



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 2: Maintaining Partnerships

Overview

As your CERT program grows, the partnerships that you established when starting your program will become even more important. You'll also want to develop new partnerships that will help your program expand. This step presents ideas for maintaining and expanding partnerships.

Contents

This step includes the following resources:

- Communicating Successes
 - Tips for Maintaining Partnerships
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Web Resources

- "The Connection" Newsletter
Web Address: <http://www.naem.com/connection.html>
 - Keep Them Coming Back: Tips From the Field, Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service
Web Address: <http://www.txserve.org/mgmt/volrec/tips.html>
 - Recognizing Volunteers
Web Address: <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/aleav.html>
 - Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-by-Step Guide to Working with the Media
Web Address: <http://www.benton.org/Practice/Features/stratcommrevw.html>
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How To: Communicating Success

Whether you are marketing CERT initially or working to gain additional support, it is important that you communicate CERT successes. By communicating successes, you will garner more support from the community by establishing a familiar presence for the program over a period of time.

Establishing a Communication Strategy

Because CERTs deal with everyday citizens, CERT success stories make good news stories. Communicating successes should be an on-going effort because every segment of the community has potential CERT volunteers or sponsors. Seeing CERTs in action and involved in the public safety of individuals, families, employees, and the community can motivate volunteers and sponsors to want to become involved with the program.

In planning local media efforts, start by recognizing that a strong committee will make the job easier and more effective. Regardless of how many different audiences need to be reached, a strong communications program requires an energetic leader, with partners and volunteers who can disseminate the information about what CERTs are and what they do.

Developing and Maintaining Media Relations

To help create a strong public information initiative, tap into people within your department or CERT volunteers who have relationships with the media. Build on existing relationships. You may want to have a Communications Committee.

If possible, identify one or more individuals with public relations or marketing backgrounds for your committee. CERT success will stem from a positive message of how the program can benefit the community. As you select Communications Committee members, consider those who:

- Own businesses.
- Are familiar with local media.
- Understand the uses of computers and the Internet.
- Have experience in fundraising.
- Can commit time to the CERT program.

Finally, invite members of the media to take the training. Having them participate and see the value of the training can make them an advocate. Many CERT programs have gained positive exposure by newspaper articles or brief coverage on the evening news.



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How To: Communicating Success (Continued)

Keeping Volunteers Involved

Although your CERT volunteers may be committed to the program, it is important to keep them involved by continuing to provide meaningful assignments.

Today's volunteers are looking for positions that present a challenge or the chance to learn a new skill. Some volunteers are looking to tap their creativity, meet other people, take a break from their jobs, or just feel like they're accomplishing something. If you create short- and long-term volunteer assignments with differing levels of commitment, you will be able to draw from a wider variety of volunteers. As you create the volunteer base, look for a volunteer manager who can help translate overall CERT needs into task assignments.

Your partners and volunteers are priceless assets. Use their abilities to help you meet CERT goals—not just in communicating successes but in other areas as well. Be sure to recognize their efforts through thank-you notes, awards ceremonies, or other means.

Introducing CERT to the Public

Volunteers who are already active in the CERT program may need no introduction. But there are many potential volunteers who don't know about CERTs or what they do. Some potential volunteers have no interest in being CERT members but would be willing to volunteer in other capacities. Introducing the CERT program and its scope can help draw volunteers to your program. Try the tips below to get your message out.

- Schedule a presentation about CERT. Bring in current CERT members, and allow them to talk about the program. If possible, bring in other Program Coordinators to describe their programs and share their success stories. Invite the media. Most importantly, stress the benefits to the entire community of having an active CERT program.
- Develop flyers, and distribute them at community events.
- Place short articles in neighborhood newsletters or local newspapers. Provide a contact phone number or email address so that people who have questions or want more information know who to call or where to go for that information.
- Place a teaser on an electronic community bulletin board, together with contact information for those who want more information.
- Look for other ways to keep your program visible—and ask CERT members to share their ideas.

Most importantly, present a consistent appearance for CERT in terms of its name and message so that CERT will become a symbol for the benefits it provides to the community.



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Words of Advice: Tips for Maintaining Partnerships

Rachel Jacky - Portland, Oregon **Every Aspect of CERT Demonstrates Partnerships**

We have partnerships with other agencies for their expertise, we partner with the business community for funding and supply assistance, and then we partner with our volunteers and enlist them as our own to spread the word, train one another, and build support.

It seems that every aspect of a CERT program demonstrates some kind of partnership. The primary partnership is between the agency that sponsors and trains the teams, and the citizens who give us their time, energy, and commitment to make the teams effective. We train and operate our teams in partnership with our professional responders. We exercise our teams in partnership with other CERT programs in our area. We equip our teams through partnerships with the private sector.

Joseph Daly - Edgewater, Florida **Working and Thinking Outside the Box**

After the CERTS complete their initial training courses, CPR training, ARC courses and disaster drills, etc. how do you maintain the group's interest? Edgewater CERTS form partnerships and become involved in community activities. The community involvement helps to sustain the CERT members interest in the program.

Frank Lucier - San Francisco, California **Partnerships Are Essential**

Partnerships (with fire departments, emergency medical, law enforcement, emergency managers) are essential for starting and maintaining a CERT program. Establishing partnerships eliminates many of the turf problems we have seen in the past.

Maintaining partnerships with the business community can be extremely beneficial. For example, Chevron Corporation became our partner in San Francisco early on in the program. We trained over 400 of their employees who lived in the City. In addition, they hosted, at their facility, three of the train-the-trainer programs. The Corporation continues to support the concept of CERT today by hosting BayNET, an association of CERT program coordinators in Northern California.

Stew Anderson - Natrona County, Wyoming **Partnerships and Resources**

Maintaining partnerships will help you obtain the people and materials needed for your CERT program. Encourage members of the press to observe CERT training and get involved in the program.



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Words of Advice: Tips for Maintaining Partnerships (Continued)

Joe Lowry - Memphis, Tennessee Partnerships and Expertise

We have partnerships with other agencies for their expertise, we partner with the business community for funding and supply assistance, and then we partner with our volunteers and enlist them as our own to spread the word, train one another, and build support.
