

Business Continuity Planning Guidelines

for School Districts & Independent School Authorities

Business Continuity Management Program
Ministry of Education, British Columbia



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Introduction

What is a Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) outlines how **critical services** will be performed when a **business disruption** prevents **business-as-usual**.

Critical Services	Services that, if not performed, may result in unacceptable outcomes.
Business disruption	Operating requirements become unavailable to one or more services.
Business-as-usual	Standard procedures for performing services.

BCPs safeguard critical services, which mitigates risks (safety, assets, liabilities), and enables an organization to take control of a situation and resume services during a business disruption.

A business disruption may be limited to a single service or impact the whole organization.

- Loss of staff – employees required knowledge or capacity are unavailable.
- Loss of technology – specific tool or computer application are unavailable.
- Loss of dependency – specific services providers (internal or external) are unavailable.
- Loss of worksite – required worksite and co-located resources are unavailable.

Business Continuity Plans provide information and strategies to resume services using alternative procedures or resources. The BCP acts as a roadmap after a business disruption by identifying priorities and outlining how, who, and what is required to restore critical services.



It is significantly easier to prepare continuity options before a business disruption occurs. During a business disruption, key staff may be unavailable, and it may not be possible to acquire the resources required to overcome a business disruption in a timely manner.

What should be included in an organization's BCP

A Business Continuity Plan enables an effective and timely response to business disruptions:

1. What <u>services</u> must be performed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What <u>level of service</u> is required?✓ <u>When</u> do the services need to be performed?✓ What <u>impacts</u> must be avoided?
2. <u>How</u> are those services performed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What <u>resources</u> are required to perform services?✓ What <u>strategies</u> are available to support recovery?✓ <u>Who</u> is required to perform those services?
3. <u>How</u> will the plan be implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Who is <u>responsible</u> for implementing the plan?✓ How will <u>communications</u> occur?✓ What happens <u>after</u> the plan is implemented?

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These guidelines are provided to support resilience during COVID-19

These guidelines and templates are designed to support school districts and independent school authorities that do not yet have a robust Business Continuity Plan. As a result of following these guidelines and templates, school districts/authorities will have a BCP that is streamlined to document critical services to ensure their availability, and capacity to overcome unexpected challenges, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business Impact Analysis (BIA) templates will assist staff to identify and document information required to plan for an event. As a result, critical services will be identified.

Business Continuity Plan (BCP) templates will assist the organization to document and prepare response activities before an event occurs. As a result, services will be documented.

To continue planning for COVID-19, BCP Strategies (see **Develop Strategies**) should be specific to mitigating relevant risks, such as temporary loss of staff or worksite. As your BCP outlines procedures for delivering all critical services, additional organization-wide strategies can be developed and implemented to support cross-training and resources for alternate staff.

Templates:

[Business Impact Analysis \(BIA\)](#)

[Business Continuity Plan \(BCP\) – Section 3 Department](#)

This page will be updated with additional templates to support planning.

Additional templates and BCP documentation will be linked on this page to support plan development, preparedness, and implementation. This document may have been updated since the date listed in the footer - if this document was not recently downloaded, please [download the latest version of the Business Continuity Planning Guidelines.](#)

Incorporate strategies from the Integrated Planning Framework (IPF)

These guidelines prescribe a generic process for planning for business disruptions. Although this process is streamlined for services required during COVID-19, it should be assumed that additional services (beyond those outlined in the IPF) will be identified during the BIA process.

This document supplements, but does not substitute for, direction provided in the [Integrated Planning Framework](#) (IPF) and [Continuity of Learning Planning Guide for Teachers](#).

Services outlined in the IPF can be incorporated in your BCP by ensuring:

- IPF services and their interdependencies are identified as “critical services”
- New processes for IPF services are incorporated in your BCP’s critical service procedures
- Organization-wide strategies to support remote work are documented as BCP strategies

Refer to the [Integrated Planning Framework](#) for program-specific strategies.

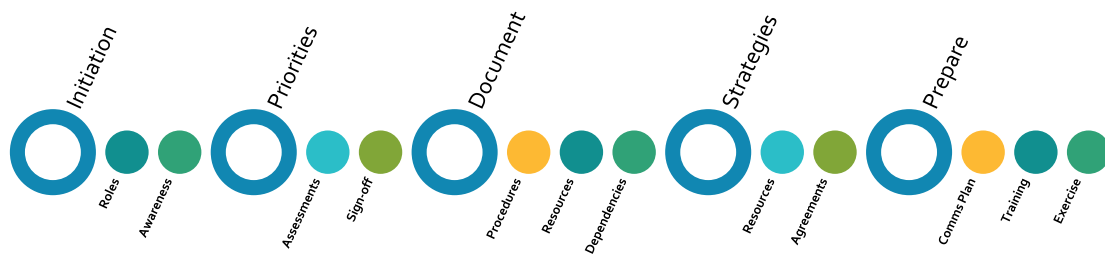
How to use these guidelines to develop a BCP

Following these guidelines as a checklist will result in a plan for all critical services in each department, general continuity strategies, and a process to implement and manage priorities.

Legend

- ☐ Action
- ☒ Consideration

This process seeks to identify, document, strategize, and prepare for business disruptions.



Business Continuity Planning can be constrained by several factors:

Risk	Mitigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of buy-in from program area staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assign senior lead to establish priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inadequate assessment or planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide general awareness for all staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning is limited to a single program area.	<input type="checkbox"/> Designate a “BCP coordinator” to manage and support the overall planning process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delays, duplication and inefficiencies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Designate “BCP Leads” for departments and lines of service to coordinate staff planning.

Coordination is required to develop and implement a BCP

All contributing staff are responsible for their part of the BCP. When activated, the BCP supports the organization to continue service – despite adverse and limiting conditions.

A top-down management structure is required to coordinate the development of a BCP.



Executive Lead

- ☐ Champion the BCP – why do we need it, what are staff roles, planning timelines
- ☐ Communicate roles/responsibilities to all staff supports increases participation.
- ☐ Assign planning roles and responsibilities to staff
- ☐ Approve timelines for assignments
- ☐ Approve priorities after the assessment occurs
- ☐ Approve strategies and risk mitigations
- ☐ During implementation, priorities may be fluid; decision making system required to coordinate activities and recovery, to meet objectives and reduce impact



BCP Coordinator

- ☐ Report to the Executive Lead and provide regular updates
- ☐ Develop, implement and monitor a project plan to develop the organization's BCP
- ☐ Develop/distribute planning assignments to Department BCP leads
- ☐ Roll-up priorities and BCP documentation from Department BCP leads
- ☐ Identify key risks and support the organization to develop continuity strategies
- ☐ Develop training materials that can be circulated to all staff
- ☐ Develop exercise materials for Department and Service BCP Leads



Department BCP Leads

- ☐ Complete tasks assigned by BCP Coordinator
- ☐ Assign planning tasks to program areas with critical services
- ☐ Roll-up priorities and BCP documentation from Service BCP leads



Program Area BCP Leads

- ☐ Complete tasks assigned by your Department BCP Lead
- ☐ Assign critical service staff to outline procedures and requirements
- ☐ Complete exercise assignments, when assigned by the Department BCP lead

In order for a BCP to enable the organization to successfully overcome an unexpected business disruption to any critical service, all departments must contribute to the plan.

Determine Priorities

The BCP focuses planning efforts on “critical services”

- To determine priorities, an assessment of all services is required
- Staff will be assigned to identify and assess the disruption impact for their services
- Identify services that are operating, or may be required, during the pandemic only
- “Critical services” are services that must be recovered within 15 days of a disruption
- Review and sign-off/approval of RTOs is required by Department and Executive leads

Department staff will outline services required during COVID-19

Using the [BIA template](#), staff will identify all services required during COVID-19:

- ☐ The BCP Coordinator should oversee the organization's BIA process
- ☐ Circulate the BIA template (or a SharePoint version) to each Department BCP lead
- ☐ Request Department BCP leads assign staff to complete the BIA template
- ☐ Only list department services that are or may be required during COVID-19

Business Impact Analysis (BIA) template:

[illegible]

Term	Description	Example
Business Function	Program Area of a Department	<i>Financial Services</i>
Sub-Function	A service that the Program Area provides	<i>Payroll</i>
Supporting Process	A description of how the service is performed	<i>Timesheets are entered/approved</i>
Impact Description	What might happen if the delay were longer?	<i>Staff pay may be delayed</i>
Time Sensitivity	Would impacts only occur at certain times?	<i>1st/3rd Tuesday</i>
Recovery Time Objective (RTO)	How many days can the service be delayed?	<i>2 business days</i>

Each service will be assigned a Recovery Time Objective (RTO)

Recovery Time Objective: *The amount of time that a service can be delayed before an unacceptable outcome may occur.*



Examples of impacts resulting from business disruptions for up to 15 days:

- “Recovery Time Objective” is when a service must be resumed to prevent major impacts
- Potential impacts range from life-safety to mild inconvenience.
- What kind of impacts the BCP will mitigate should be communicated to staff.
- Establishing a threshold for planning (eg. 15 days) determines what services to plan for
- All services, including low priority (e.g. 30 days RTO) must be identified/assessed
- ☐ Executive and department leads define criteria for “unacceptable” impacts.
- ☐ Program Area BCP leads will assign staff to list services required during COVID-19.
- ☐ Staff will describe “unacceptable” impacts of not performing the function for 15 days.
- ☐ Staff will also assign an RTO – as a maximum allowable downtime – for each service.
- ☐ Staff should request assistance during the BIA process if they are unclear of the process.

Priorities should be approved by departments and the organization

- A sign-off process ensures priorities are centrally organized and directed
- During sign-off, critically consider whether impacts are/not acceptable.
- Unacceptable impacts should be mitigated by an appropriate RTO.
- The BCP Coordinator will support the sign-off and transition to developing plans
- ☐ Department BCP will review/approved BIA results before returning them
- ☐ BCP Coordinator will combined BIA results for review/approval by the Executive Lead
- ☐ BCP Coordinator will roll-up services that have an RTO of up to 15 days (critical services)

Business Impact Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Services reflect to individual functions of the Program Area✓ Description (Supporting Process) and Time Sensitivity✓ Impact Description✓ RTO reflects the organization's tolerance for the Impact Description

Document Services

Once priorities are approved, create supporting documentation

- Departments will complete a [BCP Section 3 Department template](#)
- ☐ BCP Coordinator will provide a list of approved priorities to each Department BCP lead
- ☐ BCP Coordinator will provide a **BCP Section 3 template** to Department BCP leads
- ☐ Department BCP leads will assign priorities and a template to Program Area BCP leads
- ☐ Program Area BCP leads will task appropriate staff to complete template documentation

Define a required minimum level for each service

- ☐ Staff should describe the required level of service (e.g. “emergency requests only”
 - To avoid the impact, only a “reduced level of service” may be required
 - In some cases, a “regular level of service” may be required to avoid the impact

Document recovery procedures and key considerations

- ☐ Staff will document the procedure to perform the service
- ☐ Staff may be able to propose an alternate procedure
- ☐ Staff may advise additional considerations when recovering this service
 - Procedures should provide adequate detail; they may be implemented by other staff
 - Procedures may identify additional resource requirements
 - Single points of failure are steps in a process that do not have work-arounds

Document operating requirements and interdependencies

- ☐ For each service, staff completing documentation will list resource requirements
 - ☐ Staff (names and positions)
 - ☐ Worksite
 - ☐ Workspace Type
 - ☐ Connectivity
 - ☐ Technology (hardware/software)
 - ☐ Databases
 - ☐ Vital Records, Procedure Manuals, or Other Documents...
 - ☐ Other equipment
 - ☐ Internal dependencies
 - ☐ External dependencies
- ☐ If known, staff should identify alternatives, reducing future planning needs

An example may be provided to support consistent documentation

Below is an example of documentation for a critical service

5 days	Provide new/replacement computers to staff	
Always	Workstation Administration	IT Department
SERVICE DESCRIPTION		
Monitor for requests, configure and issue new workstations to staff		
IMPACT DESCRIPTION		
Staff are unable to perform their job duties resulting in subsequent delays		
MINIMUM LEVEL OF SERVICE		
Normal level of service		
PROCEDURE		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor for requests by email; Respond to confirm receipt of request 2. If replacement, provide instructions for receiving the previous computer 3. Assign workstation ID to staff member and department using the tracking sheet 4. If required, configure an email/user account in the Windows Server database 5. Notify the staff member when the workstation is ready for pick-up 		
RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major expenses require Director of Finance approval • Contingency budget for leases is available without approval • Ensure at least 20 workstations are available for deployment at all times • Leasing orders are placed in units of 10; orders take 2-3 weeks to fulfill 		
RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS		
	Primary/Requirement	Alternate/Workaround
Staff	John Doe, IT Administrator	Dave Hall, IT Manager
Worksite	123 Street Av	456 West Rd.
Workspace	IT Support Room	Classroom
Connectivity	Email, Phone, LAN	Phone
Technology	Windows Laptop	Smartphone
Databases	Windows Server	
Documents	None	
Other	Workstation Toolkit	
INTERDEPENDENCIES		
Requirement		Service Providers
Computer leasing		Vendor ABC

Plans should be reviewed by BCP leads for completeness

- ☐ Program and Department BCP leads will review completed BCP documentation
- ☐ Department BCP leads will compile staff contributions in the BCP template
- ☐ Department BCP leads will review, request clarification from Program Area BCP leads
- ☐ Completed Department BCP templates will be sent to the BCP coordinator for roll-up

Business Continuity Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Department and Program Area BCP Leads are listed as Recovery Managers✓ Priorities and RTO's are listed for each Department and Program✓ For each service in the BCP, the following are clearly documented:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Service, Recovery Time Objective (RTO), and Impact Description○ Minimum Level of Service○ Procedure○ Considerations○ Resource Requirements○ Interdependencies

Develop Strategies

Develop continuity strategies for the organization

A temporary loss of operating requirements can immediately prevent or limit service functions.

- Staff
- Worksite
- Telephone
- Email
- Network
- Databases/Applications

Developing generic strategies – and investing in the resources to enable them – is recommended to support services impacted by business disruption in all parts of the organization. Strategies should be centrally organized to reduce duplication/effort.

Strategies can range in cost and complexity:

1. Telework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide laptops to staff who perform critical service.• Provide online collaboration tools (eg. Office 365) to all staff• Document work-from-home protocols/procedures<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Using personal computers/devices○ Ergonomic self-assessment for your home office○ Employee reporting protocols (check in/out, etc.)
2. Cross-training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a process for cross-training staff for critical services• Develop a process for developing training materials
3. Service Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process for reviewing and adjusting Business Plans
4. Resource Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess critical services for short-term supply requirements• Identify alternate vendors/suppliers for critical supplies• Stock-pile resources required for critical services• Establish contingency agreements for goods/services with other suppliers
5. Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure service providers can meet established RTOs• Review Service Level Agreements (SLAs)• Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)• Request an audit record of their BCP or DRA (IT Disaster Recovery Plan)

Select strategies based on their cost and suitability

Strategies must be reviewed and approved by your executive lead.

Strategies should align to the following criteria:

1. Fiscal responsibility	Recovery strategies must be aligned with the organization's overall financial planning, objectives and priorities.
2. Suitability	Recovery strategies must support the business function Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) and organization's recovery strategies.
3. Reliability	Formal agreements or contracts are required for the use of externally sourced strategies, including critical dependencies.
4. Test Availability	Recovery strategies must be exercised in order to identify gaps in BCP documentation and validate the ability to support RTOs.

Acquire tools and form agreements to enable strategies

Once approved, strategies can be developed, acquired, or tentatively agreed to.

- ☐ Document all strategies in your BCP
- ☐ Review strategies and agreements annually for their suitability and availability
 - Documentation-based strategies should be stored in multiple formats
 - Procedure strategies must follow regular procurement processes and requirements
 - Agreements with new or existing contractors may be reviewed
 - Contingency agreements with new or existing suppliers may be formed

Prepare for Activations

Develop a Communications Plan to ensure coordination during activation

A Crisis Communications Plan should outline:

- Roles/Responsibilities
- Coordination – information, frequency, points of contact
- Activation procedures
 - Initial Response (Site Response or Self-Activation)
 - Activation Phase (Notification)
 - Operational Phase (Updates)
 - De-Activation Phase
- Develop and maintain a contact list
 - Primary/Alternate staff
 - Service Providers/Vendors
 - Site Contacts (School sites, tenants, partners, stakeholders)
 - Government Contacts (Local/Regional Authorities, First Nations, Ministries)

This page will be updated with additional resources.

Provide Training and Awareness for all staff

General training and awareness should be provided to all staff to increase their participation and understanding of the Business Continuity Plan.

Information provided to staff may include:

- What is a Business Continuity Plan (BCP)?
- Why do we want a BCP?
- When is the BCP implemented?
- What is my role in the BCP?

This page will be updated with additional resources.

Conduct Tabletop Exercises for the plan to identify gaps and increase staff readiness

Using a discussion-based format, a tabletop exercise considers how the plan would be implemented in response to an event. Exercises test the plan and documentation against a set of circumstances.

Tabletop exercises are intended to identify gaps in the plan and increase readiness for events. Although an exercise supports staff to increase their readiness, an exercise is not designed to test the readiness of participants.

This page will be updated with additional resources.

Activations & Resources

Additional planning and implementation resources will be provided

These guidelines are designed to support school districts and independent school authorities to develop a robust BCP for COVID-19. These guidelines streamlined a comprehensive BCP framework to document continuity strategies and critical services required during a pandemic.

Beyond COVID-19, additional assessment and planning is required to expand a BCP to ensure your organization is resilient when it resumes regular options. Future planning will involve:

- ☐ Conduct a risk assessment to identify additional planning scenarios
- ☐ Expand service assessment to all services, beyond those required now
- ☐ Expand their Crisis Communications Plan to prepare for additional events
- ☐ Develop an [Emergency Operations Center](#) to manage response to complex events

For more information, please contact the Ministry's Business Continuity Advisor by [email](#).

This page will be updated with additional resources.

Glossary of terms used in this document and associated templates

Branch	An operational unit of an organization (eg. a department).
Business Function/Unit	A service delivery unit of an organization (eg. a program).
Business Impact Analysis	A detailed and documented process designed to identify and prioritize business functions and workflow, which assigns a priority by assessing impacts that might result over time if a service were not performed due to a business disruption.
Business Priority Service	Business function or process that is not mission critical, but should it not be performed, could lead to the loss of a major government service.
Business Sub-Function	A procedure or deliverable provided (eg. "Hiring new staff")
Critical Services	General term that collectively refers to Business Priority and Mission Critical services.
Mission Critical Services	Functions and processes that, should they not be performed, could lead to loss of life or injury, personal hardship to citizens, major damage to the environment, or significant loss of revenue or assets.
Recovery Time Objectives	The amount of time that a service can be delayed before an unacceptable outcome may occur.
Risk Assessment	The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation.