

Lesson Overview

After the COOP plan has been prepared and procedures have been developed, you should establish a program to maintain the agency's COOP capability.

This lesson will present an overview of the tasks that you should undertake to maintain COOP readiness.

- Training key personnel
 - Conducting periodic COOP exercises
 - Institution of a multiyear process to ensure the plan continues to be updated as necessary
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Training

After the COOP plan is developed, all personnel who will be involved in COOP activities should be trained and equipped to perform their emergency duties.

Consideration should be given to cross-training team members. Cross training will ensure that the team is prepared to deal with the unusual demands that may arise when essential functions must be continued with a reduced staff.

COOP Training Plans

Effective COOP training plans will provide for:

- Individual and team training to ensure currency of knowledge and integration of skills necessary to carry out essential functions.
 - Refresher training for the ERG as it arrives at the alternate facility.
 - Training courses and materials designed to improve knowledge and skills related to carrying out COOP responsibilities.
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Exercises

COOP plan maintenance should include a plan of progressive exercises. Exercises should test and improve COOP:

- Plans and procedures.
- Systems.
- Equipment.

Special consideration should be given to new agency personnel—especially those on the ERG—to ensure that they are able to perform their assigned tasks under simulated COOP conditions.

Developing an Exercise Plan

An effective exercise plan should include a variety of hazards and exercise types—tabletops, drills, functional, and full-scale. Full-scale exercises should simulate actual emergency conditions. Exercises should include the phase-down of alternate facility operations and return to normal operations.

A comprehensive debriefing and after-action report should be completed following each exercise. Lessons learned should be incorporated into revisions to the COOP plan, training plan, and exercise plan.

What to Exercise

Exercises should include the full spectrum of COOP operations:

- Alert, notification, and activation
- Relocation to the alternate facility
- Operations
- Logistical support, services, and infrastructure at the alternate facility
- Devolution
- Reconstitution

Exercises should also include the interface between the COOP plan and the agency's OEP.

Developing a Multiyear Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP)

To ensure that COOP plans always reflect current conditions, they should be reviewed as part of the training and exercise program. Changes to the agency's structure, essential functions, or mission should be made to the plan as they occur.

Long-term plan maintenance should be undertaken carefully, planned for in advance, and completed according to an established schedule.

Issues Involved in COOP Plan Maintenance

Major issues to be considered in COOP plan maintenance include:

- Designation of a review team.
 - Identification of issues that will impact the frequency of changes required to the COOP plan.
 - Establishment of a review cycle.
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Designation of a Review Team

Plan maintenance should be undertaken formally by a team designated to oversee plan review and revision. Personnel should be selected for the review team for the same reasons as for the original planning team:

- Their knowledge of overall agency operations
- Their expertise in specific essential functions
- Their expertise in specific advisory areas (e.g., legal, HR)

The review team should meet after each exercise and on a regular basis throughout the year. Each meeting should be structured to review specific aspects of the plan and should include action items for review and revision as necessary.

Identifying Issues that Affect the COOP Plan

Most major issues affecting the COOP plan will result from lessons learned from exercises. Other sources of information for identifying major issues could come from:

- Presidential Directive, and State and local ordinances or directives, as appropriate.
- Direction from agency leadership.
- Policy or mission changes.
- Changes in technology or office systems.
- Changing customer needs.

Develop a strategy for methodically reviewing and identifying issues that could affect COOP planning or operations. Involve agency management, as necessary, for resolution of issues.

Establishing a Review Cycle

COOP plans, policies, and procedures should be reviewed at least annually. Additional reviews should be undertaken following each exercise and the testing of major systems. Issues raised in training may also trigger plan review.

Components of a Multiyear Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP)

A comprehensive strategy for plan maintenance includes:

- A reference to the general COOP planning requirements.
- A description of the elements that ensure a viable COOP capability.
- Identification of the resources required to establish each element.
- Discussion of organization-specific management and policy issues (e.g., resource requirements, internal policies).
- A schedule for establishing COOP capability and plan approval.
- An endorsement sheet signed by the agency leader.
- The budget required to accomplish the strategy.

Developing the COOP Maintenance Budget

Develop the COOP budget according to agency policies and procedures. When developing the budget, be sure to consider costs related to:

- Planning team time (if required by agency policy).
- Plan and procedure development.
- Alternate facility.
- Interoperable communications.
- TT&E.
- Logistics and administration.
- Security.
- MOUs/MOAs.

You may need to include other costs in your budget as well.

Distributing the COOP Plan

Initial distribution of the COOP plan is usually accomplished in one of two ways:

- Personnel may be provided a hardcopy of the plan.
- The plan may be distributed via the agency's intranet.

Because tracking changes to a hardcopy plan may be difficult or impossible, it is preferable to distribute the plan via the agency's intranet. If the intranet is used, be sure to alert agency personnel via email or other notification method when revisions are posted to the plan.
