Unit VI – Mission Essential Functions Exercise

This Unit is a quasi tabletop exercise designed to introduce you to the process of reviewing organizational missions, functions, and activities. Determining functions that are critical to an organization’s mission, identifying those functions which must continue, and prioritizing those functions based on a set of criteria. After identifying mission essential functions, techniques to assign personnel and resources, including equipment, systems, and vital records/databases will be presented. Please use the handout provided to you to complete this exercise.
**Unit Objectives**

At the conclusion of this unit, participants will be able to:

1. Perform review of organization’s mission and daily operational responsibilities.

2. Identify, select, and prioritize organization’s mission essential functions.

3. Determine requisite personnel levels and resource requirements to perform mission essential functions.
Classify organization’s operations into broad functional categories:

- Operations
- Information Technology
- Legal
- Financial
- Administrative (personnel)

Will vary by organization, use simply as a guideline for your review.

Review Mission and Daily Responsibilities

Be sure to utilize available documents and planning materials to ensure consistency with the normal operations of the organization such as: strategic plans, annual performance plans, budget documents, organizational charts, mission statements, etc.

Classify the organization’s operations into broad functional categories:

- Operations
- Information Technology
- Legal
- Financial
- Administrative (personnel)
- Planning

These Will vary by organization, use simply as a guideline for your review.
Identify Daily Functions and Support Activities

Common errors in the review of mission essential functions include:

1. Functions are overlooked as being insignificant.

2. Tools and resources required to complete functions are not reflected in the identification process.

3. Functions are grouped too broadly to effectively detail the support structure required.

4. Functions are described in such detail that it takes multiple pages to document simple functions. An unreasonable amount of detail slows down the process and restricts flexibility. After the COOP plan is validated through TT&E activities, it may be necessary to modify the functions.

5. The function identification process is seen as an end to itself. This is merely a tool to be used by the organization to determine what functions could and would be required in a COOP activation.

6. The function identification process is used by someone for ulterior purposes such as demonstrating how much their work unit does. These individuals should be gently reminded that the purpose of COOP planning is the continued performance of the organization’s critical operations.
Select Mission Essential Functions

Determine any pre-existing interdependencies, failure to do so may cause difficulty in the organization’s COOP plan execution. Remember that many functions simply cannot exist if their support structure is unavailable. The selection of the organization’s functions will be based on both its normal operations and its responsibilities in an emergency response.

One of the most difficult tasks in the COOP planning process is determining a function to be non-essential. The main reason for this is that individuals assume that since in day-to-day operations they are responsible for that function, by nature of the selection process, they are also non-essential. This is not accurate. Personnel feel that their jobs may be in jeopardy if their assigned functions are not selected for inclusion in the COOP plan, this is also not accurate. Each organization has the responsibility to make this process non-controversial. Senior managers are encouraged to lead this process due to the difficulties involved with the selection of the mission essential functions. Communication of the importance of every position in the organization, followed by an explanation of why certain functions are deemed mission essential usually helps restore personnel morale and will garner greater support for the COOP planning process.

During this segment you should:

- Beware of Single Points of Failure – functions where performance relies on one specific resource or activity.
- Planning efforts should focus on that critical area and attempt to rectify the situation through redundancy.
- Determine organizational unit responsible for each function’s performance.
- Separately list each function.
PRIORITIZE MISSION ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Prioritize Mission Essential Functions

Another major challenge is determining the priorities of an organization. In some cases statute or ordinance may require one function be restored first. In other cases, one function may be the support structure for many other functions. Priority order should be given to any function with life or safety issues involved.

During this segment you should:

• Determine the functions that must be recovered immediately (without interruption).

• Rank others in order of restoration – each function cannot be equally important.

• Insert each function in priority order in the table on the Exercise Handout.
Determine FTE for Functions

This process should be coordinated with management to ensure appropriate staffing for each function. Assignments should generally be between 20 and 25 percent of the organization’s normal staff levels. Use this figure only as a guideline – each organization’s mission essential functions will determine this number. Based on the priority of the functions, roster assignments will also be in one of two categories – advance team and COOP team. The advance team should be small in numbers and has the collective responsibility to prepare an organization’s COOP response to an alternate facility. The members should have greater knowledge of the organization’s operations and functions and greater technical skills to assist in preparing the alternate facility for emergency operations.

During this segment you should:

- Determine manpower hours for each function for one 24-hour period.
- Divide by operational hours anticipated for a COOP activation considering that most responses will be one 12-hour shift.
- Assign personnel levels based on calculation.
- Insert in appropriate cell on table.
Roster Appropriate Personnel

There are many ways to assign personnel to perform the functions. Each organization should use a process which best accommodates their operations. The personnel assigned to a COOP team form the nucleus of the relocation force which will be called upon to accomplish the mission essential functions during a COOP activation. An advance team should be established and rostered with staff with the requisite skills to initiate a COOP activation and prepare the alternate facility for the remainder (majority) of the COOP team. The other COOP team members should also be selected based on their general knowledge and skills.

During this segment you should:

- Roster assignments should be based on the knowledge and skills of the individual.
- Each team member should have the authority to perform mission essential functions.

Note: COOP training should be provided to ensure currency of knowledge and integration of skills necessary to implement the COOP plan and perform mission essential functions.
Determine Requisite Resources for Functions

Each mission essential function should be examined to determine what, if any, special or unique equipment or resources will be necessary to ensure its performance. In addition, vital records and databases should also be included.

During this segment you should:

- Identify minimum information that must be readily accessible during a COOP activation to assure mission essential functions are performed properly.

- Determine what resources are required to perform the mission essential functions – office and computer equipment, network systems and software, specialized communications system, etc.

*Note:* Some vital records and databases may not be used day-to-day – statutes, authorities, contact numbers, etc.