
UNIT 10: KEEPING YOUR PROGRAM GOING

In this unit you will learn about:

- **Essential Skills and Abilities.** Your strengths, what more you need to learn, what you need to do yourself, and what you can delegate.
- **Keeping a CERT Program Alive.** The five critical elements required to keep your CERT program healthy and viable.
- **Program Maintenance Matrix.** Technique to identify activities contributing most significantly to your program's maintenance.

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UNIT OVERVIEW

A sustainable CERT program must have a strong Program Manager who is competent and able to consider both the short- and long-term program coordination requirements. This unit looks at:

- Essential skills and abilities the Program Manager should possess
- Critical elements involved in keeping a program alive
- Use of a program maintenance matrix to identify activities that contribute most

At the conclusion of this unit, the participants will be able to describe how to sustain your local CERT program:

- Describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities a Program Manager must possess in order to coordinate a program.
- Identify elements necessary for sustaining a program.
- Explain a technique for identifying program activities that contribute most significantly to program maintenance.

This unit will look at the following topics:

- Essential Skills and Abilities
- Keeping a Program Alive

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES

WHO ARE PROGRAM MANAGERS?

There are two types of people who start a CERT program:

- Forward-thinking champions
- The person who is told to go start a program

Both may end up being champions, although they get into the job differently.

Starting a CERT program is only part of the job. Once the program is underway, the real challenge begins – keeping the program going and making sure that it is effective and stays strong and viable.

There are certain things you must know to start and maintain a CERT program. These include but are not limited to:

- How to manage volunteers (and how it differs from managing staff), including recruitment, retention, and termination
- How to accommodate all the volunteers regardless of skills and abilities
- How to promote the program to the community, media, elected officials, potential sponsors, etc.
- How to convince veteran police and fire chiefs to want to use volunteers by building organizational support/sponsorship
- How to manage the time commitment and amount of resources required to run a successful program (whether your CERT position is employing you or not)
- How to properly address legal hurdles and aspects of the program
- How to prove the value of the program (ability to quantify the program's effectiveness)

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ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES (CONTINUED)

- How to develop program support from elected officials for program activities (such as giving credit for CERT high school training)
- What your CERT program's role is in your specific community's emergency operations plan

This list is not exhaustive by any means. It will vary by community and/or the region in which the CERT program exists.

SKILLS THE PROGRAM MANAGER NEEDS

Experienced Program Managers know that being a Program Manager is rewarding. They also know that it is not easy. Program Managers need a toolbox of skills in order to accomplish the responsibilities of the job.

A listing of Program Manager skills and abilities was developed as part of the design process of this course. The list includes:

- Tact
- Political savvy
- Passion
- Flexibility
- Leadership skills
- Comfort with public speaking
- Ability to motivate
- Trustworthiness
- Ability to be cool under pressure
- Organizational triage skills
- Commitment/dedication

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ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES (CONTINUED)

- Good communication skills
- High energy level
- Team concept
- Ability to plan and to write

EXERCISE: GROUP AND DRAFT PROGRAM PLAN: MY DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Being a Program Manager is both satisfying and challenging. Effective Program Managers develop a good sense of where their strengths are and where they need to learn more, what they need to do themselves, and what they can delegate.

Purpose: This exercise allows you to identify specific areas of strength, areas of weakness, and areas that you can delegate to others.

Instructions: Follow the steps below to conduct the exercise.

1. Complete the group activity as directed by the instructor.
2. Then go to the Draft Program Plan in Unit 1.
3. Individually complete the first part of the tenth section, *Keeping the Program Going*.
 - a. Three areas where you do well (three strengths)
 - b. Three areas where you want or need to learn more
 - c. Three areas that you might want to delegate or share

KEEPING A PROGRAM ALIVE

Given all the concepts covered so far, it should be clear that there is a lot more to running a CERT program than simply providing *CERT Basic Training*. A CERT program is usually involved in a number of activities and the CERT Program Manager is responsible for most of them.

FIVE CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Keeping a program going involves five critical elements. All of the activities just mentioned address one or more of these five elements:

- Volunteers are retained.
- Skills are sharpened.
- Teams respond effectively.
- Program is administered capably.
- There is external program support.

Any program tasks and activities should support one or more of these elements of program maintenance. One program activity, if modified, might address multiple maintenance activities.

For example, an exercise will help sharpen members' skills and team response; however, if provisions are made to engage fire department officers and elected officials as observers or participants, the exercise will also enhance external support.

The degree to which each activity will contribute to overall program vitality varies among local CERT programs. It is important for you to assess how various activities will make the most difference in sustaining your local program.

KEEPING A PROGRAM ALIVE (CONTINUED)

EXERCISE: PROGRAM MAINTENANCE MATRIX

Purpose: This exercise allows you and the instructor to work together to identify actions that contribute most significantly to program maintenance.

Instructions:

1. Work individually to complete the *Program Maintenance Matrix* on the next page as directed by the instructor.
2. Then go to the Draft Program Plan in Unit 1.
3. Individually complete the second part of the tenth section, *Keeping the Program Going*.

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Exercise: Program Maintenance Matrix

Directions: Enter a task or activity in the left column. For each task/activity, indicate with a check mark which critical program maintenance element(s) it best supports.

Task or Activity	Retain Volunteers	Sharpen Skills	Effective Team Response	Capable Program Administration	External Program Support

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Task or Activity	External Program Support	Capable Program Administration	Effective Team Response	Sharpen Skills	Retain Volunteers

UNIT SUMMARY

This unit has looked at working with instructors:

- Essential skills and abilities you, as Program Manager, should possess
- Critical elements involved in keeping your CERT program alive
- Use of a program maintenance matrix to identify activities that contribute most significantly to your program's maintenance

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