to the CIFOR *Guidelines* and various components of the CIFOR Toolkit.

C. Select team members to use Toolkit.

An interdisciplinary team with practical expertise in epidemiology, environmental health, food regulation, laboratory science, and communication is ideal. Participants must have knowledge and experience in foodborne disease outbreak response, the time to participate, and the interest. Include staff who are key to improving foodborne disease outbreak response in your program, agency, or jurisdiction. Even if you decide to focus on only one program or agency while using the Toolkit, involvement of participants from both the local and state level is encouraged.

If your program/agency/jurisdiction is involved in other initiatives aimed at capacity development or program quality and performance (e.g., FDA Voluntary National Retail and Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards, Public Health Accreditation Board Standards, and National Public Health Performance Standards), consider including staff who are involved in those initiatives.

To prepare to use the Toolkit:

- A. Identify program, agency, or jurisdiction for which decisions will be made.
- B. Brief decision-makers from program, agency, or jurisdiction.
- C. Select team members to use Toolkit.
- D. Identify support staff (e.g., a facilitator for the group and a recorder).
- E. Make sure participants are familiar with the CIFOR *Guidelines*.
- F. Assemble the necessary supporting materials.
- G. Decide on a time frame for completing the process.

D. Identify support staff.

1. Facilitator

To ensure success, identify a facilitator to lead the process. The facilitator should have extensive experience in surveillance and outbreak detection, investigation, and control and be aware of the resources necessary and available to perform outbreak response activities in the program, agency, or jurisdiction. Before assembling the workgroup, the facilitator should become familiar with the *Guidelines*, read through these Toolkit instructions, and examine the worksheets. The facilitator should review the “**Tips for Facilitators**” and make sure that participants have access to all necessary materials including the appropriate Toolkit documents.

2. Recorder

Assign one person to record notes from the workgroup’s discussions, especially conclusions about the program’s/agency’s/jurisdiction’s performance in foodborne disease outbreak response and decisions on actions to improve performance. The recorder should review Toolkit worksheets before the workgroup assembles to make sure they are familiar with the format. In particular, the recorder should examine the sample worksheet completed by a local health department. (See “**Sample Focus Area Worksheet**”) The recorder should decide ahead of time whether to use electronic versions of the documents or hard copies and make arrangements to have a laptop and the necessary files available at the workgroup meeting, if needed.

E. Make sure participants are familiar with the CIFOR *Guidelines*.

To prepare to use the Toolkit, team members should become familiar with the CIFOR *Guidelines*. Workgroups might then assign individual participants to take responsibility for reviewing different chapters or sections of the *Guidelines*.

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) will provide free copies of the *Guidelines* to local and state public health, environmental health, and food regulatory agencies and laboratories. To get your free copy or download an electronic version of the *Guidelines*, go to the CIFOR website at www.CIFOR.us. The electronic version will allow you to search for key words and identify specific sections of the *Guidelines* more easily. References to the *Guidelines* are hyperlinked throughout the electronic version of the Toolkit.

F. Assemble the necessary supporting materials.

As an initial step in using the Toolkit, assemble copies of the Toolkit worksheets and other documents that might help in the process, including written protocols, after-action reports from recent foodborne disease outbreaks, data from pathogen-specific surveillance and foodborne disease complaint systems, and information on other quality improvement initiatives in which your program or agency might be involved. During team meetings, electronic versions of these documents can be projected on a screen, which can help participants follow the process more closely and ensure that they agree with the decisions that are being made.

G. Decide on a time frame for completing the Toolkit.

Use of the Toolkit requires a systematic, in-depth examination of foodborne disease outbreak response activities in your program, agency, or jurisdiction, and one Focus Area worksheet may take several hours or the better part of a day to complete. Decide up front whether your workgroup plans to work through the Toolkit process in one time period or break up the process.

II. Focus areas

A. Tracks and Focus Areas

In developing the Toolkit, outbreak response activities have been divided into four major “tracks,” corresponding to the four main chapters of the CIFOR *Guidelines*:

- Planning and preparation
- Surveillance and outbreak detection
- Investigation of clusters and outbreaks
- Control measures

Each track is divided into two to four “Focus Areas,” representing cohesive, interrelated sets of actions/resources/relationships most critical to outbreak response (Figure 1). The Focus Areas are “bite-sized” pieces of outbreak response that allow you to systematically examine current foodborne disease outbreak response activities in your program, agency, or jurisdiction.

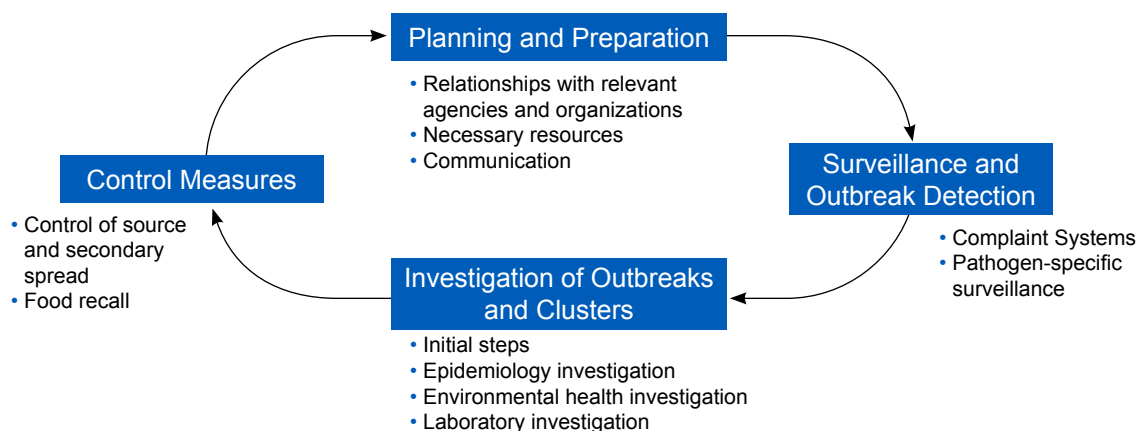


Figure 1: Outbreak response tracks and focus areas

NOTE: The listing of the tracks and Focus Areas (Figure 1) is not meant to imply a specified order of activities in responding to an outbreak.

B. Prioritization of Focus Areas

A key step in using the Toolkit is to identify the Focus Areas that are most important for your program/agency/jurisdiction to work on. (See the “**Selecting Focus Areas Worksheet**”). You might involve the full team in this prioritization process or use a smaller group of decision-makers. The full team (or subsets of the team) will then concentrate on the prioritized Focus Areas during the remainder of the process.

To help you understand what is included in each Focus Area, “keys to success” have been identified for each Focus Area. Keys to success are activities, relationships, and resources that are felt to be critical to achieving success in a particular Focus Area. If only a few of the keys to success for a Focus Area are in place in your program, agency, or jurisdiction, it could mean the Focus Area needs work.

If your program, agency, or jurisdiction is already involved in other capacity development or quality assurance initiatives, priorities identified in those efforts can be used to help prioritize Focus Areas for implementing the CIFOR *Guidelines*. The CIFOR *Guidelines* provide ways to address or meet the requirements of many of these initiatives and, therefore, could be integrated into those initiatives.

In addition, review past foodborne outbreak response experiences to identify areas in need of improvement. After-action reports or debriefings among persons involved in past outbreak responses can help you identify local strengths and weaknesses in foodborne outbreak response as well as opportunities for improvement.

Finally, a growing proportion of foodborne disease outbreaks require the resources of more than one local, state, or federal public health, environmental health, or food-regulatory agency for detection, investigation, or control. This is particularly true for some of the most serious foodborne illnesses (e.g., *E. coli* O157:H7 infection, salmonellosis, and hepatitis A infection). Therefore, all agencies and jurisdictions would be well served to prioritize the Focus Area “Relationships with relevant agencies and organizations” to improve their ability to participate in a multijurisdictional outbreak response.

To prioritize Focus Areas:

- Determine if keys to success are already in place.
- Consider priorities in other capacity development or quality assurance initiatives.
- Review past foodborne outbreak response experiences.
- Prioritize relationships with relevant agencies and organizations to improve multi-jurisdiction response.

C. Examination of priority Focus Areas

For each prioritized Focus Area, the Toolkit will help you systematically examine outbreak response in your program, agency, or jurisdiction and explore the *Guidelines* for ways to improve your response in that Focus Area. Use the **Focus Area-specific worksheets** to help you work through the process. An example of a completed Focus Area worksheet has been provided for you. (See “**Sample Focus Area Worksheet**”)

Steps in examining each priority Focus Area

1. Prioritize the keys to success.
2. Prioritize CIFOR recommendations to address needed improvements.
3. Make plans to implement selected CIFOR recommendations.

STEP 1: Prioritize the keys to success for the Focus Area. Considering the keys to success, outline what is currently being done in your program/agency/jurisdiction. Include individuals, programs, and agencies involved; their roles and responsibilities; and routine actions and procedures undertaken. Written response protocols, if available, will help in this process. Consider other ongoing efforts in capacity development or quality improvement (e.g., FDA Retail and Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards).

As you list current activities and procedures related to this Focus Area, identify those which might need work to improve your program’s/agency’s/jurisdiction’s response to foodborne disease outbreaks. Review outbreak investigation after-action reports and summaries of debriefings to help in this effort or describe experiences from the most recent outbreak in which your program/agency/jurisdiction was involved.

STEP 2: Prioritize CIFOR recommendations to address needed improvements. Having identified activities and procedures in need of improvement, read through the CIFOR recommendations related to the Focus Area, using the linkages provided to review the relevant sections of the CIFOR *Guidelines*. Rate the priority for implementation of each recommendation using a scale of 1 to 5 (1=low priority and 5=high priority). If a recommendation is already in place in your program/agency/jurisdiction, check the appropriate box. If a recommendation is not relevant to your program/agency/jurisdiction, select N/A.

In considering recommendations to improve your program's/agency's/jurisdiction's performance in outbreak response, pick those that will be the best use of resources based on the following:

- The likely impact on the occurrence of foodborne diseases or on outbreak response
- The ease of implementation, including necessary time, resources, expertise, and likely barriers
- Whether the recommendation is dependent on other conditions being in place

STEP 3: Make plans to implement selected CIFOR recommendations. For each recommendation selected in the previous step, identify who will take the lead and the time frame for implementation. If certain actions must precede others, make a note of this and adjust the time frame. Also identify factors that could positively or negatively influence full implementation. For example, certain staff skills or expertise might facilitate implementation of a particular recommendation, whereas lack of funding might inhibit implementation. Also think about ways to incorporate the recommendation into your program's/agency's/jurisdiction's standard operating procedures so the activity will be continued into the future.

When the worksheet for one Focus Area has been completed, repeat steps 1–3 for each of the other Focus Areas you have selected as important for your program/agency/jurisdiction to address.

III. Feedback

The Toolkit has been developed to help you explore and implement the CIFOR *Guidelines*. Your feedback on the Toolkit process, the worksheets, and other materials is encouraged. A Participant Evaluation Form is available in hard copy (see the “**Participant Evaluation Form**”) or online at www.CIFOR.us. Ask all workgroup members to complete an evaluation after the process is complete. Be as specific as possible in your comments, indicating specific documents or worksheet pages. Forward all evaluation forms and feedback to the address below.

IV. Contacts for Toolkit

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

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