

10 STEP ASSESSMENT & PLANNING TOOLKIT

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF EMS PROFESSIONALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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DISCLAIMER: Michigan Rural EMS Network has designed this Toolkit for informational and educational purposes. The Toolkit should not be considered as professional legal advice, or as a replacement for professional legal advice. Although we went to great lengths to ensure the information and resources provided are accurate and useful, we recommend you consult an attorney for professional assurance that the information, and your interpretation of it, is appropriate to your agency's unique circumstances.

WHY IS THIS TOOLKIT IMPORTANT?

The rural prehospital care system provides primary service to approximately 19% of Michigan residents, 1.85 million people, and 75% of the state's land mass. The EMS system in many rural communities also must expand to meet increased needs during tourist and sporting seasons. In order to meet the demand for prehospital care, it is imperative that EMS agencies operate with adequately staffed rosters.

THE CHALLENGES OF RURAL EMS

Run volumes for rural EMS agencies often cannot justify the cost of full-time personnel. As a result, EMS agencies rely heavily on part-time or volunteer personnel. In the past 10 years, as the economy in rural areas declined, recruiting EMS professionals for volunteer services became a greater challenge. Retention has also become an increasing problem. The average age of current rural EMS crews, the demands of non-EMS employment for part-time personnel, and the cost/time required to maintain a current provider license, contribute to the challenge of retaining existing personnel.

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Michigan Rural EMS Network conducted a statewide rural EMS survey. The results indicated that one of the greatest challenges faced by rural agencies is a shortage of rural EMS providers. This toolkit was created to help EMS leaders identify best practices for recruitment and retention of EMS professionals. This toolkit outlines a process that is based on a variety of best practice resources. It is supported by an extensive [electronic library](#) . Best practices have been identified using resources from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the North Dakota Rural EMS Improvement Project, and the Virginia Department of Health.

The Michigan Rural EMS Network recognizes that many rural EMS leaders perform their duties on a part-time basis, and have limited time to devote to recruitment and retention efforts. This toolkit is designed as a problem-solving method with two phases:

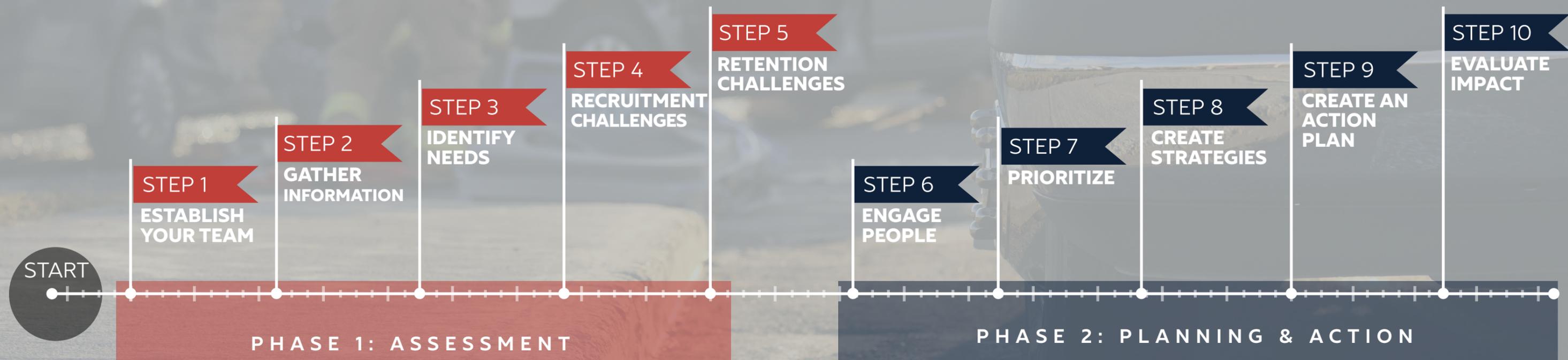
- Phase I: Assessment
- Phase II: Planning & Action

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

In order to make the toolkit easier to use:

1. The process is broken down into manageable steps.
2. An electronic library is included on the accompanying USB drive so that you can easily customize materials for your agency, and have access to additional resources. An icon  is used throughout this document to help you identify materials that are available in the electronic library.
3. This entire toolkit is included in the electronic library, which enables you to print individual pages for team meetings.
4. We have provided a companion PowerPoint presentation to assist with meeting agendas.
5. A timeline, which you can use to plan your efforts, has been provided on the opposite page. You can create your own timeline, with your own dates, using the [Timeline Tool](#)  provided. Depending on your local resources the implementation process can take 3 months to a year.

TYPICAL TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTING AN EMS RECRUITMENT & RETENTION PROJECT



Each rural community has its own unique needs and resources. Above is a sample timeline that is available to guide your work. It should not be viewed as a required timeline. You can enter the timeline dates for your initiative in the [Timeline Tool](#) and your dates will appear in that document for your reference.

PHASE ONE

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL ASSESSMENT

STEP

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Establish
Your Team

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Information

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Identify
Needs

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STEP

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Recruitment
Challenges

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STEP

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Retention
Challenges

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ESTABLISH YOUR TEAM

GETTING STARTED

Why do you need a team?

- Teams bring a variety of skills, resources, expertise, and connections to the table.
- Working with a team can create challenges. But when issues are fully discussed, and all options are evaluated, the end product is often better designed and you are rewarded with better results.
- Each individual has a unique perspective, which helps you understand your recruitment and retention issues better AND see any potential challenges.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” Henry Ford

OUR NEXT STEP

Answer the questions listed in the Think it Out Section and review the [Step 1: Establish Team Instruction Guide](#)  in the electronic library. Doing this will help ensure that conditions are in place to create and support an effective team.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In order to create an effective team, you may need to think beyond “typical” team members. A team of diverse people, who are invested in EMS and your community, may include individuals with whom you have not collaborated before. Recruitment often involves going outside the circle of EMS providers to enlist new candidates. Partnering with businesses, churches, or a community foundation are excellent ways to increase awareness of your personnel needs and gain support for your projects.



ESTABLISH YOUR TEAM

THINK IT OUT

Below, list the people that you want to invite to an initial EMS recruitment and retention team meeting. You may want to compare your list to the [Potential Member List](#)  before sending out invitations to the first meeting.

Select a date and location for your first meeting:

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 1: Establish Team Instruction Guide](#)
- [Timeline Tool](#)
- [Potential Member List](#)
- [Meeting Agenda - First Meeting](#)
- [Meeting Sign In Form](#)
- [Sample Ground Rules](#)
- [Meeting PowerPoint](#)
- [Sample Memorandum of Agreement](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Several resources for developing effective teams can be found online. These websites include articles and tips for developing a successful team:

- [Thinking Collaborative](#)
- [Know How Nonprofit](#)
- [Center for Non-Profit Excellence](#)



GATHER INFORMATION

GETTING STARTED

You may have a good sense of why you have recruitment and retention challenges. It is good, however, to take a step back and look at the issue from various perspectives. You may be tempted to jump to solutions without allowing enough input from others. Skipping this step can lead to a hit and miss approach that may or may not be effective. Invest time now for big returns later. Before you begin collecting data, write down one thing that you know about your current personnel challenges:

OUR NEXT STEP

It is time to explore what is happening and why it is happening. The [Step 2: Gather Information Instruction Guide](#)  walks you through a list of reports that you may want to review.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Even if you are able to collect a variety of data, chances are there are still unanswered questions. In addition to reviewing data that you have available, use the links in the toolkit and the [electronic library](#)  to:

- Conduct a survey
- Hold a focus group
- Interview key people in your community

The above activities are designed to help you understand why you have recruitment and retention challenges. The [electronic library](#)  includes samples for each of these activities.



GATHER INFORMATION

THINK IT OUT

List some key people from EMS or health organizations who would have reports or information that you could use to understand your recruitment & retention challenges. Refer to [Step 2: Gather Information Instruction Guide](#)  for a list of reports that may be useful.

List people from your agency or the community who you could interview, or invite to a meeting, to hear their ideas and thoughts about recruitment and retention.

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 2: Gather Information Instruction Guide](#)
- [Local EMS Fact Sheet - Template](#)
- [MiREMS Needs Assessment Report by Region](#)
- [Medical Director Survey](#)
- [EMS Professionals Survey](#)
- [EMS Manager Survey](#)
- [Focus Group Meeting Guide](#)
- [Interview Guide](#)
- [Sample Questions: Public Health](#)
- [Sample Questions: Community Survey](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Survey Collection and Reporting Tool](#)
- [MDCH Natality and Mortality Statistics](#)
- [Bureau of Healthcare Services](#)
- [US Census Quick Facts](#)



IDENTIFY NEEDS

GETTING STARTED

What makes a rural EMS agency strong? The North Dakota Rural EMS Improvement Project identified, in the [2011 Rural Ambulance Service Survival Guide](#) 

„eight characteristics of a “Thriving Rural Ambulance Service”:

1. Level of Leadership
2. High Standards
3. Positive and Inviting Environments
4. Clear Mission and Value
5. Fair Schedules
6. Safe and Healthy Schedules
7. Adequate Funding
8. Good Facilities, Vehicles, & Equipment

Understanding your strengths and needs in these eight areas, will help point you to strategies that will best address your recruitment and retention challenges.

OUR NEXT STEP

Follow the [Step 3: Identify Needs Instruction Guide](#)  in the electronic library and complete the Gaps and Needs Assessment. Distribute a copy of the Gaps and Needs Assessment to members of your team.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Generalized leadership or management training rarely meets the specific needs of rural EMS professionals. Send your agency manager(s) to training designed specifically for rural EMS leaders. The EMS Leadership Academy, sponsored by the Michigan Center for Rural Health, is an interactive training designed by SafeTech Solutions, LLC. More information is included in the [electronic library](#)  or on the MCRH EMS page at www.mcrh.msu.edu/ems.aspx.



IDENTIFY NEEDS

THINK IT OUT

Summarize your assessment: Reflect how you rated each of the eight characteristics used in the [Gaps and Needs Assessment](#)  found in the electronic library. Based on your results, use the following table to assign each of the eight characteristics to the appropriate level of need.

Eight Characteristics

- | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Leadership | 2. Standards | 3. Environment | 4. Mission/Value |
| 5. Call schedule | 6. Call Safety | 7. Funding | 8. Facilities/Vehicles |

STRENGTHS

AVERAGE NEEDS

HIGH NEEDS

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 3: Identify Needs Instruction Guide](#)
- [2011 Rural Ambulance Service Survival Guide](#)
- [Gaps and Needs Assessment](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Michigan Center for Rural Health](#)



RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

GETTING STARTED

In order to effectively recruit new people to your EMS agency, you must understand what motivates someone to become an EMS professional.

FEMA, in its [EMS Recruitment & Retention Manual](#) , identifies five key motivators for becoming an EMS professional:

- Opportunity for friendships and cooperative activities
- Feelings of satisfaction and importance
- Altruism
- Sense of achievement and self-esteem
- Successful performance

It is important to remember that motivators for one person may be different for another. Using multiple strategies and messages that target different motivators will increase your impact.

OUR NEXT STEP

Despite the challenges rural EMS agencies face, your team can be effective recruiters. Review the [Step 4: Recruitment Challenges Instruction Guide](#) . Next, complete the [Marketing That Motivates](#)  tool.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Developing a marketing strategy for recruitment may seem overwhelming at first. However a three page [Recruiting Process](#)  guide, provided by the Virginia Department of Health, will lead you through each step. The guide covers two key components:

- Marketing Sources: Advertising, networking/word of mouth, and legacy/family member
- Types of Potential Members: People who are unaware, aware, interested, and intimate



RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

THINK IT OUT

What are your local advertising options?

Print Media:

Radio/TV:

Social Media:

List a few key people who can help you network or recruit people by word of mouth:

What have you done recently to invite family members of your crew to join your agency?

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 4: Recruitment Challenges Instruction Guide](#)
 - [EMS Recruitment & Retention Manual](#)
 - [Marketing that Motivates](#)
 - [Recruiting Process](#)
-

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [EMS Toolkit](#)
- [Finding Daytime Volunteers](#)



RETENTION CHALLENGES

GETTING STARTED

Sometimes your best recruitment strategy is to retain current EMS professionals in your agency. In the 2007 document, [Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services: Challenges and Solutions](#) , FEMA identified eleven recruitment and retention root causes:

1. Time demands
2. Training requirements
3. Increasing call volume
4. Changes in the “nature of the business”
5. Changes in sociological conditions
6. Leadership problems
7. Federal legislation and regulations
8. Increasing use of combination departments
9. Aging communities
10. Internal conflict

OUR NEXT STEP

Review the definitions of each of the 11 root causes included in the [Root Causes Table](#) . After reviewing the Root Cause Table, use the data you collected in Steps 2 and 3 to complete the Think It Out Section.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Root cause analysis is a structured process for asking “why”. Use the process outlined in the [Step 5: Retention Challenges Instruction Guide](#)  to help you target root causes with strategies which can make the biggest impact. When finished, you can:

- Summarize the results of your exercise on the [Root Cause Analysis Worksheet](#) .
- If you are familiar with using SMART ART in Microsoft Word, use the Horizontal Hierarchy chart to illustrate your root cause analysis.



RETENTION CHALLENGES

THINK IT OUT

Considering the data you have collected, and other conversations you have had around the steps in this toolkit, which of the 10 root causes do you feel are most realistic for you to address?

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 5: Retention Challenges Instruction Guide](#)
- [Root Causes Table](#)
- [Root Cause Analysis Worksheet](#)
- [Principles of Retention](#)
- [Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services](#)
- [Recruitment Retention Friendly Departments](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Mind Tools - Root Cause Analysis](#)
- [5 Whys Root Cause Analysis Demonstration](#)
- [MS Office Support for Creating a Hierarchy with SMART ART](#)
- [YouTube SMART ART Hierarchy Demo](#)

PHASE TWO

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL PLAN

STEP

6

Engage
People

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STEP

7

Prioritize

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STEP

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Create
Strategies

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STEP

9

Create an
Action Plan

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STEP

10

Evaluate
Impact

Page 28-29



ENGAGE PEOPLE

GETTING STARTED

In this step, you will engage people in prioritizing the recruitment and retention challenges for your agency. There are two main benefits to including others in this decision:

1. You are more likely to select a challenge that will have significant impact.
2. When you begin to implement strategies and activities, people will be more supportive.

Start by identifying:

- Who will you ask to help you implement a recruitment strategy?
- Who should be involved in making changes that will help your retain your current EMS personnel?

OUR NEXT STEP

We have provided a [Sample PowerPoint Presentation](#) .

Present the PowerPoint to your team members. Ask for their input regarding the top three recruitment and retention challenges that should be addressed.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Even if your team is made up of a diverse group of people, present your information and engage people outside of your team for maximum impact. For example other EMS professionals in your agency, community members, and the medical control advisory committee or board might provide valuable input. This input will help build commitment to your work, and help you identify the best place to start addressing recruitment and retention challenges. Review the [Step 6: Engaging Others Instruction Guide](#)  for tips on how to engage people.



ENGAGE PEOPLE

THINK IT OUT

How and where can you reach people to get their input? (check any that apply)

- Meetings
- Personal interviews
- Online survey
- Other

List 5 potential root causes that you want to prioritize (lack of marketing, lax standards for uniforms, no formal evaluation process for crew members, etc.):

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 6: Engaging Others Instruction Guide](#)
- [Sample PowerPoint Presentation](#)
- [Prioritization Activities: Examples and Instructions](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Facilitative Leadership & Facilitative Training](#)
- [Survey Collection and Reporting Tool \(free and paid subscriptions available\)](#)



PRIORITIZE

GETTING STARTED

There is one more step before you decide what you are going to do to address your recruitment and retention challenges. It is time to decide which priorities to focus on now, and those to tackle later. It is not realistic to try to address all of your important issues at once. It is better to start with one or two, and be effective with those. Taking on too many issues at one time can be overwhelming, can result in small returns, and can discourage your team.

- Start by having your team review the results of your prioritization activities.
- Select one or two issues that you want to address now. You may want to address one concern related to recruitment, and one related to retention.

OUR NEXT STEP

As a team discuss how the volunteer life cycle and recruitment and retention principles are related to your priorities. A description of each principle is provided in the [Step 7: Prioritize Instruction Guide](#) .

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The Virginia Dept. of Health has developed a complete discussion around core principles in the Keeping the Best publication series. Increase your understanding by reviewing [Recruitment and Retention Principles](#) .

According to the principles, crew members stay longer when:

- they feel welcome, needed and respected (Belonging)
- they set and achieve personal goals (Success)
- they have strong relationships with coworkers (Friends & Family)



PRIORITIZE

THINK IT OUT

What are your immediate priorities?

Recruitment priority:

Retention priority:

What are your priorities for the next 3 years?

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 7- Prioritize Instruction Guide](#)
 - [Recruitment & Retention Principles](#)
 - [Core Retention Programs](#)
-

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Tips For Recruiting a New Generation](#)
- [Fire & EMS Leader Pro-v](#)



CREATE STRATEGIES

GETTING STARTED

All effective solutions to recruitment and retention challenges are local in nature. This means that no manual or guide can provide a recipe for success. Materials focused on EMS recruitment and retention in rural areas are limited. However, EMS agencies can adapt strategies that have proven successful for volunteer fire services.

When selecting your strategies, be careful to not fall back on ideas that are “comfortable”. Chances are they have been used before. If they have not solved the problem before, will they now? Thinking of new or innovative solutions is not easy. A good way to generate new ideas is to learn how other organizations have dealt with similar issues.

OUR NEXT STEP

Review strategies used by other communities before you take action. The [EMS Recruitment and Retention Reference List](#)  provides an “at a glance” list of ideas, along with the name of the source document and the page number.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

[Section 11](#)  of the electronic library has four documents that include several project and strategy ideas. In order to fully understand principles and strategies designed specifically for EMS, your team should review these documents:

1. [Rural Ambulance Leader’s Survival Guide](#) , North Dakota Rural EMS Improvement Project
2. [Keeping the Best!](#)  series, Virginia Department of Health
3. [EMS Recruitment And Retention Manual](#) , FEMA
4. [Retention and Recruitment Guide](#) , FEMA



CREATE STRATEGIES

THINK IT OUT

Use the ideas you recorded on the [EMS Recruitment and Retention Reference List](#)  to outline your strategies.

This priority is related to: Recruitment Retention Both

List 1-3 strategies that you want to implement:

Priority 2

This priority is related to: Recruitment Retention Both

List 1-3 strategies that you want to implement:

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 8: Create Strategies Instruction Guide](#)
- [EMS Recruitment and Retention Reference List](#)
- [Strategies-2007 Recruitment & Retention Guide- FEMA](#)
- [Strategies-EMS Recruitment & Retention Manual-FEMA](#)
- [Strategies-Rural Ambulance Leader Survival Guide-North Dakota Rural EMS Improvement Project](#)
- [Section 11 of the electronic library](#)
- [Fifty-five Ways to Reward Volunteers](#)
- [Junior EMS Program Tool Kit](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Find rural funding sources and program ideas at the Rural Assistance Center](#)



CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

GETTING STARTED

Before your team begins a project, you need a clear action plan. To ensure that your plan is most effective, consider the following tips:

1. Create an **impact statement** which includes your goals and objectives, measures for success, and outputs (See Step 10).
2. In the **activities** section, break down strategies into small steps.
3. Identify the **person/group responsible** for each activity. Realistic plans assign activities to many team members.
4. Set a **timeline**. Target dates will help the team stay on track.
5. Identify all **resources** needed such as money, time, equipment, expertise, instructors, etc.

OUR NEXT STEP

Review the [Step 9: Action Plan Instruction Guide](#) and [ACTION Plan Example](#) . Then use the blank [ACTION Plan Template](#)  to fill in the details for your project. If needed, write your impact statement after you have completed Step 10.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

We use the term ACTION Plan for a reason - it should guide your actions. ACTION Plan tips:

1. Add a status column to your ACTION Plan, and update regularly.
2. Use your ACTION Plan as an agenda for team meetings.
3. Share your ACTION Plan with the people you have identified in each of the previous steps. You may be surprised how much they are willing to contribute in time, money, or both!
4. Find funding for your programs. Review the [Funding Strategies Presentation](#) .



CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

THINK IT OUT

Write down some ideas about what you need to implement your project ideas. The [ACTION Plan Template](#)  can be used in place of this section and will give you more room to record details and target dates.

PROJECT IDEAS

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

RESOURCES NEEDED

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 9: Action Plan Instruction Guide](#)
- [ACTION Plan Example](#)
- [ACTION Plan Template](#)
- [Funding Strategies Presentation](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- **Funding Resources:** As you put your ACTION Plan together, you may wonder how you are going to find the resources to complete the project. Here are some links to help you find resources online:
- [Online giving from the public](#)
- [Federal Grants](#)
- [State of Michigan](#)
- [Private Foundations](#)



EVALUATE IMPACT

GETTING STARTED

Evaluation may be a new concept for you, or sound intimidating. However, it can be very rewarding. First you need to understand why evaluation is important.

1. Evaluation illustrates your results!
2. Results motivate your team!
3. Organizations and people support programs that show results!
4. Results mean you are better able to treat patients and save lives! Isn't that what this is really about?

Once you believe, you can achieve. Evaluation does not need to be complex. Unless you are part of a research study, there is flexibility in how you show results. The [Step 10: Evaluation Instruction Guide](#)  will help you plan a simple and achievable evaluation.

OUR NEXT STEP

Ask each of your team members a simple question: “When our project succeeds, what do you think will be different?” Review the [Evaluation Example Plan](#)  and complete the baseline column in the [Sharing Our Results Template](#) .

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Base your evaluation on the Retention Principles developed by the Virginia Department of Health.

1. Distribute the [Evaluate Principles Survey](#) , to your crew BEFORE you implement your project.
2. Use the [Evaluate Principles Report](#) , or a tool like www.surveymonkey.com, to tabulate results.
3. Complete the [Report Card Template](#) .
4. Conduct the survey on an annual basis. Enter results on page two of the [Report Card Template](#)  to show improvement.



EVALUATE IMPACT

THINK IT OUT

Review the data you collected in Steps 2 and 3, then answer the following questions:
What statistics or data do you hope to change with your Recruitment and Retention efforts?

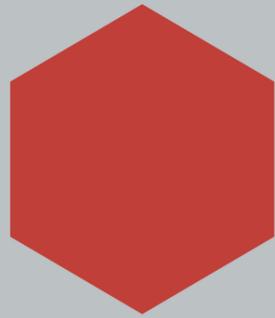
In what other ways can your success be measured?

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

- [Step 10: Evaluation Instruction Guide](#)
- [Evaluation Example Plan](#)
- [Evaluate Principles Survey](#)
- [Evaluate Principles Report](#)
- [Report Card Template](#)
- [Sharing Our Results Template](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [The Community Toolbox - Evaluation Chapter](#)
- [University of Wisconsin - Logic Model Templates](#)
- [Creating a Chart or Table in Excel](#)



SUMMARIZE

PHASE ONE: OUR ASSESMENT

What are the top three recruitment and retention challenges we want to address?

Who has expressed interest in helping with the necessary steps to address our challenges?

PHASE TWO: OUR PLAN

What will I do in the next 6 months to address our top recruitment and retention challenges?

What is at least one long term change, or one initiative, that we want to implement over the next one to three years?



MI Rural EMS Network (MiREMS)

MiREMS is a member organization with the mission of providing support to Michigan's rural EMS professionals and EMS agencies. All programs are developed based on a study of needs in rural Michigan. In a survey of Michigan rural EMS providers, 84% reported that the top two needs/concerns for their rural EMS service were staff recruitment and staff retention. More information about MiREMS and its current initiatives can be found at www.mirems.org.

EMS Agencies - Huron & Sanilac Counties

Materials for this toolkit are modeled after successful recruitment and retention programs, implemented in Huron and Sanilac Counties, by the Huron-Sanilac EMS Network (now MiREMS).

Health Innovation Initiative

This Recruitment & Retention Toolkit is made possible through a FY15 Health Innovation Grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH).

scan to visit
mirems.org



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