# Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) – Planning

A Facilitator's Guide to the
Planning Process and Workshops
*2016 – 2017*

## A NOTE TO SENIOR EXECUTIVES

This guide is part of a set of materials intended to provide technical assistance to organizations that are developing Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) plans. Because continuity planning is a specialized field and those tasked with continuity planning may not have the related knowledge and background, these documents seek to provide a brief background of information.

Continuity planning, in its narrow definition, addresses events that disrupt or threaten to disrupt those operations of an agency that are vital and time-critical to the public. Some divisions or branches within an organization may already have tested and well-maintained contingency or emergency plans for specific elements of agency operations. Existing resumption and emergency plans will not be recreated, but may be incorporated or referenced in the continuity plan.

Continuity plans seek to identify the processes for assessing damage to critical operations and expediting the decisions and actions to recover them. Agencies need continuity plans to address continuation of essential functions when staffing and resources for continuation of all of the agency's operations are not available.

The methodology for the continuity planning process divides the activities into four phases with corresponding milestones. Continuity planning is challenging, as it initially addresses all agency operations and is progressively narrowed down to just those operations identified as essential. The first phase lays the groundwork for strong project management, recognizing that commitment and support from top executives and a selection of realistic goals are crucial.

The selection of a solid continuity planning team, drawing on individuals from throughout the agency, will help to ensure that all areas of the agency are considered. A key decision in the initial efforts to launch a continuity planning project is the selection of the Project Manager who will guide the project on a day-to-day basis until a plan is drafted and then handed over to those responsible for ongoing maintenance of the plan. With the selection of an appropriate Project Manager and careful project organization, the planning can begin.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

**INTRODUCTION**
Many government organizations are developing plans that will insure continuity of their most valuable and time-critical operations. These efforts are motivated by an increased awareness and perceptions of higher risks to a variety of hazards. They also reflect a growing recognition that the public expects key government operations they depend on to be available regardless of the disruptive threats, be they natural disasters, such as flooding or earthquakes, or internal crises caused by communication or computer systems failures.

In response to these needs, the County of Santa Clara's Office of Emergency Services has created a program to support each agency in the development, implementation, and maintenance of continuity plans. The program offers a set of materials to guide and assist a project team with the activities involved in developing a Continuity of Operations/Government plan. These materials provide both background guidance, as well as "hands-on" worksheets for collecting and assembling the information, and a plan template for a continuity plan.

The purpose of this Facilitator's Guide is to provide technical assistance to the project managers who will oversee the planning activities and facilitate the development of the plan. At the conclusion of this overview, the expected results of the planning process are addressed. But what are the beginning conditions? This material pre-supposes that the County is initiating planning process that includes a greater level of coverage throughout the organization and that some operating units any already have their own plans.

**CONTINUITY PLANNING CHALLENGES**
The substance of continuity planning can be challenging because it touches all levels of activity within a governments organization, from the most senior executive to field staff involved with the day-to-day delivery of services. Not everyone is engaged throughout the entire project, however, and different levels of management must engage at different stages of the planning process. Clearly, most participants, of not all of them, must carry on with their "regular" assignments and assume continuity planning as a "collateral duty." Therefore, orchestrating team composition must be carefully considered and scheduled to minimize confusion, conflicting assignments, premature participation, and undesirable delays. The methodology presented here incorporates the following conditions:

- One senior executive should directly responsible for project completion, and this individual should take an active interest in the project's progress;

- One or two individuals will be tasked to lead the project for all or much of its duration, and these individuals will be defined as ***facilitators (or Project Managers)***;

- For each major area of operation with the organization, which typically called a division or branch, one or two individuals will participate on the project team throughout the project as **_points-of-contact (POCs)_**;

- Finally, the core of a continuity plan addresses the substance of the organization's operations, and identifies how the continuity of these operations can be assured, which will require participation by individuals who know these operations well. These individuals with specialized knowledge of the organization's operations is known as an **_operations specialist_**.

Facilitators (or Project Managers) must become familiar with the activities associated with each workshop and each stage of the planning process, so that they can gauge the project's progress, anticipate team participation requirements at subsequent stages, and lay the proper groundwork to ensure successful plan development. The purpose of this facilitator's guide is to assist with the identification of project management goals and potential pitfalls along the path to project completion.

The following figures illustrate some of the issues associated with assembly of the continuity planning team. Figure 1 suggests that the facilitator role be assigned to someone who becomes the "right hand" of the high-level executive who owns the project. Depending on the mission of the organization, individuals may be identified to serve as points-of-contact (POCs) for representing their operating areas in the planning process. They in turn will draw on operations specialists to provide insight into how vulnerable operations are actually performed and how they may be recovered in an emergency.
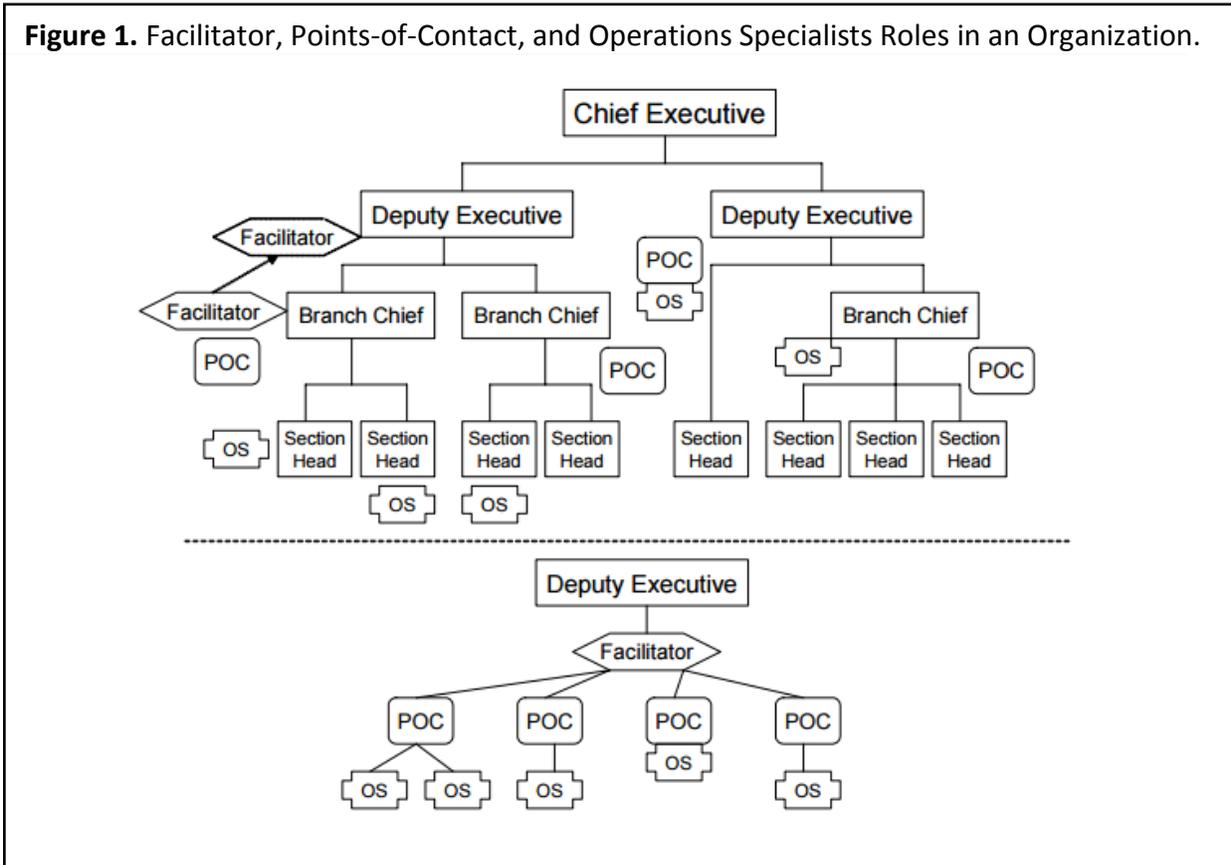
To keep the planning teams as small and effective as possible, the individual(s) who serve as facilitators may also serve as POCs for their own operations; and a POC who is also intimately familiar with operations may serve as an operations specialist. Figure 1 illustrates both of these situation. More discussion later in this document will address the role of the facilitator(s).
The intended methodology is to draw on individuals from throughout the organization on an as-needed basis to assemble a continuity planning team. This intention is depicted by the bottom of half of Figure 1.

The importance of assembling an effective team is heightened by the uneven work load that a project might entail. Senior executives must become involved in the beginning to assure proper "launch" and in the last stages of the project to integrate the planning into senior level protocols for managing crises in general. Operations specialists must become involved in the middle of the planning process to identify operations that should be covered by a plan and to formulate resumption strategies.

**Figure 1.** Facilitator, Points-of-Contact, and Operations Specialists Roles in an Organization.



As the next section of this guide describes, the technical assistance material is divided into four phases with associated milestones, and each phase involves a workshop. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the approximate level of engagement needed from various levels within the organization during each phase. Figure 2 focuses on direct participation in the workshops, and Figure 3 reflects anticipated levels of background support required at each phase.

**Figure 2.** Typical Workshop Attendance Requirement by Participant Type.
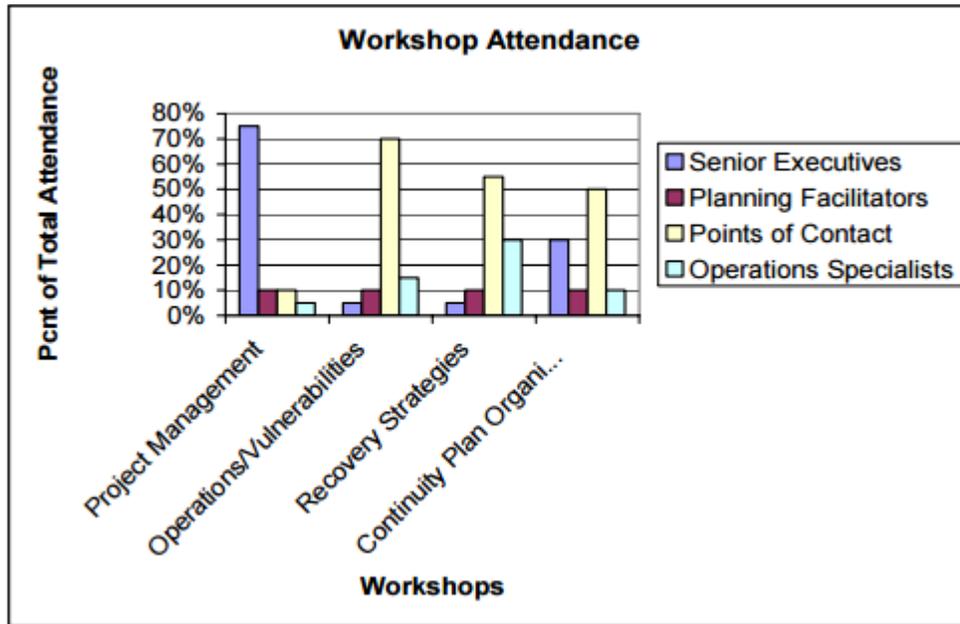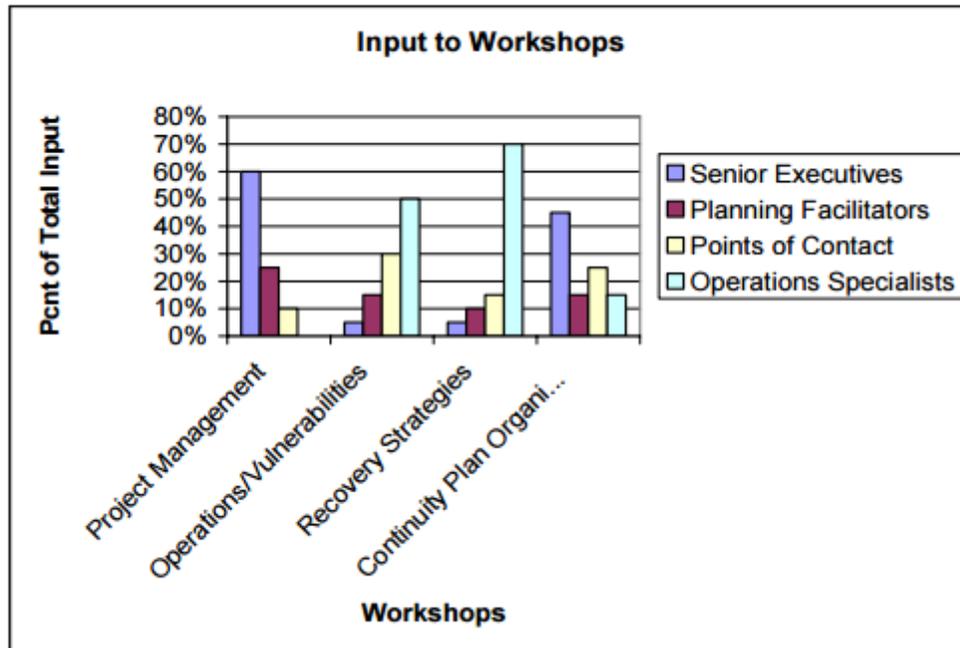


**Figure 3.** Typical Input Requirement by Participant Type.



**Workshop I** – Project and Program Management
**Workshop II** – Identifying Essential Functions and Operations Vulnerabilities
**Workshop III** – Resumption (Recovery) Strategies
**Workshop IV** – Command and Control and Constructing the Plan

**TYPES OF MATERIALS AVAILABLE AND THEIR INTENDED USE**

As previously stated, the project is organized into four phases. Each phase involves a *workshop* as a means to coordinate the efforts required, simplify the planning, and establish project milestones. These workshops provide the background training and information management templates to assist an organization in developing a continuity plan. The workshops are designed to systematically lead the planning team through data collecting and analysis to produce an initial continuity plan. The materials assume that everyone works for the same organization and will develop *a single* "plan"; however, materials could be modified to accommodate multi-organization project teams. The technical assistance materials conform to several different formats that reflect their intended role and use in conducting a continuity planning project (i.e. presentations are in .PPT format, templates are in Word format, etc.)

| Name of Material | Content Description | Intended Audience |
|---|---|---|
| **Facilitator Guides** | Project management discussion material, segmented by phase or workshop | • Facilitators (Project Managers)<br>• Senior Executives |
| **Workshop Participant Guides** | Overview discussion of content and role of each workshop | • Workshop Participants |
| **Workshop PowerPoint Presentations** | Outline and explanatory material about continuity plan development | • Workshop Participants |
| **Workshop PowerPoint Presentation Notes** | Detailed supporting discussion of issues raised in the slides | • Facilitators (Project Managers)<br>• Workshop Presenters<br>• Workshop Participants |
| **Plan Template and Guidance** | Organization structure for the documents that populate a continuity plan and samples or plan paragraphs | • Facilitators (Project Managers)<br>• Workshop Participants |
| **Planning Worksheets** | Mechanism for capturing information about operations that will require continuity plans | • Workshop Participants<br>• Operations Specialists |
| **Discussion Papers** | In depth discussion of specific topics that require more examination than PowerPoint presentation notes permit | • Facilitators (Project Managers)<br>• Workshop Participants |

Most of the items listed in the table are self-explanatory, but one merits additional comment. The Plan Template and Guidance document provides an overview to the essential questions, "What does a Continuity Plan contain?" The Plan Template and Guidance material is intended to be an electronic version of sample text and tables that can be incorporated into any team's plan with a minimum of modification. For plan content that is very similar from one plan to another, the concept is to facilitate "copy and paste" to reduce drafting requirements. However, given the specificity required by each agency's continuity plan, planning teams will need the time and ability to draft original content for the final planning document – the Plan Template and Guidance provides some assistive notes to facilitate this process.

**WHO SHOULD FACILITATE THE PROJECT?**
The facilitator role assumes direct responsibility for day-to-day project activities to assure that the planning activities proceed with all due deliberation. The facilitator should be directly accountable to the executive responsible for the successful development of an agency continuity plan. Several considerations arise regarding the selection of a facilitator:

- The substantive nature of the agency and which functional areas within the agency are most likely to be covered by a continuity plan;

- The division, branch, or section that is normally charged with leading planning efforts and is familiar with both planning processes and project management;

- The office that oversees internal operations; and

- The office that is responsible for emergency response plans and/or contingency plans for some operations; and

- The Department's Executive staff.

The following questions should be answered affirmatively to assure that whoever leads the project will be successful – in fact an agenda item for Workshop I is to examine (or re-examine) the selection of the facilitator:

- Does this person have the authority or ability to get cooperation from all divisions to participate in a review of operations, to identify those business activities that add value to the agency's customer or constituent base, and/or the agency itself?

- Does the facilitator have the authority or ability to get cooperation from all divisions that are responsible for key agency resources, such as: communications, computing and network systems, facilities, personnel, and contracts to identify how those resources might be provided under emergency circumstances in alternative locations?

- Does the facilitator have access to senior managers or executives to require them to prioritize agency functions and to decide which functions will be addressed in a continuity plan?

- Does the facilitator have access to senior managers or executives to get their participation in planning how a senior activation team or crisis management team might command and control a continuity plan, if it is activated?

In short, a quick review of all of the facilitator notes for the four workshops will reveal how the continuity planning effort shifts as the project progresses and how different levels of the organization are tapped for both information and decisions (as Figures 2 and 3 illustrate). This review can aid in identifying the appropriate office or staff to facilitate the project.

The scale and scope of an agency may influence the assignment of continuity planning management, as well. For an agency with a minimal scale and scope, someone at a lower level of responsibility may have the skills, knowledge, aptitude, and ability to access and work with staff and managers at all levels throughout the agency. For an agency with a larger scale and scope, placing the project management more than two or three levels down from the executive director may doom it to failure because of inadequate access and authority.

Scope also plays a role in the decision, especially when an agency's operations are highly diverse or geographically dispersed. Continuity plans may be appropriate not only for headquarters, but also regional, field, or special operations (such as a separate data operations center). The planning process must anticipate the scope of operations covered and ensure that appropriate business units are represented in the workshops. This statement does not imply that ALL field units must be represented. Rather, the nature of field unit operations must be represented so that a plan covering field operations can be developed.

Finally, personal skills, knowledge, and expertise must be considered. The goal of continuity planning is to develop an ability within the organization to recognize those operations that: (1) create great harm if they are disrupted, (2) require rapid restoration following a disruption to avoid harm, and (3) have no quick and easy solutions or workarounds to restore operations. Disruptions that justify activating a continuity plan are by nature severe, dramatic, and often traumatic.

Formulating strategies for re-assigning priorities and resources, sometimes deliberately withholding normal processes, requires strong and clear leadership and organized efforts by senior executives. A continuity plan must include effective command and control protocols for directing the execution of a plan. Skills in organization are needed.

Many participants in the continuity planning process must become familiar with these concepts and employ them in analysis of their operations. For the facilitators, working with these concepts must become second nature.

Fortunately, resolution of who should lead the project may be postponed until the first workshop has concluded and senior managers and executives have a strong sense of the nature of the project for their organization.

## THE ROLE OF POINTS-OF-CONTACT (POCs)

Much of what has been said about the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator also applies to the POCs. The main basis for differentiation is the scale of an organization and the amount of specialization and diversity of operations among divisions or branches. The major responsibility of a POC is to assure that their areas of operation are addressed adequately in the continuity planning process. A POC does not hold any responsibility for managing the entire planning effort of the project, but a POC may be called upon to serve as a leader and project manager for planning efforts within their operating area. As reflect in Figure 1, some facilitators may serve as POCs for their specific operating areas, as well.

## THE ROLE OF OPERATIONS SPECIALISTS

Operations Specialists contribute heavily to the activities in Workshops II and III, when operations are prioritized and resumption strategies are developed. In many cases, the POCs can be expected to provide insight into operations requirements. Yet a continuity plan most likely will fail unless individuals with thorough familiarity with the operations in question participate in the planning process. Typically they provide input in response to requests from POCs, but do not participate directly in a workshop session. Clearly, the scale of an organization affects the amount and degree of specialization between POCs and Operations Specialists.

## THE WORKSHOPS – AN OVERVIEW

As the prior discussion suggests, continuity planning requires analysis involving multiple concepts over the course of the project. When initial stages are completed well, they provide "clean" input into later stages, and the subsequent work flows smoothly. When initial stages are not performed well, the subsequent work can bog down, participants become frustrated, and project may die. The four workshops are designed to pace the work and control the quality to avoid this problem.

### Workshop I

Workshop I helps to identify some of the problems that the project management team might encounter during the project. This workshop provides an overview of the project planning process so that senior executives can assign the appropriate individuals to the management team, identify likely candidates for Points-of-Contact (POCs), and understand the milestones to be achieved as the project progresses. It also addresses the expectations that are created for the conclusion of the project, so that goals are neither too high, nor too low.

### Workshop II

Workshop II convenes the initial planning team participants to examine the organization's operations and to determine those that will be defined as "essential functions." For those

whose divisions provide essential functions, the participants in this workshop are likely to remain involved for the duration of the project, serving as POCs for their respective divisions. In this role, they will coordinate assessment and analysis activities within the division to assign priorities to functions, identify existing work-around provisions, and assess operational vulnerabilities.

### Workshop III

Workshop III convenes the initial planning team participants to examine the organization's operations and to determine those that will be defined as "essential functions." For those whose divisions provide essential functions, the participants in this workshop are likely to remain involved for the duration of the project, serving as POCs for their respective divisions. In this role, they will coordinate assessment and analysis activities within the division to assign priorities to functions, identify existing work-around provisions, and assess operational vulnerabilities.

### Workshop IV

Workshop IV leads the senior management and executive levels of the organization to develop the command and control structure that will direct a continuity plan when it is activated. This work requires an examination of current provisions for managing crises and responding to emergencies, and analysis of how to integrate command of a continuity plan, which covers essential functions only, with the crisis management or executive team's responsibilities for all organization functions, disrupted or not. One key goal of this workshop is to create a decision-making process for activating a continuity plan. In addition, this workshop addresses how the continuity plan will be staffed and supported on an on-going basis.

A review of the presentation materials associated with each workshop will reveal that the content does not align perfectly with the descriptions just given, and this inconsistency reflects a quandary that each facilitator must anticipate. Some participants have little interest in understanding the "big picture" or want to know "where we are going with this…" Give some participants the forms to complete, and they will dutifully complete them. Others will want to anticipate what's coming next, and want to know in the beginning what the final outcome will be.

A second quandary is that participants may work independently in between workshops with little consultation or collaboration among themselves or with the facilitators. The presentation materials can be fuzzy about the boundaries between workshops or stages of the project. At the beginning of each workshop, some material encourages discussion or re-examination or a previous session's work to encourage collaboration, compare notes, address points of confusion, etc. Toward the end of each workshop, material is presented that outlines the topics for the next workshop.

**THE END PRODUCT OF THE PROJECT**

When the workshops are complete, is a continuity plan in place? Typically, the answer is no – or at least not completely. The workshops assist most directly in the design of a continuity plan rather than the completion of an operational plan. A fully operational plan includes:

- Extensive documents on functions and their priorities, resumption strategies, action lists for performing resumption activities or operating under emergency conditions, contact lists, activation criteria, and organizational charts;

- Contracts or equipment/material in place to support operations during emergencies;

- Familiarity by most staff with the basics of the plan, and training and satisfactory test results for individuals who serve on continuity plan teams.

At the conclusion of Workshop IV, although much information has been assembled and resumption strategies are identified as described in the first bullet, not all essential functions may have acceptable resumption strategies that satisfy the performance goals of the continuity plan. With that said, understanding and recognition of operations vulnerabilities, and a strong sense of resumption priorities, contributes tremendously to senior management's ability to respond appropriately to disruptions.

In summary, continuity planning can – and should – become another tool available to an agency's executives to assure the quality of performance. However, like all tools or management practices, failure to maintain the plan, to train and exercise to it will lead to its deterioration and loss of value to the agency. The planning process addressed in this program I simply the first few steps toward an enhanced capability for organizational performance.

**WORKSHOP I – COOP/COG PROJECT AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

**INTRODUCTION**
Workshop I provides an overview of the project planning process so that senior executives can assign the appropriate individuals to the management team, identify likely candidates for POCs to represent important divisions, branches, or sections, and understand the milestones to be achieved as he project progresses.

It is not unusual for several repeats of Workshop I to be conducted over a period of days or weeks to engage the appropriate executives and managers and to reach consensus on the role of continuity planning within the agency, the objectives of the planning project itself, and who should lead and direct the project activities. That is to say, while any given executive may participate in only one such workshop session, resolving the substantive issues addressed in Workshop I may require several sessions, special briefings, or meetings to properly engage the appropriate executives, achieve "buy-in" as well as "ownership", and to assure the assembly of a quality planning team led by a capable facilitator.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
The successful conclusion of Workshop I should achieve the following goals:

- Recognition by all participants of the differences and similarities among emergency response plans, crisis management plans, and continuity of operations plans

- Identification of and acceptance by a senior executive as the "owner" of the continuity planning project;

- Selection of one or more individuals to facilitate (project management);

- Formulation of basic objectives for the continuity planning project team in terms of:

  o Divisions, offices, or operations *to be considered* for inclusion in the plan (results of Workshop II may conclude that inclusion is not necessary)

  o For the divisions, offices, or operations identified in the first bullet, identification of one or two persons from the unit who will serve as Points-of-Contact (POCs) and lead participants in subsequent workshops

  o Level of completeness of a plan:

    ▪ Identification of essential functions

    ▪ Prioritization of resumption efforts for essential functions

- Assessment of vulnerability to disruptions

- Formulation of resumption strategies

- Integration or assimilation of existing resumption capabilities

- Development of new resumption strategy capabilities

- Integration with existing emergency response or crisis management plans, programs, or policies

- Creation of on-going continuity planning program

  o Desired level of response and coverage:

  - Acceptable minimum restoration time objective (RTO): 2 hours, 8 hours, 24 hours, 72 hours for a specific function

  - Duration of the ability to sustain functions via emergency resumption strategies: 1 week, 2 weeks, 4 weeks for all functions

  o Schedule, milestones for workshops, and expected completion date(s)

- Size of the project team to facilitate the planning process, its organization and accountability, and dedication of suitable support;

- Preparation of policies or management directives regarding the coordination of continuity planning activities with emergency response plans and crisis management plans;

- Strategy for conducting subsequent workshops and soliciting participation from business units to be covered in the COOP/COG;

- Policies regarding resource support to planning team participants from divisions, branches, and sections;

- Policies regarding coordination and/or collaboration with outside agencies (parent or sibling relationships) regarding continuity plan formatting, organization, terminology, and concepts of operations;

- Announcements or directives to all appropriate senior managers or executives describing the project and its goals and expectations for their participation and support.

An initial discussion of the roles and responsibilities of a planning team was presented in the introduction to this facilitator's guide. A dilemma confronting every project management team as it contemplates designing and developing a continuity plan is the number of participants and the level of operational detail they represents in their business units. If the POC is at too high a level, they may only be able to speak with authority about their area of operational expertise. They may then find themselves in the position of redelivering Workshops II and III to staff in other sub-units in order to identify the functions that are essential and vulnerable to disruptions. Workshops II and II thus acquire a "train-the-trainer" context.

An alternative is for staff from other business units to participate in Workshops II and III firsthand, and the POC serves as the division's "team leader."

A third alternative is to offer Workshops II and III repetitively. Invariably, some departments, divisions, or branches lag behind or simply miss a workshop when it is originally scheduled, and "make-up" presentations are required. These subsequent sessions afford some POCs the opportunity to attend again, and to bring additional staff with them to address specific operations that the POC cannot represent well.

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND WORKSHOP I**
As earlier comments suggest, the substance of this workshop may be delivered via one or more sessions to assure adequate "buy-in" and education of all appropriate senior managers regarding the nature of the project. Those executives, managers, and staff who are most likely to be closely engaged in the continuity planning effort as project "owners" and/or managers/facilitators should participate in a full length workshop. Senior executives and senior managers who do not participate should receive a briefing on the project and workshop results.

**HAZARDS AND PITFALLS**
In addition to failure in securing high level executive engagement and acceptance of the project and positioning the project management staff too low in the organization, a key challenge is *differentiating among concepts of emergency response, crisis management, and continuity planning.* An organization may already have emergency response capabilities and may not understand why continuity planning is necessary. Some organizations may lack crisis management capabilities, and therefore two projects are needed: one for continuity planning and the other for crisis management planning. Finally, the mission of some agencies is public emergency response and providing additional continuity of operations for their emergency response capabilities contributes an additional element of confusion.

A second source of difficulty arises is the project management staff is *not sufficiently trained or experienced in continuity planning.* The intent of these facilitator notes and the other technical assistance materials is to assure smooth sailing for experienced project managers who also have experience with planning projects. Nevertheless, procuring support from experienced personnel

or technical assistance from the Office of Emergency Services or peer agencies that have successfully conducted continuity planning in the past can reduce the risk of project failure.

A third potential source of problems stems from *prior or currently existing continuity plans,* perhaps for some divisions, branches, or section. To the degree that an organization already has continuity plans and staff are familiar with the concepts, this technical assistance material may prove to be redundant or superfluous. The materials are designed for those who are not familiar with continuity planning. If some divisions already maintain continuity plans, then the project managers should consider carefully how and when to engage with these planning efforts so that individuals are not asked to re-do or repeat planning tasks, and existing plans can be leveraged to expedite the planning for those divisions or branches that do not have them.

An important point to discuss during Workshop I is the *expectations* of the key participants regarding the final result of the entire project. This indeed a very difficult subject to discuss because a new continuity planning project will face many unknowns at this stage in the project. That said, the facilitators in charge to Workshop I should read through all of the facilitator guides before this workshop is conducted to try to estimate or assess how much of a continuity plan is reasonable. A discussion of expectations should consider the following items:

- How many divisions or other operating units within the organization will be expected to participate at least in Workshop II (identifying essential functions);

- Whether specific divisions that are likely to have essential functions will participate or, for a variety of reasons, will refuse to participate;

- For those divisions that conclude that they have essential functions, whether operational resumption strategies can be identified that can be implemented without major investments of time and resources;

- The likelihood that the conclusion of the planning process will result in a recognition of unacceptable vulnerabilities; that is, an understanding that for some functions or operations no resumption strategies can be identified that satisfy the resumption performance criteria (e.g., maximum down time of 24 hours) without major investments, for which funds are not available.

**CONCLUSION**

The role of Workshop I is project management planning. If the continuity planning project is launched without completing the goals listed, the project is at risk of serious failures, such as: poor participation by relevant business units and inadequate coverage in the final plan; frustration by team members, failures to accomplish scheduled milestones, and cost overruns. Equally important, leaders of the planning process must recognize that continuity planning – even when undertaken with all good intentions – may identify problems (e.g., vulnerabilities) for which solutions (e.g., resumption strategies) are not available. Yet an increased recognition and understanding of operating risks is a measure of success.

**WORKSHOP II – IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND OPERATIONS VULNERABILITIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

Workshop II convenes the initial planning team participants to examine the organization's operations and to determine those that will be defined as "essential functions." For those whose divisions provide essential functions, the participants in this workshop are likely to remain involved for the duration of the project, serving as POCs for their respective divisions. In this role, they will coordinate assessment and analysis activities within the division to assign priorities to functions, identify existing workaround provision, and assess operational vulnerabilities.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

One of the driving concepts behind the continuity planning methodology represented by the technical assistance materials is that the fundamental question is whether harm will occur, and how much, if some operations are disrupted. This question requires a subjective answer, although there are some techniques for providing objective responses as well. The understanding of how much is at risk if operations are disrupted is then explored in Workshop III, in terms of the costs and level of effort required to minimize disruptions. But the overall goal if Workshop II is to assess the potential for harm. At the conclusion of Workshop II's activities, the following tasks should be concluded:

- All divisions, branches, or sections initially invited to participate should have identified the those operations that serve the public directly in order to determine the following:

  o Which functions or operations deliver services or goods to the public that intrinsically have a very high value, because many people depend on them or a few are highly dependent on them;

  o Of those functions identified in the previous bullet, which ones cause very serious harm if they become disrupted and cannot be resumed expeditiously;

  o Of those functions satisfying the criterion in the previous bullet, which ones do not have easy or obvious "workaround" remedies to restore minimally acceptable levels of operations quickly, and do not have existing continuity plans that can assure resumption of operations in an acceptable time frame.

- Conduct a vulnerability assessment to review the sources of operating risks for those functions that are threatened by disruptions as just described in the bullets above.

- For those functions that are vulnerable to disruptions, a review of how the functions are performed is initiated to determine the following:

  o Identify the resources that are employed;

o Establish the processes that are supported;

o Clarify how the services (or goods) are delivered;

o Define the criteria or specifications for minimally acceptable delivery or performance.

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND WORKSHOP II**

The participants in Workshop II are likely to be either staff or managers who have a reasonable comfort level in representing the operations or functions in their division/branch for the purposes of drafting answers to the questions just raised. At the conclusion of the workshop, if only the POCs attended, then they will confer with staff and managers for all operations that are suspected of being vulnerable to firm up the list and reach a consensus that the division head should be asked to approve.

As the Participant Guides suggest, the attendees (especially if they are POCs) may anticipate their role at the workshop by seeking out documents that capture or identify key functions of operations.

There is some question as to whether POCs who represent support operations, such as communications, computing systems, payroll, contracts, etc. should attend this workshop. The concluding discussion under Hazards and Pitfalls (below) addresses this question.

**ROLE OF WORKSHEETS FOR WORKSHOP II**

Worksheets 1 and 2 were developed for the purpose of assisting in the listing of functions and tasks or activities that are associated with a division or branch. These worksheets also help capture some of the important facts about these functions to assist in determining which are "essential" and which are not.

Some facilitators prefer that participants list all functions that a division performs, then flag or mark those that are time-critical AND highly valuable, thus these functions are candidates for a continuity plan. Other facilitators prefer that participants simply list the functions that are candidates for a continuity plan and omit the others. A comprehensive list provides stronger evidence that all functions were considered in the review process, whereas a partial list leaves open the question of whether an important function was overlooked.

Worksheet 2 provides a list of questions that collectively should help participants to determine whether a specific function is essential or not.

Workshop 3 is designed to capture an initial listing of the resources needed to perform a function under normal circumstances. Usually, a separate copy of Worksheet 3 is necessary for each essential function. In Workshop II, participants typically sketch out a Worksheet 3 for one

function to get the practice. Later, copies are completed for all functions that are deemed to be essential. The amount of detail to provide on Worksheet 3 is always problematic: clearly, some divisions could provide pages and pages of data to complete a single cell in the excel worksheet. The Hazards and Pitfalls section below provides more discussion of this issue, as does the discussion of Worksheets and Hazards and Pitfalls for Workshop III.

**HAZARDS AND PITFALLS**
The successful completion of Workshop II and its follow-up activities face several potential "mine-fields" that project managers should anticipate and be prepared to address.

One dilemma is the definition of *function* that should be included in the continuity plan. The operative term employed in this material is "essential", but clearly everyone in government will consider whatever they do to be essential. More constructive terms might be "high value and time-critical", or simply "time-critical". The facilitator must gauge the level of sensitivity in their organization. Some agencies have little difficulty with the term "essential", while others – especially those under budget cuts and reductions in force – may be very sensitive to such language.

Another difficulty is defining "time-sensitive." Straightforward planning processes may simply adopt a criterion that time-sensitive functions are those that must be resumed within one business day (a resumption time objective – or RTO – of 24 hours) or less. More elaborate planning processes recognize that some functions with RTOs of 24 hours do not cause much harm beyond 24 hours and therefore are not essential. Whereas, other functions with RTOs of 48 or 72 hours may be essential because the harm caused beyond the RTO value is high.

An example of the latter function might be a very value administrative process that is highly dependent on computer systems that require 72 hours to restore at an alternate site, IF a resumption plan exists (otherwise, resumption might take weeks.)

The facilitator must also anticipate how *essential functions are likely to be disturbed among different divisions* participating in the planning process. If criteria, as described above are employed, then some divisions may report multiple essential functions and others report none. No pressures or expectations should be created so that every participant feels compelled to identify an essential function for their operations. In fact, as a first cycle through the planning process, every function proposed to be essential should be scrutinized carefully to assure that its value and time sensitivity justifies inclusion in a continuity plan. Some POCs and their divisions may drop out of the planning process at the conclusion of Workshop II (should it be determined that they have no essential functions).

Yet another challenge to Workshop II is guiding participants in *describing and listing functions.* Some participants will list one or two high level concepts that actually resemble mission statements, whereas other participants may proceed to list extremely detailed activities in their

division. For example, if a division operates 30 field offices and each field office supports five business activities should Worksheet 1 contain five functions, 30 "field office functions", or 150 field office-business functions?

The Worksheet 1 results are to list major functional areas in the first column and then employ the second column to break down the functional area into component activities, with the following rules in mind:

- A function may be supported by more than one task or activity;

- Not all tasks or activities associated with a function need be essential, in the sense that they must be resumed with minimal disruption;

- A function with at least one associated task that is time-critical will be essential;

- When multiple "copies" of an activity exist, such as multiple field offices, than capturing the operations generically is usually sufficient (i.e., "30 field offices process applications"); and

- If the items listed in Column 2 tend to reflect procedural steps for performing a function or task, then too much detail is captured. Process steps are best listed in the Supplement Worksheet to Worksheet 1 for Process Details.

The adoption of a procedure for *prioritizing functions*, either to establish those that are to be deemed essential or to establish a "pecking order" among those that are essential, should be considered carefully. This issue is sufficiently treacherous that a discussion paper is available to explore it in depth. In a nutshell, a rank-ordering priority method should be avoided unless monitored very carefully during the continuity planning process, a classification method should be employed instead.

One key objective for introducing Worksheet 3 in this workshop is to encourage participants to recognize the difference between those functions that are primary and those that are supporting. Facilitators must anticipate the confusion that arises between divisions that provide goods and/or services directly to the public in contrast with supporting operations, such as communications, computer systems, payroll, contracts, and financial operations. Without question, many of these latter functional areas will prove to be "essential" and require quick resumption if they are disrupted. But what are their RTOs? This question raises the "functional dependency" or "functional inter-dependency" situation.

The approach recommended is to expect POCs for support operations to participate less in Workshop II and more in Workshop III. For some organizations, they may not need to attend Workshop II at all because the measure of "time-criticality" (if at all) cannot be determined until

those divisions that serve the public have established their RTOs. For example, the need for computing systems cannot be identified until those staff responsible for essential functions can identify how long they can operate without those systems. This analysis provides the base for determining the maximum acceptable downtime for a particular computer system(s), business software application(s), database(s), and/or network(s). Similar analysis applies to the communication system(s), contract(s), accounting system(s) and process(es), and vendor services.

As functions are identified as essential and vulnerable, facilitators can anticipate that a dialogue must be established with those responsible for supporting functions to establish which (is any) of their functions are essential (via dependencies) and what are the appropriate RTOs.

In Workshops II and III, supporting functions will be identified and annotated on Worksheet 3 in the column for agency services provided (the right-most column that also identifies vendors). A second role of Worksheet 3 in this Workshop is to provide the participants with a context for exploring the question of operations vulnerability.

The question of how best to capture the *vulnerability of a function* arises frequently, and unfortunately there are no simple answers. Whereas some organizations are very comfortable with statistical analysis and prefer to estimate "expected harm", "maximum likely harm", and similar measures that reflect a probabilistic approach to risk, this methodology does not take that approach.

The vulnerability assessment guidance in this material reflects the following observations:

- There are many possible causes of disruptions to an agency's operations, and the list of causes is growing as business environments become more sophisticated;

- The ability of hazards to affect particular operations is highly context-specific: an agency operating in a flood plain will be more vulnerable to a dam breach upstream than an agency operating out of the flood plain;

- Multiple hazards can have the same basic effect on operations, such as extended lack of access to an office complex;

- A continuity plan cannot be designed, built, and maintained to address each and every potential cause of operational disruption – the plan must focus on resumption processes and procedures for a few basic disruption scenarios;

- Canvassing the operating environment for each essential function and its time-critical supporting activities will reveal the basic sources of risk, as translated into disruption scenarios that can provide a vulnerability assessment.

The simplest approach to vulnerability analysis is to build continuity plans that address a few basic disruption scenarios, such as loss access to key facilities, communications systems, computer systems, or vendors. In this approach, the cause of a particular risk is ignored. To guide this analysis, an Outage Scenario Matrix can provide an overview of how seriously each essential function is affected by each of several basic types of disruptions.

When the planning team begins to address operating risks or vulnerabilities, the facilitator must anticipate that a major junction lies immediately ahead in terms of how to proceed. If no operations (and workshop participants) have contemplated disruptions from previous disasters, then everyone can benefit from an examination of vulnerabilities. It may be addressed via a formal and systematic review of specific causes of disruptions or via the much simpler approach previously suggested of considering a few basic scenarios. If some operations have addressed these issues before, and they have established processes and procedures for resuming their operations, then the resumption strategies section of their continuity plan is already complete. They may be excused from participating in the next workshop (which will identify resumption strategies), and can re-join the planning process as their existing continuity plans are integrated or linked into the newly created plans for the others.

The last potential pitfall is how to pace and coordinate work to be completed for Workshop II with that to be initiated in Workshop III. A key issue is how much guidance to provide participants in Workshop II about the use of the detailed worksheets to be introduced in Workshop III. As the presentation for Workshop II is being prepared, the facilitator should carefully read the notes for Workshop III to decide the best approach to this issue.

**CONCLUSION**

Capturing the time-critical functionality of an organization can be a challenge. Identifying too many functions as time-critical and essential can create exceptional workloads and burden on the planning process. For a given function with some time-critical tasks, including all tasks for that function also creates unnecessary burden. Additionally, resolving the time-critical nature of support functions that have no or little direct interface with the public requires carefully orchestrated meetings and dialogue.

The outcome, however, if performed well, is a clear recognition and agreement on those operations that will cause substantial harm to the public if they are disrupted. If provisions are already in place to minimize their disruption, then these plans will be noted for subsequent inclusion in a master agency continuity plan. If alternatives are not apparent, or not fully investigated, then the functions are flagged as "vulnerable" and are candidates for work in Workshop III to identify appropriate resumption strategies.

**WORKSHOP III – RESUMPTION STRATEGIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

Workshop III targets the operational areas that reflect the greatest vulnerabilities and require formulation of provisions to expedite resumption should disruptions occur. In this workshop, a detailed knowledge of how an organization's essential functions are performed provides the basis for identifying emergency resumption strategies. Thus, this workshop requires drilling down into the organization's operations, but only for those (usually few) functions with high levels of vulnerability.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The tasks in this workshop emphasize analysis and understanding of the operational requirements for functions that are deemed to be essential. By definition, a disruption to operations occurs when one or more key resources are not available when, where, and how they are normally expected. The thrust of continuity planning is to examine how these disruptions might occur, and to identify the minimum level of alternative resources that will be acceptable, under emergency conditions, to resume the critical operations.

The identification of good resumption strategies invariably involves creativity: the POCs and other staff who are familiar with a particular essential function must integrate many pieces of information to formulate effective solutions. These issues are discussed in the workshop presentation, so little need be said here. The facilitator must anticipate the criteria for evaluating proposed strategies, however, and plan the workshop and follow-up work to encourage cooperation, collaboration, and convergence on a consensus.

Typical criteria for evaluating proposed strategies include:

- Has the essential function been described to identify the minimum level of acceptable performance under emergency conditions:

    o If multiple tasks and activities are identified that support the function, have all those tasks that are not essential (e.g., do not add significant value and are not time-critical) been eliminated?

    o Of all those who benefit from the function, can some categories or classes of recipients be eliminated from the essential need category, to reduce the scale of operation must be resumed?

    o For those who must be served, can the standards of performance for service delivery be relaxed to ease the requirements?

- Is the resumption strategy operationally feasible, will it work?

- Is the resumption strategy properly balanced regarding the need, and if it is overly aggressive, can it be structured differently so that it isn't an over-reaction, at least for some disruption circumstances?

When operations staff are searching for good resumption strategies, it should be helpful, as the workshop slides suggest, to consider one of four basic alternative approaches:

1. Employ a similar operation, assumed not to be disrupted, to take over the essential function (e.g., one field office can back up another, or a large field office might back up a headquarters operation);

2. Establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or similar arrangement with a peer operation, such as a comparable operation in another government or even private contractor , to transfer the operation;

3. Develop a plan to re-construct the operation on an alternative site, such as a third party vendor for resumption services;

4. Build into an operation some redundancy, such as use of multiple communications systems, so that loss of one system is not fatal.

Depending on how elaborate the vulnerability assessment is, and how detailed the examination of the risk environment, the facilitators may need to encourage participants to consider multi-stage and/or alternative resumption strategies for the same function. The presentation materials, for example, encourage consideration of two different disruptions of facilities: one that is local to the subject facility only and nearby comparable facilities are presumed to be available for resumption sites; and a disruption that is wide-spread, necessitating a resumption site that is more distant.

A similar line of analysis applies to the time scale: if the disruption is expected to be reasonably brief (i.e., 24-96 hours) different strategies may be appropriate than for the case when a disruption will last for weeks or months.

In general, the facilitator should remember that resumption of physical processes is usually much easier than the resumption of data processing activities. To over-simplify the argument, the frequency and complexity of challenges to resumption activities for a public safety office with physical mobility (foot, bike, motorcycle, alternate car, taxi) when compared to those resumption activities associated with highly-technical systems like communications (cell phone, radio, pager) can be tremendous.

The identification of acceptable resumption strategies for each essential function is one goal. Unfortunately, sometimes no acceptable strategies, or readily implementable strategies, can be

identified for some functions: they continue to be vulnerable to disruptions at the conclusion of Workshop III. A second goal of this workshop is to flag vulnerabilities to operations that require more analysis at a later time.

In some continuity planning programs, the more detailed analysis of resumption strategies involves a study called a *business impact analysis* or *assessment*, otherwise referred to as a BIA. This type of study seeks to quantify the amount of harm when a function is disrupted in order to establish a more justifiable hurdle or investment level for resumption strategies. A brief discussion paper on this topic is presented on the County's digital support site.

The facilitator should also expect that the results of the workshop and its subsequent work by operations staff ultimately will be reviewed and examined by senior executives to assure that they are comfortable with the resumption strategies. Their signoff on both proposed resumption plans and identification of remaining vulnerabilities concludes this stage of the planning process. As part of the signoff process, they may be required to authorize subsequent work (in Workshop IV) to begin the activities to build or construct the resumption strategies.

The ultimate outcome of this workshop should be an overall concept for how organization's divisions will respond both individually and collectively, to resume operations following several different types of disruptions. As the workshop presentation materials suggest, this conclusion can be assembled in terms of a Resumption Strategies Matrix that captures, in a few succinct words, the response plans for each function, for each type of disruption. This matrix becomes the foundation for what is called a "concept of operations."

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND**
As the discussion of the goals and objectives should have made clear, the focus of this workshop's activities is a detailed examination of essential functions or operations to identify how they may be resumed under a variety of alternative disruption scenarios. In addition to division POCs, technical specialists and others who are intimately familiar with the business activities may be helpful in discussing workarounds and alternative operations. To avoid wasted hours of labor, many of these specialists may be consulted "off-line" and need not attend the workshop, but their continued input will be helpful and expected.

As was discussed in the conclusion of "Hazards and Pitfalls" for Workshop II, the POCs for those operations that already have continuity plans may skip this workshop.

This workshop will engage representatives for support functions heavily: those who provide the computing systems, communications systems, networks, databases, facilities, and cash flows (payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable) will probably be needed. For some operations, representatives of vendors that provide critical support services may also participate.

**ROLE OF WORKSHEETS FOR WORKSHOP III**

This stage of the continuity planning process provides numerous worksheets that are described and discussed during the workshop presentation. These worksheets provide a structure for analyzing the operations of essential functions, but how they are applied may require some discretion, and guidance from the facilitators may be needed. As the presentation slides point out, development of resumption strategies may take a top down or holistic approach, and many of the detailed worksheets may not be helpful.

To address all of these issues, the facilitator should consider the following observations:

1.  Worksheet 3, introduced in Workshop II, is intended to capture, at a relatively high level, the key resources or types of resources employed by a function to facilitate discussion among the team about "here's how we do it";

2.  The subsequent resource-focused worksheets, beginning with Worksheet #7, address such resources as communications capabilities and requirements, staff needs, facilities, databases and records, computing systems, and other specialized equipment, vendors, and intra-or inter-agency services. Participants are encouraged to think about:

    a.  What alternatives might be available in the event that the usual resources are not available, and

    b.  What are the minimal amounts of these resources that are needed under emergency operating conditions;

3.  If the participants anticipate that the best resumption strategy will involve re-constructing the process at an alternative site or building in redundancy (options 3 and 4 in the basic alternatives listed above), then diligence in completing these worksheets will be very helpful: omission of a single key resource in the continuity plan could result in operational failure.

4.  If the participants anticipate some variation on transferring the operations to another comparable operating site (Alternatives #1 or #2 detailed above), then they should focus on drafting a performance specifications statement, must like a request for proposal (RFP), for the staff at the proposed alternative facility to consider. No worksheets are provided for this approach.

5.  For some operations, where substantial documentation already exists, references to that documentation may be more appropriate than copying or duplicating the information in the worksheets. The objective is not making work or creating forms. Rather, the objective is to document in a concise manner the minimum resource requirements needed to perform tasks and activities associated with essential functions.

The Plan Template and Guidance document provides a suggested process for incorporating worksheets directly into a draft of the continuity plan.

**HAZARDS AND PITFALLS**

Numerous opportunities exist at this stage of continuity planning to encounter problems. The first and foremost difficulty arises if the tasks from Workshop II were not completed successfully. If a POC does not have a firm understanding of which functions are essential, and the definition of "essential" does not eliminate all functions that are not actually essential, then the detailed operational workload of this workshop becomes overwhelming.

With this concern in mind, the first few slides in Workshop III provide an opportunity to review the Workshop II process. If these slides are presented as part of a continuity curriculum on a sequential day, then the review is not necessary.

A second pitfall is grasping the goals and objectives of this workshop. They call for a thorough understanding of the essential functions under consideration. Few government agencies receive so much resource support that they have the freedom to literally duplicate their operations. Preparing for circumstances that may never happen – or seldom occur – calls for keen judgement about what will be minimally acceptable performance under exceptional, emergency circumstances.

Additionally, many times when staff deliberately consider alternative means to resume operations they may identify a better means for performing the operations on a daily basis. Decisions will need to be made between implementing options that are quick and easy for the now versus those which would be more effective, but are better implemented in the future.

Resolving differences between direct customer-interfacing essential functions and supporting functions can be challenging. The temptation for all of the POCs representing customer based functions gang-up on the support operations is often strong, especially if they will not be required to pay for the enhanced operations resumption capability.

Another potential stumbling block can occur in this workshop if communication among POCs is poor. Each division's POC(s) will become immersed in identifying resumption strategies for their essential functions with several alternative disruptions. If collaboration among POCs is missing then two types of can occur:

1. Two of more divisions decide independently to rely on the same facility as their alternative site, when the alternative cannot accommodate both or all of them;

2. Two or more divisions may find that by pooling their needs for resumption options, they can identify better solutions than if they plan independently.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Having examined all the essential functions carefully, and after considering the sources of vulnerability, the planning team should come up with an overall concept of operations that identifies effective and practical resumption strategies for a variety of possible disruptions. Some of these strategies may not be implemented easily or quickly, and the associated functions will remain at risk. In some cases, less than satisfactory solutions may be all that is available.

**WORKSHOP IV – COMMAND & CONTROL AND CONSTRUCTING THE COOP/COG PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION**
Workshop IV requires participation by senior management and executive levels of the organization to develop the command and control structure needed to direct the activation of a continuity plan. This work requires an examination of current provisions in place for managing crisis and responding to emergencies, and an analysis of how to integrate the command of continuity plan. The focus of this workshop is therefore on continuity plan organization.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
The activation of a continuity plan indicates that normal management capabilities have been overwhelmed and that extraordinary measures must be taken to assure minimum disruption to key operations.

The primary goals of Workshop IV are as follows:

- Establish an "ownership" structure that assures effective execution of a continuity plan and integrates its activities with the senior executive level's responsibility for emergency response activities and – more generally – managing a crisis;

- Develop very explicit procedural steps for assessing a given crisis situation to determine if activation of a continuity plan, as appropriate;

- Develop the actions necessary to activate a continuity plan and transfer command and control authority, as appropriate;

- Within the concept of operations umbrella, develop the action steps necessary to recover key operations and resume their operations under emergency conditions;

- Prepare procedures for assuring that all key executive, as well as critical, staff positions are filled, if the plan is activated;

- Given all the analysis required to accomplish the preceding goals, decide who should responsible for day-to-day maintenance and operation of a continuity plan under normal circumstances; and

- Assemble plan documents, probably in several different "packages", reflecting the different roles and contexts that plan documents play, and the different audiences they must address.

Depending upon the level of completeness of the plan, and its status in terms of formal acceptance by the organization's director or senior executive, the facilitator may wish to purpose the following secondary goals, as well:

- Draft a program of activities for promoting the plan to all of the organization's staff;

- Prepare a training program for those individuals that will assume direct responsibilities for continuity plan activation, maintenance, or exercising;

- Draft a program of training and testing exercises;

- Establish a project plan for completing the development of key resumption strategies; and

- Draft a schedule and/or procedures for maintaining the plan.

The technical assistance materials presume that most the work that was conducted during Workshop IV focus on the primary goals, while accepting that these secondary goals are "beyond each" for most planning projects. They may occur later, after a plan has formally accepted and support resources are assigned and allocated.

**ROLE OF WORKSHEETS IN WORKSHOP IV**

The worksheets provided for Workshop IV are relatively few in number, but facilitators must realize that, as Workshop IV progresses, the number and variety of documents associated with the plan can literally explode in number and size. Two of the worksheets, for Lines of Succession and Delegation of Authority, are relatively straightforward. The first identifies the succession plan for assuring that key executive and/or staff positions are filled, should the primary holder of the position not be available when the continuity plan is activated, to reduce delays in deciding matters and initiating time-critical actions.

The document volume arises from the many actions that may be necessary to recover key operations in alternative venues, and/or proscribing how the processes will be performed differently under an activated plan. Business rules that apply during normal circumstances may be set aside during an emergency, in order to expedite services.

Many of these supporting documents may exist already and are owned/maintained by the appropriate branches and sections. Thus, facilitators must anticipate that Workshop IV will also call for the design of a configuration management plan – rules for recognizing that some documents or components of a continuity plan are not "owned" by the plan itself. Rather, the

plan retains copies of the documents, or may simply include references to the documents which are maintained elsewhere in the organization.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Workshop IV tasks anticipate the necessary participation by senior executives in the organization. This participation extends beyond the executive who has "owned" the project and includes all executives that are likely to serve on a crisis management team that would "own" the continuity plan, if it is activated. This statement does not suggest that all senior executives must personally attend the workshop session. Instead, they must be briefed on the issues to be resolved – probably with proposed solutions in hand – so that their engagement and input is achieved during the Workshop IV phase of the project.

The POCs who have participated all along should be involved in drafting theplan activation procedures and to pursue the development of the action sequences necessary to recover their own essential functions. At this stage, they may begin identifying the individuals in their divisions that will be expected to become members of the continuity plan team as the plan becomes operational. These members should be briefed on the nature of the project and their expected roles.

If the project has been guided thus far by individuals that will not assume long-term responsibility for its completion and day-to-day support, then the future "owners" of the plan should begin participating, as well. In short, this may be an appropriate time for a transfer of facilitator responsibilities.

## HAZARDS AND PITFALLS

With the identification of resumption strategies, *the plan acquires a momentum of its own* that encourages its adoption as a key tool for management. Thus a challenge to the facilitators during Workshop IV is *positioning the project* to achieve quality deliberation about how the plan will be supported going forward, and identify who will "own" it in the future.

The *construction of a decision process* for deciding whether a plan should activated is not an easy task. In a nutshell, when a crisis occurs, those familiar with the plan must lead in assessing what is known about the ability of essential functions to continue operations. This decision draws on Worksheet 3 and other resource worksheets (e.g., what resources have been damaged, how badly, how quickly they can be replaced). The decision is easy if the disruption is a major catastrophic event, but many disruptions deign as little, unnoticed events.

In many agencies that hold responsibilities as first responders, protocols for managing public disasters that potentially involve multiple first responder organizations have been developed and

adopted. One component of these protocols is the *incident command system* or ICS. When an agency is examining its continuity plan for addressing internal disruptions, it must anticipate that any first responders on the scene will be following ICS procedures. The agency must address how much or how little of public emergency management protocols are appropriate for guiding the command and control structure it puts in place for its internal disruptions.

The development of action steps of resuming essential functions and their associated critical tasks is an exceptionally tedious and mentally challenging task. It is tedious because overlooking operational details can produce a plan that is doomed to failure, at least on the first few test. It is mentally challenging because the planners must remain focused on the specified disruption scenarios (wandering into "what-if" territory can lead to analysis paralysis). Both of these conditions are made all the more challenging because individuals who are intimately familiar with the operations but not heavily engaged in the planning process must take time out of their very busy schedules to contemplate conditions that most view as highly unlikely to occur.

While creating, or adopting, *lines of succession* is relatively straightforward in most government agencies because it has been previously anticipated, delegation authority is another matter entirely. Any delegation implies that someone will be giving up powers they normally have to assure the integrity and effectiveness of an agency during an emergency. Identifying where these responsibilities should be assigned, or eliminated, during an emergency is not an easy task.

A key section of the plan is called the *concept of operations*. This term may be new to many of the participants. The concept of operations describes, in very succinct and concise language, the core concepts that a continuity plan addresses:

- The disruption risks that are anticipated;

- The functions that must be resumed quickly;

- The planned organization structure of continuity teams (both at the executive and operational level); and

- The basic nature of the action plans

For brevity, and sometimes for security reasons, details and specifics may be omitted, but the reader of this component of the plan should be able to quickly gain an understanding of what the overall plan does and how the agency will respond, if disruptions occur. As mentioned under the goals and objectives section, a plan for *managing all the documents* must be anticipated. Planning teams will need to devise a system for tracking all planning documents via approved County storage platforms.

**CONCLUSION**

The planning process is not complete at the end of Workshop IV. Rather, the organization has been launched into the adoption of a very special planning process. Few, if any, plans address all vulnerabilities adequately after the first planning cycle. Some divisions or branches may have refused to participate and their vulnerabilities are yet unknown. The level of completion, or thoroughness, for some division plans may be highly detailed, while others remain sketchy. Some resumption strategies may not be operationally feasible – a condition that may not be revealed until it is tested or exercised.

For some facilitators, the next tasks in the evolution of continuity planning will be someone else's responsibility, and a hand-off is anticipated.

Others will begin to focus on building resumption strategies, translating design or intent into actionable conditions (e.g., contracts for stand-by services, pre-positioning of material, adopting new processes for backing up work in progress, etc.)Yet others may be prepared to begin the process of educating the staff about the capabilities in place, planning training for senior executives and division team members, and laying the groundwork for tests and exercises.