

The State of the Association – Fall 2024 Edition

2024 has been a busy year for IAEM! For this first address, in addition to highlighting the health and well-being of the association, I will also focus on five major initiatives:

- 1) [Government Affairs](#)
- 2) [The new Community and Member Engagement Committee](#)
- 3) [An overview of IAEM's DEI efforts from 2022-present day](#)
- 4) [A peek at the annual conference](#)
- 5) [A brief on the association's executive-level engagements](#)

The next address will focus on an update to the bylaws, reflections from the conference, and any other current events that are ongoing at the time.

The Health and Wellbeing of IAEM

From a membership and accounting perspective, IAEM is doing very well as an association and nonprofit organization. As of September 2024, we have 5,565 total members, with 576 international members from our global councils and 444 students (globally).

From a certification standpoint, the association currently has 2,496 Certified Emergency Managers and 373 Associate Emergency Managers, representing 53 states and territories, as well as 22 countries.

Fiscally, we are amid our high-spend, high-yield season, as the conference is set to take place next month. Our reserves are just about \$2M, which is a sign of good organizational health. Much like personal finances, I like to think of our reserves as a safety net, in case of unexpected expenses. For example, COVID impacted our annual conference revenue stream (which is a major source of income for IAEM), and we utilized some of our reserve funds to cover the association's expenses.

Our committees, caucuses, and commissions remain active. Currently, we have 30 groups and 10 regions convening regularly to accomplish goals and objectives that are important to each group. To highlight one, the Critical Infrastructure Consortium held its inaugural meeting on August 13, where 104 attendees heard presentations from Sunny Wescott, Chief Meteorologist, and Will Loomis, Cyber Policy Advisor, both from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, and additional meetings are set to occur every month. In the next update, I'll highlight the excellent work of other groups for awareness.

Government Affairs

The Government Affairs Committee (GAC) is one of our most active groups. Members who participate receive updates on legislative efforts on the Hill, provide input when IAEM is asked for opinions and support on legislative positions, and share tips and tricks on how best to advocate for emergency management when dealing with elected officials.

The association's participation in legislative activities is paramount. It's no secret that given the current state of the industry, we as professionals need to collectively "get louder" in advocating for more resources, greater authority, and better policies. Because without a coordinated approach to advocacy and government/legislative affairs, federal grant allocations will continue to dwindle, emergency management organizations will continue to be re-assigned and removed as cabinet-level agencies or C-suite direct reports, and we will continue to lose any authority we may have over community preparedness and resilience initiatives.

A couple of months ago, the GAC began reinvigorating its communications strategy to share more timely information. Since July, we have instituted a new monthly initiative within the GAC called the [IAEM-USA Government Affairs Update](#). Anyone who has opted-in to receive government affairs communications should have received these updates over the summer. An example of what's been in the recent updates are details on several proposed bills for member research and support, including:

- [HR 7671](#): Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act
- [HR 8616](#): Ensuring Quality Investments in Preparedness Act
- [HR 9024](#): Extreme Weather and Heat Response Modernization Act
- [HR 1605](#): Natural Disaster Recovery Program Act
- [HR 6084](#): Expediting Disaster Recovery Act
- [HR 2672](#): FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act
- [HR 5623](#): Addressing Addiction After Disasters Act
- [HR 9037](#): FEMA Mobilization Accountability Workforce Planning Act
- [HR 6997](#): Disaster Contract Improvement Act
- [HR 2892](#): Weather Alert Response and Notification Act
- [HR 6435](#): Making Aid for Local Disasters Equal Now Act

In addition to the monthly updates, you've likely seen a GAC survey called the "DHS Grant Cut Impact Stories," distributed between July and October 2024. The impact survey seeks member feedback on how the recent federal DHS grant reductions are impacting the program.

Sixty-seven members responded to the survey, and 48% of the respondents have experienced moderate cuts to their funding allocation (i.e., somewhere between 10% and 25% reduction). Many have also provided a narrative describing specific program areas being impacted.

I intend to use this data in my upcoming conversation with the FEMA Administrator later this fall to express how the budget cuts impact our ability to execute the emergency management mission nationwide. My message will be very clear: The reduction in federal grant allocation affects emergency management at all levels and in significant ways.

Introducing the new Community and Member Engagement Committee

One of the first long-term initiatives I focused on in July after becoming President was creating a new Community and Member Engagement Committee. The idea behind the new committee is straightforward – its functions will mimic those we typically find in emergency management under public information, communications and branding, and external affairs. Additionally, it will include components of our current Membership Committee that focus on increasing IAEM’s professional, public, and private visibility; researching, developing, marketing, and promoting programs and services; and overseeing activities related to membership benefits.

Its creation aims to provide members with additional benefits – and to amplify current ones – including:

1. To increase the association’s emergency management content-sharing efforts across all platforms, including industry news, best practices, and lessons learned.
2. To bring focus to the industry’s work through targeted communications to our partners and external partners.
3. To enhance the association’s digital engagement strategy to focus on the end-user experience (i.e., improve the member experience with our content and digital platforms).
4. To spearhead the industry’s advocacy, branding, and awareness messaging.
5. To boost member engagement through group collaboration, content, and information sharing on all platforms, amplifying the good work of the association’s groups with members.

This new committee, approved by the Board of Directors in September for full implementation after the annual conference, will incorporate and converge the current missions and scope of the Editorial Committee, the Membership Committee, and the Advocacy and Awareness Caucus. Why? Because much of what these groups do overlap with one another. To offer reassurances, this convergence does not erase or reduce the scope and mission of the Editorial Committee, Membership Committee, or the Advocacy and Awareness Caucus. All the work currently conducted by these groups will continue under the new committee structure – and the results will be improved as the workflows and outputs are streamlined, allowing the association to share information more cohesively.

The new committee webpage will go live after the annual conference. At that point, any interested member who would like to participate can sign up. If you enjoy public information, communications, member engagement, external affairs, marketing, branding, and advocacy – this is the committee for you!

An Overview of IAEM's DEI Initiative

Much has been shared over the last two years regarding IAEM's efforts related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), but admittedly, this particular kind of update is long overdue. The Board has invested significant time on this matter, including a substantial amount of our time at both the 2023 and 2024 board retreats. With false and misleading information being spread, I felt it was necessary to share the facts with members and illuminate our path forward in a direct, honest, and unfiltered manner.

Before I dig into the future of DEI at IAEM, it's essential everyone fully understands how we got to where we are. While long in its explanation, I must share this information as we chart a new path forward.

- Leading up to and directly following the annual conference in 2022, a series of miscommunications resulted in consequences that have impacted the association's morale, many of which we are still grappling with today.
- Here's what happened: In line with our Bylaws, the incoming President had the opportunity to nominate a new slate of leaders for the association's committees, caucuses, and special appointments. These nominations are always the focus of the Board's first business meeting following the annual conference, and on that year's slate was a brand-new nominee to lead the DEI Committee. While not new to IAEM nor DEI efforts within the industry, this individual was new to the committee and was initially brought forward simply as a recommendation for the incoming President's consideration.

That nominee was eventually included on the slate of leadership selections and approved by the board to begin their leadership term immediately.

- In the months following the vote, several members expressed discontent and disagreement with the new committee chair that was selected. Additionally, they expressed their disappointment that there had been a lack of direct communication between the incumbent chair and the new IAEM-USA President before the Board vote. These members shared their concerns with the Board directly, with the DEI Committee members, and through social media channels.

Acknowledging a communication misstep, the President issued an apology to the previous committee chair, vice chairs, and members of the DEI Committee.

- As part of the immediate fallout, many DEI supporters requested that the Board hire a third-party DEI consultant to do an exhaustive review of IAEM's governance, policies, and procedures. The supporters requested small group interview sessions and town halls to facilitate transparent feedback and communication. The Board approved that request, issued a Request for Proposals, and selected a company to conduct this work between February 2023 and January 2024.

- As a first order of business and at the consultant's recommendation, the Board temporarily suspended the DEI Committee and DEI Advisor to the Board, until their research and recommendations were provided at the end of the contract's performance period. In full transparency, the total expenditures for this contracted effort were just over \$106,000. Additionally, IAEM staff dedicated time to these efforts – provided at no additional cost to IAEM – estimated to be around \$28,000, over two fiscal years.
- Some members have expressed dissatisfaction with the extended period of silence from the Board of Directors between February 2023 and February 2024. For that, I feel the members of IAEM deserve an apology and explanation. Under advisement by the consultant, the Board was asked to funnel communications through the company to minimize any further polarization related to DEI. While that serves as one reason for the collective silence, it does not excuse it. Yes, town hall meetings were held, and occasional communications were emailed to update the membership on progress. However, looking back, more could have been done to illuminate the facts of the issue.

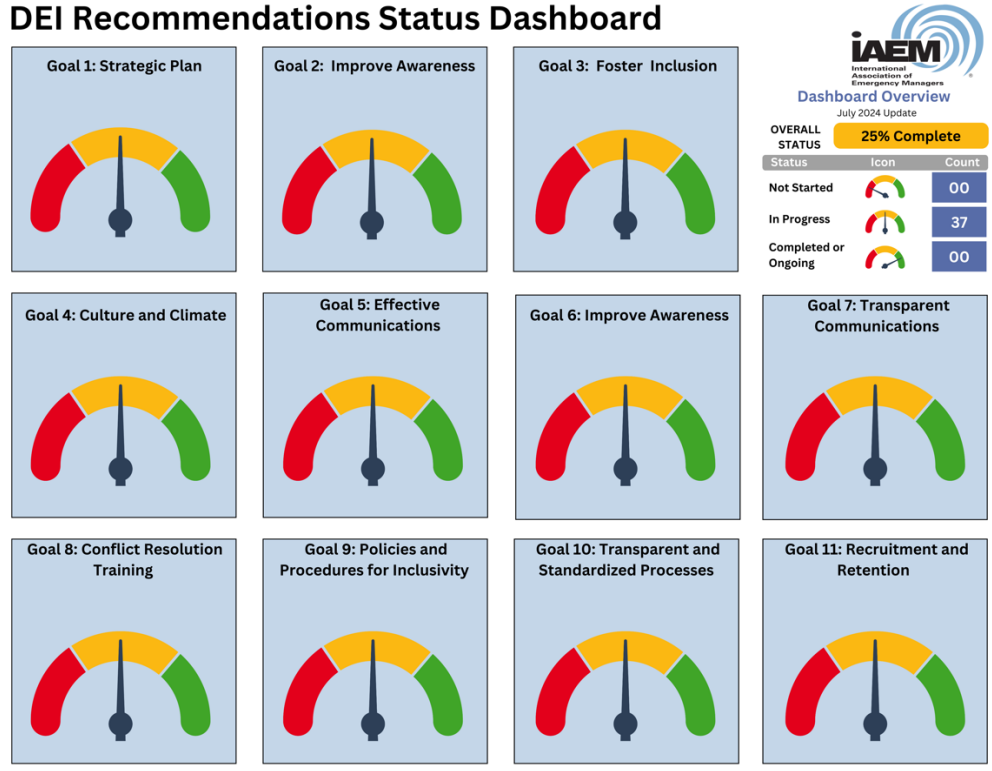
Candidly speaking – in hindsight, rather than following the advice given to us, we should have implemented our own, Board-led crisis communications plan. As all emergency managers know, during crises, we must communicate early, communicate with transparency, and communicate often. This is largely why establishing a State of the Association address is so important to me.

- Fast forward a bit, and in February 2024, the board shared the consultant's recommendations with the membership and hosted a town hall for feedback in March. Former DEI Committee members expressed during the townhall that *all* the recommendations needed to be implemented. Those members intimated that the Board of Directors were not the right individuals to carry out the tasks because they saw them as biased, incapable, and not diverse (they suggest that the decisions made since 2022 were evidence for their beliefs).
- During the April 2024 board retreat, the Board examined the 37 recommendations provided by the consultant. They voted to accept 32 recommendations, and five were put on hold due to scope and/or relevance to the association's mission. Of the 32, 18 were determined to be in various stages of progress, and 14 were identified as needing full development. During this meeting, the President indicated a task force would eventually be set up to help scope and implement the remaining recommendations, honoring the requests of the members whose feedback was provided at the town hall.
- Other activities at the 2024 board retreat included examining specific ways our events (i.e., conferences and meetings) would be inclusive and safe for all participants. Additionally, the Board voted to approve adding a new section to the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, focused on bullying. The Board also received an update from the Association-wide Policy Update Task Force lead, who was assigned to review

and update all of our governing documents, policies, and procedures in light of the DEI activities and feedback received from members.

- In July 2024, I began my tenure as IAEM-USA President. On July 1, I convened the board of directors to outline my plans for a task force, an IAEM Connect DEI Community page, and a dashboard to show transparency on the implementation of the recommendations.

DEI Recommendations Status Dashboard



- Cognizant of some members’ perspectives that the Board of Directors should not be involved in implementing the recommendations, I decided that the task force members should come from all 10 IAEM-USA regions. Why did I choose a regional approach? My responsibility is to ensure that no segment of the association is left behind in this charge, and we are organized by region.

I tasked each regional president with appointing a primary and an alternate representative to the task force by September 1, 2024. I left the appointment process up to each president, but some held an open call for candidates, and some called upon others in their regions to fill the role. In all cases, I specifically requested that regional representatives be diverse in their experiences, backgrounds, expertise, and points of view. Most importantly, I set an expectation that all participants would contribute positively and work productively.

- In between March and July 2024, members continued to express varying points of view on the DEI initiative on IAEM Connect, social media, and to the Board directly. Unfortunately, several exchanges on IAEM Connect became heated, and in late July, the board was informed that a member had mailed an anonymous package of an IAEM Connect communication thread to another member's place of employment. While no motive was immediately apparent, the communication thread shared with the employer showcased an opposing, negative viewpoint of DEI. It was after this incident that I chose not to disclose the names of the task force members who volunteered to participate to protect them from similar actions. Additionally, I asked staff at headquarters to review each new IAEM Connect post before it was added to the thread to ensure all sentiments of harassment and bullying are removed from conversations surrounding DEI. *Note: Each task force member is free to share their participation at their discretion.*
- The task force held its kickoff meeting on September 23. It was charged with three primary objectives: 1) Monitor the implementation of recommendations in progress and finish scoping the recommendations that need full development. 2) Within 30 days, provide a recommendation to the Board on the future of DEI within IAEM – whether that is to reinstate the committee, create a caucus, or bring forward another idea. 3) Within 90 days, provide a recommendation to the Board on the role IAEM should play in instilling equity as a principle of emergency management. The last objective is aimed at a more long-term, strategic role for IAEM in the industry.

With the facts and timeline provided above, I can now focus on the future and our collective path forward.

The truth of the matter is this: While there are proponents and opponents of DEI (nationwide), emergency management cannot fulfill our mission **without** incorporating the concepts, ideals, and values of equity. Put another way, if we wish to prepare our nation, build resiliency, and care for our communities and businesses – we must incorporate equity into every phase of emergency management. And this is why I intentionally asked the task force to provide a long-term recommendation focused on IAEM's role and contributions to the industry.

Equally, however, we must remember that IAEM is an emergency management association. We are membership-driven, funded by dues, and operate mainly at the willingness of volunteers. Why do I mention these things? It's become clear to me that no matter how much time, effort, and resources IAEM spends on course-correcting previous missteps, some will say we aren't doing enough.

So, here is my bottom line: IAEM will uphold the principles of DEI while we also work to stabilize as an association and balance it among our other emergency management principles.

We cannot lose sight of the emergency management mission and our role in advocating for its advancement. In between the 2022 conference and the summer of 2024 – while much of our attention has been focused on addressing the DEI issue within IAEM – our field has experienced a 9% federal grant reduction, more agencies have been reassigned to report under fire and law enforcement, corporate emergency management offices are being sunset, and the White House

has appointed a director of Long-Term Community Recovery and Rebuilding to examine the systemic issues in the recovery process, nationwide. These are significant industry issues that we cannot ignore.

We have so much work to do as an industry, and that includes focusing on DEI. However, we must work strategically and intentionally to ensure our field of practice remains viable and sustainable.

We must ALSO continue to work internally on our governance, policies, and procedures to ensure all members have a positive and rewarding IAEM experience.

I believe we can focus on all these things equally. But we cannot continue to spend most of our time, effort, and fiscal resources on one specific issue, especially when we are volunteer-driven and have limited resources to address all our priorities.

Nationally, this topic has been polarized and weaponized. Within IAEM specifically, numbers show that as of September 2024, we are down 113 members from last year in 2023. While the reduction cannot be entirely attributed to the DEI initiative, we know from a few former members who resigned that they have done so because we have fallen short of adequately addressing the issue since 2022. Conversely, we have also lost members who expressed disappointment in our continued efforts, claiming we are focusing too much of our time and resources on DEI, not emergency management.

It is time to stabilize and remember our mission: to promote the "Principles of Emergency Management" and represent professionals whose goals are saving lives and protecting property and the environment during emergencies and disasters.

I hope you will join me in these efforts as we move forward as one unified association.

A Peek at the 2024 IAEM Annual Conference

Can you believe it? We are about a month away from the [IAEM Annual Conference](#)—my favorite event of the year! I look forward to this all year long, and I always leave feeling motivated and inspired to apply what I've learned to my personal practice of emergency management. Not to mention the sheer amount of joy and happiness I experience by hanging out with my IAEM colleagues, it truly is an event and opportunity that I cherish every year.

We'll be at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, this year. I visited two years ago and was completely blown away by its beauty. Nestled at the foot of several ski slopes, the resort has so much to offer in terms of experiences, dining, and relaxation, making this year something you won't want to miss.

I am also pleased to share that the conference registration numbers are well ahead of where we've been at this time, in previous years – by 200 registrants. Regarding an agenda, we have more than six dozen breakout and spotlight sessions covering everything from career development to the latest FBI strategy to assist communities with intervention before community consequences from terrorism. We also have plenary sessions on artificial intelligence, space weather, and state-level leadership insights. And you'll get to hear a session – moderated by yours truly – with the FEMA Administrator focused on local resilience and capacity building.

I hope to see you there! We have a lot to celebrate, and being together and enjoying the company of colleagues is just one.

Haven't yet registered? You can do so, [here](#).

Executive Engagements

My last segment of this quarter's State of the Association address is on executive-level engagements. Why? Because I want you to know we're out there representing you.



Fall is always the busiest time of year. In September, I traveled to Denver for the Big City Emergency Manager's (BCEM) bi-annual meeting, to the FEMA National Advisory Council meeting, and to the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) annual conference in Baltimore. While at these events, I met with leaders throughout the field and continued conversations in areas related to cybersecurity, disaster management costs, mental health, election security, and more. I participated on a panel focused on artificial intelligence, and Thad Huguley represented IAEM at the

NEMA Legislative Affairs Committee meeting.

In early September, I met with the White House's director of Long-Term Community Recovery and Rebuilding. In that discussion, I focused on governance and policy gaps that I believe should be addressed by the federal government to improve the nation's recovery processes. More specifically, I focused on the need to pivot our approach as an industry, where instead of prioritizing and emphasizing the need to "plan to respond," we should emphasize our "plan to recover." I also emphasized that our lack of focus on recovery – whether through national doctrine, grant requirements, or program accreditation criteria – inadvertently allows us to focus our time elsewhere. If systemic issues keep us from being a resilient nation, we must address the gaps where we know they exist. I have plans to continue this conversation with the director soon.



In September, Josh Morton also attended the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials event. While there, he focused on the relationships between IAEM-USA and IAEM-Latin America and reviewed the legislative initiatives that IAEM is supporting. He also spent much of his time seeking support from the NALEO officials as a partner and offered reciprocal support for their efforts.

I have one final executive engagement scheduled with the FEMA Administrator in late October. At the time of this address, that meeting has yet to happen, but I fully intend to share the feedback from the DHS Grant Cut Impact Stories survey.

In closing, I hope that through these updates, you've gleaned more information about the association's ongoing activities and gotten a glimpse into how your membership commitment and hard-earned money (provided to us in the form of dues) are being cared for. If you have any questions or feedback, please email me at USAPresident@iaem.com.

In Service,

Carrie

We are stronger together - #IAEMstrong.