



National SAR Operations Concept (NSOC)

HUMANITARIAN WORKFORCE TO RESPOND TO COVID-19 AND EMERGENCIES NSOC

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National SAR Operations Concept (NSOC) Report

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Natural disasters, pandemics and human-induced hazards in Canada can and will intensely affect local, regional, and national populations. Physical, emotional, and economic stresses are clear, with long lasting effects felt for many years. Regardless of the nature of the event (environmental, fire, climate, infrastructure, or terrorism), the humanitarian toll accelerates to the forefront of the Canadian perspective.

Public Safety Canada (PS), through the Emergency Management Framework, has set in place its own framework for an all-hazard approach to address both natural and human-induced hazards and disasters. The ultimate purpose of the framework is to save lives, preserve the environment, and protect property and the economy. Cooperative emergency management is the cornerstone of the framework, where federal, provincial, territorial, and local authorities work through a process of all-hazard identification, alerts, and response when incidents become threats to the population at large.

Since natural and human-induced events are predicted to continue and to increase in number, complexity and severity over time, there will be inevitable challenges to the capabilities of today's emergency management response. PS has accepted the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC)'s application to initiate a national concept of operations for a Humanitarian Workforce (HWF) to respond to pandemics (COVID-19) and other emergencies, natural or human-induced. This initiative will respond en masse with trained volunteers from across Canada to assist with humanitarian aid where and when needed

Established in 1996, SARVAC is a federally incorporated registered Canadian charity that provides a national voice for Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) volunteers in Canada. SARVAC's mandate is to: address issues of common concern; develop consistency and promote standardization and portability of programs and volunteers, and; deliver initiatives in Canada that benefit and support all GSAR volunteers, as well as the public.

SARVAC is an Association of Associations representing the thirteen recognized volunteer GSAR Associations in Canada. The SARVAC Board of Directors (BoD) is comprised of volunteer representatives

from each of the provinces and territories. SARVAC represents the interests of 9,000 GSAR volunteers throughout Canada who provide GSAR services on land and inland waters. Additional specialties include: canine assisted searches, swift water, ice, avalanche, high angle rescues, and mechanized search and rescues (helicopter, ATV, UTV, snowmobile).

Any deployment is comprised of a comprehensive network of trained search managers, team leaders and searchers, that are based on functions as set out in the Incident Command System, the Incident Management System, or other recognized management systems.

1.1.1 Provincial and Territorial (P/T) Context

As described, SARVAC is a National Volunteer GSAR Association, projecting a national voice for the Provincial/Territorial GSAR Associations (P/T Associations). Each of the P/T Associations have a multitude of local, independent, volunteer based GSAR Groups. This document acknowledges that the relationships between P/T Associations and their respective Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) will vary. As such, some concepts, roles, and processes laid out in this document may need to be amended to accommodate these variations.

1.1.2 P/T Associations

All P/T governments prescribe Emergency Management legislation to guide activities and requirements for emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, with PS representing the Federal Government's perspective on Emergency Management directorates and policies. The following is a list of the Canadian P/T Associations' respective websites, or contact number in the case of Nunavut. These Associations provide the guidance and liaison between the P/T Authorities and the independent Local GSAR Groups:

- British Columbia: BCSARA www.bcsara.com
- Alberta: SARA www.saralberta.ca
- Saskatchewan: SARSAV www.sarsav.ca
- Manitoba: SARMAN www.searchandrescuevolunteer.ca
- Ontario: OSARVA www.osarva.ca
- Québec: AQBRS <https://sauvetagecanin.jimdo.com/index>
- New Brunswick: NBGSARA www.sarnbres.ca
- Nova Scotia: NSGSARA www.sarnovascotia.com
- Prince Edward Island: PEIGSARA www.peisara.ca

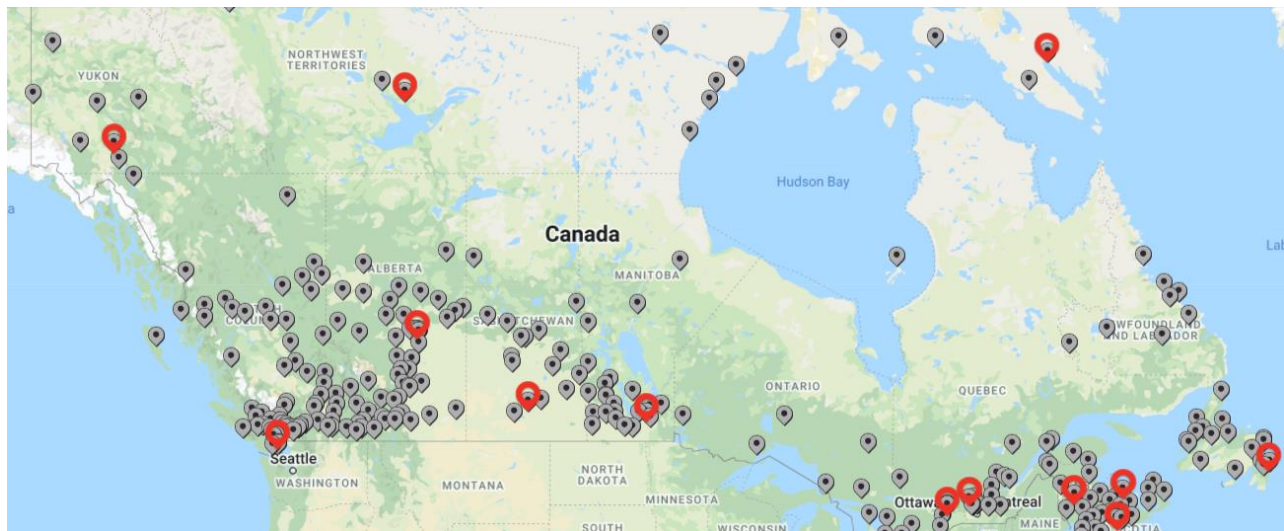
- Newfoundland and Labrador: NLSARA www.nlsara.org
- Yukon: YSAR www.yukonsar.org
- Northwest Territories: YKSAR www.yksar.com
- Nunavut: Nunavut (800) 693 1666

1.1.3 Local GSAR Groups in Canada

There are over three hundred independent Local GSAR Groups located across the country. These volunteer-run entities provide trained GSAR resources to serve the local communities within their designated regions of operation, along with aiding other Local GSAR Groups outside of their regions when the call for additional support is raised.

SARVAC promotes the formation of these Local GSAR Groups by providing support in the form of guidance and resources for organizing and enhancing local units, educational materials, and consulting services. While following a disciplined organizational structure (based on established incident management strategies such as the Incident Command System, or the Incident Management System), Local GSAR groups have provided many hours of disaster relief and pandemic (COVID-19) response support to urban, First Nations, inter-provincial communities, and remote locations.

Local GSAR Group Distribution Across Canada



Source: Map at “Find Your Nearest SAR Team.” *Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada*, <https://sarvac.ca>.

1.1.4 Mutual Aid Agreements

Mutual Aid Agreements will be developed with the appropriate Authorities in due course and located for the reader in an **APPENDIX** of this document.

1.1.5 Standards for a HWF Responder

The standard requirements to participate as a volunteer HWF Responder, are that the individual has successfully completed Basic GSAR training, ~~and~~ has received accreditation by their Local GSAR Group, and fulfills the local GSAR membership obligations and requirements. The basic training of a GSAR member provides a foundation of skills and understanding of what an emergency response entails, along with how to work within a command-and-control structure. These are key assets for an HWF Responder.

1.2 NSOC Purpose

The NSOC explores and outlines the plans and actions required to execute a national emergency surge response for SARVAC and its associated members.

1.3 Scope of the NSOC

The NSOC will provide a timeline approach with directives for key stakeholders and guidance for SARVAC and its associated members, during a Pandemic/COVID-19 or all-hazards disaster incident in Canada. This will allow SARVAC to respond to the event based on a clear understanding of the response requested, and on its own capabilities.

SARVAC's NSOC provide a platform to effectively assemble an urgent response to Requests for Federal Assistance (RFA). This NSOC will provide guidance to SARVAC and its member organizations on all HWF aspects. This will include but is not limited to:

- a) Developing a day-and-night call out and dispatch capability,
- b) Pre-identifying qualified HWF Responders,
- c) Pre-establishing criteria for identifying, tasking, coordinating, and organizing existing decentralized GSAR Groups, as well as all-hazards capabilities,

- d) Modularizing capabilities that can be tasked, such as: search and rescue, site management / incident command, first aid, operational communications, wellness checks, geomatics, logistics support, security / traffic management and general labour.
- e) Developing a response accountability system.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this NSOC are to:

- Provide an overview of the overall process steps and phases of a SARVAC response to an HWF deployment.
- Articulate detailed steps, responsibilities, and accountabilities for the operational response.
- Articulate the planning, development, and implementation of a logistics plan required to mobilize an all-hazards disaster response.
- Articulate the levels of approvals and support required at each key component of the National SAR Operations Concept.
- Provide an operational foundation for SARVAC to provide surge capacity for a HWF response for the entire country, from coast to coast to coast.

1.4 Assumptions

The development of the NSOC will include the following assumptions:

- SARVAC will respond to HWF deployment requested by PS on behalf of an AHJ.
- Taskings of SARVAC members may include roles and responsibilities outside traditional GSAR response.
- SARVAC, P/T Associations and HWF Responders will be reimbursed for all expenses deemed eligible under the HWF (or other) Program.
- SARVAC will be responsible for arranging appropriate insurance coverage for all members and assets during the response.
- In the future, the NSOC will be updated and improved, as experience and After-Action Report findings are transferred into continuous improvement for NSOC's national operational capability, SARVAC's HWF Program.

1.5 Constraints

Consideration must be given to the complexities of organizing and transporting individuals across Canada during emergency response efforts, given Canada has an east to west distance of 5,500 kms and a north to south distance of 4,600 kms. Approximately 90% of the population is concentrated in a 160 km band along the southern border with the USA. At the time the NSOC was drafted, there remains constraints on the activation and deployment of the volunteer GSAR resources in Canada, which exist with respect to the drafting and signing of Mutual Aid Agreements with PS, the P/T governing authorities, and other local and regional authority entities. Additional constraints with deployments include: the collection and security of GSAR member's information, capabilities and skills, and; third-party contractors utilized in the logistical efforts for the timely movement of HWF personnel and resources, particularly to and from remote areas of Canada.

2. Governance Structure

The governance structure of the HWF community in Canada outlines the processes and norms in place to ensure good engagement and appropriate decision-making, towards common development and deployment goals, stated in the SARVAC's HWF Governance document, external of this NSOC document.

3. SARVAC Operations Concept

3.1 Overview

Operational capacity within SARVAC is a new role established based on the National SAR Operations Concept as detailed in the following section, 3.2 Key Phases of the Operations Concept.

Note: Not all P/T Associations and/or individual Local GSAR Groups may wish to participate in the HWF. This effort is on a voluntary basis with the assumption that any responding associations and groups have enough available resources held back to manage commitments to their jurisdictional authorities and local communities.

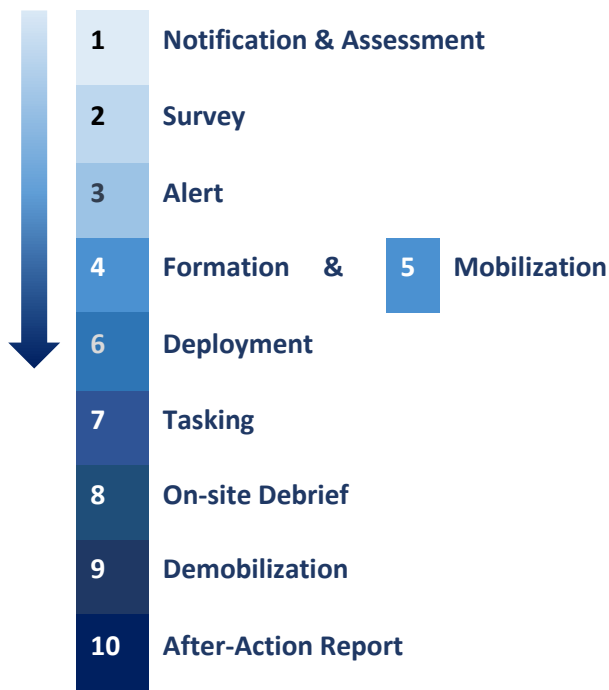
Responsibilities, governance, and accountabilities for systemic emergency response are the pillars of management capabilities for SARVAC and its members. The following NSOC preview will define major roles and principles of Operations Concepts on a continuously expanding horizon, with information examined, defined, embedded, and managed into the program.

This new capability will allow SARVAC to play an operational coordination function with its participating member organizations and groups. This will allow for the operational mobilization of its members among the more than three hundred groups.

3.2 Key Phases of the National SAR Operations Concept

The ten key phases of the SARVAC NSOC are summarized to provide a timeline of the overall process, from first notification through to deployment, to demobilization, return to home base, and then concluding with the completion of After-Action Reports.

Phases of the SARVAC National SAR Operations Concept



SARVAC HWF Organization

3.3 National SAR Operations Concept Overview

The following section provides an overview of each phase. For additional details, refer to **APPENDIX A – Details of the Operations Concept**.

3.3.1. Notification and Assessment

Notification and Assessment Description:

SARVAC receives an RFA from PS that there is an event where SARVAC's GSAR members are requested to respond under the HWF Program. This RFA triggers the National SAR Concept of Operations process, or NSOC.

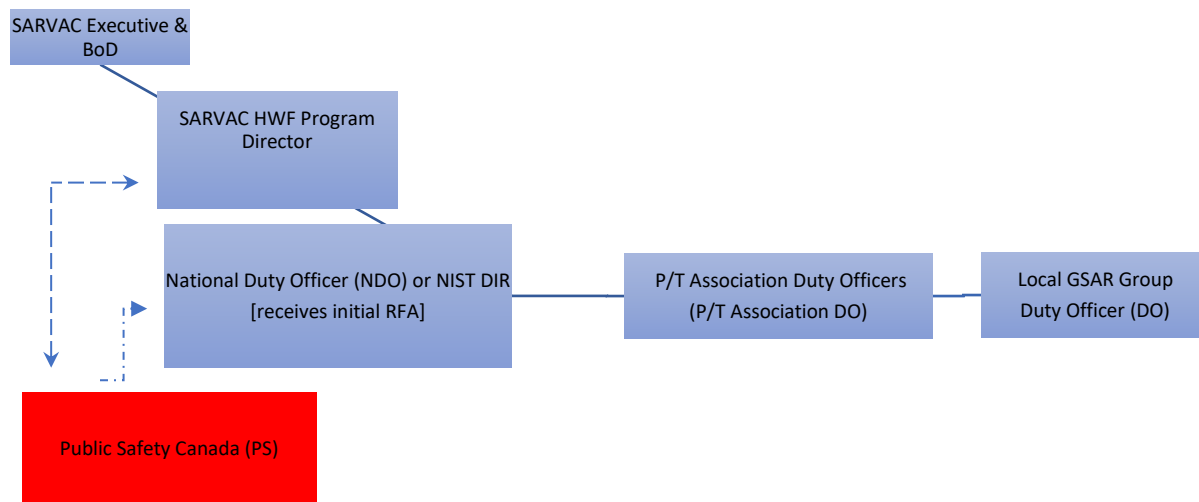
Notification Roles and Responsibilities:

PS will initiate and develop an RFA to SARVA. Once in receipt of the RFA query, SARVAC's National Duty Officer (NDO) will record the information into the Notification form, and alert the HWF PD. A National Incident Support Team Director (NIST DIR) will be appointed by SARVAC to take on the responsibility for executing the NSOC process. The NIST DIR will assign all the required functions for the NIST, including the Operations Section, Planning Section, Logistics Section and the Finance & Administration Section. The NIST Finance & Administration Section will be responsible for systematically managing the flow of funds, legal and insurance concerns and for administrative assistance to the NIST DIR and the MIST.

Notification and Assessment Intended Outcome:

Notification from PS to SARVAC via the NDO of an event requiring an HWF response has activated SARVAC's NSOC. The Notification and Assessment Phase evaluated: the location of the specified disaster/pandemic RFA event; HWF capability requested, HWF resources required for the response; the anticipated number of operational / deployment waves, and the anticipated duration of the event.

Request for Federal Assistance (RFA) Input to HWF Program Director from Public Safety Canada (PS)



3.3.2. Survey

Survey Description:

This Phase determines whether SARVAC will deploy the requested capability, or part thereof; it assumes that there is substantial commitment to support from P/T Associations and Local GSAR Groups, who actively survey their membership for real-time availability, for ability to deploy, and to hold in-reserve enough resources to manage callouts from within their home jurisdictions. During the input process for submittal and approval for the RFA, there is active inter-communication among PS, the AHJ, the affected P/T Association(s), participating Local GSAR Group DOs and potential HWF Responders. The NDO sends out a survey message to all, with the mission status of “Deployment is Requested,” in order to establish the availability of GSAR members (to become HWF Responders).

Survey Roles and Responsibilities:

The NIST DIR or designate will engage fully with participating P/T Associations, (and by extension to the GSAR Groups and GSAR members to confirm the number and capabilities of HWF Responders. The NIST DIR will develop the RFA proposal, outlining HWF capacity and capability, event specific Service Agreements, as well as a budget for the estimated cost of the response. The NIST Planning Section will manage a tentative list of available GSAR members based on the latest output of SARVAC’s data management system (DMS) to assess what capabilities are available. The NIST DIR will also engage the AHJ to discuss the event, as well as on-site conditions. The NIST DIR will also appoint a Response

Commander (RC), who will provide overall mission leadership on the ground once HWF Responders are deployed.

Survey Intended Outcome:

The completed RFA proposal is sent by the NIST DIR to PS for a reply. P/T Association DO, through the Local GSAR Group DO has notified members of a pending national HWF response for confirmation of availability. The NIST DIR has opened communication lines (with PS, the affected AHJ, the DO, and the SARVAC Executive), and continues to implement the NSOC process.

3.3.3. Alert

Alert Description:

This Phase begins when the NIST DIR communicates the status of a HWF deployment to P/T Associations, Local GSAR Groups and HWF Responders. The alert message is sent as a follow-up to the survey message, and will be one of two notices, either “Deployment Confirmed” or “Deployment Stood Down.” This Phase confirms that there is substantial commitment to support from P/T Associations and Local GSAR Groups.

Alert Roles and Responsibilities:

A national HWF Alert will be sent to P/T Associations from the NIST DIR via the NDO, upon receipt of an approved RFA proposal. If the Alert message is “Deployment Confirmed,” participating Local GSAR Groups, through their P/T Association DO will be notified to organize and brief HWF Responders on the event particulars. The Planning Section Manager (PSM) will validate HWF Responder data within the DMS. HWF Responders will ready themselves for deployment.

If the Alert message is “Deployment Stood Down,” then participating Local GSAR Groups and their GSAR members (via their respective DOs) will be notified to do the same.

Alert Intended Outcome:

At the conclusion of the Alert Phase, P/T Association DO and HWF Responders selected are advised of the status of the deployment: confirmed or stood down.

3.3.4. Formation

Formation Description:

This phase can occur concurrently with the Mobilization phase; the status of deployment is confirmed. The NIST DIR assigns the operations, planning, logistics and finance and administrative functions for the NIST, and prepares for the deployment and for unforeseen HWF Responders returning to homebase, and for demobilization. The NIST assembles the Mission Incident Support Team (MIST) and Mission Ready Groups (MSG). The formation of the MIST will be in ensuring that the teams are of the required capabilities needed to effectively meet the demands of the deployment, and are populated with individuals most suited to the requirements of the deployment.

Formation Roles and Responsibilities:

The NIST DIR will ensure that the Planning Section liaises with the Mission Ready Groups, and provides information and instructions to HWF Responders. The NIST DIR will also coordinate the development of the Incident Support Plan. HWF Responders will ready themselves for deployment, which includes signing an Agreement to Serve waiver, a Code of Conduct Agreement, and a Confidentially Agreement.

MIST positions, including MRG Supervisors and MRG Strike Team Leaders will be chosen by the NIST from the pool of HWF Responders and may include identifying responders to function as leaders during travel for the mobilization, deployment, and demobilization phases. The AHJ/Emergency Management Office Organization, and if possible, the Local GSAR group, will assist the Logistics Section with securing accommodations for the inbound HWF, be they hotel(s), base(s) or camp(s).

Formation Intended Outcome:

The status of deployment was confirmed. The NIST is fully populated, engaged and operational. The MIST is assembled, will effectively meet the demands ahead, and will prepare for deployment. Future waves of HWF Responders may be identified at this time.

3.3.5. Mobilization

Mobilization Description:

During this phase, which can occur concurrently with the Formation phase, HWF Responders mobilize and rendezvous at designated travel hubs, and ultimately at the destination. The Logistics Section Manager coordinate the travel, accommodation and response infrastructure required for the HWF

deployment, under the guidance of the NIST DIR. The Mobilization phase requires diligent oversight with a flexible outlook to the constant impact of weather and transport capacity issues. Understandably, travel costs are a significant portion of the overall expense allocated to a full HWF response. However, consideration for the welfare of travelling HWF Responders should be a priority. The return travel of the HWF Responders to their points of origin shall also be coordinated at this time.

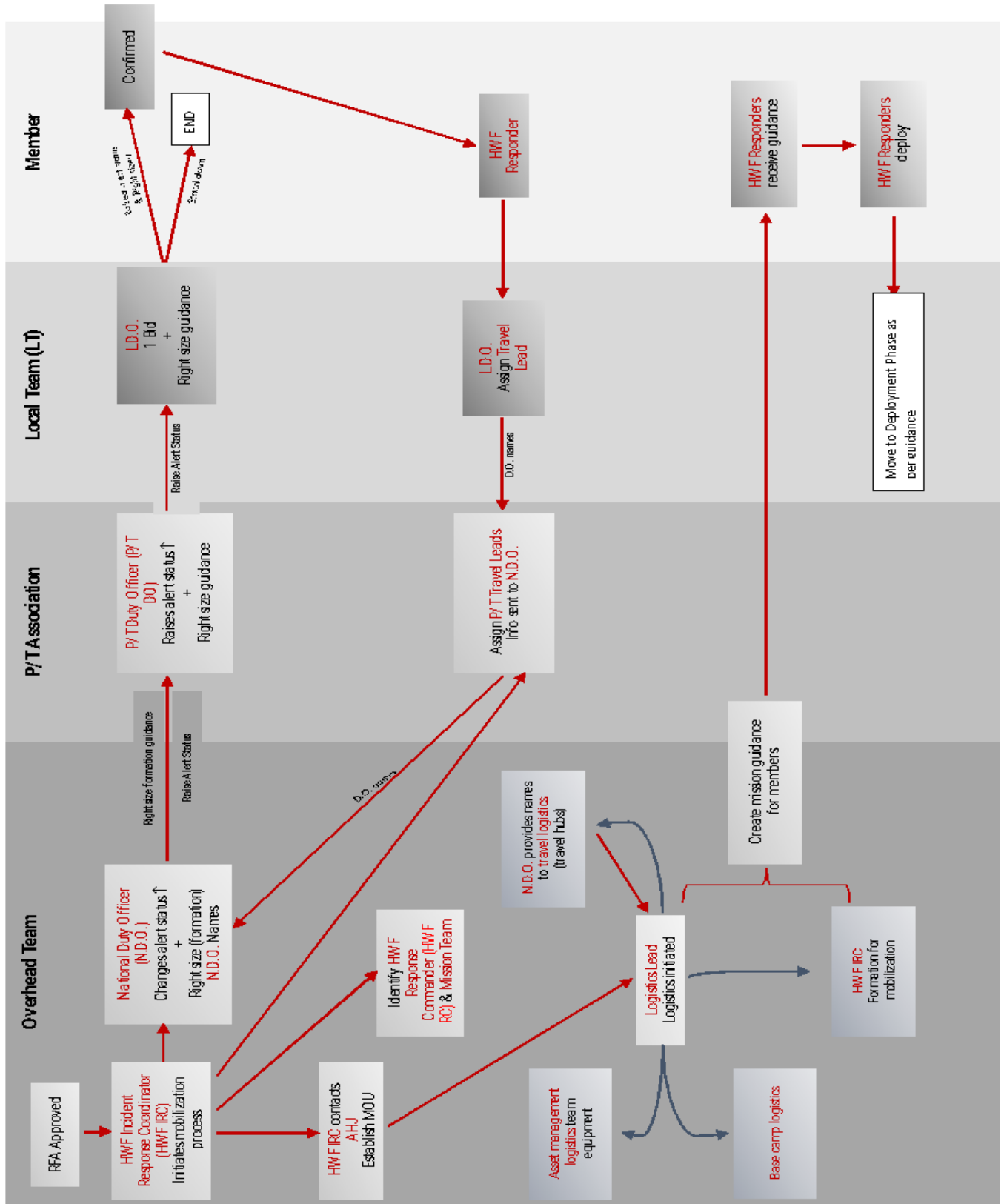
Mobilization Roles and Responsibilities:

The NIST DIR will oversee the management of travel planning. The NIST Finance & Administration Section will monitor the flow of resources and funds. The MRG Supervisors and MRG Strike team Leaders will be responsible for HWF Responders within their team who are traveling the same route (e.g., same planes, buses, convoys or cars). Individual HWF Responders will also ensure their own personal readiness status, as well as adhere to all logistics, deployment, and demobilization instructions found in their Information Packet.

Mobilization Intended Outcome:

All activated HWF Responders have arrived at the appointed travel hubs in a timely fashion and ultimately at the destination. The return travel for the HWF Responders has also been coordinated during this phase.

Formation, Mobilization, Deployment Phases



3.3.6. Deployment

Deployment Description:

The during this Phase, the MIST / MIMT and MRGs assembles at the Base of Operations, are assigned to their accommodations. Once deployment instructions from the RC have been relayed to the MRG Supervisors and MRG Strike Team Leaders, the HWF Responders assemble at their designated Staging Area to await integration into the event taskings. The NIST DIR ensures that all HWF Responders are aware of the tasking details (e.g., type, environment, hazards, and length). It is the responsibility of the AHJ (via the RC) to notify the NIST DIR when a change in resource size is required, such as the need for additional HWF Responders, a reduction in numbers, a temporary stand-down, or a complete stand-down. The NIST DIR monitors, documents, and then briefs all parties with any changes to the overall mission plan. This could include information regarding deployments, demobilization(s), the arrival of waves of new HWF Responders, and Peer Mental Wellness members.

Deployment Roles and Responsibilities:

The RC will monitor and manage expectations for the MIST, including HWF Responder non-operational time. Once HWF Responders have arrived at the event destination, the RC will ensure that the MIST is briefed of the mission, and monitors for any issues or concerns that arise within the MIST. HWF Responders should acclimatize to local conditions and prepare for deployment into the field.

Deployment Intended Outcome:

All activated HWF Responders have arrived at the Base of Operations (BoO) (e.g., base, camps, or hotels) in a timely fashion. The RC may have assigned HWF Responders to set up the Base of Operations. HWF MRGs have been assimilated into the Incident organizational structure by the AHJ and are assigned to taskings, in a safe and responsible manner. The arrival of future waves of responders has been planned, developed, and coordinated to seamlessly integrate into the response if required.

3.3.7. Tasking

Tasking Description:

The MIST reports to the AHJ incident organization upon arriving at the Staging area. Taskings are event specific, potentially outside of the HWF control. However, individual members of the HWF contingent may have an operational voice in the event, depending on the functional authority (e.g., Incident Command Team, Incident Management Team, or MRG Supervisors) they are asked to provide within the

event Taskings. Daily feedback from the RC to the NIST DIR is required to ensure SARVAC Executive/BoD, P/T Associations and affected Local GSAR Groups are kept informed.

Tasking Roles and Responsibilities:

The AHJ point of contact will brief the HWF Responders regarding general operations and taskings, and the Command Agency (i.e., the agency that has been placed in command by the AHJ, such as police, fire service, Public Works, or community services) will provide briefings on the Operational Taskings. HWF Responders should execute their assigned taskings safely and responsibly, and concurrently monitor their personal and the Mission Team well-being. HWF Responders should understand how to report critical incident stress and access available Mental Wellness resources if needed. The RC will provide daily feedback to the SARVAC, P/T Association and Local GSAR Groups via briefings with the NIST DIR.

Tasking Intended Outcome:

SARVAC's HWF contribution has impacted the response efforts in a positive way, potentially mitigating the suffering and duration of the event. All parties are briefed throughout the Deployment. The MIST has seamlessly integrated into the Incident Response structure of the AHJ and have performed assigned duties.

3.3.8. On-site Debrief

On-site Debrief Description:

Immediately upon completion of the last on-site Tasking for each operational period, all responding members engage in an On-site Debrief exercise which will include a Mental Wellness component. This debrief provides an opportunity to discuss experiences from the event, decompress, learn what signs and symptoms to look out for in regards to mental wellness, and share content for the After-Action Report. The On-site Debrief should be facilitated by the AHJ with aid from the HWF RC for the Mental Wellness portion and additional resources.

The RC ensures that a carefully and compassionately facilitated methodology is used to walk each member through a recap of the entire Deployment. The facilitator(s) seek to bring forth deployment details from all perspectives, including positive, negative, and room for improvement perspectives. Most importantly, however, is input as to how the HWF community and others can help with any underlying issues a HWF Responder may have. On-site Mental Wellness support is available to all HWF Responders. Documentation of the On-site Debrief, respecting any personal privacy issues, is sent to the NIST DIR for

collation and distribution to SARVAC Executive/BoD, P/T Association DOs, and Local GSAR Groups and HWF Responders.

On-site Debrief Roles and Responsibilities:

Prior to HWF Responders leaving the event site, the RC will organize an On-site Debrief exercise with the local AHJ Incident Commander. The Debrief will be thorough and will end with a provision that access to psychological counselling will be available. Documentation of the exercise and attendee lists will be sent to the NIST DIR. The RC, AHJ Incident Commander and NIST DIR, will also complete an Executive Summary of the On-site Debrief exercise with SARVAC's Executive, including the outcome from the HWF Responders On-site Debrief. The HWF Responders will participate in the On-site Debrief and perform selfcare, as needed.

On-site Debrief Intended Outcome:

AHJ Incident Command, RC, HWF Responders and SARVAC team have completed On-site Debriefs for every operational deployment team, have decompressed, and have shared lessons learned. All members will have reported together, prior to travelling to their point of origin.

3.3.9. Demobilization

Demobilization Description:

During the Demobilization Phase, the MIST (or parts thereof), stands down and the HWF Responders return to their points of origin. The NIST DIR (through the Logistics Section) coordinates the travel, and the MIST leadership (RC, MIST, MRG Supervisor, MRG Strike Team Leaders) assists with returning HWF Responders to points of origin efficiently and safely. Individual members will acknowledge when they have arrived at their home.

Demobilization Roles and Responsibilities:

The Logistics Section, AHJ, and Local GSAR Groups and HWF Responders will commence demobilization of the incident facilities. The HWF Responders will complete all taskings safely before traveling back to their point of origin. The Logistics Team will arrange transport for all HWF Responders back to their respective home bases. Responders, through their Local and P/T Association DOs, will confirm when they have returned home.

Demobilization Intended Outcome:

The demobilized HWF Responders have returned to their respective homes efficiently and safely.

3.3.10. After-Action Report

After-Action Report Description:

The SARVAC Program Director (PD) leads an After-Action Report exercise with SARVAC's Executive and BoD, participating National and P/T Associations, Local GSAR Groups and any other key stakeholders (i.e., PS, Incident Organization, AHJ/Emergency Management Offices) that are deemed critical to attend.

After-Action Report Roles and Responsibilities:

The SARVAC HWF PD will prepare and facilitate a National After-Action Report exercise to include the key participating groups: SARVAC's Executive and BoD, participating National and P/T Associations, and Local GSAR Groups. P/T Associations will distribute key points of the After-Action Report to HWF Responders through their Local GSAR Groups, which will include aspects of the operation needing improvement. The SARVAC HWF PD will complete an After-Action Report to the Tasking Agencies and recipient AHJ. The SARVAC PD will also develop a report for stakeholders outlining the lessons learned; these should be incorporated into policies and guidelines for future missions.

After-Action Report Intended Outcome:

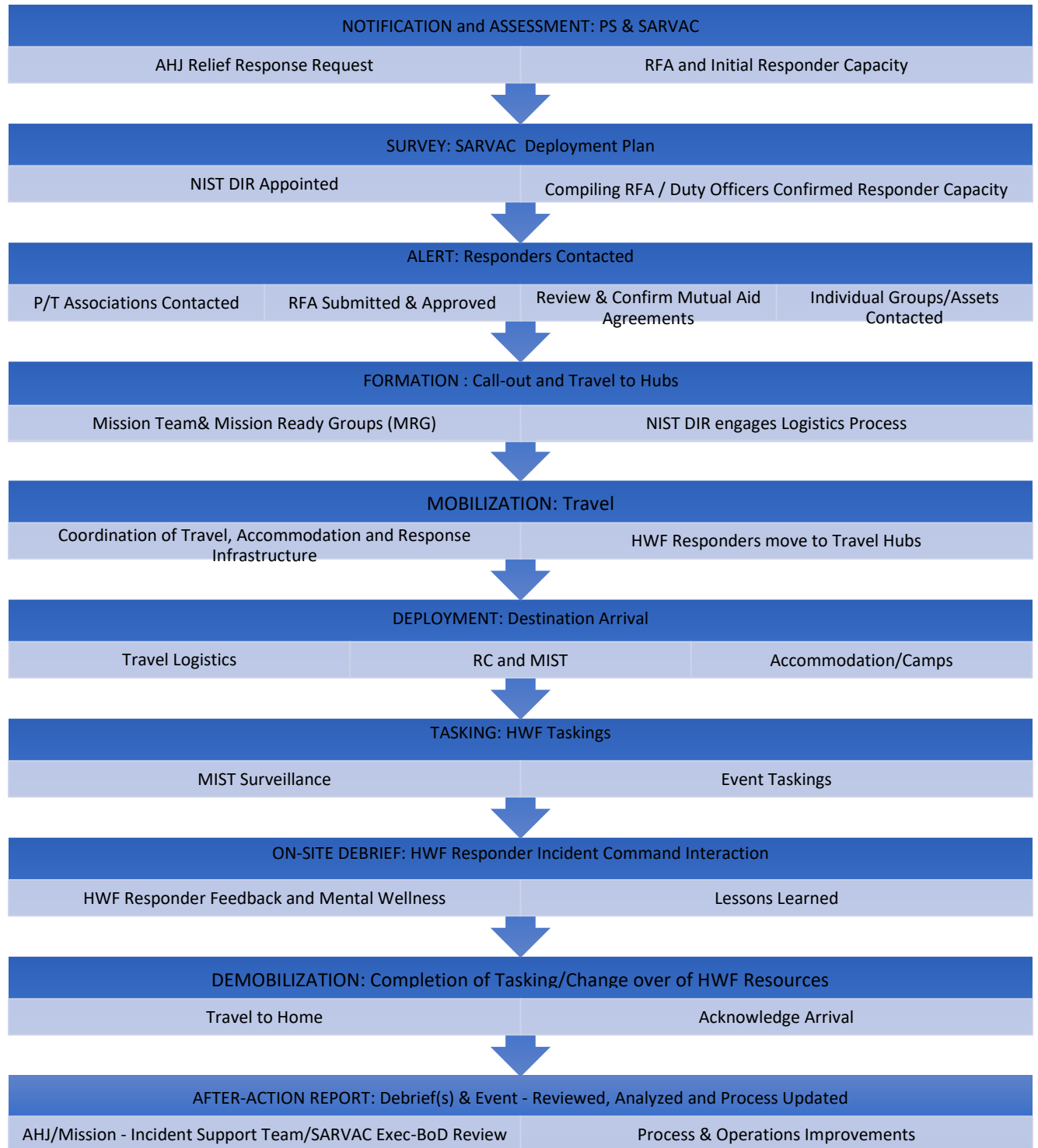
The Report should continuously improve HWF operations and relief efforts, and ensure that all HWF Responders were provided the care that they required post-event. The report should have answered the following questions:

1. What was the plan going into the event?
2. What occurred during the full HWF deployment and taskings?
3. What parts of the planning and/or plan went well?
4. What can be improved upon in each of the ten Phases?

3.4 HWF Process Flow Against Major Outcomes

The diagram following provides a visual summary of the key phases detailed previously with their expected major outcomes.

HWF Process



4. Training and Exercises

It is expected that SARVAC, P/T Associations and Local GSAR Groups will engage in training and awareness sessions that focus on all-hazard Disaster Response efforts and Call-out protocols.

A component of the sessions should focus on the HWF, defining what the HWF represents, the types of events that a HWF may be called upon to assist with (e.g., floods, tornadoes, pandemics, forest fires), and the roles and responsibilities for each HWF Responder. Training sessions should also review the expectations of the Local GSAR Groups (where the event occurs), as well as all responding Groups, and the interaction between Local GSAR Groups, P/T Associations and SARVAC.

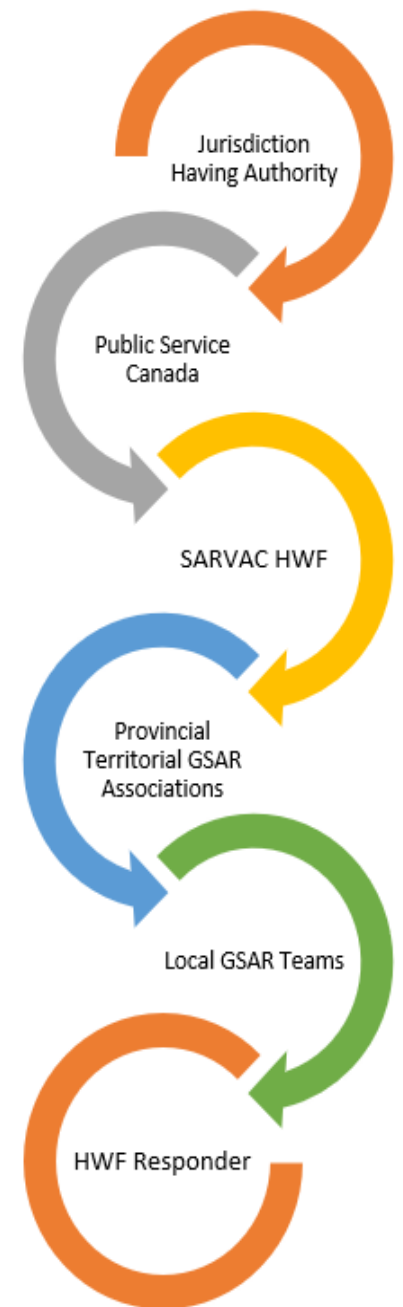
Discussions should also include how SARVAC integrates into the larger HWF with St John Ambulance, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and PS. A review of the team's AHJ relative to where they are located, would highlight the complexities of how the greater HWF comes together from coast to coast to coast and responds to a pandemic or national disaster event.

a. APPENDIX A: Details of the National SAR Operations Concept

1. Notification and Assessment

- a. SARVAC receives a notification, or an RFA from PS of an event where SARVAC Volunteers are requested to respond under the HWF Program. This request triggers the National SAR Concept of Operations process, the NSOC. Note: An AHJ will have requested federal assistance from PS to initiate involvement from the Federal Government perspective. When the request for federal assistance is approved within PS, the formalization of the RFA is sent to SARVAC's NDO, where the initiation of the NSOC begins.
- b. The NDO will notify the HWF PD of the receipt of an RFA.
- c. The HWF PD will appoint a NIST Director, who in turn may appoint positions to form the NIST.
- d. The NIST DIR identifies and initiates some key NIST functions to assist in the preparation of the RFA query proposal, such as the NIST Operations Section Manager (OSM), NIST Planning Section Manager (PSM), the NIST Logistics Section Manager (LSM), the NIST Finance & Administration Section Manager (FASM) and a Liaison for Indigenous Communities.
- e. The NIST reviews the RFA to determine the required the number of HWF Responder requested and if any specific capabilities are required, as well as anticipated deployment duration if additional operational waves may be required.
- f. When major event arise, SARVAC may be requested to maintain an Agency Representative at the Government Operations Center (GOC) RFA Table. The HWF PD and/or NIST DIR would ensure the position is filled.

HWF Response Notification – Initial Flow of Communication



2. Survey

- a. The NIST DIR with the assistance from the DOs will send out the Survey to P/T Associations using an Alert Status NOTICE with Deployment is Requested, in order to establish the availability of HWF Responders.
- b. P/T Associations will forward the Survey to Local GSAR Groups
- c. Individual Local GSAR Groups will send the Survey to their GSAR Group members.
- d. Individual Local GSAR Groups will forward a list of selected HWF Responders based on the Survey results.
- e. Documented exchanges between all parties will require timely responses from designated association/group contacts.
- f. The NIST DIR will convene a conference call with P/T DO to brief on tasking particulars and request validation of readiness. The conference call could include the affected Local GSAR Group. Inclusion of local resources identified by the AHJ, will provide more detailed expertise on the Event and real-time input on logistical, environmental and safety questions. The group considers the severity of the event, logistics, location of accommodations [e.g., hotel(s), base or camp(s)] and staging area, evacuation, and available medical resources. The group will also review and the skills and capabilities requested by the RFA.
- g. The PSM will validate available HWF Responders in number and skills available using the information from the DMS.
 - i. Call out list combined with the DMS is used to identify any specialized skills existing within the MIST team (i.e., Incident Command, Incident Management Team, Mission Ready Groups (MRG) assembled including Supervisor(s) and MRG Strike Team leader, Helicopter certified, Advanced 1st Aider, etc.). Required and identified specialized skills should be solicited by the AHJ.
- h. The location and application for funding is established.
- i. The NIST DIR will formalize the RFA proposal with the assistance of the requesting AHJ. The formalization of the RFA proposal includes:
 - i. Description of emergency.
 - ii. Numbers of personnel required and skill sets.
 - iii. Identify potential Camps and Staging area and date/timing of deployment.
 - iv. Mutual Aid Agreements in force and special deployment considerations (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic protocols).

- j. A tentative confirmation or decline of the RFA query is drafted by the NIST DIR. The NIST DIR answers to PS (and thus the requesting AHJ).
- k. PS/AHJ either accepts or declines SARVAC's capability offering.

3. Alert

- a. The NIST DIR with the assistance from the DOs will distribute a deployment status to all, using an Alert Status NOTICE with two levels:
 - i. Deployment is Confirmed, with details to follow, or
 - ii. Deployment is Stood Down.

4. Formation

- a. NIST DIR will also appoint a Response Coordinator (RC), who will provide overall mission leadership on the ground once HWF Responders are deployed
- a. Using an ICS structure as the basis for the formation of the MIST's, the NIST DIR will designate (with guidance from the RC), MRG Supervisors to organize and oversee the HWF Responders as they travel to the destination, via the travel hubs.
 - i. The NIST will remain in place throughout the deployment, and demobilization phases. They will not be responsible for taskings or event specific items.
 - ii. Local Event AHJ and GSAR Groups will be contacted by the RC and NIST DIR to provide an overview of the existing Emergency Management Plan and structure.
- b. The NIST DIR will distribute the event emergency plan to the MIST.
- c. Travel and accommodations will be organized by the NIST, whereas oversight will be administered by the NIST DIR.
- d. The AHJ and Local GSAR Group may be requested to assist the NIST to oversee the MIST's destination accommodations and facilities.
- e. The NIST DIR and RC will review and manage privacy concerns, including, but not limited to, personnel care, information sharing and sleeping arrangements.
- f. The PSM will validate available HWF Responders in number and skills available using the information from the DMS.
 - i. Call out list combined with the DMS is used to identify any specialized skills existing within the MIST team (i.e., Incident Command, Incident Management Team, Mission Ready Groups (MRG) assembled including Supervisor(s) and MRG Strike Team

leader, Helicopter certified, Advanced 1st Aider, etc.). Required and identified specialized skills should be solicited by the AHJ.

- g. RC will develop an understanding of the type, timing, and safety concerns of taskings that the MIST will undertake, such as:
 - i. If individual taskings are considered outside of the normal operational realm, then these taskings should be brought to the attention of the NIST DIR to ensure the work is within the scope of the HWF.
 - ii. Understanding any localized rules for deployment in the field, such as the issuance of the 'Supervision of the Spontaneous Public Volunteers' to the HWF Response Contingent.
- h. P/T and Local HWF Coordinators will provide event briefs to Local GSAR Groups and travel hub guidance for their respective jurisdictions.
- i. The RC determines the on-site medical details, including supply lines and secure storage.
- j. The Logistics Section determines the emergency evacuation plans, including the staging, transportation, security, medical, and communication of the plans.
- k. AHJ or NIST Logistics Section determines and arranges for Camp facility staffing and equipment sourcing.
- l. Any special needs equipment is identified and obtained.
- m. Determine Contact(s) at the event location, etc.

5. Mobilization

- a. The NIST DIR finalizes the MIST's logistics travel plan.
- b. The Logistics Section Manager organizes the Logistics Section and secures transportation to hubs and destination.
 - i. The list for attending HWF Responders is evaluated to identify efficient travel departure locations and/or travel hubs.
 - ii. Travel logistics including third party contractors (i.e., air travel, accommodations) is organized and activated.
 - iii. Transportation and destination reservation information is distributed to the individual travelers.
 - iv. The coordination of return travel is undertaken.

- c. The NIST DIR and RC through the MRG Supervisor, ensure all local Travel Team Leaders are named and aware of their roles and expectations from SARVAC's perspective.
 - i. Nominated local Team Leaders are ready with HWF Responders' information, travel and site logistics, and any special needs if required.
 - ii. HWF Responders deploy to travel hubs, as prescribed.
- d. NIST Logistics Section secure access to mass transit where practical.
 - i. Travel logistics (third party) assistance is available day and night to all travelling groups of HWF Responders.
- e. All MRG Supervisors are responsible for HWF Responders assigned to them for the duration of the deployment, including return to points of origin. They will ensure that:
 - i. HWF Responders are always accounted for while enroute to destination, at stops and change of transit modes (e.g., plane to bus, bus to accommodations).
 - ii. During event Taskings, including the time spent in the Staging areas, all HWF Missions will be under the Event Organization's guidance and responsibility.
 - iii. RC will be responsible for follow-up notification to associated group executive.

6. Deployment

- a. The RC and MRG Supervisors ensures all in-coming HWF Responders receive an orientation package and accommodations.
- b. Prior to moving to their assigned Taskings, all HWF Responders are given an in-depth Orientation Briefing. Briefing topics could include, but not limited to:
 - i. Geographical Area affected,
 - ii. Numbers of the public impacted,
 - iii. Status of relief response,
 - iv. HWF Taskings brief,
 - v. Weather, topography, and structural concerns,
 - vi. Personal and team safety awareness,
 - vii. Mandatory and optional personal and team safety gear (instructions and mode of use),
 - viii. Evacuation procedures,
 - ix. Humanitarian procedures,

- x. Interactions with home/business owners, the public, media, other HWF parties, etc.,
 - xi. Emergency evacuation services and alerting protocols,
 - xii. Available medical and consultation services:
 - 1. For the public.
 - 2. For HWF individuals.
- b. Mission Ready Group (MRG) Supervisors remain responsible for individuals throughout the deployment (i.e., deployed at the event and during downtime).
- i. MRGs are responsible for maintaining emergency and personal cell contact numbers, as well as medical and skills information for team members and to keep abreast of any stress related changes in behavior.
 - ii. MRGs are responsible for signing in and signing out team members at the accommodations/camps.
 - iii. RC is responsible for disciplinary oversights, where required.
 - iv. HWF Responders should always act respectfully and professionally. They are personally responsible for their actions before, during and after assignments. All will report any behavior witnessed that does not represent SARVAC and their P/T Associates, Local GSAR Groups, or team member, in a professional manner.
 - v. Future waves are planned, developed, and coordinated to seamlessly integrate into the response when required.
- c. The NIST DIR (when instructed to by the AHJ), initiates the Demobilization Process to demobilize deployed Local GSAR Groups to their respective home jurisdictions. The NIST DIR also prepares to either shutdown the current deployment, or accept an influx of new jurisdictional groups of HWF Responders.

7. Tasking

- a. The RC provides a Status Report Update to the NIST DIR, SARVAC and P/T Associations. Status Report Update information should include:
 - i. Number of deployed personnel, as well as any released,
 - ii. Tasking descriptions and progress reporting,
 - iii. Safety incidents and/or concerns,

- iv. Medical Aids and/or intervention occurrences,
 - v. Weather/Environmental/Structural events,
 - vi. National Relief efforts, numbers of partner and/or local relief resources,
 - vii. Documented issues and/or anticipated issues,
- b. Amendments to RFA's, if required.
 - i. RC and NIST DIR adjusts RFA and distributes to PS and NDO.
 - ii. After discussions, the NIST DIR, RC and NDO agree to amendments, then forward the amendments to PS/SARVAC Executive/AHJ, responding P/T DOs and LDOs with deployed members.
 - c. The NIST DIR and RC notifies AHJ of updates with associated adjustments to the RFA.
 - d. During the Taskings, as with all GSAR efforts, all are reminded to be safe, and to protect ones' team members, the public at large and those one is responding to.

8. On-site Debrief

- a. Incident management designates an in-house facilitator to oversee an Operational On-site Debrief session for personnel immediately upon the completion.
- b. P/T Associations and Individual GSAR Groups will identify external Mental Wellness resources that are available to returning members in need. Follow-up with such members will be required immediately upon return.
- c. Documented issues or findings from such meetings with the returning members will be distributed to SARVAC Executive, P/T DOs, and NIST DIR.

9. Demobilization

- a. The NIST DIR and the Logistics Section oversee necessary travel reservations and documentation to jurisdiction Groups for distribution to individuals after Mission team has been stood down, or parts thereof. HWF Responders return to their points of origin using the same transportation hubs for deployment, if possible. An accountability process will be used for all returning members.
- b. The Camps are demobilized by the Logistics Section, including return and/or storage of any supplies/equipment.

10. After-Action Report

- a. Prior to the SARVAC and the major stakeholders After-Action Report session, Local GSAR Groups are encouraged to have a member wide facilitated After-Action Report session to review the event with their entire membership.
- b. Within a pre-established timeline, SARVAC will lead a lessons-learned exercise of HWF Response Contingents and other key stakeholders involved in the event, including PS, Incident Organization, and respective ECC/EOC.
- c. When issues arise that have a wide-ranging impact to the Mission and the event, the Individual Groups shall forward these After-Action Reports to the NIST DIR and P/T GSAR Associations within a pre-established timeline
- d. SARVAC will be responsible for instituting an improvement mechanism to deal with the After-Action Report outcomes within a pre-established timeline. SARVAC will lead a lesson learned exercise with the MIST and other key stakeholders involved in the event, including GOC, Incident Organization and respective ECC/EOC.

APPENDIX B: Organizations, Groups, and Functions

I. ORGANIZATIONS

Public Safety Canada (PS): The Federal Government of Canada agency responsible for the Humanitarian Workforce (HWF). PS receives the Request for Federal Assistance (RFA) from the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) on behalf of the Government of Canada, then initiate the process of fulfilling the request.

Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC): An Association of Associations representing the thirteen recognized volunteer Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) Associations in Canada.

SARVAC Board of Directors (SARVAC BoD): Comprised of volunteer representatives from each of the provinces and territories of Canada.

SARVAC Executive: The elected executive body for SARVAC is responsible for the day to day running of the association.

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): The legal authority that has jurisdictional responsibility over an HWF event. This is often an emergency operations organization delegated by Provincial/ Territorial (P/T) governments or a local government.

Provincial/Territorial Ground Search and Rescue Association (P/T Association): A volunteer association responsible for the interaction between the P/T governing bodies for Emergency Management. The P/T Association will act as the collective voice for the Local GSAR Groups within its region, while ensuring that the response considerations for non-HWF GSAR activities are not compromised with the building of an HWF Response effort from its member base.

Local Ground Search and Rescue Group (Local GSAR Group): One of many volunteer groups located across the country, which have a reporting line to the P/T Association designated for their respective province or territory.

II. GROUPS

i. Program Management Team: A non-operational group that is responsible for the overall management of SARVAC's HWF Program, and forms part of the SARVAC office. It ensures that the necessary mechanisms are in place for successful HWF operations and missions. It is led by a Program Director (PD) that reports to the President of SARVAC.

ii. HWF National Incident Support Team (NIST): The TEAM that is responsible for the coordinating the overall HWF mission response. The Team is headed by a NIST Director (NIST DIR) and is comprised primarily of Program Management Team staff to form the NIST Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance and Administration Sections staff.

iii. Provincial/Territorial (P/T) overhead team: Consists primarily of a P/T Duty Officer (DO) however, this group could be expanded to include a P/T Coordinator function if deemed necessary. This group is responsible for the flow of information to the GSAR Groups

iv. Local overhead team: This group is responsible for the flow of information to the GSAR Members

v. HWF Mission - Incident Support Team (MIST) / Incident Management Team (MIMT): This TEAM is responsible for coordinating the mission ground operations and is comprised of the entire team that is deploying to an HWF event in response to an RFA. The group is lead by a Response Coordinator (RC).

III. FUNCTIONS

i. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Program Director (PD): This executive function (non-operational) is responsible for *SARAVC HWF Program*. Reporting to the Executive Director, they will manage the ongoing development, implementation, and maintenance of the HWF program, and will be supported by a small Finance & Administration capability.

Program Management: This function is responsible for the operationalization and maintenance of the NSOC, including training and exercise programs, After-Action Reports, and the maintenance of the HWF National Readiness System.

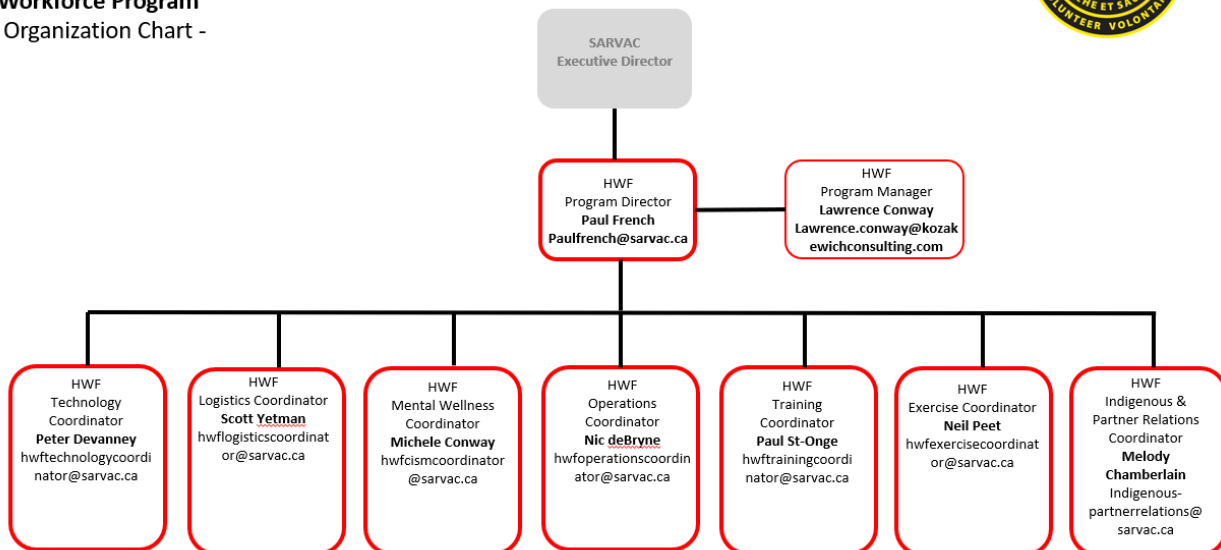
Partner Relations: This function is responsible for maintaining and managing relations with Federal, P/T, and Indigenous Governments, as well as facilitating the development of agreements as needed.

Planning & Reporting: This function is responsible for the development of a long-term strategic plan for the HWF Program as well as the reporting of progress against the plan. The function is also responsible for reports to government.

Program Development: This function is responsible for the development and implementation of new HWF capabilities; HWF technology procurement and development, the development of a logistics capability and the development and implementation of the National Readiness System.

The Program Management functions are carried out by the SARVAC HWF Program Management Team:

**SARVAC's
Humanitarian
Workforce Program
- Organization Chart -**



ii. HWF NATIONAL INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM (NIST)

NIST Director (NIST DIR): This function directs SARVAC HWF efforts, including setting up and coordinating the entire response throughout the event. However, the NIST DIR does not travel to the event site; they coordinate virtually. The NIST DIR is responsible for updates to SARVAC's Executive/BoD, P/T Associations and Local GSAR Groups with deployed HWF Responders. They also ensure that the On-site Debrief and After-Action Report is completed and distributed to the appropriate entities.

National Duty Officer (NDO): This function is responsible for the initial reception of RFAs from PS, which initiates the process for notifying SARVAC's Executive, BoD, and P/T Associations.

Operation Section: This function is responsible for coordinating the operational support provided to the HWF mission.

Planning Section: This function is responsible for planning the HWF mission, including forming the MRG and MIST, the Planning Section tracks resources, the mission situation and plans for the demobilization of all deployed HWF resources.

Logistics Section: This function is responsible for coordinating the logistical support provided to the HWF mission.

NIST Logistics - Transportation Unit: This function under the logistics Section is responsible for arranging the transportation for all HWF Responders to and from the Base of Operations, designated rendezvous point and their point of origin. This will include transportation arrangements by air and/or ground.

NIST Logistics - Accommodation Unit: This function under the logistics Section is responsible for deploying a base of Operations or Camp required to support the HWF mission. This function works closely with the MIST.

NIST Logistics - Supply Unit: This function under the logistics Section is responsible for deploying HWF Team assets to the operational area, in support of the HWF mission.

NIST Finance & Administration Section: This function is responsible for tracking and controlling financial expenditures pertaining to a specific mission. This function is also responsible for procurements and acquisitions as they relate to the mission.

iii. PROVINCIAL/ TERRITORIAL (P/T) OVERHEAD TEAM

P/T Coordinator: This function supports the alerting of Local GSAR Groups within their respective jurisdictions as part of a broader HWF mission.

P/T Duty Officer (P/T DO): This function is responsible for information and data management within their jurisdiction as response information flows between the NIST and the local overhead team. The function is also responsible for providing regular briefs to the P/T Association Executive.

iv. LOCAL OVERHEAD TEAM

Local Coordinator: This function is responsible for coordinating the local alerting of local HWF Responders as part of a broader HWF mission.

Local Duty Officer (LDO): This function is responsible for overseeing all HWF activities, including the update of Individual Member availability and credentials, status updates to Local GSAR executives, coordination of all notices and communication with the Local GSAR Groups, confirmation and/or validation of available HWF Responder credentials and coordination of HWF training for the Local GSAR Group.

v. HWF MISSION - INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM (MIST)

Response Coordinator (RC): This function is responsible for overseeing the HWF Responders while they are mobilizing, deploying, or returning to their point of origin. The HWF Responders ultimately take their direction from the RC through their MRG Supervisor. Any disciplinary or emergency medical situations that arise throughout the response are administered by the RC. The RC also provides On-site Debrief notes and After-Action Report analysis.

Agency Representative (AR): This function is the link between SARVAC's Mission Team and the AHJ Command Structure at the Incident Command Post (ICP), Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) or

Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC). The AR may coordinate with the Incidents Commanders or Liaison Officer. This function can be held by the RC or a designate.

Mission Ready Group (MRG) Supervisor: This function is populated with experienced HWF Responders (ideally trained SAR Manager), reporting through the RC, and will be responsible for communications among responding HWF Responders and Strike Team Leaders while they are preparing for mobilization, deployment, tasking and de-mobilization. The MRG Supervisor will be supervising the Strike Team Leader and ultimately the HWF Responders on operational taskings.

Strike Team Leader: This function is populated with experienced HWF Responders (ideally trained SAR Managers and/or trained SAR Team Leaders), reporting through the MRG Supervisor or RC, and will be responsible for communications among responding HWF Responders while they are preparing for mobilization, deployment, tasking and de-mobilization. The Strike Team Leaders will be supervising the HWF Responders on operational taskings.

HWF Responders: This function is populated with experienced GSAR Members, reporting through the Strike Team Supervisor and MRG Supervisor and ultimately the RC. The HWF Responders are the “surge capacity” members who will be carrying out the operational work that initiated the RFA.

b. ANNEX A – Approval and Review

PLAN MAINTENANCE:

The NSOC will be revised as required, with all changes issued through the SARVAC President. The SARVAC Office will ensure that this plan is reviewed and updated as necessary, but not less than annually.

APPROVAL:

DATE	TITLE	NAME
March 31 2022	President Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada	Janelle Coultres

RECORD OF REVISION:

DATE OF REQUEST	SOURCE OF REQUEST	DATE COMPLETED
January 2024	Changes of CISM to Mental Wellness Changes in the alignment of Phases Activities	February 14 2024
	Corrections to terminology	March 14 2024

