NEXUS PIONEER CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

Exercise Objectives Builder

Free Resource Template

A practical worksheet for developing clear and measurable exercise objectives connected to plans, capabilities, risks, and improvement priorities.

Template Version	Version 1.0
Publication Date	July 2026
Prepared By	Nexus Pioneer Consulting Group, LLC
Intended Use	Downloadable resource for exercise planning, objective development, and evaluation alignment
User Entry	Exercise, organization, planning team, and approval information may be completed on the next page

Where Experience and Innovation Converge in Crisis Preparedness

Template Use and Exercise Objective Instructions

Purpose: This builder supports the development of focused exercise objectives that can be traced to an operational need and evaluated using observable evidence.

Use: Apply the worksheet during concept and objectives meetings, exercise planning team sessions, scenario development, evaluator preparation, or revision of an existing objective set.

Objective standard: Each final objective should identify who will perform, what action or decision will be demonstrated, the conditions under which it occurs, and the evidence that will show performance.

Scope discipline: A useful objective tests one primary performance focus. Broad goals should be divided into separate objectives when they require different players, evaluation methods, or scenario conditions.

Public resource note: This free template supports planning and does not replace organization-specific legal, regulatory, accreditation, grant, safety, security, or compliance requirements.

Objective Quality Notation Options

Use the Status / Notation column to document the planning decision in plain language. Suggested terms include: Ready, Needs Revision, Too Broad, Not Observable, Not Measurable, Out of Scope, Not Applicable, or Follow-Up Required.

Exercise Planning Information

Organization		**Exercise Date**	
Exercise Title		**Exercise Type**	
Lead Planner		**Planning Team**	
Leadership Sponsor		**Approval Authority**	
Primary Purpose		**Known Constraints**	

Exercise Planning Information - Continued

Scenario / Hazard		**Exercise Location / Format**	
Primary Plans Reviewed		**Capabilities Reviewed**	
Risk Sources Reviewed		**Improvement Priorities Reviewed**	
Target Participants		**External Partners / Dependencies**	

Objective Development Sequence

Development Step	Planning Output
1. Define the Need	State the risk, plan issue, capability question, operational change, or improvement priority that justifies the exercise.
2. Select the Performance Focus	Identify the decision, coordination behavior, communication, procedure, or product that must be demonstrated.
3. Establish Conditions	Define the scenario conditions, information, constraints, and participant roles needed to create a realistic opportunity to perform.
4. Define Measures and Evidence	Identify what evaluators will observe or collect and what would indicate effective, partial, or ineffective performance.
5. Confirm Scope and Approval	Check feasibility, remove duplication, assign ownership, and obtain approval of the final objective set.

Planning principle: Start with the operational question the exercise must answer, then build the objective, scenario, and evaluation approach around that question.

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1. Exercise Need and Scope Alignment

Objective Development Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Is the exercise purpose clearly stated and understood by planners and leaders?				
Is the need tied to a documented risk, gap, lesson, corrective action, or priority?				
Does the exercise type support the decisions, actions, and coordination to be tested?				
Do participants have the authority, responsibility, or operational role needed to perform?				
Are realistic scenario conditions defined for a fair opportunity to perform?				
Is the objective feasible within time, resources, simulations, safety limits, and schedule?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

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2. Plan and Procedure Alignment

Objective Development Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Is the objective linked to a current plan, annex, procedure, policy, job aid, or decision process?				
Are relevant plan sections current, accessible, and available as appropriate?				
Does the objective test an observable action, decision, communication, coordination process, or product?				
Are unclear roles, missing procedures, or outdated assumptions identified as learning targets?				
Can evaluators distinguish poor execution from a plan deficiency?				
Are sensitive planning and partner details appropriately protected?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

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3. Capability and Risk Alignment

Objective Development Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Does the objective identify the capability, function, service, or outcome to demonstrate?				
Is it linked to a credible threat, hazard, vulnerability, disruption, or condition?				
Does the risk connection explain dependencies and cascading impacts?				
Are assumptions, resource limits, staffing, technology, and partner expectations documented?				
Does it include cross-functional or external coordination when needed?				
Will the exercise test realistic performance rather than awareness or discussion?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

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4. Improvement Priority Alignment

Objective Development Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Is the objective linked to an AAR item, corrective action, gap, finding, lesson, or priority?				
Has the source finding been checked for owner, status, due date, risk, and completion evidence?				
Does the objective test improved performance rather than completion of an activity?				
Are observations or products needed to verify effectiveness defined before development?				
Are persistent, deferred, high-risk, or cross-department priorities visible in prioritization?				
Has the team prevented lower-value interests from displacing higher-value improvement questions?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

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5. Objective Quality and Measurability Checklist

Objective Quality Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Does the objective use an observable verb such as activate, decide, coordinate, notify, validate, or restore?				
Does the objective contain one primary performance focus?				
Does the statement identify who will act, what they will do, and under what conditions?				
Are measures, products, decisions, time expectations, or other evidence identified?				
Is the objective feasible and traceable to a plan, capability, risk, priority, dependency, or concern?				
Have vague verbs been replaced by an observable action, decision, or product?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

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6. Detailed Exercise Objective Builder

Convert one priority need into a focused objective that can be exercised and evaluated within the approved scope.

Objective ID		**Priority**	
Objective Owner		**Draft / Final Status**	
Final Objective Statement		*During [condition], [players] will [observable action] in accordance with [plan or standard], demonstrated by [measure or evidence].*	
Why This Objective Matters			
Plan / Procedure	**Capability / Function**	**Risk / Hazard**	**Improvement Priority**
Target Players / Organizations		**Scenario Conditions / Start State**	
Observable Actions / Decisions			
Performance Measures / Success Indicators		*Time, quality, completeness, accuracy, coordination, compliance, decision, or product thresholds.*	
Evaluation Evidence / Collection Method		*Evaluator notes, logs, messages, maps, situation reports, timelines, recordings, or participant products.*	

Dependencies / Constraints / Scope Exclusions	*External partners, simulations, unavailable systems, artificialities, safety limits, or topics intentionally not tested.*

7. Detailed Exercise Objective Builder

Convert one priority need into a focused objective that can be exercised and evaluated within the approved scope.

Objective ID		**Priority**	
Objective Owner		**Draft / Final Status**	
Final Objective Statement		*During [condition], [players] will [observable action] in accordance with [plan or standard], demonstrated by [measure or evidence].*	
Why This Objective Matters			
Plan / Procedure	**Capability / Function**	**Risk / Hazard**	**Improvement Priority**
Target Players / Organizations		**Scenario Conditions / Start State**	
Observable Actions / Decisions			
Performance Measures / Success Indicators		*Time, quality, completeness, accuracy, coordination, compliance, decision, or product thresholds.*	
Evaluation Evidence / Collection Method		*Evaluator notes, logs, messages, maps, situation reports, timelines, recordings, or participant products.*	

Dependencies / Constraints / Scope Exclusions	*External partners, simulations, unavailable systems, artificialities, safety limits, or topics intentionally not tested.*

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Convert one priority need into a focused objective that can be exercised and evaluated within the approved scope.

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Plan / Procedure	**Capability / Function**	**Risk / Hazard**	**Improvement Priority**
Target Players / Organizations		**Scenario Conditions / Start State**	
Observable Actions / Decisions			
Performance Measures / Success Indicators		*Time, quality, completeness, accuracy, coordination, compliance, decision, or product thresholds.*	
Evaluation Evidence / Collection Method		*Evaluator notes, logs, messages, maps, situation reports, timelines, recordings, or participant products.*	

Dependencies / Constraints / Scope Exclusions	*External partners, simulations, unavailable systems, artificialities, safety limits, or topics intentionally not tested.*

9. Detailed Exercise Objective Builder

Convert one priority need into a focused objective that can be exercised and evaluated within the approved scope.

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Final Objective Statement		*During [condition], [players] will [observable action] in accordance with [plan or standard], demonstrated by [measure or evidence].*	
Why This Objective Matters			
Plan / Procedure	**Capability / Function**	**Risk / Hazard**	**Improvement Priority**
Target Players / Organizations		**Scenario Conditions / Start State**	
Observable Actions / Decisions			
Performance Measures / Success Indicators		*Time, quality, completeness, accuracy, coordination, compliance, decision, or product thresholds.*	
Evaluation Evidence / Collection Method		*Evaluator notes, logs, messages, maps, situation reports, timelines, recordings, or participant products.*	

Dependencies / Constraints / Scope Exclusions	*External partners, simulations, unavailable systems, artificialities, safety limits, or topics intentionally not tested.*

10. Objective-to-Evaluation Alignment Matrix

Use this matrix to confirm that every objective has a clear source, performance focus, evaluation method, and accountable lead. Add rows as needed.

ID	Final Objective	Plan / Procedure	Capability	Risk / Improvement Priority	Measure / Evidence	Lead Evaluator
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

Decision point: No objective should move into final scenario development until the planning team can explain how it will be exercised, evaluated, and assigned.

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11. Final Objective Set and Prioritization

Record the approved objective set below. Prioritize objectives based on operational value, risk, improvement need, and the exercise resources required to test them well.

ID	Approved Objective Statement	Priority	Include / Defer	Approval / Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Scope Control and Approval

Objectives Removed / Deferred		**Reason**	
Final Approval Date		**Approved By**	

Planner / Facilitator Certification

Planner Name		**Title / Organization**	
Date Reviewed		**Exercise / Program Area**	

12. Facilitator and Evaluator Handoff Checklist

Objective Development Check	Status / Notation	Source / Reference	Decision / Revision Notes	Owner / Follow-Up
Is each objective assigned to an evaluator with the knowledge and access to assess performance?				
Do evaluation guides identify expected actions, plans, data sources, and observation space?				
Do MSEL events create a realistic opportunity to perform without forcing an answer?				
Are evaluators prepared to record what occurred, when, who acted, evidence, and affecting conditions?				
Do facilitator questions clarify decisions without coaching participants toward an expected outcome?				

Prompt for discussion: What must be observed, measured, or produced to show that this objective was meaningfully exercised?

Objective Readiness Gate

Decision	Use When	Required Action	Decision Owner / Date
READY	The objective is aligned, feasible, observable, measurable, and supported by scenario and evaluation design.	Approve for exercise delivery and protect it from unnecessary scope changes.	
REVISE	The objective is valuable but remains too broad, unclear, unsupported, or difficult to evaluate.	Assign a revision owner and deadline before the scenario or evaluation package is finalized.	
REMOVE / DEFER	The objective is out of scope, duplicative, low-value, unsafe, or not feasible within available resources.	Document the rationale and place the need into a future exercise or improvement planning cycle.	

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Objective Formula and Example Library

Recommended formula: During [scenario condition], [players or organizations] will [observable action] in accordance with [plan, procedure, policy, or standard], demonstrated by [decision, product, coordination behavior, time, quality, or evidence threshold].

Use examples as drafting models, not universal standards. Measures and time expectations should reflect the organization, exercise type, plan, operating environment, and evaluation purpose.

Focus Area	Weak or Vague Statement	Improved, Measurable Objective
EOC Activation	*Understand the EOC activation process.*	Following notification of escalating impacts, designated leadership and EOC staff will determine the activation level, initiate required notifications, assign initial functions, and document the activation decision using the current EOP and activation procedures.
Public Information	*Discuss how to communicate with the public.*	During conflicting and incomplete incident reporting, the public information function will coordinate an approved initial message, identify the intended audiences and distribution channels, and document unresolved information needs and rumor-control actions.
Continuity	*Review continuity procedures.*	After loss of the primary facility and selected staff, department leaders will prioritize essential functions, identify alternate staffing and work locations, and develop a documented 12-hour continuity action plan using the current continuity plan.
Cyber Disruption	*Explore cyber response roles.*	Following loss of selected network services, incident leadership, information technology, communications, and continuity personnel will establish a coordinated response, identify operational impacts, select workarounds, and document restoration priorities and required notifications.

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Common Source Inputs and Facilitation Guide

Use these examples to keep objective development grounded in current operational needs and evidence. Organizations should adapt the list to their sector, jurisdiction, authorities, and operating environment.

Plans and Capabilities	Risk and Operating Conditions	Improvement and Validation Inputs
• Emergency operations plans and annexes • Continuity plans and procedures • Department SOPs and job aids • Communications and notification plans • Resource management procedures • Delegations and decision authorities	• Hazard or threat assessments • THIRA, HVA, risk registers, or profiles • Critical service and dependency analysis • Staffing, facility, technology, or vendor constraints • Emerging threats and operational changes • Leadership risk and consequence concerns	• After-action reports and improvement plans • Corrective action registers • Real-world incidents and near misses • Training observations and readiness reviews • Audits, accreditation, and inspection findings • Previous exercise evaluation records

Guidance Alignment References

This builder is designed as a practical planning aid and is informed by widely used emergency management planning, exercise, incident management, continuity, and improvement guidance. Users should apply the current versions relevant to their organization and requirements.

- FEMA Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidance
- FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans
- FEMA National Incident Management System
- FEMA continuity guidance and continuity planning resources
- Risk, capability, corrective action, accreditation, and sector-specific guidance applicable to the organization

Website Resource Page Description

Exercise Objectives Builder: A free, downloadable template that helps exercise planning teams develop clear and measurable objectives connected to plans, capabilities, risks, and improvement priorities. Includes alignment checklists, detailed objective worksheets, an evaluation matrix, prioritization tools, a readiness gate, and practical objective examples.

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