

Evolving Incident Management

Phase 2: Strategic Implementation Plan

Narrative

**A Project Report to the
National Wildfire Coordinating Group Executive Board**

July 24, 2012

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Executive Summary

Background

In December 2011 the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Executive Board accepted the Incident Management Organization Succession Planning (IMOSP) Team's report *Evolving Incident Management: A Recommendation for the Future* following a two year analysis period. The NWCG Executive Board agreed to adopt the Organizational Model proposed in Section 1 of the Report (Team Make-up and Management).

In February 2012, the NWCG Executive Board chartered a second interagency task team to develop a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) as Phase 2 of Evolving Incident Management (EIM). The purpose of the SIP is to outline the implementation steps and timelines that are needed over the next 5 years (2012-2016) to implement the 14 recommendations in Section 1 and the 11 overarching principles (OAP) contained in the EIM Report.

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To develop the EIM-SIP, the Phase 2 Task Team organized the 14 recommendations and 11 OAPs into eight work units and identified the tasks needed to implement the recommendations and principles. The SIP also identified the necessary skill sets that would be needed from within the NWCG organization and external partners, and sequenced the completion dates of the various work units into a logical workflow. For the OAPs that are predominantly under agency-purview, the Task Team organized these principles into two work units to assist with further development of recommendations that individual agencies could implement in conjunction with the SIP.

The EIM-SIP is comprised of eight work units with projected timelines for completion from 2012 thru 2016. The Work Units are as follows:

- **IMT Pathways** (Rec #3 and OAP #1)
- **IMT Governance and Mobilization** (Rec #1, 4, 5, 12, 13; and OAP #4, 6, 8, 10)
- **IMT Composition** (Rec #6, 7, 8, 9; and OAP #1, 6, 8, 10)
- **IMT Augmentation** (Rec #10, 11; and OAP #1, 5, 8)
- Transition of Area Command to Strategic Management Teams (Rec #14; and OAP #1, 6, 8)
- **NIMO** (Rec #2)
- Single Qualifications (OAP #2)
- **Agency Purview** (OAP #1, 3, 7, 9, 11)

Methodology

Tasking

The Tasking Memorandum from the NWCG Executive Board instructed the EIM-SIP Task Team to develop the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) at a “high, strategic level,” leaving technical details to the next phase, which will also be defined in the SIP. The SIP is to be based on the recommendations and background data contained in the *Evolving Incident Management* Report. Lastly, the Task Team was directed to keep travel to a minimum by using virtual meetings to the fullest extent possible.

The Strategic Implementation Plan will:

- Develop tasks and group the recommendations from the new Incident Management Organizational Model into logical work units.
- Identify skill sets within the NWCG organization (and external if needed), to address each work unit.
- Sequence a logical workflow, identifying benchmarks, and develop timelines to accomplish each work unit.
- For the overarching principles in the Report, determine which principles are within NWCG’s influence and which are under individual agency purview.
- Develop tasks under NWCG purview and group into logical work units.
- Identify skill sets to address each work unit.
- Sequence a logical workflow, identifying benchmarks, and develop timelines to accomplish each work unit.
- For tasks under individual agency purview, develop a strategy for how NWCG can assist the agency’s staff in seeking resolution.

Meeting Management

The Task Team developed the Strategic Implementation Plan over the course of two and a half months (February 22 thru May 4, 2012) by scheduling weekly e-Meetings and one on-site meeting in Boise. Additional subject matter experts were recruited as needed from the dispatch community to assist with technical expertise and proofing of concepts. NWCG Executive Board liaisons (Aitor Bidaburu and Karyn Wood) provided the link back to the NWCG Executive Board.

E-Meeting format was the preferred method due to the constraints of travel cap in FY2012. To support data sharing and e-Meetings, the Task Team established a library on MyFireCommunity and utilized www.LiveMeeting.com as the format for the virtual meetings.

Strategic Implementation Plan Process

The Task Team began the process by organizing the 14 recommendations and 11 OAPs into logical work units based on the following criteria:

- Identifying which of the 14 recommendations are dependent or independent of the other recommendations.

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- Independent recommendations were organized into stand-alone work units (*i.e. IMT Pathways, Transition of AC to SMT, and NIMO Work Units*).
- Recommendations that are dependent or closely linked to other recommendation were grouped into the same work unit if the tasks or skill sets needed to implement were related or similar (*i.e. IMT Governance & Mobilization, IMT Composition, and IMT Augmentation Work Units*).
- In addition, the EIM-SIP Team looked for any recommendations that contained high priority tasks which needed to be addressed early on in order for the remaining work units to be completed (*i.e. IMT Pathways Work Unit*).

The next step was to evaluate the 11 OAPs to determine which principles are within NWCG's purview and which ones are primarily under individual agency purview.

- OAPs that could be addressed under the purview of NWCG were combined into the six work units developed for the 14 Recommendations. In numerous cases, several of the OAPs were pertinent to multiple Work Units (*i.e. OAP #1, 4, 6, 8, and 10*).
- OAPs deemed to be primarily under individual agency-purview were grouped into a stand-alone or a combined work unit that NWCG can take the lead to further develop recommendations to assist individual agencies (*i.e. OAP #2 as stand-alone, and OAP #1, 3, 7, 9, and 11 into a combined work unit*).

To provide the NWCG Executive Board with a comprehensive implementation timeline, the eight work units are displayed in a timeline covering the next five years (2012 thru 2016). The Task Team proposed start dates for all the Work Units and projected end-dates sequenced into a logical workflow for completion, remaining mindful of the recommendations that are high priority for completion.

Summary of Work Units

IMT Pathways Work Unit

The EIM Report contained the recommendation that all federally sponsored IMTs will be merged into one type of IMT under the new organizational model. The EIM-SIP Task Team recognized this as a high priority recommendation that needed to be addressed promptly in order for the remaining recommendations to be developed.

The Task Team developed this recommendation as a stand-alone work unit to address Recommendation #3, IMT Typing. The tasks within this work unit include establishing that the standard for federally sponsored IMTs will be at the Type 1 level; developing training/learning pathways for current Type 2 C&GS to transition to the Type 1 level; developing training/learning pathways for future C&GS positions to sustain the 40 federal Type 1 teams; revising the complexity analysis/organizational needs analysis to match the new organizational model; and evaluating efforts to improve Type 3 capabilities at the local level to manage extended attack fires and to provide a recruitment source for future IMTs.

IMT Governance and Mobilization Work Unit

The IMT Governance and Mobilization Work Unit is an aggregate of five recommendations and four overarching principles that will formalize how the 40 federally sponsored IMTs would be distributed throughout the geographic areas, how the IMTs would be governed, how they would be dispatched, and how the state-sponsored IMTs would be used for surge capacity during periods of peak activity. These recommendations are closely related, requiring similar skill sets, and were combined into one work unit.

To ensure consistency, the EIM-SIP proposes NWCG take the lead on developing national guidelines and templates to assist implementation of the five recommendations contained in this work unit. Once the national guidelines and templates are developed, it would be passed to the geographical areas to implement the recommendations for IMTs assigned to their area.

The EIM-SIP Task Team recognizes stake-holder engagement will be a key component to the success of developing national guidelines and template, and recommends the future task team assigned to this work unit be comprised of a broad range of representatives from the Geographic Area Coordinating Groups, Dispatch Community, IC/AC group, and Agency Administrators.

IMT Composition Work Unit

The IMT Composition Work Unit is an aggregate of four recommendations and three overarching principles that will formalize the size, composition, configuration, and membership of the 40 federally sponsored IMTs. In addition, this work unit will develop guidelines for how IMT trainees will be identified, selected, and governed to ensure IMT succession. These recommendations are closely related, requiring similar skill sets, and were combined into one work unit.

The tasks within this work unit include implementation of the EIM recommended size and configurations for all 40 federally sponsored IMTs; establishing national guidelines for how the three discretionary positions will be managed, developing national guidelines for managing trainees at the Geographic Area (GA) level; developing a national template for an IMT Position Needs Analysis to assist

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the GA's in identifying critical shortages for succession planning; developing guidelines and timelines for how the National Needs Analysis template will be used by the GA's to identify a pool of trainees based on GA interagency priorities; developing criteria for IMT membership to be included in the National IMT Standard Operating Procedures; and determining barriers to developing/expanding agreements with non-NWCG member agencies to increase participation on federally sponsored IMTs.

IMT Augmentation Work Unit

The IMT Augmentation Work Unit is an aggregate of two recommendations and four overarching principles that will formalize use of Modules and Service Centers as described in the new organizational model. These two recommendations are closely related, requiring similar skill sets, and were combined into one Work Unit.

Advancements in technology have allowed for more efficient and effective use of resources to support incident assignments while not needing to be physically located at the incident. Support Centers can be established to support multiple incidents. National standard operating procedures for how Support Centers will be governed, configured, ordered, and mobilized will need to be developed.

The EIM-SIP Task Team also discussed the merits of developing national standardized modules as described in the *Evolving Incident Management Report* as opposed to ordering individual single resources to create customized modules on an as-needed basis for each incident. As such, one of the tasks for this work unit would be to evaluate the benefits of establishing standard module configurations as displayed in the new organizational model versus eliminating this recommendation and continue the practice of ordering individual single resources to create ad hoc "modules" on the incident.

Transition from Area Command to Strategic Management Team Work Unit

The transition of Area Command (AC) Teams to Strategic Management Teams (SMT) is recommended as part of the new organizational model, and the EIM-SIP proposes it to be a stand-alone work unit as it is an independent recommendation that can be developed concurrently with the other work units.

The tasks within this work unit are to effect the transition of Area Command Teams to the long-term goals of Strategic Management Teams by establishing the mission and expectations, size, configuration, qualifications, use of trainees, governance, and development of a single set of standard operating procedures. In addition, the Phase 3 Task Team will need to consider development pathways and how succession of SMTs can be assured into the future.

It will be important that NWCG work with the DHS Incident Management Support Team to get a change in terminology (Area Command to Strategic Management Teams) along with ensuring that SMT's in the new organizational model is compliant with NIMS. The group will need to identify the barriers to maintain current staffing levels of AC Teams and future SMTs, which include developing recommendations to mitigate barriers if under NWCG purview.

The EIM-SIP Task Team recognizes that stake-holder engagement will be a key component to the success of developing national guidelines and template, and recommends the future task team assigned to this work unit be comprised of a broad range of representatives from the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, Geographic Area Coordinating Groups, Dispatch Community, IC/AC group, S-

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520/620 Steering Group, Operations Workforce Development Committee, Wildland Fire Institute, NRF-NIMS Committee, and Agency Administrators.

NIMO Work Unit

The National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) Recommendation is proposed as a stand-alone work unit as it is an independent recommendation under Forest Service purview with few ties to other Recommendations.

The EIM Report recommends the four Forest Service-sponsored NIMO Teams be part of the new organizational model, and would be in addition to the 40 federally sponsored IMTs. The NIMO Teams would continue to be managed under the governance of the USDA Forest Service.

In response to many of the comments received during the IMOSP analysis, the EIM-SIP recommends a Task Team be established to clarify NIMO's role, range of deployments, types of assignments, governance, and how they will be managed alongside the 40 federally sponsored IMT rotation. However, the EIM-SIP recommends mobilization of NIMO Teams remain under NICC during all Preparedness Levels and not be managed by the Geographic Area Coordinating Centers as NIMO Teams are not assigned to any one particular Geographic Area or Forest Service Region. This is a common misnomer that should be clarified.

Single Qualifications Work Unit

This work unit is based on the overarching principle that calls for a common wildland fire qualification system to be used in support of interagency workforce development and succession planning strategies, as well as unifying the wildland fire qualification system with the all-hazards system under NIMS.

The EIM-SIP proposes this be a stand-alone work unit as it can be developed independently from the other work units, and will most likely require significant time to address.

Agency-Purview Overarching Principles Work Unit

This Work Unit is comprised of five Overarching Principles deemed to be under agency purview, and were combined into one Work Unit for further development of recommendations that individual agency leads can take back to their agency/bureaus for consideration. Although the resolution of these principles is largely outside of NWCG's purview, the EIM-SIP proposes NWCG take the lead on organizing and leading this Work Unit to help further consistency among the affected agencies/bureaus.

The IMOSP Team noted for the new organizational model to be successful, many of these overarching principles needed to be addressed. The EIM-SIP Team concurred with this recommendation, but also recognizes these principles will require a shift in agency culture or process changes that require high-level support by agency or even department-level leadership. For some of the overarching principles it needs to be determined if the scope of the principle is within federal or state statutes, appropriations law, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) policies, and even Public Law.

Once the NWCG-led Task Team develops and evaluates these recommendations, it would then pass to agency leads to take these recommendations back to their individual agencies for consideration and hopefully implementation.

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The EIM-SIP Task Team recognizes stake-holder engagement will be a key component to developing the implementable steps for these principles, and recommends the future task team assigned to this Work Unit be comprised of a broad range of subject matter experts and representatives that may be external to NWCG but are still stakeholders in the future of incident management, such as Agency Administrators, Agency and Departmental Human Resource Specialists, Agency Workforce Development Specialists, Federal Fire Directors, National Association of State Foresters, Incident Business Committee, and even input from DOI Solicitors Office and FS-Office of General Council may be needed as well.

Monitoring Mechanisms

An additional recommendation that resulted from Phase 2 is the development and implementation of monitoring mechanisms for each of the work units. The purpose of the monitoring mechanisms is to evaluate the effectiveness of the IMOSP recommendations, measure progress towards achieving the IMOSP goals, and provide an opportunity to conduct periodic reviews of the new Incident Management Organization.

Implementation Timelines

The Phase 2 Task Team developed a proposed timeline for each work unit to be initiated and completed in a logical flow as part of the Strategic Implementation Plan. As suggested in the *Evolving Incident Management Report*, the intended implementation period is to start in 2012 and is to be concluded by CY2016. However, the Task Team recognizes that further discussion may be needed as these recommendations are further developed, and recommends that the proposed implementation period be refined by the NWCG Executive Board once Phase 3 commences and the future Phase 3 Task Teams have a chance to address each of the recommendations and overarching principles in more depth.

EIM-SIP Task Team Considerations for Phase 3

Over the course of developing the Strategic Implementation Plan, the EIM Task Team identified some key messages from the *Evolving Incident Management Report* that were re-occurring themes during Phase 2. They are as follows:

The Need to Enforce Existing and Future Policies and Standard Operating Procedures to Ensure Consistency

The *Evolving Incident Management Report* recognizes the many policies and SOP's that have been successful and time tested over the years. As we move forward with implementing the future incident management organizational model it is important for those policies which will be retained and for future policies which will be developed in EIM that they be adhered to and enforced, along with oversight at the national level to ensure they are uniformly followed.

In essence, we need to follow our own guidelines to achieve predictable and consistent organizational behavior.

The Future Role of NWCG under NIMS and a Single Qualification System

NWCG needs to fully embrace NIMS and transition away from the use of NIIMS. HSPD-5 requires all Federal departments and agencies to adopt NIMS and to use it in their individual incident management programs and activities, as well as in support of all actions taken to assist State, tribal, and local governments. As FEMA moves toward the utilization of an endorsement process for all emergency response agencies, NWCG will need to ensure we are in compliance with and working in support of the national system. NWCG will be responsible for developing and maintaining the endorsement piece for wildland fire within the guidance and framework set forth by FEMA.

As mentioned in OAP #2, the use of a single common qualifications system is necessary to support interagency workforce development and succession planning. Although NWCG cannot dictate the use of a single qualifications system for the nation, we need to work on a solution internally within wildland fire. Agency supplementation of the PMS 310-1 should be addressed as well as the current use of two tracking systems IQCS and IQS.

The Importance of the Overarching Principles in Order for the New Organizational Model to be Successful

Throughout development of the SIP, the Task Team recognized the overarching principles contained in the *EIM Report* were key components which needed to be addressed in order for the new incident management organization model to be successful. The eleven principles have much in common with the recommendations contained in previous studies and reports on incident management and succession planning. Stakeholder feedback during the IMOSP process confirmed the importance of these overarching principles, and was a re-occurring theme during the many presentations, workshops, and on-line survey responses.

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The Task Team acknowledges that many of these overarching principles will take considerable coordination and even shifts in agency processes or culture to break down the many barriers that have prevented us from making progress in the past as some of these barriers may be outside of agency purview. Yet in spite of this, the SIP proposes NWCG take the lead to coordinate the efforts of an additional Task Team to look for areas of common ground or work processes that would reduce or eliminate some of the barriers.

The Need for High Level Support

Support from top Agency leaders and stakeholders will be crucial in the successful implementation of the new incident management organizational model and adoption of the recommendations and overarching principles. Many of the changes will require a cultural shift and renewed commitment from all levels of the organization in the support of wildland fire. In addition, some of the overarching principles may require change in Agency regulations, policies, and procedures and in some cases potentially legislative changes. Direction from Agency leaders will be key to promoting and effecting these changes.

The Need for Stakeholder Engagement

Many of the recommendations and overarching principles represent paradigm shifts from the standard operating procedures which have been the norm for several decades. As a result, initial response to the recommendations and principles may be met with skepticism, negativity, or out-right refusal especially if the respondents feel that their input was not addressed or solicited.

Although the IMOSP Team incorporated stakeholder feedback in their EIM Report, it should be acknowledged that the comments received may not be representative of the entire wildland fire community, and in fact the wildland fire community may still be divided in opinion on several key issues.

Stakeholder engagement will be a key component in developing the next phase of EIM implementation in order for the recommendations and principles to be widely accepted and supported by the wildland fire community. As such, the EIM-SIP Team recommends the future task team assigned to the eight EIM-SIP Work Units be comprised of as broad of a range of subject matter experts and stakeholder representatives that can be accommodated, especially from among the different geographic areas and agencies/bureaus.

The Need for an Oversight Organization to Manage the Next Phase of Evolving Incident Management

Over the course of developing the SIP, the Task Team recognized the need to provide oversight of the future task teams which will be assigned to the eight work units and provide a central figure that will coordinate the completion of the work unit tasks in a timely manner. To facilitate this, the EIM-SIP Task Team developed a proposed organization chart for Phase 3, and recommends that a Project Coordinator be assigned.

As the SIP spans a period from 2012 thru 2016, it would be beneficial to assign an individual who can be committed to this project for the duration of the implementation period either thru a long-term detail or as a principle part of their duties to ensure continuity.

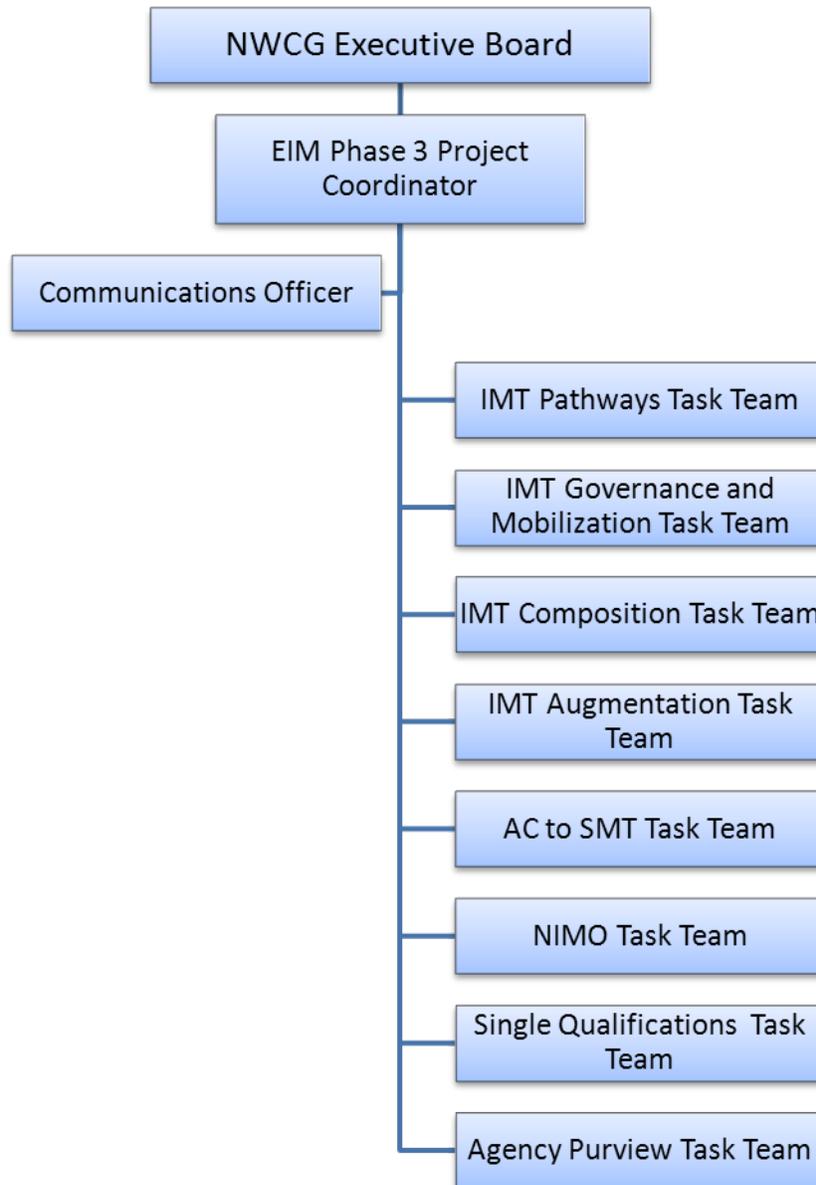


Figure 1: Proposed Phase 3 Organization Chart

EIM Phase 2: Strategic Implementation Plan Team

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