



VIRGINIA HEALTHCARE COALITION COMPLETES PEDIATRIC PROJECT IN 6 MONTHS DURING PANDEMIC

Near Southwest Preparedness alliance leverages Critical Ops' services to meet grant requirements in the midst of COVID-19 response efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance (NSPA), a regional healthcare coalition based in Virginia, leveraged Critical Ops' business services to complete a pediatric annex to their existing Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) for a pediatric hospital surge. NSPA was able to successfully pivot to respond to the demands of COVID-19 as Critical Ops continued to facilitate the development of this plan. As a result, the NSPA met the requirements by the submission deadline and will continue to assess and rehearse the plan in the upcoming fiscal year.



Plan development that would've required the coalition to meet 2-3 times per week was reduced to 1 meeting per month.



In six months, the NSPA had a finalized plan that culminated over 5 years of work from previous working groups.



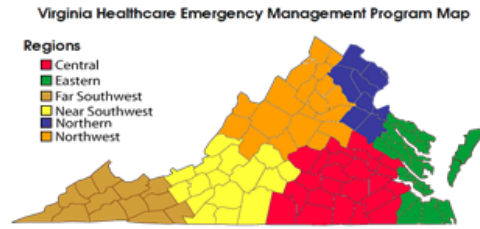
The NSPA saved months of planning time that were devoted to priority response efforts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



ABOUT NEAR SOUTHWEST PREPAREDNESS ALLIANCE

The Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance (NSPA) is a regional coalition that helps healthcare entities in 16 counties and 7 cities in Virginia to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

The coalition is comprised of 4 full-time employees and several part-time employees who assist exclusively with response efforts. Experts across a range of healthcare services lend their knowledge to grant-related projects and ensure their numerous healthcare subtypes are coordinated and well-resourced across the region.



BUILDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance was tasked to plan and prepare for a pediatric disaster and mass casualty surge on hospital systems. To meet the requirements, NSPA needed to create a pediatric annex that complemented their existing emergency operations plan from the ground up. The coalition gathered a team of at least 20 subject matter experts from the pediatric field to help shape the plan.

Creating an entirely new infrastructure required an extensive amount of time and manpower. The group of experts met two to three times a week, putting strain on the already busy individuals who all worked full-time positions in addition to their participation on the project. Due to the coalition's response role, they often had to prioritize other services first, pushing the pediatric annex project to the backburner. NSPA tried using templates from other coalitions across the country as guides, but ultimately had to establish their own plans. Even if their product met the minimum requirements by the submission deadline, the new guidelines could've caused confusion and possibly affected their response, as timeliness is paramount in all NSPA projects.



AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EXPERTS

After identifying that they needed help meeting the federal requirements of the pediatric annex project, the Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance leveraged a relationship they'd previously established with Critical Ops. Chelsea Treboniak, President of Critical Ops, presented at the coalition's Annual Regional Workshop and worked with NSPA on other projects. NSPA selected Critical Ops to provide services for their pediatric annex project, in part, to take advantage of Critical Ops' network of experts across the country.

“

“Critical Ops does a great job nationwide and allowed us to get reach outside the state and build larger plans.”

- Mary Kathryn Alley, Medically Vulnerable Populations Coordinator,
Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance.

”

Though NSPA already had a working group, their time was extremely limited, so having access to more subject matter experts opened a wealth of information channels they could tap into. “Critical Ops does a great job nationwide and allowed us to get reach outside the state and build larger plans,” said Mary Kathryn Alley, Medically Vulnerable Populations Coordinator of the Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance.

DELIVERING A HIGH CALIBER PRODUCT

Critical Ops facilitated the development of pediatric annex, so members of the coalition could work on other initiatives. Alley explains, “The variety of healthcare types the Coalition partners with is so large, and we're trying to provide something different for each entity, so it really helped to bring in another organization to manage other aspects.” To meet the September 30th, 2020 deadline, Critical Ops outlined deliverables throughout the year to ensure the plan was complete, reviewed, and submitted on time. As Critical Ops managed the development of the plan and curated resources, the coalition continued to meet once a month while still reaching their projected milestones.



NSPA RESPONDS TO COVID-19 WHILE MEETING PEDIATRIC ANNEX PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Project Highlights

- Final product completion in 6 months
- Continuity of care during COVID-19 response
- Planned rehearsals and exercises in 2021

In the middle of developing the pediatric annex plan, COVID-19 cases began surging across the country. The Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance had to pivot to assist their regional healthcare facilities with response efforts. Despite the shift, Critical Ops continued to work on the plan, ensuring the objectives of the project were still operating as scheduled. As a result, NSPA didn't lose steam on the project and could still maintain routine check-ins for review and collaboration. This increased their competitive advantage tenfold, as they were able to support the region even when the demand for healthcare resources and support were at their peak.

Prior to the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance had worked with other consulting organizations in the past to develop products that either did not meet their needs or required extensive revision. NSPA conducted a two month planning stage with Critical Ops, and the completion of the final product took six months, even under the pressure of the COVID response. The success of the product and its timely submission motivated the innovative working group to strengthen the plan in 2021 with regional rehearsals and exercises.

ENRICHING THE PLAN IN 2021

In addition to exercising their plan in 2021, the Near Southwest Preparedness Alliance intends to use Critical Ops' services to assess their 6 month strategic plan and identify ways they can continue their new normal. This will allow NSPA to continue to work directly with partners within the coalition, achieving their number one goal—keeping regional healthcare systems moving forward.