# THE CONTINUITY PLANNER

## FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## Cyber Security COOP Tips

- Focus on how your agency can maintain operations if its IT systems, networks, or data are compromised.
- Create detailed plans identifying which critical systems must be restored first, establishing secure methods and setting up backup systems and data recovery procedures.
- Outline how your agency will communicate internally and externally during a cyber-attack.

## Continuity Working Group (CWG)

The CWG is in the process of scheduling the first meeting. If you are interested in participating in the CWG, please click the link below to add your name to the list. The link will close February 28, 2025.

https://forms.gle/G87rqwMHsFLtjYYV8

## Upcoming Course

L/1301 Continuity Planning

March 18th-19th, 2025

Orlando Operations Center
110 George Desalvia Way
Orlando, Florida 3280

Registration available in SERT TRAC.

Submit any questions to:
COOP@em.myflorida.com

## YOU SPOKE, I HEARD YOU

There were several inquiries from agencies asking how they can improve their continuity plan. A new continuity plan assessment tool has been developed to assist with a more strategic view for reviewing your COOPs. The review tool is divided into sections according to the solution areas: Staff and Organization, Equipment and Systems, Information and Data, and Sites.

There is a 10-point scoring system. The progress areas are numerated and colored coded: No Progress-Limited Progress is red; Moderate Progress is yellow; Substantial Progress-Objective Achieved is green. The summary page will calculate and provide a highlighted color-coded score. The COOP crosswalk will be revised to correlate with the assessment tool. The pilot will begin with the 2024 plans.

## Pandemic Preparedness and Continuity Plans

Integrating health emergencies into Continuity of Operation Plans (COOPs) is essential for ensuring state agencies can continue critical operations during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the need for applicable, flexible, and adaptable plans to address the disruptions caused by widespread health emergencies. Here are several key considerations and lessons from COVID-19 that can be integrated into COOPs:

1. **Clear Roles and Responsibilities**
   - **Lesson:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was often confusion regarding who was responsible for what within agencies, especially concerning health protocols, employee safety, and public health guidelines.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should clearly define roles, responsibilities, and procedures for responding to health emergencies. This includes identifying key decision-makers and confirming that clear lines of authority and communication are well-established.

2. **Remote Work Capabilities**
   - **Lesson:** The pandemic revealed that several state agencies were not prepared to transition quickly to remote work, leading to productivity loss and organizational challenges.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should integrate strategies for remote work that guarantee essential operations are up and running even when employees can't physically be in the office. This includes investing in IT infrastructure, ensuring data security, and providing employees with the tools necessary to work from home. Plans should include how to maintain communication and collaboration remotely.

3. **Health and Safety Protocols**
   - **Lesson:** Some agencies had a hard time developing and implementing health and safety protocols during the pandemic which led to outbreaks and employee shortages.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should have clear guidelines for responding to health emergencies, including social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements, cleaning and sanitation procedures, and health screenings. These protocols should be adaptable to the growing nature of health threats, such as new variants of a virus.

4. **Supply Chain Resilience**
   - **Lesson:** The pandemic disrupted global supply chains, affecting the ability of agencies to obtain critical supplies.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should incorporate plans to address supply chain vulnerabilities and identify alternative suppliers and sources for critical goods and services.

5. **Employee Health and Well-being**
   - **Lesson:** COVID-19 highlighted the need to support employee well-being and mental health as they dealt with illness, isolation, stress, and uncertainty.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should prioritize employee health and well-being, offer mental health resources, flexible work schedules, and support for those affected by the pandemic (sick leave or family leave policies).

6. **Post-Emergency Evaluation and Updates**
   - **Lesson:** After the initial crisis of COVID-19, many agencies failed to immediately review and update their response plans based on the lessons learned.
   - **Integration:** COOPs should include a post-emergency evaluation process that reviews the effectiveness of the plan during the crisis. This evaluation should lead to updates and improvements to make sure agencies are prepared for future health emergencies.

Incorporating health emergencies into COOPs through lessons learned from COVID-19 is vital to safeguarding organizational resilience. Integrate clear roles, remote work capabilities, safety protocols, communication strategies, and scenario-based training to strengthen the agency's ability to continue operations during a health emergency. Flexibility and continuous evaluation are key to adapting to continuous changes in health threats.