

# Tabletop Exercises

An overview  
for the  
Safeguard Iowa Partnership



# Using HSIN Connect

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- This webinar is being recorded and a copy will be available on the Safeguard Iowa Partnership website for future viewing.
- At the end of the presentation the presenters will take questions. To submit a question use the Chat feature available on the left-hand side of your screen.

- Brought to you by Safeguard Iowa Partnership in collaboration with our partner Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management.



# Welcome and Introductions

- **John Halbrook** –  
Exercise Planner HSEMD



- **Steve Warren** –  
Exercise Planner HSEMD



# Webinar Objectives

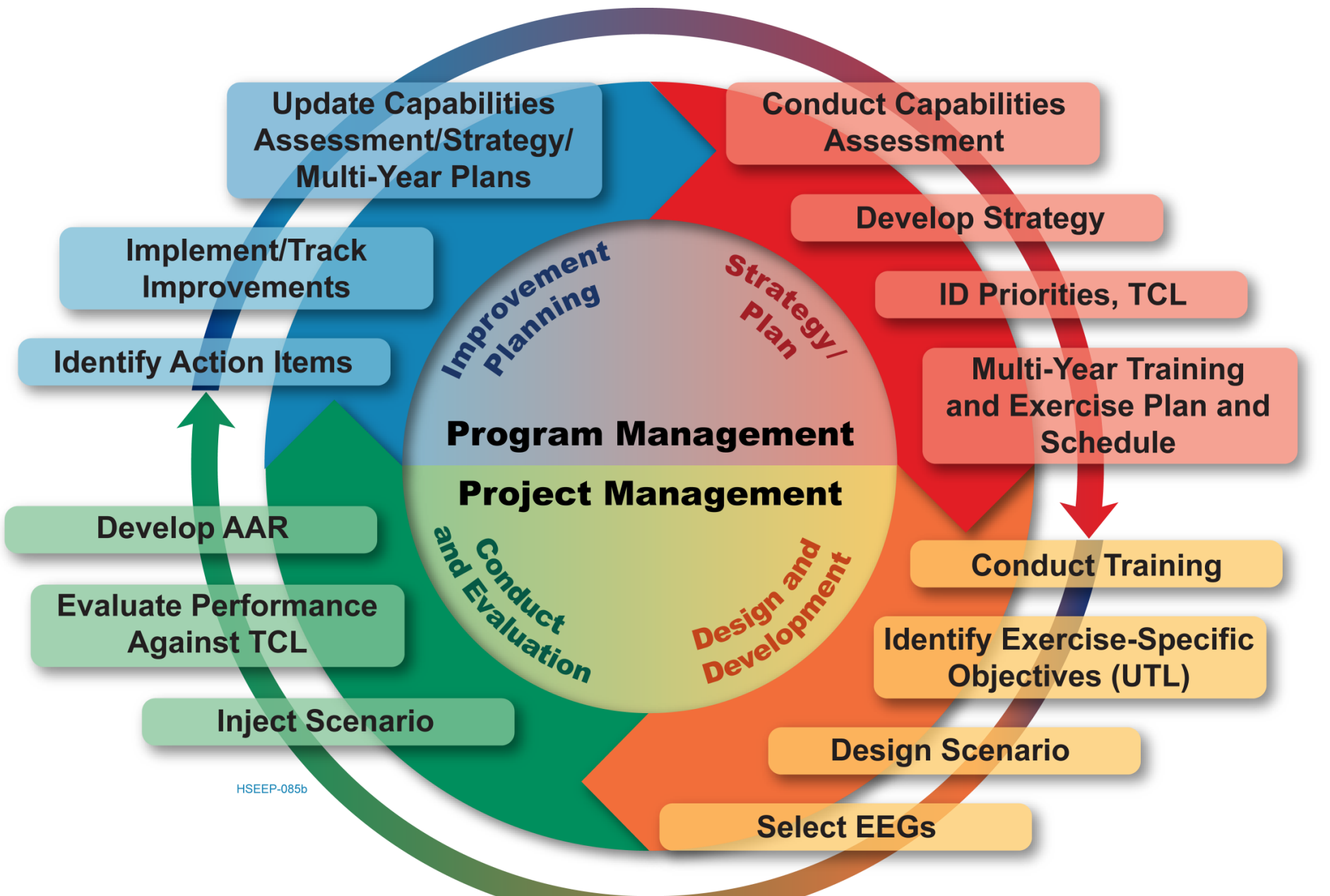
- Exercise philosophies and methodologies
- Describe the purposes and characteristics of a tabletop exercise.
- Describe the steps in facilitating a tabletop exercise.
- Review documents that can be used to support tabletop exercises (TTX)
- Moving forward from tabletop exercises

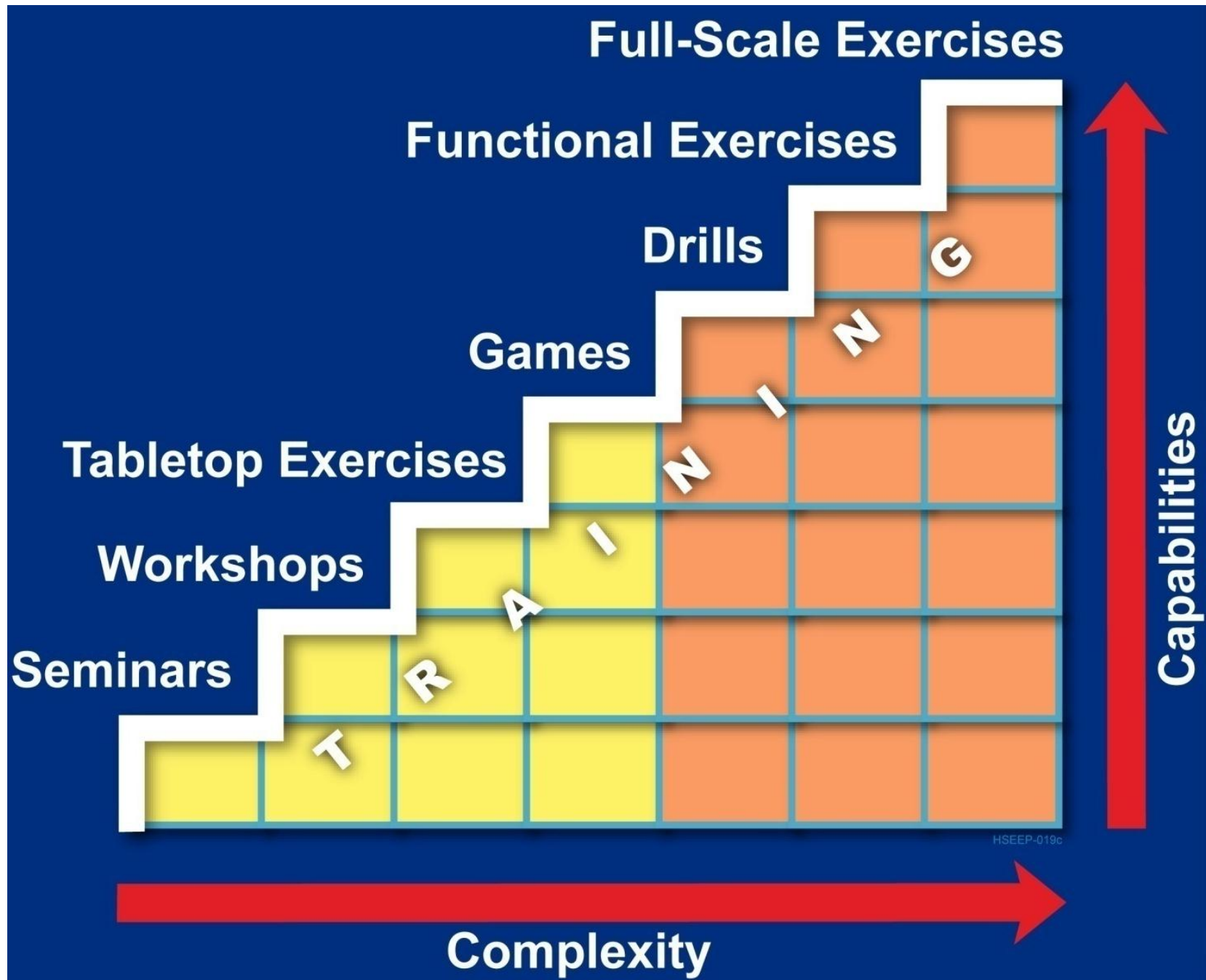
# HSEEP

- HSEEP = Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program
- A nationally recognized methodology
- Adopted from federal, military and private sector exercise programs
- Established based upon best practices
- Common structure and terminology

# Progressive Exercising

- Broad commitment: Multiple groups involved in planning, preparation, and execution.
- Careful planning: Each exercise carefully planned to achieve identified goals.
- Increasing complexity: Increasingly complex exercises build on each other until mastery is achieved.





HSEEP-019c

# Full-Scale Exercises

## Functional Exercises

### Drills

### Games

### Tabletop Exercises

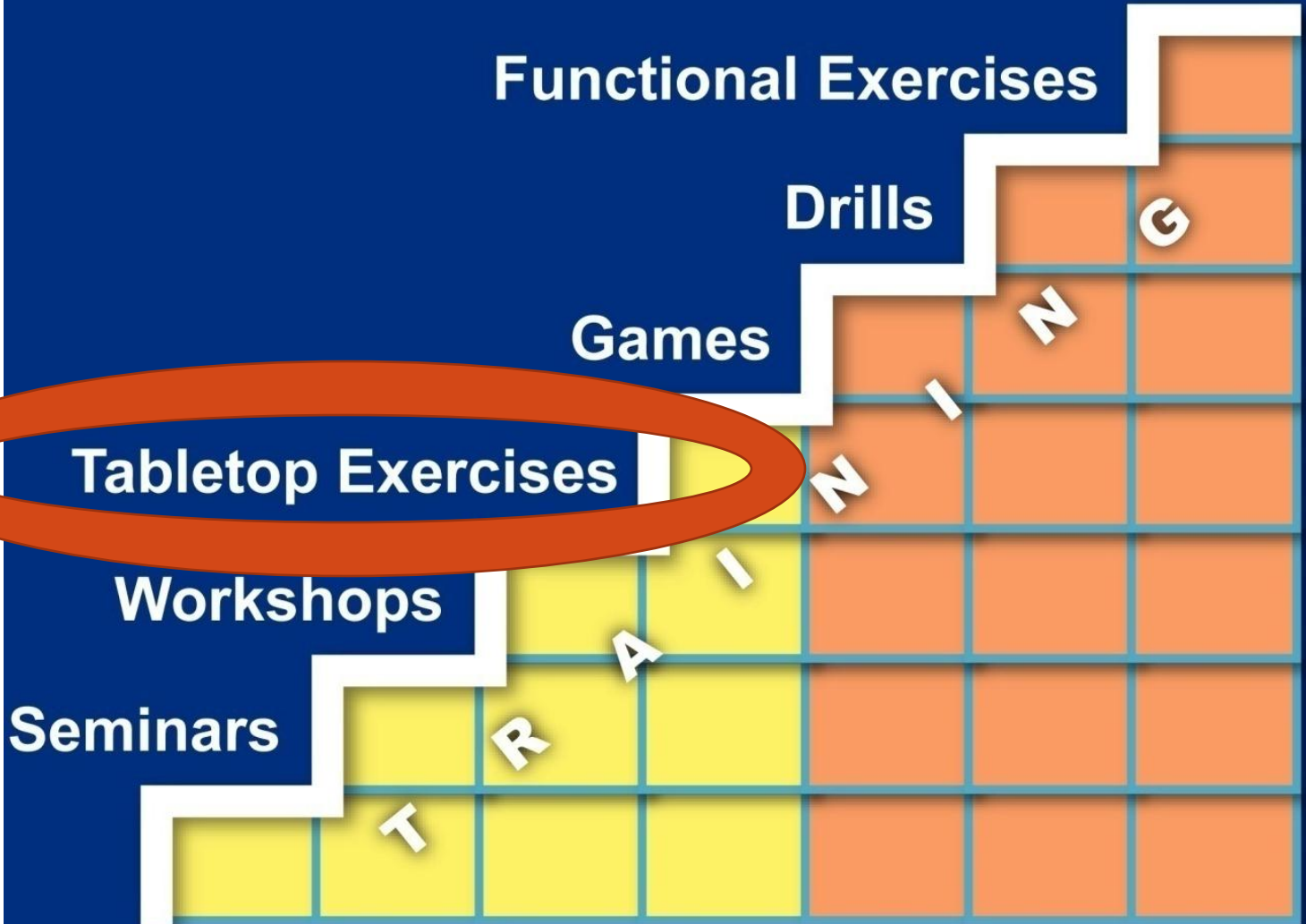
### Workshops

### Seminars

Capabilities

Complexity

HSEEP-019c



# Goals and Objectives

- We start with goals not Scenarios
  - Goals will tell us the scenarios that fit our exercise
  - If we start with the scenario we don't always fit in all of our goals
- Example
  - Identify which staff will set up an alternate work site during a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) event.
  - Identify IT connectivity gaps in our emergency plan
  - Evaluate the plans to mobilize the coordination center during an emergency.

# The Tabletop Exercise

Discussion Based

# Tabletop Characteristics

- Purpose: Solve problems as a group.
- Format:
  - Discussion guided by facilitator.
  - No simulators.
  - No elaborate facilities or communications.
- Audience
  - Policy and executive level (Think decision makers)
- Evaluation:
  - Observers may be present.
  - Success measured by participant feedback, impact on policies, plans, procedures.

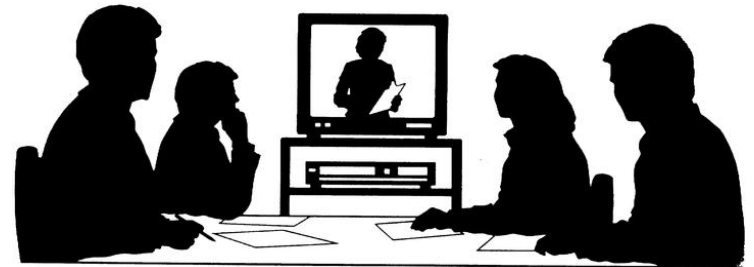
# Designing a Tabletop Exercise

- Use 8-step process, job aids
  - Needs Assessment
  - Scope
  - Purpose statement
  - Objectives
  - Narrative
  - Major/Minor Events
  - Expected Actions
  - Messages



# Applying the Design Steps

- Narrative:
  - Shorter
  - Printed (or in person, TV, radio)
  - As a whole or in parts
  - Discussion items
- Events:
  - Closely related to the objectives
  - Only a few are required
  - Used as basis for problem statements



# Applying the Design Steps

- Expected Actions:
  - List serves as a basis for developing problem statements and messages.
  - “Actions” may be discussion that leads to change.
- Messages:
  - A few may suffice.
  - May relate to major or detailed events.

# Facilities and Materials

- Classroom, Office space, conference facility, or Operations centers
- Materials:
  - Plans, policies
  - Maps
  - Other references



# Problem Statements, Messages

- Present verbal problem statements to:
  - Group.
  - Individuals, then open discussion to group.
- Deliver prescribed messages to individuals, who coordinate with others and respond.
- Take time to resolve tough problems.



# Facilitating the Exercise

- Strategies for setting the stage:
  - Welcome
  - Briefing
  - Narrative
  - Ice breaker



# Facilitating the Exercise

- Strategies for involving everyone:
  - Organize messages
  - Encourage
  - Elicit—do not provide—solutions
  - Eye contact
  - Positive
  - Reinforcement



# Supporting Documents

- Situation Manuals
  - Provides players all of the background information they need for the exercise
  - Lists Scope, Purpose Statement and Objectives
  - Defines roles and responsibilities for all participants
  - Establishes the exercise “Rules”
  - Exercise Agenda
  - May Provide players with the questions and references
- Should be distributed before the exercise

# Evaluating the Exercise

- Scribes can take notes during discussions (if appropriate)
- Participant feedback forms
  - Capture players concerns and observations
  - Help make future activities more appropriate for audience
- Outside evaluators and experts can identify improvements or issues.

# Tools and Templates

- HSEEP/Exercise Design class
  - January 24-27 2012
  - October 16-19<sup>th</sup> 2012
- Iowa Homeland Security Emergency Management
  - <http://www.iowahomelandsecurity.org/>
- HSEEP website
  - <https://hseep.dhs.gov>
- Exercise document templates
  - [https://hseep.dhs.gov/hseep\\_Vols](https://hseep.dhs.gov/hseep_Vols)

# Thank You

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# Questions?

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