Putting all of *your* pieces in place

Continuity Planning for Nonprofit Organizations

...when natural or man-made disasters strike, nonprofit agencies must be positioned to continue providing services when they are needed the most.

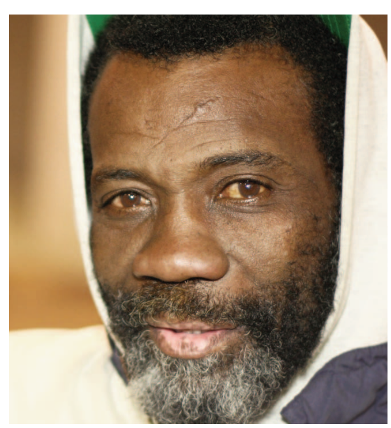
Introduction

Nonprofit organizations play a crucial role in our society today, supporting causes ranging from child and family health programs to education and literacy, animal rescue and scientific research. Many of the agencies and programs that promote these issues rely on public funds or foundation and other grants for funding. Therefore, when natural or man-made disasters strike, these agencies must be positioned to continue providing services when they are needed the most. The Hurricane Katrina tragedy that devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005 illustrates the need for survival, recovery and continuity plans at all levels of the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

This white paper is intended to offer guidance to help you establish a basic continuity program that will enable your organization to continue through an operational loss or failure. The steps that are covered include:

- **How to establish recovery priorities**;
- **How to perform continuity planning**, including building a recovery strategy, building a recovery plan and updating your plan;
- **How to communicate effectively during a crisis**.



Establish Recovery Priorities

Thinking about and planning for a complete loss of operations can overwhelm any nonprofit organization. Many critical components keep nonprofits moving: complex processes, specialized equipment, computer software, phones, office supplies and – most important – people. As a first step, begin by making a spreadsheet that addresses the following:

• **What are the key processes your organization relies on?** Make a list, and set priorities in terms of critical need and which must be addressed first. For instance, assuming you lost all functional capabilities, what would you need to get up and running first? Telephone? Computer systems? Set priorities but don't overanalyze the order of them.

• **Add two columns to your spreadsheet and assign a Recovery Timeframe Objective (RTO).** You will use this to create categories for planning purposes and steps in the recovery process. An RTO is the time by which recovery resources need to be installed, enabled and ready for use after a disaster. Below is a table of RTO categories that suggests groups for critical processes. How long can you provide your organization's services without each process? Assign a Tier and corresponding RTO to each item in your list.

1	Less than 1 Day
2	1 — 3 Days
3	4 — 5 Days
4	1 — 2 Weeks
5	3 — 4 Weeks
6	More than 4 Weeks

With this list you now have a road map for restarting your operations following an operational interruption or loss. With these priorities, you can set goals each year for creating continuity plans and know you are starting with the most critical processes first. This list should be reviewed and validated by the organization's leadership annually at a minimum, as it will guide recovery efforts when disaster strikes.

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Perform Continuity Planning

Continuity for your nonprofit is achieved by developing a recovery strategy and plan for each critical process and keeping these plans healthy with exercises.

You should set continuity planning goals for each year until all processes have a plan. For example, in the first year you may want to tackle tiers 1, 2 and 3 to address processes that must be recovered in five (5) days or less. The three steps below break down each step that should be taken to build and maintain your continuity program.

Step 1 - Build a Recovery Strategy

To avoid "analysis paralysis," focus your thinking on four impact or loss scenarios that represent how your organization could be interrupted.

The recovery strategy is a key step that is often missed. You would not build a house without first thinking about it and drawing specifications. Likewise, strategic thinking will save you time and money if done prior to the planning step. It is simple, yet difficult, for people to consider that their daily routine may be disrupted, and that everything they are familiar with may be destroyed.

To avoid "analysis paralysis," focus your thinking on four loss scenarios that represent how your organization could be interrupted. (Don't be concerned about how they might be caused.) Then, write down your approach for restarting your operations for each scenario by listing the resources you will need to begin and continue recovery. Next, for each recovery resource listed, describe how it will be obtained during a disaster. By thinking this through, you may be able to make some lower or no-cost arrangements now, or at least have your thoughts in order to more quickly obtain them during a disaster. See examples that follow.

SCENARIO: Workforce Impact

- Up to 50% staff is unavailable for at least eight weeks.
- The impact affects countries or regions.
- Outages could occur in multiple waves and over several months.
- The impact occurs during a peak processing period.

Recovery Resources	Recovery Strategies
People – How can your organization prepare to sustain critical processes during a significant virus outbreak or other public health threat?	Identify essential daily roles required to support critical business processes. Determine minimal number of staff required to support the process. Determine if specialized skills are required to support the process and identify where these skills exist throughout the organization. Determine alternate options if minimal number of staff are not available to support the process. Consider the impact of a home/work rotation to minimize infection potential. Consider and plan for the inability of your workforce to travel locally or abroad. Consider adequacy of cross training programs and accelerate where possible. Work with specific country resources to create a regional workforce plan and potential sharing of resources. Assess current succession plans for critical positions. Capture contact information for continuity-critical complementary workers. Encourage staff to review country, personal, family and work preparedness recommendations.

Note: The scenario above is based on recent events like SARS and the World Health Organization's (WHO) plea for countries and organizations to prepare for a potential Avian Influenza Pandemic. These events have expanded the thinking of traditional continuity planning to consider the workforce. (See www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html for information on Avian Influenza)

SCENARIO: Facility Loss

- All equipment, supplies and resources in your workspace have been destroyed.
- Your building cannot be restored for at least 30 days.
- Some of your personnel may not be available.

Recovery Resources	Recovery Strategies
People – Who will be needed to support your recovery efforts?	Use existing staff and ask for volunteers to sign-up for a recovery team to be activated at time of disaster. Plan to use a temporary staffing agency if necessary (you may wish to decide now on an agency or two, and include the information in a contact list).
Facility – Where can you run critical operations while your facility is being restored?	Ask partners to agree in advance to provide workspace if you lose your main site of operations, or scout potential sites and add the information to your contact list.
Equipment – What equipment or technology will you need?	Obtain written agreements from volunteers in advance to use PCs and printers located at volunteer homes.
Supplies – What basic supplies will be needed?	Purchase at time of disaster or create a recovery supplies backpack.
Vital Documents – What documents must you have for recovery?	Duplicate vital documents and store them at separate locations.
Vendors/Partners – What vendors or partners can support your recovery?	Obtain written agreements with partners and vendors on how they can support your recovery.

NOTE: All agreements with volunteers, partners and vendors should be documented in a "Letter of Agreement" or "Service Level Agreement" that is signed by all relevant participants.

SCENARIO: Technology Loss

- Your computer software is not available for an extended period.
- Your phones are not operational.
- Your access to the Internet is not operational for an extended period.

Recovery Resources	Recovery Strategies
People – Who will be needed to support your technology recovery efforts?	Hire a local technology firm at time of disaster, or use existing staff.
Equipment – What technology equipment will you need?	Purchase equipment at time of disaster, ensure laptops are taken home each night so computing resources are available.
Vendors/Partners – What vendors or partners can support your technology recovery?	Obtain written agreements to support your technology recovery.
Vital Data – What computer software files and other electronic data is vital for your recovery?	Back up software data and electronic documents at appropriate intervals (daily, weekly, monthly, annually) and store offsite.

SCENARIO: Vendor/Supplier Loss

- A key vendor or partner has lost the ability to support your organization for at least 30 days.

Vendor – Who will be needed to provide you with the supplies or product you are currently receiving from your vendor?	Document how current vendors or suppliers would plan to continue supporting you during a disaster, or make a list of alternate vendors or partners who can meet your needs.

With the four loss scenarios defined, you are ready to send the recovery strategy to your organization's leadership for approval. Next, be sure any person, vendor or partner you identified as vital in supporting your recovery effort formally approves your strategy. With the necessary approvals in hand, you are ready to proceed to Step 2.

Step 2 - Build a Recovery Strategy

Now that you've thought through your needed resources and strategies, it's time to build an actual plan. A recovery plan centers around the tactical teams and checklists that will be used at time of disaster to support an orderly recovery. Your plan should contain the following components:

- **Notification and Activation Process**
  Define how the recovery teams will be activated for your organization by specifying who will initiate the calls to your operations and leadership teams. It may be useful to develop a process flow chart on notifications and plan activation. You also may wish to note in your activation process flow any emergency responders that would be in place (i.e., local fire and police authorities, or your organization's security personnel who would have control of your operations until all life safety issues have been addressed).

- **Contact Call Lists**
  This list should include work, home, mobile, pager and fax numbers of all staff, vendors and others who are captured on your recovery resources and strategies lists. This will allow you to quickly notify and activate them during a time of loss or outage. You may want to organize the contact information by designating who will notify staff and others.

Recovery Teams and Tasks
Organizing your nonprofit into recovery teams and developing tasks will ensure everyone knows what he/she is supposed to do when disaster strikes.

Team Leader tasks example:

- Receive notification of operations loss
- Notify staff of loss and provide meeting location and time to organize recovery effort
- Determine the expected extent of outage and damage report
- Brief team members
- Incident details and expected outage
- Activate and agree appropriate recovery tasks and staffing
- Establish regular meeting with team for updates and organization of recovery effort
- Support team recovery at alternate location
- Plan for return to normal operations
- Return to new or original site

Team Member tasks example:

- Receive notification of operations loss from team leader
- Perform recovery tasks (develop these tasks for your nonprofit!)
- Implement plan to return to normal operations

Recovery Strategy
Include your recovery strategy with each plan, as it may be referred to during recovery.

Appendix
Include any documents that you use on a regular basis that would be needed for your recovery. (Examples: Vendor list, accounting codes, annual reports and other items.)

Plans can be organized in a single word processing document that is printed and kept in a secure location offsite by your nonprofit leadership and operations head.

Step 3 – Exercise/Update Your Recovery Plan

Just as we keep our bodies healthy with exercise, recovery strategies and plans need to be kept alive with exercises. At a minimum, you should update the contact lists quarterly and the entire plan annually.

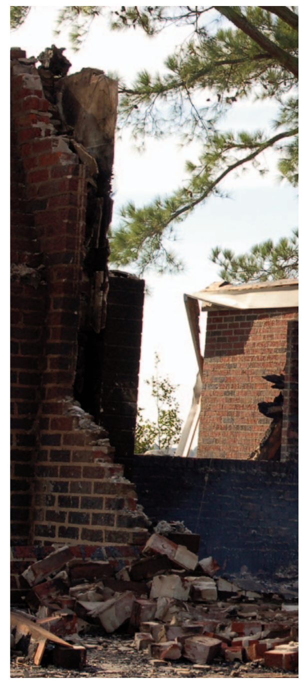
Using what is called a **"tabletop exercise,"** you can practice your plan and responses by sitting around a table with a team leader and appropriate staff. Develop a realistic scenario for the exercise, and first review your notification and activation processes. Then have the team leaders read through their tasks aloud, and do the same with the team member tasks. At each annual practice session, your recovery teams will almost certainly think of additional tasks and resources for the plan, or make decisions about areas that need to be changed or updated. A sample agenda for such an exercise follows:

Review Notification & Activation Process	1:30 – 1:40
Review our BCP Strategy	1:40 – 1:45
Complete Walk Through • Teams • Call Tree • Tasks – Read by selected team lead/member	1:45 – 2:40
Discuss all improvements identified • Missing or invalid contacts? • Missing tasks? • Missing information?	2:40 – 2:50
Open Discussion/Questions	2:50 – 3:00

Communicate Effectively During a Crisis

It is a good idea to have a media or crisis communications plan in place for use during a disaster.

This ensures that you are managing your public image to the extent possible and practicable, and also will provide you with another communication vehicle for assuring your client agencies, staff and others that you are taking action. The media can be extremely useful during times of crisis, and it is to your benefit to have a plan in place that will allow you to distribute the most timely and helpful information that you have, as quickly as possible.



Communicate Effectively During a Crisis

A crisis communications plan should include and determine the following:

- **Description** of the issue and possible crisis.
- **Who** is responsible for **managing the crisis**?
  (Executive director, key staff person, etc.)
- **Who** is responsible for **investigating facts** during the crisis?
- What information is appropriately **public information**?
  *(What records/information can or will we share?
  What privacy and/or liability issues might we face?)*
- **Who will speak** for the organization? *(Board chair, executive director; name the alternates in order and by title)*
- What is our **policy statement** regarding the media? *(i.e., that it is our intent to provide full and accurate information in a timely fashion; that we recognize that reporters have jobs to do; that we view media interviews and public communications as valuable opportunities to tell our story and explain what we are doing; that we will establish ground rules about news conferences, coverage of meetings, etc.)*
- Maintain current file of local **media contacts**, with names, phone numbers, email addresses and fax numbers.
- **Maintain a media kit** with background information, brochures, contact lists, and any video or file footage about your organization. Absent a media or information kit, you should at minimum maintain a file of news releases with standard phrases in them that describe your organization, its background and its mission.

Having a media or communications plan in place ...allows you to distribute timely and helpful information quickly

Summary

Continuity planning is a significant but crucial effort for your nonprofit.

It is best to approach the planning in phases, in order to keep it at a reasonable pace while you and your staff are also meeting daily deadlines and overseeing other projects.

Take the first step by making a list and setting priorities, then develop strategies, a plan, contact lists and other information before conducting practice sessions. Document agreements with all groups that will be supporting your recovery; this will limit misunderstandings at time of disaster.

Keep your strategy, plans and teams healthy with quarterly updates and annual exercises. Spending time on continuity planning for your operations now will allow you to continue helping others even after a disaster.

This article was authored by Jack Holt, Manager, Business Continuity Planning, GlaxoSmithKline, for the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation with editorial assistance from Gazella Communications. This article has been developed as a service of GlaxoSmithKline. Like any other service, in spite of our best efforts the information may become out of date over time. Nothing in this article should be construed as the giving of advice or the making of a recommendation and it should not be relied on as the basis for any decision or action. GlaxoSmithKline accepts no liability for the accuracy or completeness or use of, nor any liability to update, the information contained in this article.

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North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation
Five Moore Drive
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
919.483.2140