Knox/East Tennessee Health Care Coalition

Readiness Plan

Review 12.22.2025

1 INTRODUCTION

MISSION

The Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition (KET HC) will assist the health care community and other emergency response agencies to jointly prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster events by supporting collaborative planning and information sharing among a broad range of healthcare partners in order to protect, promote, and improve the health and prosperity of the people in Tennessee.

PURPOSE

The purpose of The Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition is to support the development of cooperative partnerships in order to promote and enhance the well-being of the community's healthcare system through coordinated disaster preparedness, education, public information, response/ recovery activities, and sharing of resources.

SCOPE

The purpose of this plan is to provide a roadmap for the HCC to address strategic priorities, implement the cooperative agreement activities, and develop and grow as an organization. The coalition's work shall encompass efforts to meet requirements as prescribed by ASPR's (Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response) Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), Tennessee Department of Health's (TDH) Program Guidance for Healthcare Coalitions, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and accrediting bodies such as The Joint Commission. This plan does not supersede authority of or any guidance for of any participating entities.

The HPP Readiness Plan serves as a strategic framework for Healthcare Coalitions (HCCs) to enhance healthcare system resilience, strengthen emergency preparedness, and ensure coordinated response and recovery efforts. This plan outlines the priorities, implementation strategies, and development initiatives necessary to build a sustainable and effective coalition for emergency preparedness and response.

Administrative Support

This plan will be approved by Active Coalition Members and will be reviewed annually to adjust priorities based on emerging threats, gaps identified through assessments, and lessons learned from real-world incidents and exercises. The Regional Hospital Coordinators (RHCs), serving as the KET HC Advisory Board, will provide administrative support to the document.

PRIORITIES

To align with the FY 2024–2028 Strategic Plan, the HCC will focus on the following key priorities during each Budget Period (BP):

1.1 Enhancing Healthcare System Preparedness and Response

- Strengthen collaboration between hospitals, healthcare providers, public health agencies, and emergency management organizations.
- Develop clear incident response protocols and ensure that all HCC partners understand their roles and responsibilities during a disaster.
- Improve healthcare system integration into local, state, and federal emergency response structures.

1.2 Improving Medical Surge Capacity

- Develop strategies to expand surge capacity.
- Implement hospital decompression strategies, including patient tracking and transfer systems, to optimize hospital space utilization during mass casualty events.

1.3 Expanding Resource and Supply Chain Management

- Strengthen partnerships with vendors, suppliers, and distributors to secure critical medical supplies, PPE, and pharmaceuticals during emergencies.
- Develop a regional cache of essential medical supplies to ensure timely deployment during disasters.
- Establish a centralized inventory management system to track stock levels, distribution, and replenishment needs for coalition partners.

1.4 Advancing Interoperable Communication

- Improve communication between HCC members, first responders, public health agencies, and emergency management through the use of secure, redundant, and interoperable communication platforms (HRTS, TNHAN, ReadyOp).

- Ensure all coalition members are trained on the use of regional emergency notification systems and crisis communication protocols to include HRTS, TNHAN and ReadyOp.

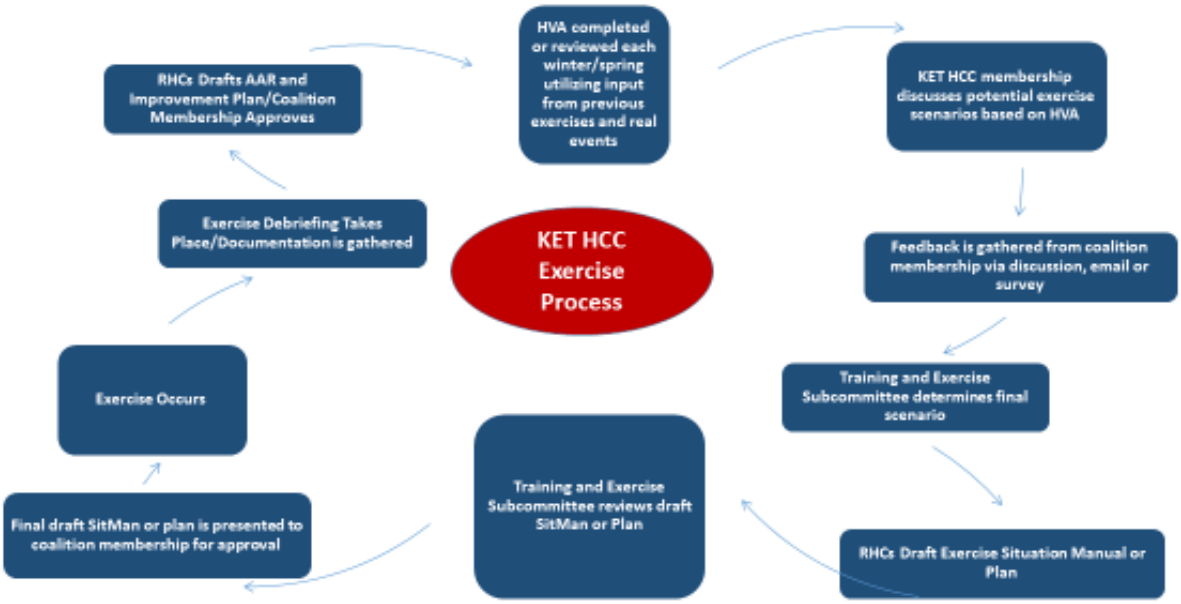
1.5 Conducting Comprehensive Training and Exercises

- Develop an annual training and exercise plan to test coalition capabilities.
- Ensure all training programs align with HSEEP (Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program) guidelines and integrate lessons learned from previous exercises into future planning.
- Conduct after-action reviews (AARs) and improvement planning (IP) to enhance preparedness based on exercise outcomes and real-world incidents.

These priorities will be reassessed and refined each BP based on evolving needs, stakeholder feedback, and assessment results.

EXERCISE PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS

The KET HC maintains a robust exercise program. Annual exercises, following the Medical Response Surge Exercise (MRSE) guidance from ASPR, are conducted to test coalition capabilities. Tabletop and Functional Exercises are also planned as necessary. Exercise needs are identified by the Training and Exercise Subcommittee and approved by the coalition members.



Implementation Planning

To successfully achieve the outlined priorities, the HCC will implement the following strategies:

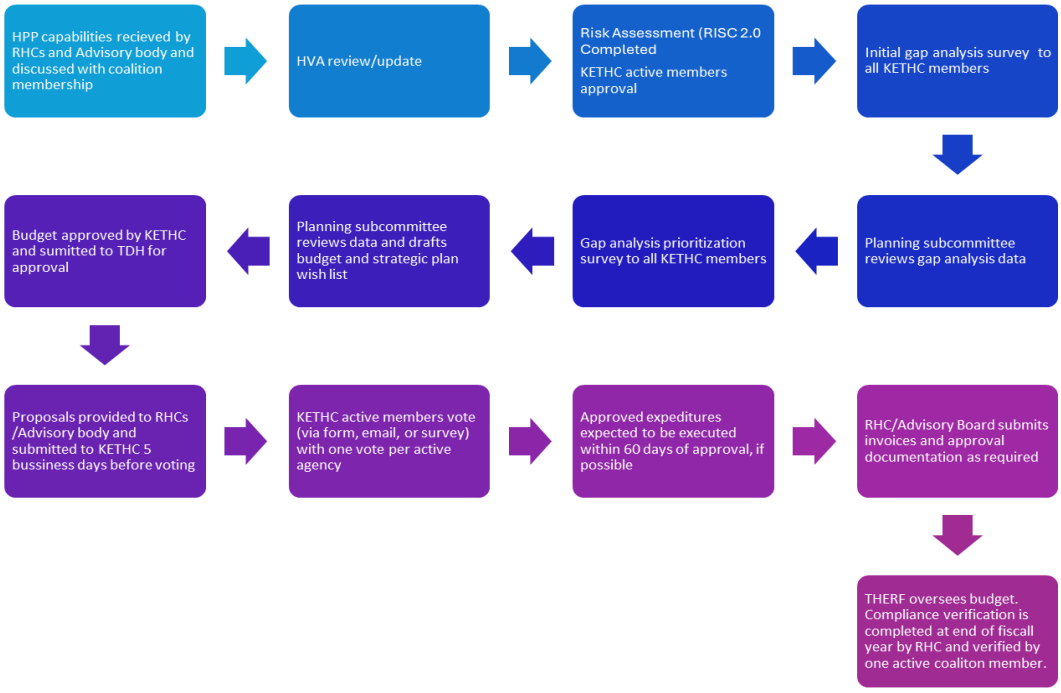
Developing Required Materials and Submitting Reports

- Prepare project plans, progress reports, and outcome evaluations as required by the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
- Ensure all required materials are developed and submitted by the deadlines specified in the timing and deadlines table.

Addressing Identified Gaps

- Conduct comprehensive risk assessments, hazard vulnerability analyses (HVA), and capability gap analyses to determine areas for improvement.

  Management Process:



- Utilize findings from assessments to prioritize funding, training, and resources for addressing deficiencies in preparedness.
- Establish a continuous improvement cycle, updating strategies on a rolling basis as assessments are completed.

Engaging Community Partners

- Strengthen collaboration with EMS agencies, emergency management, public health departments, private sector partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Develop community engagement strategies, such as public outreach campaigns, community preparedness workshops, and LEPC meetings.
- Enhance partnerships with long-term care facilities, dialysis centers, home health agencies, and outpatient services to improve coordination in healthcare emergency response.

Facilitating Continuous Improvement

- Use real-time data collection tools to monitor coalition performance and adjust strategies as needed.
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning and knowledge-sharing forums among HCC members to enhance best practices.

KET HC strives to promote the value of healthcare and medical readiness with support from its member organizations. Inter-organization relationship and trust are the hallmarks of the KET HC, ensuring a robust and sustainable coalition. Coalition member organizations recognize that – even though they may be competitors – they are better when working together to prepare for and respond to medical disasters. While grant funding is an asset in helping the KET HC meeting its goals, the coalition members first recognize the importance of the strategic partnerships that are developed through the coalition.

Furthermore, TDH provides assistance to healthcare coalitions by providing both state and metro Regional Hospital Coordinators who are available to provide program expertise, guidance, and administrative support to the coalition is recognized as key to maintaining and improving the KET HC. Without their full-time contribution, the daily operations of the KET HC would suffer.

The KET HC website - found at http://ketcoalition.org and managed by the RHCs – strives to provide exposure of coalition activities. Additionally, feedback mechanisms are provided through the website.

HCC Development

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition is a subcomponent of the State of Tennessee Department of Health, utilizing THERF (Tennessee Hospital Education and Research Foundation) which is a subsidiary of Tennessee Hospital Association (THA).

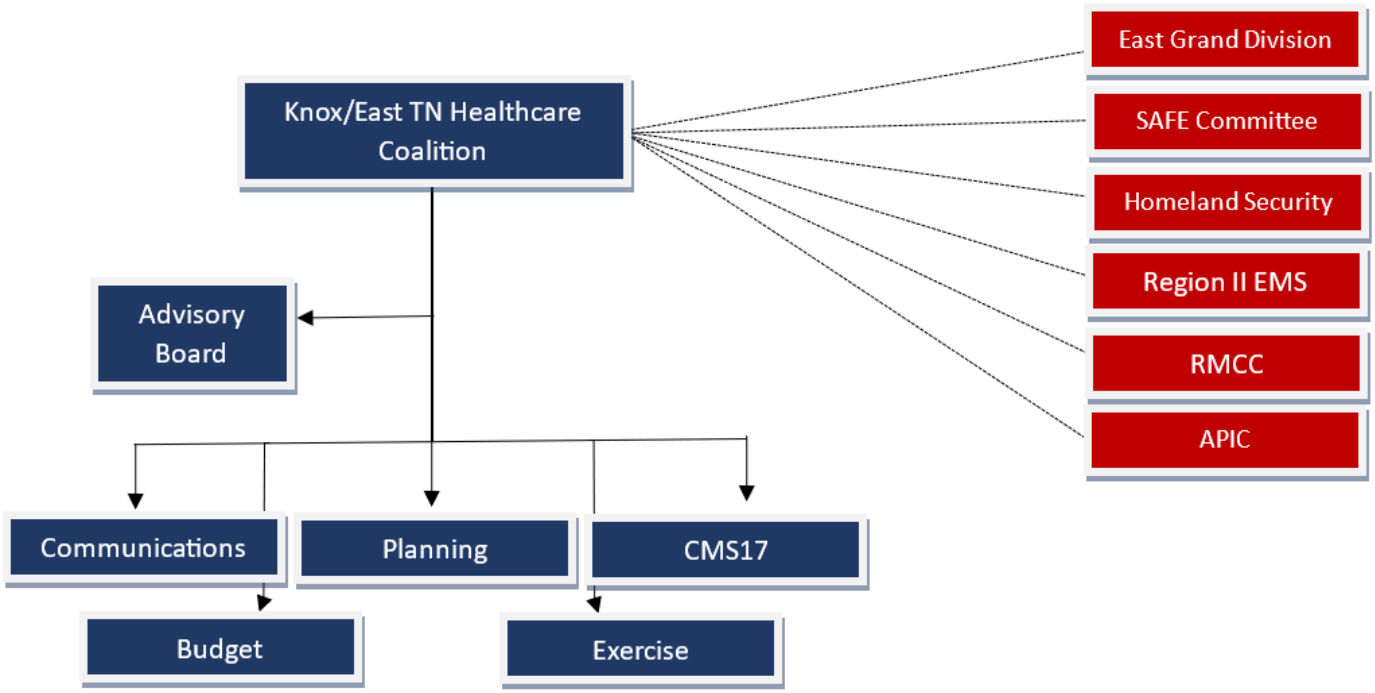
Coalition membership is open to all healthcare organizations and jurisdictions and emergency management related organizations within the coalition's geographic area as outlined in the KETHC Bylaws.

Membership is divided into 4 types: active members (governing Board), inactive members, advisory Board, and invited non-members or subject matter experts. Each participating organization should assign one to three members to attend meetings and actively participate in coalition activities. Active members maintain voting rights by attending at least 8 of every 12 meetings annually and serve as the governing board for the coalition – making all coalition related decisions to include plan and expenditure approvals. Inactive members are those participating organizations who have not maintained meeting attendance.

The Advisory Board is composed of the region's Regional Healthcare Coordinators and Vulnerable Populations Coordinator. They are tasked with maintaining an advisory role to the coalition and ensuring day-to-day coalition operations and requirements are met.

Finally, the coalition reserves the right to invite subject matter experts to attend as needed. Additionally, visitors often attend and are encouraged to participate in coalition discussions.

Membership details can be found in the KETHC Bylaws and also the KETHC Memorandum of Understanding. Membership list can be found in the KET Governance Document.



FUNDING SOURCE

HPP

The majority of the funding dedicated towards KETHC activities comes from ASPR's (Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response) Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grant dollars. These funds are provided from ASPR within the Department of Health and Human Services to the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH). The state awarded funds are then divided among the 8 healthcare coalitions across Tennessee and TDH's Central Office. KETHC has chosen to partner with Tennessee Hospital Association's (THA) education and research foundation (THERF) to serve as our fiduciary agency – who directly receives the state funding, manages the funds, and ensures that all accounting requirements are met.

The Regional Hospital Coordinators, which serve as the Advisory Board for the KETHC, are fully supported by HPP funding. Additionally, HPP funding provided to the coalition is used to offer training and education, resources, exercises, and other needs as identified by the Active Members of the coalition. All funding allocation decisions are based on meeting gaps as identified through the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment and Gap Analysis that shall be completed or reviewed each year.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Additional funding sources that may support coalition activities, for example COVID supplemental dollars for preparedness and response activities. Funding from other sources shall be handled in the same manner as HPP related funding.

Draft budgets will be submitted per grant requirements and reviewed annually to ensure they meet requirements of the Readiness plan.

To ensure long-term sustainability and operational efficiency, the HCC will focus on the following areas:

Managing and Improving Administrative and Financial Functions

- Establish robust financial oversight mechanisms to ensure efficient use of grant funds and compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.
- Develop sustainable funding strategies beyond federal grants, such as private partnerships, state funding opportunities, and membership contributions.
- Strengthen coalition governance by defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within the HCC leadership structure.

Communicating the Benefits of HCC Activities

- Develop a strategic communication plan to highlight the impact of HCC initiatives to stakeholders, healthcare leadership, and policymakers.
- Create a network of “HCC champions” who will advocate for coalition goals and facilitate engagement with healthcare readiness partners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To measure progress and effectiveness, the HCC will:

- Use findings from after-action reports (AARs) and improvement plans to refine coalition strategies and enhance overall preparedness.

Conclusion

The HCC Readiness Plan serves as a living document that will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect new priorities, emerging threats, and lessons learned from exercises and real-world events. Through strategic planning, effective implementation, and continuous development, the HCC will strengthen healthcare system resilience and ensure a coordinated, effective response to emergencies.