
**COUNCIL TO IMPROVE FOODBORNE
OUTBREAK RESPONSE (CIFOR)
STRATEGIC PLAN**



Introduction

The Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) is a multidisciplinary collaboration of national associations and federal agencies working together since 2006 to improve methods at the local, state, and federal levels for detecting, investigating, controlling, and preventing foodborne disease outbreaks. CIFOR member organizations represent epidemiology programs, environmental health programs, public health laboratories, and regulatory agencies at the local, state and federal levels involved in foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response. The food industry is represented on the Industry Workgroup. CIFOR identifies barriers that hinder rapid detection of and response to foodborne disease outbreaks and develops projects that address these barriers.

CIFOR has successfully leveraged its collaborative framework and the dedication of its members to create a number of high value products. These include guidelines for foodborne disease outbreak response, a toolkit and educational programs to aid individuals and agencies responsible for outbreak response, guidelines for the retail food industry, and performance measures for foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response programs. Through these efforts, CIFOR has become internationally recognized for its contributions to food safety and public health.

In April 2015, CIFOR began crafting a new vision and five-year strategic plan (“the plan”) for going forward, building both on its own past accomplishments and new strengths and capacities which have emerged in the field of foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response and prevention (“outbreak response”). The plan provides a framework for CIFOR’s activities and clarifies and strengthens its relationship with its member agencies and associations and with other entities that are actively working to improve outbreak response. CIFOR will assess the plan’s progress and monitor changes in the science and practice of outbreak response over time, with a goal of updating the plan every five years.

Building on the Mission and Vision

From inception CIFOR has focused on partnership and collaboration, a philosophy captured in its vision statement:

Local, state and federal partners collaborating effectively to reduce the burden of foodborne illness in the United States.

CIFOR is one of the only entities with representation across the entire spectrum of organizations, jurisdictions, geographies, and professions that focuses on outbreak response. This provides a unique perspective and unmatched opportunity for identifying needs in outbreak response and developing recommendations to address those needs.

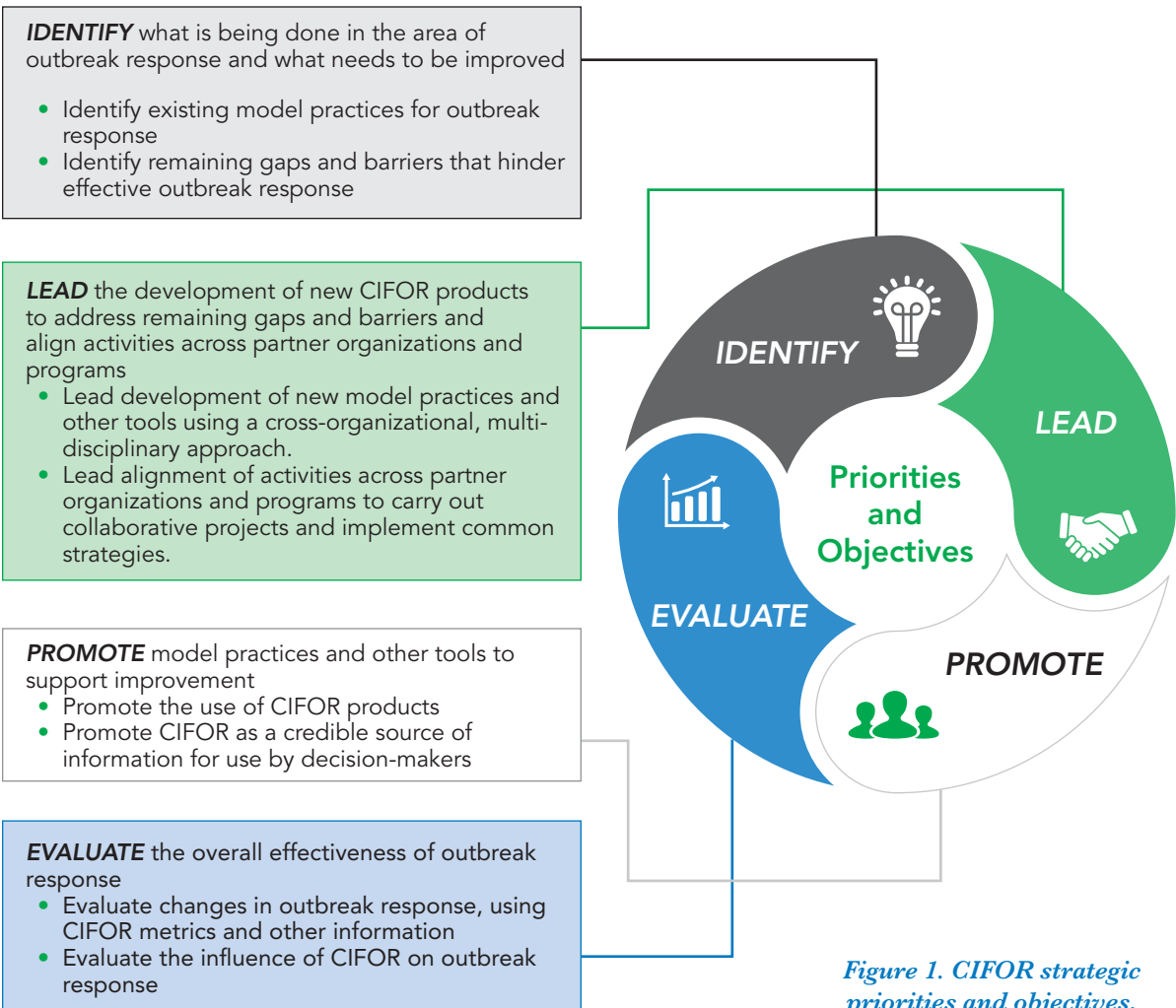
A unique CIFOR perspective informs and facilitates its mission:

To improve methods and processes at the local, state, and federal levels to detect, investigate, control and prevent foodborne disease outbreaks.

CIFOR has identified **four key priorities** and **eight objectives** to achieve its mission and guide actions in coming years. These priorities and objectives are summarized in Figure 1 and discussed in the following section.

CIFOR’s process is cyclical, with knowledge obtained in each priority area used to inform and influence decisions and actions in other priority areas.

Priorities and Objectives



Priorities and Objectives

PRIORITY 1:

IDENTIFY what is being done in the area of outbreak response and what needs to be improved

- **Objective 1** - Identify existing model practices and tools for outbreak response
- **Objective 2** - Identify remaining gaps and barriers that hinder effective outbreak response

CIFOR member organizations and programs that specialize in foodborne disease outbreaks are generating knowledge about what works and what is needed to improve outbreak response. However, distribution of knowledge tends to be limited to members and close networks of the organizations and programs. Further, information and recommendations gleaned from actual outbreak responses can be difficult to collect and disseminate. CIFOR is well positioned to serve as a convener and collector of information from a variety of sources in order to identify existing model practices and tools and to identify remaining gaps and barriers.

PRIORITY 2:

LEAD the development of new CIFOR products to address remaining gaps and barriers and align activities across partner organizations and programs

- **Objective 1** - Lead development of new model practices and other tools to address remaining gaps and barriers using a cross-organizational, multi-disciplinary approach.
- **Objective 2** - Lead alignment of activities across partner organizations and programs to carry out collaborative projects and implement common strategies.

Through its work to identify needs and measure effectiveness in outbreak response, CIFOR has become a central point for tracking progress and priorities necessary for overall system improvement.

While many efforts to improve outbreak response will most effectively be carried out by individual organizations or programs, there are issues that require a multidisciplinary, cross-organizational perspective. Because of participation by all key outbreak response organizations, associations and programs at the local, state and federal level, CIFOR is uniquely qualified to lead new product development efforts by distilling information about gaps and barriers and information gained from previous outbreaks into model practices and other tools. CIFOR is also well positioned to identify opportunities for alignment across partner organizations and programs and lead collaborations focused on process improvement.

PRIORITY 3:

PROMOTE model practices and other tools to support improvement

- **Objective 1** - Promote the use of CIFOR products
- **Objective 2** - Promote CIFOR as a credible source of information for use by decision-makers

A key role for CIFOR is promotion of its model practices and implementation tools for outbreak response. CIFOR has created valuable products capturing model practices including the *Guidelines* and associated *Toolkit*, metrics for measuring effective outbreak response, *Outbreaks of Undetermined Etiology Guidelines*, *Lab-Epi Reporting Software*, and *Industry Guidelines*. All of these products have been well received, but there is a need for effective promotion and training to increase adoption at all levels of government. Adoption of CIFOR's model practices and tools will be increased if decision makers recognize the value of CIFOR's multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary composition in creating high quality products. Active promotion of CIFOR and its products is the key to making this happen.

Priorities and Objectives

PRIORITY 4:

EVALUATE the overall effectiveness of outbreak response

- **Objective 1** - Evaluate changes in outbreak response, using CIFOR metrics and other key statistics
- **Objective 2** - Evaluate the influence of CIFOR on outbreak response

With its ability to bring together organizations and interests associated with outbreak response,

CIFOR is well positioned to assess the effectiveness of these activities. The CIFOR Guidelines, Toolkit and associated metrics were developed to enable continuous quality improvement efforts targeted at outbreak response. CIFOR is also uniquely positioned to address issues related to evaluation such as standardizing approaches to surveillance and data collection. Finally, it is imperative that CIFOR conduct periodic self-evaluation to assure accountability.

Operationalizing the Strategic Plan

To operationalize this plan, CIFOR will create four Development Teams, one per priority, with content experts representing organizations and associations involved in outbreak response. These teams will identify the best course of action to pursue through strong technical expertise, extensive knowledge of any work currently underway, and creative thinking.

Development Teams will serve as think tanks that use objectives under each priority as a framework for identifying needs and generating ideas to address needs. CIFOR will create a charter for each Development Team, describing its purpose, roles of team members, expectations for the team and operating parameters. To facilitate this framework, CIFOR will revise its By-Laws to reflect roles and expectations for the Development Teams.

Development Teams will be responsible for defining project ideas to help meet objectives for each priority and address identified needs. This process will include creating project ideas within the Development Teams, soliciting project ideas from experts and on occasion, reviewing project proposals from outside organizations. While each Team will have a specific focus, Teams will work together to plan and package projects across priority areas. This will be critical to avoid silos between Teams and to streamline the process for project submission and review by CIFOR and potential funding agencies. In addition to new Development Team charters and By-Laws revisions, CIFOR will create guidelines for developing, submitting and approving project proposals that reinforce the new framework and assure any products fully support CIFOR's mission, vision, priorities and objectives.