

# Core Competency Background

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The Core Competency Project and the team's purpose were crafted by taking information that was developed over the last 15 to 20 years and input from SAR Deputies, SAR coordinators, and SAR volunteers.

## **The goals were to:**

- Develop information that would help deputies and volunteers better understand WAC requirements.
- Enhance and update the "Out of County" responder guidelines that were established a number of years ago.
- Develop a formalized training program that could be implemented by a county or make allowances for an existing county training program that meets the project's goals.
- Begin to look at changes being discussed and begin a process of on-going review / change.

We worked diligently to ensure we learned from past efforts to bring standards to Washington State, to develop new methods of utilizing SAR resources, and to standardize training. The team used past efforts as a benchmark and a measuring tool for the development of the document that exists today. Hours and hours were spent going through the documentation from previous work. Additional time was spent looking at existing competency plans and documents. Plans from California, Oregon, New Mexico, Colorado, and the National Park Service as well as other SAR organizations were reviewed and compared to the objectives of the team.

We were dedicated to "*not re-inventing the wheel*". We carefully looked at what exists today in the larger counties, and the smaller counties. We spent time with some of the best consultants in the country regarding search and rescue seeking their advice and counsel. We looked at the changes that appear to be coming.

We met with the Deputies who on a daily basis work, coordinate, and manage SAR missions and incidents in Washington State.

## **From all of this research and work several themes emerged:**

- Change is occurring and it needs to be documented, managed, and planned for.
- Situations occur every year that put searchers and subjects in greater personal and professional danger.
- The need to increase the professionalism of SAR volunteers and paid staff is clear.

These themes made it clear as to what was needed: a workable solution.

**First, review the work that had previously been done.** We gathered the information and reviewed it. We talked to people who had been part of the earlier standards and benchmarks efforts.

It became clear that a different approach was needed; the team decided to look for common skills that all search and rescue responders need. It was decided to put together a set of core competencies that would cover the following areas:

- Physical and Mental Fitness
- Legal Issues
- Search and Rescue Survival
- Navigation (Map and Compass) – GPS – Altimeter – Other
- Communications – Coordination – Documentation – (radio, coordinate, ICS forms, etc.)
- Crime Scene Identification and Management
- Clue Awareness and Identification
- Search Techniques
- Helicopter Safety
- Subject/Searcher First Aid
- Searcher Safety
- Rescue Techniques

The team felt that all responders whether base or field need training in all of these areas and are able to demonstrate a level of proficiency.

**So it was decided to create a Core Competency document.** The team has been working for the past 18 to 20 months on the drafting and developing this document. It is a document that was drawn from many sources. The team diligently looked for best practices. We believe this document is an excellent starting point. It needs to be noted that it is a starting point. The team has been working this project on a five (5) year timeline.

That is the background of the Core Competency team and the document that exist today.

**We need to look at where we go from here.**

- The Out of County standards need to be updated to reflect the Core Competencies.
- A pilot program needs to be started.
- Counties should be encouraged to look at and review the Core Competency document in light of their own training for SAR.
- SARVAC and WSSARCA are committed to work with any and all counties who would like to analyze their training.

The team also felt it was important to account for options. The following options are available to counties:

- Opt out
- Implement their own training program
- Apply for an “Equivalence” training program

As you will see below our implementation strategy is a very structured, step by step plan. It was felt by the team that a structured and controlled implementation strategy was needed to ensure that all inputs are reviewed and identified adjustments can be made.

**Project Plan – Phases 1 -7**

Phase	Activities in the Phase
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 1</b></p> <div style="background-color: #6aa84f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Define the Issue</li> <li>▪ Develop a work group to define and review the issue.</li> <li>▪ Agreement that the issue warrants action to be taken.</li> <li>▪ Gather all previous documents and information created regarding the subject matter being reviewed.</li> <li>▪ Review current RCWs and WACs for the current information, document gaps.</li> <li>▪ Review any current benchmarks or standards (SARVAC out of county document); document gaps.</li> <li>▪ Review gap documentation.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 2</b></p> <div style="background-color: #6aa84f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review issue information and decide is it an issue.</li> <li>▪ Review gap information for gaps of significance.</li> <li>▪ Oversight groups (WSSARCA-SARVAC) review issue statements and gap information, decide on the level of significance and need. If the issue meets the criteria for review and action, a project team needs to be established.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 3</b></p> <div style="background-color: #6aa84f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a project team.</li> <li>▪ Establish a project issue statement.</li> <li>▪ Project team will meet and begin the process of review and research.</li> <li>▪ Project team will develop potential solution options.</li> <li>▪ Project team along with sponsors and stakeholders will review solution options.</li> <li>▪ Sponsors and stakeholders will provide input on preferred solution.</li> <li>▪ Project team will review and finalize documents and implementation plans.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 4</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present final document or documents.</li> <li>▪ Implement updated Out-of-County Core Competency documentation.</li> <li>▪ Implement training program for pilot counties.</li> <li>▪ Monitor Out-of-County Core Competency plan.</li> <li>▪ Monitor pilot training for pilot counties (3 to 5 counties at most).</li> <li>▪ Review and analyze findings from pilot program.</li> <li>▪ Develop a train the trainer program.</li> <li>▪ Develop an observer training.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 5</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design, develop, and implement train-the- trainer program.</li> <li>▪ Design, develop, and implement the observer/evaluator training program.</li> <li>▪ Add 4 to 6 additional counties to the pilot program.</li> <li>▪ Review all change and update request.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 6</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin a review of all pilot programs.</li> <li>▪ Begin a statewide train the trainer plan.</li> <li>▪ Begin a statewide observer/evaluator training program.</li> <li>▪ Review all training done in all counties to date.</li> <li>▪ Develop a statewide implementation plan.</li> <li>▪ Review all change and update request.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 7</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>This Phase is Complete</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop plans to implement core competency statewide.</li> <li>▪ Monitor implementation.</li> <li>▪ Monitor equivalence plans by county or statewide organizations.</li> <li>▪ Review all change and update request.</li> </ul>

The first iteration of Core Competency has been completed. The second iteration begins July 1, 2018.