

## **Additional Explanations on Determining Functions and Processes**

There is no one way to identify essential functions. However, here is one approach, which focuses on the organization's functions and their criticality. This can be modified for context into a four-step approach.

- 1) Identify all functions;
- 2) Identify essential functions;
- 3) Prioritize those functions; and
- 4) Determine essential function resource requirements.

### **1. Identify All Organization Functions**

The mission statement clearly outlines the basic purpose of the organization and is the first place to look to determine essential functions. Existing Administrative Procedures, rules and reports on operations usually offer a good starting point for identifying various functions.

Once all the functions are identified for Business Continuity planning purposes, narrow the list to only the essential functions. This can be accomplished by referring back to the organization's mission and considering the beneficiaries of the function. For example, if other organizations or individuals are dependent on a particular function to continue their operations, then the function is probably an essential function.

### **2. Identify Critical Processes and Services**

After the essential functions are determined, examine the processes and services that support them. Essential functions and their supporting processes and services are intricately connected. Each essential function has unique characteristics and resource requirements, without which the function could not be sustained. Those processes and services described for each function that are necessary to assure continuance of an essential function are considered critical. Often, critical processes and services vary depending upon the emergency or if they have a time or calendar component.

### **3. Identify Priority of Essential Functions**

Once all essential functions and their supporting critical processes and services have been identified, prioritize the functions according to those activities that are pivotal to resuming operations when a catastrophic event occurs. Prioritization requires determination of the following:

- Time criticality of each essential function; and
- Sequence for recovery of essential functions and their critical processes.

An essential function's time criticality is related to the amount of time that function can be suspended before it adversely affects the organization's core mission. Time criticality can be measured by either recovery time or recovery point objectives. **A recovery time objective (RTO)** is the period of time within which systems, processes, services, or functions must be recovered after an outage. **A recovery point objective (RPO)** is more specific to information systems. It is the amount of data that can be lost measured by a time index. Thus, an RPO of one hour means that the last hour of data before the failure will not be recovered. Not all processes have RPO's, and some processes can have both a RPO and a RTO. During Business Continuity planning, organizations will primarily be focusing on RTO, but it is important to understand RPO and incorporate RPO information into the BCP where necessary.

Deciding which essential function should be restored first in a crisis would be impossible without also considering its related critical processes and services. Critical processes or services are those that must be resumed soon after a disruption, generally within 24 hours. By contrast, secondary processes or services do not need to be resumed as quickly after a disruption.

### **4. Identify Critical Data Needs**

The protection of vital records, systems, and equipment, including the ability to access and use such records are a central part of planning. Examples of vital records include emergency plans and documents,

staffing assignments, and selected program records needed to continue critical operations. In addition, legal and financial records, as well as contractual obligations are vital records that may be maintained. Vital records and systems include any IT applications or systems that are necessary for the Department to perform its minimum essential functions.

#### **5. Protection of critical data**

The next step after identification of vital records is determination and selection of protection methods. This necessitates first looking at the current methods of protection and preservation. The routine maintenance program for the records in question may be sufficient for the protection of information in the event of a disruption to critical processes and services. However, the effectiveness of the protection method should always be evaluated in light of continuity concerns. Your team should look at the current backup and retention schedules for each vital record and ask if the files should be backed up more often or retained for greater periods. Another measure to consider is the replication of data or of a server in an alternate facility or scanning paper records. The team should also consider storing duplicate files off-site, if they are not currently so stored.