

Planning for Business Continuity in Times of Disaster



A facilitation
guide to support
your organisation's
business continuity
planning

'Community-based organisations (CBOs) are well placed to provide essential community recovery services as they are part of disaster-affected communities, have established relationships, have built reservoirs of trust and understand the community's needs. Conversely, by virtue of being part of the community, CBOs are also vulnerable to the same impacts of the disaster that has affected the broader community. In short, just when CBOs are most needed they are also most likely to have their service delivery capabilities disrupted.'

**POLICY INNOVATION HUB
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY**

This resource has been developed through funding from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors.

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Introduction

In times of disaster, community-based organisations are often the first point of call before, during, and long after disaster strikes. Finding the balance between the community's demand for services and disruption to your organisation's infrastructure can be challenging.

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) maximises the continuation of your organisation during and following any critical incident that results in disruption to your normal operational capability. If you already have a BCP in place, re-visiting it with your colleagues on a regular basis ensures it is dynamic and relevant. It's also an opportunity to add in what you have learnt during a real-life

event, through training, connecting with the local disaster management groups or speaking with other community-based organisations.

Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) has developed a suite of resources to help you build capacity within your organisation when it comes to disasters. We aim to support you to be able to reduce the impact on your services, staff, volunteers and service users at the time of disruption.

This user-led facilitation guide provides a quick and easy way to prepare your colleagues in how to respond at the time of disaster and in the months that follow. It is designed to be a companion document and to be used in conjunction with the Business Continuity and Disaster Management Planning Toolkit and resources available on the CSIA website.

www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement.

The Facilitation Guide is divided into four steps:



STEP 1: SHARED UNDERSTANDING

It's important that everyone in your organisation has a shared understanding of what business continuity planning means for your organisation.

This includes understanding the types of disasters and the disruptions they may cause. Disasters like floods, storms and fires are important, but when we talk about disaster, we don't just mean natural disasters. In your planning, we recommend that you discuss the range of events that may disrupt your business operations and the communities you support. Some examples include cyber-attack or loss of power.

The CSIA website has examples of what your organisation may need to consider when responding to different types of disaster at www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement. Consider sharing these resources with your colleagues.

Activity

Discuss with your colleagues what a disaster disruption would mean for your organisation, and what your disaster plan needs to achieve. If you already have a business continuity plan, discuss the plan with your colleagues: Is it up to date? Is it shared? Has it been tested? We discuss reviewing and testing your plan in Step 4.

When discussing with your colleagues brainstorm what the critical functions are to separate them from non-critical (things that are not essential to do at times of disaster).

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STEP 2: SCENARIO PLANNING

Scenario planning is a user-led approach driven by key people at all levels of your organisation to conduct an exploratory exercise. You can use scenario planning to re-visit your business continuity plan and identify gaps or to start your plan by identifying what your organisation already knows.

This approach can help community-based organisations (CBOs) consider their situation and plan accordingly. It's an approach that captures the experience to help inform the resources and systems that should be included in your BCP.

While conducting this exercise consider how the needs of people, environments and your service delivery may be affected. You could also consider these needs during the disaster operation trigger levels of activation being Watch; Alert; Lean Forward; Stand Up and Stand Down.

Activity

Download the scenario planning tools (the two tools are on the following pages and can be copied) from the CSIA website. If possible, have both printed at A0 size so you and your team/s can work together around the tools. Begin by identifying a possible disruptive disaster event and, as a group, answer the following three questions.

What are the actions the organisation needs to take?

What are the organisational procedures to be considered?

e.g. Workplace Safety, Human Resources, Emergency Management.

What are the key decision-making points, and at what stage should they be made?

e.g. Who will remain to maintain critical business functions? Is everyone aware of their roles during a disaster?

Using post-it notes, have the group add their responses to these questions on the circles at the key times.

You can repeat this activity for different kinds of disasters.

Scenario Planning Tool – Warning Notification

A. Choose a disruptive disaster scenario

e.g. storm, cyber-attack, bushfire, flooding, health event

B. Record what action you would take at the specified time period in the circles

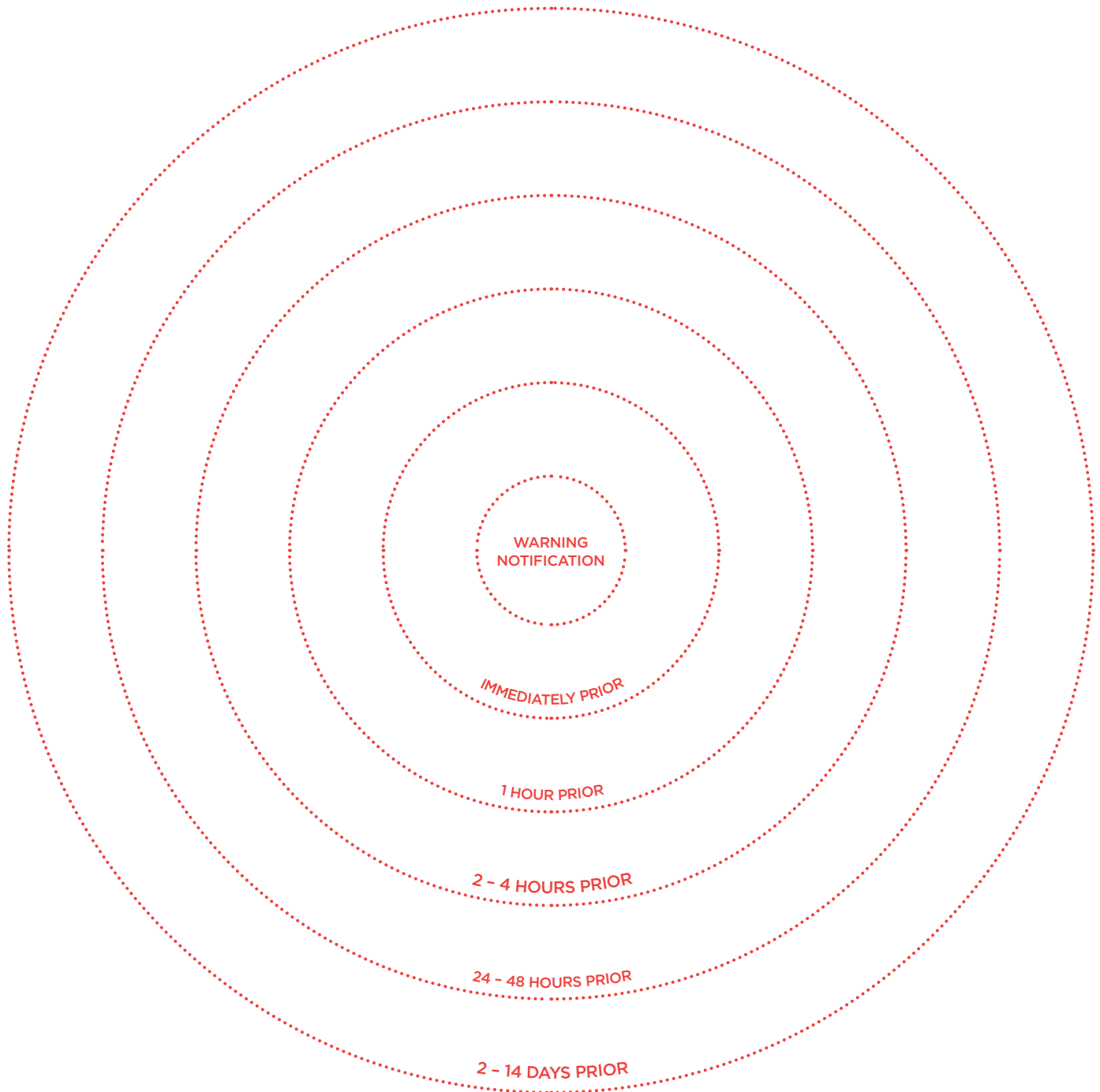
e.g. risk assessment, relocate, staff updates, media release

C. Record what organisational procedures need to be considered

e.g. notification of impact on service delivery, staff and volunteer roster

D. Identify the key decision-making points

e.g. evacuate or stay on site during disasters, process maps or flowcharts can be drawn



Consider the needs of **people** including:

- Workers and volunteers
- Service users/clients and their support networks
- Local stakeholders
- Local Disaster Management Group

I.e. Will they be able to access the workplace? Will they be affected?

Consider the needs of **environments** including:

- Buildings
- Cars
- Services users/clients homes
- Local geography

I.e. If it is damaged what alternative options are there?

Consider the needs emerging from **how you deliver services** including:

- In office
- In public spaces
- One on one or group
- Therapeutic, support or practical living
- In partnership with others

I.e. Will you still deliver services?

Scenario Planning Tool – During / After the Event

A. Choose a disruptive disaster scenario

e.g. storm, cyber-attack, bushfire, flooding, health event

B. Record what action you would take at the specified time period in the circles

e.g. risk assessment, relocate, staff updates, media release

C. Record what organisational procedures need to be considered

e.g. service disruption, staff roster

D. Identify the key decision-making points

e.g. relocate or remain on site



Consider the needs of **people** including:

- Workers and volunteers
- Service users/clients and their support networks
- Local stakeholders
- Local Disaster Management Group
- Other community organisations

I.e. Can they access the workplace? Have they been affected?

Consider the needs of **environments** including:

- Buildings
- Cars
- Services users/clients homes
- Local geography
- ICT infrastructure

I.e. Are they damaged? What alternative options are there?

Consider the needs emerging from **how you deliver services** including:

- In office
- In public spaces
- One on one or group
- Therapeutic, support or practical living
- In partnership with others

I.e. Can you still deliver services? Will services need to be modified? Are roads cut off?



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STEP 3: DOCUMENTING

Once your scenario planning session is complete, you can use the information collected to document a first draft of your BCP. If you already have a plan, use it to fill in any gaps you have discovered.

BCP are not static, they are dynamic and are revisited regularly to ensure relevance. They will continue to grow and develop based on the continuous learning, business growth and development of your organisation.

When documenting your business continuity plan consider the following points to include:

- leadership
- building skills and capacities of staff
- building local networks
- linking with your Local Disaster Management Group and the associated Human and Social Recovery Group
- risk assessment and management planning
- access points for key services
- what happens when facilities are impacted
- contacting and caring for clients and vulnerable people
- community development
- learning and reviewing.

Your organisation's BCP can take whatever form is most useful to you. We have handy guidelines for writing a BCP on the CSIA website at www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement.

STEP 4: REVIEW & TEST

Once you have your plan in place it is important to review and test it. There are various ways you can do this, including:

1. Sharing **within your organisation** and asking for feedback helps your team become more familiar with your plan and ensures it works effectively.
2. **Peer to peer review** is a great way to further explore the robustness of your plan. Connect with another organisation from your local area delivering similar services to test your plan. It is a great way to build on relationships, learn from the experiences of others and share information, resources, tools and practices.
3. **Consulting with service-users**. Seek input from service users (do they have feedback or suggestions to improve service delivery elements of your BCP?)
4. **Seeking feedback** from the Local Disaster Management Group, District Disaster Management Groups and the associated Human and Social Recovery Group. Contact your local council for details on these groups.
5. Conduct a **scenario-based exercise** applying the draft plan to road test the approach and identify further refinements for different kinds of disasters.

During the review and testing it's important to explore the following:

- Are there any key steps/needs that have been missed in your BCP?
- Does the BCP work for all disruptions?
- Is there enough flexibility built into the BCP?
- How familiar are your staff, volunteers and service users with your BCP? How can you make them more familiar?
- What other organisations do you rely on? How can they be included in your BCP?
- Are you relying too much on other organisations to be easy solutions? E.g. assuming too much about ambulance availability to evacuate etc.
- How can you connect with other organisation's BCP? How can you help each other?
- Are there opportunities for your organisation to support the Local Disaster Management Group, District Disaster Management Groups and the associated Human and Social Recovery Group?

There are printable guides and examples for review and testing your BCP on the CSIA website at www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement.

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Since 2017, the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) has worked in partnership with the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors to build awareness and promote uptake of user-led business continuity planning (BCP) in the Community Services Industry.

Industry feedback and experiences from all phases of this work has informed this facilitation guide to equip your organisation to facilitate your own business continuity planning workshops.

Download the facilitation guide and additional resources at www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement.



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