

Lesson Overview

Continuity of Operations (COOP) is a Federal initiative, required by Presidential Directive, to ensure that Executive Branch departments and agencies are able to continue to perform their essential functions under a broad range of circumstances.

This lesson will introduce COOP, including:

- What COOP is and why it's important.
 - How COOP differs from Continuity of Government (COG).
 - The roles and responsibilities of key players in COOP planning.
 - Family support measures to take in case of COOP implementation.
-

What is COOP?

COOP is an effort within individual departments and agencies to ensure continuity of their essential functions across a wide range of emergencies and events.

- Today's changing threat environment and recent emergencies have increased the need for COOP capabilities and plans.
 - COOP planning is part of the fundamental mission of all Federal agencies.
 - COOP is a Federal initiative to ensure that Executive Branch departments and agencies can continue to perform their essential functions under a broad range of circumstances.
 - COOP is also "good business."
-

COOP Planning Considerations

FPC-65 describes the planning considerations and requirements for COOP plans. FPC-65 requires that all Federal Executive Branch agencies must:

- Be capable of implementing their COOP plans with and without warning.
 - Be operational not later than 12 hours after activation.
 - Be capable of maintaining sustained operations for up to 30 days.
 - Include regularly scheduled testing, training, and exercising of personnel, equipment, systems, processes, and procedures used to support the agency during a COOP event.
 - Provide for a regular risk analysis of current alternate operating facilities.
 - Locate alternate facilities in areas where the ability to initiate, maintain, and terminate COOP is optimal.
 - Take advantage of existing agency field infrastructures and give consideration to other options, such as telecommuting, work-at-home, and shared facilities.
 - Consider the distance of the alternate facility from the primary facility.
 - Include development, maintenance, and review of COOP capabilities using a Multi-Year Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP).
-

Benefits of COOP Planning

Agencies realize the benefits from COOP planning aside from preparedness. These benefits include the agencies' ability to:

- Anticipate events and necessary response actions.
- Adapt to sudden changes in the operational environment.
- Improve their performance through the identification of essential functions, work processes, and communications methods.
- Improve management controls by establishing measures for performance.
- Improve communication to support essential functions throughout the agency.

What COOP is Not

Ensuring the safety of all agency personnel is a critical element of COOP planning. However, COOP is not the same as an agency's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP). OEPs are intended to ensure the safety of personnel in the event of an incident inside or immediately surrounding an agency's building. For example, the OEP would be implemented in the event of a minor fire that required evacuating the building or if an emergency occurred outside the building that required sheltering in place.

Depending on the emergency, the COOP plan may be implemented at the same time as the OEP.

At the Federal level, COOP is also different from Continuity of Government—or COG plans. For Federal departments and agencies, the term COG is used to describe activities for specifically designated offices. COOP supports the continuity mission for all offices, including alternate facility/relocation missions and functions.

At the State and local levels, COOP and COG planning and operational activities are generally the same.

Why Develop a COOP Plan?

Aside from the requirements set forth in FPC-65, COOP planning is just good business. COOP planning requires agency personnel to review the functions that are truly critical to the agency. COOP planning also requires agencies to:

- Consider the threats that could impact the office and plan for them.
- Determine the vital information, personnel, and other resources required to continue the agency's essential functions.
- Plan for the safety of all personnel.

Who Should be Involved in COOP Planning?

COOP planning is a team effort. It involves personnel at every level of the organization including:

- Senior management.
- The COOP Program Manager.
- COOP planners.
- Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) personnel.
- Non-ERG personnel.

Agency Leaders' Role in COOP Planning

Overall, senior management is responsible for planning and ensuring that the agency is capable of carrying out each respective function related to COOP programs. These responsibilities include complete oversight of COOP:

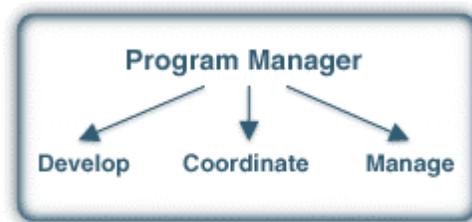
- Planning.
- Activation.
- Reconstitution.

Agency leaders may delegate many of their responsibilities. However, the overall accountability remains with the leadership.

The COOP Program Manager's Role in COOP Planning

The COOP Program Manager serves as the agency's coordinator for all COOP activities. The Program Manager has overall responsibility for developing, coordinating, and managing all activities required for the agency to perform its essential functions during any emergency or other situation that would disrupt normal operations.

When these responsibilities are taken in total, the COOP Program Manager is responsible for ensuring a "viable COOP capability" at the agency.



The COOP Program Manager develops, coordinates, and manages the response.

Role of ERG Personnel in COOP Planning

Persons designated as ERG personnel contribute to COOP planning by:

- Sharing their expertise as active members of, or advisers to, the COOP planning team.
- Familiarizing themselves with the COOP plan and their roles in it.
- Participating in COOP tests, training, exercises, and after-action reporting sessions.
- Preparing a personal "Go Kit" for COOP activation.
- Ensuring their families' safety and security in the event of COOP activation.
- Reporting to the alternate facility upon COOP activation.

Role of Non-ERG Personnel in COOP Planning

Even personnel not designated as ERG members during COOP operations may have a role in the planning process. These personnel can contribute by:

- Providing input on the execution of essential functions.
- Assisting in identifying and backing up vital records.
- Becoming familiar with the agency's OEP and COOP plans.
- Providing contact information.
- Ensuring that their families are prepared for emergencies.
- Being prepared to deploy to support the ERG, if required.

Family Support Planning

During a COOP situation, employees will need to focus on maintaining essential functions. This focus will be disrupted if the employees are also concerned about their families' safety and security.

Agency leaders should encourage all personnel to plan for their families' safety and security during COOP operations.

Prepare a "Go Kit"

It makes good sense to prepare for emergencies. All personnel should ensure that their families have a "Go Kit" that is readily accessible in case of an emergency. At a minimum, the family Go Kit should include:

- **Personal items and necessities**, including food and water, clothing, prescription medications, and other items that may be required for family survival.
- **Financial and legal documents** that cannot be replaced easily.
- **The name and phone number of an out-of-area contact.** It may be easier to call someone outside the area than to make local calls during an emergency. An out-of-area contact can relay messages about the location and safety of family members.

Develop a Plan

Emergencies can occur quickly, and a quick response can be the difference between life and death or serious injury. Therefore, it is important for employees and their families to develop a plan for responding in an emergency and discuss:

- The types of emergencies that are most likely to occur.
- How the family will get information about the emergency (e.g., Emergency Alert System broadcasts).
- What family members will do in each case.

If some family members are at school or work, find out about the emergency plans at those places as well.

Agencies' Role in Family Support Planning

During an emergency, employees and their families will appreciate knowing that the agency is concerned for safety. The COOP program should include:

- **Processes for activating an emergency information call-in number** for employees to get information about agency operations, pay and benefits, and other items of interest.
 - **A process for accounting for and tracking all employees.** As the COOP situation progresses, it may be possible to expand operations. It is important to be able to account for and track employees so they can be reached if needed.
 - **Provisions for providing guidance and assistance** to employees and their families. Anticipating questions and providing guidance will help employees focus on their work, while being assured that their families are taken care of.
-

Communicating During an Incident

Lessons from 9/11 showed that during an emergency, even basic communication can be neglected in the face of pressing decisions. The agency should develop a communications plan for all employees. The plan should:

- Incorporate regular communications to employees.
- Update information as necessary.
- Include procedures for securing the worksite.
- Include provisions for safeguarding vital records.

During COOP activation, a priority for **all** employees should be to contact family members to ensure them that they are safe.

Lesson Overview

All COOP plans have certain elements in common. Together, these elements give the COOP plan a reasonable chance of succeeding—or viability.

This lesson will cover the elements that make a COOP plan viable, including:

- Essential functions.
 - Delegations of authority.
 - Succession planning.
 - Alternate facilities.
 - Interoperable communications.
 - Vital records and databases.
 - Human capital.
 - A test, training, and exercise program.
 - Plans for devolution and reconstitution.
-

What is an Essential Function?

FPC-65 defines **essential functions** as those functions that enable an organization to:

- Provide vital services.
- Exercise civil authority.
- Maintain the safety of the general public.
- Sustain the industrial or economic base during an emergency.

In other words, essential functions are an agency's business functions that must continue with no or minimal disruption.

How Do You Identify Essential Functions?

To have a successful COOP plan, an agency must determine what its essential functions are by considering its customers and their needs. Assigning a priority to customer needs helps to distinguish between essential and nonessential needs—and thus, the agency's essential and nonessential functions.

When identifying essential functions, consider:

- Functions that **must** be continued in all circumstances.
- Those functions that cannot suffer an interruption for more than 12 hours.

Agencies must be able to continue essential functions within 12 hours and be capable of sustaining essential functions for up to 30 days.

Essential Functions May Be Established by Law or Presidential Directive

Some organizations are legally required to perform certain functions. Other functions may be mandated by Presidential Directive. Any function required by law or Presidential Directive should be considered an essential function.

The agency head may also identify functions as essential. Some essential functions may be defined by the agency's mission. Still other functions may be essential because they provide vital support to another agency.

Prioritizing Essential Functions

After identifying all functions that are essential to the agency, each function should be prioritized according to:

- Its relationship to and support for national-level essential functions, or the organization's essential functions, as appropriate.
- The criticality of the function.
- The likely COOP triggers and scenarios.

Sometimes, priorities may be situation-dependent. For example, the CDC's essential functions will be an extremely high priority in the event of a suspected biological attack or a pandemic than for widespread flooding.

Drivers of Essential Functions

The continuity of essential functions will be driven by the availability of:

- Trained personnel (human capital).
- Vital records and databases.
- Supplies.
- Equipment and systems.

Keep these "drivers" in mind when developing recovery timelines for essential functions.

Orders of Succession

Succession to office is critical in the event that the agency leadership is unavailable, debilitated, or incapable of performing their legally authorized duties, roles, and responsibilities.

Orders of succession provide for the orderly and predefined assumption of senior agency offices during an emergency in the event that any officials are unavailable to execute their legal duties. Like delegations of authority, orders of succession are not merely a COOP function. They should be developed to support day-to-day operations.



Order of succession flowing from the Director to the Assistant Director to the Associate Director. Orders of succession should be at least three deep.

Information Included in Orders of Succession

All orders of succession should include:

- The conditions under which succession will take place.
- The method of notification.
- Limitations on delegations of authority by successors.

The agency's General Counsel should review all orders of succession for legal sufficiency. All orders of succession should be maintained with the agency's vital records.

Delegations of Authority

Delegations of Authority are formal documents that specify the activities that those who are authorized to act on behalf of the agency head or other key officials may perform.

Delegations of authority document the legal authority for officials—including those below the agency head—to make key policy decisions during a COOP situation. Delegations of authority are required to ensure:

- Continued operations of agencies and their essential functions.
- Rapid response to any emergency situation requiring COOP plan implementation.

Information Included in Delegations of Authority

All delegations of authority state specifically:

- The authority that is being delegated, including any exceptions.
- The limits of that authority.
- To whom the authority is being delegated (by title, not name).
- The circumstances under which delegated authorities would become effective and when they would terminate.
- The successor's authority to redelegate those functions and activities.

Delegations of authority are not exclusive to COOP but are necessary for day-to-day operations. Delegations of authority for COOP should be determined **before** an emergency to ensure continued operations of critical functions.

Selecting Alternate Facilities

FPC-65 assumes that, if COOP activation is required, an agency's primary operating facility is unavailable and that essential functions will require relocating. The Circular requires all agencies to identify a location, other than the normal facility, that can be used to carry out essential functions in a COOP situation. Agencies should also identify business continuity-or devolution sites-in case the alternate facility is made inoperable.

Alternate facility selection should be based on an analysis of a combination of factors. Prioritizing the factors based on the organization's requirements is the first step in locating a suitable alternate facility.

Ensuring Interoperable Communications

Alternate communications provide the capability to perform essential functions, in conjunction with other agencies, until normal operations can be resumed. Interoperable communications must:

- Support the execution of the agency's essential functions.
- Ensure the capability to communicate internally and externally.
- Permit access to data, systems, and services.

Interoperable communications must also be:

- Redundant.
- Available within 12 hours of activation, or less, depending on the mission and requirements of the organization.
- Sustainable for up to 30 days.

Identifying and Safeguarding Vital Records

Every agency has documents, files, and other materials that are "vital" to the agency and its operations. These records may include:

- **Emergency operating records**, such as plans and directives, delegations of authority, or staffing assignments, and orders of succession.
- **Legal and financial records**, such as personnel records, payroll records, insurance records, and contact records.

COOP personnel may also require other materials and resources. If so, these materials and resources should also be considered "vital."

Components of an Effective Vital Records Program

Vital records programs have several components in common. These components range from establishing and assigning responsibility for the program to development of a records maintenance program and testing the program to ensure that it works as planned.

Human Capital

During COOP activation, agencies will have to perform their essential functions with reduced staffing. Human capital, then, is critical to ensuring the flexibilities required of ERG personnel. Agencies should ensure that all ERG personnel are adequately trained and cross-trained to enable the performance of all essential functions.

Tests, Training, and Exercises (TT&E)

TT&E includes measures to ensure that an agency's COOP program is capable of supporting the continued execution of its essential functions throughout the duration of a COOP situation. Tests, training, and exercises (TT&E) are an extremely important component of the overall COOP program.

TT&E programs should be a blend of test, training, and exercise events to ensure that it:

- Is comprehensive in that it includes all three components.
 - Reflect lessons learned from previous TT&E events.
-

Tests

A **test** is an evaluation of a capability against an established and measurable standard. The key word in this definition is **capability**. Tests are conducted to evaluate capabilities, not personnel. From a COOP perspective, tests are an excellent way to evaluate functions such as:

- Communications connectivities.
 - Alert and notification procedures.
 - Deployment procedures.
-

Training

Training:

- Is instruction in core competencies and skills and is the principal means by which individuals achieve a level of proficiency.
- Provides the tools needed to accomplish a goal, meet program requirements, or acquire a specified capability.

Training encompasses a range of activities, each intended to provide information and refine skills.

Exercises

Exercises are events that allow participants to apply their skills and knowledge to improve operational readiness. Exercises also allow planners to evaluate the effectiveness of previously conducted tests and training activities.

The primary purpose of an exercise is to identify areas that require additional training, planning, or other resources. The goal of exercises is improving an agency's mission capability.

There are several types of exercises. Exercise type should be selected based on the program goal.

Devolution

Devolution is the capability to transfer statutory authority and responsibility for essential functions from an agency's primary operating staff and facilities to other employees and facilities. Devolution is sometimes also called "fail over."

Devolution planning supports overall COOP planning and addresses catastrophic or other disasters that render an agency's leadership and staff unavailable or incapable of performing its essential functions from either its primary or alternate facilities.

Reconstitution

Reconstitution is the process by which surviving and/or replacement agency personnel resume normal agency operations from the original or replacement primary operating facility.

Agencies must identify and outline a plan to return to normal operations after agency leaders or their successors determine that reconstitution operations can begin.

Because reconstitution can be complex, reconstitution operations should be overseen by a Reconstitution Manager.

Lesson Overview

COOP planning is a team effort. The tasks required to develop; test, train, and exercise; and implement the COOP plan are far too many and complex for a single individual to complete.

This lesson will cover the roles and responsibilities for key COOP planning personnel. The lesson will also cover the responsibilities that every employee has for assisting with COOP planning and implementation.

Who Are the Key Players in COOP Planning?

There are several key players in COOP planning.

- Agency leaders
 - The COOP Program Manager
 - The COOP Planner
 - COOP planning team members
-

Agency Leaders

Senior agency leaders set the tone for COOP planning by:

- Establishing COOP planning as an agency priority.
- Formulating agency policy to support COOP planning.
- Appointing the COOP Program Manager.
- Identifying the agency's essential functions.
- Providing budgetary and other support for the planning process.
- Ensuring that systems are tested, staff is trained, exercises are conducted, and lessons learned are fed back into the plan.

In short, senior agency leaders make or break the COOP planning process.

The COOP Program Manager

The COOP Program Manager has responsibility for day-to-day COOP planning. He or she:

- Recommends personnel for the planning team.
 - Develops program goals, objectives, and milestones.
 - Develops and monitors the budget.
 - Coordinates the plan development.
-

COOP Planner

When possible, a COOP Planner should also be assigned to the planning team. He or she will:

- Have experience in emergency planning.
 - Have knowledge of agency operations—including the agency's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP).
 - Provide planning guidance to the Program Manager and the planning team.
 - Put Plan together.
 - Make recommendations for testing, training, and exercising; and revise the plan based on lessons learned.
-

COOP Planning Team Members

COOP planning team members should be selected based on their knowledge and experience in areas critical to COOP. The exact membership of the team will vary depending on the agency. However, personnel who are critical to any COOP plan include managers or other designees from:

- Operations identified as essential functions.
 - Information technology.
 - Communications.
 - Human resources.
 - Logistics.
 - Facilities.
 - General Counsel.
-

Other Employees' Responsibilities

Other employees will have responsibilities for COOP planning as well. Planning team members will coordinate with personnel in their offices to gather information; develop procedures; or identify vital records, files, and databases.

Planning team members in special offices, such as Human Resources or the Office of General Counsel may need assistance in reviewing policies, procedures, or parts of the plan itself to provide input on sufficiency and workability.

Role of Non-ERG Personnel in COOP Planning

Even personnel not designated as ERG members during COOP operations may have a role in the planning process. These personnel can contribute by:

- Ensuring that you understand your role should COOP implementation become necessary.
- Participating in tests, training, and exercising the COOP plan, as necessary.
- Ensuring that you and your family will be safe in an emergency that requires COOP implementation.
- Being prepared to deploy to support the ERG, if required.

You may be assigned other responsibilities as well, depending on the agency's needs.

Lesson Overview

Tests, training, and exercises are critical to ensuring that:

- Vital systems work.
- Personnel have the skills and knowledge they need to implement the COOP, if necessary.
- The plan works as intended.

This lesson will cover the reasons to test, train, and exercise. The lesson will also cover the types of tests, training, and exercises that are commonly used in COOP planning.

Objectives of the COOP Test, Training, and Exercise Program (TT&E)

FPC-65 requires all agencies to test, train, and exercise their COOP plans to assess, demonstrate, and improve the agencies' ability to execute their COOP plans. Among the objectives of the COOP TT&E program are to:

- Assess and validate COOP plans, policies, and procedures.
 - Ensure that agency personnel are familiar with COOP procedures.
 - Ensure that COOP personnel are sufficiently trained to carry out essential functions in a COOP situation.
 - Test and validate equipment to ensure both internal and external interoperability.
-

Why Test?

Testing is an important part of COOP readiness. By testing, agency personnel can tell if the policies and procedures work as they should, when they should. Testing is critical for:

- Alert, notification, and activation procedures.
- Communications systems.
- Vital records and databases.
- Information technology systems.
- Major systems at the alternate facility (e.g., power, water).
- Reconstitution procedures.

Other aspects of the COOP plan may also require testing based on the agency.

COOP Testing Requirements

FPC-65 requires testing of certain aspects of the COOP plan. The agency test program must include:

- Quarterly testing of alert, notification, and activation procedures.
 - Semiannual testing of plans for the recovery of vital classified and unclassified records and critical information systems, services, and data.
 - Quarterly testing of communications capabilities.
 - Annual testing of primary and backup infrastructure systems and services at alternate operating facilities (e.g., power).
-

COOP Training Requirements

Training familiarizes agency personnel with the essential functions that they may have to perform in a COOP situation. FPC-65 requires **annual**:

- COOP awareness briefings for the entire workforce.
- Team training for COOP personnel.
- Team training for agency personnel assigned to activate, support, and sustain COOP operations.

The training required by FPC-65 is **minimal**. When determining training needs, consider the policies and procedures that require implementation and the tasks to be performed as part of continuing essential functions. Develop and conduct training based on the actual training needs.

Types of Training

Before the COOP plan can be exercised, personnel must be trained so that they know what their responsibilities are and have the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Types of Training: Orientations

Orientations are usually the first type of training conducted. They are typically presented as briefings. Orientations are a good way to:

- Introduce the general concepts of the COOP plan.
 - Announce staff assignments, roles, and responsibilities.
 - Present general procedures.
 - Describe how the COOP plan will be tested and exercised and within what timeframes.
-

Types of Training: Hands-on Training

After familiarizing personnel with basic policies and procedures, hands-on training can:

- Provide practice in specialized skills (e.g., notification procedures).
 - Allow for practice of newly acquired skills.
 - Help maintain proficiency at infrequently used skills.
-

Exercises

Exercises serve to assess, validate, or identify problems for later correction, specific aspects of COOP plans, procedures, systems, and facilities.

The Goal of Exercises

The goal of exercising your agency's COOP plan is to prepare for a real incident involving COOP activation.

The broad goals of exercises are to:

- Discover planning weaknesses.
 - Reveal resource gaps.
 - Improve coordination.
 - Practice using the communication network.
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities.
 - Improve individual performance.
 - Improve readiness for a real incident.
-

Types of Exercises

After personnel are trained, you will be able to test the plan through exercises. There are several types of exercises that are commonly used to test COOP plans:

- Tabletop exercises
 - Functional exercises
 - Full-scale exercises
-

Tabletop Exercises

A tabletop exercise is a simulation activity in which a scenario is presented and participants in the exercise respond as if the scenario was really happening.

The scenario for a tabletop exercise can be presented orally by the exercise controller, in written text, or by audio or video means.

In a tabletop exercise, new information is presented as the situation unfolds, making the participants reconsider their previous decisions and plan their next actions based on the new information.

Typically, a tabletop exercise takes about 2 hours, including the postexercise debriefing.

When To Use Tabletop Exercises

Tabletop exercises are particularly useful to:

- Enable decisionmakers to walk through an incident and make decisions similar to those in an actual incident.
- Provide a forum for discussion of plans, policies, and procedures in a low-stress, low-risk environment.
- Resolve questions of coordination and responsibility.

It is particularly helpful to conduct tabletop exercises on new or newly revised plans before more wide-scale, higher-risk exercises are conducted.

Advanced Exercises

Other types of exercises are more advanced and include:

- **Functional Exercises.** Functional exercises simulate a function (e.g., alert, notification) within a real incident. Functional exercises test a single part of COOP activation to be tested independently of other responders.
- **Full-Scale Exercises.** Full-scale exercises test the agency's total response capability for COOP situations. These exercises are as close to reality as possible, with personnel being deployed and systems and equipment being implemented.

A solid, progressive exercise program takes time and careful planning—up to 18 months or more in the case of a full-scale exercise. Be sure to devote the time necessary to developing appropriate exercises to test your COOP plan.

What if Data Show Poor Performance?

Let the measurements speak for themselves. Show personnel how they are doing. Ask for, and offer explanations and work as a team to identify the "why" behind the poor performance.

Record performance accurately in after-action reports. Plan to address the "why" in future training, exercises, and/or other interventions.

Develop a Multi-Year TT&E Plan

FPC-65 requires that all Executive agencies develop a Multi-Year Test, Training, and Exercise Plan that addresses:

- COOP TT&E requirements.
- Resources to support TT&E activities.
- The COOP TT&E planning calendar.

The Multi-Year TT&E Plan will be described in more detail in a later lesson.

Lesson Overview

A COOP plan assumes that an agency's primary facility is unusable for some period of time. As such, COOP implementation involves the deliberate and preplanned movement of selected personnel to an alternate operating facility.

This lesson will present an overview of COOP implementation, including:

- The phases of implementation.
 - The decisionmaking process related to implementation.
 - Special issues related to devolution and reconstitution.
-

COOP Versus OEP

FPC-65 makes a distinction between emergencies that result in short-term unavailability of a facility and those that result in long-term unavailability.

- Emergencies, such as a hazardous materials incident, may require facility evacuation with little notice. These emergencies result in the activation of the Occupant Emergency Plan—OEP—but cause only a short-term disruption.
 - Emergencies that are so severe that an agency facility is unusable for a period long enough to impact normal operations, may require COOP plan implementation.
-

When To Implement the COOP Plan

Agencies should develop an executive decisionmaking process that:

- Allows for a review of the situation.
- Provides the best course of action for response and recovery.

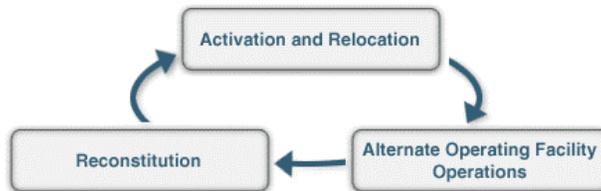
Following an established decisionmaking process will help to preclude premature or inappropriate activation of a COOP plan.

Implementation Phases

FPC-65 factors COOP implementation into three phases:

1. Activation and relocation
2. Alternate operating facility operations
3. Reconstitution

Each of these phases will be described on the next screens.

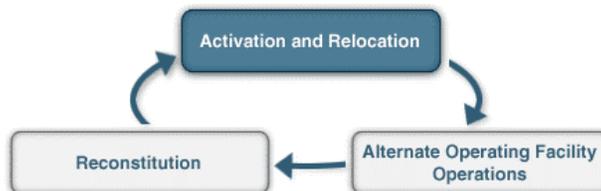


Three phases of COOP implementation: Activation and Relocation, Alternate Operating Facility Operations, and Reconstitution.

Phase I: Activation and Relocation

Phase I: Activation and Relocation encompasses the initial 12-hour period following activation of the COOP plan. During Phase I operations, agencies:

- Activate plans, procedures, and schedules to transfer essential functions, personnel, records, and equipment to alternate operating facilities.
- Notify appropriate offices and agencies of COOP activation, regardless of agency location and the time of activation of call-down procedures.



Three phases of COOP implementation: Activation and Relocation, Alternate Operating Facility Operations, and Reconstitution. Activation and Relocation is highlighted.

Activation

Agencies must be prepared to activate their COOP plans for all emergencies, regardless of warning period. Agencies must also plan to activate their COOP plans during both duty and nonduty hours.

Activation also requires notification of:

- Alternate facilities.
 - The FEMA Operations Center (FOC).
 - Other points of contact, as appropriate.
 - COOP essential and nonessential personnel.
-

COOP Team Deployment

COOP implementation will generate stress for the ERG as they prepare to depart quickly to the alternate facilities. Written procedures to guide the deployment process can reduce stress and ensure that no important concerns are overlooked during the transition.

Deployment Procedures

These procedures should specify:

- What the ERG should do and the materials that they should take to the alternate facility.
- Administrative requirements associated with travel to and check-in at the alternate facility.

Based on the threat level, procedures may allow for partial deployment of essential functions that are critical to operations.

Relocation

Relocation involves the actual movement of essential functions, personnel, records, and equipment to the alternate operating facility. Relocation may also involve:

- Transferring communications capability to the alternate facility.
 - Ordering supplies and equipment that are not already in place at the alternate facility.
 - Other planned activities, such as providing network access.
-

Devolution

In some cases, it may be necessary to activate the COOP plan through **devolution**. Devolution planning supports overall COOP planning. Devolution planning addresses emergencies that may render an agency's leadership and staff unavailable or incapable of supporting essential functions.

If devolution is necessary, prioritized essential functions are transferred to a devolution site, usually a regional or field office. Agency direction and control of essential functions is transferred to the devolution site.

Agencies are required to complete devolution planning as part of their COOP planning processes.



Devolution from Headquarters to the Devolution Site.

Special Issues for Devolution

Devolution planning involves several special issues.

- Personnel at the devolution site must be trained to perform the essential functions to the same level of proficiency as agency primary personnel.
- Vital records, documents, and databases must be available and up to date at the devolution site.
- Communications and information management systems must be transferred to the devolution site.
- Delegations of authority must include senior personnel at the devolution site.

Developing specific procedures for devolution during the COOP planning process will facilitate devolution should it become necessary.

Phase II: Alternate Operating Facility Operations

Phase II: Alternate Operating Facility Operations covers the period from 12 hours after activation up to 30 days. During Phase II, agencies will conduct essential functions from the alternate facility.

Prioritizing essential functions during the planning process is key to initial operations to ensure that the highest-priority functions are activated first. Lower-priority essential functions are then brought online as soon as possible.

Transition To the Alternate Facility

Written procedures to guide ERG members through the transition to the alternate facility will result in quicker COOP implementation. Issues that should be addressed by these procedures include:

- Minimum standards for communication and direction and control to be maintained until the alternate facility is operational.
- Activation of plans, procedures, and schedules to transfer activities, personnel, records, and equipment.
- Securing the primary facility and nonmovable equipment and records.

The transition to the alternate facility will occur more quickly if all needed equipment and administrative supplies are located at the facility before an emergency occurs.

Go Kits

Go Kits are packages of records, information, communication and computer equipment, and other items related to an emergency operation. Each ERG member should prepare Go Kits in advance and keep them up to date and available should deployment be necessary.

Kits should contain items that are essential to supporting the team member's operations at the alternate site.

Alternate Facility Operations

Operations at alternate facilities will vary widely depending on the agency and its essential functions. Despite this variability, there are some common issues that should be planned for to facilitate alternate facility operations. These issues include:

- Execution of mission-essential critical functions.
 - Establishment of communications to all critical customers.
 - Assignment of responsibilities to key staff.
 - Augmentation of staff if it is determined that initial staffing is inadequate.
 - Accountability for staff, including non-ERG personnel.
 - Development of plans and schedules for reconstitution.
-

Reception and Inprocessing

The COOP plan must establish a reception area and inprocessing procedures for deployed personnel. Personnel must know where to go to check in and receive assignment to their work spaces. Arriving personnel may also need information about hotels, restaurants, laundry facilities, and medical treatment facilities.

Inprocessing packets should be prepared in advance of COOP activation and provided to employees for inclusion in their go kits. The packets should include information, such as:

- Hours of operation.
 - Anticipated duration of the relocation, if known.
 - Safety and security measures.
 - The information line telephone number.
-

Personnel Accountability

COOP procedures must provide for accountability of deployed and nondeployed personnel. Accountability is critical to ensure that:

- All personnel are safe.
 - ERG members have arrived at the site.
 - Replacement personnel and augmentees can be identified quickly, when necessary.
-

Phase III: Reconstitution

Reconstitution describes the agency's processes to return as a fully functional entity in its primary facility or a long-term temporary facility.

Basic planning for reconstitution should take place concurrently with COOP planning. Specific reconstitution planning should begin as soon as the COOP is implemented.

Because reconstitution can be very complex, many agencies will designate a Reconstitution Coordinator whose job it will be to focus solely on reconstitution issues.

Reconstitution Tasks

Reconstitution involves a myriad of tasks. Among the primary tasks are:

- Determining that the agency's primary facility is suitable for normal operations to resume from that site.
 - Scheduling an orderly return to the facility.
 - Transfer of vital records, documents, and databases.
 - Transfer of communications capabilities.
 - Notification of all employees.
-

Reconstitution Resources: GSA

Part of reconstitution planning should involve the identification of resources to help:

- Determine the extent of repair or restoration required to make the agency's primary facility usable.
- Identify new space if the primary facility has been destroyed or will take an extensive period of time to repair.

The General Services Administration (GSA), or your State or local government facilities coordinator, can provide assistance in securing office space and procurement of furnishings, equipment, and services required to return agency operations to normal.

Reconstitution Resources: OPM

As your agency reconstitutes, there may be questions that arise involving personnel issues, such as:

- Pay for nondeployed personnel.
- Overtime pay for ERG members.
- Collective bargaining issues.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), or your State or local human resources, budgeting, or personnel office, will make a determination about payroll issues. OPM also has specialists available to assist agencies in addressing collective bargaining and other personnel issues.

Lesson Overview

After the COOP plan has been prepared and procedures have been developed, you should establish a program to maintain the agency's COOP capability.

This lesson will present an overview of the tasks that you should undertake to maintain COOP readiness.

- Training key personnel
 - Conducting periodic COOP exercises
 - Institution of a multiyear process to ensure the plan continues to be updated as necessary
-

Training

After the COOP plan is developed, all personnel who will be involved in COOP activities should be trained and equipped to perform their emergency duties.

Consideration should be given to cross-training team members. Cross training will ensure that the team is prepared to deal with the unusual demands that may arise when essential functions must be continued with a reduced staff.

COOP Training Plans

Effective COOP training plans will provide for:

- Individual and team training to ensure currency of knowledge and integration of skills necessary to carry out essential functions.
 - Refresher training for the ERG as it arrives at the alternate facility.
 - Training courses and materials designed to improve knowledge and skills related to carrying out COOP responsibilities.
-

Exercises

COOP plan maintenance should include a plan of progressive exercises. Exercises should test and improve COOP:

- Plans and procedures.
- Systems.
- Equipment.

Special consideration should be given to new agency personnel—especially those on the ERG—to ensure that they are able to perform their assigned tasks under simulated COOP conditions.

Developing an Exercise Plan

An effective exercise plan should include a variety of hazards and exercise types—tabletops, drills, functional, and full-scale. Full-scale exercises should simulate actual emergency conditions. Exercises should include the phase-down of alternate facility operations and return to normal operations.

A comprehensive debriefing and after-action report should be completed following each exercise. Lessons learned should be incorporated into revisions to the COOP plan, training plan, and exercise plan.

What to Exercise

Exercises should include the full spectrum of COOP operations:

- Alert, notification, and activation
- Relocation to the alternate facility
- Operations
- Logistical support, services, and infrastructure at the alternate facility
- Devolution
- Reconstitution

Exercises should also include the interface between the COOP plan and the agency's OEP.

Developing a Multiyear Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP)

To ensure that COOP plans always reflect current conditions, they should be reviewed as part of the training and exercise program. Changes to the agency's structure, essential functions, or mission should be made to the plan as they occur.

Long-term plan maintenance should be undertaken carefully, planned for in advance, and completed according to an established schedule.

Issues Involved in COOP Plan Maintenance

Major issues to be considered in COOP plan maintenance include:

- Designation of a review team.
 - Identification of issues that will impact the frequency of changes required to the COOP plan.
 - Establishment of a review cycle.
-

Designation of a Review Team

Plan maintenance should be undertaken formally by a team designated to oversee plan review and revision. Personnel should be selected for the review team for the same reasons as for the original planning team:

- Their knowledge of overall agency operations
- Their expertise in specific essential functions
- Their expertise in specific advisory areas (e.g., legal, HR)

The review team should meet after each exercise and on a regular basis throughout the year. Each meeting should be structured to review specific aspects of the plan and should include action items for review and revision as necessary.

Identifying Issues that Affect the COOP Plan

Most major issues affecting the COOP plan will result from lessons learned from exercises. Other sources of information for identifying major issues could come from:

- Presidential Directive, and State and local ordinances or directives, as appropriate.
- Direction from agency leadership.
- Policy or mission changes.
- Changes in technology or office systems.
- Changing customer needs.

Develop a strategy for methodically reviewing and identifying issues that could affect COOP planning or operations. Involve agency management, as necessary, for resolution of issues.

Establishing a Review Cycle

COOP plans, policies, and procedures should be reviewed at least annually. Additional reviews should be undertaken following each exercise and the testing of major systems. Issues raised in training may also trigger plan review.

Components of a Multiyear Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP)

A comprehensive strategy for plan maintenance includes:

- A reference to the general COOP planning requirements.
 - A description of the elements that ensure a viable COOP capability.
 - Identification of the resources required to establish each element.
 - Discussion of organization-specific management and policy issues (e.g., resource requirements, internal policies).
 - A schedule for establishing COOP capability and plan approval.
 - An endorsement sheet signed by the agency leader.
 - The budget required to accomplish the strategy.
-

Developing the COOP Maintenance Budget

Develop the COOP budget according to agency policies and procedures. When developing the budget, be sure to consider costs related to:

- Planning team time (if required by agency policy).
- Plan and procedure development.
- Alternate facility.
- Interoperable communications.
- TT&E.
- Logistics and administration.
- Security.
- MOUs/MOAs.

You may need to include other costs in your budget as well.

Distributing the COOP Plan

Initial distribution of the COOP plan is usually accomplished in one of two ways:

- Personnel may be provided a hardcopy of the plan.
- The plan may be distributed via the agency's intranet.

Because tracking changes to a hardcopy plan may be difficult or impossible, it is preferable to distribute the plan via the agency's intranet. If the intranet is used, be sure to alert agency personnel via email or other notification method when revisions are posted to the plan.
