

Executive Summary

ARES Strategic Plan – Changes and Revisions

When the Public Service Enhancement Working Group (PSEWG) began its effort to create an ARES Strategic Plan more than three years ago, ARES had no clearly defined mission, objectives or goals; there were no specific training requirements, reporting of activities by ARES groups was inconsistent and haphazard, and the ARRL could not quantify the number of ARES participants either locally or nationally.

The proposed ARES Strategic Plan has addressed these deficiencies along with much needed updating of the ARES program for the 21st century.

The first draft of the ARES Strategic Plan, introduced in the spring of 2018, understandably raised some questions and concerns. So the Board of Directors at its July 2018 meeting established a comment period for Section Managers and Section Emergency Coordinators to gather feedback from ARES leadership in their Sections and submit comments on the ARES Strategic Plan through an online form. During the comment period (from August 2, 2018 through October 31, 2018), the PSEWG received input from 55 ARRL Sections, representing 40 states, totaling more than 125 pages of feedback.

The PSEWG thanks all those who offered comments and ideas. The members of the PSEWG reviewed every comment and suggestion, identifying about a dozen key items that were commonly cited by those in the field organization for improvement of the strategic plan. The following is a list of those items and a description of how the PSEWG incorporated them into a revised ARES Strategic Plan:

1. Removal of the requirement for ICS 300 and 400 training. This training is not available everywhere, comes at substantial cost to the volunteer, and is beyond the needs of Amateur Radio volunteer leadership in most areas.
 - o This recommendation has been incorporated and ICS 300 and 400 are now "recommended" but not required. In their place is the no-cost FEMA Professional Development Series, consisting of the following IS courses: 120.c, 230.d, 235.c, 240.d, 241.b, 242.b, and 244.b, as they may be amended.
2. Emphasize certain key points –such as the fact that ARES and its participants are not first responders, that there is a need for solid Amateur Radio training and experience, and clarify the difference between credentialing and identification.
 - o Agreed and that emphasis has been added to the plan.
3. Clarify the role of ARESMAT and similar response teams.
 - o Definitions have been added.
4. Encourage partnerships between ARES and state emergency management.
 - o Emphasis has been added.
5. Explain the relationship between ARES and the AuxComm training program.
 - o Such additional training is recommended.
6. Explain that the three-tiered ARES membership structure is not a path to be followed, but defines three distinct ways to participate in the ARES program. Improve the definition of ARES level one. Many made the case that this level is not just introductory but may include radio amateurs who desire to take a limited role in ARES activities.
 - o Definition of ARES level one has been clarified.
7. Clarify that “public service events” such as parades and marathons are not outside the realm of ARES activity, but a key part of it. They are an integral part of effective training.

- Explanation has been added.
- 8. Eliminate the cost for ARRL courses EC-001 and EC-016. Also add a continuing education component to ARRL training.
 - Costs of the ARRL EC-001 course have been eliminated for ARES participants registered in ARES Connect.
 - Continuing education has been included as a common goal.
- 9. Clarify the definitions for ARES leadership positions in terms of scope, authority, and responsibilities.
 - Further explanation has been added.
- 10. A top priority, once the plan is approved, should be to update the EC manual.
 - That update is in process.
- 11. Explain that training requirements are ultimately the responsibility of the SM.
 - Each SM should approve training for the local ARES organizations as may be required by local conditions and needs.
- 12. Continually seek opportunities for improvement of the ARES program to stay relevant. ARES cannot remain stagnant only to be updated once every few generations. The ARES Strategic Plan, and the ARES program, must be able to evolve. To this end, there needs to be improved communications between ARRL HQ (staff, Board and committees) and ARES field organization leadership.
 - As part of the League's Lifelong Learning goals, HQ staff will conduct an annual ARES Review to insure continued program relevance.