



Case Study



ASPR TRACIE

The Challenge

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). The office is charged with leading the nation in preventing, preparing for, and responding to the consequences of public health emergencies and disasters.

ASPR's mission requires that public health and medical professionals and emergency first responders have a foundation of solid, reliable information. Such information historically has been difficult to find. These professionals have been faced with:

- Too much information in some areas, not enough in others.
- Conflicting opinions provided by experts.
- Varied sources with unknown reliability.
- Challenges in requesting technical assistance and training.

Resorting to Google searches—and the unverified, unreliable information they can produce—is not a viable approach considering what is at stake.

In 2014, ASPR teamed with ICF International to meet the clear need for a reliable source of easily accessible information about disaster preparedness and recovery for state and local authorities, HHS grantees, healthcare facilities' emergency managers, and healthcare coalitions. The ASPR and ICF team envisioned a comprehensive compilation of peer-reviewed journals and grey literature—vetted by subject matter experts (SMEs) and dynamically structured to reflect current issues and ensure fresh, up-to-date content. The team was driven by the knowledge that doing its job well would result in a direct improvement to the nation's healthcare resilience and preparedness. The result was the development of the ASPR Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE).

The Solution

ASPR TRACIE is a three-pronged information gateway for public health and medical professionals that allows each user to determine the best approach for connecting with top-level content about disaster preparation and recovery. The system's ease-of-use reflects the importance placed on stakeholder engagement, before, during, and even after the development process. Feedback was solicited and incorporated from a wide variety of stakeholders, resulting in a service that is truly end-user designed.

The **Technical Resources (TR)** domain is a self-service collection on 65 plain-English topics, available 24x7. The collection represents the compilation of many applicable sources in collaboration with the National Library of Medicine. Experts have vetted annotated bibliographies (called Topic Collections) that identify studies, toolkits, lessons learned, planning guides, and training. All materials provide real-life, illustrative examples of resources

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Learn more about how ICF Public Health Services can help your organization:

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With ASPR TRACIE, users work in their preferred style or best-suited way for a particular need.

put into practice. Helpful browsing features include a highlighted short list of must-read information and the ability to both search for, rate, and comment on content.

Users of the **Assistance Center (AC)** domain can get direct help by phone or email during business hours. Requests for information already available in ASPR TRACIE's TR section— analogous to making a request of a research librarian—are completed in a timely manner. More complex requests also are welcome and may require ASPR TRACIE to reach out to its cadre of subject matter experts. The trained technical assistance specialists who field AC requests are experienced in public health and healthcare preparedness. Essentially, AC offers on-demand access to a deep bench of expertise whether the information is currently available on ASPR TRACIE or not.

The third domain of ASPR TRACIE is the **Information Exchange (IE)**, which allows for peer-to-peer sharing of questions, concerns, past experiences, best practices, and resources. This discussion board allows registered, vetted users to work together in an environment that is password protected and monitored. Users can post, search, upload, and share documents as well as establish private groups if need be.

The Results

ASPR TRACIE represents a best case outcome for collaborative development and offers an innovative framework and rich content defined by users. Users can find information in the most comfortable or appropriate manner.

Integrated feedback from stakeholders throughout the development process has resulted in audience-tailored materials. With three distinct but integrated options for accessing and sharing knowledge, the system helps those seeking information about healthcare emergency preparedness and response to prioritize activities, make smart decisions, find training, get answers, identify resources, and build on shared experiences.

Disaster health is a complex and constantly evolving field. ASPR TRACIE can improve planning and response, even as its context changes. The system will continue to grow and add features as dictated by the user community's ongoing feedback. Because of its design, all aspects of ASPR TRACIE are continually validated through use, just as any gaps or enhancements are identified.

As a development partner, ICF International has brought subject matter expertise in disaster preparedness and recovery as well as proven capabilities in information technology, including successfully implemented proofs of concept for each of ASPR TRACIE's three components. For this project, the company has tapped into its team of experts in design, implementation, marketing, communications, training, and engagement for digital media and Web development. IT efforts have been strengthened by ICF's solid understanding of user requirements from its long-time provision of advisory services to address state and local challenges and from its established leadership in public health preparedness.

About ICF

ICF (NASDAQ:ICFI) is a leading provider of professional services and technology-based solutions to government and commercial clients. ICF is fluent in the language of change, whether driven by markets, technology, or policy. Since 1969, we have combined a passion for our work with deep industry expertise to tackle our clients' most important challenges. We partner with clients around the globe—advising, executing, innovating—to help them define and achieve success. Our more than 5,000 employees serve government and commercial clients from more than 65 offices worldwide. ICF's website is icf.com.

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