Emergency Operations Center Mid-Action Survey Report

Prepared by: Sarah Adams and Rene Santana (Planning Branch)

Other Contributors: Michael Trujillo

Date: 7/30/2020

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# Background and Methods:

The purpose of the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Mid-Action Survey was to identify needed adjustments to the COVID-19 EOC response.

The survey was developed based on interviews with various Section Chiefs and other EOC leaders who identified core elements of EOC functioning. The survey was available online from July 9th, 2020 to July 27th, 2020.

## Questions

### 1. Likert Scale Questions:

The final survey included 13 evaluation questions administered to all participants, 8 questions for those serving leadership roles, and 3-10 Section or Branch-specific questions. Questions were on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” Participants had the option to answer “N/A; Don’t Know” if the question did not apply to them.

### 2. Open-ended Questions:

Every respondent answered 3-4 open-ended questions. These included 2 questions administered to all participants, 1 Section or Branch-specific question, and 1 question for those serving a leadership role.

### 3. Introductory Questions:

Three (3) introductory questions were used to initiate branching logic and determine what teams participants collaborated with most often.

## Analysis:

Quantitative survey answers were assigned scores as shown below.

* Strongly Agree (2)
* Somewhat Agree (1)
* Somewhat Disagree (-1)
* Strongly Disagree (-2)

Averages shown in this report range from (+2) to (-2). Averages should be interpreted as follows. Key averages are color coded.

* Strongly Positive (Dark Green): >1.00 to 2.00
* Somewhat Positive (Light Green): >0.00 to 1.00
* Neutral: 0.00
* Somewhat Negative (Light Red): <0.00 to -1.00
* Strongly Negative (Dark Red): <-1.00 to -2.00

Qualitative answers were analyzed based on Section or Branch that comments related to, as well as common themes.

# Results: General

In total, 105 employees responded to the survey. This included 22 employees from Logistics, 21 from Planning, 20 from Containment, 11 from Medical, 11 from Mitigation, 10 from Command Staff, 4 from Finance, and 6 from other Sections or job categories. Out of all participants, 42 (40%) reported serving in a leadership role.

## Table 1: Sections an Branches by Number of Employees Collaborating with them.

Survey respondents most commonly reported collaborating with the three Branches in the Operations Section, followed by Planning, Logistics, and Finance.

**Table 1: Sections an Branches by Number of Employees Collaborating with them.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Section or Branch | Employees Collaborating with Section or Branch |
| Planning | 37 |
| Logistics | 34 |
| Finance | 26 |
| Operations: Medical | 40 |
| Operations: Mitigation | 39 |
| Operations: Containment | 42 |

## Table 2: The 8 Evaluation Questions Administered to those Serving in Leadership Roles.

Table 2 (Below) shows results for the unique questions given to those serving leadership roles.

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Other survey items scored higher, although no results were interpreted as “strongly positive.”

**Table 2: The 8 Evaluation Questions Administered to those Serving in Leadership Roles.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| The team(s) I lead almost always have enough people. | **-0.35** |
| The team(s) I lead almost always receive enough training to do their jobs effectively. | **0.33** |
| Staff assigned to my team(s) almost always have the right qualifications before being onboarded. | **0.85** |
| When team members leave the EOC and return to their regular jobs, my team(s) have enough staff to support the work without them. | **-0.54** |
| When the EOC was first set up, expectation were clear about how much time staff members (with split schedules) should commit to the EOC vs. Public Health work. | **-0.85** |
| Currently, expectation are clear about how much time staff members (with split schedules) should commit to the EOC vs. Public Health work. | **0.03** |
| The team(s) I lead are prepared for a COVID-19 surge. | **0.24** |
| The team(s) I lead have enough authority to fix problems efficiently. | **0.21** |

## Qualitative Analysis: Comments from those Serving in Leadership Roles

The largest concern for leadership is centered around staffing. Concerns in this topic include: time expectations for staff working in the EOC, high staff turnover and the resulting time consistently spent on training revolving staff members, and the need for more staff members in many sections.

**Staff expectations of time:** Newly onboarded staff are unclear about the amount of time expected of them to work in the EOC and this information is not being consistently communicated through EOC leadership. Individuals find themselves unsure of whether they can pick up tasks assigned with their normal positions while they have free time from their EOC responsibilities. Further, supervisors of borrowed members are unclear of the EOC expectations as well and are assigning tasks to their employees, distracting some members from their EOC responsibilities.

Proposed suggestions:

* EOC leads need to be transparent about the 100% time commitment required of staff being brought onboard to the EOC and need to communicate this commitment to employees as well as their supervisors.

**High staff turnover:** This has been noted by many leaders; in one example, an individual notes that their staff has difficulty in confidently answering patient questions on isolation/quarantine end dates because of the consistent state of turnover in their department. This has led to this individual having to review every case, slowing down the case review process. Several leaders have noted that because the staff turnover is widespread, not only are they having to deal with consistent training in their sections, but they are having to constantly re-establish new points of contact with other sections, slowing down communication tunnels.

Proposed suggestions:

* Seek staff that can meet the full-time commitment rather than accumulating many moving parts with part-time commitment, allowing for staffing consistency.

**Need for more staff:** Every leader has voiced the need for increased staffing in their respective sections. Individuals in several departments have noted that while members have been decreased as case rates have decreased, they have not been brought back up as the need has risen. Further, many leaders want to be proactive in anticipating the expected case surge, but do not have ample staff to do so. This lack of staff has led to scarcity of qualified individuals, as noted by the Safety Officer, creating a larger strain on staff with the amount of time required to train incoming staff. Incident Command has expressed pride in scaling back response staff, even as numbers have continued to increase, the perception is that EOC staff is disconnected with the efforts being put forth by the “boots on the ground” individuals in each section. Outbreaks in the office are not being considered as a stressor of staffing requirements and the existing perception around the office outbreaks is that these are being ignored and “kept secret.”

Proposed suggestions:

* EOC staff needs to allow for time to identify and train replacements before reassigning existing staff
* Onboarding needs to become a priority in anticipation of the surge to allow for the time it takes to identify qualified individuals
* Consider contracting more work out or hire specific COVID-response staff to build a team solely focused on the response
* Consider the need for backup staff and triage as case numbers continue to rise and the likelihood of staff exposure continues to increase.

**Leadership disconnect:** Many staff have pointed out the routine of the 8 AM update calls as a problem area. The calls are perceived as “tone deaf” to the efforts being put forth by sections staff, who are often “working 10-12 hour days and giving up their weekends, time with families, and their own self-care.” The feeling around this call is that it has reached a level of monotony that provides minimal value to many. The format of the call appears to reinforce the feeling of disconnect with Incident Command as efforts continue to increase within individual sections and the routine of the call continues with little more to offer than minor, general updates. The routine call is primarily viewed as effective in short-term situations, but the need for a more personalized call arises as we come to expect the COVID response will be a long-term one. Individuals want to be informed of the efforts of other branches as well as recognized for their efforts and view the 8 AM call as a missed opportunity to do so.

Proposed suggestions:

* Reverting to the DOC format for the 8 AM calls
* Allowing section chiefs to provide personalized updates for each other sections to encourage communication from each branch

## Table 3: The 13 Evaluation Questions Administered to All Participants.

Table 3 (following page) shows the results of the 13 general EOC evaluation questions, broken down by Section or Branch.

The questions assessed adequacy of training, communication between peers, and function of the EOC Command Structure. The Logistics Section had the highest average score for all three measures. Excluding those who identified as being in other Sections or job roles, the lowest-scoring units were Planning (for Training and Command Structure Functioning), and Containment (for Peer Communication). Individual items of concern varied between Sections and Branches. (Discussed elsewhere in this report).

Survey items that showed consistent issues across the board were the following:

Training:

* I received all the training needed to do my job effectively.
* My onboarding process was clear.
* I understand how to request supplies, information, personnel, and other types of support through the command structure.

Peer Communication:

* It is easy to get all the information I need from members of other Sections.
* It is easy to get all the information I need from people working at other sites (EOC, Breslauer, Home).
* It is easy to get all the information I need from other branches ([\*\*\*], [\*\*\*]) within the Operations Section.

Command Structure Functioning:

* When I request supplies, information, personnel, and other types of support through the command structure, I can easily get my needs met.
* I have enough authority to fix problems efficiently.

**Table 3: The 13 Evaluation Questions Administered to All Participants.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Plan. | Logistics | Finance | Medical | Miti. | Contain. | Other |
| I received all the training needed to do my job effectively. | 0.37 | 1.00 | 0.75 | 0.33 | 0.30 | 0.20 | -0.25 |
| My onboarding process was clear. | -0.59 | 0.35 | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0.40 | -0.42 | -0.25 |
| I understand how to request supplies, information, personnel, and other types of support through the command structure. | 0.39 | 1.29 | 0.75 | 0.20 | 0.00 | 0.39 | 0.00 |
| I understand the scope of my role within the EOC. | 0.75 | 1.48 | 1.50 | 0.91 | 1.18 | 1.25 | 0.80 |
| Training: Average | **0.23** | **1.03** | **0.81** | **0.42** | **0.47** | **0.35** | **0.08** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| It is easy to get all the information I need from others within the [\*\*\*]. | 0.70 | 1.27 | 0.50 | 0.91 | 1.45 | 0.80 | 0.50 |
| It is easy to get all the information I need from members of other Sections. | -0.22 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 0.44 | 0.27 | -0.19 | 0.00 |
| It is easy to get all the information I need from people working at other sites (EOC, Breslauer, Home). | 0.16 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.45 | -0.38 | -1.20 |
| It is easy to get all the information I need from other branches ([\*\*\*], [\*\*\*]) within the Operations Section. | n/a | n/a | n/a | -0.50 | 0.50 | -0.53 | n/a |
| Peer Communication: Average | **0.21** | **1.09** | **0.17** | **0.21** | **0.67** | **-0.07** | **-0.23** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| When I request supplies, information, personnel, and other types of support through the command structure, I can easily get my needs met. | 0.25 | 1.06 | 0.75 | 0.29 | 0.40 | -0.20 | 0.00 |
| I understand which projects or tasks should be a priority. | 0.90 | 1.52 | 1.50 | 1.60 | 1.00 | 1.50 | 1.00 |
| I have enough authority to fix problems efficiently. | -0.05 | 1.20 | 1.67 | 0.00 | -0.50 | 0.26 | 0.25 |
| When I report a problem, EOC leadership takes my concerns seriously. | 0.47 | 1.53 | 1.50 | 0.80 | 0.56 | 0.47 | 1.00 |
| When I report a problem, EOC leadership provides appropriate support. | 0.31 | 1.41 | 0.67 | 1.00 | 0.30 | 0.24 | 1.25 |
| I have confidence in EOC leadership. | 0.50 | 1.23 | 1.67 | 1.00 | 0.73 | 0.33 | 0.80 |
| Command Structure Functioning: Average | **0.40** | **1.33** | **1.29** | **0.78** | **0.41** | **0.43** | **0.72** |

Note: Averages are calculated using the average score for each question (not weighted based on the n for each question).

## Qualitative Analysis: Improving Collaboration

**Command Staff**

The sentiment among many command staff is that collaboration between sections is working well. However, several suggestions have been offered to improve upon.

* Ensured continuity of staff by assigning dedicated staff for the duration of the event
* Co-location of EOC staff in all sections
* More involvement in the operations section

**Finance Staff**

Individuals from the finance section had several suggestions regarding communication between sections:

* Space to communicate budget when planning is in development
* Communication with other sections to know when their work may cause finance delays

**Logistics Staff**

Individuals from the logistics section had many concerns. Their top concerns included establishing clear lines of communication between sections and establishing guidelines for 213 documentation. One responder pointed out consistent leadership change that resulted in one leader missing consistent days with meetings being changed with no prior announcement to accommodate this schedule. Several suggestions for improvement are offered below:

* Section directories with updated contact information as staff rotate
* Communication with sections of 213 guidelines for use and the importance of allowing adequate turnaround time
* Clearer outlines of authority for individuals in this section

**Containment Staff**

The majority of recommendations from the containment team concerned staffing needs and means of establishing communication with other sections. Below are some suggestions that have been offered:

* Consistent staffing that can work all needed hours
* The creation of email groups for each section to make consistent communication easier
* Master phone list with staff desk and cell phone numbers
* Access to IAP on shared drive
* Co-location of EOC staff in all sections
* Increased staffing for drive through and contact tracing

**Medical Staff**

Many in the medical staff pointed out the desire to not only communicate with other sections, but also hear updates from other sections to know how they can best support from within their roles. A common sentiment in this group is the feeling of being “out of the loop.” Suggestions from this group are below:

* Restructure of the 8 AM daily operational briefing to include updates from each section as well as county responses
* A separate meeting with other sections to provide updates and introductions
* Return to DOC format for 8 AM daily operational briefing
* The introduction of a daily IAP that reflects the daily situation reports

**Mitigation Staff**

Individuals in the mitigation section share many of the same concerns as their peers in other sections. The largest concern for this group is communication with other sections with updates on each individual section. However, there is also a concern for communication with remote staff to provide updates on new assignments and any delays in the section. Suggestions from this group are below:

* Including information on section efforts and movements within the EOC during the 8 AM daily operational briefing
* Section chief debriefing with assigned section to disseminate updates to individuals in their section
* Improved communication with those working remotely/off-site
* Section directories with updated contact information as staff rotate
* IAP training, contact information in IAP, and a searchable IAP document

**Planning Staff**

Like individuals in each of the other sections, staff in the planning section are mainly concerned with adequate communication with staff in other sections as well as with remote staff in their own section. Suggestions from this group that have been offered to resolve these issues are below:

* Explanation of what others’ roles are within their sections
* Monthly meeting with leadership regarding best practices and procedures along with an open discussion forum
* Command staff involvement in developing solutions in section conflicts
* Summary sheet containing the responsibilities of each section
* Improved communication with remote staff
* Increased inter-section projects/exercises to narrow communication gap between sections
* Co-location of EOC staff in all sections

## Qualitative Analysis: Improving EOC Functioning

**Communication and Leadership**

When discussing communication issues, participants most commonly cited poor communication between EOC leadership and line staff. Likewise, when describing leadership issues, participants most commonly cited communication. Recommendations from survey participants are summarized below:

**Improving bottom-up communication:**

* Command staff should be more proactive about identifying and listening to the needs of line staff.
* Lower-level employees should have “safe” ways to provide updates, suggestions and feedback to ICs and other leaders.
* Section Chiefs should meet with line staff and relay their needs up the chain of command, so that problems can be fixed at a higher level.
* EOC leads should spend time with *other* sections to help them facilitate better cooperation across Sections and meet their needs better.
* Line staff who interact directly with the public should be included in decisions about public communication strategies.
* One participant noted that EOC leaders often struggled to communicate or provide support when they were split between the EOC and other duties, but did not provide a direct suggestion for fixing this problem.

**Improving top-down communication**:

* Leaders should continually reinforce expectations, acknowledge challenges, and provide “kudos.”
* Provide prompt communication of changes.
* Make it clear who line staff should ask for help when they need more information about various topics.
* Improve the level of connection with lower-level employees.

Other recommendations for improving the leadership structure included changing or eliminating daily briefings, having clear rules and expectations, eliminating frequent changes to processes and protocols, better organization, better self-care among EOC leaders, shifting formal responsibilities to EOC supervisors, having a better strategy for deciding who should be assigned to leadership roles, and eliminating the constant sense of urgency to complete routine, reoccurring tasks.

When discussing other types of communications issues, participants expressed wanting to have a clearer idea of what other Sections and Branches across the EOC were working on, in order to facilitate better cooperation. They also mentioned a need for better cooperation between sections in general, and that those working at sites other than Caterpillar Road felt disconnected from the main EOC response. They also described the need to better communicate the importance of the public health response with members of the public and other parts of the Shasta County government (other than the HHSA).

**Staffing**

The two most commonly cited issues with staffing were a.) constant staff turnover, and b.) the need for more staff in general. Participants discussed how turnover negatively affected the quality of work, and created confusion and burnout. There were also issues with staff not being assigned according to their skill sets, which a.) created greater need for training, and b.) put unqualified or inappropriate staff members in leadership positions. Another issue was lack of pre-planned schedules and last-minute requirements that staff work longer hours. Participants also noted that people were sometimes reassigned right after being trained. Another suggested more staff for the call center specifically.

Generally speaking, most participants thought that reducing the frequency of staff reassignments and rotation would be very helpful in addressing the staffing problem. However, one participant thought that if it was not possible to increase the overall number of available staff, it would be beneficial to routinely rotate staff out of EOC work to reduce their stress level. This participant also felt it would be valuable to reach out to staff NOT assigned to the EOC, to see how they had been affected by the staffing changes.

**Training and Onboarding**

Comments related to training and onboarding included training people before the emergency response begins, cross training employees to create backup personnel, having a clear onboarding process that includes description of job duties, written resources describing job duties, and allowing staff to learn on the job for a longer time before reassigning them to other duties.

**Other Recommendations**

Other recommendations included a better centralized location, county cars, lunches, coffee, and donuts.

# Results and Discussion: Planning

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Planning-Specific)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Planning leadership has expressed the challenge of not receiving strong guidance or clarification on expectations. There is also concern that they do not have enough authority to perform their job effectively. There is also some concern for the expectations of time that individuals spend on EOC duties and whether individuals may resume regular job duties as well. Staff is currently lacking and there is a great need for more staff.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Planning-Specific)

General Questions: Members of the Planning Section scored low with regard to their onboarding process (-0.59), ability to obtain needed information from other sections (-0.22), and having enough authority to fix problems efficiently (-0.05).

Compared to other Sections and Branches, they had the lowest scores with regard to their assessments of Training and Command Structure Functioning.

Section-Specific Questions: This group answered three questions that were unique to the Planning Section. Scores were somewhat positive regarding the ability to access needed software and databases. However, having enough time to complete necessary tasks was rated as close to neutral.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| It was easy to obtain software that I needed. | **0.94** |
| It was easy to obtain access to databases that I needed. | **0.81** |
| I have enough time to complete necessary tasks. | **0.05** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve Planning

**Unclear Decision Making and Communication from Leadership:** The most common issue was an unclear process of decision making and communication from leadership. This resulted in (a.) unclear priorities, (b.) lack of adequate instruction, (c.) unclear job duties, (d.) re-doing work after changes to instructions, (e.) duplication of efforts across teams, (f) rushed deadlines, (g.) ignoring the expertise of line staff, (h.) delayed approval of public-facing materials and other projects, and (i.) being asked to produce projects that were ultimately never used.

Participants suggested (1.) keeping a list of ongoing projects with their priority levels, and (2.) creating written instructions for all Planning Section tasks.

**Staffing Issues:** Two participants mentioned that their role in the EOC was small and unnecessary, saying that their work could be absorbed by someone else or was never used. Another said that they were not being used for the job that they were hired for, and did not know if they ever would.

**Other Issues:** One participant thought that the daily briefings were repetitive, and could be cut back from an every-day schedule. Another had issues using ArcGIS Pro from off campus. One said that Resources was functioning fine. One felt very strongly that the database for tracking businesses was cumbersome, and should be switched to a user-friendly Excel workbook.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Planning-Specific)

Members of Planning have offered multiple suggestions to improve collaboration, including: co-location with all EOC sections, taking a more proactive approach in staffing and focus coming into the Fall, and improve inter-section communication through regular interdepartmental projects and exercises.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# Results and Discussion: Logistics

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Logistics-Specific)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Logistics leadership has expresses difficulty in obtaining timely decisions from Incident Command and even more difficulty when Police and Fire were involved. Like all other sections, Logistics also has a need for increased staffing as cases increase.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Logistics-Specific)

General Questions: Members of the Logistics Section showed the highest levels of satisfaction with Training, Peer Communication, and Command Structure functioning of any branch. None of the general questions had an average rating of below zero. The lowest ranked items were having a clear onboarding process (0.35), receiving all training needed work effectively (1.00), getting needed information from other Sections (1.00), and getting needed information from those at other sites (1.00).

Section-Specific Questions: Members of the Logistics Section received 4 unique questions (see below). Overall, respondents ranked all of these questions as strongly or somewhat positive. The lowest scoring items were receipt of 213s with resource requests (0.67), and confidence in explaining the ordering process to providers (0.88).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| I am confident in my ability to complete and submit the correct forms to fiscal. | **1.33** |
| When I receive requests for equipment, services, personnel, etc., they are almost always approved by the appropriate staff member. | **1.36** |
| When I receive requests for equipment, services, personnel, etc., they almost always come via a completed 213. | **0.67** |
| When I receive requests for Personal Protective Equipment or other medical supplies, I can easily explain the process to providers. | **0.88** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve Logistics

The most common response among members of the Logistics Section is that employees were happy with how the Section was being operated. They described it as running smoothly and as having good leadership. Issues and suggested improvements are described below.

**Training Needs:** Participants had multiple suggestions for improving training. These included: (a.) a more clear explanation of job duties, (b.) a more detailed and consistent onboarding process, (c.) clarifying what should go into the 213 vs. the doc45 email, and (d.) conducting all HIPAA trainings online, rather than in-person. Participants also mentioned generally wanting to improve their customer service.

**Staffing:** Employees mentioned the need to train backup workers so that the unit would be prepared for surge. A specific concern was that they may not be able to take sick time during a COVID-19 surge. Another participant mentioned staffing turnover as being an issue.

**Other Recommendations:** Other recommendations included less meetings (unless they were deemed necessary), clearer communication from leadership, prompt updates of the spreadsheet tracking supplies, and the need to purchase items without waiting for approval. The person mentioning the need for faster purchasing explained that products would sometimes be unavailable or more expensive by the time the approval process was finished.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Logistics-Specific)

Members of the Logistics team have offered co-location as a means to improve collaboration with other sections. They have also asked for regular distribution of a phone tree to facilitate effective and timely communication with other sections.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# Results and Discussion: Finance

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Finance-Specific)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Finance leadership expresses the need for additional staff in preparation for a surge. The desire to increase focus on tasks before the surge is common. Individuals in this team have expressed difficulty in balancing regular job duties with EOC commitments.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Finance-Specific)

General Questions: Members of the Finance Section were strongly positive in their assessment of Command Structure Functioning, and somewhat positive on Training and Peer Communication. None of the individual survey items had an average score below 0.00. The lowest ranked items were having getting needed information from other Sections (0.00), getting needed information from those at other sites (0.00), and having a clear onboarding process (0.25).

Section-Specific Questions: Members of the Finance Section received 5 unique questions (see below). Overall, respondents ranked all of these questions as strongly or somewhat positive. The lowest scoring items were receiving notification about COVID-19 funding sources (1.00) and notification about upcoming COVID-19 expenses (1.00).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| When I receive time cards, they are almost always filled out correctly. | **2.00** |
| When I receive 214s, they are almost always filled out correctly. | **1.50** |
| 214s are almost always submitted to me on time. | **1.50** |
| Other teams routinely notify me about available COVID-19 funding sources. | **1.00** |
| Other teams routinely notify me about upcoming COVID-19 expenses. | **1.00** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve Finance

Members of the Finance Section had a number of concerns stemming from needs for improved communication with leadership and other sections.

**Change of EOC leadership:** Leadership roles changed multiple times making it very confusing who to contact to get needed information

**Communication with other teams:** Purchasing needs more connections with medical ordering so additional guidance can be given to those procuring resources.

**Authority:** Having more authority/permissions to cost centers for budget to actual reviews and to see EDR data in order to get the data needed for reporting.

**Staffing:** Finance chief needs a go-between person, so they can work on funding and resources as needed to report to IC's, HHSA Director or CEO of County

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Finance-Specific)

Members of the Finance team have expressed the need for space to relay the importance of budgeting and knowing what is being planned in order to provide more accurate fiscal reports. They also wish to establish more communication with other sections to facilitate timely completion of projects.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# Results and Discussion: Medical Branch, Operations

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Medical-Specific)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Leaders of the Medical Branch of Operations have brought up the concern for staffing for a surge. They do not have staff available to train as back up or to provide relief and what staff they have received back been confused around their assignment and have frequently been reassigned. Concerns around communication with other sections and with EOC leadership have been brought up as well as the need to restructure the daily operations meeting to include time to hear individual section updates to increase communication among all sections.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Medical Branch-Specific)

General Questions: The lowest scores for members of the Medical Branch were getting information from other Branches in the Operations Section (-0.50), ability to get needed information from people at other sites (0.00), having enough authority to fix problems efficiently (0.00), understanding how to request resources through the command structure (0.20), having a clear onboarding process (0.20), and getting their needs met when requesting resources through the command structure (0.29).

Section-Specific Questions: The Medical Branch reported somewhat positive or strongly positive scores on all four of their Branch-Specific questions. This included assessments of training, time to complete necessary task, and preparation for a COVID-19 surge.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| I am almost always up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 guidelines. | **1.18** |
| I am confident in my ability to explain COVID-19 guidelines to partnering facilities. | **0.73** |
| I have enough time to complete necessary tasks. | **0.90** |
| Operations – Medical Branch is prepared for a COVID-19 Surge. | **0.50** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve the Medical Branch

The most common concerns from members of the Medical Branch included communication with other sections and understanding the scope of individual roles.

**Communication with other sections:** Members of this Branch point out that public health and the EOC did not appear to be working toward the same, unspecified goals leading to a limited understanding of staff availability and wasted time. Members also noted that the limited understanding of work to be accomplished led to inappropriately assigned staff and tasks.

**Scope of role issues:** Members pointed out that work was not distributed evenly. One individual reports being given simple tasks, while others were assigned multiple, complicated tasks at once. One individual suggests that collaboration and planning for EOC job descriptions and training could reap a greater understanding of roles and tasks.

**Developing consistent COVID-19 guidelines:** Several members note the opportunity to develop and implement operational plans in anticipation of an outbreak rather than in reaction to it. One problem that has arisen from this is a disorganization of protocols and procedures, leading to inconsistent application of guidelines. In some cases, isolation/quarantine protocols are not being applied consistently.

**Staffing:** Individuals note the need for lead backups and increased staffing in contact tracing and investigation.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Medical-Specific)

Members of the Medical Branch offer that a more informative daily operations call would facilitate greater communication and collaboration between branches. Another suggestion to improve collaboration is to provide a sheet explaining each section’s responsibilities and contact person, allowing less time to be spent on finding the correct person to speak to.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# Results and Discussion: Mitigation Branch, Operations

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Mitigation-Specific)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Leaders of the Mitigation Branch of Operations have expressed a lack of support from EOC leadership and feeling of being undervalued in the solution-making process. Like many sections, they also express interruptions from staffing changes as a cause for changes in efficiency.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Mitigation-Specific)

General Questions: The lowest scores for members of the Mitigation Branch were having enough authority to fix problems efficiently (-0.50), understanding how to request resources through the command structure (0.00), ability to get needed information from members of other sections (0.27), receiving needed support from EOC leadership (0.30), and receiving all training needed to do their jobs effectively (0.30).

Section-Specific Questions: This group answered eight questions that were unique to the Mitigation Branch. The lowest scores for these items were the tracking database for businesses (-0.30), preparation for a COVID-19 surge (-0.13), and ability to easily obtain needed software (0.00).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| It was easy to obtain software that I needed. | **0.00** |
| It was easy to obtain databases that I needed. | **0.38** |
| The database (for tracking communications with businesses) is easy to use. | **-0.30** |
| I understand the process for creating educational materials and distributing them to the public. | **0.67** |
| I am almost always up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 guidelines. | **1.64** |
| I am confident in my ability to explain guidelines to the public. | **1.40** |
| I have enough time to complete necessary tasks. | **0.20** |
| Operations – Mitigation Branch is prepared for a COVID-19 Surge. | **-0.13** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve the Mitigation Branch

The largest concerns from the Mitigation Branch were issues surrounding leadership and law enforcement support. Issues are described below:

**Leadership issues:** Members of this Branch do not feel the support of EOC leadership, nor do they feel empowered to speak out. Much of this comes from constant staffing disruptions. This group has also voiced a perception that there is a lack of concern for team projects and that the line staff is of no value to the solution-making process. Confidence in leadership to develop and stand by decisions from this Branch is minimal.

**Law enforcement support:** Concerns around lack of law enforcement support have arisen with members noting that support seems to be nonexistent. Members have asked for the ability to work with other partnering agencies to enforce public health policies if needed.

**Surge preparation:** One member noted a perceived lack of staff preparation in the case of a surge. Concerns for this stem from a lack of staff members available to this section.

**General resource concern:** One member noted a lack of available computer resources to perform an assigned position, stating that not all contracted members have the same access to computers and internet permissions available to other agencies, especially when working from home.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Mitigation-Specific)

Members of the Mitigation Branch have expressed a need to improve communication with remote staff to facilitate a more collaborative environment. They have also suggested co-location to improve this. Like other sections, they have also expressed the desire to update the daily operations briefing to include time for sections to give individual updates as well as time for Section Chiefs to meet with their section to disseminate briefing discussions.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# Results and Discussion: Containment Branch, Operations

## Key Findings: From those Serving in Leadership Roles (General and Containment)

The lowest scoring items in this section were related to ensuring that adequate staffing was available to complete necessary tasks. This includes ensuring there is enough staff available when some team members return to work (-0.54), having enough people in general (-0.35), and clarifying the role of staff with split EOC/Public Health schedules (-0.85 at EOC set up, 0.03 now).

Leaders of the Containment Branch of Operations have expressed a large concern for the number of staff available to them, with many members pointing out that not only do they not have enough for a surge; but, that they are plagued by the issue of constant staff changing as well, increasing their time spent training. This concern is echoed by all the majority of members as they fear that staff are being reassigned from them too soon.

## Key Findings: Likert-Style Questions (General and Containment-Specific)

General Questions: Members of the Containment Branch reported feeling negative about more survey items than any other Section or Branch. General items with negative scores included getting needed information from other Branches in Operations (-0.53), assessment of the onboarding process (-0.42), getting needed information from those at other sites (-0.38), getting needs met when requesting resources through the command structure (-0.20), and getting needed information from other Sections (-0.19).

Compared to other Sections and Branches, they had the lowest overall score for Peer Communication. They reported poor levels of communication with everyone except for members of their own branch.

Section-Specific Questions: This group answered nine questions that were unique to the Containment Branch. The lowest scoring item was preparation for a COVID-19 Surge (-0.72), followed by reasonableness of deadlines (-0.29), and having enough time to complete tasks (-0.10). Scores regarding participants’ assessment of contact tracing deadlines (0.00) and isolation/quarantine deadlines (0.09) were more in the neutral range, but employees could likely still benefit from support on these items.

A positive finding was that the Containment team members felt somewhat or strongly positive regarding their level of training on various items, and safety when delivering isolation and quarantine orders.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score |
| Deadlines for completing case investigations are reasonable. | **-0.29** |
| Deadlines for completing contact tracing are reasonable. | **0.00** |
| Deadlines for delivering Isolation and Quarantine Orders are reasonable. | **0.09** |
| I feel safe when delivering Isolation and Quarantine orders. | **1.50** |
| I am almost always up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 guidelines. | **0.55** |
| I am confident in my ability to explain guidelines to the public. | **1.10** |
| I am confident in my ability to communicate with members of the public who are upset. | **1.10** |
| I have enough time to complete necessary tasks. | **-0.10** |
| Operations – Containment Branch is prepared for a COVID-19 Surge. | **-0.72** |

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on How to Improve the Containment Branch

**Staffing**: The overwhelming majority of comments about improving the Containment Branch were related to staffing issues. These included not having enough nurses or contact tracers, not having enough nurses or contact tracers to handle a COVID-19 surge, and issues with staff turnover or those with split schedules. With regard to staff turnover and split schedules, participants explained that staff being continually transferred in and out of Containment created a near-constant need for training, inconsistent quality of work, inconsistent levels of support for the team, confusion about who is and is not working, people working on other projects while assigned to Containment, lack of communication about when people are leaving, and lack of surge staff.

Containment staff had specific recommendations for improving the staffing issue. Suggestions are paraphrased below:

* Create a permanent unit for case investigation and contact tracing, with a permanent nursing supervisor. This core team should remain consistent throughout the outbreak and not have any other duties.
* Increase the number of available contact tracing and nursing staff for a COVID-19 surge.
* Ensure that trained contact tracers are available for surge at least 1 day per week, even after being reassigned to other duties.
* Provide additional clerical staff, such as a medical service clerk (MSC) who could help out with non-nursing duties (e.g. mailing letters, sending faxes, filling, requesting medical records, etc.)
* Reduce the number and frequency of changes to the Incident Action Plan (IAP) to eliminate continuous reassignment and retraining.
* Make it clear that employees should only do Containment work while assigned to containment (they should not be distracted by other duties).
* Add another team member to the Drive Through Testing (DTT) unit.
* Provide additional staff for offsite testing.
* Hire extra help staff.
* Increase the number of staff available for weekends.

**Communication with Leadership**: Another fairly common issue was communication with leadership. When this was mentioned, Containment staff explained that they did not feel like leadership paid attention, understood, or valued their needs. One participant described sending documentation of the Containment branch’s job duties to leadership, but still getting questions about their job duties, implying that the document had not been read. Another participant did not feel that leadership understood the stress or emotional needs he or she experienced. Another said that issues were continuously brought up in the Containment Branch, but never solved, and that leadership had unrealistic expectations.

**Other Issues and Recommendations**: Other suggestions including pursuing continuous quality improvement (CQI) measures for the Branch, adding pre-recorded answers to the menu options for the call center, and switching over to an online platform for case investigation and contact tracing (The participant mentioned that this was in progress).

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving Collaboration (Containment-Specific)

Members of the Containment Branch have voiced the need for staff consistency in their section as well as other sections to facilitate more collaboration. They have expressed that a large amount of time is spent hunting down the correct person to speak to, only to find that the person has left the EOC. Much of this can be accomplished by hiring staff that can meet the time and scheduling requirements rather than plugging in part-time staff. Additionally, Containment has noted the need for increased staffing in drive through and contact tracing.

## Key Findings: Qualitative Analysis on Improving EOC Functioning (General)

Findings from the qualitative analysis showed that EOC functioning overall could be improved with the following changes:

* Better communication up the chain of command (i.e. communication of line staff’s needs and challenges).
* Better communication down the chain of command (i.e. clear instructions, clarifying EOC vs. public health duties, and fewer last-minute changes).
* More staff members assigned to EOC work.
* Less staff rotation and turnover (to improve the quality of work and reduce burnout)
* Improving the training and onboarding process; allowing people to stay in their jobs long enough to learn.
* Providing additional resources, such as a central location, food, and county cars.

## Evaluator Recommendations:

Evaluator recommendations will be filled out after the second wave data has been analyzed. However, you can infer possible solutions from the issues and solutions identified by participants (above).

# General Discussion

(pending second wave)