

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE



Florida Division of Emergency Management

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Introduction

Continuity of Operations (COOP) is an effort within an organization to ensure the continued performance of essential functions during a wide range of potential emergencies. This is accomplished through the development of plans and comprehensive procedures that include provisions for alternate facilities, personnel, resources, interoperable communications, and vital records/databases.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management's (FDEM), Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government (COOP/COG) Program is statutorily responsible for developing and distributing guidelines for developing and implementing disaster preparedness plans in accordance with 252.365(3)(c), Florida Statute to ensure that all State of Florida Executive Branch departments, agencies, commissions, water management districts, universities, prisons, and independent organizations can maintain the ability to continue and support their essential functions during an emergency or event.

This COOP Implementation Guidance provides instruction for Executive Agencies to develop and implement disaster preparedness plans from an all-hazards approach based on statutory requirements, best practices and lessons learned. It is intended to be used as a resource by the heads of State of Florida agencies, senior policy officials, designated emergency coordination officers (ECOs), county emergency management directors, emergency management planners, and other interested parties in COOP plan development and maintenance.

Background

Prior to the unprecedented attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001, COOP planning was an individual agency responsibility primarily in response to an emergency within their own organization. The content, structure, and implementation of these plans was left to the discretion of each agency. However, with increased significance on homeland security, it was imperative that the Florida State government guarantee the integrity of constitutional authority through a comprehensive COG program supported by individual agency COOP capabilities.

COOP	COG
Effort within individual organizations to continue essential functions.	Coordinated effort across governments and jurisdictions to continue national, state, local, tribal, and territorial essential functions.
Applies to all organizations within the whole community, including non-governmental organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, and the private sector.	Specific to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government (at all levels).
All events (fire, flood, hurricane, etc.)	Major or catastrophic disasters that could impact the entire nation, state, tribe, or jurisdiction and overwhelm a government's ability to respond unless it is prepared to deal with the situation. Events that threaten the institutional stability of SLTT governments effect the ability to achieve COG.

[FEMA Guide to Continuity of Government for State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Governments.](#)

COOP planning was simply a “good business practice” – part of the fundamental mission of all agencies as responsible and reliable public institutions, until the release of the Executive Order 01-262 on September 11, 2001 which re-enforced the agencies’ requirement to have disaster preparedness plans under Chapter 252.365, Florida Statutes, through their designated Emergency Coordination Officers (ECOs).

The State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) establishes the framework for Florida to be sufficiently prepared to manage all hazards. This plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of the State agencies, special districts, and Federal and local governments before, during, and after an event. However, it does not make any provisions for the interruption, resumption, and reconstitution of critical government services under the following scenarios:

- A State agency is closed to normal business activities as a result of an event (whether or not originating in the State agency office) or credible threats of action that would preclude access or use of the State agency office and the surrounding area.
- The Tallahassee, Florida metropolitan area is closed to normal business activities as a result of a widespread utility failure, natural disaster, public health emergency, significant hazardous material incident, civil disturbance, or terrorist or military attack(s). Under this scenario, there could be uncertainty regarding whether additional events such as secondary explosions, or cascading utility failures could occur, and many State agencies may need to activate their respective COOP plans and relocate to alternate operating sites.

Therefore, Governor Bush signed Chapter No. 2002-43: Relating to Disaster Preparedness, into law on April 16, 2002, so that Florida can develop and implement a coordinated statewide program. Through this program, Florida can not only ensure the continued performance of mission essential functions but can assure its place as a leader among the States as an effective body which is capable of serving its residents in the 21st Century.

In 2002, Governor Bush signed an amendment to § 252.365, Florida Statutes, enhancing the requirements for Disaster Recovery Plans. The law requires standardized essential elements, establishes a deadline for plan completion and mandates an assessment and approval process. During 2002, FDEM implemented a programmatic initiative emphasizing the development of COOP plans for state and local governments. This included publishing the 2002 Continuity Implementation Guidance, which this document supersedes.

Since then, state, and local governments have faced numerous emergencies that required them to activate their COOPs. The 2004-2005 hurricane seasons created conditions that required activation of COOPs and valuable lessons were learned that were incorporated into contingency planning. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, jurisdictions and agencies across the State were required to adapt existing continuity strategies to address unique operational requirements, to include resource limitations, employee health, social distancing, and widespread absenteeism. This prompted agencies to revisit essential functions and personnel, with the focus of maintaining critical infrastructure and services, while evaluating telework capabilities. This emergency prompted Governor DeSantis to sign an amendment to § 252.365 in 2021, Florida Statutes, further enhancing the requirements for Disaster Recovery Plans.

Florida's COOP/COG Program

Statutory Requirements

Executive Agencies COOP plan guidelines are put forth in Chapter 252.365, Florida Statutes, which outlines ECO responsibilities. ECOs are ultimately responsible for ensuring all facilities under their jurisdiction have COOP plans that meet the baseline preparedness requirements stated in 252.365(3):

The disaster-preparedness plan must outline a comprehensive and effective program to ensure continuity of essential state functions under all circumstances, including, but not limited to, a pandemic or other public health emergency. The plan must identify a baseline of preparedness for a full range of potential emergencies to establish a viable capability to perform essential functions during any emergency or other situation that disrupts normal operations. This baseline must consider and include preparedness for rapid and large-scale increases in the public's need to access government services through technology or other means during an emergency, including, but not limited to, a public health emergency.

The plan must include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- *identification of essential functions, programs, and personnel;*
- *procedures to implement the plan and personnel notification and accountability;*
- *delegations of authority and lines of succession;*
- *identification of alternative facilities and related infrastructure, including those for communication;*
- *identification and protection of vital records and databases;*
- *provisions regarding the availability of, and distribution plans for, personal protective equipment;*
- *schedules and procedures for periodic tests, training, and exercises.*

The division shall develop and distribute guidelines for developing and implementing the plan. By December 31, 2022, each agency must update its plan to include provisions related to preparation for pandemics and other public health emergencies consistent with the plan developed pursuant to s. 381.00315. Each agency plan must be updated as needed to remain consistent with the state public health emergency management plan.

Public Record Exemption

Executive Agency COOP plans and annexes contain information related to the physical security of government facilities and are therefore exempt from the public record laws of Florida by authority of Florida Statute 119.071(3). As such, COOP plans are not subject to the general disclosure requirements of Florida Statute 119.07(1) or any other requirements of disclosure.

Program Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of state agencies and FDEM in the role of continuity preparedness planning are outlined in Chapter 252.365. In summary, State Agencies are responsible for assigning an ECO who is responsible for the development and maintenance of a COOP Program that encompasses all agency facilities for all-hazards, to include a public health emergency.

Florida Division of Emergency Management

- Serve as the lead agency for implementation of Florida Statutes, Chapter 252: Emergency Management.
- Coordinate COOP activities for the State agencies and provide technical assistance to the Legislative and Judicial Branches.
- Issue COOP guidance, in accordance with the State's CEMP, Florida Statutes, Chapter 252: Emergency Management, and all applicable authorities to promote understanding and compliance with the requirements and objectives.
- Lead the State Emergency Response Team, which serves as the principal interagency forum for discussion of emergency management issues such as policy guidance, plans, and procedures, and for dissemination of information to agencies for developing and improving their individual COOP plans.
- Coordinate State Executive Branch interagency COOP exercises.
- Conduct periodic assessments of Executive Branch COOP capabilities and report the results to the Governor.
- Approve agency COOP plans submitted on or before December 2022 and make recommendations for plan improvements to ensure compliance with the COOP Implementation Guidance.

State Agency Heads

- Appoint a COOP Coordinator and provide the name and contact information of the individual(s) to FDEM. This position shall be staffed at the discretion of the agency's head and may be the agency's designated Primary or Alternate ECO.
- Confirm that each state agency and facility, such as a prison, office building, or university, has a disaster preparedness plan that is coordinated with the applicable local emergency management agency and approved by the division.
- Develop, approve, and maintain agency COOP plans and procedures for headquarters and all subordinate elements outlined in Florida Statutes, Chapter 252.
- Notify the State Warning Point and other appropriate agencies upon activation of the agency's COOP plan.
- Develop and maintain a COOP Multi-Year Strategy and Program Management Plan.
- Conduct tests and training of agency COOP plans through the development of a comprehensive test, training, and exercising program to include participation in periodic COOP exercises to safeguard effective interagency coordination and mutual support.
- Coordinate intra-agency COOP efforts and initiatives with policies, plans, and activities in accordance with the State's CEMP, Florida Statutes, Chapter 252: Emergency Management, and all applicable authorities.
- Submit updated agency COOP Plan for approval to FDEM, on or before December 30, 2022.

Local Emergency Management Officials

- Certify that applicable agency COOP plans are coordinated the local emergency plans, procedures, and practices
- Report problems or issues to FDEM for resolution.

COOP Plan Elements

Situation and Assumptions

It is the policy of the State of Florida to be prepared to respond to any emergency or threat thereof which may disrupt operations within an agency or at a State facility. Emergencies are any unplanned event that can cause deaths or significant injuries to employees, customers, or the public; or that can shut-down your organization, disrupt operations, cause physical or environmental damage, or harm the organization's public image. Emergencies may include fire, hazmat incident, flooding, tornado, communications failure, radiological incident, civil disturbance, public health emergency, hurricane/tropical storm, explosion, "sick-building" syndrome, cyber security, or terrorist event.

This all-hazards planning approach minimizes vulnerabilities by the systematic development of an operational capability that is not dependent upon a facility. The probability (likelihood that an incident will occur), frequency (how often an incident occurs), and the severity (impact of incident) are factors that weigh heavily into COOP planning. Events that could disrupt operations should be evaluated based on criticality and probability.

Typically, risk assessments determine that the most probable/frequent incidents are less severe and that the most severe events have lower probabilities and occur less often. This is why COOP planning must address the full range of scenarios. Agencies may conduct a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) in order to identify threats and hazards and the impact they may have on their ability to perform essential functions. A BIA can be used to identify potential impacts on the performance of essential functions and the consequences of the failure to sustain those functions in order to establish the foundation for evaluating and establishing risk mitigation strategies for the agency. These findings, in addition to the statutory requirements and agency policies can inform the situation.

To maintain viable COOP capability, each agency's plan must:

- Be maintained at a high level of readiness.
- Be capable of implementation both with and without warning.
- Be operational no later than 12 hours after activation.
- Maintain sustained operations for up to 30 days.
- Take maximum advantage of existing agency field infrastructures.

Planning assumptions identify what the planning team assumes to be facts for planning purposes to make it possible to execute the COOP. During operations, the assumptions indicate areas to adjust in the plan as the facts of the incident become known. This may include results from a BIA, the policies presented in this guidance as well as individual agencies policies that affect continuity planning.

Purpose, Scope, and Objectives

Purpose

Agencies should develop and maintain their COOP capabilities using a multi-year strategy and program management plan. The plan should outline the process the agency will follow to designate essential functions and resources, define short and long-term COOP goals and objectives, forecast budgetary requirements, anticipate, and address issues and potential obstacles, and establish planning milestones.

Specifically, COOP plans shall be designed to:

- Ensure that the agency is prepared to respond to emergencies, recover from them, and mitigate against their impacts.
- Assure that the agency is prepared to provide critical services in an environment that is threatened, diminished, or incapacitated.
- Establish a means of information coordination to the Governor during a COOP event.
- Provide uninterrupted communication within the internal organization of the agency and externally to other agencies and to all identified critical customers.
- Serve as intelligence collection and dissemination node for the agency.
- Provide timely direction, control, and coordination to the agency leadership, other agencies, and other critical customers before, during, and after an event or upon notification of a credible threat.
- Establish and enact time-phased implementation procedures to activate various components of the plan to provide sufficient operational capabilities relative to the event or threat thereof for the agency.
- Facilitate the return of State government to normal operating conditions as soon as practical based on circumstances and the threat environment.
- Remain compatible with Florida's CEMP.

Scope

Prior to initiating the development of their COOP plan, agencies should solidify the scope of their planning efforts. This will vary greatly across state agencies, some agencies have multiple divisions and/or facilities that may need to be included whereas other agency plans may have just one building or one leadership role in which succession is needed. Clearly defining the scope of your plan prior to beginning development will assist in keeping your planning efforts on track to ensure plan viability. The scope should include the entities and geographic areas to which the plan applies. This section can also be utilized to describe the times or conditions for activating the COOP plan.

Objectives

The COOP plans establish policy and guidance for the execution of the State of Florida's mission essential functions in the event that Tallahassee or any agency or facility is threatened or incapacitated, and the relocation of selected State personnel and functions is required.

COOP planning objectives include:

- Preserving safety of personnel and visitors.
- Provide for the ability to continue essential operations.
- Contain provisions for the protection of critical equipment, records, and other assets.
- Maintain efforts to minimize damage and losses.
- Contain provisions for an orderly response and recovery from any incident.
- Serve as a foundation for the continued survival of leadership.
- Assure compliance with legal and statutory requirements.

Authorities and References

This section of the COOP plan documents the legal basis for COOP operations and activities. Below are some that may be applicable, however, agencies should include additional references used, agency-specific authorities, including Florida Statutes, executive orders, administrative codes, and agency policies as needed.

Authorities

- Chapter 252, Florida Statutes (Emergency Management)
- Chapter 22, Florida Statutes (Emergency Continuity of Government)
- Chapter No. 2002-43, Florida Statutes (Relating to Disaster Preparedness)
- Executive Order 80-29 (Disaster Preparedness)
- Executive Order 87-57 (State Emergency Response Commission) dated April 17, 1987; as updated by Executive Orders 98-153 and 98-155.
- Executive Order 01-262 (Emergency Management)
- Executive Order 01-300 (Domestic Security)

References

- Sections 14.055 – 14.056, Florida Statutes (Governor)
- Sections 22.01 – 23.127, Florida Statutes (Emergency Continuity of Government)
- Sections 23.12 – 23.127, Florida Statutes (Florida Mutual Aid Act)
- Section 163.01, Florida Statutes (Inter local Cooperation Act of 1969)
- Sections 250.540 – 250.549, Florida Statutes (Military Affairs)
- Sections 252.31 – 252.62, Florida Statutes (Emergency Management Act)
- Chapter 282, Florida Statutes (Communications and Data Processing)
- Section 401.015, Florida Statutes (Medical Telecommunications and Transportation)
- Sections 870.01 – 870.06, Florida Statutes (Affrays; Riots; and Unlawful Assemblies)
- Chapter No. 2001-361, Florida Law (Public Records/Security System Plan)
- Chapter No. 2001-365, Florida Law (Domestic Security/Counter-terrorism)
- Chapter No. 2001-366, Florida Law (Domestic Security/Counter-terrorism)

Mission Essential Functions

Each agency shall identify their mission essential functions as the foundation of the COOP planning. Mission essential functions are those that enable an organization to provide vital services, exercise civil authority, maintain safety and well-being of general populace, and sustain industrial and economic base in an emergency. Any functions not deemed mission essential should be deferred until additional personnel and resources become available. The COOP plan should integrate support activities to for essential functions to be performed efficiently during emergency relocation.

The following are steps necessary for the selection of mission essential functions:

1. Compile all organizational functions.
2. Determine criteria for selecting critical activities.
3. Identify mission essential functions.
4. Prioritize those functions.
5. Roster personnel to complete those functions based on skills and knowledge.
6. Assess alternate work location needs based on functions and rosters.
7. Determine requisite resources and equipment.

Business Process Analysis

Once an agency has identified their essential functions, performing the Business Process Analysis (BPA) will aid in the development of staffing and logistic support required to support these functions during a continuity event. The BPA is a systematic process that identifies and documents the activities and tasks that are performed within an organization. A BPA captures and maps the functional processes, workflows, activities, subject matter expertise, systems, resources, controls, data, and facilities required in the execution of a function or task. An effective BPA supports the development of detailed procedures that outline how an organization accomplishes its mission.

The following are steps necessary to complete a BPA:

1. Identify the output (e.g., products, services, information) resulting from the performance of the essential function
2. Identify the input (e.g., products, information, equipment) required to perform the essential function
3. Identify internal and external dependencies and interdependencies of the essential functions
4. Identify agency leadership responsible for essential functions
5. Identify agency staff who perform or directly support the essential function
6. Identify communication and IT support required for the essential function
7. Identify location/infrastructure requirements of the essential function
8. Identify necessary resources and budgeting requirements for the essential function
9. Describe the process flow of the essential function

Delegations of Authority and Orders of Succession

Each agency shall identify and maintain delegations of authority to ensure the rapid response to any emergency situation requiring COOP plan activation. Agencies shall pre-delegate authorities for making policy decisions at headquarters and regional levels, as applicable.

Each agency shall identify orders of succession for agency heads and key leadership. The orders of succession are a critical part of the COOP plan, and agencies are responsible for establishing, disseminating, and maintaining the succession to key leadership positions. The orders should be of sufficient depth and geographical dispersion is encouraged.

At a minimum the delegations of authority and order of succession should:

- Establish an order of succession to the position of agency head and develop rules and procedures to address:
 - Conditions for succession;
 - Method of notification; and,
 - Time, geographical, organizational limitations.
- Describe succession order by position or titles, rather than by person.
- Establish succession for key leadership positions within the organization at both headquarters and in the regions.
- Consider assigning successors among the contingency staff to therefore each team has an equitable share of the duly constituted leadership.
- Confirm officials are prepared to perform their emergency duties.
- Revise and distribute orders as necessary.

Alternate Work Locations

Alternate Facilities

The COOP plan shall designate an alternate operating facility. The facility may be identified from existing organization infrastructures or external sources. The facility should have sufficient space and equipment to maintain the COOP team and be capable of sustaining operations for up to 30 days (with resource acquisition). The alternate facility should have reliable logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems (water, electrical power, HVAC, etc.). Consideration for the health, safety, and emotional well-being of the COOP team should be used when selecting the facility, including considerations for social distancing and PPE in the event of a public health emergency. In addition, the selection process should include deliberations on the appropriate physical security and personnel access control measures.

Agencies should consider pre-positioning minimum essential equipment at the alternate facility. In addition, agencies should coordinate with the alternate facility manager to develop support procedures for the alternate facility to accept the COOP team and prepared to support COOP operations for up to 30 days. If alternate facility is multi-use, agencies should confirm they have priority for utilization in the event of a COOP activation.

At a minimum, each organization should:

- Utilize existing agency facilities, if applicable.
- Consider cooperative agreements, sharing with other agencies and virtual office technologies.
- Ensure sufficient space and equipment to accommodate the relocating personnel.
- Provide for reliable logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems.
- Guarantee the ability to sustain operations for a period of up to 30 days.
- Consider pre-positioning assets and resources at facility.
- Establish appropriate physical security and access controls.

Telework

Telework options can be used to enhance the continuity capabilities of state agencies. In situations such as extreme weather conditions, infectious disease outbreak, national security special events, or civil unrest, which prevent employees from traveling to or working at their regular facility, the option of telework allows employees to perform essential functions off-site to keep the organization running. Telework can be used as a preliminary stop-gap while relocating to an alternate facility, to augment office space for supporting functions, or as a stand-alone solution in incidents deemed appropriate by agency leadership. In preparation for such circumstances, organizations should have a telework policy in place that provides eligible employees with instructions, procedures, and performance expectations.

Organizations should focus on the following activities to incorporate telework into their continuity plans:

- Assess essential functions to identify which functions the organization must conduct onsite and which the organization can conduct via telework by continuity and noncontinuity personnel.
- Establish and maintain plans and procedures to use telework as a primary or backup continuity strategy for those essential functions and supporting tasks that can be accomplished via telework.
- Establish a policy under which eligible continuity and non-continuity personnel are authorized to telework during a continuity event.
- Notify all employees of their telework eligibility prior to a continuity activation.

- Have eligible employees authorized to telework during a continuity activation successfully complete a telework training program prior to signing a written telework agreement with his/her supervisor.
- Coordinate with the organization's designated telework managing officer when developing the organization's continuity plan.
- Ensure information technology (IT) equipment, support, and servers are in place and offer appropriate capacity to support the number of staff envisioned to telework.
- Provide protection of information and information systems during telework.
- Provide access to essential records, databases, and robust communications tools necessary to sustain an organization's essential functions at telework locations.
- Adhere to relevant laws, statutes, policies, and guidance governing the use of Telework.
- Coordinate with IT specialists to identify equipment and technical support requirements for personnel identified as telework capable.

Logistics Support/Resource Requirements

Each agency should determine to what level they can self-sustain their emergency operations and then develop procedures to acquire services, personnel, resources, PPE, and other equipment necessary to perform the mission essential functions. Mutual aid and assistance should be considered. Agencies should establish memorandums of agreement/understanding with any entity that will be utilized prior to COOP activation.

Materials and equipment which will be needed immediately upon COOP activation shall be identified and measures to assure their availability under all circumstances must be developed. Each agency shall manage the preparation, off-site storage, and regular maintenance of materials and equipment contained in drive-away kits. Offsite storage of materials and equipment is required to support the availability of assets.

At a minimum, the COOP plan should:

- Identify, pre-position, and maintain equipment and other resources required at alternate site, e.g.,
 - Computer equipment and software
 - Office supplies
 - File cabinets, desks, chairs, etc.
 - Vehicles
- Prepare and pre-position Drive-Away Kits.
- Provide for telecommunications and information technology support at an alternate facility.
- Establish provisions for personnel transportation (parking), lodging, and dining at alternate facility.
- Prepare and maintain Site-Support Procedures which identify the initial requirements for receiving, supporting, and relocating personnel to alternate facility.

Drive-away Kits

Continuity personnel who have been identified to relocate should create and maintain drive-away kits in order to support essential functions during alternate operations. These kits should include the necessary supplies for operations at the alternate facility which is not pre-positioned. These kits may include printed vital records, office supplies, contact lists, purchasing cards, badges, maps, communication

equipment, chargers, etc. Agencies should establish procedures for regularly updating drive-away kits to maintain readiness in the event of a no notice COOP activation.

Personnel Issues and Coordination

Agencies should plan to provide critical information to both essential and non-essential staff and inform employees how to prepare themselves and their families prior to an emergency. Personnel issues have the potential to negatively impact an organization’s COOP performance. A communications plan for essential and non-essential staff shall in coordination with appropriate entities. Personal preparedness kits and plans are essential for all staff.

At a minimum, agency COOP plans shall address the following components:

- Prepare communications plan to disseminate information to essential and non-essential personnel.
- Continued communication with external partners, including re-routing of mail, etc.
- Address the health, safety, emotional well-being of all employees and their families.
- Assure personal preparedness for staff through “personal go-kits.”
- Address pay status, administrative leave, and layoffs.
- Address medical, special needs, and travel issues.

Personal Go-Kits and Family Disaster Planning

Agencies should provide guidance to employees on family disaster preparedness, which may include a Family Support Plan, for personnel required to relocate to an alternate facility during a COOP activation. Additional guidance to increase personal and family preparedness can be found at [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) and [FloridaDisaster.org](https://www.floridadisaster.org). Agencies should also provide guidance to continuity personnel on items to bring in personal go-kits. These items should include anything individuals may need during an extended operation out of the alternate facility. Items may include clothes, toiletries, chargers, glasses, prescriptions, and other medical needs.

Interoperable Communications

Each agency should take maximum advantage of the advances in technology now available and consider the full spectrum of communications: landline, cellular, satellite, wireless, web applications, conference services, etc. The communications capability should be commensurate with the organization’s operations and provide for access to other data and systems required to perform the mission essential functions. Redundancy of communications is vital, and the capability should be developed to sufficient depth to assure availability.

Within the COOP plan, interoperable communications shall at a minimum:

- Identify the data and communications systems needed to support mission essential functions.
- Confirm availability at alternate facility at appropriate level for each of the following:
 - Voice and fax (POTS)
 - Data systems
 - Cellular
 - Secure communication, if necessary
 - Satellite
 - Internet and email
 - Web applications

- Video Conferencing
- Emergency systems (NAWAS, EAS, etc.), if necessary
- Provide for both internal and external communications.
- Consider mobile communications capabilities.

Vital Records and Databases

Each agency should provide for the protection and availability of electronic and hardcopy (as applicable) of documents, references, records, information systems, and databases. The COOP plan should account for the identification and protection of vital records and databases at both the primary facility and alternate facility.

To the extent possible, agencies should provide for: off-site storage of duplicate records, off-site back-up or electronic records and databases, and pre-positioning of vital records and databases at the alternate facility. A maintenance program to assure the records are current should also be instituted.

Safekeeping and pre-positioning systems and data is critical to alternate operations, hence each organization shall at a minimum:

- Identify vital records, systems, and data (hard copy and electronic) critical to performing functions.
 - Emergency operating records: plans and directives, orders of succession, delegations of authority, staffing assignments.
 - Legal and financial records: personnel records, Social Security records, payroll records, retirement records, insurance records, contract records.
- Provide offline availability of vital records.
- Plan for protection, duplication, and movement of records.
- Preposition resources and systems prior to deployment.
- Ensure accuracy and currency of records, update as necessary.
- Establish procedures for documenting operations when COOP is activated.
- Assure agency's Disaster Recovery Plans are capable of supporting COOP activities in accordance with Florida Statutes, Chapter 282: Communications and Data Processing.

Security

Each agency should ensure that all four types of security are addressed – Operational, Cyber, Physical, and Access Controls. Each measure should be incorporated into a comprehensive plan to assure the security of the COOP program and their primary and alternate facilities. A COOP plan is not a classified document, but it is extremely sensitive information – distribution should be limited. Agencies should consider using Chapter No 2001-361, FL Law (formerly Senate Bill 16-C) to provide a public records exemption for their plans.

Each agency should:

- Establish Operational Security and Cyber Guidelines for the handling of COOP Plan and SOPs, consider restricting information through limited distribution of documents.
- Address physical security of current office and at alternate facility.
- Enact personnel access controls for employees and critical customers.
- Address security of communications, if appropriate.
- Be prepared to augment all security levels based on the emergency or the threat.

Test Training and Exercise

Agencies shall develop a comprehensive Test, Training, and Exercise program to validate policies, plans, and procedures, ensure that personnel are sufficiently trained, and verify that resources and equipment are capable of supporting operations.

Training and orientation curriculum should be instituted to create awareness and enhance the skills required to develop, implement, maintain, and execute the COOP program. It is recommended that staff also be trained in the Incident Command System (ICS) to assure familiarity with the conduct of emergency operations.

Each element of the COOP program should be evaluated through a combination of different tests and exercises, and agencies should establish procedures to for the information obtained from their program to be incorporated into a remedial action process.

At a minimum, the organization should:

- Conduct orientation and training for identified COOP personnel (individual/team).
- Periodically test alert and notification procedures.
- Plan periodic exercise of operational plans, alternate facilities, and interoperable communications.
- Plan joint agency exercises, to include participation in other agency exercises.
- Periodically validate and test equipment, including IT and communication equipment.
- Establish remedial action plan/process.
- Update plans and procedures as appropriate or annually.

Program Maintenance

Each agency should prepare and employ a strategic and multi- year planning process that includes anticipated funding requirements. The plan should define the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the program. This document is crucial to the development, maintenance, performance, and success of the program.

The plan should identify a current inventory of internal/external resources, resource capability shortfalls and steps necessary to overcome them, and operation and maintenance costs. The program's costs should be calculated for both program dollars and labor.

Agencies at a minimum shall:

- Prepare a strategic, long-range plan for consistent and constant development towards full operational capability; include milestones to gauge progress.
- Establish a coordinated program management process for maintenance, operation, and funding for a viable COOP capability.
- Review plan annually to confirm accuracy.

COOP Concept of Operations

Decision for COOP Plan Activation

Agencies are encouraged to develop an executive decision process that would allow for an analysis of the emergency situation to determine the best course of action for response and recovery. This decision matrix should include factors for determining to evacuate, telework, and/or relocate depending on the scenario. This decision-making process will ensure that the agency does not activate its COOP plan prematurely and/or inappropriately activation of an agency COOP plan. A suggested approach to ensuring a logical sequence of events in activating a COOP plan is referred to as Time-Phased Implementation, which is outlined below.

Evacuation

Some no notice events that may trigger a COOP event may also warrant building evacuation. Plans should address the decision process to evacuate and that COOP activation procedures are compatible with established agency evacuation plans. Employees should be notified promptly following an evacuation order if relocation and/or telework is required to continue operations.

Relocation

A COOP plan includes the premeditated movement of selected key principals and supporting staff to an alternate facility, for example – a sudden emergency, such as a fire or hazardous materials incident, may require the evacuation of an agency building with little or no advanced notice, but for only a short duration would not automatically necessitate the activation of a COOP plan unless the facility is rendered untenable. An emergency with severe impacts which does render the facility unusable for a time frame long enough to affect normal operations, will likely justify and may require that the agency's COOP plan be activated.

Emergencies, or potential emergencies, may affect the ability of agencies to perform their mission essential functions from their primary location.

Relocation may be required to accommodate a variety of emergency scenarios, examples include:

- An agency headquarters is unavailable, and operations can shift to a regional, field, or other location.
- A single agency facility is temporarily unavailable, and the agency can share one of its own facilities or that of another agency; and,
- Many, if not all, agencies must evacuate the immediate Tallahassee, Florida, area.

Any of these scenarios entails facility unavailability; however, it is imperative to make the distinction between a situation requiring building evacuation only and one dictating the necessity to activate the agency's COOP plan.

Telework

Agencies are encouraged to incorporate telework into their continuity planning. Incorporating telework into continuity plans means that these plans identify ways that an agency's personnel perform the duties and responsibilities necessary to continue essential functions during a COOP event from an approved worksite other than their primary facility or designated alternate facility.

Telework can be an important tool in several ways:

- A pandemic influenza or other public health emergency intensifies in a geographic area, telework can be utilized to mitigate workplace exposure.
- Alternate facility space is limited, supporting functions can be maintained virtually while mission essential functions operate from the alternate facility.
- Telework is utilized to continue essential functions while the COOP relocation team readies up the alternate facility for operation.
- If an evacuation is ordered, designated employees may work remotely to continue essential functions without the cost of an alternate relocation facility.

Agencies need to implement and maintain a robust IT system with the necessary infrastructure (including bandwidth and VPN access) to accommodate a sudden spike in remote usage of agency systems as well as the accompanying technical support personnel to resolve remote connectivity issues.

Phase I – Activation

Alert and Notification Procedures

Establish specific actions to alert and notify key staff, non-essential personnel, and critical customers that COOP activation is imminent.

This component also requires notifications to the following entities:

- Alternate facility manager(s) of impending activation and actual relocation requirements
- State Warning Point (800) 815-4001 and other appropriate agencies of the decision to relocate and the anticipated time of arrival at the alternate facility
- Advance and contingency teams of the COOP plan activation
- Essential and non-essential personnel

Initial Actions

Agencies should establish actions specific to termination of primary operations and the subsequent activation of essential personnel, emergency communications and alternate operations. Agencies should also implement their procedures to provide instruction to all personnel, including essential and non-essential on their expectations during a COOP activation for both duty hours and non-duty hours.

Activation Procedures During Duty and Non-Duty Hours

On-duty activation procedures should be complementary to the organization's Building Evacuation Plans and include specific actions for an efficient and complete transition of direction and control from primary facility to the alternate facility and include measures for security at both sites. Procedures shall include actions necessary to disseminate information to key staff when off-duty and/or not present at the primary site.

Deployment and Departure Procedures: Time-Phased Operations

Agencies should determine most critical essential functions based on the level of threat. Agencies should establish administrative procedures to allow for telework and/or travel and transportation to the alternate facility which allows partial pre-deployment of any essential functions which are critical to operations.

Transition to Alternate Operations

Agencies should establish the minimum standards for communication, direction, and control to be maintained until the alternate facility is operational. During this phase, agencies should also implement procedures for the following:

- Activation of plans, procedures, and schedules to transfer activities, personnel, records, and equipment to alternate work locations including telework and/or alternate facility.
- Transportation of documents and designated communications, automated data processing, and other equipment to the alternate facility, if applicable.
- Securing the normal operating facility physical plant and non-moveable equipment and records, to the extent possible.

Site-Support Responsibilities

Upon activation of alternate facility, procedures should include provision for notification to alternate facility manager to ready site for operations.

Actions include the following:

- Assembling necessary documents and equipment required to continue performance of essential operations at alternate facility:
 - Ordering equipment/supplies, if not already in place
 - Continuing essential operations at the normal operating facility if available, until alternate facility is operational.

Phase II – Alternate Operations

As alternate operations are underway, COOP personnel should prioritize the following:

- Contingency Staff Responsibilities – Assign responsibilities to key staff to perform mission essential functions. Advance Team and COOP Team roles and responsibilities should be included.
- Execution of Essential Functions – Performance of any essential functions determined to be critical to operations.
- Establishment of Communications – Re-establish normal lines of communication to all critical customers. Notify the State Warning Point and all other appropriate agencies immediately of the agency's alternate location, operational and communications status, and anticipated duration of relocation, if known.
- Augmentation of Staff – Determine if current staffing meets the workload to perform mission essential functions and activate additional staff as necessary.
- Amplification of Guidance to Essential and Non-Essential Personnel – Provide additional guidance to all personnel in regard to duration of alternate operations and include pertinent information on payroll, time and attendance, duty assignments, etc.
- Development of Plans and Schedules for Reconstitution and Termination – Immediately begin preparation of communication and vital records and databases procedures to transfer back to primary facility. Circumstances may dictate that a new primary facility is designated and subsequently occupied.

Phase III – Reconstitution and Termination

Plan should provide general guidance and policy on ending alternate operations and returning to a non-emergency status at the designated primary facility. These procedures should inform all personnel, including non-emergency personnel, that the threat of or actual emergency no longer exists, and provide instructions for resumption of normal operations.

Agencies should establish specific actions to ensure a timely and efficient transition of communications, direction and control, and transfer of vital records and databases to primary facility. The procedures developed while at the alternate facility should manage an orderly return to the normal operating facility, or movement to other temporary or permanent facility, using a phased approach if conditions necessitate. Agencies should report the status of their relocation to the State Warning Point and other appropriate organizations.

After-Action Review and Remedial Action Plans

Following a COOP event, agencies should develop a team to assess all phases and elements of the alternate operations and provide specific solutions to correct any areas of concern to update plan.

Continuity Trainings

FEMA National Continuity Programs (NCP) established the [Continuity Excellence Series \(CES\)](#) – [Level I, Professional Continuity Practitioner](#) and [Level II, Master Continuity Practitioner](#) – to address the full spectrum of requirements to support a viable continuity capability. The series is designed for continuity professionals throughout the federal government and among our state, local, tribal, and territorial governmental partners, private-sector owners of critical infrastructure/key resources, and non-governmental organization disaster response entities.

[IS-1300: Introduction to Continuity of Operations](#) This course is intended to lay the foundation of knowledge for students who wish to increase their understanding of continuity and building a comprehensive continuity program in their organization or jurisdiction. This course replaces IS-546.a Continuity of Operations Awareness Course and IS-547.a Introduction to Continuity of Operations.

E/L/K 1301: Continuity Planning. This course assists continuity practitioners with understanding their continuity roles and responsibilities, and provides them with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to help develop and maintain a viable continuity plan for their organization. The course materials are based on guidance found in Federal Continuity Directives (FCDs) 1 and 2 and the Continuity Guidance Circular (CGC) for developing continuity plans and programs. By the end of the course students will possess the ability to build a draft continuity plan and understand the key roles necessary for developing critical mitigation strategies and key elements of a continuity capability. The target audience for this course is all levels of government and whole community partners.

E/L/K 1302: Continuity Program Management. This course assists continuity program managers with understanding their roles and responsibilities and provides resources to help them develop a wholistic continuity capability for their organizations. This course is intended for continuity practitioners responsible for the oversight and management of an organizational continuity program. The course materials are based on guidance found in FCDs 1 and 2 and the CGC for developing continuity plans and programs. By the end of this course, program managers will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of key concepts and strategies for implementing a continuity program management cycle. The target audience for this course is all levels of government and whole community partners.

[IS-551: Devolution Planning](#) This course is designed to provide you with the tools and practical knowledge necessary to develop your organization’s devolution plans and procedures.

[IS-545: Reconstitution Planning Workshop](#) The purpose of the Reconstitution Planning Workshop is to assist Federal Department and Agency, state, local, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions with the importance of developing effective and comprehensive reconstitution planning.

[IS-120.c: An Introduction to Exercise](#) This course introduces the basics of emergency management exercises. It also builds a foundation for subsequent exercise courses, which provide the specifics of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

[IS-130.a: How to be an Exercise Evaluator](#) This course introduces the basics of emergency management exercise evaluation and improvement planning. It also provides the foundation for exercise evaluation concepts and practices as identified in the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

[E/L 146: HSEEP Training Course](#) This course is designed to describe the core principles and processes of HSEEP, its standardized methodology, available resources, and practical skill development, which will assist in developing an HSEEP consistent exercise program.

[IS-520: Introduction to Continuity of Operations Planning for Pandemic Influenza](#) This course introduces students to the characteristics of a pandemic influenza, the effects that a pandemic influenza can have on every facet of our society, and the steps their organizations can take to minimize the effects of a pandemic.

Additional COOP Resources

[State CEMP](#)

2022 State COOP Checklist

[Florida Statute 252](#)

[Federal Continuity Directive 1 \(FDC 1\)](#)

[Federal Continuity Directive 2 \(FDC 2\)](#)

[Continuity Guidance Circular](#)

[EO 80-29](#)

[EMAP 2019 Emergency Management Standard](#)

[The Continuity of Operations: What You Need to Know](#)

[Guide to Continuity of Government for State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Governments](#)

[Guide to Continuity Program Management](#)

[Reconstitution Plan/Annex Template and Instructions](#)

[Business Process Analysis and Business Impact Analysis User Guide](#)

[Non-Federal Continuity and IPAWS Resources](#)

[Continuity Plan Template and Instructions for Non-Federal Entities and Community-Based Organizations](#)

[Continuity Assessment Tool](#)

[Determined Sentry: Continuity Telework Exercise Player Handbook Template](#)

[Business Impact Analysis and Risk Management Worksheet](#)