
Section 8. Sustain the Program

8.1. Overview

Once the NET Guard Program is implemented, resources and care are required to ensure that the NET Guard Program can be sustained long term and deployed in the event of an emergency. Sustainability is challenging and requires consistent support and collaboration with partners.



8.2. Ongoing program management and administration

A solid management team is important in growing and sustaining a program. Concepts that can help with program management include:

- Using dedicated volunteers to fill important team management roles
- Having each team member be responsible for specific aspects of the program
- Using cross-training and rotations to ensure that there is continuity and the team is not dependent on any one member.
- Engaging volunteers in program marketing to recruit new volunteers and build strong public and private partnerships

8.3. Maintaining and Building New Public and Private Partnerships

Partnership building – with both public and private groups or agencies – is an ongoing process. Changes in government agencies and partner organization leaders or contacts are almost inevitable; be aware of any changes in personnel that occur and bring the new personnel into the NET Guard Program’s partnership as early as possible. Changes in staff very often mean changes in policies and priorities, so maintain regular communication. When there are changes, work with outgoing contacts personally to introduce the Program to the incoming contacts to help ensure that NET Guard continues to be a priority. Make sure to promote the benefits of the partnerships to new contacts and to retain agreements for sharing resources. This type of relationship building should exist on all governmental levels that the Program deals with – local, state, and federal. The stronger the relationships with these agencies, the more success the Program will have in sustaining the NET Guard Program.

The same is true for maintaining private partnerships. Besides the challenges of personnel changes, be aware of and in tune with shifts in corporate culture that can impact their priorities for donations and grants that the program previously relied on. Regular communication with the private partners will keep them aware of ongoing changes or new developments in the program and promote an understanding of its importance.

8.4. Retaining volunteers and integrating new volunteers

Retaining volunteers and integrating new volunteers requires continuation of the volunteer management and support functions that begin with the recruitment of volunteers described in earlier sections:

- Program promotion and volunteer recruitment
- Regularly scheduled productive meetings incorporating training and exercises
- Training
- Exercises
- Communication plan with regular program updates and opportunities for information sharing

The program should maintain an active recruiting program – even when the NET Guard Program is “fully staffed”. Ongoing recruiting and training of volunteers will ensure that the program has depth for response capacity and can expand services. It also sends a clear message to the volunteers of the seriousness of the NET Guard Program and the importance of ensuring services delivery in an emergency.

In addition to regular meetings and training, communication is an important tool for retaining and integrating volunteers. Regular communication with the volunteers not only keeps them informed of changes or new developments in the NET Guard plan, but also allows them to share in the challenges and successes. Consider email newsletters or updates and other group-managed information sharing tools.

Training should be an ongoing part of any NET Guard Program. Even after the volunteers have completed all of the training that the NET Guard Program initially requires, regular “continuing education” is a good way to keep volunteers involved and encourage team cohesion. In addition to classroom training, conduct exercises and other projects and activities on a regular basis to ensure that, in the event of a deployment, the volunteer team will function capably.

8.5. Tracking and Maintaining Equipment and Other Resources

Equipment, supplies and other resources are a fundamental aspect of the NET Guard Program. Equipment should be tested regularly, and repaired, upgraded or replaced if it becomes obsolete. The ability to successfully deploy the NET Guard Program in the event of an emergency hinges on

the resources the program relies on being available and functional. The following organizational tools can help keep track of the equipment and resources required by the NET Guard Program:

- **Equipment and supply inventory log reports** – The frequency of this reporting is dependent on the size and scope of the NET Guard equipment. An inventory of all equipment and supplies that will be in use if the program is deployed, should be conducted on a regular basis and especially when equipment is used or moved.
- **Equipment maintenance log reports** – All stored physical equipment should be tested regularly, and any non-functioning equipment should be replaced or repaired as quickly as is practical. Testing equipment like computers, monitors, routers, cabling and backup generators can be done in conjunction with program exercises or as a separate maintenance task with all repairs and replacements logged in a maintenance report.
- **Partner functionality survey reports** – If the NET Guard Program is dependent on resources provided by a partner (for example, a redundant data line, or a satellite internet connection), conduct regular surveys to determine that nothing has changed on the partner's side that will affect the functionality of the NET Guard Program. Telecommunication providers routinely reconfigure their networks, so it is important that you survey them regularly to determine if any changes they might have made will affect the NET Guard Program.

8.6. Optimizing Strategic Partnerships

Once the Program has established strategic partnerships – whether with a public or private entity – look for ways to optimize those partnerships. All partners will appreciate recognition for their contributions. Consider including names of the strategic partners on printed recruiting or informational material newsletters, or other forms of communication to the public. Recognizing the contributions made by the strategic partners demonstrates appreciation and informs the community at large of the partnerships that support the Program.

Once you have established a NET Guard Program team, you will need to continue to solicit broad based community support. NET Guard's success depends upon diverse resources (funds, in-kind donations and volunteers) and optimum use of the services by the community and community organizations.

8.7. Tools to Help Sustain the Program

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

Title or Description	File Name	Public/ Private
CNCS Toolkit for Program Sustainability, Capacity Building, and Volunteer Recruitment-Management	CNCS - Toolkit for Program Sustainability, Capacity Building, and Volunteer Recruitment-Management.pdf	Either
Medical Reserve Corps Technical Assistance Series - Guidelines for Developing and Managing an MRC Unit	MRC - 5-5_Special_Topics_Guidelines_(FINAL)(1).pdf	Either
Medical Reserve Corps Technical Assistance Series - Sustainability	MRC - 5-3_Special_Topics_Sustainability_(FINAL).pdf	Either
Medical Reserve Corps Technical Assistance Series - Volunteer Retention and Recognition	MRC - 5-4_Special_Topics_Volunteer_(FINAL)(1).pdf	Either