



## **Hamilton County Continuity of Operations Overview**

This document is meant to provide you with an overview of continuity of operations, describe how Hamilton County Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency (EMHSA) can support you as you complete your Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan, explain how to use the Hamilton County COOP Template and outline the sections of the plan. Additionally, supporting worksheets are also available to provide guidance on how to identify and prioritize your organization's essential functions and conduct a business process analysis.

### **What is Continuity of Operations (COOP)?**

COOP is an effort within an organization to ensure that its essential functions continue to be performed during a wide range of emergencies until normal operations can be resumed. It is a fundamental responsibility of public institutions and private entities responsible to their stakeholders. The goal of continuity of operations is to continue or resume the essential functions within 12 hours of a disruption and maintain those functions for up to 30 days or until normal operations can be resumed.

### **Why is Continuity of Operations Important?**

Today's threat and hazard environment and the potential for no-notice emergencies, including natural hazards, technological hazards, and man-made hazards, have increased the need for robust continuity capabilities and planning across the whole community. Continuity planning not only increases the likelihood that an organization's essential functions continue, but it also supports that critical services continue to be provided and that applicable core capabilities continue to be delivered. An organization's and community's resiliency is directly related to the effectiveness of its continuity capability.

Other benefits of continuity planning include:

- Enables an organization to maintain "business as usual" despite disruptive events.
- Allows an organization to anticipate events and necessary response actions.
- Improves performance through the identification of the organization's essential functions that must be supported in an emergency.
- Improves communication to support essential functions throughout the organization.
- Protects the interests of an organization's customers.
- Protects the organization's staff from job loss.
- Protects the organization's data and information needed to continue operations.

### **Elements of a Viable Continuity Program**

Program Management, Plans, and Procedures: Establishing planning and procedural objectives that guide plan development and maintenance.

Essential Functions: Critical activities that are conducted to accomplish an organization's mission and serve its stakeholders and must be continued throughout or resumed rapidly after a disruption. Identifying and prioritizing the essential functions is the first step to continuity planning because they drive all other components of the organization's continuity planning and preparedness efforts.

Orders of Succession: The formal designation of persons who will fulfill the duties of leadership positions and key personnel positions should the original person/occupant of that position be unable, or unavailable to perform their duties.

Delegations of Authority: Clearly delineate all organization personnel who have the legal authority to make key decisions, make policy determinations and take necessary actions during continuity activation and operations.



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**Continuity Facilities:** An alternate location where essential functions are continued or resumed during a continuity event. The designated alternate work location(s) will preferably be chosen prior to the continuity event. These sites refer to not only other facilities and locations but also work arrangements such as telework and mobile work concepts.

**Continuity Communications:** The identification, availability, reliability, and redundancy of critical communications and information technology systems that are needed to execute the essential functions.

**Essential Records Management:** An agency's vital data required for performing essential functions, which should be maintained on secure systems and backed up on redundant servers.

**Human Resources:** Refers to supporting human resources needs for both continuity personnel and employees who may not be designated to as continuity personnel.

**Test, Training, and Exercise (TT&E) Program:** Training familiarizes leadership and staff with the procedures and tasks to be performed when executing the continuity plan. Testing and exercises assess and evaluate the components of the continuity plan and program to promote improvement. The TT&E program facilitates the validation of an organization's continuity capability and its ability to perform essential functions during an emergency.

**Devolution:** A different organization will perform your organization's essential functions, in the event that your agency cannot be reached, until your organization can reassume its duties.

**Reconstitution Operations:** The process by which the organization's personnel resumes normal operations at the primary operating facility. Reconstitution should start immediately.

### **How can Hamilton County EMHSA help with COOP planning?**

As you move forward with developing or updating your organizations COOP plan, Hamilton County EMHSA can support you in your efforts by answering questions, facilitating your organizations planning meetings, and/or reviewing your plan to provide feedback. A COOP template was also created for your organization to use. This template addresses the elements of a viable continuity program. Please contact Morgan Peterson at [morgan.peterson@hamilton-co.org](mailto:morgan.peterson@hamilton-co.org) or 513-263-8102 for assistance.

### **How to use the template?**

The COOP Template provides you with formatting, language and an existing framework. The template was designed to include best practices and concepts outlined in national guidance. The template was built to streamline the planning process and highlight key components of continuity of operations that need to be addressed at the local level. While main language is present, the plan is meant to be a guide for the local planning team to use throughout the process of plan development. *The most important part of planning is the discussions and relationships that come out of the process.* The template should be used to outline the organization's continuity program, identify your organization's essential functions, designate leadership and other key positions, and determine needed resources including communications, vital records, alternate facilities, and equipment.

### **SECTIONS OF THE COOP TEMPLATE:**

#### **Introductory elements:**

- **Executive Summary:** Frames the COOP plan by explaining the agency's mission, how the mission relates to continuity, and the role of the plan.
- **Introduction:** Sets up the document by explaining what COOP is and the need for continuity of operations.
- **Purpose:** Explains the goal of continuity of operations and what the plan seeks to do.



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- **Situation:** Gives the plan context by identifying when the plan is implemented, who the plan applies to and how the plan relates to other plans that may already be established.
- **Assumptions:** Lists the assumptions the planning team had to consider in order to make this plan possible.

**Essential Functions:** This section identifies and priorities your organization's mission essential functions. Please see Worksheet #1 for tips on how to identify your organization's essential functions.

**Authorities & References:** Lists the authorities and references that are applicable to the plan. While overarching continuity of operations authorities and references will remain the same, applicable authorities that give your organization the authority to operate will need to be included.

**Concept of Operations:** Outlines the organization's continuity capability and illustrates how the overall response and recovery will look. The Concept of Operations Section is broken down into the three phases of Phase I – Activation, Phase II – Continuity Operations and Phase III – Reconstruction. Within these phases, various continuity elements are addressed such as the alternate facilities; critical systems and resources; orders of succession; delegations of authority; vital files, records and data bases; continuity communications and devolution. For more guidance on how to identify the required resources and capabilities to execute your essential functions, please see Worksheet #2 which outlines the business process analysis.

**Human Resources:** Identifies the different actions the organization will take to support all personnel during a continuity event.

**Roles & Responsibilities:** Outlines the tasks of individuals who have a part in continuity operations.

**Plan Maintenance:** Explains how the plan will be reviewed and updated and who is responsible for ensuring these activities are done.

**Test, Training, & Exercises:** Describes how the plan will be tested, trained, and exercised.

**Attachment #1: Glossary & Acronyms:** Defines terms used within the plan and lists abbreviations.

**Attachment #2: Threat and Hazards Listing:** Lists the threats and hazards Hamilton County is susceptible to. These threats and hazards may cause the continuity event.

**Attachment #3: Communications Support:** Provides guidance on what information to include when communicating with personnel, county leadership, suppliers and stakeholders. Your organization is encouraged to develop pre-scripted messages that can be used as templates for all groups. Creating templates helps your organization get the needed information out quickly in a clear concise manner. Getting this information out quickly is especially important when providing direction to employees.

**Attachment #4: Alternate Site Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding:** If you have a written agreement with your alternate site that explains the conditions in which the site may be used, please add the agreement here.

**Attachment #5: <ORGANIZATION'S NAME> Organizational Chart:** Attach your organizational chart to supplement showing lines of succession order.