

Continuing Vital Mission Operations After a Disaster: The Booz Allen Continuity Planning Tool

Federal agencies often struggle to create comprehensive plans for continuing operations following a disaster, in part because they are missing a proven roadmap for identifying mission-essential functions required to reconstitute their operations. By standardizing processes and integrating planning activities, Booz Allen Hamilton's new Continuity Planning Tool helps agencies put in place strategies for assurance and resilience that can be exercised, tested, and continuously updated to ensure compliance with government directives and goals.

Need for Integrated Continuity of Operations Planning

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, a large defense agency needed to create an enterprise-wide mission assurance plan that integrated its various continuity plans for people, processes, and technology. However, the agency did not have a standard approach to planning, and so each of its different plans—for protecting physical infrastructure, IT recovery, business continuity, etc.—were developed in isolation by personnel in different offices. Documents were typically compiled in Microsoft® Word or Excel formats, which did not allow for plan integration or coordination. In addition, mission priorities identified in the plans were not linked to customer needs, nor was there an overarching exercise program to test the plans' effectiveness.

Online Continuity Planning Tool

The agency asked Booz Allen to help develop a process for creating, integrating, testing, and updating plans across all of its organizations. Booz Allen leveraged capabilities from across the firm to assemble a team that included expertise in assurance and resilience and information technology, as well as in-depth understanding of government requirements outlined in Federal Continuity Directives and documents.

Working with the agency's leaders, Booz Allen consultants developed the Continuity Planning Tool (CPT), a secure online planning tool that standardizes content, format, and databases for plans supporting Continuity of Operations (COOP), Business Continuity Planning, and IT Disaster Recovery. The CPT guides users in identifying and prioritizing Mission Essential Functions and National Essential Functions performed by their offices. Using risk management methodologies, the tool also helps prioritize these essential functions according to their criticality and the agency's objectives for recovery time.

Among its key features, the CPT:

- Links facility disaster preparedness plans, critical employee lists, alert and notification rosters, and senior leadership COOP plans

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- Allows leadership and planners to quickly analyze and understand the impact if the agency loses a facility, information, equipment, activity, or operation
- Has automated metrics that measure completion percentage and milestone dates for all parts of organizational continuity plans.

Today, the defense agency has more than 144 active planners who ensure that their continuity plans are regularly updated and exercised. During a crisis, agency leaders have immediate access to a vast collection of information about their people, facilities, capabilities, partners, and customers. They understand a function's criticality, loss impacts, locations affected, recovery time objective, and customer impacts. They can tap into critical information about employees, points of contact, alternate locations, interdependencies, internal and external systems, communications requirements, and vital records. The resulting information-rich continuity plan enables the agency to quickly reconstitute its mission-essential functions to support customers and mission partners.

Helping Federal Agencies Be Ready for What's Next

While an agency's mission-essential functions may not change, the people, systems, and facilities supporting those functions often do. That's why it is critical for agencies to have tools that enable them to efficiently update their planning information on a regular basis. CPT provides that capability.

CPT is now being adopted by other defense and civilian agencies, many of which have found that its value

goes beyond continuity planning. For example, CPT can help agencies with Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) planning because it links offices and facilities with their mission-essential functions. CIOs and technology staff can use CPT to guide their IT disaster recovery planning because CPT identifies the mission functions supported by an organization's IT systems. Agencies also are using CPT to inform budget planning, and certification and accreditation activities.

Booz Allen continues to enhance CPT with new capabilities, such as Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) applications. And so today, CPT serves as a valuable tool in our suite of continuity planning solutions and services. Our consultants tailor CPT and all of our solutions to address the specific needs of each customer, working to ensure that federal agencies can continue vital mission operations following a disaster.

Ready to Help You

Our work on the Continuity Planning Tool is just one example of how collaboration with Booz Allen's strategy and technology consultants can help government leaders create effective continuity plans and achieve mission goals. Our consulting teams draw from a wide range of capabilities in assurance and resilience, information technology, and system development, as well as in-depth knowledge of government operations and requirements. To learn more about the know-how behind this project's success and how Booz Allen's CPT can help your team be ready for what's next, visit www.boozallen.com/defense.

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