

DHS Science and Technology Directorate

Digital Volunteer Program Guide

Digital Volunteer Surge Support for Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery

When a disaster strikes and response systems become stressed, affected agencies can work with trusted volunteers to provide social media and digital surge support. The use of digital volunteers is already yielding considerable results, but many agencies are unsure of the best way to use digital volunteers for emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Effective digital volunteer programs facilitate coordination and information sharing among diverse participants (e.g., state and local agencies, public information officers [PIOs], emergency managers [EMs], fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services) to meet agency objectives when they reach maximum capacity.

Digital volunteer functions can include crowdsourcing, social media data analytics, message amplification and curation, and citizen engagement before, during and after an incident. As agencies implement the National Incident Management System and the use of social media for emergency management increases, public safety agencies must comprehensively plan for and integrate digital volunteers into routine operations.

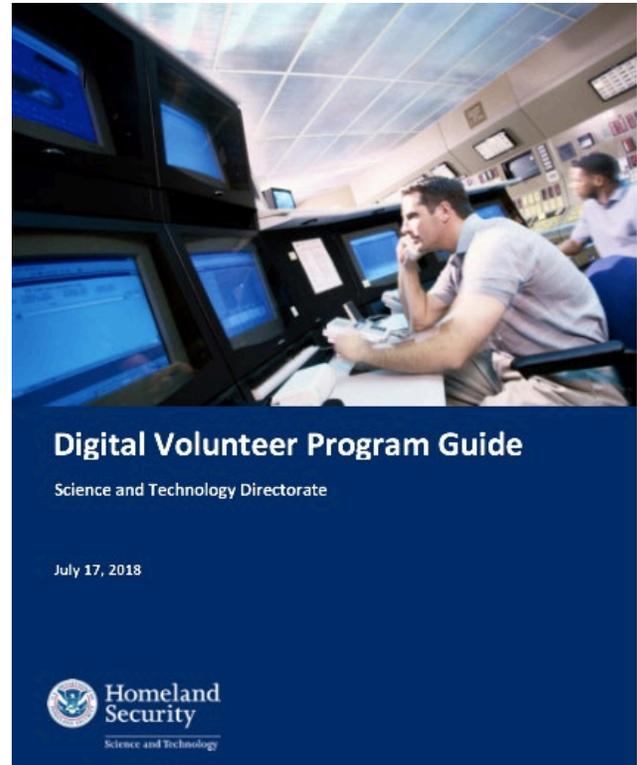
The Digital Volunteer Program Guide

To address knowledge gaps and support agencies that are looking to launch and maximize the benefits of a digital volunteer program, the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) developed a [Digital Volunteer Program Guide](#) (Guide). The Guide provides step-by-step guidance on developing a digital volunteer program to comprehensively plan for and integrate digital volunteers into routine social media emergency management operations. More than 100 state and local government EMs, PIOs and digital volunteer managers contributed to the Guide's development. Real world best practices identified during development are included throughout the Guide.

Planning Resources

Users follow Guide prompts to: (1) think critically about major digital volunteer strategy considerations; (2) develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) to improve coordination across volunteers and staff, create efficiencies, minimize errors, and regulate routine tasks; and (3) outline digital volunteer terms in Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to clearly define roles and responsibilities prior to an incident.

All of the resources and templates included in the Guide are modifiable to suit an agency's or jurisdiction's specific needs. Resources within the Guide include:



How to Develop a Digital Volunteer Program Strategy: Outlines the major strategy considerations users should consider prior to pursuing a digital volunteer program or partnership with a digital volunteer organization, including objectives and desired outcomes; governance structures; and state laws, policies and liability.

How to Recruit Digital Volunteers: Outlines the suggested process for identifying and screening digital volunteers as part of an organization's digital volunteer program.

Digital Volunteer SOP Template Guidance: Provides critical thinking exercises and guidance to help users complete the Digital Volunteer SOP Template.

Digital Volunteer MOU Template Guidance: Provides critical thinking exercises and guidance to help users complete the Digital Volunteer MOU Template.

By completing the Guide, S&T's goal is for agencies to have improved digital volunteer processes and plans in place to immediately implement.