WashU Continuity

2020 GUIDE TO CONTINUITY PLANNING

The aim of WashU Continuity is to increase the university's resilience in the face of disruptive events. Resilience means being able to continue performing the university's mission of teaching, research, public service and patient care during any disruptive event – and to return to normal performance as quickly as possible. Continuity plans contain information and strategies that would be needed during a recovery process, as well as recommendations for advance preparations.

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INTRODUCTION

Disruptions of all types and severity occur on campus and can have a devastating impact on you, your work, and your colleagues. Consider the following situations:

- A fire breaks out in your area or an adjacent area, forcing you to evacuate the building…
- A sprinkler head malfunctions and floods your area…
- A blizzard paralyzes St. Louis region closing all roads for three days…
- A pandemic has sickened 50% of your staff…

How would you recover from these events? What can you do to reduce the risk a major disruption in your area or the loss of valuable work? What can you do to preserve equipment, specimens, samples and vital records?

Knowing what to do and having a plan will help limit disruptions and reduce unacceptable losses in your operations.

A continuity plan is a collection of resources, actions, procedures and information that is developed for use in the event of a major disruption of operations. This planning helps prepare WashU departments and organizations to maintain essential functions after a disaster or other major disruption. In the event of a major disaster or other disruption, having a continuity plan will minimize the impact and help you return to normal operations as quickly as possible.

A continuity plan is different from an emergency action plan. An emergency action plan tells you what to do immediately before or during an emergency, like what to do if you see a fire, or what to do during a blizzard. A continuity plan helps you minimize the impact on our operations regardless of the event and helps you return to normal operations as soon as possible.

GETTING STARTED

Developing a continuity plan may seem like an overwhelming task, but in reality you probably already have much of the required information and process. This guide will help you walk through the planning process in a logical order.

- Develop a planning team to help bring all the pieces together. Consider including your director or manager, lead administrator, information technology (IT) specialist and other essential staff.
- Schedule a meeting with the planning team and WashU emergency management continuity planning program manager. During this introductory meeting the program manager for continuity planning will provide an overview of continuity planning walk through this guide and the process to developing a continuity plan.
- Review existing plans such as your department or building's Emergency Plan. They may provide helpful information for developing your continuity plan.

DETERMINING ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND PROCESSES

Essential functions are those services, programs or activities that are necessary to the ongoing operations and would directly affect the success of the department if they were to stop for an extended period. Stopping them for an extended period of time would cause harm to your department and the university. Essential functions will serve as the guide for how to restart operations following a disaster or major disruption. They help answer the question "What is the minimum level of service or activity my department must offer to still consider us to be in business?"

CRITICALITY ANALYSIS

Knowing the priorities of your functions will help you establish a continuity plan that focuses on the functions that are the most important. Below is general guidance to help you prioritize your functions. Completing the criticality analysis will also help determine the priority for each function.

Priority for Recovery

Priority for Recovery Level	Importance
Critical	Function directly impacts the life, health, safety or security and stopping would have significant consequences
High	Functions must continue at normal or increased level. Pausing for more than 24 hours may cause significant consequences or serious harm to operations.
Medium	Function must be continued if at all possible, perhaps in reduced mode. Stopping for more than one week may cause major disruption to operations.
Low	Function could be suspended for one month without causing significant disruption to operations.

CRITICAL IT APPLICATIONS

WashU has a very robust and complex information technology system. It consists of IT services, applications, databases, servers, internet, etc. For the purpose of continuity planning it is important to identify what IT application and services your essential function depend on.

VITAL RECORDS

The identification, protection and readily availability of vital records, databases and hardcopy documents needed to support the essential function under the full spectrum of all-hazards emergencies are critical elements of a successful continuity plan and program. Identify any vital records you may have in your area and how they are safeguarded.

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Next you will want to determine what essential resources you need for each function. *For example, if you need tables and chairs to continue the essential functions then select the resource category and office supplies and furniture.*

This information is vital if in the need to relocate to an alternate location identified in your plan. You will have already determined what resources you must have in order to resume the function. Knowing this information will make procuring or acquiring the resources much easier.

REQUIRED VENDORS

Supply chain management for disruptions is a key part of continuity planning. As an important step in continuity planning process, identifying if the essential function depends on a vendor is key. Identify any vendors that have a direct impact your supply chain management for your operations. *For example, if your department depends on a vendor to provide staff or a resource that is delivered every day to your office then identify them as a vendor.*

PRIMARY AND ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

When creating your continuity plan it is important to identify required buildings and any alternate locations you may relocate to following a disruption. An important consideration in determining alternate locations is the capabilities at the new location. For example, if you need to relocate your office you wouldn't want to identify a free weights room at the recreation center. Also things to consider in determining an alternate location is the owner of the location, is it WashU IT/Voice supported, does it have any emergency/backup power capabilities and most importantly is it big enough.

LINES OF SUCCESSION AND ESSENTIAL POSITIONS

Identifying those individuals that have a critical role in running the department or performing the essential functions should be documented. The two most common types of essential rosters in continuity planning are Lines of Succession and Essential Position rosters.

- Lines of Succession
  - Identify who would be in charge if the current administrator is unable to fulfill essential duties.
- Essential Positions
  - Identify any positions that are critical to the essential functions or the recovery operations of the essential functions.

In addition to creating essential rosters, you may develop teams that will be responsible for specific activities in a continuity event. For example, a leadership team may assemble within so many minutes following a disruption to determine the next steps.

DEVELOPING RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND PROCEDURES

The next step is to outline the actions to take after a disaster or major disruption to maintain or restore each function. This will involve developing recovery strategies and procedures. Recovery strategies serve as checklists that guide your recovery actions and are organized by required resources (people, places and things). Recovery strategies can help answer the basic question, "What if?"

Emergency Management has identified seven likely scenarios that recovery strategies should be developed for.

Those scenarios identified in the plan to consider are:

- Operate with reduced staff
- Loss of facility
- Loss of IT applications and services
- Loss of power
- Loss of water
- Loss of vendor
- Loss of resources

When creating your recovery strategies and procedure be sure to include enough details to make them useful. If they are too vague they won't be helpful.

SUMMARY

Continuity planning may seem overwhelming in the beginning. Most individuals immediately default to thinking about catastrophic operations and how they could continue operations. Thinking this way will only create confusion and frustration because it is hard to plan for continuity operations during a total loss of infrastructure and services for the entire university. WashU Continuity program instead tries to focus attention on those disruptions that could be faced on a daily basis, but could be extended to 3-5 days in length. Washington University Emergency Management will guide the planning team through the process and provide guidance and incite every step of the way. You will never be left "alone" to develop a plan. Below are the steps to the planning process developed by Emergency Management. Upon conclusion of all five steps the department will have an approved continuity plan.