Energy, Sustainability, and Infrastructure

Protecting and Managing Your Organization Through Disruption

Continuity of operations planning and best practices can help public sector agencies weather the pandemic storm

A new approach to disruption
Major disruption to operations (whether from natural disasters, violent events, cybersecurity incidents, or public health emergencies) causes upheaval in organizations. Today, organizations must rethink how they perform critical functions; engage with customers, citizens, and stakeholders; protect their workforces; and protect their assets. Guidehouse has supported numerous clients through continuity of operations planning (COOP), helping them prepare for, respond to, and recover from major disruptions. Such disruptions include floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, the September 11 attacks, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the 2008 financial crisis, and now COVID-19.

Key challenges for the public sector
Disruptions like the coronavirus outbreak find many leaders without a playbook, or with preparedness plans that fall short, are outdated, or are not encompassing of the disruptions that could occur or are occurring.

How Guidehouse can help
Guidehouse's approach to COOP follows best practices preparedness and response standards promulgated by the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). We tailor our approach based on our deep knowledge of public sector agencies, requirements, and operations. Because clients are in various stages of maturity with their continuity plans and infrastructure, we help them strengthen the most critical aspects of their planning shortfalls. Guidehouse delivers proven risk management methodologies and best practices to enhance preparedness and organizational resilience.

Guidehouse's COOP framework includes the following steps:
• Identify and validate the most essential functions an organization must conduct to protect its employees, assets, customers, and reputation for maximum resiliency during and after the disruption.
• Identify how to continue operation of critical infrastructure, including helping organizations understand the upstream and downstream dependencies required to operate.
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- Conduct a business impact analysis to assess how vulnerable the essential functions and critical infrastructure are to the hazards and impact of disruption.
- Identify the timeframes for unacceptable loss of functions and critical assets.
- Prepare strategies to protect critical assets, including facilities, personnel, information technology, and vital records.
- Make risk-informed decisions using scenarios and forward planning.
- Ensure critical infrastructure is available to minimize disruption to employees and customers.
- Identify governance through massive disruption to ensure proper decision-making and control.
- Communicate with stakeholders (employees, customers, investors, local authorities, and regulators) with appropriate messaging in terms of content, timing, and channel.
- Assess and update (if applicable) the current practices and assets an organization has or must reconsider (e.g., telework policy, system access considerations, contingency plans, financial assets and cashflow, and supply chain disruption).

Guidehouse’s framework has four phases and is supported by tools and templates to quickly operationalize an organization’s preparedness and response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Discovery</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Business Impact Analysis (BIA)</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>COOP Development</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assess governance and communications cadence</td>
<td>• Review existing BIA and identify mission essential functions (MEFs) and the systems, processes, and human assets that support the MEFs</td>
<td>• Develop COOP policies, processes, and procedures with organization leadership</td>
<td>• Roll out policies, processes, communication, and tracking of key performance metrics</td>
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<td>• Identify key performance indicators</td>
<td>• Perform rapid risk assessment on MEFs to identify risks and impacts</td>
<td>• Define COOP components based on industry best practices</td>
<td>• Ensure knowledge transfer and training to the organization</td>
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<td>• Identify stakeholders</td>
<td>• Identify mitigation strategies informed by organization’s risk tolerance and current conditions</td>
<td>• Conduct training and tabletop exercises for key leadership and staff</td>
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<td>• Gather policies, emergency procedures, recovery plans</td>
<td>• Collect critical dependencies such as IT systems, personnel requirements, vital records holdings, facilities, infrastructure</td>
<td>• Outcomes: COOP; updated policy, guidance, templates.</td>
<td>• Outcomes: Operational continuity procedures.</td>
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Outcomes: Rapid understanding of the current state and gaps.
Outcomes: Impacts on employees, customers, systems, assets. Identification of highest impacted activities, risks, and mitigation options.
Outcomes: COOP; updated policy, guidance, templates.
Outcomes: Operational continuity procedures.

Why Guidehouse?
Guidehouse will help you protect your people, citizens, and mission delivery through these trying times. We combine our experience with continuity planning and implementation with a deep knowledge of the public sector’s missions and operations. We are a long-standing consultant to FEMA, helping them evolve their role as a lead agency for the federal government in continuity. Guidehouse also helps FEMA provide guidance to federal, state, and local governments, communities, and businesses in resiliency. We operate side by side with FEMA and state and local governments before, during, and after disasters, helping communities plan for, respond to, and recover from disasters, including pandemics. Guidehouse has also assisted private sector entities, federal entities, and state agencies in the development and implementation of their continuity plans. We also conduct our own continuity plans and simulations to ensure Guidehouse and our people will be safe and productive in the event of emergencies. Contact us today to discuss how we can help your organization prepare for and overcome disruption.