Guide to Continuity Program Management

FEMA National Continuity Programs

May 2020

This page intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

1. Purpose

Continuity planning is simply the good business practice of ensuring the execution of essential functions and provision of critical services and core capabilities through all circumstances. Today's threat environment and the potential for no-notice emergencies, including localized natural hazards, accidents, technological emergencies and terrorist-related incidents, underscore the need for strong continuity planning that enables all communities, organizations and entities to continue essential functions across a broad spectrum of emergencies.

Figure 1: CGC

This *Guide to Continuity Program Management* expands on continuity program management guidance found in the Continuity Guidance Circular (CGC) and Federal Continuity Directives (FCD) 1 and 2[1]. It provides guidance and templates to assist continuity program managers and planners to develop a Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), project plans and a multi-year test, training and exercise (TT&E) calendar. This guide does not address development of a continuity of operations plan. For information and guidance on how to develop a continuity of operations plan, refer to the Continuity Resource Toolkit, which contains guidance documents and templates[2].
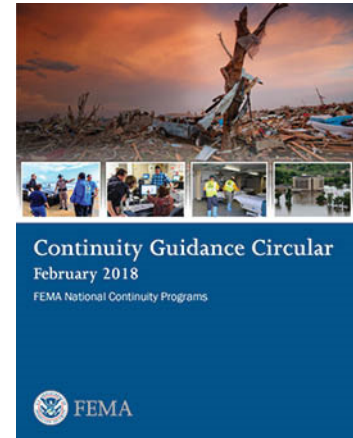
1.1. Multi-Year Strategy Plan vs. Project Plans

Planning has many benefits—it helps an organization achieve its mission more effectively, focuses financial and human resources on specific agreed-upon needs and goals, and establishes benchmarks for improving the program. A MYSP provides a vision for the future while a project plan(s) establishes specific tasks that need to be accomplished to achieve the vision. Both are needed to achieve your continuity program goals and build a comprehensive continuity program.

---

[1] The CGC can be found at: https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/132130
FCD 1 can be found at: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1486472423990-f640b42b9073d78693795bb7da4a7af2/January2017FCD1.pdf

[2] The Continuity Resource Toolkit can be found at: https://www.fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkit

Table 1: MYSP vs. Project Plan

MYSP Focus	Project Plan(s) Focus
STRATEGIC	PROGRAM EXECUTION
- Multi-year (typically 3-5 years). Long-range goals that may take multiple years to achieve. Long-range goals are often attained in phases or a series of shorter-term goals. - Positions the organization for the future. - Input is gathered from leadership, planning team members and other stakeholders. - A process that actively questions the continued long-range requirements of the program and areas of need or improvement.	- A more detailed plan or family of plans with short-term goals, objectives and tasks with specific beginning and end dates. - Plans current program and funding for specific goals, objectives and tasks. - Typically developed and managed by the organization's program manager or planners. - A tool that will assist the program manager to implement the work of the organization.

2. Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The purpose of the MYSP is to set the overall goals and objectives for your continuity program. Organizations should develop a continuity focused MYSP that provides for the development, maintenance and review of continuity programs and plans to ensure the program remains viable and successful. When developing the MYSP, the planning team should account for the mitigation options and key elements of a viable continuity capability (refer to Figure 3 and the CGC for full descriptions).

Figure 2: Continuity Mitigation Options and Key Elements

A MYSP with short and long-term goals and objectives serves as a framework for making decisions and provides a basis for planning. Putting together a strategic plan can provide the insight needed to keep an organization's continuity program on track by setting goals and measuring accomplishments. By analyzing the information in the strategic plan, leadership and continuity planners can make necessary changes and set the stage for further project planning.

Figure 3: MYSP Development Process

2.1.   Form a Planning Team and Conduct an Analysis

Developing a strategic plan requires forming a planning team and completion of an analysis to examine the areas of need, capabilities that need to be sustained, opportunities for improvement, resource requirements, budget constraints, as well as concerns, issues, and obstacles that the organization may face when implementing the plan. When analyzing the continuity program and plan, the planning team should take into account the organization's mission and vision and try to answer:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

Organizations may form a planning team to perform the analysis. The planning team may consist of organizational leadership and members of the organization's continuity working group, or equivalent and consist of one or more representatives from across the organization, including:

- Each organizational office;
- Information Technology;
- Accounting/Finance;
- Human Resources;
- Facilities Management;
- Comptroller;
- Legal/General Counsel;
- Devolution Team;
- Reconstitution Team; and
- Union or Bargaining Unit Representative (if applicable).

2.2.   Develop Continuity Goals, Objectives and Tasks

The planning team should develop goals, objectives, and tasks for the continuity program:

- A **goal** is the outcome the organization seeks to achieve.
- An **objective** breaks each goal down into smaller steps and identifies the specific actions that must be completed in order to achieve the goal.
- A **task** is a precise set of steps taken to achieve each objective.

When developing goals, objectives and tasks, the planning team should analyze:

- Statutes, mandates, and regulations;

- Mitigation options and key elements;

- Overarching organizational strategic plans;

- Leadership vision and intent;

- Results from the organization's Business Process Analysis (BPA) and Business Impact Analysis (BIA);

- Corrective Action and Improvement Plans (CAP/IP);

- Lessons learned from tests, training, and exercises (TT&E);

- Results from program assessments; and

- Other identified program needs.

Goals, objectives and tasks should be "S.M.A.R.T." (specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and timely). For example, your organization may have a goal to obtain a notification system to notify and inform all staff and provide situational awareness. The S.M.A.R.T. objective may be to "acquire an emergency notification system before the beginning of hurricane season next June."

Once goals and objectives have been defined, tasks for accomplishment should be developed. If the objective is to "acquire an emergency notification system," the example tasks might be:

S.M.A.R.T.

Specific

Measurable

Actionable

Reasonable

Timely

Figure 4: S.M.A.R.T. Objectives

- Research existing products;

- Contact vendors and suppliers;

- Obtain cost estimates and prepare a budget submission; and

- Formulate an implementation and training plan.

Once the goals, objectives and tasks for accomplishment have been identified, the planning team should prioritize them and develop a schedule by those that require short-term action and those that may require long-term planning.

SHORT TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Short-term goals and objectives should include everything you want to achieve in less than two years. Short-term goals and objectives are those that may have a high priority and are actionable within a short time frame. Funding and the resources and personnel to accomplish them are available for short-term goals and objectives.

LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Long-term goals and objectives are those that require longer-term planning strategies or cross multiple budget or planning cycles. Funding or the resources and personnel to accomplish them may be lacking and may need to be planned for over multiple years or accomplished incrementally. Examples may include purchasing expensive Information Technology (IT) equipment, (i.e. redundant servers and communications systems), or building, leasing or acquiring alternate locations.

2.3. Develop a Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The next step is to develop the MYSP to detail the identified goals and objectives. The MYSP is a working document and should be easy to change and update, but must also be specific about what you are doing, when you will do it, who will be accountable, what resources will be needed and how the accomplishment will be assessed.

Once a MYSP has been developed, the next step is to monitor progress and actions. It is recommended that the organization hold regular meetings with the planning team to monitor progress and review and update/modify the MYSP.

3. Continuity Project Plans

Project plans are tools that will assist the organization's continuity program manager and planners in executing the work of the organization. Project plans provide task-level details, usually presented on a timeline, to assist program managers and planners track all aspects of the continuity program and to assign responsibilities. Project plans are primarily an internal resource for the program manager/planner team to improve program efficiency and maintain an up-to-date view of how the program is progressing and what needs to be accomplished. There are many software programs that have pre-built project plan templates available (Microsoft Word, Excel, Project, etc.). There is no "right" program or format. Projects vary in scope and requirements, which means the right program and format will also vary. Regardless of the preferred program or format, continuity program managers should follow the steps below to develop project plans:

1. Create and analyze program needs and requirements;

2. Identify and coordinate with stakeholders;

3. Set goals, objectives, and tasks;

4. Determine deliverables and create a timeline with milestones (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.);

5. Assign responsibility; and

6. Revise plans and modify, as needed.

The checklists below provide **example** lists of items that may need to be included in the organization's project plan(s). Refer to Annex A for a sample MYSP worksheet, which can be used to assist organizations to begin development of a MYSP.

Table 2: Program Management, Plans, and Procedures Checklist

Program Management, Plans, and Procedures		
ITEM	TASKS	FREQUENCY
Plan review and update (e.g. Continuity, Devolution, Reconstitution)	☐ Review for accuracy ☐ Incorporate corrective actions/lessons learned and changes in policy and philosophy ☐ Manage distribution of plan updates ☐ Identify/review current/potential partnerships ☐ Review applicable requirements, guidance	Annually
Essential Functions	☐ Identify/review organization essential functions ☐ Obtain Leadership approval	Annually
BPA/BIA	☐ Conduct/review/update BPA/BIA	Biennial

Program Management, Plans, and Procedures		
Checklists and Standard Operating Procedures	☐ Update and revise checklists ☐ Ensure annual update/validation	As needed or at least annually
Budget/Resources	☐ Identify budget and resource requirements	Annually
Multi-Year	☐ Develop/review MYSP	As needed or at least annually
Strategic Plan	☐ Develop/review Project Plan(s)	As needed
Project Plan(s)	☐ Establish a schedule for evaluating and assessing continuity plans and program	Annually

Table 3: Develop/Review Mitigation Options Checklist

Develop/Review Mitigation Options		
ITEM	TASKS	FREQUENCY
Alternate Locations	☐ Maintain alternate location readiness ☐ Verify systems ☐ Verify access codes ☐ Cycle supplies and equipment as needed ☐ Update Memoranda of Understanding/ Memoranda of Agreement (MOU/MOA)	Annually
Monitor and Maintain Equipment at Alternate Location	☐ Train users and provide technical assistance ☐ Monitor volume/age of materials and assist with cycling/removing files	Ongoing
Telework	☐ Establish telework agreements ☐ Conduct telework tests and training	Annually
Devolution	☐ Develop/review devolution plan ☐ Conduct devolution TT&E activities	Annually
Review and update supporting Memoranda of Understanding/ Agreement (MOU/MOA)	☐ Review for currency, annually ☐ Incorporate changes, if required ☐ Obtain signature renewing agreement	As required

Table 4: Develop/Review Key Elements Checklist

Develop/Review Key Elements		
ITEM	TASKS	FREQUENCY
Orders of Succession/ Delegations of Authorities	☐ Establish/update orders of succession and delegations of authority ☐ Ensure General Counsel review	As needed or at least annually
Communications and Information Systems	☐ Identify/review (as part of BPA process) ☐ Maintain operational readiness through tests/training	Annually
Essential Records and Databases	☐ Functional area training on essential records needed to support essential functions ☐ Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) function reviews and maintains established Essential Records Plan ☐ Review and update	Annually
Human Resources	☐ Determine needs and qualifications ☐ ERG, Devolution Emergency Response Group (DERG), and Reconstitution team appointments ☐ Issue appointment letter and schedule member for orientation ☐ Family Support Plan ☐ Drive-Away Kits	As needed

Table 5: Test, Training and Exercise (TT&E) Checklist

Test, Training and Exercise (TT&E)		
ITEM	TASKS	FREQUENCY
Test, Training, and Exercise Program	☐ Establish a schedule for conducting regular TT&E activities ☐ Conduct internal exercises and tests ☐ Support external exercise planning and execution activities ☐ Develop/review CAP/IP	Ongoing
Orient New Policy Officials and Senior Management	☐ Brief officials on continuity and roles and responsibilities	Within 60-days of appointment

4. Continuity Budget and Resource Requirements

People, communications, facilities, infrastructure and transportation resources are necessary for the successful implementation and management of an organization's continuity program. Through the budgeting and planning process, an organization's leaders and staff ensure the availability of critical continuity resources needed to continue the performance of the organization's essential functions. Once an organization has identified its goals, objectives and tasks, an organization must align its resources and budget for its continuity activities before, during and following a continuity plan activation.

Despite continuity being a good business practice (and a requirement for many organizations) developing a budget and acquiring needed resources can be one of the most challenging aspects of the continuity program managers position. Acquiring funds and resources should not be the sole responsibility of the office tasked with developing the continuity program and plan. The entire organization benefits from a viable continuity capability and should contribute to its development and maintenance.

4.1. Ideas for Acquiring Funds and Resources

In an era of declining budgets, planners and managers may need to be innovative in identifying avenues to fund continuity planning, equipment and initiatives. Examples include:

1. **Explore grant funding.** Continuity planning is an allowable use of funding under the DHS Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). Tribal governments may use the competitive grant process through the Tribal HSPG. Each government agency sets its priorities for use of grant funding under both programs. Program Managers and organizations should contact their jurisdiction's grant funding program for additional information and to determine if continuity needs will qualify.

2. **Identify dual-use technology and resources.** The acquisition and upgrade of equipment or systems can benefit an organization's continuity capability, if considered and planned for accordingly. For example, when organization computers are due for a lifecycle replacement, replacing desktop computers with laptops can enable the flexibility and dispersion of an organization. Similarly, upgrades or purchases of some continuity equipment benefit the entire organization; therefore, the cost should be borne by the whole organization rather than one program (i.e. generator back up power at the primary facility).

3. **Leverage low- or no-cost resources.** FEMA offers free continuity training, tools and templates[3]. Virtual training, such as internet-based courses or webinars, also provide a low-cost alternative. Teaming with other organizations through use of mutual aid agreements, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) or MOU/MOAs are low-cost methods of enhancing capabilities.

Below are examples of resources that may need to be accounted for in the budgeting and planning process:

Example Budget Items

- Communications equipment (radios, Emergency Notification System, etc.)

- Infrastructure

- Test, training and exercise activities

- Travel and overtime costs

- Equipment, supplies and resources

- Contracts

- Alternate locations and devolution sites (lease, acquisition costs, etc.)

- Information technology support (laptops, servers)

---

[3] Tools and templates can be found on FEMA's Continuity Resource Toolkit: https://www.fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkit
Information on available continuity training can be found at: https://www.fema.gov/continuity-excellence-series-professional-and-master-practitioner-continuity-certificate-programs

5. Continuity Test, Training and Exercise Calendar

5.1. Overview

One project plan that almost all organizations will develop is a test, training and exercise (TT&E) activities plan or calendar. TT&E activities assess and validate continuity plans, policies, procedures and systems. Achieving the goal of continuity mission readiness is possible only if TT&E activities are conducted on a regular schedule and if each event contributes to increasing the organization's readiness and resilience. Conducting TT&E events using an all-hazards approach using threats, hazards and vulnerabilities identified through organizational risk assessments affirms the viability of continuity plans and programs. This calendar is continuity focused to assist the program manager, but then it should be incorporated into the organization's overall training and exercise plan.

TESTS

Testing demonstrates the correct operation of all equipment, procedures, processes and systems that support an organization's continuity program. This ensures resources and procedures are kept in a constant state of readiness. As detailed in FCD 1, testing and exercising an organization's policies, plans, and procedures cultivates better organizational knowledge, identifies gaps in coverage and validates existing plans and programs.

Organizations should test:

1. Alert and notification systems and procedures for all employees and for continuity personnel;

2. Protection, access and recovery strategies found in continuity and information technology/disaster recovery plans for essential records, critical information systems, services and data;

3. Internal and external interoperability and functionality of primary and backup communications systems;

4. Backup infrastructure systems and services, such as power, water and fuel;

5. Other systems and procedures necessary to the organization's continuity strategy, such as the IT infrastructure required to support telework options during a continuity plan activation; and

6. Measures to ensure accessibility for employees and members of the public with disabilities.

TRAINING

Training familiarizes individuals with roles, responsibilities, plans and procedures for conducting essential functions and providing critical services when normal operations are disrupted.

Organizations should train personnel on:

1. Expectations, roles and responsibilities during a continuity plan activation and how these aspects differ from normal operations for all personnel;

2. Continuity plans and strategies, such as relocation, mutual aid agreements and telework, for those identified to perform essential functions and provide critical services during a continuity plan activation;

3. Backup communications and IT systems that may be necessary to support or sustain essential functions for those expected to use such systems; and

4. Orders of succession and delegations of authority for those individuals filling positions outlined within those documents.

EXERCISE

Exercises play a vital role in preparedness by enabling partners, stakeholders and elected officials to shape planning, test and validate plans and capabilities, and identify and address gaps and areas for improvement. Exercise programs improve an organization's preparedness posture and emphasize the value of integrating continuity functions into daily operations. Exercises provide a low-risk environment to test capabilities, familiarize personnel with roles and responsibilities and foster meaningful interaction and communication across organizations.

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)[4] provides guiding principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design, development, conduct, evaluation and improvement planning.

Organizations should exercise:

1. Continuity plans and procedures in order to validate the organization's strategy and ability to continue its essential functions and services;

2. Intra- and interagency backup communications capabilities;

3. Backup data and records required to support essential functions for sufficiency, completeness, currency and accessibility;

---

[4] For additional information on HSEEP, refer to: https://www.fema.gov/hseep

4. Internal and external interdependencies, including support to essential functions, services and situational awareness; and

5. Recovery from the continuity plan activation and environment and a transition back to normal operations.

EXERCISE TYPES

HSEEP describes seven types of exercises, each of which is either discussion-based or operations-based. Discussion-based exercises (seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises and games) familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreements and procedures or may be used to develop new plans, policies, agreements and procedures. Operations-based exercises (drills, functional exercises and full-scale exercises) validate plans, policies, agreements and procedures, clarify roles and responsibilities and identify resource gaps in an operational environment.

Organizations should use a combination of each type of exercise to ensure the mission readiness of all elements of their continuity program. The type of exercise that best meets the organization's requirements is identified through an analysis of the capabilities and requirements the organization is attempting to test and validate; the training and exercises it has already conducted; and the resources available for exercise planning, conduct, and evaluation.

HSEEP AND THE PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

Organizations should utilize the "progressive approach" outlined in HSEEP. HSEEP calls for the development of a multi-year plan that employs a progressive approach, in which TT&E activities are aligned to a common set of exercise program priorities and objectives with an increasing level of complexity over time. The "progressive approach" does not imply a linear progression of exercise types. See **Figure 8** for a depiction of the progressive approach.
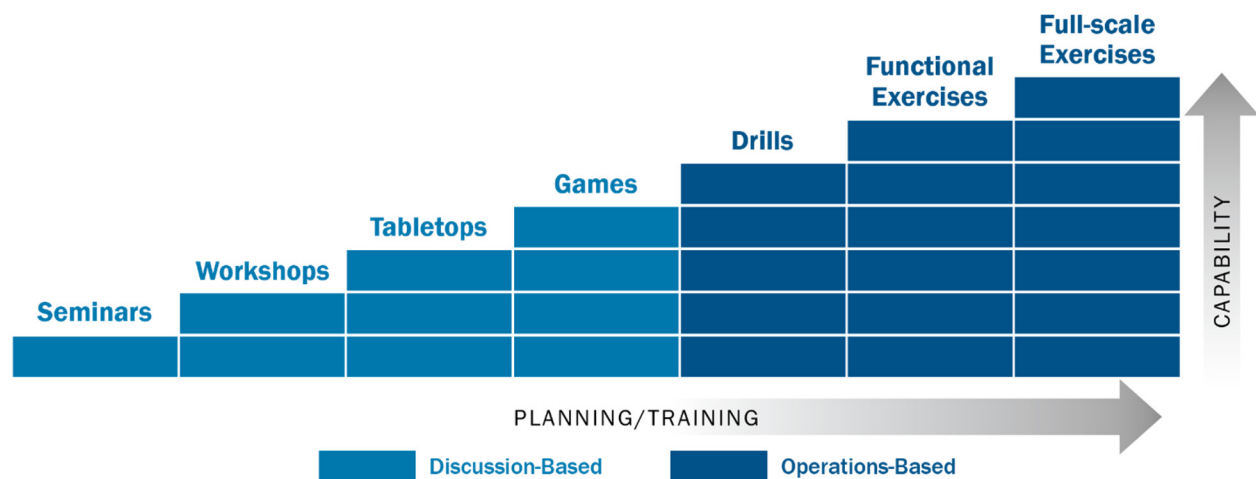

Figure 8: Progressive Approach

CORRECTIVE ACTION AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Documenting the strengths, areas for improvement and associated corrective actions contributes to the strengthening of continuity preparedness and helps organizations build capabilities as part of a larger continuous improvement process. Over time, exercises should yield observable improvements in readiness and preparedness in future exercises and real-world incidents.

Organizations should incorporate evaluations, after action reports, and lessons learned into the development and implementation of an improvement plan. The corrective actions identified during individual exercises, real-world incidents and assessments are tracked to completion, ensuring tangible improvements in capabilities. An effective corrective action program develops improvement plans that are dynamic documents, which are continually monitored and implemented as part of the larger system of improving preparedness.

An Improvement Plan Template can be found on the HSEEP Resources page on the FEMA Preparedness Toolkit website https://preptoolkit.fema.gov/web/hseep-resources.

Refer to Annex C for a TT&E multi-year calendar template.

Annex A. Multi-Year Strategic Plan Worksheet

Table 6: Sample MYSP Worksheet

Goals	Objectives	Tasks	Due Date	Responsible Party	Issues/ Obstacles/ Constraints
Current Year					
Year 2					
Year 3					
Year 4					

Annex B. Project Plan Worksheet

Table 7: Sample Project Plan Worksheet

Year	TT&E Event	Date(s) planned/Completed	Participants
1st Quarter			
Jan			
Feb			
Mar			
2nd Quarter			
Apr			
May			
Jun			
3rd Quarter			
Jul			
Aug			
Sep			
4th Quarter			
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			

Annex C. Test, Training and Exercise (TT&E) Calendar

Table 8: Test, Training and Exercise (TT&E) Calendar Template

Year	TT&E Event	Date(s) planned/Completed	Participants
1st Quarter			
Insert Month/Day	Insert Event	Insert Dates Planned/Completed	Insert Participants
2nd Quarter			
3rd Quarter			
4th Quarter			

Annex D. Resources and References

REFERENCES

- Presidential Policy Directive 40 "National Continuity Policy."

- Continuity Guidance Circular:
  https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1520878493235-1b9685b2d01d811abfd23da960d45e4f/ContinuityGuidanceCircularMarch2018.pdf

- Federal Continuity Directive 1:
  https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1486472423990-f640b42b9073d78693795bb7da4a7af2/January2017FCD1.pdf

- Federal Continuity Directive 2:
  https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1499702987348-c8eb5e5746bfc5a7a3cb954039df7fc2/FCD-2June132017.pdf

- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Toolkit:
  https://preptoolkit.fema.gov/web/hseep-resourcesh

RESOURCES

- Continuity Resource Toolkit:
  https://www.fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkith

- FEMA Continuity Training and Continuity Certificates:
  https://www.fema.gov/continuity-excellence-series-professional-and-master-practitioner-continuity-certificate-programsh

- FEMA Business Process Analysis and Business Impact Analysis User Guide:
  https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1565364767950-771197cf15ae239d988f02153b2b2442/BPA_BIA_Users_Guide.pdfh

- Continuity Assessment Tool (CAT):
  https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/158679