

DRAFT

Strategic Plan 2020

Including Mission and Vision Statements

August 2016



That Others May Live



Our Mission

The mission of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference is to locate the lost person efficiently by enabling its Groups to provide the best search and rescue services possible to responsible authorities.

Our Core Values

We expect honesty, integrity, and true professionalism in everything we do.

We value Groups who show commitment through their training, actions, and leadership to the health and safety of all persons engaged in a mission or training exercise.

We value Groups who work in close cooperation and coordination with responsible authorities before, during, and after missions.

We value the fundamental principles and skills of search and rescue as the cornerstone for our Groups to be high quality resources for responsible authorities.

We value technology leadership and practice innovation as the foundations to advancing the state and art of search and rescue in our region.

We value search management excellence, with search managers embracing the critically important practices of safe incident operations, quality service to the responsible authority, best practice implementation, and an awareness of risk management.

We expect teamwork and goodwill among all member teams, regardless of location or practice specialty.

We are an organization of
professionally trained
volunteer teams with shared values that
provide the best in search and rescue.

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Our Vision

The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference is an organization of volunteer search and rescue teams (Groups) in the mid-Atlantic region who are aligned by the common goal to be the resource-of-choice that responsible authorities will turn to when they need to locate a missing person quickly. Our Groups exhibit outstanding professional qualities, share our simple core values, and possess a strong commitment to locating the lost person. Founded in 1974, the ASRC is one of the oldest search and rescue organizations in the United States and we lean on our extensive experience to guide us into the future.

We are a unifying organization that fosters an environment for our Groups to have the tools they need to be at their very best, when our Groups are strong, the ASRC is strong. Our world-class training standards enable our Groups to ensure their members are among the best trained anywhere. Our Groups are the employer-of-choice for people looking to volunteer in search and rescue. We provide opportunities and create a culture in which our Groups can share and promote operational best practices and tactical efficiency when engaged in a mission. Our Groups regularly evaluate and improve their capabilities by investing in training and continuing education. We value and embrace any resource type which improves the state of the practice of search and rescue in our region.

By advancing the practice of search management and planning, we grow with the changing needs that agencies responsible for search and rescue have. Each of our Groups are leaders and innovators in search and rescue by conducting research, evaluating new technologies, and developing new capabilities to offer to the responsible authorities with which they work.

*...when our Groups are **strong**,
the ASRC is **strong**.*



Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)

Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group
(BRMRG)

Maryland Search and Rescue (MSAR)

Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG)

Northwest Pennsylvania K9 (NWPAK9)

Search and Rescue Ohio (SAR-OH)

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group
(SMRG)



1. Credentialing Program

In April 2016, we acknowledged that our certification system needed an overhaul. We recognized that some of the RAs our Groups worked with were viewing ASRC certifications as a self-certifying system. Further we recognized we can do better to bring our system in line with industry standards and best practices. We did a lot of work leading up to April 2016 to create the framework for an overhauled system along with integrating that framework into our governance documents. Now that those items are in place, its time to implement the credentialing system.

The framework passed in 2016 provided the general system in which the credentialing program will operate. Much of the specifics were delegated to a Credentialing Board who will develop the policies, procedures and other items that make the credentialing program work. With the Credentialing Program the ASRC has the opportunity create a differentiator for our Groups and maintain our top-tier training standards.

Action Items

- Stand up the Credentialing Board in 2016 and the ASRC BOD will give the mandate to begin their work.
- The Credentialing Board will develop milestone goals for implementing the program and communicate them to the ASRC BOD.
- Engage Groups and members to solicit their regular feedback throughout the development process.
- Develop, test, and refine examination procedures which are in-line with industry best practices, robust, and defensible.
- Work with our RAs to gain acceptance of the Credentialing Program so our Groups have the incentive to participate in the program.

2. Develop our Groups

Volunteer organizations operate best when they function similar to a for-profit business. Our Groups provide their services best when they have a strong and robust organization. In essence, our Groups are consultants to the responsible authorities that request their help. We want to create an opportunity for our Groups to share their experience, learn from each other, and learn the best practices that other non-profit organizations use. We should harness the collective experience of our Groups to deliver better support. We want to make sure that our Groups have a strong organizational foundation that allows them to practice search and rescue to the best of their ability.

As action items for this goal, we will work to help our Groups:

- **Develop a plan for growth** - Organizational growth is an important part of success and long-term survival of any organization. We can help our Groups think about and plan for recruitment, talent development, broadening services, and finding new clients as part of growing their organization.
- **Market their Clients** - Our Groups should think about how they market their clients. Typically the best way to ensure repeat customers is to do good work. However, each Group needs to think beyond this and find new ways to interact with their clients. This might mean offering free classes, joint training scenarios, developing memorandums-of-understanding, etc. Being utilized by an RA is essential to Group member retention and morale. Members of our Groups want opportunities to perform what they train for. Marketing clients is an essential step to continued utilization.
- **Develop a recruitment program** - Our Groups should have a recruitment program that strives to select the best candidates for Group membership. Recruitment programs should comprise of both soliciting applications and a robust application process. Application processes should be well defined and advertised. The recruitment process should lend credibility to the Group. Groups should seek means and methods for attracting the right individuals to volunteer for the group and provide easy means to initiate the application process. The recruitment process should not be overly complex to the applicant. The recruitment process should be a way to ensure that the Group and applicant are a good fit for one another prior to earning membership.
- **Develop the Talent of Their Members** - ASRC Groups offer regular training sessions to teach and maintain the skill sets of their members. The ASRC can do many things to aid our Groups in this process including developing high quality training materials, build training curriculums, and provide access to regular ASRC-sponsored training events
- **Have good financial hygiene** —Our Groups continually face funding challenges that we can help them with. The ASRC can provide our Groups with fundraising and grant writing support. We can also help our Group have good management practices when it comes to implementing grants or developing grant application materials.



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3. Deliver content to our Groups

The ASRC should be more pervasive in the experience of the membership of each of our Groups. We need to reach more than just the leadership of our Groups. We can do this easiest by delivering content. Content is a catch-all phrase for items delivered directly to an end user in each Group. This is above and beyond training standards and insurance offered to our groups. We must generate the kind of content that communicates the best available knowledge in technical search and rescue practices and organizational management. We have to deliver our collective knowledge to our Groups; otherwise how can we expect them to be the best?

As action items for this goal, we are going to create content by:

- Turn to our committees and expect them to generate deliverables on a quarterly basis and provide those deliverables to our Groups for dissemination to their membership.
- Offer quarterly webinars on a variety of topics, record attendance and issue continuing education credits to those who attend. We will record these webinars and make them available for viewing at a later time.
- Offer podcasts, blog posts, and similar social media content available to individuals on-demand.
- Create training materials to support our training standards. We can no longer afford to have standards without the training materials to back them up. We should be delivering the information we want folks to have in addition to expecting them to demonstrate it during the credentialing process. Training materials may include: instructional videos, screencasts, one page handouts, traveling instructors, archived webinars, and so on. Much of training in search and rescue lends itself ideally to self-study—the more we provide to individuals to learn on their own, the more we offer our Group to use their training time as efficiently as possible. Training materials also help deliver information consistently between Groups, fostering a similar training regimen that we view so importantly.
- Consistent with our goal to develop our Groups, we should be able to develop materials that document the best practices we think apply to the way a search and rescue organization operates itself. The variety of organizations that are a part of the ASRC offers a unique opportunity to capture value information and experiences, process that into best practices, and turn that information around to our Groups for their own use.
- We have the expertise and experience in the ASRC to aid our Groups when they are troubled and struggling. We should be finding ways to assist our Group and train their personnel in operating their organization. For newer or inexperienced Groups, we should have a set of off-the-shelf document infrastructure that enables them to stand up an organization quickly without writing anything from scratch.

Content is the value-added service that we can offer sooner than later. This goal is dependent on proper project vision, participation of volunteers, and setting regular deadlines for deliverables.



4. Develop our Remote Support capability

As a center for excellence and an incubator for innovation, we recognize that remote support offers a unique opportunity. Remote support is the re-distribution of certain types of tasks to a location other than the immediate vicinity of an incident. We understand the power this presents to search planning and incident management when on-scene resources are limited. We understand that remote support is an important differentiator for our organization and will attract both potential clients (RAs) to use the services of our Groups and candidate Groups who may wish to join the ASRC. Remote support is a value-added service to both our Groups and our RAs.

Remote support scales with incident complexity and harnesses the power of advanced computational methods, in effort to optimize the deployment of on-scene resources. We recognize an important component of remote support is the utilization of geographic information systems (GIS) software which is ideally suited to the inherent spatial problems presented by a search and rescue incident. We recognize that GIS comes in many forms, and significant training is involved for volunteers to operate these programs. However, we also acknowledge that remote support is more than just a GIS software program and include additional tasks which require minimal training and some limited computer experience. We must recognize, applaud, and support the role that the Integrated Geospatial Tools for Search and Rescue (IGT4SAR) map template for ArcMap® has played in developing this capability. We must support its continued development.

To date, remote support has been an ad-hoc program with few participants. This service and the technology to support it has matured over the years since remote support has been deployed on missions. We recognize that we must offer a program to grow the number of participants and lower the barrier to entry to participate. We view this as another specialization that folks may choose to follow and we view this as an important skill that ASRC-certified search managers must understand and know how to utilize.

To achieve these goals the ASRC will:

- Engage a group of volunteers to develop the workflow, personnel requirements, training curricula, and training materials that will create this program.
- Add a component of remote support to search manager certifications.
- Offer regular training opportunities to learn the software skills needed to offer a remote support service during a mission.
- Continue to market remote support to responsible authorities and our Groups, share success stories, and solicit feedback.
- Find ways to make learning the GIS systems as easy as possible, offer updated training materials, and sponsor courses when offered by qualified instructors.



5. Fostering an Ecosystem for Innovation

The ASRC is proud of the work it has done in the past to advance the state of search and rescue in the region. We want to continue to be recognized by our peers and clients as practice leaders for land search and rescue. Our goal is to continue this tradition of developing new capabilities, improving search management, harnessing new technologies and methods all in order to locate the lost person quickly. A cornerstone for this type of environment is a practice of continual and honest self-assessment to bring to light those policies, procedures, skills, and abilities which are benefiting our responses or need additional refinement.

We encourage our Groups to assess their respective response areas for additional capabilities that the responsible authorities and the lost subject they work for may benefit from. What is missing from your area? What could be done better? We encourage our Groups to interview the responsible authorities to find out what they think could be improved upon or additional capabilities that is needed. While the ASRC has its roots in ground-based search and rescue, it should not ignore additional types of resources if they are warranted.

Some of our members are doing work with national implications. This work is impressive and confirms that there is much that can be improved within the practice of search and rescue. We should congratulate our colleagues who are doing this work and look to them as examples of the type of innovation the ASRC can foster.

We will implement this goal by:

- Encouraging our Groups to identify new capabilities they can bring to bear on search and rescue missions based on routine mission debriefs;
- Assisting teams in developing new capabilities by providing needed support to help review standards, finding experts in the field, understanding best practices and identifying other support as needed;
- Keeping our Groups informed of current issues and advances in search and rescue, emergency management and operational tactics that could be implemented in our region;
- Providing assistance in finding sources to fund particular projects, and
- Acknowledging the work done by others to advance the state of search and rescue in our region.

