

Medical Reserve Corps
Office of the Surgeon General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Technical Assistance Series
Special Topics: Sustainability

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www.medicalreservecorps.gov

Medical Reserve Corps Technical Assistance Series



Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

As part of its effort to support the growth and sustainability of **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** units across the United States, the MRC Program Office—headquartered in the office of the U.S. Surgeon General—has developed a series of technical assistance documents. Each one addresses topics considered important for MRC units. The Technical Assistance Series is available at: www.medicalreservecorps.gov. Some of the topics addressed are as follows:

- **Getting Started: A Guide for Local Leaders**

Each MRC functions differently. The first step in forming a unit is to carefully evaluate your local situation. It is important to secure a broad base of support from others in your community. Identifying and acquiring resources is essential to meeting your MRC's operational needs.

- **Organizing an MRC Unit: Operational Components and the Coordinator's Role**

The coordinator's main job is matching community needs for emergency medical response and public health initiatives with local volunteer capabilities. Establishing and sustaining the unit's internal organization also is a priority.

- **Coordinating With Your Local Response Partners**

MRC units supplement a community's existing emergency medical response capabilities and public health infrastructure. Coordinating with local response partners is critical, as is developing and nurturing a broad network of partners. Conducting exercises with response partners will be necessary, as will close communications during and after an emergency or engagement.

- **Developing Volunteer Relationships and Capabilities**

Developing volunteer capabilities is a key mandate for every MRC unit. The process begins by advertising your MRC unit to the community. As volunteers are screened and matched with existing needs, they must be informed of any risks associated with their MRC activities. They also will require additional training.

- **Establishing and Maintaining Your MRC Unit's Organization**

A well-run organization is the foundation for every successful MRC unit. Information must be tracked and updated for volunteers and local partners. Policies must be established and followed. Operating funds must be solicited, along with leveraged public and private sector resources. Planning—strategically, financially, and operationally—is an essential, ongoing function of the MRC unit's administrators.

- **Special Topics**

Some of the more complex aspects of operating an MRC unit are related to differences in local laws and the evolving technical nature of the MRC's work. For example, legal liability is something every unit member should know about. Another special topic of interest to MRC units is sustainability. Special publications address these and other emerging topics.



The **Medical Reserve Corps** program is sponsored by the U.S. Surgeon General's Office in cooperation with the White House's **USA Freedom Corps** and the Department of Homeland Security's **Citizen Corps**.





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The information in this publication is intended as a general guide to establishing and operating a Medical Reserve Corps unit. The MRC Program Office encourages communities to consider alternative approaches that may offer a better fit for their local circumstances, resources, and needs. The MRC Program Office welcomes learning from these successes.

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Special Topics: Sustainability

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Sustainability

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Sustainability

Sustainability is a critical topic for Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units nationwide. Each MRC faces different circumstances regarding sustainability and funding based on their local situation. Nationwide, the MRC proves its value and worth. Local units are demonstrating that they have helped increase public health preparedness and bolstered public health infrastructure in their communities through MRC volunteer activities. This leads to support outside of their sponsoring agency—community and key stakeholder support ensures sustainability.

One traditional definition of *sustainability* is “to keep in existence; to maintain or prolong.” Another interpretation is that sustainability incorporates a practice into a community or permanently instills a practice in a community. The MRC has extended this definition since the program’s inception in 2002. Although 166 MRC units were recipients of the Office of the Surgeon General-sponsored MRC Demonstration Project, which funded local sponsoring agencies (42 in 2002 and 124 in 2003) for 3 years, more than 300 MRC units found various ways to develop and sustain additional operating entities.

Funding is one component of sustainability, and there are other key elements that ensure it.

Elements of Sustainability

- **Internal (institutional) capacity** identifies and addresses maintenance issues, such as developing a process for replacing members/cultivating new leaders/volunteers and a sound organizational structure to facilitate action/team spirit.
- **Strategic planning and implementation** transforms your vision and mission into reality using logic models and action plans.
- **Financial security** allows you to develop a resource plan with diverse funding streams and cultivate in-kind (material, human) resources.
- **Integration of efforts** institutionalizes programs, policies, and services into other community initiatives.
- **Communication** cultivates buy-in and visibility in and outside your MRC unit.
- **Community champions** can support your efforts.
- **Demonstrated value** shows that your MRC unit is an indispensable resource.

Medical Reserve Corps Sustainability Work Group

The MRC Sustainability Work Group (SWG) was formed at the Region III meeting in November 2005 to identify sustainability needs that MRC units have and to provide guidance on how to address them.



The SWG's objectives are to:

- Address financial health and sustainability of all MRC units
- Assist MRC units with monitoring their individual financial health
- Target the future financial needs of the MRC nationally
- Supply recommendations for future sustainability with additional funding sources

The SWG surveyed 363 MRC unit and state coordinators, and 108 individuals participated. The results were shared at the 2006 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference.

Some of the SWG's recommendations are to:

- Build stronger relationships with your health department, emergency service agencies, local hospitals, health insurers, and pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies
- Secure the time and effort to research and write grants. Without paid staff or a nonprofit partner that has paid staff responsible for these activities, it is unlikely an MRC will be able to secure grants.
- Hire a professional grant writer/manager or find a volunteer with the background and time.
- Develop a strategic alliance or partnership with a strong nonprofit or governmental entity to act as a fiduciary entity and to be responsible for the grants writing and management task.
- Work on a regional level with other MRC units to secure regional funds.

The SWG engages MRC leaders in sustainability. The SWG intends to collect best practices and lessons learned about sustainability and will provide more guidance and resources to the MRC.

What Do Supporters and Funders Look For?

- **Organizational history/competence**—Demonstrate and promote your unit's value through documentation of your unit's activities and accomplishments.
- **Identification and understanding of needs/assets**—Demonstrate that your unit's activities meet identified needs and resources in the community, and support this with needs assessment results, after-action reports, etc.
- **Readiness**—Participate in public health and preparedness training, exercises, and general activities that will prove readiness.
- **Compatibility with the funder's identified mission**—Confirm that your mission, goals, and objectives are consistent with those of a potential funder.
- **Evidence-based strategies**—Adopt realistic, proven strategies that will lead to solid end results and translate to organizational credibility.

- **Measurable outcomes/impact**—Create measurable outcomes to reveal the extent and impact the MRC has made at the community level.
- **Accountability**—Maintain general accountability to all key stakeholders: volunteers and their families, community, sponsoring organization, program partners, and funders.
- **Consistency**—Establish goals and objectives consistent with your unit’s mission, and remain focused on the plan.
- **Collaboration**—Collaborate and align with key stakeholder partners to strengthen and develop your MRC unit’s mission.
- **Cost effectiveness**—Analyze and compare the costs associated with the mission, actions, and outcomes your MRC is conducting.
- **Realistic goals and budget**—Establish goals and budget objectives consistent with your MRC unit and sponsoring agency’s mission.
- **Leveraging/matching resources**—Develop local partnerships and collaborative efforts to ensure a sustainable, integrated MRC.
- **Sustainability**—Demonstrate—to potential funders—that the unit has the capacity to provide its services to the community in the long term—show diversification of financial and material support, stakeholder buy-in, and integration into community plans.

Resources

Links Related to Sustainability and Funding

- Associated Grant Makers: <http://www.agmconnect.org>
- Charity Channel: <http://charitychannel.com/>
- Chronicle of Philanthropy: <http://philanthropy.com/>
- Forum for Fundraising: www.forumforfundraising.com
- Fundsnet Services: www.fundsnet.com
- Grantmakers In Health: www.gih.org
- Grants.Gov: <http://www.grants.gov/>
- The Foundation Center: <http://foundationcenter.org/>
- The Foundation Directory Online: www.fconline.org
- U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov

Articles and Other Resources Related to Sustainability and Funding

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About CDC: Funding and Procurement, Procurement and Grants Office:
<http://www.cdc.gov/about/funding.htm>
- CharityChannel, LLC; Volunteer Management Review; *Write the Path to Your Successful Future: Goal Setting 101*:
<http://charitychannel.com/publish/templates/?a=9494&z=24>
- Corporation for National and Community Service, Online Learning Center:
http://my.nationalservice.org/outstart_db/
- Foundation Center, Proposal Writing Short Course:
<http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/index.html>
- Harvard Business School, Working Knowledge for Business Leaders Archive, *Ways to Market Social Responsibility*:
http://workingknowledge.hbs.edu/pubitem.jhtml?id=4716&sid=-1&t=special_reports
- Medical Reserve Corps, Potential Private Funding Sources:
<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/PotentialPrivateFunding>
- National Association of County and City Health Officials, Programs and Activities, Funding Opportunities: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/fundingguide/index.cfm>
- Non-Profit Guides: <http://www.npguides.org/>
- The Center for Public Justice, Charitable Choice—Faith and Community Liaisons:
<http://www.cpjustice.org/charitablechoice/faithbystate>
- The EIIP Virtual Forum; Virtual Forum Presentation February 9, 2005, *Grant Writing 101: Where to Ask and How to Get What You Want*.
<http://www.emforum.org/vforum/lc050209.htm>
- The Grant Institute: <http://www.thegrantinstitute.com>
- The Guide to Managing for Quality, SWOT Analysis:
<http://erc.msh.org/quality/ittools/itswot.cfm>
- The Research Assistant, Grantwriting and the Grantwriting Tutorial:
<http://www.theresearchassistant.com/tutorial/index.asp>
- University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Public Health; South Central Public Health Training Center, *Preparing a Competitive Grant Application*:
<http://www.southcentralpartnership.org/training/training.asp?ID=14>
- University of Kansas, Community Toolbox Table of Contents:
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/tools_toc.htm



- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, *How to Apply for Federal Funds*:
<http://www.hhs.gov/fbc/generalfund.html>
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Grants and Training:
http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/grants_goals.htm
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Working with DHS, Government, Open for Business—Grants:
http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0355.xml
- <http://www.grants.gov/section910/spreadthewordwebcast.pdf>

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- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. (2000, June). *Getting to Outcomes*.