

WHAT MAKES THE CEPP A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION

What Makes the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) a Successful Organization

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Introduction and Problem Statement

The Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) is a non-profit organization 501 (c) (3) that advocates joint emergency planning between Colorado's public, private and philanthropic sectors (Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership [CEPP], 2020, n.d.). They strengthen emergency planning partnerships within the state through their work with federal, state, and local agencies, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations. To strengthen emergency planning partnerships in Colorado, the organization conducts activities which include representation on federal, state, and local boards and committees; joint emergency planning and training exercises, programs, and workshops; and promoting information and resource sharing and situational awareness (CEPP, 2020, p. 3).

The CEPP was created in 2008 with the purpose of connecting the public and private sector during the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Denver (CEPP, n.d.). The organization ensured situational awareness for the business community of the planning efforts of all parties associated with the convention. The CEPP was recognized by the state for the public-private collaboration they fostered for the DNC and their emergency preparedness planning efforts (CEPP, n.d.). Following the DNC, they continued to provide emergency preparedness related educational briefings and workshops while also communicating preparedness issues between the public and private sector.

Since 2008, the CEPP's has become the lead private-public partnership (P3) for emergency management in Colorado. The membership has grown to approximately 3900 members representing industries from retail, commercial properties, and sports and entertainment venues to critical infrastructure, hospitals, and education, as well as a myriad of other industries throughout Colorado (CEPP, n.d.). The organization conducts resilience building activities

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including speaking engagements, programs and workshops, joint planning and training exercises, information and resource sharing, and promoting situational awareness. They are also a member of numerous national, state, regional, and local committees such as the Colorado Homeland Security and All-Hazards Senior Advisory Committee where they chair the Private Sector Subcommittee and are a member of the Information Sharing Subcommittee (CEPP, 2020, p. 5). The CEPP took part in the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #14 – Cross Sector Business and Infrastructure point of contact during the State COVID-19 pandemic response and continues to represent business and infrastructure in the EOC during training and events alongside the new Private Sector Liaison (CEPP, 2020, p. 6).

The purpose of this project is to discover what activities have led to the CEPP's success in strengthening joint emergency planning in Colorado. The project surveyed a non-random purposeful sampling of stakeholders from federal, state, and local governments, and the non-profit and private sector to obtain their opinions as to what activities the CEPP conducts that are most successful in strengthening joint emergency planning in Colorado. The responses were then categorized and assessed to determine which of the CEPP's activities provided the most significant contributions to the successful strengthening of joint emergency planning in the state of Colorado.

Literature Review

Background of Private-Public Partnerships

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PL 109-295) required the National Advisory Council (NAC) to develop and revise the national preparedness goal, the national preparedness system, the National Incident Management System, the National Response Plan, and related plans and strategies to include the input of State, local,

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and tribal governments as well as the private sector (Bennett, 2009a, p. 2). In January 2009, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) NAC subcommittee urged FEMA to recommend that state Emergency Management Agencies establish a private sector liaison position in all State EOCs to whom FEMA would provide unclassified Situation Reports (Bennett, 2009a, p. 2). By August of 2009, the NAC Homeland Security Grant Program guidance encouraged the support and/or establishment of P3s to improve the capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from emergencies and increase coordination with key sectors and critical infrastructures (Bennett, 2009b). More recently, FEMA's 2019 update to the National Response Framework (NRF) established Emergency Support Function (ESF) #14 as the Cross-Sector Business and Infrastructure ESF. The purpose of ESF #14 is to promote coordination and collaboration between business, critical infrastructure, and government stakeholders that are not aligned under other ESFs to prevent and/or mitigate the possibility of failures throughout multiple sectors (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2021, p. 3).

FEMA's *Building Private-Public Partnerships* (2021) guide defines a P3 as "any type of mutually beneficial cooperative arrangement, informal or formal, between two or more organizations of private industry and the public sector to enhance the life safety, economic security, and resilience of jurisdictions" (p. 1). The federal guide states that a P3 can be led by a governmental organization or private or non-governmental organization as long as it is an inclusive partnership with cooperation and participation composed of multiple elements of the whole community (FEMA, p. 6).

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Private-Public Partnerships in Practice

In practice P3s tend to thrive with non-governmental leadership supported by the bureaucracy and working through informal relationships. For example, Gazley (2008) argues that P3s led by government agencies are not as collaborative (p. 141). Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) agree with Gazley but further suggest that the leadership of a P3 should have endorsement from sponsors near the top of the public bureaucracy (p. 654). On the other hand, Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) contend that P3s need to have flexible governance structures to adapt to changing requirements throughout the life cycle of the partnership (p. 647). A significant amount of literature further suggests that the partnerships should be less formal, with and without contractual agreements, but instead consisting of relationships built on trust (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2015, p. 654; Gazley, 2008, p. 142; Kumaraswamy, Zou, & Zhang, 2015, p. 119; Stewart, Kolluru, & Smith, 2009, p. 346; Walker & Hills, 2012, p. 481).

The common theme throughout the literature and stated in FEMA's definition of a P3 is that public/private partnerships must be mutually beneficial to be successful (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015, p. 648; FEMA, 2021, p. 1). Mutually beneficial activities include networking, building cooperative relationships, collaboration during training and education programs, and communicating needs and negotiating necessary contracts prior to emergencies (Busch & Givens, 2013, p. 4; Department of Homeland Security [DHS], n.d., p.1; McEntire, 2002, p. 376). The Department of Homeland Security's Lessons Learned Best Practices Overview for Public-Private Partnerships (2006) states that P3's enhance coordination for emergency preparedness through promoting risk sharing, distributing vulnerability and threat information, generating joint plans and organizing response and recovery operations; all of which are mutually beneficial activities (p. 1).

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Summary

Since Hurricane Katrina, the federal government has encouraged the development of P3s at the state level. The CEPP has developed into the non-governmental lead organization for the Colorado private-public partnership. The mutually beneficial activities the CEPP conducts to enhance coordination for emergency preparedness within Colorado include membership in numerous national, state, regional, and local committees; speaking engagements; programs and workshops; joint planning and training exercises; information and resource sharing; and promoting situational awareness. The following sections will discuss and analyze what activities conducted by the CEPP are the most beneficial to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado.

Methodology

Data Collection

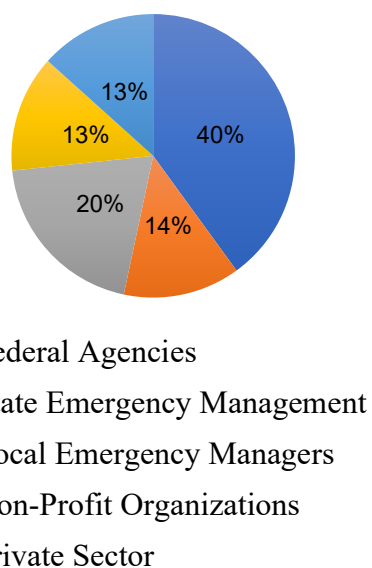
Data was collected by means of interviews from a non-random purposeful sampling of stakeholders at each level: federal, state, and local governments, and non-profit and private sector. The CEPP provided the researcher with contact information for fifty-three stakeholders which included fifteen federal employees from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM); thirteen Colorado State Emergency Management employees; eight representatives of local emergency management organizations; five representatives of non-profits; and twelve private sector representatives.

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Emails were sent to stakeholders requesting interviews or, if the stakeholder did not have the time for an interview, they were given the option to respond with the answer to the question: “What activities do you feel led the CEPP to successfully strengthen emergency planning within Colorado?” Activity examples provided in the email were CEPP’s membership on state, regional and local committees; information and resource sharing; promotion of situational awareness; joint emergency planning and training exercises; or a combination of activities. Respondents were also given the chance to provide their own examples of activities the CEPP conducts that contribute to successfully strengthening emergency planning withing Colorado.

Of the 53 emails sent, the response rate was 28 percent (15 responses). There were four bad email addresses, two respondents stated that they only provide information to the CEPP and had no experience as to what occurred after the CEPP received the information, and 15 individuals responded. Of the 15 responses, 40 percent (6) were members of federal agencies, 13 percent (2) were Colorado state emergency management employees, 20 percent (3) were local jurisdiction emergency management representatives, 13 percent (2) represented nonprofit organizations, and 13 percent (2) represented organizations within the private sector. See Figure 1 – Response Rate.

Figure 1. Response Rate



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Variables

The research question used in this capstone project was designed to answer what activities have led to the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership's (CEPP) success in strengthening joint emergency planning with federal, state, and local governments along with non-profits and private stakeholders in Colorado. The independent variable (IV) is the activities conducted by the CEPP. The dependent variable (DV) is the strengthening of the joint emergency planning with federal, state, and local governments along with non-profits and private stakeholders in Colorado. The IV is a nominal variable that represents specific actions taken by the CEPP that have strengthened joint emergency planning in the state of Colorado.

Analysis Plan

This inquiry used qualitative inductive reasoning. A non-random purposeful sampling of stakeholders from each level were asked what activities conducted by the CEPP have led to strengthening of joint emergency planning within Colorado. Activity options provided included the CEPP's membership in numerous national, state, regional, and local committees; speaking engagements; programs and workshops; joint planning and training exercises; information and resource sharing; and promoting situational awareness. Stakeholders were also given the option to provide other activities or reasons they perceive to facilitate the success of the CEPP in strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. The responses were categorized to develop a list of activities that CEPP stakeholders perceive to have contributed to CEPP's success in strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado.

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Findings

All 15 respondents (100%) stated that not just one activity, but a combination of activities make the CEPP successful at strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. The one activity that 100% of respondents stated contributes to the CEPPs success is information and resource sharing. Ten respondents provided additional activities conducted by the CEPP to include: providing a resource for networking, the fact that they lead the P3 as a non-profit organization, and that they retain strong leadership. Response rates can be found in Table 1 – CEPP Activity Ranking.

Table 1

CEPP Activity Ranking

CEPP Activities	n/15	% of respondents
Information and Resource Sharing	15	100%
Joint Emergency Management Planning and Training Exercises	10	67%
Membership on State, Regional, and Local Committees	8	53%
Promoting Situational Awareness	7	47%
Programs and Workshops	7	47%
Networking	7	47%
Leadership	5	33%
Non-profit	3	20%

All respondents (100%) agreed information and resource sharing is a key activity that the CEPP conducts that strengthens joint emergency planning in Colorado. An employee from the Colorado State Emergency Management stated that the CEPP “helps the state and local organizations help each other.” Another repeatedly stated that the CEPP “has the ability to convene the people to lift the burden off the emergency manager.” One state respondent also applauded the fact that the CEPP is continuously searching out new information to share with their partners. Federal respondents argued that the CEPP’s outreach is invaluable as they bridge

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the gap between the federal government and the private sector. One federal respondent also stated that they felt comfortable knowing that information passed to the CEPP would reach the private sector. Many examples were also provided of state and federal agencies contacting the CEPP in emergency situations and swiftly receiving the resources required from local and private sector organizations.

Two thirds of respondents stated that the joint emergency planning and training exercises provided by the CEPP were invaluable to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. One respondent mentioned that the CEPP partnered with their agency, reducing the redundancy of training exercises and providing a greater reach of the training to the private sector. Starting in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way the CEPP provided training from in-person to online. A couple respondents noted that they look forward to in-person training resuming in the future.

Eight of the fifteen respondents (53%) agreed that the CEPP's representation on federal, state, and local boards and committees is an additional method the CEPP uses to strengthen joint emergency planning within Colorado. One respondent mentioned that the CEPP brings the needs of the private sector to the federal committees. Another stated that "the CEPP promotes awareness within a variety of networks and organizations, (which) reaffirms to its partners that the CEPP will show up for you, reinforcing that the CEPP is an *active* organization and not another group that exists on a website but not in production."

Seven of the fifteen respondents (47%) mentioned the CEPPs promotion of situational awareness as one of their strengths, stating that the information flow through the CEPP is invaluable. One respondent suggested that there was not as much inclusion with emergency preparedness throughout the state before the CEPP, arguing that they have been the bridge

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between the public and private sector. The same respondent stated that the CEPP has brought emergency preparedness to the forefront in the private sector, helping communities. Yet another person argued that the CEPP is proactive in emergency preparedness. All individuals who mentioned information sharing as a strength stated that they appreciate the CEPP emails in addition to the quarterly meetings and situation reports.

Seven respondents (47%) agreed that programs and workshops are key activities that support the CEPP's mission. Representatives of federal agencies stated that they appreciate webinars that they can share with their networks as well as the additional networking provided with in-person workshops. One even mentioned that CEPP workshops have increased awareness of federal standards for attendees, leading to more communication with the private sector regarding emergency preparedness necessary according to their organization's federal standards. A stakeholder from the private sector suggested that the CEPP could also act as an intermediary or facilitator in the future, sharing information regarding emergency management workshop and training opportunities offered by other organizations. Another suggestion was to offer workshops or speakers on intelligence related to emergency preparedness.

When asked if there were any other activities that came to mind that the CEPP conducts to improve emergency preparedness within Colorado, seven of the fifteen (47%) respondents mentioned that the networking offered through the CEPP is invaluable. One respondent mentioned the fact that the wide-reaching networks of CEPP board members has also helped to increase the networks of the stakeholders. Another mentioned that the CEPP invites new people to their network before they even realize they are needed. A member of the state emergency management stated that the networking provided by the CEPP leads to the private sector being

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able to manage their own emergency situations, lifting some of the burden from the public sector.

Although only five of the fifteen (33%) respondents stated that the leadership of the CEPP increases their ability to improve emergency preparedness within Colorado, every respondent used the executive director's name synonymously with the organization's name when discussing the CEPP. Many respondents mentioned that the new executive director has taken the CEPP to another level, increasing the network of stakeholders while still getting to know each person individually. One stated that the CEPP used to be "a high rolling philanthropy circle that didn't relate to the common man" but that it has now been taken to something that speaks to all stakeholders. All five individuals that mentioned the leadership of the CEPP is a factor in the organization's success in strengthening joint emergency planning in Colorado argued that the current leadership is strong, professional, proactive, and confident.

Finally, 20 percent of respondents mentioned that the fact that the CEPP is a nonprofit organization is a key factor in its ability to strengthen emergency planning within Colorado. One stated that the fact that the CEPP is "in between state, local, federal, and the private sector brings everyone together, so they know how to work together during an incident." Another mentioned that it is easier for organizations at all levels to communicate through the CEPP because they are "between the government and private sector."

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Discussion

This project was conducted to assess which activities conducted by the CEPP are the most beneficial to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. This knowledge can assist in the continuation of best practices and build upon activities that stakeholders value. It can

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also be used to support the advancement of P3s across the country, and possibly beyond. The literature suggests that activities recommended for a P3 to thrive should be mutually beneficial and promote information sharing and emergency management education (Busch & Givens, 2013, p. 4; Department of Homeland Security [DHS], n.d., p.1; McEntire, 2002, p. 376). Experts also agree that P3s with informal, non-governmental authority with sponsors from the top of the public bureaucracy have a greater tendency to succeed (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2015, p. 654; Gazley, 2008, p. 142; Kumaraswamy, Zou, & Zhang, 2015, p. 119; Stewart, Kolluru, & Smith, 2009, p. 346; Walker & Hills, 2012, p. 481). Based on interviews with a non-random purposeful sampling of stakeholders, the main finding of this study is that there is not just one activity that makes the Colorado P3, the CEPP, successful at strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. Furthermore, all stakeholders agree the key to the CEPP's success is a combination of activities with information and resource sharing at the forefront.

Stakeholders were provided five activities conducted by the CEPP to select from and decide which were most essential to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. Two thirds of all stakeholders interviewed agreed that joint emergency management planning and training exercises conducted by the CEPP are extremely conducive to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. The last three activities: membership on state, regional, and local committees; promoting situational awareness; and programs and workshops; were all selected by nearly half of interviewees as beneficial activities to strengthening joint emergency planning within Colorado. All activities conducted by the CEPP are mutually beneficial activities suggested by the scholars as well as the federal government in P3 literature as best practices for public-private partnerships.

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Information and Resource Sharing

Information and resource sharing is the one activity that 100 percent of stakeholders selected as one of the most beneficial activities conducted by the CEPP that strengthens joint emergency planning within Colorado. State and local emergency managers use the CEPP to communicate resource needs before, during, and after an emergency. The CEPP promotes situational awareness through their routine email distribution as well as through the state EOC in states of emergency. Stakeholders revealed that the CEPP has also improved operational efficiency through their collaboration with state and federal partners to develop information sharing platforms. This continuous information sharing is a key element to promoting resilience, enabling the public and private sector to prepare for and coordinate for emergency preparedness.

Communicating needs and negotiating contracts prior to emergencies assists in streamlining strategic planning (Busch & Givens, 2013, p.4; McEntire, 2002, p. 376). One stakeholder stated that the networking opportunities offered through the CEPP have offered more opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing. The sharing of resources also builds trust by demonstrating the capabilities and follow-through of the member organizations (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2015, p. 653).

Joint Emergency Planning and Training Exercises

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) best practices article on Education, Training, and Technical Assistance argues that training and education programs assist in improving the understanding of stakeholders' preparedness responsibilities, procedures to be conducted in an emergency, as well as individual stakeholder capabilities (n.d., p. 1). Training exercises, programs, and workshops also provide numerous benefits to all members of P3s such as building networks and relationships, helping to clarify roles and responsibilities, establishing

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common terminologies, identifying gaps and best practices, and alerting members to needs, interests, and threats (United States Department of Homeland Security [DHS], n.d., p. 1). The interviewed stakeholders agreed that the CEPP's joint emergency planning and training exercises were invaluable networking opportunities while also keeping stakeholders up to date on current emergency management guidance.

Joint emergency planning and training exercises also provide a venue for collaboration which is another key element of any partnership. Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) define the key collaborative competency as "the ability to work across boundaries, analyze and involve stakeholders, engage in strategic planning, and participate in teamwork" (p. 655). Collaboration also builds trust, another element that enables the success of a private-public partnership. The CEPP also offers opportunities for collaboration through quarterly free workshops.

Membership on State, Regional, and Local Committees

The CEPP memberships on state, regional, and local committees help to ensure support from the bureaucracy and leadership at all levels. In addition, committee membership offers networking opportunities to build informal relationships. Informal relationships built through networking can help build an understanding of what resources others have available for emergencies while also fostering mutual trust and teamwork (McEntire, 2002, p. 376). The CEPP's membership on committees also builds trust with private stakeholders because they know that the CEPP will represent their interests and needs with the government.

Promoting Situational Awareness

Fifty-three percent of interviewed stakeholders agreed that the CEPP's promotion of situational awareness is one of the major contributing factors to their ability to successfully strengthen joint emergency planning in Colorado. The continuous communication through email

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offered by the CEPP is just one method in which they promote situational awareness as circumstances arise. The DHS (2006) lists distributing vulnerability and threat information as one of the mutually beneficial activities in their best practices for public-private partnerships (p.1). The inclusion of the CEPP in the state EOC during training exercises, and actual emergencies has further increased communication and situational awareness for the private sector, increasing resiliency for the state.

Programs and Workshops

Programs and workshops, similar to joint planning and training exercises, offer opportunities for building networks, helping to clarify roles and responsibilities, establishing common terminologies, identifying gaps and best practices, and alerting members to needs, interests, and threats (United States Department of Homeland Security [DHS], n.d., p. 1). Most stakeholders mentioned networking as one of the strengths of the CEPP through many of their activities, however, workshops have been presented online since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, federal stakeholders did mention during their interviews that they have appreciated the online programs and workshops because they have the ability of sharing them with colleagues and subordinates that would benefit from the information.

Governance and Leadership

Twenty percent of stakeholders agreed that the CEPP's status as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization also strengthens its ability to promote emergency planning within Colorado. Gazley (2008, p. 141) argues that P3s run by non-governmental organizations tend to be more collaborative which the CEPP stakeholders argued is because the non-profit organization is easier to communicate through. This is likely due to the less formal partnership built with the

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CEPP that has formed a relationship built on trust (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015, p. 648; FEMA, 2021, p. 1).

The proactive, non-governmental leadership of the CEPP has also built an additional level of trust. Stakeholders also mentioned the reach of the board members who have helped build the network of the CEPP. The leadership of the CEPP seems to have the endorsement from sponsors near the top of the public bureaucracy which scholars argue will assist in maintaining the life cycle of the partnership (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2015, p. 654).

Summary

The activities conducted by the CEPP to strengthen joint emergency planning within Colorado are all mutually beneficial to the CEPP stakeholders. The activities include membership in numerous national, state, regional, and local committees; speaking engagements; programs and workshops; joint planning and training exercises; information and resource sharing; and promoting situational awareness. One stakeholder described this as the “wheel of collaboration” in which the CEPP “plans with partners, trains with partners, exercises with partners, and operates with partners.” All activities conducted by the CEPP are spokes on the wheel that drive the strengthening of joint emergency planning in Colorado.

Recommendations

A recommendation for the CEPP to further strengthen joint emergency planning within Colorado is to provide more in-person training and workshops in the future. Two-thirds of respondents listed joint training exercises and workshops as a key activity to strengthen joint emergency planning within Colorado. One state respondent stated during their interview that “partners are always asking for additional training, workshops, and tabletop exercises.”

Respondents also discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has driven training and

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workshops to the virtual environment. Almost universally, they look forward to the day that in-person training and workshops can resume. One stakeholder also mentioned an option to increase training opportunities would be to act as an intermediary, sharing known training and workshops that other organizations provide with stakeholders in email distributions.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include the possibility of bias because the list of stakeholders was provided by the CEPP executive director to the researcher. The researcher tried to address this limitation by ensuring stakeholders understood that their responses were confidential to ensure comments were not biased based on their relationship with the CEPP leadership. Another limitation is that the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the wider population due to the small, non-random sample size of the CEPP stakeholders. The findings, due to the small sample size, may not be practically significant to apply to future program decisions but can be used as a baseline for understanding why and how the CEPP has been a successful organization. Future research should include a larger, random sampling of the CEPP stakeholders.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine which activities have led the CEPP's success in strengthening joint emergency planning in Colorado. The CEPP Annual Report (2020) offers membership on state, regional and local committees; information and resource sharing; promotion of situational awareness; joint emergency planning and training exercises and programs and workshops as the activities they conduct (pp. 1-13). Interviews with a small, non-random purposeful sampling of the CEPP's 3900 stakeholders resulted in a conclusion that information and resource sharing is the number one activity that the CEPP conducts that helps strengthen joint emergency planning in Colorado but that it is the combination of multiple

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activities that the CEPP conducts that results in the actual strengthening of joint emergency planning in Colorado.

All activities conducted by the CEPP are mutually beneficial activities listed by federal guidance as best practices and are also suggested by scholars as beneficial for private-public partnerships. In addition, the stakeholders believe that the organization has strong leadership that represents their interests at all levels of government. The state government has also shown trust in the CEPP by including them in the state EOC during training exercises, and actual emergencies.

In conclusion, this study would suggest that all activities conducted by the CEPP have led to the strengthening of joint emergency planning in Colorado. Stakeholders affirm that the information and resource sharing in addition to other activities are vital to the CEPP's success in strengthening joint emergency planning in Colorado. The researcher suggests additional research, including expanding the stakeholder interview base, would be useful to support leveraging the CEPP's success in building new P3s across the country.

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