

# Medical Reserve Corps

## 2024 Operational Readiness Awards

### Interim Report

### September 2024



## Table of Contents

<b>Summary of the 2024 Operational Readiness Awards .....</b>	<b>3</b>
What are the Operational Readiness Awards? .....	3
Award Tiers.....	3
<b>2024 Operational Readiness Awards Impacts and Outcomes .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Fast Facts.....	4
ASPR Priorities for the MRC.....	4
MRC Mission Sets .....	4
Delayed Projects .....	5
MRC Volunteer Engagement .....	7
Feedback on Award Process .....	8
<b>Success Stories from the Field.....</b>	<b>10</b>
NACCHO Award Improvements .....	12
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>12</b>





## Summary of the 2024 Operational Readiness Awards

### What are the Operational Readiness Awards?

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) distributes Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Operational Readiness Awards through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Medical Reserve Corps Program Office.

In 2020, NACCHO transitioned from the previous Challenge Awards format to providing Operational Readiness Awards (ORAs). The ORAs were designed to provide seed money for MRC units to build and strengthen volunteer and unit response capabilities. These awards aim to build the operational readiness capabilities of MRC volunteers and units to meet the emergency preparedness and response needs of their local, regional, or statewide stakeholders.

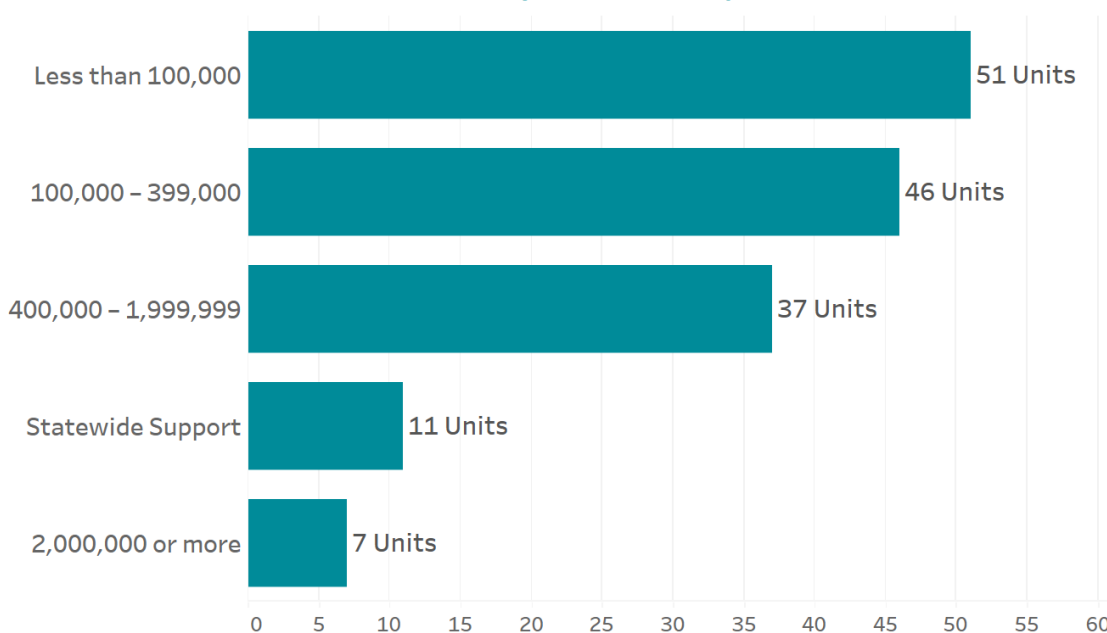
This report includes an overview of the 2024 MRC ORAs and the results of the Interim Project Survey. The interim project evaluation is typically completed by awardees approximately six months after they receive notice of award. The survey provides an opportunity for MRC units to share progress or challenges on planned activities and provide feedback on the award process.

### Award Tiers

In 2024, NACCHO awarded **152 MRC Operational Readiness Awards**, totaling \$1,255,000, via two funding tiers:





- ❖ **(53 units) Tier 1: \$5,000** – Projects designed to build MRC response capabilities.
- ❖ **(98 units) Tier 2: \$10,000** – Projects designed to strengthen MRC response capabilities.

2024 ORA Awardees by Jurisdiction Population Size



## 2024 Operational Readiness Awards Impacts and Outcomes

### Fast Facts

 <p>152 awardees, or <b>100% of all awardees, completed the interim report survey</b> which informed this report.</p>	 <p>Of responding units, <b>28,045 MRC volunteers</b> are anticipated to directly <b>benefit</b> from the 2024 Operational Readiness Award activities.</p>
 <p><b>268 mission sets or response team capabilities</b> planned to be developed or strengthened as part of their ORA.</p>	 <p><b>92%</b> of respondents <b>have started</b> their Operational Readiness Award activities, at the time of the survey.</p>

n=152

### ASPR Priorities for the MRC

2024 Operational Readiness Awardees were expected to align their project goals and activities to support at least one of the four ASPR priorities for the MRC which include:

- 1. Medical screening and care in emergencies**
  - a. Including medical support at shelters, clinics, mobile disaster hospitals, alternate care sites, evacuee resource centers, and community outreach sites; medical screening and surveillance during infectious disease outbreaks; and patient movement support.
- 2. Points of dispensing (PODs), mass vaccinations, and other mass dispensing efforts**
  - a. Including medical countermeasure PODs, mass vaccination clinics, and commodity distribution support (e.g., N95 masks, water, and/or food).
- 3. Deployment of volunteers outside of local jurisdiction**
  - a. Including activation across city and/or county lines (e.g., to assist a response in a neighboring community – potentially with other local MRC units) and Emergency Management Assistance Compact deployments across state lines.
- 4. Community response outreach and training**
  - a. Including STOP THE BLEED® and CPR/AED training events.

### MRC Mission Sets

Released in 2019 and updated in 2021, the [MRC Deployment Readiness Guide](#) outlines a number of deployment readiness tools for unit leaders and training resources for MRC volunteers. The Deployment Readiness Guide also introduced the concept of Mission Sets. A Mission Set is “a scalable response and recovery capability for MRC units and volunteers that is organized, developed, trained, and exercised prior to an emergency or disaster for local, state,

and/or regional deployment purposes.” While Tier 1 awardees were funded to develop volunteer-level capabilities, Tier 2 awardees were funded to develop unit-level capabilities, including to identify new or evolving response missions and draft corresponding Mission Sets. A [template](#) and examples of Mission Sets developed through ORAs are featured on [NACCHO’s MRC website](#).

In the 2024 ORA Interim Evaluation Survey, we asked the unit how many mission sets or response capabilities are expected to be developed or strengthened because of the ORA project. Ninety-four units responded to expecting to develop at least one mission set or response team capability with the 2024 ORA. All 94 units were in Tier II and on average plan to develop three mission sets per unit. This data is similar to 2023, where 96 units planned to develop mission sets and on average 3 mission sets per unit. The minimum number of mission sets a unit plans to develop is one, and the maximum number of mission sets a unit plans to develop is 38. The breakdown of number of mission sets and number of units is shown in the table below.

<i># of Mission Set</i>	<i># of Units</i>	<i>Total Mission Sets Planned to be Develop</i>
<i>1</i>	31	<b>31</b>
<i>2</i>	26	<b>52</b>
<i>3</i>	17	<b>51</b>
<i>4</i>	9	<b>36</b>
<i>5</i>	6	<b>30</b>
<i>6</i>	3	<b>18</b>
<i>12</i>	1	<b>12</b>
<i>38</i>	1	<b>38</b>
<i>Total</i>	<b>94</b>	<b>268</b>



## Delayed Projects

Of the 152 interim survey respondents, 92% reported they have started their activities at the time of the interim project survey, 1% less than 2023 ORA awardees at the same point in time. Few units reported not yet starting their planned activities (8%).

Twelve Units (8%) have not yet started their planned activities. The bar graph below (Figure 3.) displays the breakdown of reasons what has prevented them from beginning. Seven units responded, “Other” as the reason that has prevented them from beginning. Other text included:

- Have not received award check
- Check received at the end of the fiscal year
- Training has limited availability
- Change in MRC Coordinator, delay in filling the position

Units also reported the following reasons preventing them from beginning their planned activities, staff turnover (two units), limited staff time (one unit), and contract or vender challenges (3 units), Figure 3.

Percent of Units Who've Started Activities

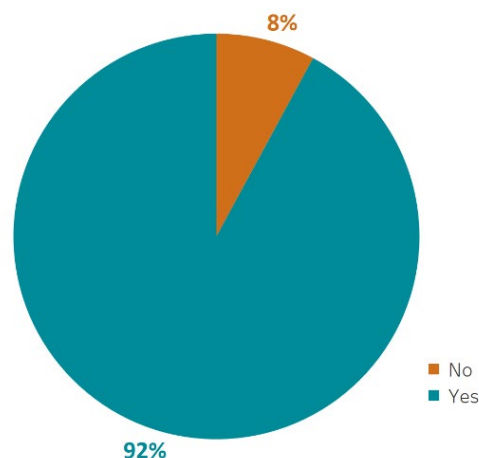
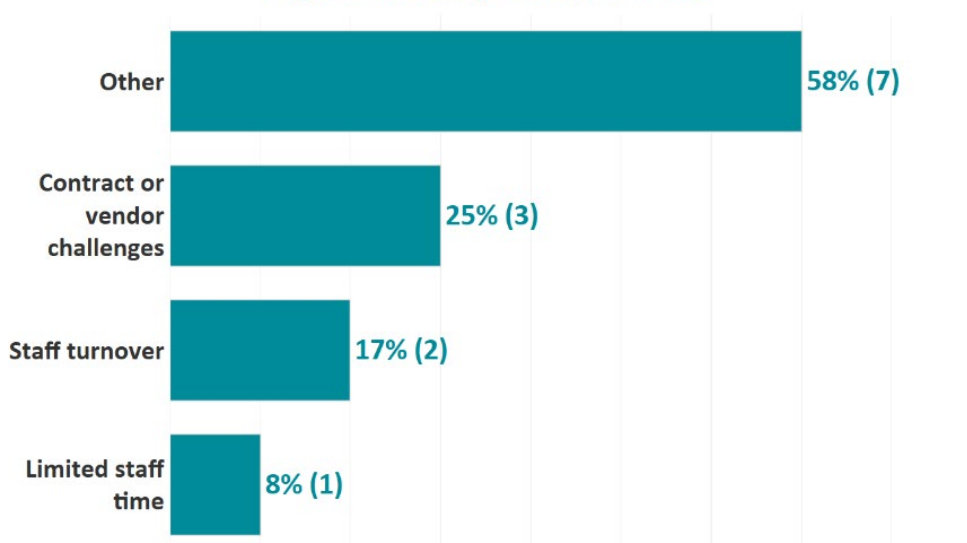
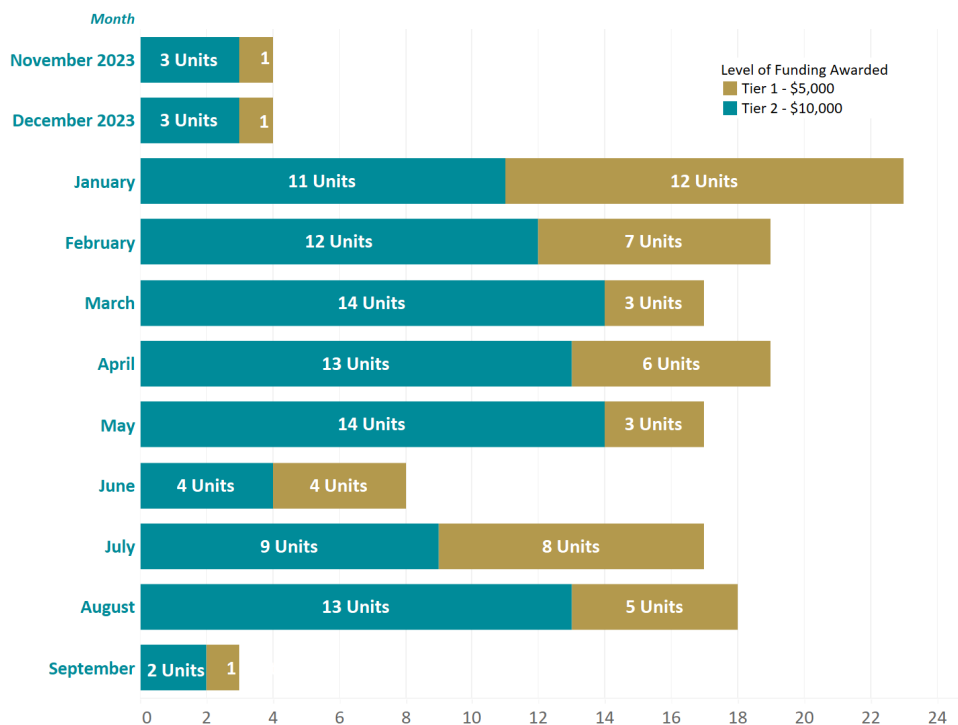


Figure 3. Delays in Start Time



Despite the challenges, 98% or 149 units reported an actual or anticipated project start date. Figure 4 below shows anticipated start dates by month in 2024, all projects started in 2023 were also included.

**Figure 4: Project Start Date by Month**

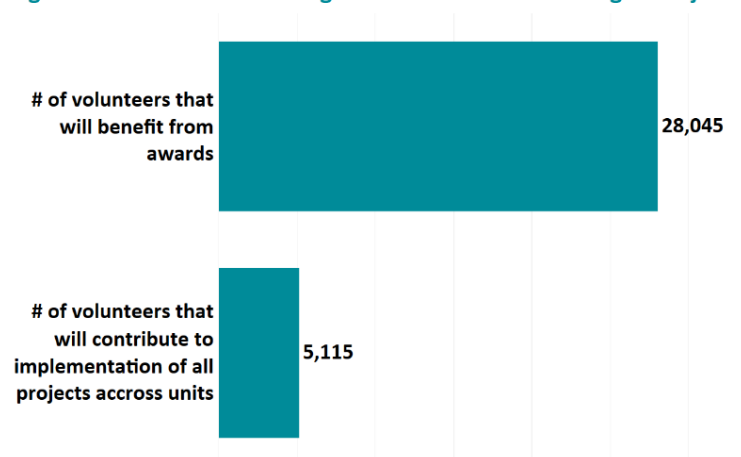


## MRC Volunteer Engagement

ORA awardees were asked how many MRC volunteers were expected to contribute to the implementation of ORA projects and how many MRC volunteers were expected to directly benefit from the projects. The average number of volunteers contributing per project is 37, which is less than the average number of volunteers contributing per project for the 2023 ORA project, 99 volunteers contributing per unit. The average number of volunteers that are expected to benefit from the ORA project is 185

volunteers per project, also less than 2023 with 205 volunteers per unit. However, these numbers are projections as many of the activities have not been completed. Overall, the number of volunteers benefiting from the ORA project is 5 times the number of volunteers who will be contributing to the project.

Figure 5. Volunteers Benefiting vs. Volunteers Contributing to Projects



## Feedback on Award Process

ORA awardees were asked a series of questions to help NACCHO's MRC staff evaluate the usefulness and ease of the MRC ORA process from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied. Respondents were extremely satisfied with the award process. Figure 6 and 7 below show the satisfaction rates of the request for application (RFA) process, timeline of application period, online application, communication with/from NACCHO staff, completing and submitting the first deliverable, and contract processing.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with award process

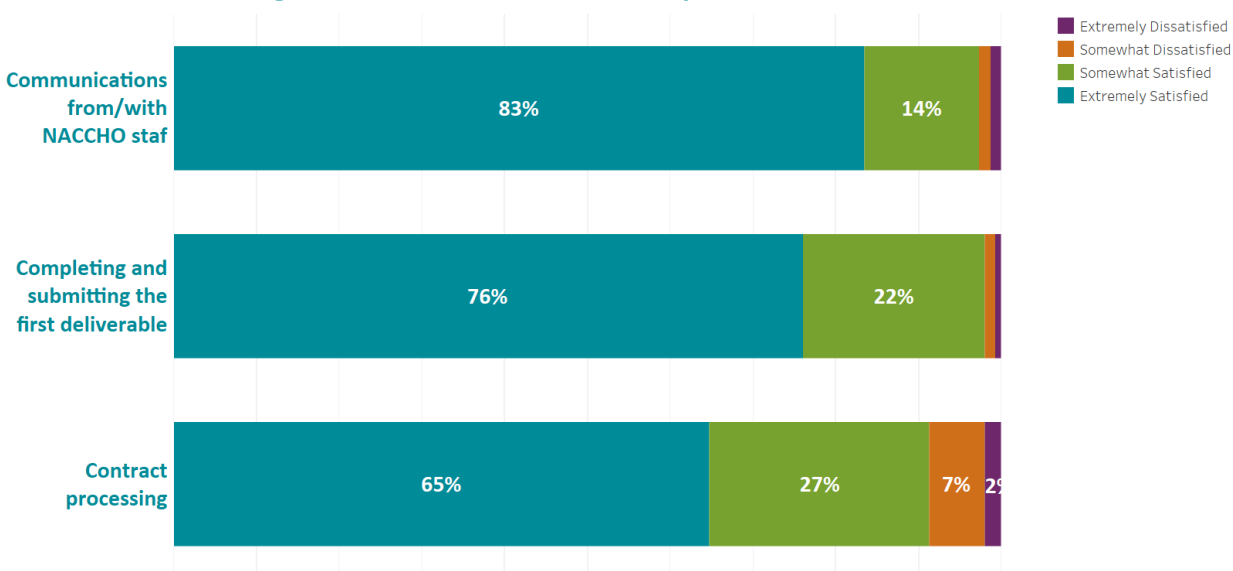




Awardees reported being extremely satisfied with the Request for Application (RFA) document, 82% and 11% somewhat satisfied. 81% of awardees were extremely satisfied with the online application and 12% somewhat satisfied with the online application. 72% of respondents were extremely satisfied with the timeline of the application period and 19% were somewhat satisfied with the timeline of the application period. Satisfaction with the kickoff webinar on 11/03/2022 was the lowest, with 63% of respondents extremely satisfied, 11% of respondents somewhat satisfied, and 25% N/A, did not access or attend. The 25% of respondents who reported not attending the kickoff webinar may also include new unit leaders who started after the award was granted or change in staffing.

Communications from/with NACCHO staff and completing and submitting the first deliverable had a 83% extremely satisfactory rating with 14% somewhat satisfactory rating, 1% somewhat dissatisfied rating, and 1% extremely dissatisfied rating. The lowest satisfaction of all award process categories was contract processing, with 65% extremely satisfied, 27% somewhat satisfied, 7% somewhat dissatisfied, and 2% extremely dissatisfied.

**Figure 7: Satisfaction with award process**



Room for improvement is available in all aspects of the ORA award process but most importantly the contract processing and kick off webinar attendance and awareness. However, it is important to note that overall awardees are satisfied with the award process and communications with NACCHO staff has improved since the 2022 interim report with 53% extremely satisfied and 31% somewhat satisfied. The timeline of the application period has also had a slight increase in satisfaction from 2022, with an increase of 4% more of awardees being satisfied with the timeline of the application period.

## Success Stories from the Field

Respondents were asked to share success stories thus far, that have captured the impact of their Operational Readiness Award activities on the people and communities that their MRC unit serves. Examples of these stories are shared below within four main categories: training in action, volunteer recruitment and retention, public health, and capacity to serve.

### Training in Action

#### ***Mid-Ohio Valley MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“As a result of our training, one of our volunteers (A.M.) received CPR/ AED training. She was at her work location when a female co-worker had a sudden cardiac arrest event. She performed CPR for about 8 minutes and was able to get the co-worker back to a conscious state before the ambulance arrived on scene. She stated that prior to this training, she had never received CPR training and as a result she was prepared to perform CPR and another life was saved.”

#### ***West Central Nebraska MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“We had an amazing experience for our annual Nebraskaland Days celebration. We always supply a First Aid tent at the concerts each year, and this year was an extremely intense and necessary venue. We had an awesome team of volunteers who stepped up into their roles without issue. In our AAR meeting with the ambulance, fire, police, and NEland Days board we were told that our volunteers did an amazing job. They also gave the volunteers a lot of opportunity to discuss what could be improved for our MRC needs to be able to provide the best quality of care at future events.”

#### ***Brazoria County MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“After receiving the shelter kit supplies, a team of 15 volunteers assembled the kits into 25-person shelter go kits. In the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, we deployed one of these kits for a city in our jurisdiction. We were able to provided all of the supplies needed in under 2 hours from request.”

### Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

#### ***Oahu MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“Three of our units are working together to hold a 1-day statewide MRC conference, which hasn't been done before - at least to the recollection of current PHP staff. Each of the 3 units were awarded \$10k, some of which will be used to fly a maximum of 75 volunteers from 3 of the counties to Oahu so that a total of 100 volunteers (maximum) can learn and network together. Planning together for this event has been a positive experience for the unit coordinators and has opened channels of communication a little wider than before.”

#### ***District 10 Norman/Cleveland County MRC, Tier I Awardee***

You think something as simple as a chair wouldn't make a difference. However ... Buying a better quality chair with lumbar support and air ride support on the legs reduced volunteer fatigue, back pain and improved moral. The cost was actually cheap at ~\$70/chair but the impact was

tremendous for our volunteers. The success of this grant was not only to acquire needed equipment for the unit, but equipment that directly benefitted the volunteers.”

## **Public Health**

### ***Bond County MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“Our student intern developed a lesson plan for handwashing for elementary age school children using the Glitter Bug tools and materials. Included in her program is a book to read to the students, and materials for students to actively engage in handwashing activities. She also developed a training program for MRC volunteers to learn how to field the program, and informational materials to include ppt presentation and a trifold brochure. The first handwashing field activity was conducted in March at the Greenville Elementary School for 4 kindergarten classes with much success! Follow on activities have included scheduling with schools and using the hand washing demonstration and outreach program at various community events by having an activity area for children to learn and do proper hand washing techniques.”

### ***MRC of SW Vermont, Tier II Awardee***

“We had a Geriatric Outreach Team event planned for Juneteenth at a Senior Housing complex on June 19th. The temperature was expected to be 94' and humidity of 87. We pivoted the event to checking on the 54 seniors in each unit and seeing how they were handling the heat. We took data collection, we passed out water and sunscreen, as well as heat illness education. We collected data on how many have air cooling options and now looking into solutions and funding for more cooling opportunities for these resource-restricted seniors.”

## **Increased Capacity to Serve**

### ***Cape Girardeau County MRC, Tier II Awardee***

“An MRC member was sent to the National Preparedness Summit in Cleveland, Ohio with ORA funding. This conference provided invaluable insight and knowledge for emergency preparedness. The member brought back ideas and information regarding MRC member recruitment/retention, utilizing GIS for emergency preparedness, animal sheltering, Chempack response, after action reporting, and so much more! This knowledge has helped our unit continue to grow and build its capabilities.”

### ***La Paz County MRC, Tier I Awardee***

“We had the opportunity to set up 3 cooling stations. One at a yearly local event that had 3500 people in attendance. We handed out water and cooling towels and were available to assist anyone who was experiencing heat related injuries. We also had 2 power outages and staffed cooling stations during both outages. We had the opportunity to serve our community and those in the Colorado River Indian Tribes community.”

## NACCHO Award Improvements

### Award Improvement Comments:

- Like past cycles, awardees reported delays throughout the contract and check processing, with a few units still waiting for their award funds as of May or June. Some awardees suggested longer project periods in the future to accommodate for these delays.
- Awardees suggested an increase in workshops for award recipients to help guide them throughout the project period.
- A handful of awardees felt that delays or challenges were internal rather than due to NACCHO's processes.
- Several units feel they would benefit from a tracking system to better inform them of their stage in the award process.
- Many units feel that NACCHO's award process is fair and straightforward. One unit noted, "The language is clear, and the length process for the application are excellent. We have no outstanding suggestions for improving the award process." -- Duxbury Bay Area Regional MRC, Tier I Awardee

NACCHO is actively working to streamline future ORAs for future project years and better internal coordination with the contracts and grants team.

## Acknowledgements

This project was supported by the cooperative agreement (grant # 1 U3REP230718) from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. NACCHO is grateful for this support. The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the official views of the sponsor.

