



**Section 8 – Training, Testing and Exercising (TT&E)**

## Description of topic

A continuity program goes beyond just building a plan. The program includes training all personnel to understand the purpose of continuity and their roles, responsibilities and leadership expectations before, during and after a disruptive event so that essential functions continue, and the organization emerges with minimal damage to its services and reputation. It also requires ongoing rigorous exercising and evaluation to ensure the most robust and up to date plans that will support continuation of the organization's essential functions during any disaster or other event that disrupts normal operations.

During exercises personnel can practice their planned tasks under simulated continuity conditions, which in turn allows them to provide more in-depth input during the after-action evaluation, helping to identify places where the plan can be improved. The training, testing and exercise activities validate the effectiveness of your plan and its ease of use.

Your organization should document TT&E activities, including the time and date of the event, participants, and the result or outcomes that will guide further development of the program. Keep a record of your exercise plan, and notes taken during its execution and evaluation for future reference.

Plan improvement activities should include an ongoing cycle of:



The results of each test or exercise is used to create a list of ways to plug gaps, organize additional resources and update the plan. Each time changes are made it may be necessary to re-train some or all staff to ensure they are prepared to respond accordingly.

It is not necessary to test the entire plan every year. it may be more manageable to improve one component of the plan (essential functions, alternate facility, communications, etc.), then test across several or all sections to see that they remain cohesive and useful.

Only through ongoing, well targeted, intensive efforts designed to 'break' the plan can you ensure that you are identifying potential weak spots and maintaining a program that will bring you back to normal as quickly as possible after a disastrous event.

## This section helps you:

Describe plans to ensure that training and exercises are conducted regularly and that, over time they cover all components of the plan to ensure a rapid, effective response at the onset of a disaster or disruptive event. Implementing your TT&E plan should ensure that your personnel are able to demonstrate their understanding of the program, and their ability to execute their assigned roles and responsibilities within the established recovery time.

## Component 1 – Training

### Location

#### Training, Testing and Exercising section

- Summary of the purpose and intent of training, and the commitment to ensuring that all personnel understand the purpose of the plan and their roles and responsibilities toward successful continuity operations.
- Description of the types of training you will conduct (new hire, all-staff, Continuity Team, Recovery Team, Back-up/Devolution Team), including:
  - Participants (which personnel will be trained).
  - Circumstances for initial training (new hire, special duty assignment, etc.).
  - Frequency of refresher courses.
  - Methodology for determining the effectiveness of training/learning.

#### Training, Testing and Exercising appendix

- Multi-year training plan showing coverage of all components of the COOP. (Can be combined with the testing and exercise schedule.)

### Summary

The organization's training program should include and document periodic training on:

- New hire continuity orientation training (as needed).
- Continuity awareness for the entire workplace.
- Periodic refreshers to pass along updates and ensure retention of information.
  - Briefings over the continuity plan.
  - Training on the recovery plan and procedures to resume normal operations at the original or a replacement facility.
  - Training on continuity plan activation, including relocation to alternate sites, telework and back up strategies such as devolution.
  - Training on communications and IT systems to be used during a continuity event.
  - Training regarding identification, protection and availability of electronic and hard copy documents, references, records, information systems, equipment and data management software (including sensitive or confidential data handling) necessary to support essential functions.
- Individual cross-training to cover modified roles and responsibilities for personnel serving on the organization's Continuity Team, Recovery Team and Back-up/Devolution Team and their substitutes.
- Telework requirements and procedures, including how to access and use records, communications, and function-specific systems.
- Succession training and a review of delegations of authority for the organization head and other key positions.
  - When and how responsibility may be assumed.
  - What authorities can, and cannot, be assumed by successors.
  - When and how responsibility should be returned to the primary position holder.
- Training on essential records.
  - Identification of essential records for continuity.
  - Storage and backup procedures to protect records and ensure they are available from alternate work sites.
  - Records recovery strategies if they become damaged.

### Resources, tools and templates to guide planning

#### Internal

- Training team.
- IT team.
- Human Resources.
- Records Manager.

#### External

- Outside subject matter experts, if helpful.

## Component 2 – Testing

### Location –

#### Training, Testing and Exercising section

- Summary of the purpose and intent of testing.
- Description of different types of tests that will be conducted, including:
  - Participants.
  - Frequency of refresher courses.
  - Methodology for after-action evaluation and improvement planning.

#### Training, Testing and Exercising appendix

- Multi-year plan detailing the types and frequencies of tests that will be conducted. (Can be combined with the training and exercise schedule.)

### Summary

Your testing program should include the following at all alternate work sites:

- Alert/activation procedures for all personnel.
- The capability to protect and access both hard copy and electronic essential records.
- IT disaster recovery timelines and abilities.
- Recovery of, or implementation of alternate, communications resources.
- Backup Infrastructure access (utilities, fuel, etc.).
- Physical security capabilities.

### Resources, tools and templates to guide planning

#### Internal

- Internal Property Manager.
- Staff Services.
- Human Resources.
- Training Team.

#### External

- Property and Building Managers.
- Emergency services.

## Component 3 – Exercises

### Location –

#### Training, Testing and Exercising section

- Summary of the purpose and intent of exercises.
  - Participants.
  - Frequency of refresher courses.
  - Methodology for after-action evaluation and improvement planning.

#### Training, Testing and Exercising appendix

- Multi-year plan detailing the types and frequencies of exercises that will be conducted. (Can be combined with the training, and testing schedule.)

### Summary

The annual exercise program should include:

- A cyclic, multi-year strategy to ensure all plan components are evaluated and to assess personal readiness in key areas, such as:
  - knowledge of the continuity plan and individual roles if the plan is activated (including expectations and responsibilities for which they will be held accountable).
  - Testing movement of Continuity Team members to an alternate site.
  - Demonstrating internal and external communications capabilities.
  - Demonstrating that backup data and records required to support essential functions at alternate sites are sufficient, complete, current, and accessible.
  - Demonstrating the ability to continue essential functions from continuity and telework sites.
  - Assessing the ability to conduct recovery procedures to return the organization to normal operations quickly and effectively.
  - Demonstrating that personnel are aware of, and ready to execute backup procedures, such as devolution, if necessary.
- An assessment of the ability to perform essential functions, as identified in the business process, from the continuity facility or other remote location, including testing IT infrastructure for connectivity and access, and changes in speed of data transfer.
- An assessment of the ability to manage dependencies with both Internal and external partners whose interaction is necessary for performance of essential functions including:
  - Effects to communications, data or utilities if damage occurs at nearby facilities.
  - Availability of services from entities that fund, regulate or provide services necessary to complete essential functions, if those entities are also disrupted by the disaster.
  - Ability of vendors to obtain required supplies and deliver them to the organization.

### Resources, tools and templates to guide planning

#### Internal

- Individuals who helped authoring the sections being exercised.
- Staff Services.
- IT Team.
- Human Resources.
- Senior Management.

#### External

- Pre-fabricated exercise templates established for use by any organization.
- External observers or evaluators.
- Partners and interdependent organizations.

## Component 4 – After-Action and Improvement Planning

### Location –

#### Training, Testing and Exercising section

- Summary of the purpose and intent of conducting after-action evaluations and improvement plans.
- Describe the process that will be used to conduct these activities after any actual event or exercise.

#### Training, Testing and Exercising appendix

- Include a template for exercise planning, conduct, after-action evaluation and improvement planning.

### Summary

After any continuity activation or test/exercise it is important to conduct an after-action analysis to determine where there are gaps that can be filled to make the plan better and personnel more prepared to support the plan during the next event. All participants, observers and evaluators should be included in conversations after an event as their first hand input will provide your best insight into what is, and is not, working and how to make the plan more effective.

The after-action summary, along with an analysis of changes to the organization's mission, duties, funding, capabilities, risks and technologies will create the blueprint for your plan improvements.

Documentation of an exercise should include goals and activities, plans to ensure relevant outcomes, appropriate and adequate depth of detail, a summary of participants a simple story line to provide depth and reality (complete with a series of challenges that test their knowledge of, and make them evaluate the capabilities outlined in the plan).

Remember to include changes to the organization such as mission or strategic plan shifts, new or expired duties, changes in personnel and expertise, addition or subtraction of funding, emerging risks and developments in technology.

### Resources, tools and templates to guide planning

#### Internal

- Participants in the exercise.
- Managers of essential functions.
- Senior leadership.

#### External

- External evaluators or observers.
- Partners and stakeholders.

## Component 5 – Plan Review Cycle

### Location –

#### Training, Testing and Exercising section

- Summary of the purpose and intent of regular reviews and updates.
- Describe the process that will be used to review and update the plan, including schedule, areas to research for necessary information.

#### Training, Testing and Exercising appendix

- Multi-year schedule and dates of actual plan improvements.

### Summary

Plan reviews should be done:

- After every exercise while the after-action input is still fresh.
- After any events that cause activation of the continuity plan.
- When there is significant change to the organization's staffing, mission, responsibilities, capabilities, changes in threats or remediation capabilities.
- At least annually.

If plan improvements significantly change key components (such as identifying different essential functions, changing alternate work arrangements, re-structuring responsibilities, etc.) the plan promulgation statement should be re-signed by the head of the organization to ensure they remain aware and supportive of the plan's contents.

### Resources, tools and templates to guide planning

#### Internal

- Managers.
- Senior leadership.
- Continuity Team and Recovery Team members.
- Individuals who helped during the writing of the plan.

#### External

- Individuals who helped during the writing of the plan.