
Section 7. Implement the Program

7.1. Overview

After developing the Program Plan, the next step is to recruit, train, and credential all NET Guard team members so they have the validated knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the tasks identified in the plan. Team members will also need to understand the principles of disaster management and participate in joint exercises so that they can effectively work within the local emergency management structure.



7.2. Implementing the Program Development Plan

Implementing the NET Guard program development plan outlined in Section 6 operationalizes the plans, procedures, partnerships, and documents that you created. Opening the NET Guard Program to volunteers typically begins by promoting a kickoff meeting using the channels identified in the program development plan. Potential volunteers are invited to attend the meeting where the Program Manager or a designee outlines the NET Guard Program, roles, responsibilities, and conditions.

It is important to have a completed program development plan and have a schedule of NET Guard activities prior to scheduling the kickoff meeting. These activities can include trainings, guest speakers, exercises, organizational meetings, or other activities. Keeping volunteers engaged in performing meaningful tasks is critical to long-term sustainability. If volunteers feel under-utilized or believe that the NET Guard Program is not active, they will likely cease to participate in the Program. Once this occurs, it is very difficult to have them return. Worse yet, they may discourage friends and coworkers from participating.

7.3. Promoting the Program and Scheduling a Kickoff Meeting

Once the program framework and management policies are established, begin recruiting volunteers from the resources and strategies laid out in the program development plan.

Use the partnerships formed during the program development to distribute information about the kickoff meeting. Successful recruiting has occurred from the CERT Program, Medical Reserve Corps, local amateur radio community, and professional organizations that deal with technology,

emergency management, or business resiliency issues. Other places to advertise about NET Guard include public access television, newspapers, and especially the internet, including email distribution lists, social media, and announcements on your housing organization's website. Be sure to include in your outreach efforts a general overview of NET Guard, a list of the types of positions within your NET Guard Program, requirements to become a volunteer, the time and location of the meeting, and contact information for follow-up.

The HandsOn Network/CNCS Volunteer Management Guidebook provides several tips on communicating with volunteers including:

- Be prompt in your response to phone calls/e-mails. Return volunteer calls or e-mails within 24 hours
- Be thorough in your explanation of the volunteer duties. Volunteers will be more likely to sign up if they know exactly what they will be doing, and they will know what to expect at the project
- Use this opportunity to teach potential volunteers about the issue area, the community service organization they will be serving, and the potential impact of the project
- Use their names often; this helps develop a personal connection
- Keep the commitments you make. People will not support you if you don't provide information requested, address issues they bring up, and/or miss scheduled appointments

7.4. Hosting the Kickoff Meeting

Kickoff meetings for NET Guard Programs have had up to 75 people attend. The meeting should take between 2-3 hours at most to introduce the NET Guard Program and answer any questions the attendees may have about the program.

Ideas on what to cover during the Kickoff Meeting (adapted from the HandsOn Network/CNCS Volunteer Management Guidebook) include:

- Introduce yourself (or another staff person, partner, or volunteer) as the NET Guard Program Manager. Give attendees an opportunity to introduce themselves briefly and their interest in the program
- Thank attendees for interest in volunteering.
- Pass around a sign in sheet to allow volunteers to "check-in." Be sure to include a space for their email, phone number, and any other contact information such as radio call sign. Consider issuing nametags to allow volunteers to get to know each other
- Provide information on the national NET Guard Program
 - History of NET Guard
 - What is a NET Guard Team?
 - How NET Guard interacts with the emergency response system and the community

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- Provide information about the local NET Guard Program
 - The NET Guard mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the NET Guard Program
 - A description of the local program organization (determined by local program)
 - How teams work (local activation protocol, team communication method (determined by local program)
 - The program's expectations of the volunteer
 - Introduce volunteers to the standards, policies, and procedures of the NET Guard Program
 - Describe NET Guard program and team roles and give potential volunteers an opportunity to ask questions and clarify options for service
 - Distribute a NET Guard volunteer application form during the meeting
 - Inform volunteers how they will be contacted regarding any additional interviews or for discussions regarding assignments
 - Provide information on the next meeting, project, or training, and ask who will be attending. Ideally, provide the date and time, address, directions, anything volunteers should bring or do to prepare for the meeting, and parking information. If next meeting is not scheduled, inform the volunteers how this information will be provided (email, posted on website, etc.)
 - Tell volunteers whom to contact if they have a change in plans
 - Thank the volunteers for their time and participation

7.5. Follow-Up Activities including Trainings and Tabletop Exercises

It is critical to keep volunteers engaged in regular, meaningful activities and recognize them for their efforts. Retaining volunteers is essential to the success of your NET Guard Program. From beginning to end, volunteers need to feel good about themselves and their service.

Meaningful planned activities are key. The program development plan you created should include a list of trainings, exercises, and activities for NET Guard volunteers. An important concept to note is to “plan a step ahead.” In practice, this means knowing the agenda for the following meeting, training, or activity before announcing it to the NET Guard volunteers. Some tips for scheduling future events include:

- **Include the volunteers in planning activities.** Bring a tentative training, meeting, and activity schedule to the first meeting. Ask the participants if the schedule meets priorities and is feasible. Ask for suggested activities and recommendations for sources for training or exercises. Identify partner organizations and volunteers with expertise and skills in ITC-

related topics such as amateur radio technology, networking, or GIS technology they can provide for the team

- **Have a Reason to Meet** - Always have a reason or objective for your meeting
- **Set an Agenda** - Having an agenda in advance to send to volunteers will improve attendance and contribute to an effective and productive meeting. Make sure that all of your meetings have a printed agenda
- **Keep It Short** - Keep your meetings short and to the point. An agenda and one or two objectives will help, but always be aware of keeping to the planned meeting time. Stay on task and, if you get done early, thank them and let them go home! Unless you are doing some major training or exercise, avoid going more than 2 hours
- **Offer Food and Drinks** – Plan to provide refreshments during meetings. Most volunteer groups are ready to organize to take turns bringing light refreshments
- **Continue to Offer Training** -Expand beyond just the basic NET Guard and FEMA emergency response training. Consider working with the local CERT Program to encourage NET Guard volunteers to become CERT-trained. Additional emergency response training is obtainable by working or partnering with organizations such as the local Red Cross chapter, local Voluntary Organizations in Disaster (VOAD), or hospital. Organizations that coordinate virtual volunteers also provide opportunities for training in social media or web-based and new technology response tools.
- **Schedule Tabletop Exercises, and NET Guard Participation in Community Exercises** -- Exercises are a great way to test your team's capabilities and practice new skills or services in new situations. Try to schedule at least one exercise per year, preferably two. Exercises are also a great way to get recognition for your team. Consider invitations to local media and do a write-up on your website, in a newsletter, or in a newspaper or magazine
Section 9 of the NET Guard Program Guide covers Program Evaluation, of which a major component are exercises.

7.6.Tools to Help Implement the NET Guard Program

Tool Kit items relating to this section of the NET Guard Guide are listed below.

Title or Description	File Name	Public/Private
CNCS and HandsOn Network Handbook on Volunteer Management	Hands On Network and CNCS - Volunteer Management Guide.pdf http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nonprofitgov/toptools	Either
FEMA Course Manual for IS 244, IS-244 Developing and Managing Volunteers	FEMA - IS244A Course Manual.pdf	Either

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