# Sample Key Elements of a Continuity of Operations Program

**Practical Guidelines for Building a Successful and Effective Program**

1. **Program Initiation and Management**

* Establish the need for a Continuity of Operations (COOP) program.
* Acquire leadership support and funding
* Build the program foundation and structure to support the program.
* Develop and present key continuity concepts

1. **Introduction**

Most organizations have developed a COOP program; however, there are some organizations who have not made the program a priority and are just getting started.

This section is created to assist those organizations creating the program from the ground up. The processes and recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive, but provide a framework for laying a strong foundation on which the program may be constructed.

1. **Establish the Need for a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Program**

The state of Texas requires all state agencies have a COOP program that complies with legal and statutory requirements. It is critical to research and identify the relevant business, legal, regulatory, statutory and contractual requirements for developing the program. These items should be presented to agency leadership for their review.

Certain agencies will be subject to unique local, state, or federal laws applicable only to them because of their unique mission, operations, and jurisdiction (e.g., An agency responsible for environment protection that is regulated by both state and federal statutes.).

Identifying the organizational costs of not complying with these requirements will provide an incentive for the organization to support, fund, and provide the resources to develop the program to avoid the cost of non-compliance through operational loss of one or more essential processes. Costs of non-compliance can include loss of funding, being reported to oversight bodies, financial penalties, reputation loss, legal liability, and other costs.

1. **Acquire Leadership Support**

Acquiring explicit leadership support for the COOP program is the most important factor for a program’s success or failure. Leadership support is required to receive the critical resources- staff, funding and time- needed to develop a successful program. Division directors will provide resources if the executive director declares the program an organizational priority.

**The Executive Memorandum**

Upon receiving verbal approval from the agency head to deploy the program, request that he/she send an internal memo to agency leadership that introduces the program to them. If available, a communications specialist or department may be utilized to assist in drafting this memo.

The memo should:

* Introduce the COOP program and state the program directly supports achieving the organizational mission.
* Identify the legal basis (statutes, laws) for the program.
* State the program is permanent, will include creating plans and conducting exercises, and will be annually maintained and continuously improved.
* Identify the program’s location within the agency.
* Identify the Continuity Manager (Manager).
* Identify protection and preservation of agency essential functions as the program’s scope.
* Indicate staff from each organizational section expected to serve as the Continuity Coordinator(s) to deploy the program within their area on coordination with the Manager.

This simple memo will set expectations and ensure organizational support throughout the organization for the program.

1. **Setting the Foundation**
2. **Flexibility**

There is no one-size-fits-all Continuity of Operations Program. Each program’s structure is unique and determined by the organization’s structure, operations, mission, and resources.

Agencies that have a homogenous mission will have a simpler structure compared to those with multi-faceted and diverse programs. A single plan may work with a smaller, homogenous agency whereas a large agency may require multiple plans.

1. **Standard Foundational Definitions, Agency Prioritization Recovery Standard and the Continuity Council**

The adoption of key foundational program elements will help agencies establish a common framework of terminology and definitions used by COOP program builders. The adoption of these elements will remove ambiguity and confusion, establish an agency standard for plan creation and response operations, and create the vehicle to deploy the program across the agency regardless of size.

1. **Define “Essential” vs “Non-Essential” Functions.**

The COOP program is focused around protecting, at a minimum, “essential” functions. No function is truly “non-essential.” No agency would spend resources on processes that are not required or needed.

The label becomes necessary when an event impacts multiple processes concurrently and overwhelms the agency’s capacity to respond to every process outage at the same time. The agency can only respond to a limited number of outages at any one time because of resource scarcity. Therefore, it must first focus its efforts on recovering the most critical agency processes.

The strategy is called “triage” and is the same tactic practiced by the medical community to treat patients in a mass casualty event. Triage first treats patients with the most critical, life-threatening injuries then treats those with lesser injuries.

It is recommended the agency develop similar criteria to establish process criticality. The prioritization will define processes that are “essential,” and processes that are “non-essential.” It will also determine the recovery time objective of individual processes for planning purposes and determine their recovery priority in relation to other processes during a future disaster event.

Factors to consider when determining process criticality include:

1. Impact on agency mission performance;
2. Cascading effects a process loss will have on other processes;
3. Legal or statutory impacts of process non-performance; and
4. Impact to the public.

“Essential” versus “non-essential” must be tied to a defined Recovery Time Objective (RTO), or the maximum amount of time allowed for process recovery after an outage.

One example: An agency defines “essential” functions are those which must be recovered within one (1) week of an outage and “non-essential” functions as those able to be recovered longer than one (1) week.

1. **Process Recovery Priority and Recovery Time Objectives (The Standard)**

The Standard is a one-page, agency-level document which serves as the foundation of the COOP program including the assignment of RTOs to individual processes in plans. It also determines response and recovery efforts for process restoration after an outage. It is reviewed and formally approved by agency leadership.

* It is the official agency standard to establish priority order of process restoration after a destructive event simultaneously impacts multiple processes (Ransomware).
* It is an administration-owned document.
* It establishes an objective standard for establishing Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) of individual processes in individual COOP plans and establishes process recovery prioritization.

The Standard consists of two parts:

1. The Recovery Time Objectives (RTO’s) RTOs represent the amount of time an application can be down and not result in significant damage to a business and the time that it takes for the system to go from loss to recovery. The RTO categorization is flexible and should fit the needs of the agency. It should have at least four (4) but preferably five (5) prioritization categories based on time after an outage. An example:

* Priority 1: 0-24 Hours
* Priority 2: 24- 72 Hours
* Priority 3: 72 Hours to 1 Week
* Priority 4: 1 Week to 2 Weeks
* Priority 5 :2 Weeks or longer

1. Identification of general “types” of agency processes within each priority level. Many processes will be unique to the agency; however, there are processes common to all agencies such as: communication, payroll, accounts payable, project planning, audit, contract management and support, safety sensitive orientation and training, funding activities, employee hiring, program planning and analysis, in-flight project support to name a few.

A resource to assist in developing a Standard is the agency’s intranet page or internet page, which describes the overall agency’s mission and describes its main programs. Diverse, multifaceted agencies usually have a dedicated site for each section or division that describes the various responsibilities within each. To get more detail on the program’s activities schedule a meeting with the process owners. It is a great opportunity to build key relationships throughout the agency.

Once the draft document is created it should be presented to agency administration for their review and modifications. Once complete, the final draft should be formally approved by agency administration and shared broadly throughout the agency.

1. **Continuity Coordinators Team (Coordinators)**

The Coordinators are the organization through which the Manager will organize and implement continuity of operations program activities throughout the agency. This arrangement allows the Manager to work through each division’s representatives to stand up and maintain the program within a manageable span of control. The Manager will work through the Coordinator members, who will then organize and execute the program within their respective divisions to achieve the program objectives.

The Coordinators act as limited dedicated COOP staff across the agency to deploy the continuity of operations program across critical agency divisions.

1. **Introducing the Overall COOP Program**

Now that leadership buy-in is secured, key definitions are established, the Standard is created and the Coordinators are identified, it is time to launch the program through a formal presentation.

**The Kick-Off Meeting**

The objective of this meeting is to present a high-level program scope and provide the roadmap complete with a timeline and milestones for deploying the program. This timeline should begin with the initial presentation through the completion of the first COOP plan(s) and completion of the first exercise(s). The presentation should be no more than two (2) hours.

Meeting attendees should include key stakeholders including the Program Sponsor (Agency-level Leaders), division directors and all Continuity Team members.

Topics to be covered in the presentation may include:

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| * The COOP program objectives * Applicable laws and statutes * The scope of the program- protecting agency “essential functions” * Presentation of the agency Standard for process recovery and prioritization * The organizational scope to be covered by the program * Out-of-scope agency operations or divisions * Introduction and brief description of all COOP plan chapters * Brief description of plan annexes: Devolution, Pandemic, Reconstitution | * Descriptions of Testing, Training, Exercises, and Annual Plan Maintenance * Roles and Responsibilities of the Manager and the Coordinators * The program deployment schedule with dates and milestones * An estimated weekly Coordinator time commitment * The Manager’s contact information and encourage frequent communication between the Manager and Coordinators |

The meeting will help to “demystify” the COOP program and alleviate Coordinator’s concerns about the program and their role in it. It is important to communicate that prior COOP experience is not required that all expertise and training will be provided to them by the Continuity Manager.

1. **Risk Management**

Risk management is the process of identifying, analyzing, assessing, and communicating risk and then accepting, avoiding, transferring, or controlling it to an acceptable level. It is only effective if the evaluation and mitigation efforts occur prior to a hazard’s occurrence.

A risk management program should:

* Identify risks that can harm an agency’s essential processes or assets.
* Measure potential risks to determine detrimental operational impacts and identify cost-effective risk mitigation alternatives.

Effective risk management assists organizations in accomplishing continuity objectives by removing, degrading or lowering the impact of the risk to agency operations. Risk management is a key cornerstone to continuity of operations by acting to protect operations before an event happens to mitigate what otherwise could be a detrimental operational impact.

Many methods of conducting risk assessments exist but all assessments should answer the following questions:

1. What are the threats/ hazards the agency faces?
2. What is the probability of the threat/ hazard occurring?
3. What is the vulnerability to the agency if it occurs?
4. What is the impact (severity) if the threat occurs?
5. What is the Cumulative Risk Score of the hazard to the agency? (The Cumulative Risk Score is the sum of the vulnerability, probability and impact of the hazard occurring.)

**Risk Mitigation and Control**

If a hazard represents an unacceptably high level of risk to the agency it will have a Cumulative Risk Score at or above a key threshold. This number triggers a Risk Mitigation Plan (RM Plan), a plan designed to address the risk by significantly reducing or removing the hazard’s impact to agency operations if it occurs.

The RM Plan contains a:

* Brief narrative of the risk problem and identifies the essential functions which will be impacted and the impact on their performance.
* Narrative Description of Proposed Mitigation: Outline the proposed solution[s] to reduce the risk.
* Anticipated EF Risk Reduction: Identify the anticipated reduction in risk associated with implementing the proposed mitigation.
* Mitigation Project Office and Manager: Identify the office and individual who will have primary responsibility for overseeing implementation and completion of the risk mitigation plan.
* Estimate Budget Requirements: Estimate risk mitigation project cost and identify funding strategy.
* Estimate Schedule: Identify the mitigation project schedule, including milestones and estimated completion date.
* Participating Partners: Identify organizations involved in implementing the proposed risk mitigation plan, including the roles each partner will play.

1. **Business Impact Analysis (BIA)**

Business impact analysis is a method to isolate, measure and forecast the impact a hazard/ threat will have on *one or more essential processes*. The objective of the BIA is to establish a foundation for risk mitigation strategies to protect the performance of agency essential functions if the hazard occurs.

A BIA should:

* Identify and evaluate the effect threats/ hazards may have on an agency’s essential processes.
* Assess the impact to the agency of the loss or degradation of the essential process.
* Measure any gap between the process’ stated Recovery Time Objective and the recovery time achievable based on current resource and network architecture.

It is important to note all authorities governing Texas COOP programs specifically recommend/require?? BIAs for “essential” processes. BIAs and follow-on mitigation activities are resource intensive. Successful continuity planning requires scarce COOP program resources (people, time, money) be used prudently for the most important priorities: essential functions which support the agency mission and core operations.

There are many methods of conducting BIAs, but a comprehensive BIA at a minimum will cover the following areas:

1. The vulnerability of essential functions
2. The severity of the disruption
3. What type of loss would the agency expect to incur with the process loss?
4. What is the RTO for the process? How long would it actually take for process restoration based on current network architecture? Measure the gap between these two figures.
5. Does a Risk Mitigation Plan need to be considered to mitigate the risk?

Agency’s must consider the cost of risk and be realistic when determining the level of risk that is acceptable and unacceptable. Risk reduction is costly because it requires significant allocation of agency resources to implement. Risk can never be completely eliminated because organizations will never have unlimited resources to counter every hazard in the operational environment.

1. **Continuity Strategies**

* Identify and implement cost-effective strategies to reduce risk to essential functions and strengthen continuity posture

The Risk Management and BIA process identified gaps/ vulnerabilities in the agency’s continuity posture which threaten to stop or degrade essential operations if they occur. The agency should consider implementing a risk mitigation (reduction) activity to reduce or remove the threat to the process.

Every organization is different; a successful strategy for one organization may not be an acceptable solution to another. It is important to review the mitigation strategies to ensure they are compatible to an organization’s mission, resources, structure, statutes and operational requirements.

Successful mitigation strategies require the benefits of implementing the mitigation action outweigh the costs of implementation. A careful review is required to ensure the process being protected is critical enough to warrant the expenditure of resources.

There are several low-cost mitigation options that can be a solution to several types of threats. These should be reserved as potential remediation candidates for a range of threats to essential operations.

The following general strategies include but are not limited to:

* Analyzing essential processes for identifying manual workaround procedures if the normal technologies are unavailable. Example: Tracking employee time on a notepad if the timesheet system is down.
* Develop a reciprocal agreement with another agency to utilize space in each other’s facilities
* Alternate facilities: Identify and develop a hot site, warm site or cold site in one or more agency-owned facilities.
* Identify dual use space in existing facilities to use as office space during a recovery event including conference rooms, cafeterias, break rooms and training rooms.
* Identify an external, third-party vendor to provide alternate site for office space and/ or technology needs.
* Transfer staff and operations from an affected site to a non-affected facility.
* Suspend non-critical operations and transfer those staff to support essential function recovery operations.
* Direct employees at an affected site to work from home if the workforce is equipped for remote work capabilities.
* Cloud computing- Move/ have redundant capability for IT assets (databases, networks, applications) to a cloud-based environment.
* Implement multi-modal redundant communications capabilities including: employee cell phones; cloud-based email, meeting and mass notification applications; paper-based employee and vendor call lists
* Consider insuring the risk: business interruption, flood, payroll insurance.

1. **Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans & Program Artifacts**

* Develop an all-hazard plan(s) to be used to respond to and recover from an event which debilitates essential functions and threatens agency assets.

1. **Introduction**

COOP program artifacts are key documents necessary for a well-formed and comprehensive COOP program. They fall broadly into the categories of training, communications, exercises, standards, risk management, and plans. All COOP plans are program artifacts but not all program artifacts belong in a COOP plan.

COOP plans are all-hazards documents which detail how an organization can continue or restore operability of essential functions during incidents that impact normal operations. They are actionable documents which should only contain information needed to coordinate response activities and restore operations to full capacity.

Plans are deliberately designed to be used regardless of the hazard impacting operations. They are designed for use to any hazard: hurricanes, fires, ransomware, civil unrest, flooding, cyber-attacks, power outages or any number of other events.

COOP Plan Annexes are created for very specific hazards which due to their unique nature and impacts require specific planning efforts to adequately prepare for the event. Pandemic, Devolution and Reconstitution annexes are three of the more common annexes programs create. These annexes do not replace the COOP plan, but supplement it.

1. **COOP Plan Chapters/ Elements**

It’s important to reiterate only those chapters needed to respond during an outage are required in the COOP plan. There are key elements of the COOP program such as Risk Management, BIAs, Training and Exercise material which are critical to the program but aren’t required in the plan because they are not useful for restoring operations after an outage. The plan owner has the discretion to include additional plan content beyond the required minimum below:

1. **Promulgation Statement/ Formal Review and Authorization Form**

This is a short one-page letter which should be signed by the agency head (for agency-level plans) or the division director (for division-level plans). It should include the agency/ division mission statement and provide the scope and purpose of the plan. It gives the plan official status, and the organization authority and responsibility to perform their tasks.

1. **Essential Functions**

The essential functions list is a brief description of each essential function. Each entry should include function name, a brief description (What is the process? What does it do? What is its function? How often does it occur?), the Recovery Time Objective (mapped to the agency Standard document), normal staff level, critical staff level, and whether it can be remotely accessed.

1. **Business Process Analysis (BPA)**

The BPA is an in-depth review of each essential functions. One BPA needs to be completed for each essential function identified in the Essential Functions (EF) Chapter. The data included for each BPA should include sufficient data that someone unfamiliar with the process should have a high-level roadmap for process restoration.

Each BPA should include but not be limited to:

1. EF Output- What products, services, and information result from the performance of the EF?
2. EF Input Requirements- What products, information, and equipment are required to perform the EF?
3. EF Leadership: Who is the manager/ director over the EF?
4. EF Critical Staff- What staff in the organization is required to directly support or perform the EF? Identify by name and title.
5. EF Communications & Information Technology Requirements- What communications and information technology (IT) software and equipment are required to support EF performance?
6. EF Facility Requirements- What are the facility requirements for performing the EF (e.g., facility type, square footage, infrastructure required)?
7. EF Resources & Budgeting Requirements- What supplies, services, capabilities (not already addressed) are required to perform the EF?
8. EF Partners and Interdependencies-Who are the internal/external organizations (other divisions, other agencies, vendors) that support/ensure EF performance, and what information, supplies, equipment, or products do they provide?
9. EF Process Flow- From start to finish, how is the EF performed? Use a verbal description, flow charts or other process mapping tool.
10. **Call Trees**

Call trees at a minimum should include all staff who have a role in COOP response and recovery activities or are critical to organizational leadership activities. Call lists should be manageable in size. A good rule of thumb is all staff should be able to be contacted within 15 minutes of a call down initiation.

If a call list is too large, consider breaking it up into separate lists. Example: Rather than 1 Division call list of 100 staff create 4 Section/Department call lists of approximately 25 staff per list.

It is up to each individual agency/ organization whether to require personal cell phone numbers of staff. During weekends, holidays or after-hours many staff will not be monitoring their agency issued cell phones or emails.

Best practice is to capture work and personal cell phone numbers and work emails for multi-modal methods of employee communication. Hard copies of call lists should be kept in a secure environment and accessible to staff responsible for calling another staff member.

1. **Essential Records**

An essential record is any document, database or record necessary for the operation of an Essential Function. Examples include: databases, contracts, service level agreements, employee records, payroll lists, emergency operating records, equipment inventories, emergency staffing assignments, contact lists, registries, medical records, policy and procedure manuals, system manuals, and legal records.

One Essential Record form should be completed for each record critical to the performance each Essential Function. The types of data to be capture include: Essential record name and description, the Essential Function it supports, the form it is in (electronic, paper, tape, cd, etc.), its physical or electronic location (network file locations), location of back-up copies and whether the record contains Personally Identifiable Information or confidential data.

1. **Alternate Facilities Strategy and Identification**

Alternate facilities are needed in case the primary facility becomes damaged or unsafe for staff occupancy. Many organizations have discovered a viable alternate facility strategy is for all staff to work from home.

There are 5 General Types of Alternate Facility Strategies:

* All employees relocate to an alternate physical facility.
* Some employees relocate to the alternate facility and some employees work from home.
* All employees work from home.
* Employees are directed to work from multiple physical locations.
* A hybrid strategy of some combination of the above.

1. **Emergency Relocation Group (ERG)**

The ERG is a team of staff assigned responsibility to continue essential functions from an alternate site in the event the primary facilities are threatened or have been incapacitated by an incident.

ERG personnel must have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform and continue the mission essential functions of the organization, or other COOP related operations, during any crisis or emergency requiring activation of the COOP plan.

If the alternate facility strategy is for all staff to work from home, no ERG team is needed in the COOP plan.

**ERG Responsibilities:**

1. Ensure the alternate facility has sufficient capabilities to ensure all EFs may be performed at the location as they are performed at the primary facility including:
   1. Hardware and software functionality (laptops, printers, electrical outlets, applications)
   2. Network access (network cables, wi-fi connectivity)
   3. Communications capability
   4. Workstations (chairs, desk space, lighting, phones, supplies)
   5. Toilets, HVAC, water
2. Ensure all necessary documentation is present at the alternate location to be able to effectively and efficiently conduct the EFs. Examples of documentation includes information contained in the COOP plans such as staff call lists, vendor contact lists, MEFs, BPAs, essential records, Orders of Succession and Delegations of Authority.
3. **Delegations of Authority (Delegations)**

Delegations specify who is authorized to act on behalf of senior agency officials for specific purposes. It documents the legal authority (and its limits) for officials to make key policy decisions during a COOP activation. Duties that require delegation of authority are more specific and limited than duties that require orders of succession. Examples of duties or positions that may require plans to delegate authority include approving emergency policy changes; approving purchasing or commitment of resources; and signing contracts, General Counsel activities; Executive Director; Chief Operating Officer; Chief of Staff and Chief Financial Officer.

Note: The majority of positions, duties and divisions do not require a Delegations of Authority.

Key definitions and components when considering Delegations include:

* Official: the position that may delegate a legal authority to a successor
* Summary of Responsibilities: the authority and/or responsibility being delegated
* Designated Successors: the position that may assume the authority
* Requirements of Successor: the certifications and other requirements the successor must have to assume the legal authority that being delegated

Delegations should include a three-deep staffing of successors for each position being delegated.

1. **Orders of Succession (OOS)**

The Orders of Succession (OOS) allow for an orderly and predefined transition of leadership of agency leadership during an emergency if any officials are unavailable to execute their legal duties. The designation as a successor enables that individual to act for and exercise the powers of a principal if necessary.

OOS should be developed for key leadership positions throughout the organization. OOS successors should include a three-deep staffing of successors for each position.

1. **Budgeting and Resources**

This plan chapter may or may not be included. The Business Process Assessments contains a field for capturing budgeting and resources for specific essential processes. The intent of this chapter is to capture agency-level or program-level budgeting and resourcing needs

Considerations:

* Identify budgetary requirements for addressing organizational resilience and continuity interdependencies in the performance of essential functions
* Provide for the acquisition of those resources necessary for continuity operations on an emergency basis
* Describe/ detail the overall budgeting & resource acquisition strategy for the agency/ division/ program

1. **Plan Addendums**

Significant flexibility should be given to the COOP plan owners regarding the documentation they deem valuable to include in their plan. COOP plans are actionable plans; the information within them should be useful to respond to and recover from an event that debilitates agency essential processes.

Plan owners should attach as many addendums unique to their area they deem of value. Types of documents that may be considered include contracts, contractor call lists and staffing, external emergency stakeholders/ partners such as local fire and law enforcement, and network diagrams to name a few.

1. **Additional Program Artifacts**

There are several types of COOP program artifacts that are not appropriate to COOP plans but are critical to the COOP program’s effectiveness. These items should not be included in plans because they do not contribute to an effective response and can inhibit response times by plans becoming bloated with unnecessary material.

These types of documents include but are not limited to:

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| * Continuity Coordinator Team Charter * Business Impact Assessment * Risk Management Docs * COOP Audit Documentation | * Training Materials * Presentations * Exercises documentation and After-Action Reports |

1. **Awareness and Training Programs, COOP Plan Exercises**

* Establish and maintain awareness programs that develop an organizational “culture of preparedness.”
* Deploy training and exercise tools to employees with direct planning and/or response roles for the organization.

1. **Awareness**

Preparedness is everyone’s responsibility. Unexpected events can occur anywhere, and happen to anyone and effect everyone. Hazards such as pandemic, ransomware or widespread civil unrest require an all-employee, organization-wide approach. Organization’s must develop a “culture of preparedness” so if the unexpected happens, employees will have the awareness and training to act to keep themselves safe, and assist other employees as needed and have the mental agility to adjust to their duties as circumstances require.

There are several tools available to develop general organizational awareness. These include but are not limited to:

* Developing a dedicated COOP-based website
* Conducting building or campus-wide fire drills
* Preparedness facility posters in facilities
* COOP based newsletters
* Leveraging September as National Preparedness Month for an awareness campaign
* Providing employee e-learning preparedness courseware

1. **Training and Exercises**

Training is more immersive preparedness activity and is generally reserved for employees who have a direct role in the COOP program because of the increased resource expenditure. It is reserved for organizational leadership, Coordinators and employees assigned a direct response and recovery role. There are several methods to train continuity staff including:

* In-depth, Interactive Training: Led by the organizational COOP Manager. This training provides the knowledge, tools and confidence to COOP staff to be able to develop the program and respond efficiently and effectively during a real-world event. Subject areas covered previously above in Section I- Program Initiation and Management, Introducing the Overall COOP Program, Kick-Off Meeting.
* Attending COOP webinars, seminars and conferences.
* Participating and leading COOP Exercises.

Exercises are an activity in which the organization rehearses a simulated event to test whether the COOP plan(s) contains the appropriate information and procedures to effectively respond to and recovery from impacts which detrimentally affect essential processes and organizational assets.

**Types of Exercises**

1. **Table Top Exercise**- An exercise in which participants review and discuss the actions they would take without performing the actions. Examples include discussing an Orders of Succession invocation or a discussion on using the Emergency Relocation Group to move operations to the alternate facility. Table tops are the simplest and easiest exercises to plan and execute.
2. **Functional Exercise**- An exercise that confirms the effective coordination, command, and control with multiple inter-departmental divisions and/or with other agencies. A functional exercise does not involve physically moving assets to simulate a real-world response. Functional exercises require more planning and resource expenditure than table tops but significantly less than a full-scale exercise.
3. **Full-Scale Exercise**- An exercise involving the entire organization in coordination with other agencies. It also involves physically moving response assets in coordination with those agencies as if the response were to a real-world event. Full-scale exercises are expensive and require significant planning.
4. **COOP Plan Confidentiality, Maintenance, Security and Distribution**
5. **Confidentiality of COOP Plan- House Bill 1832**

All information contained in the COOP plans is sensitive, confidential and exempt from being viewed by the public through the Freedom of Information Act. Texas passed House Bill 1832, which provides that a COOP plan developed under the requirements of Section 412.054, Texas Labor Code and all records written, produced, collected, assembled or maintained as part of the development, or review of these plans, is confidential and excepted from public disclosure.

1. **Plan Review and Maintenance**

COOP plans are required to be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Additional elements of COOP plans may be added or modified based on agency requirements during the review period. If the threat or risk landscape deteriorates, or additional environmental factors appear, it is recommended COOP plans be updated as more frequently as circumstances require.

1. **Plan Security and Distribution**

A detailed and functional COOP plan contains sensitive data that may expose organizational vulnerabilities, sensitivities, strategies, personnel, and resources needed to continue essential functions that protect life, property, vital information, and agency operations. The disclosure of information in these plans could endanger lives; compromise the security of essential equipment, services, and systems. It could also lead to exposing an organization to attack or disruption and impact its ability perform essential operations.

Therefore, it is strongly advised COOP plans are:

1. Always stored in a secure location whether in electronic or hard copy form.
2. Accessible and distributed only to those staff on a need-to-know basis. Plan distribution should be limited to staff who act in a division or agency leadership capacity or have specific response roles and responsibilities.
3. When plan elements (call lists) are taken off-site in a hard copy form they should be kept in a secure location of the home.
4. Never sent electronically to personal email accounts or stored on home computers.
5. Never shared with anyone outside of the organization or distributed to staff who do not have response duties.
6. **Organizational Resilience is the Objective**

The goal of a COOP program is creating a resilient organization. Successful programs require a dedicated, consistent and holistic approach involving an ongoing cycle of planning, training, exercising, and evaluating the performance outcomes after each exercise (or real event) to continuously improve agency continuity posture. It also involves the support and participation staff at all levels of the agency, from the agency leader, to directors, to staff with direct COOP responsibilities to staff who may be called to support the agency in a critical hour.

Resilience is a whole community involvement. It is also imperative agencies develop relationships at all levels of government and with private sector organizations to mutually support one another in order to become a truly resilient organization.

**Presidential Policy Directive-21**, Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience, defines resilience as “the ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and recover rapidly from operational disruptions. Resilience includes the ability to withstand and recover from deliberate attacks, accidents, or naturally occurring threats or incidents.”