

Business Continuity Management Under COVID-19

Preparing for and operating an organisation within a COVID-19 environment.

Introduction

Pandemics like COVID-19 can impact worker ability to attend the workplace as usual, alter patterns of business and travel, interrupt supply chains, and affect the daily operations of an organisation. Minimising the impact to the organisation can be achieved by creating a plan that clearly identifies risks, critical areas of the organisation and how best to protect them through a business continuity management plan.

The current COVID-19 pandemic may have impacts that are not anticipated in existing risk management documents and business continuity plans established by organisations. These may require review and updating to account for specific risks associated with the virus and its transmission, the public health response measures, changes in the needs of clients and consumers, and initiatives to address the social, health and economic impacts.

This document can be used to review and update existing policy and plans, to identify and address gaps, or as a starting point if the organisation does not already have these in place.

Business continuity management

Business continuity management is the development, implementation and maintenance of policies, strategies and programs to assist an entity manage a business disruption event, as well as build entity resilience. It is the capability that assists in preventing, preparing for, responding to, managing and recovering from the impacts of a business disruption event like COVID-19.

1. Manage risk.



- Produce a list of risks and the potential impact to the organisation.
- Develop mitigation strategies to minimise the potential risk to the organisation.



- Develop a contingency plan in the event the risk happens.

2. Identify critical areas of the organisation.



- Identify what the organisation cannot do without: people, supplies, documents, systems or procedures.
- For each critical area, describe the potential impact on the organisation if they were to fail.
- Develop strategies to minimise the impact each failure would have.

3. Complete a detailed scenario plan for each of the top three critical areas.

Question	Details
Critical failure	<i>[Provide a short description of a critical area that could or is interrupted.]</i>
Background	<i>[Provide any relevant background information that is essential to restoring the critical area.]</i>
Impact to business	<i>[Provide an estimate of the impact to your business. This can be in terms of percentage of sales or a dollar figure.]</i>
Immediate actions	<i>[List what needs to be completed immediately to ensure loss is kept to a minimum.]</i>
Secondary actions	<i>[Once immediate actions have been completed, what secondary actions can be completed until your business has recovered completely?]</i>
Responsibilities	<i>[List the people who are responsible and for what during this critical business scenario.]</i>
Resources needed	<i>[What resources will you need to ensure you recover well in this sort of scenario? For example: cash flow, staff, service providers]</i>

4. Assessment of the operating environment

Based on the assessment of pandemic effects to the organisation, list any areas of the operating environment that have changed.



- List the changes that have occurred in the operating environment since the pandemic.
- Identify what parts of the organisation have been affected by the changes and how.
- Develop ways in which the organisation can adapt to suit these new environmental conditions (e.g. telehealth or adapt services provided in consultation with relationship managers).

5. Communication strategy

A pandemic like COVID-19 will have challenges and opportunities to the communication strategy of the organisation. Some points to consider when adapting the communication plan include:



- What service availability and eligibility changes have occurred?
- How do clients and consumers communicate with the organisation that provides them services?
- What precautions is the organisation taking to minimise risk of infection? What do clients and consumers need to do when accessing services to minimise risk of infection?
- If the organisation is reopening its physical location and/or services in person after the pandemic has subsided, how will you get the message out?
- What channels will you use to target clients?
- How does this strategy differ in light of any changes in the operating environment?