



## SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION OF CANADA HUMANITARIAN WORKFORCE



## MISSION INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM TRAINING WORKSHOP

21 – 23 March 2025

## AFTER-ACTION REPORT

*Final Version – 25 June 2025*



**Mission Incident Support Team Training Workshop  
21 – 23 March 2025  
After Action Report**

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## SIGN-OFF PAGE

**Mission Incident Support Team (MIST) Training Workshop  
21 – 23 March 2025  
After Action Report**

**Review Summary:**

As the SARVAC HWF Project Director, I have reviewed the After-Action Report for the above-referenced workshop. Based on the findings and analysis, I acknowledge the successes, challenges, and lessons learned outlined in this report. I also recognize the corrective actions and recommendations provided to improve future workshop outcomes.

**Approval:**

☒ I approve this report as final.

☐ I require further revisions or additional information before approval.

**Signature:**

Signature	Name	Date
<i>Paul French</i>	Paul French	June 26, 2025



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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

To assemble an effective response to a pandemic or an all-hazards disaster in Canada, the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC) and its member associations have established the Humanitarian Workforce (HWF) National Search and Rescue Operations Concept (NSOC). The NSOC provides a platform to efficiently assemble and manage an urgent response to Requests for Federal Assistance (RFA) to support Canada and Canadians in their time of need with the goals of saving lives, preserving the environment, protecting property and the economy.

When Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) volunteers from across Canada assemble under the SARVAC umbrella as HWF Responders, and deploy to the location of the RFA, their activities on the ground are directed and managed by the Mission Incident Support Team (MIST). The MIST, which is based on the Incident Command System (ICS) construct, is essentially an Incident Management Team (IMT) of qualified personnel assigned to the Command and General Staff Positions.

The Command Staff is assigned to carry out staff functions needed to support the SARVAC HWF Response Coordinator (RC). These functions include interagency liaison, incident safety, and public information. Command Staff positions are established to assign responsibility for key activities not specifically identified in the General Staff functional elements. The General Staff represents and is responsible for the functional aspects of the incident command structure. The General Staff typically consists of the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration sections.

When the SARVAC HWF deploys under an RFA, they are supported on the ground by the MIST for the duration of the tasking. As the length of a response may range for days to weeks, or longer, it is essential that SARVAC has a pool of qualified and trained GSAR volunteers that can be called upon to fulfill the duties of the Command and General Staff positions in the MIST on a rotational basis.

To help build this capacity, the SARVAC HWF program has introduced the MIST Training Workshop. The first workshop was held from 21 March 2025 to 23 March 2025 (inclusive) with a total of 31 participants from the SARVAC HWF Project Team and GSAR Volunteers from across Canada in attendance.

Through the delivery of this Workshop, the SARVAC HWF program sought to build the cadre of available SARVAC HWF responders who would be called upon to effectively assume the duties of the Command and General Staff positions in the MIST under an HWF deployment.

With the feedback received from the HWF Project Team and the Post-Workshop Participant Survey, this After-Action Report (AAR) will examine the elements of the workshop that were successfully delivered, identify areas for improvement, and generate an Improvement Action Plan (IAP) to build on and improve the workshop deliverables moving forward.



## 2. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW:

### 2.1 Description:

A workshop is typically held to achieve a specific goal or to build a clearly defined deliverable. The specific goal could be to walk participants through a process and provide them with the opportunity to ask questions every step of the way, so they get discussion-based practice. With regards to deliverables, workshops can be used to share information and ideas on the development of, or update to, documents such as strategies, plans, policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), business continuity plans, and mutual aid agreements.

The MIST Training Workshop was a facilitated, 2-day session:

- To raise education and awareness of the NSOC and the associated SOPs, as well as the roles and functions of the Command and General Staff positions in the MIST.
- To analyze the 10 Phases of the NSOC as they apply to the Command and General Staff functions of the MIST.

### 2.2 Date, Location, and Duration:

- Friday, 21 March 2025 to Sunday, 23 March 2025, inclusive. A virtual session was held in advance of the workshop to provide an overview of the SARVAC HWF program and a Workshop orientation.
- Toronto, Ontario.
- Day 1 – Friday: Inbound travel / workshop evening session.
- Day 2 – Saturday: Workshop.
- Day 3 – Sunday: Workshop and outbound travel.
- Day 4 – Monday: Outbound travel.

### 2.3 Objectives:

In a facilitated workshop of 2 days in duration:

1. Identify a small cadre of SARVAC volunteers and staff (30) from across Canada who will be called upon to provide a surge capacity at the Command and General Staff levels in the MIST when the HWF program is asked to deploy under an RFA, and a MIST augmentation is required.
2. Raise the levels of understanding and competency in the 10 Phases of the NSOC and the associated SOPs amongst the Workshop Participants.
3. Raise the levels of understanding and competency in the roles and responsibility of the Command and General Staff positions (and the associated duties) of the MIST.



## **2.4 Curriculum:**

- MIST Workshop – Defining Roles and Expectations.
- HWF Program Overview.
- HWF Guidance Documents (EMGOSAR, NSOC, National SOPs).
- Emergency Management in Canada.
- Introduction to HWF Operational Organization / Roles and Responsibilities.
- Information Flow and Dissemination.
- Risk Assessment and Management.
- Operational Planning.
- Operational Technology.
- Practical Exercise.
- Conclusion and Wrap-Up.

## **2.5 Workshop Roles and Responsibilities:**

The **HWF Program Director** was responsible for overall management, leadership and direction of workshop planning, delivery and post-workshop review and evaluation. The HWF Program Director and HWF Program Manager also worked with the Executive Director and the SARVAC Board of Directors to recruit the workshop participants from SARVAC volunteers nation-wide.

The **HWF Program Manager** was responsible for project oversight and the direction of HWF program staff to ensure that the workshop deliverables and milestones were met.

The **HWF Operations Coordinator** was responsible for overseeing the production of all content and managing the delivery of the MIST workshop.

The **HWF Exercise Coordinator**, in cooperation with the HWF Operations Coordinator, supported the planning and delivery of the workshop curriculum.

The **HWF Training Coordinator** was responsible for supporting the HWF Operations Coordinator in the production of all media and other workshop training aids as required.

The **HWF Technology Coordinator** was responsible for creating the required data management system to track workshop participant recruiting, the sharing of information, and the tracking of participant travel to and from the Workshop.

The **SARVAC Finance and Administration Officer** was responsible for arranging all accommodations, catered meals, and boardrooms for all workshop attendees as well as for administering and processing all travel claims and invoices.

The **SARVAC Travel Agent** was responsible for booking airline travel for all Workshop attendees.

All **SARVAC HWF Project Staff** supported the planning and delivery of the workshop as required by the Project Director and/or Project Manager.



## **2.6 Workshop Timelines:**

Weekly Open Action Tracker (OAT) meetings were held every Thursday during the planning phase of the workshop.

<b>ACTION / EVENT:</b>	<b>DATE / TIME:</b>
Concept and Objectives (C&O) Meeting	Friday, 10 Jan 25
Initial Planning Meeting (IPM)	Thursday, 16 Jan 25
Main Planning Meeting (MPM)	Thursday, 30 Jan 25
Final Planning Meeting (FPM)	Thursday, 20 Feb 25
Workshop	Friday, 21 Mar 25 – Sunday, 23 Mar 25
Workshop After Action Report (AAR)	April 2025

## **2.7 Workshop Evaluation Criteria:**

The evaluation of this workshop has been facilitated through the production and dissemination of an online Participant Feedback Survey and a SARVAC HWF Project Team post-workshop hotwash. All feedback received has been incorporated into this AAR and IAP.





### 3. WORKSHOP SUCCESSES:

Through the conduct of the MIST Workshop, SARVAC was able to bring together representatives from 11 GSAR associations to raise their knowledge and awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the Command and General Staff positions of the MIST as they pertain to the employment of the NSOC for the HWF program.

This workshop yielded several meaningful outcomes:

- **Enhanced knowledge and skills:** Core competencies of the Command and General staff positions were explored with participants gaining valuable knowledge and awareness of the expectations when they fulfill the MIST roles during a SARVAC HWF deployment.
- **Network building and collaboration:** Participants were able to build relationships with peers from different GSAR associations and backgrounds which helps to build a nationwide network of HWF responders who can collaborate and support each other during deployments.
- **Improved coordination and standardization:** Ensuring the alignment of protocols, language, and procedures across all GSAR associations to ensure a national approach to HWF deployment for disaster relief.
- **Identification of regional challenges and strengths:** By bringing together GSAR representatives from across Canada, SARVAC and GSAR associations can identify unique regional risks and capacities which helps inform national strategies that are more inclusive and representative (language, culture, etc.).
- **Leadership and capacity development:** This workshop has identified and educated GSAR volunteers who will return to their associations and teams to raise awareness of the HWF program which will help to build program resilience through decentralized leadership.
- **Increased motivation and engagement:** Being selected for a national-level workshop will likely boost morale and motivation amongst participants who often leave with a renewed sense of purpose and program commitment.
- **Action Plans and Follow-up Initiatives:** Participants may develop disaster preparedness or response plans for their home GSAR teams which will enhance response capacities and capabilities to localized events.
- **Data collection and insight generation:** SARVAC HWF project staff can gather feedback from workshop participants on local perspectives with respect to disaster preparedness challenges across the country which will help to inform policy development and resource allocation at a national program level.

## 4. WORKSHOP FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

### 4.1 Delivery of Workshop Content:

While most workshop attendees agreed that the curriculum presented was relevant to the roles and responsibilities of the Command and General Staff of the MIST, it was felt that the methods of content delivery were concentrated on traditional lecturing techniques and structured PowerPoint presentations, and that other, more engaging and diverse methods of information sharing could be explored to ensure that interest is maintained and that the transfer of knowledge is successful.

The principles of adult learning are based on the ideas that adults bring unique experiences, motivations and learning needs to the educational process. The key principles of adult learning are:

**Self-Directed Learning:** Adults typically prefer to take responsibility for their learning. They like to have control over their learning process, set their own goals, and decide how to approach the material. Instructors can support this by acting as facilitators rather than traditional lecturers.

**Prior Experience:** Adults bring a wealth of prior knowledge and life experience into the learning environment. This experience can be a valuable resource for understanding new concepts. Adult learners often appreciate learning that connects with their personal or professional experiences.

**Problem-Centered Learning:** Adults tend to prefer learning that is practical and centered on solving real-world problems. Instead of abstract theory, adult learners are often interested in learning how to address immediate challenges or apply knowledge to practical situations.

**Respect for Learner's Autonomy:** Adults value being treated with respect and dignity in the learning environment. They appreciate an atmosphere of mutual respect, where their opinions and experiences are valued and their contributions to the learning process are welcomed.

**Readiness to Learn:** Adults are generally ready to learn when they recognize a need to know something. This is often triggered by changes in their personal or professional lives, such as a new job, promotion, or new responsibilities.

**Learning as a Lifelong Process:** Adults view learning as a continuous, lifelong process. They are often motivated by the desire to improve their skills or knowledge throughout their lives, which means learning is not limited to a particular age or stage of life.

In adult education, creativity is not just about being entertaining—it's a strategic approach to enhancing learning effectiveness, relevance, and engagement. Educators who adopt creative methods empower adult learners to grow personally and professionally with confidence and competence.

**Recommendation 1:** That SARVAC HWF explore the principles of adult learning and alter their instructional techniques, when appropriate, so that future workshops vary the methods of content delivery to better align with the specific needs and learning preferences of an adult audience.



## 4.2 Workshop Structure and Time Management in Achieving Learning Objectives:

The MIST workshop curriculum developed was extremely comprehensive and included significant content. To deliver the workshop content in the 2-days available for training, a very tight agenda was necessary.

A well-structured workshop with effective time management is critical for achieving educational goals—particularly in aligning enabling objectives with the terminal objectives. Terminal objectives define the overall outcome or competence that participants should attain by the end of the workshop. Enabling objectives, on the other hand, break down the terminal objective into smaller, measurable steps or skills that guide the instructional design and delivery.

Structure provides the framework for organizing content in a logical progression. It ensures that each enabling objective builds upon the previous one and supports the eventual achievement of the terminal objective. Without a clear structure, the learning experience can become fragmented, leaving participants without the necessary foundation to meet the final outcomes.

Time management plays a crucial role in ensuring that each enabling objective receives adequate attention. Poor time allocation can lead to rushed segments or missed objectives, which diminishes the likelihood of achieving the terminal objective. Conversely, effective time management allows facilitators to pace content delivery, incorporate participant interaction, and provide reinforcement activities or assessments.

**Recommendation 2:** *That SARVAC HWF maximize the impacts of workshops and ensure that enabling objectives contribute effectively to terminal objectives:*

- *Develop a Detailed Workshop Plan: Break down the terminal objective into a series of enabling objectives and align each one with a segment of the workshop. Ensure a logical flow of content.*
- *Allocate Time Strategically: Assign time blocks to each enabling objective based on its complexity and importance. Factor in time for instruction, practice, feedback, and questions.*
- *Include Buffers: Build in short buffer periods to absorb unexpected delays or allow deeper exploration of complex topics without derailing the overall schedule.*
- *Monitor and Adapt: Stay responsive during the workshop. Use participant feedback and formative assessments to adjust pacing or emphasize specific objectives as needed.*

*By integrating structure and time management into the design and delivery of a workshop, facilitators can create an effective learning experience that ensures participants achieve the intended competencies.*



### **4.3 Collaborate Workspace for the Engagement of the HWF Communities of Interest.**

Microsoft Teams provides a dynamic, centralized platform that enables seamless communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. For communities of interest such as the SARVAC HWF Train the Trainer Champions, and the MIST and Mental Wellness cohorts, MS Teams can serve as an inclusive digital hub that fosters engagement, idea exchange, and collective growth.

#### **Create a Dedicated Team with Structured Channels:**

- Establish a dedicated Team for the communities.
- Create channels around key topics, projects, or themes (i.e. general discussions, resources, events, innovations).
- Use private channels for steering groups or subcommittees to plan without overwhelming general members.

#### **Enable Persistent and Real-Time Communication:**

- Use the Posts tab for ongoing conversations and to share ideas, ask questions, or make announcements.
- Encourage the use of @mentions to draw attention to specific contributions or updates.
- Leverage integrated file sharing and collaboration.

#### **Store and collaborate on documents using the integrated Files tab:**

- Co-author documents in real-time with Word, Excel, or PowerPoint, supporting knowledge-building and transparency.
- Host Virtual Events and Meetings.

#### **Schedule regular virtual meetups, webinars, or discussion panels via Teams Meetings:**

- Use features such as breakout rooms, polls, and live reactions to foster participation and interactive sessions.

#### **Encourage Community Engagement and Recognition:**

- Use channels like “Kudos” or “Showcase” to recognize contributions and highlight member achievements.
- Implement gamification strategies (i.e. badges, leaderboards) using third-party apps to increase motivation.

#### **Maintain Governance and Inclusivity:**

- Assign clear roles (i.e. moderators, coordinators) to facilitate discussion and manage content.
- Ensure the space is welcoming by establishing community guidelines and fostering respectful interactions.



**Recommendation 3:** *That SARVAC HWF continue the migration of program files and documents from the Google platform to the Microsoft Teams platform and that they utilize this workspace to continue the collaboration and growth of the SARVAC HWF communities of interest and that expansion be explored to include other SARVAC HWF files such as Indigenous Relations and Partnerships, Logistics, Communications and Technology, and Exercising.*



## 5. CONCLUSION:

The MIST Workshop held in March 2025 was the first to be designed and facilitated by the SARVAC HWF Project Team. From the concept-phase to the delivery-phase, this successful outcome was achieved in the very short time span of only 10-weeks, with the associated planning and production workload being carried by the team in addition to their regular day-to-day duties and responsibilities.

While several opportunities for refining and fine-tuning have been identified, the SARVAC HWF Project Team are to be recognized and commended for their hard work, dedication, and “can do” attitude in furthering the cause of the SARVAC HWF through the production and facilitation of this workshop.

The Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada would also like to recognize and thank the many GSAR Volunteers from across this nation who so freely and willingly give of their time and their talents to support the GSAR activities and the mission of the SARVAC HWF program.



## APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (IAP)

TITLE	ISSUE	CORRECTIVE ACTION	ELEMENT	OPI	COMPLETION DATE
Delivery of Workshop Content.	The methods of content delivery were concentrated on traditional lecturing techniques. More engaging and diverse methods of information sharing could be explored.	That SARVAC HWF explore the principles of adult learning and alter their instructional techniques, when appropriate, so that future workshops vary the methods of content delivery to better align with the specific needs and learning preferences of an adult audience.	Policy Training	St-Onge	TBD
Workshop Structure and Time Management in Achieving Learning Objectives	Time management plays a crucial role in ensuring that each enabling objective receives adequate attention.  Effective time management allows facilitators to pace content delivery, incorporate participant interaction, and provide reinforcement activities or assessments.	That SARVAC HWF maximize the impacts of workshops and ensure that enabling objectives contribute effectively to terminal objectives.	Policy Training	All Staff	TBD



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Collaborate Workspace for the Engagement of the HWF Communities of Interest.	Microsoft Teams provides a dynamic, centralized platform that enables seamless communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. For communities of interest such as the SARVAC HWF Train the Trainer Champions, and the MIST and Mental Wellness cohorts, MS Teams can serve as an inclusive digital hub that fosters engagement, idea exchange, and collective growth.	That SARVAC HWF continue the migration of program files and documents from the Google platform to the Microsoft Teams platform and that they utilize this workspace to continue the collaboration and growth of the SARVAC HWF communities of interest and that expansion be explored to include other SARVAC HWF files such as Indigenous Relations and Partnerships, Logistics, Communications and Technology, and Exercising.	Policy Training Oversight	All Staff	TBD
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## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED

### **Prioritize Practical, Hands-On Learning:**

- Strong preference for more exercise time, practical application, and scenario-based learning.
- Suggestions for multiple planning cycles, staged tabletop exercises, and more team-based activities.
- Clear desire to reduce lecture-style instruction in favor of adult learning methods.

### **Improve Presentation Format & Delivery:**

- Frequent mention of over-reliance on MS PowerPoint; request for more varied and engaging formats (videos, flowcharts, live demos).
- Need for better visual design and presenter visibility (i.e. lighting, slide contrast).
- Recommendation to balance presenter focus with support materials.

### **Time Management & Agenda Structure:**

- Comments noted rushed sessions, long days, and overloaded content.
- Suggestions for better pacing, tighter adherence to schedule, and time for discussion and reflection.
- Interest in shorter days or spreading content over virtual sessions.

### **Participant Preparation:**

- Requests for pre-workshop reading material beyond the NSOC to build baseline knowledge.
- Desire to restrict advanced-level sessions to TTT graduates to allow deeper discussion and avoid repeating basics.

### **Content Focus:**

- Feedback to focus more on HWF/MIST-specific roles and skills, rather than ICS refreshers.
- Requests to connect procedural steps to functional goals and adapt plans to local circumstances.

### **Logistics & Experience:**

- Feedback included requests for better food, shorter travel, and more networking opportunities.
- Suggestions to mix seating arrangements and create spaces for participant interaction (i.e. chat groups, sharing sessions).



## APPENDIX C: STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Number of Workshop Participants:	31
Number of Workshop Hours (instruction):	19
Total Number of Workshop Hours (participation): (Workshop hours – instruction [19] x number of participants)	589
Total Number of Travel Hours: (To and from Toronto, ON by mode of transport)	262.5
GSAR Associations Represented:	SARVAC HWF - 8 SARVAC - 1 AQBRs - 2 SARAB - 3 NSGSARA - 2 BCSARA - 2 PEIGSAR - 1 YSAR - 2 SARMAN - 2 NLSARA - 2 SARSAV - 2 NBGSARA - 2 OSARVA - 2



## APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>AAR</b>	After-Action Report
<b>C&amp;O</b>	Concept and Objectives
<b>EMGOSAR</b>	Emergency Management Governance for Search and Rescue
<b>FPM</b>	Final Planning Meeting
<b>GSAR</b>	Ground Search and Rescue
<b>HWF</b>	Humanitarian Workforce
<b>IAP</b>	Improvement Action Plan
<b>ICS</b>	Incident Command System
<b>IMT</b>	Incident Management Team
<b>IPM</b>	Initial Planning Meeting
<b>MIST</b>	Mission Incident Support Team
<b>MPM</b>	Main Planning Meeting
<b>MS</b>	Microsoft
<b>NSOC</b>	National Search and Rescue Operations Concept
<b>OAT</b>	Open Action Tracker
<b>RC</b>	Response Coordinator
<b>RFA</b>	Request for Federal Assistance
<b>SARVAC</b>	Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>TTT</b>	Train the Trainer