A school bus with a child getting into it

Description automatically generated

PREFACE

The Arizona Department of Education developed this guidance and instruction document in good faith as a preparedness tool for Arizona schools and districts. Guidance contained within this document utilizes state and federal planning resources; US Department of Education REMS Continuity of Operations (COOP); Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for K-12 Schools; Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA’s) Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG101) 2018, and the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs COOP guidance. In the current format, this guidance is public information; however, schools and districts should be aware of the need to protect specific emergency planning information and should redact information as necessary for the safety of the school or district. The instructions contained in this document align with the ADE COOP Template and should be used by schools and districts as they adapt the template to their schools and districts.

Arizona would like to recognize the individuals who shared their valuable time and expertise in the development of the COOP Template. We also thank those who provided counsel and insight during the development process.

The COOP template was first developed in 2015 and published in 2016 with the help of staff from Arizona Department of Education, Arizona School Risk Retention Trust, Buckeye Elementary School District, Cave Creek Unified School District, Paradise Valley Unified School District, Scottsdale Unified School District. The template was originally adapted from the Texas School Safety Center School District Continuity of Operations Plan template.

The template was reviewed and updated in 2023 to align with the FEMA Continuity Guidance Circular from February 2018. The project planning team consisted of staff from Arizona Department of Education, Arizona School Risk Retention Trust, and Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council. In 2024, the COOP template and the guidance document (this document) were updated to align the two documents and provide instructions to assist schools and districts with completing the COOP template.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[introduction 4](#_Toc187769644)

[HOW TO USE THE COOP GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE INSTRUCTIONS 5](#_Toc187769645)

[CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLANNING guidance 6](#_Toc187769646)

[DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN OF YOUR COOP PLAN ANNEX GUIDANCE 10](#_Toc187769647)

[BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS 11](#_Toc187769648)

[Continuity personnel 14](#_Toc187769649)

[ORDERS OF SUCCESSION 15](#_Toc187769650)

[DELEGATION OF AUTHORITIES 16](#_Toc187769651)

[CONTINUITY COMMUNICATIONS 17](#_Toc187769652)

[CONTINUITY PHASES 18](#_Toc187769653)

[BUDGETING AND ACQUISITION OF RESOURCES 22](#_Toc187769654)

[ESSENTIAL RECORDS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS 23](#_Toc187769655)

[HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 25](#_Toc187769656)

[TESTING, TRAINING, AND EXERCISING THE PLAN 26](#_Toc187769657)

[Plan and program Maintenance 27](#_Toc187769658)

[APPENDICES 28](#_Toc187769659)

# introduction

The Arizona Department of Education’s (ADE’s) Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) *Guidance and Instructions for COOP Plan Annex* is provided to schools, school districts, and charter organizations in Arizona for the purpose of being used as a guide for the format and content of a standard COOP. This template guides the development of the COOP by incorporating the traditional elements that may be considered for inclusion in the development of a school, school district, or charter organization COOP. The ADE *Guidance and Instructions for COOP Plan Annex* (this document) was designed to be used in conjunction with ADE’s *Template for School/District COOP Plan Annex*.

The school or district COOP Plan Annex is an effort to ensure that essential functions continue to be performed during a wide range of disruptions to routine operations, including localized infrastructure outages and natural, technological, or human-caused disasters. A plan may incorporate all or some of the essential elements of a COOP when first developed. However, identifying and defining essential functions to include essential personnel to carry out those functions should be a priority during plan development.

In the current format, this document and the template document are public information. However, once the template is completed and customized for use by your school or district, you should consult your school’s/district’s legal counsel regarding the confidentiality and exemption of your district’s COOP from public release.

Whole Community Engagement is a guiding principle in continuity planning. Involving all school/district departments and community partners (e.g., key vendors, families, students) in the planning process will strengthen the continuity plan. It is advantageous to organize a planning team for the development of your COOP to include, but not limited to, directors of essential departments in your organization and key school/district points of contact. It is also beneficial to involve persons with disabilities and other access and other functional needs and those from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds to the planning team. Of course, being successful in plan development requires the support of senior leadership from your school, district, or charter organization.

If electing to use the ADE *Template for School/District COOP Plan Annex*, it is imperative that your COOP Plan Annex represents what your school, district, or charter organization does to ensure the continuity of essential functions during disruptions during the traditional school calendar.

# HOW TO USE THE COOP GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE INSTRUCTIONS

Getting Started:

* Open these two documents:
  + *Guidance and Instructions for COOP Plan Annex* (this document)
  + *Template for School/District COOP Plan Annex*
* It will be helpful for the plan writer to have this document open on one computer monitor/screen while completing the template document on another computer monitor/screen or having them both open side by side on one monitor.

General guidance on using this *Guidance and Instructions for COOP Plan Annex:*

* The text under each heading provides general COOP guidance on the topic and a description of the information that should be captured in the plan section, and, in some cases, provides step-by-step instructions for completing the sections.
* When step-by-step instructions are included in the section, it can be identified by a text box that looks like this:

**Sample - ADE COOP Template Instructions**

General guidance on using the *Template for School/District COOP Plan Annex*:

* All gray boxes are designed to type the name of the school or school district into the field. The gray boxes will disappear once text is typed into the box.
* The template includes brackets around suggested information but must be customized to the corresponding school or district. The exception to this is tables. Table cells that are left blank are meant to be filled in by the school or district.
* There are standard, administrative plan sections at the beginning of the template. The plan writer should carefully review these sections, make any necessary changes, and type the name of the school or district into the gray box. These sections include Security and Privacy Statement; Promulgation Statement; Record of Changes; Record of Distribution; Training, Exercise, and Engagement Activity; Introduction; Purpose; and Scope.
* Change the cover page to match the name of school or district, date, and branding and logos from your school or district.
* Change the page headers to include the name of the school or school district.
* Change the font and colors throughout the plan to match the branding and logos from your school or district.
* Ensure you refresh the Table of Contents before finalizing the document.
* The school or school district plan writer may wish to add or remove narrative as appropriate. They may also add additional sections and appendices as necessary to ensure the content and intent are appropriate for the school or school district.
* If additional figures, charts, and tables are added, ensure:
  + Figures are labeled and Alt Text is included for screen readers.
  + Charts and Tables are labeled and in sequential order as they appear in the document.

# CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLANNING guidance

National preparedness efforts, including planning, are now informed by Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8, which was signed by the president in March 2011 and describes the nation’s approach to preparedness. This directive represents an evolution in our collective understanding of national preparedness, based on the lessons learned from school incidents, wild land fires, terrorist events, and other experiences. PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas:

1. **Prevention -** for the purposes of this guide, means the capabilities necessary to avoid, deter, or stop an imminent crime, or threatened or actual mass casualty incident. Prevention is the action schools take to prevent a threatened or actual incident from occurring.
2. **Protection -** means the capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters. Protection focuses on ongoing actions that protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, networks, and property from a threat or hazard.
3. **Mitigation -** means the capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an event or emergency. In this document, “mitigation” also means reducing the likelihood that threats and hazards will happen.
4. **Response -** means the capabilities necessary to stabilize an emergency once it has already happened or is certain to happen in an unpreventable way; establish a safe and secure environment; save lives and property; and facilitate the transition to recovery.
5. **Recovery -** means the capabilities necessary to assist schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment.

In the broader PPD-8 construct, the term “prevention” refers to those capabilities necessary to avoid, prevent, or stop a threatened or actual act of terrorism. The term “prevention” also refers to preventing imminent threats. Emergency management officials and emergency responders engaging with schools are familiar with this terminology. These mission areas generally align with the three timeframes associated with an incident: **before, during, and after.**

The majority of Prevention, Protection, and Mitigation activities generally occur before an incident, although these three mission areas do have ongoing activities that can occur throughout an incident. Response activities occur during an incident, and Recovery activities can begin during an incident and occur after an incident. Development of a COOP Functional Annex is a vital part of preparedness.

It is important as schools/districts plan for and execute response and recovery activities through their emergency response plan; they should use the concepts and principles of Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5, National Incident Management System (NIMS). One component of NIMS is the Incident Command System (ICS), which provides a standardized approach for incident management, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. By using ICS during an exercise or incident, schools/districts will be able to effectively work with the responders in their communities. For more information on NIMS and ICS visit the FEMA website.

Continuity of operations focuses on the ability of a school or district to quickly resume or continue essential functions during any type of emergency or disaster. The emphasis is on critical resources that support essential function operations. There are six critical resources that are considered while planning for continuity of operations:

* Staff
* Supplies/equipment
* Space (i.e., facilities)
* Systems
  + Information technology
  + Communications
* Essential records

A COOP plan is a functional annex to and supports a school’s/district’s emergency operations plan (EOP). It is developed to ensure that essential functions continue during an emergency and its immediate aftermath. Essential functions may include business services (e.g., payroll and purchasing), communications (e.g., internal and external), facilities maintenance, safety and security, and continuity of teaching and learning. Essential functions will be organized according to school/district functional areas, which will be discussed in further detail in this document.

The COOP Plan Annex is intended to:

* Set priorities and describe how a school or district will ensure that essential functions continue during an emergency and its aftermath.
* Ensure students receive applicable related services (e.g., nutrition services) in the event of prolonged closure.
* Guide the continuation and/or restoration of essential functions within 12 hours of activation.
* Sustain essential functions for up to 30 days or until normal or standard operational status is achieved.

The COOP planning team should consider the following when developing the goals, objectives, and continuity strategies in the annex:

* How the COOP annex is designed, so that it can be activated at any time and sustained for up to 30 days.
* How the COOP annex will set priorities for re-establishing essential functions, such as restoration of school/district operations, and maintaining the safety and well-being of students and the learning environment.
* How the COOP annex will ensure students receive applicable related services in the event of a prolonged closure.

The ArizonaDepartment of Education provides four continuity planning resources to assist schools/districts with developing and maintaining a COOP Annex and a comprehensive continuity program. The four resources, listed below, should be used together and are also depicted in Figure 1.

1. This guidance document is one of those resources, which provides an overview of the continuity planning process, describes key elements of the COOP, and provides instructions to use along with the ADE COOP Template.
2. Secondly, ADE has developed a series of six brief training videos that guide planners through the details of starting a continuity program, identifying and prioritizing essential functions, identifying accompanying resources and interdependencies of essential functions, and integrating continuity planning and emergency operations planning.
3. The third resource available to schools/districts are two business impact analysis tools. These include the Business Impact Analysis (BIA) Tool specifically designed for Arizona schools/districts to prioritize essential functions and the Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet (EFTS) specifically designed for Arizona schools and districts to identify and track critical business resources and interdependencies related to essential functions.
4. Lastly, ADE provides a COOP template that planners can customize to create a school/district COOP annex. This guidance document contains instructions to use with the COOP Template.

**Figure 1 – ADE’s COOP Resources**

**COOP Guidance and Instructions**

**COOP Training**

**Video Series**

**BIA Tools**

**COOP Template**

Overview of COOP process

Descriptions of key COOP elements

Instructions for the COOP Template

Instructions on COOP program & plan development

Six video series

Business Impact Analysis Tool

Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet

COOP Plan Structure and Content

Customize to district or school

ADE’s six continuity videos are described in Table 1. The table includes the title, length, and contents of each video. The videos are ordered to guide the continuity planning process and are best used in the order they are presented.

**Table 1 - ADE COOP Training Video Series**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Video 1** | **Video 2** | **Video 3** | **Video 4** | **Video 5** | **Video 6** |
| Getting Started: Building a School or District COOP Program | Identify Essential Functions and Estimate Impacts | Prioritize Essential Functions Using a Business Impact Analysis Tool | Identify the Resources  that Support Essential Functions | Identify the Internal and External Interdependencies that Support Essential Functions | Integrate Continuity Planning with Emergency Response Planning |
| **13:25 mins.** | **9:43 mins.** | **9:57 mins.** | **9:19 mins.** | **6:40 mins.** | **10:09 mins.** |
| * Defining continuity of operations and essential functions * Defining the project scope and objectives * Establishing a project timeline * Forming a planning team * Obtaining leadership buy-in * Holding a kick-off meeting | * Defining essential functions * Defining deferrable functions * Identifying all school or district functions * Estimating the impacts of disrupted functions * Prioritizing functions | * Defining a Business Impact Analysis Tool * Familiarizing yourself with the tool * Step-by-step instructions for using the Business Impact Analysis Tool * Determining and sharing the business impact scores | * Understanding the resources that supporting each essential function * Reviewing the descriptions of staff, space, supplies, and systems * Reviewing types of essential records * Using the Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet to document the resources and essential records that support essential functions | * Defining interdependencies * Reviewing the internal interdependencies that support essential functions * Reviewing the external interdependencies that support essential functions * Use the Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet to document internal and external interdependencies | * Difference between a COOP and EOP * Diagrams that show how the COOP connects with the EOP * The basic incident command structure and where COOP can fit into that structure * The process of activating the COOP and how it may integrate with EOP activation |

# DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN OF YOUR COOP PLAN ANNEX GUIDANCE

In addition to the resources that ADE provides, they support the use of state and federal planning resources by schools and districts for continuity planning. The following documents can serve as additional planning resources, but sources are not limited to these:

* [FEMA Continuity Guidance Circular, February 2018 (2024 Update), FEMA Office of National Continuity Programs](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_continuity-guidance-circular_082024.pdf)
* [FEMA Continuity Plan Template and Instructions for Non-Federal Entities, August 2018](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/non-federal-continuity-plan-template_083118.pdf)
* [FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101, Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Version 3.0, September 2021](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_cpg-101-v3-developing-maintaining-eops.pdf)
* [FEMA Continuity of Operations Overview Brochure](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/coop_brochure.pdf)
* [National Fire Protection Association Standard on Continuity, Emergency, and Crisis Management (NFPA 1600), 2019](https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/nfpa-1600-standard-development/1600)
* [US Department of Education, REMS COOP; Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for K-12 Schools](https://rems.ed.gov/GuideK12.aspx)

ADE recommends following FEMA’s CPG 101 six step planning process, as depicted in Figure 2*.* This planning process may be used to create new planning documents and annexes, as well as to revise and update existing plans.

**Figure 2 – Six Step Planning Process**

**A diagram of a situation

Description automatically generated**

Another important principle from FEMA’s CPG 101 is Whole Community engagement. Whole Community engagement involves inviting and enabling the participation of a wide range of partners, stakeholders, and/or individuals into the planning process. Schools/Districts should use whole community engagement as a guiding principle while developing the COOP Annex, ensuring that students, families, teachers, staff, leaders, those with disabilities and other access and functional needs, and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds are able to participate in the process. Whole community engagement also refers to engaging a wide variety of external partners (e.g., federal, state, tribal, local, government, non-government, and private organizations).

# BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

## **Business Impact Analysis**

A business impact analysis (BIA) evaluates the potential impacts of a business disruption to essential functions, processes, and systems. Essential functions are those that must continue under all circumstances, including when there is a school/district closure due to an emergency. Essential functions that are disrupted result in significant impacts to students, staff, confidence in the organization, financial, and legal areas. These include functions that keep the school/district operating, ensure response to emergencies, provide safety and security, and continue the learning environment. Functions are broad groups of work and typically there are a few to several functions within a department. Functions are large enough that they can be broken down into several smaller groups of work or processes.

Deferrable functions are those functions that could be delayed for up to 30 days during an emergency. They are still important to the school/district but can be de-prioritized to focus on those functions that are essential. Critical business assets (e.g., staff, space, supplies) from deferrable functions may be reassigned to support essential functions during an emergency. Examples of deferrable functions include sporting events, after school activities, and professional development

Essential functions are truly those school/district functions and activities that must be continued under all circumstances. If some services or activities can cease during an emergency, they are likely deferrable function. Determining essential and deferrable functions ahead of an emergency reduces debate during an emergency event and focuses resources on what is most important.

## **Functional Areas**

The use of functional areas can help guide the process of determining essential and deferrable functions. Consider all the larger groups of work or functions within each functional area of the school/district. ADE has determined functional areas for schools/districts to use. These areas may need to be adjusted to account for the specifics of individual schools/districts:

* Administration/Superintendent’s Office
* Assessments
* Athletics
* Communications/Public Relations
* Community Education
* Curriculum Instruction
* Facilities/Custodial
* Financial/Business Services
* Food Services/Nutrition
* Grant Management
* Homeless/Foster/Group Homes
* Human Resources
* Information Technology
* Legal/Risk Management
* School-Based Law Enforcement
* School Nursing
* Special Education
* Student Services/Behavioral Health
* Transportation
* Warehouse
* Elementary-Primary Office
* Middle School Office
* High School Office

## **Identifying and Prioritizing Essential Functions**

There are various ways to identify and prioritize essential functions. A business impact analysis and business process analysis (BPA) are two methods of thoroughly evaluating an organization’s essential functions and the resources and interdependencies required to keep functions operational. Each essential function is prioritized by a business impact score (BIS). The BIS is a numerical score used to prioritize essential functions. The higher the score the greater the perceived impact(s) to the school/district if the function is disrupted and the more quickly those impacts may accrue. ADE has developed two tools to assist schools/districts with these tasks.

1. The BIA Tool evaluates the potential impacts of a business disruption to essential functions and quantifies the impact of a function’s disruption to the school/district. The business impact score is the numerical score used to prioritize essential functions. The higher the score the greater the perceived impact(s) to the organization if the function is disrupted and the more quickly those impacts may accrue.
2. The Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet (EFTS) is an Excel spreadsheet that provides a framework for determining and documenting the critical resources (i.e., staff, space, supplies, systems, etc.) needed to support essential functions. Internal and external interdependencies are also considered for each essential function. The spreadsheet is organized by functional area. Using the EFTS during the continuity planning process meets recommendations of not just identifying essential functions but conducting a BPA.

When considering essential functions, ensure planning for the provision and accommodation of students who have individualized education plans (IEPs). IEPs outline the individual educational accommodation needed by students and are legally binding. The COOP Annex must address IEPs of students with disabilities.

In addition to IEPs, the COOP Annex should consider how eligible students will receive continued medical and food service during prolonged school dismissals. And the needs of any students and staff with other access and functional needs or disabilities should be incorporated into continuity planning. Please see [Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During an H1N1 Outbreak](https://www.ed.gov/media/document/h1n1-idea-qapdf) for more information on this topic.

When considering district or school functions in an emergency, it is important to understand the functions of schools in supporting critical emergency management functions in the community. Schools are often called upon by local emergency management to perform functions outside of their normal operations, therefore these additional responsibilities should be considered when a school or district is creating a COOP Annex. Examples include the use of school sites as emergency shelters and school buses used for evacuation procedures.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Business Impact Analysis and Essential Functions Section**

* Fill in the gray boxes with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with either school or district.
* Complete or review the school or district BIA Tool and Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.

# Continuity personnel

Roles and responsibilities of the school or district continuity personnel should consider the school or district departments and essential functions. Identifying the staff necessary to continue essential functions is a key step in identifying continuity roles and responsibilities. Additional roles and responsibilities may be required depending upon the event and on the mitigation, response, and recovery strategies being used. Continuity planners may consider roles and responsibilities of individuals by title or role (e.g., Principal, Superintendent, School Nurse) or by teams (e.g., Safety Team, Incident Command System team, Continuity Team).

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Continuity Personnel Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Tailor the continuity, recovery group, or ICS team name in the text for your school or district. Use titles only – do not use the names of specific individuals.
* Fill in the brackets with either school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.
* Add and remove department names from Table 4 to align with your school or district. Refer to the *Functional Areas* sub-section above.
* Add or remove table rows as needed to accommodate the number of departments identified.
* Enter the electronic and/or hard copy location of the contact list.

# ORDERS OF SUCCESSION

One of the fundamental principles of continuity planning is to maintain leadership in the event of an emergency by establishing orders of succession in the event the district, department, or school leaders are not available during an emergency. In the wake of an emergency impacting schools/districts, key staff may be injured, caring for loved ones, deceased, or otherwise unable to report to duty. As a result, it is necessary to have a procedure for filling these vacated positions (either temporarily or permanently). Determining orders of success prior to an emergency allows for the orderly transition of authority. Best practices dictate that at least two individuals, identified by position/title, are identified to replace key positions. ADE recommends identifying three to five successors for key leadership positions. Below are considerations for the establishment and initiation of the orders of succession process.

* Positions may be prescribed by statute, order, or directive.
* There should be a succession procedure that specifies the circumstances and the method of notification.
* Successors serve until formally appointed by the appropriate authority, replaced, or relieved.
* Orders of succession are primarily for leadership positions and key management. ADE recommends orders of succession for superintendents and director level leadership.
* Individuals with unique skills and knowledge associated with essential functions should be considered.
* The first step in creating orders of succession is to create a list of alternates who would serve in an interim or acting capacity in the event the superintendent and directors are not available.
* The School Board and school/district administration should approve the list of successors for leadership.

Tables 5 and 6 in the ADE COOP Template provide space to document orders of succession. Examples of orders of succession may look like these:

* District level: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents of Finance and Instruction, and District Directors
* School level: Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean, and Head teacher

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Orders of Succession**

* Use Table 5 to document successors for the Principal or Superintendent.
* Use Table 6 to document Vice Principal or director level successors.
* The tables should list successors in order, starting with the first option for successor.
* List position / title and not the name of the successor.
* Add or remove table rows as needed to accommodate the number of successors identified.
* Additional tables may be added to document successors for other key school or district positions. (Remember to renumber the tables throughout the template if tables are added.)
* Successors to the Superintendent may require School Board approval. Consult with your attorney for further guidance.

# DELEGATION OF AUTHORITIES

Districts may decide to grant authority to individuals who step into a role or title (i.e., successors) during an emergency. Delegation of authority provides successors with the organizational or legal authority to act in the position they are filling. They identify what can and cannot be done by an acting leader. It is important that delegation of authority have been reviewed by the district’s legal team to identify possible restrictions, such as state law or district and/or local policies.

Empowerment of successors may include items such as:

* Authorize closing or reopening of schools
* Approve policy changes during emergencies
* Approve standard operating procedure changes during emergencies
* Act on behalf of the school/district in interagency response
* Make personnel management decisions
* Approve expenditures
* Sign contracts, authorize procurement, and commit resource
* Release public information
* Alert and notifications

The making of critical decisions cannot be delayed as a result of confusion over authority and responsibility. Therefore, a definitive plan of delegation should be in place. The ADE COOP Template provides a table that may be used to document delegation of authority.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Delegation of Authorities Section**

* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.
* Use Table 7 to document Delegation of Authority for the successors listed in Tables 5 and 6.
* Fill in the brackets with either principal or superintendent and department names as appropriate.
* Add or remove rows as needed to accommodate the number of successors.
* Add columns as needed to document any additional authorities important to your school or district.

# CONTINUITY COMMUNICATIONS

The delivery of clear, timely, accurate, and consistent messaging is critical for continuity of operations. Staff, students and families, and external partners and stakeholders must be informed on a regular basis throughout a disruption to standard operations. This requires establishing clear communication pathways and systems.

Communication systems refer to the equipment and platforms used to communicate (i.e., phones, email systems, radios, etc.). Schools/districts should identify redundant (i.e., secondary and tertiary) ways to communicate when primary communications systems are disrupted. Consider developing a table that captures primary and redundant communication systems, audiences, and key system considerations during a COOP incident.

Communication pathways represent the flow of information internally to individuals across the school/district and externally to the school/district community, vendors, partners and stakeholders outside the school/district (i.e., who communicates with whom). Consider developing a communications pathways diagram to capture how communication would flow during a COOP incident. Remember, it is critical that students and families receive clear communication about continuity of instruction.

Considering the following when planning for continuity of communications:

* Redundant systems for internal and external communication at primary sites and any pre-identified alternate locations.
* Multiple methods for communicating with the whole school community.
* An emergency notification system (ENS). This may take multiple forms, such as an emergency communication short message service (SMS) application that pushes out emergency notifications or a telephone tree protocol with call-down rosters.
* County and state radio frequency satellite phones as alternative communication methods.
* Procedures for testing communication systems on a regular basis.
* Communications with the local emergency operations center, first responders, or even the state authority in the event cellular towers and phone landlines are affected.
* Systems that are impacted by power loss.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Continuity Communications Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.
* Add to or remove from the list of communication methods as appropriate for your school or district.

# CONTINUITY PHASES

Concept of operations describes how the school/district will implement and manage the continuity strategies and procedures for each continuity phase or element. It is recommended that schools/districts should develop procedures within each of these phases. Figure 4 helps to describe the continuity phases and the recommended actions within each phase.

**Figure 4 – Continuity Phases**

A screen shot of a phone

Description automatically generated

## **Readiness and Preparedness Phase**

This phase encompasses all school and district preparedness planning and training that occurs prior to an emergency that disrupts operations. Risk management activities occur in this phase, including school and district hazards assessments and identifying mitigation strategies. This phase involves developing emergency operations and relevant hazard-specific and functional annexes, including continuity of operations plans and procedures. Training school and district staff in continuity of operations is an important component of readiness. During this phase, planners should consider methods for sharing the COOP Annex with school and district officials, the School Board, and other relevant internal and external stakeholders.

## **Activation Phase**

This phase outlines the procedure for activating the COOP Annex. This should include who has the authority to activate the plan and under what circumstances or thresholds must be met for activation. The activation phase includes initial response actions, such as alert and notifications to personnel and evaluation operational impacts for the purpose of developing continuity strategies.

## **Alternate Operations Phase**

In this phase schools/districts implement continuity strategies to keep essential functions operational. Procedures to be included in this section of the COOP include accounting for personnel, implementing the continuity strategies, and preparing for reconstitution of (i.e., return to) normal operations or standard operating procedures. It is important during this phase, and all phases, to maintain communications, with both internal and external audiences.

When planning alternate operations consider the following three strategies:

* Telework or virtual work, including virtual or distance learning
* Alternate site(s)
* Devolution

During a disruption, more than one strategy may be useful. A hybrid strategy may be used when certain essential functions can be accomplished virtually, while others may require an alternate site. It is important to ensure operations can continue for 30 days or until normal operations resume and to provide for reliable logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems. Establishing any necessary MOUs, MOAs, MAAs, or other collaborative agreements that may be needed during any alternate operations strategy should also be accomplished during development of the COOP Annex.

**Telework/Virtual**

Telework or virtual work occurs from home using remote access provided by IT. Schools/Districts should develop procedures for the implementation of telework or virtual work to continue essential functions, including determining which essential functions can be done virtually. (Note: The EFTS includes space to document telework ability for each essential function.) Consider the equipment and supplies staff will need to carry out their work virtually, and for distance learning (i.e., virtual learning) the equipment and supplies students will need for continuity of education.

In a situation that requires extended virtual work or distance learning due to facility or utility disruptions, schools/districts should consider how long a virtual strategy is viable for continuity of operations before an alternate site strategy is implemented. In some situations, such as a pandemic, an alternate site may not be a safe or viable alternative.

**Alternate Sites**

An alternate site strategy involves continuing essential functions at an alternate facility when the permanent facility has been damaged or is unable to be safely used. Schools/Districts should develop procedures for the use of an alternate site to continue essential functions, including planning for the resources needed to support essential functions at the temporary location. When planning for an alternate site consider the following:

* Feasibility of relocating within the district
* Mobile offices/classrooms
* Capacity/occupancy requirements
* Utility requirements
* Location/access for staff and students (e.g., access via public transportation)
* Critical resources needed on site (i.e., supplies/equipment, systems, essential records) and transport of resources to the alternate facility
* Rotations or shifts for staff and/or students when space is limited
* Prioritize space for:
  + Teams or staff that work on essential functions.
  + Work processes that operate best when teams/staff can collaborate in person.
  + Students with the greatest need for in-person learning.

**Devolution**

Devolution is the transfer of responsibility and authority of essential functions to another facility or to a partner organization if the impact to school/district leadership, staff, and facilities is catastrophic. In extreme circumstances, when an emergency or disaster has rendered leadership, staff, or facilities incapable of response or use, leadership responsibility and essential functions would devolve to a predetermined facility or organization for an extended period.

Devolution planning involves:

* Procedures for the transfer of statutory authority and responsibility for essential functions.
* Identifying who will order the devolution and under what conditions.
* Identifying triggers for activation.
* Identifying minimum staffing and leadership needs for essential functions and determining the “tipping point” for performance of essential functions (i.e., the number of staff necessary for any alternate operations).
* Determining the resources required to assist should devolution occur.

The following questions may be helpful to identify activation triggers for the devolution strategy:

* How many bus drivers and vehicles are needed to provide transportation services for all students?
* At what point does the school/district “fail to operate”?
* How many IT personnel are needed to run network operations before the school/district “fails to operate”?
* How many teachers are required to provide instruction at a school?

## **Reconstitution Phase**

Alternate operations transitions to normal or standard operations during restoration. This includes the return of staff and students to permanent facilities. IT systems, communications systems, supplies, and records are restored to pre-disruption levels. Any deferred functions are reinstated. Reconstitution activities may include verifying restoration of facilities, equipment/supplies, systems, and records; establishing district staff and/or the school community at the permanent facility; and communicating the return to normal operations. Districts should appoint a Reconstitution Manager to begin this work as soon as feasible after a disruption. It is recommended that schools designate a reconstitution point-of-contact to coordinate with the Reconstitution Manager.

When planning for reconstitution, consider the minimum requirements needed to return to normal operations and restore the learning environment, including:

* Number of staff and students
* Number of safe and healthy facilities
* Business and financial systems operating
* Other resources needed to return to normalcy

When reconstitution has been established and the school/district is operating normally, an after action review should be conducted to evaluate the school’s/district’s response to the continuity disruption. Strengths and areas for improvement determined during the after action review should be used to revise and improve plans and procedures for future continuity of operations incidents.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Continuity Phases Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.
* Tailor the continuity, recovery group, or ICS team name in the text for your school or district. Use titles only – do not use the names of specific individuals.

.

# BUDGETING AND ACQUISITION OF RESOURCES

Budgeting and acquisition of resources plans or procedures are critical for the effective implementation of a COOP in schools. This section should consider the financial planning, resource acquisition, and management processes necessary to maintain essential functions during and after disruptions. By planning for these, school or districts will improve the availability of financial and material resources to support operations and minimize disruptions to essential functions during emergencies.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Budgeting and Acquisition of Resources Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.

# ESSENTIAL RECORDS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The identification, protection, and availability of essential records during a disruption is critical to continue essential functions. FEMA defines essential records as information systems and applications, electronic and hardcopy documents, references, and records needed to support essential functions during a continuity incident. When considering the availability of essential records, information systems and applications should also be evaluated as many records are kept in electronic format.

Continuity planning includes identifying, protecting, and accessing essential records. Redundant data management is critical; planners should work with school/district IT leadership when developing the COOP Annex to ensure redundancy (i.e., backup) of essential systems and records. During the BPA, the EFTS guides planners to document the essential systems and records that are needs to continue essential functions. Essential records may be organized into two categories:

1. Emergency operations records includes emergency operations and continuity plans and procedures, emergency contact information for leadership and management, level of education for management staff, contact information for operational, safety and security, risk management personnel, and general employees.
2. Legal and financial records can include business and procurement information, payroll records, student data, and any records related to the protection of the rights of the individuals who are served by the school/district (e.g., IEPs).

Schools and districts should take preventive measures to protect key documents and/or

copies that are readily accessible by leadership and available in alternate locations ensure alternative versions are available during and after an emergency, such as:

* Create duplicate copies.
* Encourage families and guardians to keep their own copies of critical education documents for their children, including IEPs.
* Encourage educators to keep back-up copies of key planning materials and records of achievement.
* Create portable electronic files on flash drives, external drives, CD-ROMs, or all three.
* On a nightly basis, back-up and store essential electronic records and soft copies of your EOP and COOP on local servers and on servers in another location (e.g., a neighboring district or even a neighboring state).
* Although almost all records today are located on servers, consider having hard copy in addition to the electronic copy available on-site and at a remote location.
* Make advance provisions for emergency procurement procedures when establishing vendor contracts.
* If available, use cloud computing to provide highly available systems and redundancy, and to ensure alternative versions of files are available during and after an emergency.
* Conduct semi-annual tests to determine whether offsite information can be functional within 12-16 hours.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Essential Records and Information Systems Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.

# HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Continuity planning requires the designation of personnel that are needed to perform essential functions during an emergency or disaster. Schools/Districts should designate such staff as essential continuity personnel and plan for at least two back-ups for these roles. Planners should work with school/district human resources during the development of the COOP Annex to align policies and procedures related to essential continuity personnel.

Consider the following when planning for essential continuity personnel:

* Human resource expectations during a disruption to operations (e.g., pay, time off, support services, employee assistance program).
* Clear expectations on roles and responsibilities during a disruption.
* Ensure applicable collective bargaining obligations are satisfied.
* Ensure key continuity personnel have advanced training regarding their assigned essential functions.
* Maintain a roster of continuity personnel and back-ups contact information.
* The needs of continuity personnel with access and functional needs and other disabilities (e.g., accessible communications, accessible facilities/alternate sites, reasonable accommodations or modifications).

In addition to continuity personnel, continuity planning should consider all school/district staff, including traveling and contracted staff. All staff should be aware of the expectations before, during, and after a disruption to operations, as well as the resources available to them, including support services and/or the employee assistance program. Planners should work with school/district human resources to ensure policies and procedures for staff align with union contracts. During disruptions to operations staff may be reassigned and consideration should be made to know the abilities and special skills of school/district staff. Any reassignment of staff should be reviewed with human resources to ensure allowable reassignments according to human resource policies and union contracts.

# TESTING, TRAINING, AND EXERCISING THE PLAN

## **Testing**

Testing refers to the period testing of equipment, procedures, and systems that support continuity of operations. This helps to keep resources that support essential functions in working order and ensure readiness to respond. The COOP Annex should plan for testing.

## **Training**

The training of employees is critical to implementing the COOP Annex. Untrained employees may not be able to continue or reinstate their functions during a business disruption. Employees must have knowledge of the COOP Annex and other emergency/crisis plans. Participation in ongoing training activities is critical for leadership, continuity personnel, and others involved in responding to continuity of operations disruptions. All staff should also participate in basic continuity training activities

School/District leaders and planners should plan for the delivery of training for continuity staff and all employees on a regular basis according to district recommendations. Training plans should take into consideration new employees, existing employees, and reassignment of employees. A training plan or schedule should be incorporated into the COOP Annex.

## **Exercising**

Along with training, exercising provides an opportunity for leadership, continuity personnel, and employees to become familiar with continuity plans and procedures. Exercises may take the form of a simple drill (e.g., fire drill, communications drill), a tabletop exercise (i.e., a facilitated scenario-based discussion), or participation in more complex functional or full-scale exercises with community partners. School/District should hold or participate in exercises on a regular basis according to district recommendations. Include the schedule of exercising in the COOP Annex.

To validate COOP and ensure essential functions are supported, check for the following:

* Staff’s understanding of their roles.
* Equipment and systems work as required.
* Timeliness of activation/deployment is appropriate.
* Alternate facility’s supplies and capabilities are adequate.
* Interdependencies, supply chain issues, and infrastructure capabilities are addressed.
* Deficiencies and vulnerabilities have been identified.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Testing, Training, and Exercising Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.

# Plan and program Maintenance

Schools/Districts should establish a regular cycle of COOP Annex reviews and revisions. In addition, consider updating the COOP Annex after exercises and real-world events, which trigger after action reviews. After action reviews produce strengths and areas for improvements, which can be used to validate and update continuity plans and procedures. Other situations that may trigger a review and revision are changes in leadership, organizational re-structuring, and changes in systems.

ADE has developed the [*Arizona District and School Emergency Preparedness and Response Competencies*](https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2024/02/ADE%20Competencies%20Final%2011.15.23.pdf)which include a competency on continuity planning. The continuity planning competency provides a framework for school/district to evaluate and assess continuity planning efforts. Planners should consider the use of this framework when reviewing and updating the COOP Annex.

Multi-year strategic planning is a way for schools/districts to document short- and long-term planning goals. Issues, concerns, potential obstacles, and strategies for addressing these can be documented in a multi-year strategic plan (MYSP). Planning, testing, training, and exercising activities and resource requirements to support the continuity program may also be included in the MYSP.

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for the Plan and Program Maintenance Section**

* Fill in the gray box with the name of the school or district.
* Fill in the brackets with school or district.
* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district. Remove any statements, concepts, and/or strategies that do not apply to the school or district.

# APPENDICES

Appendices are supplemental plan information that are attached at the end of the plan. There are standard appendices such as an acronym list or references and other appendices that contain information that is best presented outside of the section content due to the length of the information or because it interrupts the flow of the section content.

**Appendix A: List of Related Plans**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix A: List of Related Plans**

* List all relevant related plans for your school or district COOP Plan Annex.

**Appendix B: Business Impact Analysis Tool**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix B: Business Impact Analysis Tool**

* Include a snapshot, image, or summary of your school’s or district’s Business Impact Analysis (BIA) Tool. Fill in the backets with the correct information.
* Enter the electronic location of the school’s or district’s BIA Tool.

**Appendix C: Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix C: Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet**

* Include a snapshot, image, or summary of your school’s or district’s Essential Function Tracker Spreadsheet (EFTS). Fill in the backets with the correct information.
* Enter the electronic location of the school’s or district’s EFTS.

**Appendix D: Glossary**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix D: Glossary**

* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district plan.
* Remove any terms and definitions that do not apply to the school or district.
* If you removed or added language during the development of your annex the glossary. may need to be updated.

**Appendix E: Acronym List**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix E: Acronym List**

* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district plan.
* Remove acronyms that do not apply to the school or district.
* If you removed or added acronyms during the development of your annex, this list may need to be updated.

**Appendix F: References**

**ADE COOP Template Instructions for Appendix F: References**

* Edit content as appropriate to the school or district plan.
* If you used any additional references or resources during the development of your school or district COOP, add those references to the list.