

# Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box Facilitator Guide

August 2024

**Table of Contents**

[Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box Documents 4](#_Toc174633733)

[How to Use This COOP Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box 4](#_Toc174633734)

[Exercise Overview 5](#_Toc174633735)

[Exercise Overview Table 5](#_Toc174633736)

[General Information 7](#_Toc174633737)

[Exercise Objectives 7](#_Toc174633738)

[Exercise Structure 7](#_Toc174633739)

[Exercise Logistics 8](#_Toc174633740)

[Exercise Staffing 8](#_Toc174633741)

[Safety and Real-World Emergencies 9](#_Toc174633742)

[Roles and Responsibilities 9](#_Toc174633743)

[Exercise Participants 9](#_Toc174633744)

[Exercise Guidelines, Assumptions, and Artificialities 10](#_Toc174633745)

[Exercise Evaluation 10](#_Toc174633746)

[Hot Wash 10](#_Toc174633747)

[After-Action Report (AAR) and Improvement Plan (IP) 11](#_Toc174633748)

[Participant Feedback Forms 12](#_Toc174633749)

[Module 1: Staffing 13](#_Toc174633750)

[Scenario 13](#_Toc174633751)

[Continuity Topics 13](#_Toc174633752)

[Discussion Questions 13](#_Toc174633753)

[Module 2: Information Technology 17](#_Toc174633754)

[Scenario 17](#_Toc174633755)

[Continuity Topics 17](#_Toc174633756)

[Discussion Questions 17](#_Toc174633757)

[Module 3: Alternate Facilities 20](#_Toc174633758)

[Scenario 20](#_Toc174633759)

[Continuity Topics 20](#_Toc174633760)

[Discussion Questions 20](#_Toc174633761)

[Appendix A: Exercise Schedule 24](#_Toc174633762)

[Exercise Schedule Table 24](#_Toc174633763)

[Appendix B: Exercise Participants 25](#_Toc174633764)

[Exercise Participants Table 25](#_Toc174633765)

[Appendix C: Acronym List 26](#_Toc174633766)

[Acronym List Table 26](#_Toc174633767)

[Appendix D: Participant Feedback Form 27](#_Toc174633768)

[Part 1: General Information 27](#_Toc174633769)

[Part II: Exercise Design 27](#_Toc174633770)

[Part III: Participant Feedback 28](#_Toc174633771)

[Appendix E: Exercise Planning Check List 29](#_Toc174633772)

[Before the Exercise (One to Three Months) 29](#_Toc174633773)

[Before the Exercise (Two Weeks) 29](#_Toc174633774)

[Before the Exercise (One Week) 30](#_Toc174633775)

[Day of the Exercise 31](#_Toc174633776)

[Following the Exercise (One Week) 31](#_Toc174633777)

[Following the Exercise (One Month) 31](#_Toc174633778)

## Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box Documents

This document (Facilitator Guide) is part of a Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box. Below is a list of all the documents included in the Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box.

1. **Situation Manual:** The Situation Manual provides general information to exercise participants, including exercise objectives, scope, and the exercise scenario.
2. **Facilitator Guide:** This document describes the roles and responsibilities of the exercise facilitator and the exercise planning team. Because this handbook contains information regarding exercise administration, it is only to be distributed to those designing, facilitating, or evaluating the exercise.
3. **Facilitator PowerPoint Presentation:** A PowerPoint Presentation has been developed to help guide and facilitate the exercise. The PowerPoint presentation supplements the Situation Manual and provides participants with key information regarding the exercise.
4. **After-Action Report/ Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) Template:** The AAR/IP is a document that includes an exercise overview, analysis of capabilities, and a list of corrective actions. The length, format, and development timeframe of the AAR/IP depend on the exercise type and scope. A template AAR/IP has been developed for this exercise.

### How to Use This COOP Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box

Throughout each tool in the Tabletop Exercise-in-a-Box, the user will find indicators and icons to help customize their exercise and to meet the needs of their organization.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Best Practice** icon identifies tips, tricks, planning considerations and recommendations for the tabletop exercise or for continuity planning. These icons and boxes should be deleted before the document is finalized. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | **Instruction** icon identifies instructions for completing and customizing this tabletop exercise. These icons and boxes should be deleted before the document is finalized. |

Throughout the document the user will also find highlighted text. This highlighted text can be customized with information specific to the facility conducting the exercise. ***Please remember to delete this page prior to finalizing the SITMAN for distribution.***

## Exercise Overview

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | Review the following chart to better understand the exercise and what is being evaluated. Remember to **complete the information that is highlighted in grey**. The information in this exercise overview **should match the information listed in the Situation Manual**. |

### **Exercise Overview Table**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Exercise Name** | Continuity in Crisis: A Tabletop Exercise |
| **Exercise Dates** | [Indicate the date(s) of the exercise and the start and end time] |
| **Scope** | This discussion-based exercise is planned for up to [Number] hours at [Host Location]. |
| **Focus Area(s)** | Response |
| **Objectives** | * **Objective 1:** Assess the organization’s plans and process for identifying and staffing essential functions and operations during a disruptive incident. * **Objective 2:** Evaluate the organization’s process identifying and prioritizing critical information, data, and systems that are necessary to maintain essential functions and operations during a disruptive incident. * **Objective 3:** Discuss the organization’s strategies for identifying alternate care sites to continue services following a disruptive incident. |
| **Threat or Hazard** | **Module 1:** Staffing  **Module 2:** Information Technology  **Module 3:** Alternate Facilities |
| **Scenarios** | **Module 1:** In the heart of a challenging season, a sudden surge in absenteeism has hit the organization hard. Whether due to illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances, a significant portion of clinical and administrative staff are unexpectedly unavailable.  **Module 2:** A long-term Information Technology (IT) outage has struck the health care facility, rendering crucial systems inaccessible.  **Module 3:** A severe weather event, such as tornado, has struck the region where the health care facility is located. |
| **Sponsor** | [Insert the name of the host organization.] |
| **Participating Jurisdictions/ Organizations** | See Appendix B for a full list of participants. |
| **Point of Contact** | **[First Name Last Name]**  [Title]  [Agency]  [Street Address Line 1]  [Street Address Line 2]  [City, State, Zip Code]  [Phone Number]  [Email Address] |

## General Information

### Exercise Objectives

The exercise objectives describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are approved by the exercise planning team.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | The following are **sample exercise objectives** for this Exercise-in-a-Box. The listed objectives are the same for all the modules. An organization may add more objectives or edit the current objectives as they see fit. The organization may also wish to add objectives that are specific to their plans or policies. |

#### Exercise Objectives Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 1:** | Assess the organization’s plans and process for identifying and staffing essential functions and operations during a disruptive incident. |
| **Objective 2:** | Evaluate the organization’s process identifying and prioritizing critical information, data, and systems that are necessary to maintain essential functions and operations during a disruptive incident. |
| **Objective 3:** | Discuss the organization’s strategies for identifying alternate care sites to continue services following a disruptive incident. |

### Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a discussion based exercise lead by a facilitator. Players will participate in the following three modules:

* **Module 1:** Staffing
* **Module 2:** Information Technology
* **Module 3:** Alternate Facilities

Each module can act as a standalone discussion-based exercise examining a particular component of the organization’s Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan. A PowerPoint update will summarize the key events occurring within that module. Participants will review the situation and engage in functional group discussions of appropriate response issues. For this exercise, the functional groups will be multidisciplinary. After these functional group discussions, participants will engage in a moderated plenary discussion in which a spokesperson from each group will present a synopsis of the group’s actions, based on the scenario.

## Exercise Logistics

### Exercise Staffing

#### Exercise Staffing Table

| **Position** | **Name** | **Email** | **Phone Number** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Main Facilitator | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |
| Co-Facilitator | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |
| Evaluator | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |
| Evaluator | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |
| [Other] | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |
| [Other] | [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number] |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | Ensure there is at least **one facilitator and one evaluator identified for the exercise**. It is recommended to have at least one evaluator for every 20 people in attendance. |

**Exercise Facilitators** guide exercise play and are responsible for ensuring that participant discussions remain focused on the exercise objectives and making sure all issues are explored as thoroughly as possible within the available time.

The Facilitator’s primary role is to encourage all participants to contribute to the discussion and to remind them that they are discussing hypothetical situations in a no-fault environment. Facilitators also build and maintain an inclusive environment where participants feel comfortable speaking honestly and where differences of opinion are respected. Facilitators should ensure that everyone feels included in the conversation and has an opportunity to participate.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Facilitators should not lecture or dominate the discussion,** but rather keep conversations moving as well as redirect conversation when necessary. Additionally, Facilitators may want to use an issues list or “parking lot” to document valid points that are raised by participants during the exercise but that risk taking the conversation off topic; these items can be assigned for later discussion to the appropriate persons. |

An **Exercise Evaluator’s** primary responsibility for the tabletop exercise is to assess the effectiveness of emergency preparedness and response plans, procedures, and capabilities in a simulated environment. It is their job to take detailed notes regarding strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, and notable actions or decisions made during the exercise.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Preparation.** Review and become familiar with the exercise objectives, scenario, and evaluation criteria in advance to ensure a clear understanding of expectations.  **Active listening**. Pay close attention to participant discussions and interactions, focusing on both verbal and non-verbal cues to gain insights into their thought processes and decision-making.  **Objectivity.** Maintain objectivity and impartiality throughout the evaluation process, avoiding personal biases or assumptions. Evaluate performance based on established criteria rather than personal opinions. |

### Safety and Real-World Emergencies

Exercise participant safety takes priority over exercise events. All organizations will comply with their own environmental, health, and safety plans and procedures, in addition to appropriate federal, state, and local environmental health and safety regulations.

If a real-world incident requires resources committed to the safe conduct of the exercise, exercise leadership, in coordination with other leaders as appropriate, will convene to discuss potential courses of action.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | **Review the information above** and ensure that it meets the needs and/or requirements of the organization. |

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Exercise Participants

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

* **Players:** Personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
* **Evaluators:** Are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document player discussions, including if and how those discussions conform to plans, policies, and procedures.
* **Observers:** Do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.

### Exercise Guidelines, Assumptions, and Artificialities

* Real-world emergencies take priority over exercise play. If an exercise participant needs to respond to a real-world emergency during the exercise, please do so. The exercise facilitator may also pause play or stop the exercise at any time due to a real-world emergency or safety concern.
* This exercise will be held in an open, no-fault environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, may occur.
* Respond to the scenario using knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., use only existing assets) and insights derived from training.
* Decisions are not precedent setting and may not reflect the organization’s final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
* Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve preparedness and response efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus as they lead to process improvements.
* The assumption is the exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented. All players will receive information at the same time.
* [Add additional exercise guidelines as needed.]

### Exercise Evaluation

Evaluation of the exercise is based on the exercise objectives and associated discussions. After the exercise, players will be asked to complete [Appendix D: Participant Feedback Form](#_Appendix_E:_Participant)**.** This feedback, paired with facilitator observations and notes, will be used to evaluate the exercise, and compile the After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP).

### Hot Wash

At the conclusion of exercise play, the main facilitator will conduct a hot wash to allow players to discuss strengths and areas for improvement, and for note takers to seek clarification regarding player discussion and decision-making processes. All participants are encouraged to provide feedback and engage in this discussion.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | The main facilitator for the exercise should conduct the exercise hot wash. Facilitating an exercise hot wash or debrief is crucial for extracting valuable insights, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations from participants. Here are some tips and tricks for conducting a successful hot wash or debrief session:   * **Set the Tone:** Emphasize the importance of open communication, mutual respect, and a non-judgmental approach to feedback. Encourage active participation from all participants. * **Provide Structure:** Outline the agenda and objectives for the hot wash or debrief session upfront to provide clarity and direction. * **Listen Actively:** Practice active listening throughout the debrief session, paying attention to both verbal and non-verbal cues. * **Foster Collaboration:** Promote collaborative problem-solving and idea generation by facilitating interactive discussions and brainstorming sessions. * **Manage Time Effectively:** Allocate sufficient time for each discussion topic while also ensuring that the debrief session remains focused and on track. * **Document Key Insights:** Take detailed notes and summarize key discussion points, decisions made, and follow-up tasks for future reference. * **Follow-Up and Closure:** Conclude the hot wash or debrief session by summarizing key takeaways, action items, and next steps. Thank participants for their contributions and reaffirm the organization's commitment to continuous improvement. |

### After-Action Report (AAR) and Improvement Plan (IP)

As a result of this exercise, an After-Action Report and Improvement Plan will be developed. Improvement planning is the process by which the observations recorded in the AAR are resolved through development of concrete corrective actions, which are prioritized and tracked as a part of a continuous corrective action program. The IP identifies specific corrective actions, assigns them to responsible parties, and establishes target dates for their completion.

### Participant Feedback Forms

Participant Feedback Forms provide players and exercise staff, including evaluators, the opportunity to comment on exercise activities and exercise design on a non-attributable form. [Feedback forms will be available at the beginning of the exercise to allow players to capture information throughout their individual play.] Evaluators should collect completed forms at the conclusion of exercise play at their respective evaluation sites.

## Module 1: Staffing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | **If any adjustments were made to the scenario** in the Situation Manual, ensure that the information is reflected in this document. |

### Scenario

In the heart of a challenging season, a sudden surge in absenteeism has hit the organization hard. Whether due to illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances, a significant portion of clinical and administrative staff are unexpectedly unavailable, leaving critical roles unfilled and essential operations hanging in the balance.

With the workforce shortage escalating, the organization faces a daunting challenge in maintaining its usual level of productivity and service delivery. It's clear that action must be taken to address this staffing shortfall and ensure the continuity of operations.

In response to this urgent situation, the organization must activate its continuity plans to mitigate the impact of the staffing crisis. Swift and strategic measures are necessary to redistribute responsibilities, adjust schedules, and possibly bring in temporary assistance to fill the gaps left by absent employees.

### Continuity Topics

* Essential Functions
* Orders of Succession
* Delegation of Authority
* Human Resources/Staffing

### Discussion Questions

The following questions are provided as suggested topics to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

#### Essential Functions: Facilitator Considerations

**Essential Functions** are the activities an organization determines cannot be deferred during an emergency. This should not be an exhaustive list of the facilities day-to-day operations, but rather a limited set of functions continued throughout disruption or resumed rapidly. Essential Functions are intended to be available within 12 hours of a continuity incident, with the continuity plan ensuring 30 days of business continuity.

**Example Essential Function:** Provide emergent clinical patient care services until infrastructure and/or staffing no longer allows.

**Supporting Essential Activities** are sub-tasks which are necessary for the success of an Essential Function.

##### Essential Functions Discussion Questions

1. What are the organization’s essential functions?
2. How are essential functions defined within the organization, and how frequently are they reviewed for relevance and accuracy?
3. Have essential functions been prioritized based on their criticality to organizational operations?
4. How does the organization ensure essential functions can be performed even in the face of disruptions or resource constraints?
5. What redundant systems or backup plans are in place to support essential functions in the event of failures or disruptions?
6. How does the organization ensure communication and coordination between departments responsible for essential functions during a disruptive event?

#### Orders of Succession: Facilitator Considerations

**Orders of Succession:** This is a list of trained and qualified individuals who would sequentially assume responsibility for the highest levels of authority and/or leadership positions within the department and/or facility.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **3 Deep.** It is recommended to try and plan "3 deep" for each position; at a minimum, identify a secondary. If there are not enough staff to identify a tertiary that is OK!  **Contact information.** Should include title and 24/7 contact information.  **Implementation Guidance.** Rules and procedures for implementation. |

##### Orders of Succession Discussion Questions

1. Describe the orders of succession in the organization.
2. How often are orders of succession reviewed and updated to reflect changes in organizational structure or personnel?
3. How does the organization ensure individuals designated as successors are adequately trained and prepared to assume their roles?
4. How does the organization test and validate the effectiveness of orders of succession?
5. How are orders of succession communicated to relevant stakeholders within the organization?
6. In the event of a succession scenario, what support mechanisms are in place to assist successors in transitioning into their new roles seamlessly?

#### Delegation of Authority: Facilitator Considerations

**Activation:** Monitoring criteria for a continuity incident and who has the authority to activate the continuity plan should be clearly identified including the why, when, how, and who of continuity activation

**Delegation of Authority:** Once orders of succession have been identified, it’s important to define what the delegation of authority is for the secondary and/or tertiary. Delegation of authority allows a facility and/or department to pre-determine what is or is not appropriate scope of decision making for someone who is operating outside of their normal scope of work.

Delegation of authority may be a pre-defined list of responsibilities and decision-making authority, or it may be defined in broader terms, such as administrative or emergency.

Typically, once the event and/or incident has concluded, or a higher level of authority has been located, the delegation will be returned to the higher level. If a higher level is not readily available after the event, the authority will remain in effect until replacements can be made at the correct level.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Administrative Authority.** Delegated to maintain fully operational activities until replaced.  **Emergency Authority**. Temporary role to meet the needs of the immediate emergency situation only.  **PTO Plan**. Review an existing PTO or leave policy for each essential function lead. Should that same plan apply in administrative and/or emergency delegation? |

##### Delegation of Authority Discussion Questions

1. How is authority delegated within the organization during emergency situations, and what criteria are used to determine appropriate delegation levels?
2. What are the established protocols for escalating decision-making authority as the severity of a situation increases?
3. How does the organization ensure clarity and consistency in the delegation of authority across different departments and levels of management?
4. How would the organization revoke or modify delegated authority based on changing circumstances or operational needs?
5. How does the organization ensure accountability and oversight in the exercise of delegated authority during emergency situations?

#### Human Resources / Staffing: Facilitator Considerations

**Staffing:** This section is intended to identify the minimum staffing requirements to perform and maintain essential functions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Flexible scheduling.** Consider if the staffing accounts for the time of day, week, month, and/or season. All of these may impact staffing numbers; it is recommended to plan based on an organization’s average staffing needs.  **Progress, not perfection.** Staffing is a challenge on the best of days; document what the essential functions would minimally require and document any recommendations for leadership to consider during a continuity incident. |

##### Human Resources / Staffing Discussion Questions

1. How does the organization assess staffing needs during different phases of a disruptive event, and what mechanisms are in place to adjust staffing levels accordingly?
2. What contingency plans are in place for managing staffing shortages? Consider cross-training initiatives, temporary staffing arrangements, or alternative work schedules?
3. How does the organization communicate staffing expectations and responsibilities to employees during emergency situations?
4. What support mechanisms are available to employees who may require assistance or accommodation during emergency situations, such as childcare services or flexible leave policies?
5. How does the organization address potential challenges related to staff morale, motivation, and well-being during prolonged periods of disruption or uncertainty?

## Module 2: Information Technology

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | **If any adjustments were made to the scenario** in the Situation Manual, ensure that the information is reflected in this document. |

### Scenario

A long-term Information Technology (IT) outage has struck a health care facility, rendering crucial systems inaccessible. Electronic health records, communication platforms, and other vital IT infrastructure are offline, severely impacting the health care facility’s ability to deliver patient care efficiently. With no immediate resolution in sight, the organization faces significant challenges in maintaining essential operations, scheduling appointments, and coordinating medical procedures. The outage has also disrupted communication channels, hindering staff coordination and collaboration. As the outage persists, the organization must activate its COOP plan to mitigate the impact, ensure patient safety, and restore critical IT services as swiftly as possible.

### Continuity Topics

* Essential Functions
* Continuity of Communications
* Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems

### Discussion Questions

The following questions are provided as suggested topics to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

#### Essential Functions: Facilitator Considerations

**Essential Functions** are the activities an organization determines cannot be deferred during an emergency. This should not be an exhaustive list of day-to-day operations, but rather a limited set of functions continued throughout disruption or resumed rapidly. Essential Functions are intended to be available within 12 hours of a continuity incident, with the continuity plan ensuring 30 days of business continuity.

**Example Essential Function:** Provide emergent clinical patient care services until infrastructure and/or staffing no longer allows.

**Supporting Essential Activities** are sub-tasks which are necessary for the success of an essential function.

##### Essential Functions Discussion Questions

1. What are the critical health care services and functions that rely heavily on IT systems and databases?
2. How will the organization prioritize essential functions during the IT outage to ensure patient safety and continuity of care?
3. Are there alternative methods or manual processes in place to perform essential functions if IT systems are unavailable?
4. How will staff be trained and informed about their roles and responsibilities in maintaining essential functions during the outage?
5. What strategies will be employed to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of maintaining essential functions throughout the duration of the IT outage?
6. How will the organization coordinate with external partners or agencies to ensure the continuity of critical health care services during the IT outage?
7. What steps will be taken to assess and address any potential legal or regulatory implications resulting from the disruption of essential functions?

#### Continuity of Communications: Facilitator Considerations

The objective of discussing communications is to ensure full connectivity among leadership, internal elements, and other organizational entities to perform essential functions during a continuity incident.

While the emphasis of communication planning may be on how internal notification and activation will occur, equally important is considering how external communications will occur within the community the organization serves and external vendors.

The process for notifying internal and external stakeholder groups, along with who is responsible for performing these notifications, should be identified in this section. If the notification process is the same, regardless of the incident type, be sure to reference the notification process in the base emergency operations plan (EOP).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Communication Strategies.** Identify information on specific communication systems, management processes, and/or notification/coordination strategies for a continuity incident. |

##### Continuity of Communications Discussion Questions

1. How will the organization communicate with staff, patients, and external stakeholders regarding the IT outage and its impact on health care services?
2. What communication channels and protocols will be utilized to disseminate timely updates and instructions during the outage?
3. Who is responsible for coordinating communications efforts during the IT outage?
4. How will the organization address language and accessibility barriers in communication with patients and stakeholders during the outage?
5. What strategies will be employed to manage public perception and maintain trust in the organization's ability to handle the IT outage effectively?

#### Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems: Facilitator Considerations Top of Form

As an organization works towards achieving this continuity planning element the primary considerations for successful completion mean the following have been planned for: identification, protection, and availability of information systems and applications electronic and hardcopy documents, references, and records needed to support essential functions.

##### Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems Discussion Questions

1. Which vital records, databases, and IT systems are critical to maintaining essential health care services, and what backup measures are in place to ensure their availability?
2. How frequently are vital records and databases backed up, and where are the backup copies stored?
3. What procedures will be followed to restore access to vital records and IT systems once the outage is resolved?
4. What are the redundant or alternative IT systems available to support essential functions if primary systems remain inaccessible?
5. How will the organization ensure the security and integrity of data stored in vital records and databases during the IT outage?
6. What measures will be taken to prevent data loss or corruption resulting from the IT outage?
7. What are the contingency plans in place for addressing IT system failures or cybersecurity incidents that may occur during the outage?
8. How will the organization coordinate with IT vendors or support services to expedite the resolution of the outage and minimize its impact on health care operations?

## Module 3: Alternate Facilities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | **If any adjustments were made to the scenario** in the Situation Manual, ensure the information is reflected in this document. |

### Scenario

A severe weather event, such as a tornado, has struck the region where the health care facility is located. The facility has sustained catastrophic damage, making it uninhabitable and unsafe for patients, staff, and visitors.

### Continuity Topics

* Continuity Facilities / Alternate Locations
* Devolution
* Reconstitution
* Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems

### Discussion Questions

The following questions are provided as suggested topics to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

#### Continuity Facilities/Alternate Locations: Facilitator Considerations

**Continuity facilities**, or alternate work locations, are locations from which leadership and critical positions may operate during a continuity event. Internal alternate, as well as external, work locations need to be documented.

##### Continuity Facilities/Alternate Locations Discussion Questions

1. What criteria are used to identify and select suitable alternate care sites in the event of a severe weather event?
2. How will the organization ensure the readiness and accessibility of alternate care sites, including infrastructure, equipment, and supplies?
3. What agreements or contracts are in place with alternate care sites to facilitate the seamless transition of health care operations?
4. How will patient transportation logistics be coordinated to ensure safe and efficient transfer to alternate care sites?
5. What measures will be taken to address infection control and safety protocols at alternate care sites to minimize risks to patients and staff?
6. How will the organization maintain communication and coordination between the primary facility and alternate care sites during the transition and ongoing operations?
7. What plans are in place to ensure the continuity of support services, such as pharmacy, laboratory, and imaging, at alternate care sites?
8. How will the organization address potential challenges or limitations of alternate care sites, such as capacity constraints or geographic distance from the primary facility?
9. What procedures will be followed to assess and monitor the quality of care provided at alternate care sites to ensure compliance with organizational standards and regulatory requirements?
10. How will the organization coordinate with local authorities, emergency management agencies, and health care partners to leverage available resources and support for alternate care sites?

#### Devolution: Facilitator Considerations

Devolution is the capability to transfer statutory authority and responsibility for the organization’s essential functions from the primary operating staff and facilities to another organization’s employees and facilities.

Devolution is the last resort for maintaining an organization’s essential functions and typically is a result of a catastrophic failure.

##### Devolution Discussion Questions

1. How are roles and responsibilities assigned and communicated to designated personnel in the devolution process?
2. What guidelines or standard operating procedures do devolved personnel follow in carrying out their assigned tasks and responsibilities?
3. How will the organization ensure continuity of command and control structures during the devolution process?
4. What mechanisms are in place to maintain situational awareness and facilitate information sharing among devolved personnel and with external stakeholders?
5. How will the organization address potential challenges or conflicts that may arise in the devolution of authority and decision-making?
6. What measures will be taken to ensure accountability and oversight of actions taken by devolved personnel?
7. How will the organization maintain communication and coordination between devolved personnel and centralized leadership during the recovery process?
8. What training and exercises are conducted to prepare personnel for their roles and responsibilities in the devolution process?
9. How will the organization ensure the continuity of essential functions and services during the transition to devolved operations?
10. What procedures are in place to facilitate the reintegration of devolved personnel and functions back into the centralized command structure once the situation stabilizes?

#### Reconstitution: Facilitator Considerations

Reconstitution is the plan for resumption of normal business operations while maintaining essential functions. The overall objective remains to ensure essential functions continue regardless of whether an organization is working towards a resumption of services and/or is in the middle of a real-world emergency.

This section should identify when and how a return to normal business operations would take place as a result of a continuity incident and how paused services i.e., non-essential functions will be resumed.

##### Reconstitution Discussion Questions

1. What criteria will be used to determine when it is safe and appropriate to begin the reconstitution process?
2. How will the organization prioritize reconstitution efforts to ensure the timely recovery of critical health care services?
3. What measures will be taken to assess the integrity and safety of the primary facility before resuming operations?
4. How will the organization address any remaining infrastructure or environmental hazards that may pose risks to patients, staff, or visitors during reconstitution?
5. What steps will be taken to restore essential services, such as power, water, and HVAC systems, to the primary facility?
6. How will the organization ensure the readiness of medical equipment and technology systems for use upon reconstitution?
7. What procedures will be followed to verify the accuracy and integrity of vital records, databases, and IT systems before resuming normal operations?
8. How will the organization communicate with staff, patients, and external stakeholders regarding the reconstitution process and the resumption of health care services?
9. What measures will be taken to address any lingering operational or logistical challenges that may affect the quality and efficiency of health care services during reconstitution?
10. How will the organization conduct post-event evaluations and debriefings to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement in the reconstitution process?

Top of Form

#### Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems: Facilitator Considerations

As an organization works towards achieving this continuity planning element the primary considerations for successful completion mean the following have been planned for: identification, protection, and availability of information systems and applications electronic and hardcopy documents, references, and records needed to support essential functions.

##### Vital Records, Databases, and IT Systems Discussion Questions

1. Which vital records, databases, and IT systems are essential for the continuity of health care operations, and how will they be protected and recovered?
2. What backup measures are in place to ensure the availability and integrity of patient records and medical data during and after severe weather incidents?
3. How will the organization address potential challenges in restoring access to vital records, databases, and IT systems following the severe weather event?

## Appendix A: Exercise Schedule

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | Because this information is updated throughout the exercise planning process, **appendices may be developed as stand-alone documents** rather than part of this document. The times picked for each module can be approximate and not prescriptive. An organization may choose to spend more or less time on each module depending on the level of discussion. It is recommended for each module to last around 60-90 minutes. |

### **Exercise Schedule Table**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | [Insert Date] |
| [Time] | Welcome and Introductions |
| [Time] | Module One |
| [Time] | Module Two |
| [Time] | Break |
| [Time] | Module Three |
| [Time] | Hotwash |
| [Time] | Closing Comments |

## Appendix B: Exercise Participants

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | The following chart is used to **document those who are participating in the exercise.** If this is a community-based exercise, an organization may choose to partition participants by their organization. If this exercise is for a single organization, they may choose to partition participants by their department. |

### **Exercise Participants Table**

| **Organization or Department** | **Name** | **Job Title** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Organization or Department] | [Name] | [Title] |
| [Organization or Department] | [Name] | [Title] |
| [Organization or Department] | [Name] | [Title] |
| [Organization or Department] | [Name] | [Title] |
| [Organization or Department] | [Name] | [Title] |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## Appendix C: Acronym List

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A blue line drawing of a paper and a pencil indicating instructions | Please **review the completed Situation Manual** and ensure that all acronyms have been included in the table below. |

### **Acronym List Table**

| **Acronym** | **Term** |
| --- | --- |
| AAR/IP | After-Action Report/Improvement Plan |
| COOP | Continuity of Operations |
| HSEEP | Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program |
| IT | Information Technology |
| SITMAN | Situation Manual |
| [Acronym] | [Term] |
| [Acronym] | [Term] |
| [Acronym] | [Term] |

## Appendix D: Participant Feedback Form

Thank you for participating in this exercise. Your observations, comments, and input are greatly appreciated, and provide invaluable insight that will better prepare our organization against threats and hazards. Any comments provided will be treated in a sensitive manner and all personal information will remain confidential. Please keep comments concise, specific, and constructive.

### Part 1: General Information

Please enter your responses in the form field.

#### General Information Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (optional):** |  |
| **Position Title:** |  |

### Part II: Exercise Design

Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your overall assessment of the exercise relative to the statements provided, with 1 indicating strong disagreement, 2 indicating disagreement, 3 indicating neutral, 4 indicating agree, and 5 indicating strong agreement.

#### Assessment Factor Table

| Assessment Factor | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre-exercise briefings were informative and provided the necessary information for my role in the exercise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Exercise participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Participants were actively involved in the exercise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Exercise participation was appropriate for someone in my field with my level of experience/training. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The exercise increased my understanding about and familiarity with the capabilities and resources of other participating organizations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Part III: Participant Feedback

1. I observed the following strengths during this exercise:
2. I observed the following areas of improvement during this exercise:
3. Please provide any recommendations on how this exercise or future exercises could be improved or enhanced.
4. Other Comments (if needed):

## Appendix E: Exercise Planning Check List

The following checklist includes items for consideration.

### Before the Exercise (One to Three Months)

* Identify the exercise planning team and who should be invited to participate in the exercise.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | The **exercise planning team will help design, develop, and conduct the exercise**. The planning team members are not typically players in an exercise. However, if the exercise team also plays in the exercise, ensure these individuals are careful not to divulge sensitive exercise information. |

* Identify a date and time for the exercise and send out a calendar hold, a save the date, or an exercise registration flyer to participants.
* Identify and reserve a space for the exercise that is appropriate for the number of expected participants. Does the room include:
  + Enough space for the number of expected participants (i.e., tables and chairs for each participant).
  + Proper acoustics that encourage discussion.
  + Accessible accommodations (i.e., parking and restroom access).
  + Power, internet bandwidth, and cell phone reception to support exercise play.
* Identify whether a meal or refreshments will be provided during the exercise.
* Identify an experienced exercise facilitator.
* Identify experienced exercise evaluators.
* Meet with the exercise planning team to complete and review the exercise documents.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | For discussion-based exercises, it is **recommended to host a combined Concepts and Objectives/Initial Planning Meeting (C&O/IPM) to mark the beginning of the exercise development process**. During this time, the planning team would validate the scope, objectives, and scenario for this exercise. This is also an opportunity to review and begin drafting the exercise documents. |

### Before the Exercise (Two Weeks)

* Meet with the planning team and finalize all exercise documents.
  + Situation Manual
  + Facilitator PowerPoint Presentation
  + Participant Feedback Form

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | To close out the exercise development process, it is **recommended to meet with the exercise planning team for a Final Planning Meeting (FPM)** where all exercise documents will be finalized and to review last minute logistical considerations. |

* Send the exercise facilitator and evaluators the following documents:
  + Situation Manual
  + Facilitator Guide
  + Facilitator PowerPoint Presentation
* Meet with the exercise facilitator and evaluators.
  + Review exercise documentation.
  + Review exercise logistics.
* Order any exercise refreshments or meals.

### Before the Exercise (One Week)

* Send the Situation Manual to all the exercise participants along with any logistical information.
  + Include date and time of the exercise.
  + Include room location.
  + Include any travel or parking instructions.
* Assign exercise discussion groups, if applicable.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | If the exercise includes **more than 20 people, it is recommended to divide participants out into breakout groups** to encourage discussion. These groups can be organized by department, organization, function, or they can be multidisciplinary. To accurately document discussion, ensure there is one evaluator per group. |

* Print exercise materials.
  + Exercise Sign in Sheet
    - 1 copy printed for exercise day.
  + Situation Manual
    - 1 copy printed per exercise participant.
  + Participant Feedback Form
    - 1 copy printed per exercise participant.
* Confirm any food or refreshment orders.
* Review logistical needs.
  + Laptop or computer with proper audio/visual equipment
  + Name tents or identifiers.
  + Pens and paper

### Day of the Exercise

* Arrive at the exercise location 60 minutes prior to the start of the exercise.
* Setup the room
  + Test any audio/visual equipment.
  + Set out exercise documents.
  + Set out the sign in sheet with pens.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A light bulb with rays of light indicating best practice | **Consider arranging the tables to best suit the exercise.** For example, a u-shaped layout for the exercises may encourage participant interaction in a small group. If there are more participants and it is preferred for them to participate in breakout group or a functional group discussion, separate the tables and chairs into clusters. |

* Coordinate food or refreshments, if applicable.
* Conduct the exercise.
* Clean and organize the room to its original standards.

### Following the Exercise (One Week)

* Collect notes from the evaluators.
* Begin to organize the After-Action Report/Improvement Plan.

### Following the Exercise (One Month)

* Draft and review the After-Action Report/Improvement Plan with the exercise planning team.
* Send the finalized After-Action Report/Improvement Plan to exercise participants.