Recovery planning guidance

Concerns and strategies

The following series of questions is designed to help your organization consider a wide array of safety and health issues and make choices to return your personnel safely from a pandemic event. Differences in strategy may be necessary to accommodate many things such as (but not limited to):

- Whether you are a large agency, small agency housed with others in a large shared building, small agency in your own, easily isolated workspace or a campus with multiple buildings
- The setup of your workspace, traffic patterns and size of shared areas
- The frequency of entry by the public or others who might not observe the same precautions
- The health and vulnerabilities of your personnel and customers
- Budget available to maximize capabilities
- Leadership choices and compatibility with other organizational strategies

The questions should be used as a starting place for your planning process, focusing you on topics that are often useful. Modify as needed to build the best recovery plan your organization can manage at the time of need.

- Some topics may be missing so create your own as needed
- Some may not pertain to your organization and you can skip those
- Others may be impossible to strategize at this point but should be added to the multi-year strategic plan and budget strategy to enhance capabilities at a later date.

Return of the workforce:

1. Order of return to the workplace:
   a. Who should come back first?
      i. People who conduct tasks that are difficult or impossible to do remotely.
      ii. People who have recovered from the infection and may have built a resistance.
   b. Who should come back last?
      i. People who are able to complete the same amount of work at the same quality and in the same time from their remote location (if they’re more safe and just as effective it may be best to keep them remotely located for a while).
      ii. People with pre-existing or other health issues that make them more vulnerable.
      iii. People who have not yet been infected.

2. How can you adopt a ‘new normal’ schedule?
   a. Split groups of staff who do the same work into groups and alternate the days they are allowed to come into the office so that no two teams from any division/workgroup are ever there at the same time. Zero overlap should mean that if someone gets sick and infects others you will only lose a half, third, etc. of the people who know how to do that function.
   b. Use remote work as a routine part of every employee’s schedule to:
      i. Create more social distance.
      ii. Ensure equipment stays updated and is operational for when it is needed.
      iii. Ensure personnel remember all of their log-in and access credentials and altered processes for remote work.

3. How can you protect returned workers from infection?
   a. Create unbreakable, enforced social distancing. How far is 6’ really in an office (don’t forget the vertical dimension compared to cube wall height)?
   b. Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, eye protection, coveralls.
      i. Required or optional?
      ii. Who is responsible for providing the masks?
      iii. Is training, fitting for correct use needed?
      iv. Safe removal, sanitation or disposal procedures?
      v. Remember that use of masks is designed to protect others from your coughs and sneezes so it isn’t a choice of “If I choose not to wear one then I accept that I might get sick” but rather “If I don’t wear one and end up sick then I am expected to infect 1.3 others and that could cascade through the workplace.
c. What procedures will you require for hand washing and sanitizing? (and how will you deal with the dry, cracked skin that could follow frequent cleansing)
d. Will you conduct daily wellness checks and send home anyone who shows symptoms, and how will you do that (taking temperature, answering self-identification questions)? For best protection use skin surface testing thermometers not oral ones with disposable sheaths.
e. Will staff be allowed/mandated to self-quarantine if they are potentially exposed?
f. How do you handle employees who become symptomatic or who do/have tested positive regarding distancing and return to work?
g. Can you train your additional duty safety officers (ADSOs) or others to safely set and monitor cleaning schedules, distancing, wellness monitoring, etc.?

4. How will you handle multi-staff areas to avoid cross-contamination?
   a. Workers who move throughout the building or grounds.
   b. Groundskeepers
   c. Equipment operators.
   d. Vehicle drivers (especially if they are carrying others)?
   e. Visitors from other entities such as TSLAC, State Surplus, TFC, couriers, etc.?

5. How will you handle customer/visitor/public needs?
   a. Setting up safe entry (limiting numbers, distancing and pathways).
   b. Regulating appointments or otherwise controlling traffic.
   c. Facilitating access to needed services in a safe way.
   d. Administering licensing or other exams.
   e. Interviewing job candidates.

6. Mitigating staff fears
   a. Regular, honest updates and other communications.
   b. Sharing best, scientifically supported data and recommended procedures.
   c. Demonstrating a high level of protectiveness toward employee health.
   d. Prioritize protection of the whole workforce (don’t allow individuals to make choices that might affect more than themselves (choosing not to wear PPE or participate in wellness screenings).

Monitoring and protecting the workspace
1. Who is ensuring social distancing, sanitization and safe behaviors?
   a. Every day distancing.
   b. Break room, conference room, lobby and other common areas.
   c. Elevators

2. How will you handle special event celebrations such as potlucks, parties, holidays or birthdays?

3. Who should ensure the building is sanitized?
   a. The responsibilities of owners, property managers, maintenance, janitorial and your staff.
   b. Cleaning schedules, both regular and deep sanitization.
      i. Elevators (buttons, panel, rails, door edges)
      ii. Bathrooms
      iii. Break rooms
      iv. Copy rooms
      v. Conference rooms
      vi. Gyms and showers
      vii. Air filter changes
      viii. Structural (such as sneeze guards)
      ix. Vehicles (fleet, buses golf carts, forklifts)
      x. Equipment (copiers, vacuums, microwaves, coffee makers, refrigerators, etc.)
      xi. Tools and machinery
      xii. Other
4. How will you handle mail, documents, cash and supplies?
   a. Mail and package sanitization.
   b. Cash handling.
   c. Donations received.
   d. Office supplies and personal items brought back in from home worksites.

5. What control can staff have over their own vulnerability and wellness?
   a. Where possible accommodate individual wellness concerns and work safety preferences.
      i. Remote work and success expectations/measurements (example: the ability to complete the same amount of work at the same quality and in the same time as at the office pre-pandemic)
      ii. The choice to limit their workspace only to people who are protected (ex: if masks are optional, individuals can choose not to let anyone into their area without a mask).

6. Will you, in future, require vendors, contractors and RFP/RFQ applicants to show proof of having a safety plan that at least meets your office standards?