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BENS' Regional Public-Private Partnerships: Building a Resilient Nation

Our recent national experience has vividly demonstrated that government alone cannot secure the nation or respond to major disasters. It needs the vast resources and expertise of the business community, just as business needs government. Individual businesses do heroic things in times of crisis, but much more could be accomplished by working in concert with government.

Within hours after the levees broke in New Orleans, one company offered to donate mobile telecommunications trailers and the staff to run them, so that first responders could talk to one another. Government agencies could not accept the offer, but instead purchased the trailers after several critical days had passed. In another instance, the State of Louisiana requested forklifts from out-of-state, when local companies might have met the need if they had only known whom to contact. Several major retailers delivered truckloads of critical supplies to the Gulf from across the country, but drivers had to stop at multiple check points set up by frustrated law enforcement officials.

Katrina may have been the biggest natural disaster in American history, but government and business face similar challenges in smaller disasters—and Katrina's devastation would be eclipsed by a 1918-scale flu pandemic or a nuclear attack at one of our major ports.

Most public-private homeland security initiatives focus on critical infrastructure protection and business continuity – how to keep individual businesses and industry sectors up and running during a crisis. This is essential, but it's not enough. Businesses also have a stake in maintaining the continuity of their *entire* communities. If the community isn't functioning and able to purchase supplies and services, individual businesses cannot survive – even with the best business continuity plan.

Since 9/11, and especially since Katrina, many experts have called for more effective public-private partnerships to prepare for and respond to catastrophic events. While few would disagree, implementation has often been challenging, given the different incentives and cultures of business and government. Both groups recognize the need to build strong teams and practice response scenarios *before* a crisis hits, but they've had few playbooks to draw from.

Business Executives for National Security (BENS, www.bens.org) began working shortly after 9/11 to build regional public-private partnerships, which connect business and government to fill gaps in security and emergency preparedness that neither can address alone. While these partnerships require modest investments, they produce exponential increases in regional homeland security and disaster response capability.

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Recognizing the importance of regional partnerships, the White House report, *Katrina: Lessons Learned*, singled out and encouraged expansion of the BENS' regional partnership model (see www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned). Other post-Katrina reports issued by the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S Senate, the General Accounting Office and several think tanks also highlighted the need for more business-government collaboration, but most were short on detail on how to do it.

Congress invited BENS to better define the role of business in catastrophic events by convening a panel of business leaders. BENS responded to this request by creating the Business Response Task Force, which produced its report in the fall of 2006 entitled *Getting down to Business: an Action Plan for Public-Private Disaster Response Coordination*. The report explores how federal, state and local governments can fully integrate business into the nation's emergency response system, providing detailed recommendations in three substantive categories: public-private collaboration; surge capacity/supply chain management; and legal & regulatory environment (see www.bens.org). Building regional partnerships is one of the fundamental ways that BENS has carried out the recommendations of this report.

What Are Regional Partnerships?

Government cannot secure the homeland alone. Whether confronting the risks of terrorism or natural disaster, state and local governments face constant budgetary constraints. Meanwhile, many in the private sector who share security concerns don't know how to help.

BENS Regional Partnerships provide the means for business and government to build an efficient, collaborative partnership that strengthens a region's capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to catastrophic events. Governors, state and local officials and leading corporations form a working partnership in each region - strengthening relationships at the regional level that transcends many traditional political and other boundaries of government and business relationships.

Governments welcome the resources and capabilities the private sector brings to their homeland security challenges. Likewise, by pledging resources that can be mobilized during crisis, offering business expertise, and dedicating support to well-managed programs, Regional Partnership member companies contribute to their communities in a cost-effective and highly-leveraged way. In addition, these partnerships engender a deep sense of pride in employees for having contributed to a safer community.

Regional homeland security partnerships have begun to take root in many parts of the country, and they have taken many forms. Since early 2002, BENS has built or facilitated partnerships in eight regions with very different economic and political characteristics.

The BENS's facilitated partnership concept has been implemented and tested nationally and its efficacy proven. BENS, with the agreement of the various partnership members, is in the

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process of devolving all of the partnerships to independent operations. Each partnership will transition to autonomous operations as a 501(c)(3) by mid-year 2009.

The following is a brief history of the eight partnerships:

The New Jersey Business Force, launched in February 2003, following a year-long design and development effort. This partnership has 30 charter members, including most New Jersey-based Fortune 500 companies, but like all BENS regions, its programs reach businesses large and small throughout the state. New Jersey programs include:

- ❑ Creating web-based registries of business resources at the county and state levels that can be called upon by emergency managers in a catastrophic event (over \$300 million in resources have been registered to date); and
- ❑ Improving information sharing by a.) providing targeted alerts about local incidents and threats via custom software provided pro bono by a member company, and b.) piloting a satellite data casting system developed by the state's public television and radio affiliate that provides a secure, alternate channel of communication in emergencies.
- ❑ The BEOC (virtual and physical) is a business coordination/fusion center designed to exchange information across multiple sectors. Its goal is to facilitate shared situation awareness during major disasters and crises. The evolving BEOC concept is a collaborative effort among the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), the U.S. Army's Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC) at Picatinny Arsenal, and the members of the New Jersey Business Force (NJBF.) During its first real-world activation, the BEOC transitioned from a virtual to a physical operation in support of the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership and the Denver business community during the Democratic National Convention held August 25-28. The BEOC initiative is garnering significant attention from government departments at all levels along with private sector groups. Succinctly stated, the BEOC program is a collective endeavor by like-minded, proactive partners who see greater resilience as an outgrowth of mutual cooperation.

The Georgia Business Force followed New Jersey in 2004 and now has 20 charter members, including most global firms based in Atlanta, and several smaller ones. Among other initiatives, Georgia is pioneering two programs that have been cited as national models:

- ❑ A "Business Operations Center" that connects businesses across industry sectors to the state's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including formal seats in the EOC for business representatives that serve as coordinators and analysts; and a virtual team of a few dozen representatives from leading regional businesses and trade organizations that convene via teleconference during catastrophic events; and

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- ❑ Mobilizing businesses to help state and local public health agencies with mass dispensing of medications from the Strategic National Stockpile in the event of a pandemic or terrorist attack.

In Massachusetts, BENS worked with the state's emergency management agency to build and rapidly deploy a web-based registry of business resources prior to the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston. Resources worth an estimated \$300 million were registered during this effort. The state has developed and expanded its own partnership, known as "ESF 18", and is engaging the state's business community in several initiatives that improve regional collaboration and information sharing.

The MidAmerica Business Force, anchored by ten leading companies in the Metro Kansas City region, also was formed in 2004 and served Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. MidAmerica programs include:

- ❑ Co-developing the charter for the region's information fusion center known as Terrorism Early Warning (TEW), and formally engaging the business community in the implementation of this new information sharing apparatus; and
- ❑ Creating a program called Operation Resilient Guard, a series of seminars and exercises designed to both alert and educate senior business leaders and the public about a wide range of potential threats, both natural and human caused.

In 2005, BENS began partnership operations in California, launching the Bay Area Business Force (BABF) in Northern California and assuming management of the Homeland Security Advisory Council in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

BENS formed the Bay Area Business Force (BABF) as part of an expansion of its Silicon Valley regional office. Nearly fifty companies, representing the hi-tech, financial services, biotech and retail industries, actively participate in BABF events and exercises. BABF programs include:

- ❑ Building a unique "Business Operations Center" that has connected the Bay Area's industry to government through private sector liaison seats in nine regional Emergency Operations Centers.
- ❑ Serving as the lead organizer of private sector participation in California's emergency preparedness exercises, such as Port Protector and Golden Guardian.

The Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC), Region One, started in 2003 as a business advisory group for the Sheriffs of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, both of whom play prominent homeland security roles in the region. BENS signed an agreement with HSAC in late 2005 whereby it employs the partnership staff and helps to manage HSAC operations. HSAC and now boasts a membership of eighty business, government and academic leaders in Southern California. It has launched a number of programs, including:

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- ❑ Building a “Business Response Network” database, which includes tens of millions of dollars in private sector resources that can be called upon for public use during a disaster
- ❑ Working with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to organize companies so that they can mass dispense medication from the region’s strategic national stockpile during a major medical emergency

During the October 2007 Southern California wildfires, HSAC and the BABF each served as the official private sector liaison to the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. They worked side-by-side with federal, state and local officials inside the state and regional Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) to manage all of the private sector donations offered to California, helping to route millions of dollars worth of food and supplies to affected areas. They also served as a key information link between the public and private sectors by responding to inquiries from specific companies, relaying business input to the EOC, and disseminating frequent informational updates to different industry sectors.

BENS joined with the Iowa Business Council (IBC) to launch the Safeguard Iowa Partnership (SIP) in 2007. The IBC includes the top executives from 24 of the state’s largest businesses, hospital systems, and public universities. BENS employed SIP’s executive director to provide management oversight, and deliver subject matter expertise. Iowa is implementing programs similar to those in other regions of their state, including integrating business into the state’s EOC and building a private sector resource registry. Stakeholders in the partnership have agreed to work together on emergency planning, exercises and training, and improving communication between business and government during emergencies.

The Safeguard Iowa Partnership (SIP) surpassed all expectations when it quickly became an integral part of the response following Iowa’s historic flooding and a series of catastrophic tornadoes in May and June of 2008. Operating at the center of the response effort, Safeguard Iowa’s Executive Director and BENS Regional Partnership staff deployed to the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and satellite EOCs in Des Moines and Iowa City. These staff members served as a conduit for two-way communication between the business sector and EOCs statewide and coordinated business outreach efforts with government agencies and other relevant stakeholders. Drawing on the expertise and assets of over 60 member organizations who had previously volunteered to help in a crisis, the SIP assisted in securing items ranging from packaged food and bottled water to clothing, zip ties, cleaning supplies, and transportation. When the distribution schedules of a large, Iowa-headquartered grocery chain were threatened by road closures and state regulations limited the shifts of its drivers, partnership staff facilitated a solution by working directly with the Department of Transportation in the EOC to identify alternative routes that would allow the movement of essential products to continue.

In Colorado, BENS joined a broad coalition led by the Denver Police Foundation, the Denver Infragard Members Alliance (Denver IMA), and the Philanthropy Roundtable to launch the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) in early 2008. CEPP has enlisted a

number of Colorado's civic leaders and organizations, representing relevant city and state agencies, businesses, academia, and the US Northern Command in Colorado Springs.

The August 2008 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Denver proved to be an excellent platform to utilize the CEPP's organizational framework for increasing private sector involvement in the event's planning. CEPP stakeholders rolled out a virtual Business Operations Center that, among other things, allowed for sharing of security updates between the private sector and local, state, and national agencies, and the US Military (NORTHCOM/CO National Guard).

What Regional Partnerships Do

Each partnership develops an array of tools and plans using an "all hazards" approach by preparing for both natural and human caused catastrophes, while focusing on the hazards that pose the greatest risk to each region (e.g., hurricanes in the Southeast, flooding in the Midwest, and earthquakes on the West Coast and in the New Madrid fault region that is centered in seven southeastern states). The programs outlined above in each region illustrate the kinds of capabilities that have been valuable to both business and government. So far, programs have fallen into six general categories. These are by no means exhaustive—they just scratch the surface of what regional partnerships can deliver.

1. Getting Organized: Communicating Clearly via Business Operations Centers. Business and government need a mechanism to ensure quick and reliable communication when catastrophe strikes. Businesses need to link to one another, and to state and local government emergency operations centers (EOCs) before, during and after an event to identify threats, minimize bureaucratic roadblocks, and get the right resources to the right places faster. Most BENS' partnerships have built their own "Business Operations Center" (BOC) to fill this need.

The BOC model includes two components. First, the BOC facilitates business-to-business communication by convening representatives from leading companies and trade organizations across critical infrastructure sectors. The representatives initially connect via secure teleconference and the web, and ultimately meet in a physical location as well if the crisis becomes significant enough. Second, the BOC improves public-private communication by securing a few business "seats" at a state or regional EOC that are staffed by a BOC manager and several BOC analysts. The BOC manager facilitates communication between the teleconference and the state EOC, and the BOC analysts help determine disaster needs and develop response solutions to communicate with the BOC representatives. The BOC representatives are then responsible for communicating with the broader business community.

In addition to developing BOCs within its regional partnerships, BENS is working with state and local partners to better define how business collaborates with the federal agencies through FEMA regions and the DHS joint field offices that "stand up" during national emergencies.

2. Supply Chain Management: Getting the Right Resources to the Right Places at the Right Time. Emergency managers need quick, reliable access to private sector resources, ranging

from equipment and supplies to specially trained personnel. BENS' regional partnerships are cataloging, in advance, business resources that can be made available on a pro bono or for-sale basis during a major catastrophe. BENS has built regional registries in New Jersey and Massachusetts, and California and is currently developing registries in Missouri, Iowa. The Colorado partnership, CEPP, is developing a resource registry called Connect Colorado.

BENS has focused initially on registering pro bono resources that are typically not for sale (e.g., trucks, warehouse space, skilled volunteers), but it is beginning to register resources that would be provided at cost or market price as well. BENS also recommends that emergency managers continue to expand contingency contracts for disaster resources that they would expect to be in short supply. Finally, states and regions should consider implementing "reverse auction" systems that enable real-time posting of needs by emergency managers to be matched with real-time proposals by business donors and vendors. FEMA and the Aidmatrix Network have successfully piloted such a system in 34 states and regions throughout the country.

Resource registries can improve the disaster supply chain in a single state, but for large scale disasters like Katrina that overwhelm that state's ability to respond, a mutual aid system between states can provide significant additional capacity by adapting a process similar, and perhaps parallel to the state mutual aid system known as EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact).

3. Supply Chain Management: Mobilizing Business for Mass Dispensing of Medications. Public health officials need private sector support to prepare for and respond to the threats of bioterrorism or a disease outbreak, like pandemic flu. For example, if there were an aerosolized anthrax attack in Atlanta, the public health system would likely have less than ten percent of the staff needed to treat the region's nearly five million residents in four days. BENS is mobilizing businesses to use their corporate facilities as dispensing sites and provide volunteers to assist public health staff at schools and other government sites.

BENS worked with state and county public health officials in Metro Atlanta and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create a model for mobilizing business volunteers and using business facilities as dispensing sites, and then recruited 1,200 volunteers to participate in a full-scale, aerosolized anthrax exercise. BENS has also partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to execute a similar program with twenty-five companies in Southern California and staged bioterrorism tabletop exercises with public agencies in New Jersey.

4. On-going Information Sharing: Integrating Business into State and Local Fusion Centers. Many states are creating fusion centers to synthesize and analyze information and intelligence from multiple public and private sources and to disseminate "fused" information to appropriate government and business stakeholders. Most fusion centers have focused on increasing intelligence sharing among relevant local, state and federal agencies. Many of the fusion centers have found a need for greater private sector participation.

At the same time, the private sector seeks more actionable intelligence from government, and more clarity about the information sharing process. The BENS' office in Metro Kansas City

is providing assistance with fusion center design, increasing business participation, and exploring ways to enhance the use of web-based information sharing tools such as DHS' Lessons Learned Information Sharing. In Los Angeles, the Homeland Security Advisory Council has established a relationship with its fusion center by facilitating meetings between the regions' leading business executives and the Center's Directors; it is currently exploring the feasibility of establishing a private sector "seat" in the Center.

5. Critical Infrastructure Protection: Improving Risk Assessment. Federal, state and local governments perform risk assessments that identify critical infrastructure sites, and then estimate the threats to each site, the vulnerability of each site if it were attacked, and the criticality/consequence of an attack (i.e., the casualties and economic damage). These assessments can help allocate government and business security resources more rationally.

An estimated eighty-five percent of the nation's critical infrastructure is privately held, and government often lacks sufficient information about these facilities to accurately assess risk. Meanwhile, many businesses are concerned about disclosing confidential data to government that might be shared with other parties. BENS' partnerships are facilitating business participation in public agencies' critical infrastructure risk assessment initiatives in ways that do not compromise the confidentiality of business data.

6. Exercising to Identify Gaps and Test New Programs. Each partnership is committed to performing two types of exercises on a regular basis. The first identifies gaps that need to be filled. For example, a pandemic flu tabletop exercise with twenty or thirty business and government leaders in a region can help these leaders understand what they need to do to prepare their own organizations and how they will need to work together in such a crisis. These exercises produce impressive lists of potential business-government initiatives that would drastically improve response. Too often, however, there is little follow through after these exercises take place, and when the exercise is repeated a year or two later, it produces a similar list of needs and remedies. The partnerships attempt to turn these exercises into programs that produce real results.

The second type of exercise tests an actual business-government program that a regional partnership has started to implement – like a Business Operations Center or mass dispensing of medications – to make sure the program works, and to highlight opportunities for improvement. Each of these programs must be exercised – not once, but on a regular basis.

On a larger scale, BENS has been an ongoing partner of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by helping integrate business into the biennial national terrorism exercises known as TOPOFF (short for Top Officials). Large-scale exercises can both identify gaps and test new programs.

In addition to identifying gaps and testing programs that address them, exercises help build trusted relationships between business and government. These relationships in turn enable business and government to work more effectively "on the fly" in all kinds of scenarios. Katrina helped drive home the lesson that building relationships in advance is better than exchanging business cards during a crisis.

Business and government leaders familiar with continuous improvement models will recognize the process BENS uses in its partnership model: 1) identify gaps, 2) create programs to fill the gaps, 3) test the programs and 4) institutionalize them. The U.S. military has been honing continuous improvement models for about two hundred years. Business operations consulting pioneers Demming and Juran created their own continuous improvement frameworks in the 1960s, as have many others since. This process isn't new, but the players are.

A key difference between regional homeland security partnerships and most continuous improvement efforts is that most require collaboration across organizations that are forced to work together – within a business (sales and shipping), between businesses (manufacturers and their suppliers), within a military service (logistics and special forces), and across services (Air Force and Army). When it comes to homeland security partnerships, however, business and government have to decide they want to work together. Analogies can be found in the social sector, like businesses partnering with local schools to improve education, but in homeland security, we've been plowing new ground. Homeland security as we now know it did not exist prior to 9/11, and with rare exceptions, business and government saw little need to work together to prepare for catastrophic events.

Lessons Learned

What can we start to harvest from these new seeds we're planting? What lessons have we learned? BENS' experience has shown that while each region will develop a unique character and strategy, successful partnerships share several common attributes.

1. Make it Regional.

The federal government should support, not manage regional public-private partnerships because business-government partnerships require a level of trust and agility that is most easily achieved at the local level. Relationships of trust are strengthened as partners work together on a regular basis to achieve a common objective. Regional partnerships make it possible for business and government leaders to work together for the welfare of their communities – not once, but on an ongoing basis across many initiatives.

Regions should be defined based on natural economic and political boundaries, which could be a state, part of a state or multiple states. Businesses and trade organizations across industry sectors should participate, and state and local government agency partners should include emergency management, law enforcement, public health, National Guard and homeland security. Each region should decide what to do and how to do it – one size doesn't fit all. Regions should share best practices and precautions, but should leave plenty of room for customization.

Regional partnerships let business and government leaders:

- Design their own initiatives, while drawing upon best practices from other regions;
- Coordinate requests from multiple government agencies;
- Rank initiatives according to their needs and priorities;

- Develop and implement a coherent plan; and
- Work with complementary non-profit and trade organizations to build on regional strengths and avoid duplication of effort.

Catastrophic events that are national in scope will require significant federal government support. However, strong regional partnerships – and strong links between them - will delay the need for federal intervention, and they will make federal support more effective when it is needed.

2. Get Political and Business Leaders on Board

The formal endorsement and buy-in of a few prominent CEOs and a senior elected official in the region (e.g., governor or mayor) is a prerequisite to getting business and government organizations to devote the time necessary to make the partnership successful.

3. Build from a Local Institutional Base

Regional partnerships are easiest to build by utilizing a strong base of support from an existing organization in the region. In Georgia, Kansas City, New Jersey and the San Francisco Bay Area, Business Force partnerships were built from an existing BENS' regional office. In Iowa, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Southern California, BENS helped an existing organization build the partnership. The Iowa partnership is led by the Iowa Business Council, whose members are the CEOs of 24 of the state's largest employers. In Massachusetts, the state created the partnership within their emergency management agency. In Southern California, the partnership was created by the Los Angeles and Orange County Sheriffs and a business leader in each county, and then BENS was asked to provide management support. The Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) is supported and funded by a grant from the Anschutz Foundation.

Other regional partnerships have been spawned by business organizations such as chambers of commerce or business councils, state or local governments, and regional economic development organizations made up of government and business leaders. Any of these can work as long as the lead organization has a strong base of business and government support in the region. A lead organization can accelerate the partnership's start-up and provide the institutional strength to sustain commitment and funding over time. Long-term sustainability cannot be ignored, even during the partnership's start-up phase, as the CEOs and government leaders who help launch the partnership will inevitably move on.

A lead organization must have credibility and influence with government and business leaders in the region, and a commitment to improving security and emergency preparedness. If no organization with these characteristics is available, starting from scratch may be the only option. Starting from scratch presents the greatest challenge, but it is possible with a critical mass of business and government leadership and a small but capable full-time staff.

4. Engage Organizational Partners and Avoid Duplication

Whether the regional partnership is a stand-alone entity or built from within an existing organization, it is important to engage other organizations to add both expertise and resources, and to avoid duplication of effort.

At the regional level, partners can include trade organizations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, business councils, or a local financial services group), non-profits (e.g., Red Cross, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) or Hands on Network), or government-led partnerships (e.g., state or local intelligence fusion centers).

Whether or not they're engaged in homeland security initiatives, each of these organizations can offer specific expertise and resources if they have the capacity to participate in a given region. If they are already engaged in homeland security initiatives, all the more reason to invite them to participate in a broad-based regional partnership. Few regions can support multiple homeland security partnerships, and businesses will lose interest if they're asked to participate in overlapping initiatives. It may not be possible to coordinate every security-related initiative under one regional partnership, but each regional partnership should seek to coordinate as many related initiatives as possible.

Regional partnerships can engage consulting firms to assist in implementing specific programs. For example, BENS has received support from management consultants in implementing the Business Operations Center, mass dispensing and information sharing programs. This consulting support has come pro bono for smaller-scale programs and through commercial contracts for larger-scale initiatives.

At the national level, regional partnerships will benefit from working closely with federal government agencies that have a stake in homeland security, including DHS, CDC and FBI.

Regional partnerships can also consider seeking support from a national organization or consulting firm in building, managing the partnership, and learning from best practices in other regions. BENS has provided this support on an ongoing basis in Southern California and Iowa, including the use of its 501(c) (3) status to employ regional partnership staff. Some regions may see this as a simpler option than employing staff within a lead organization or starting a new 501(c) (3), while others may prefer to build their partnership independently.

5. Put the Partners to Work

Civic-minded companies with executive-level volunteers are the core of the regional partnership, providing both governance and operating support. BENS-facilitated partnerships are governed and supported by three member "teams." The first is an Advisory Council that sets strategic direction and is comprised of CEOs and the directors of key state or local agencies. This team keeps its member organizations committed and reviews results on a semi-annual or annual basis. The second is an Operating Council, comprised of business and state agency senior managers, and leaders of non-governmental organizations. The Operating Council meets approximately every two months and is charged with program implementation. The third is a set

of program working groups, each of which is charged with implementing a specific program. The working groups meet as often as needed to execute their plans.

Each of these teams engages members based on their seniority, expertise, time availability and passion. Sustaining commitment from a broad cross section of members on an on-going basis is critical to the success of the partnership.

6. Staff It

Regional partnerships should commit to hiring a small full-time staff with senior management experience. Partnership staff can recruit and motivate business and government partners, hire and oversee consultants as needed, implement programs and exercises, and provide the follow-through and accountability often lacking in all-volunteer partnerships. They also provide subject matter expertise to business and government organizations, and serve on regional committees, panels and working groups. Building a sturdy partnership takes focused, sustained effort from experienced staff on the ground in the region. Each regional director and support staff should have experience and relationships that are relevant to their region. For example, BENS employs one to three staff in each region, and regional leaders have extensive management experience. BENS' partnership staff has included former Army and National Guard Colonels, an entrepreneur/investment banker, and a high tech and biotech sales executives.

7. Sustainable Funding

The funding models of BENS- facilitated partnerships vary according to unique characteristics of each region. There is no single best funding mechanism for partnerships, however BENS has identified some best practices in this important component of partnership development.

BENS has found that a partnership's efficacy and the long-term commitment of businesses are better ensured when operating funds come from private sources. Government funding – with its attendant constraints and requirements – stifles the leadership and willingness of private sector partners to meaningfully engage – relegating the partnership to becoming “just another government program”. Business is most likely to invest when it has the ability to help drive the agenda.

Partnerships that identify funding in advance for first year operations find it easier to recruit key stakeholders and to demonstrate the program's value – engendering businesses' engagement and long-term commitment to the partnership. Four of BENS' early partnerships relied on individual corporate participants and BENS members for funding, which required partnership staff to dedicate significant time and focus to continuous fundraising – at the expense of substantive program work. After the first year or so, their financial sustainability became increasingly difficult and labor intensive. Conversely, by identifying a source of start-up capital, it becomes easier to recruit and engage a broad base of community stakeholders, provides a window of time to demonstrate the partnership's value, and thereafter shifts the responsibility of sustainability to a coalition of the private sector partners. The best example of this approach is the Safeguard Iowa Partnership.

If a partnership is to remain viable, two fundamental ingredients are required: 1.) a willingness on the part of businesses to take ownership of the partnership; and 2.) a sustainable funding plan. Businesses have been willing to donate resources, people, information and and cash to regional partnerships, but their commitment is strained if individual stakeholders are constantly bombarded with funding requests or if they do not perceive a value derived from the partnership. When private stakeholders drive the partnership, the funding is infinitely easier to secure.

Ultimately a sustainable funding plan will include a combination of private contributions from the business community and foundation grants to fund basic partnership operations and staff, with the option of accepting government grants only when they are dedicated to specific programs, technologies, or finite projects – not partnership operations.

8. Write a Plan

The lead organization and/or individuals that recruit partners and staff should start building consensus around initial programs during the recruiting process. Once the partnership has established governing councils and put funding and staffing in place, it should write a plan with a few specific programs, with deliverables, for the first year.

To date, BENS' programs have focused more on preparedness and response than prevention and long-term recovery because the partners have judged these types of programs to have the best combination of value and feasibility. Program selection is not a scientific process, but a deliberative one based on analysis of programs that are perceived as high value to all partners, and feasible to implement quickly with limited resources. Partnerships should consider starting with broad-based programs such as a Business Operations Center and a resource registry, because they form a foundation on which other programs can be built. A more comprehensive outline of potential programs has been produced by The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP) and can be found at www.tisp.org.

9. Deliver Results, Fast

The best way to build support for a partnership is to deliver tangible results quickly. The first programs should be at least piloted during the first year. This means avoiding programs that are valuable but hard to implement, and it means quickly building the program working groups, including members, partner organizations and consultants, if needed. The partnership programs described above have enabled BENS's regional partnerships to deliver new capabilities in months, not years. If significant roadblocks are encountered during implementation, the partnership should consider postponing the program and replacing it with a more feasible one.

10. Practice, Practice, Practice

Many homeland security partnerships produce recommendations and plans and declare victory without delivering tangible results. Successful regional partnerships won't stop there; they'll conduct exercises to test and improve each program. Many emergency response plans existed pre-Katrina, but not enough involved the private sector, and businesses were often left out of the exercises. Exercising programs makes them real, and exercising on an ongoing basis

across many initiatives raises awareness, builds strong relationships and prepares the partners for any catastrophe.

“We don’t count on plans, we count on training....[W]e have regular meetings of our emergency people. Live exercises, table-tops, including local first responders and local government officials.” - Donna Shalala, President, University of Miami

11. Tell Your Story

A thoughtful communications effort will tell target audiences about the importance of the regional partnership and recognize the partnership’s success, including the contributions of key partners in each program. Each partnership should try to recruit a communications/public relations firm to their team who can help with message development, target audiences and media placement. Recognizing success motivates partners and builds community support. And of course, making sure the partnership is real and producing tangible results before embarking on media campaigns will build credibility.

12. Learn and Teach

Regional partnerships should learn from one another. The most comprehensive source of regional partnership information is the DHS Lessons Learned Information Sharing web site (www.llis.gov). It includes a Best Practice series that provides information and guidelines for developing public-private partnerships for emergency preparedness at the state and local level, and provides numerous references to regional partnerships and related resources.

13. Grow

Regional partnerships invariably identify more important work than can be accomplished in the short term. They find endless opportunities to expand programs, geography and impact. Regional partnerships should not shy away from growth, but manage it wisely, in order to sustain the viability and efficacy of the partnership.

Conclusion

The successful response of BENS’ regional partnerships following recent catastrophes in Iowa and California sheds light on how these innovative organizations can help to produce a very different picture than we saw after Katrina. Long-time partners from business and government are able to come together in cities and states across the country to save lives, care for the sick and injured, and put people back to work. Citizens become better organized and find more ways to help. Communities, businesses and families get back on their feet faster and with more hope for the future. The BENS regional public-private partnership concept is working to increasingly help the country move forward in implementing this new resilience model.

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About BENS

For over a quarter century, Business Executives for National Security has been the primary channel through which American business leaders have contributed their special experience and talent to help build a more secure nation.

Founded in 1982 by business executive and entrepreneur Stanley A. Weiss, BENS is guided by the simple notion that America's security is everybody's business. Led by President and CEO General Charles G. Boyd, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), BENS is a highly respected national, non-partisan, non-profit organization of senior executives dedicated to enhancing our national security using the successful models of the private sector.

The innovative business-government partnerships that BENS has fostered over the past two decades to help save the Defense Department billions of dollars are now uniquely positioned to help meet the new challenges of the 21st century. BENS encourages that these public-private partnerships be expanded into all aspects of homeland security – helping to prepare state and local governments to deal with catastrophic events or terrorist attacks, guard against cyber attack, track terrorists' financial assets, and secure the nation's ports.

As the United States confronts threats of terrorism, pandemics and natural disasters, BENS is more important than ever before (www.bens.org).