

Workforce Solutions
Business Continuity Plan
March 2020

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1. Purpose

The Business Continuity Plan describes the steps Workforce Solutions takes prior to and immediately following an emergency to continue business operation and provide service to customers.

The objectives of this plan are:

- To minimize the risk and impact of interruptions
- To prepare for operating when business is interrupted
- To recover quickly from interruptions

Emergencies come in many forms and knowing what to do and when to do it saves valuable time during preparation and recovery efforts. It is important to understand career offices may serve as staging areas for disaster relief and a place for area residents to get help for a variety of needs. Since our primary role is providing direct services to the community, it is vital that our organizational infrastructure return to operation as quickly as possible.

In this plan, we identify critical operations and provide emergency procedures and alternate service operation methods. Staff may access the plan at any time on the web at wrksolutions.com. Each year in May, Workforce Solutions reviews the plan with staff, evaluates its effectiveness and updates the plan.

The Business Continuity Plan includes the specifics of the response such as job assignments, staffing strategies and serving customers. We open Workforce Solutions facilities as quickly as practical after the **emergency** event. If we cannot open an office, we will make other arrangement for providing service to customers.

Included throughout the plan are four phases:

Mitigation: Activities Workforce Solutions undertakes to prevent the occurrence of an emergency or minimize the potential adverse effect one may have on its operations (e.g., installation of standby or redundant equipment, staff training).

Preparedness: Activities Workforce Solutions undertakes to support and enhance response to a disaster/emergency. (e.g., planning, employee education, preparation with outside agencies, acquiring and maintaining critical supplies).

Response: Activities Workforce Solutions undertakes to respond to disruptive events. The actions are designed to help reduce the impact on operations, damage, and to speed recovery (e.g., warnings, evacuations).

Recovery: Activities Workforce Solutions undertakes to return to complete business operations. Short-term actions assess damage and return vital operations to minimum operating standards. Long-term actions focus on returning all operations back to normal or an improved state of affairs.

The Gulf Coast region is susceptible to a wide range of disaster scenarios with Hurricanes and high water being paramount. Some potential hazards we can plan for are:

- Floods/Flash Floods
- Hurricanes
- Tornados
- Winter Ice Storms
- Fire
- Technology Emergencies (utility disruptions, cyber attacks)
- **Pandemic outbreaks or health crisis (Influenza, Coronavirus, SARS, etc.)**

We define an emergency as any situation posing a risk to customers, staff, operations, or one that requires us to evacuate a Workforce Solutions office.

2. Declaration of Emergency

When an emergency occurs which affects the safe and effective delivery of services, contractor management of the affected area or office will communicate and cooperate with all relevant parties, including H-GAC. H-GAC and contractor management will decide the next steps. The decision to close or reduce services at an office will be made on a case-by-case basis. Workforce Solutions implements the Business Continuity Plan as needed. Factors to consider when closing an office:

- Is the office location safe and operational?
- Can some staff safely make it to the office?
- Can the office open with limited services?

The organization remains in an emergency status until contractor management, a designated representative, or H-GAC reports operations returned to normal.

In the event an emergency declaration is made, H-GAC will post pertinent information on the Workforce Solutions website. Additionally, offices will post signage on the front door and change the message on the main office telephone number.

3. Critical Operations

We identified critical operations central to the Workforce Solutions system to include. communication, financial services, logistics, and personnel. **We developed plans to continue business operations to the extent possible until operations return to normal.** Customer service, to both customers and employers, is also part of core operations. Contractor management is responsible for assigning duties regarding these operations and ensuring **staff is available to resume services.** To this end, management will maintain records of current contact information and responsibilities **for all personnel.**

3.1 Communication

Communication is central to any emergency response **to ensure the safety of staff and customers**. Office management must immediately report emergencies to the proper authorities and as soon as possible contact H-GAC Board staff.

Our primary contacts at H-GAC are Kevin Rodney and **Brenda Williams**. Contact H-GAC staff by calling 713.627.3200 or their contact phone number listed in the emergency contact list. When notifying H-GAC board staff, give information regarding the nature of the problem (electricity out, flood warnings, etc.), the severity of the issue (cannot function, dangerous to customers and staff) and the estimated time for the interruption in operations (expect power to resume in the morning, flood waters should recede overnight, etc.)

3.1.1 Internal Communication during Emergencies

When an emergency occurs during work hours, career office management in the immediate area should inform their management (contractor management). Career office management will also inform career office staff. Office Managers should take note of any staff present at the time and account for any staff scheduled to work but not present at the time of the emergency. Further direction may be given by the manager or when possible through communication with the program director or designated representative. Management maintains responsibility for the safety of staff while onsite; it is imperative staff check-in with management prior to leaving the area.

When the emergency requires evacuation of the facility, office management should immediately notify the contractor manager, who in turn will notify H-GAC.

For emergency situations occurring outside of regular business hours, the contractor management will make sure staff are informed of the emergency and have instructions of where and when to report to work. Affected personnel must report to their back-up assignment office if their primary location is inoperable as long as it is safe for them to do so. In the event the emergency is system wide and with a duration exceeding 48 hours, a central phone message board or alternate form of communication will be established by management to notify those affected of information regarding their work status. If the central message board is inoperable or not established, staff should follow the instructions of local authorities and media directives regarding when to report or return to an evacuated area or work location.

H-GAC will **post information on the Workforce Solutions website and** send notifications and updates via Omnilert to contractor management who in turn will notify staff.

3.2 Financial Services

Financial activities must return to normal as quickly as possible during an emergency. The finance director is responsible for ensuring that the organization has the financial means to continue in the aftermath of a disaster. The finance director works with contractor management, H-GAC and other local resources to meet the financial needs of the organization and its employees - including accounts payable and payroll functions.

Financial activities conducted during an emergency are subject to written federal, state and local contract procurement rules to the extent possible. We expect contractor management to confer with Board staff and use good judgment in order to accomplish tasks in a quick and efficient manner.

3.3 Logistics

Technology is a critical component to the continued functioning of Workforce Solutions during an emergency. The IT department is responsible for the restoration of damaged and/or destroyed facilities/equipment, and will cooperate with H-GAC and contractor management in order to determine alternative sites when primary locations are inhabitable and ensure the safety of staff during restoration activities. The goal is to facilitate a return to normal operations as quickly as possible, while providing alternative operating means during the recovery process.

3.4 Personnel

Employees are the foundation of our business and our most valuable asset. In a disaster or emergency event, staff need time to recover themselves. Contractor management should maintain a database of contact numbers for managers, supervisors and all staff within the organization or establish an alternative method of communication during an emergency. In turn, each manager and supervisor within an office is responsible for maintaining a database of contact numbers of office staff.

Employees should be aware of their role during and after an emergency and know how to respond to an emergency. Contractor management should review such plans at least on an annual basis in addition to any time the plan is changed.

Contractor management will give all employees alternate worksite locations during the recovery period in order to return to normal operations. Management will also provide operational status updates to employees on a regular basis in order to maintain communication.

4. **Preservation of Vital Agency Records**

A checklist of vital organizational records is included in the plans of each organization. In order to preserve such records, contractor management will store electronic copies of records online or on a device located in another secure place. Files and data that are already stored online, such as records in **DocuWare, WIT, TWIST, Gazelle, FACS, and Global Cash** are already secure and accessible from remote locations in the event of an emergency.

5. **Emergency Procedures**

In order to ensure the safety of staff and customers, make sure staff understands the emergency procedures shown in this plan. Various types of emergencies will trigger the implementation of different plans, including imminent emergencies where we may have a planning period and immediate situations that require timely responses.

5.1 Imminent Evacuation

If circumstances allow for prior preparation because of a **pandemic event, health crisis, or** imminent disaster such as a hurricane/tropical storm. Staff must take steps to mitigate the effects of the potential damage and to return the office to operation prior to evacuating the area. In some circumstances, including high winds, heavy rain, or ice may cause a single office to close as opposed to a system-wide mandate. In the event a manager determines that office closure is the safest response to the situation, he or she should confer with contractor management and then report the situation to H-GAC. Contractor management will decide whether to evacuate an office.

1. Contractor management will contact each office manager to inform him or her of the scheduled time for the office to close.
2. The Office Manager then informs their supervisory staff of the impending office closure and delegates responsibilities for the following duties:
 - Equipment Protection
 - Staff notification of back-up office reporting plans
 - Records protection
3. When preparing offices for disaster situations contractor management will take steps to protect **customers, staff, equipment, and records**. To ease recovery/restoration efforts:
 - a. Unplug all electronic equipment, wrap them in plastic sheeting and move them to a higher area such as an employee desk. If the equipment is near windows move it further into the building as an added layer of protection.
 - b. Secure and protect all records to the extent possible. Return all customer files to closed filing cabinets, locking the cabinet if possible. Remove loose papers from all desks and close all doors. Staff should complete the securing of their personal workspace first then assist in the securing of any remaining office equipment or areas.
 - c. Post a public notice visible from the outside of the building stating the office is closed due to a mandatory evacuation order and the office will re-open as soon as feasible once this order is lifted.
 - d. **Secure equipment and release staff.** The office manager will remain until all staff vacates the building, at which time the office manager will report to his/her supervisor in order to confirm that the evacuation is complete.

5.2 Immediate Evacuations

Certain circumstances may not allow for planning or preparation in the event of an emergency. The manager is responsible for making this decision and communicating it to staff. If an office needs to evacuate immediately, Career Office Management will instruct staff to:

- Stop all work immediately
- Contact outside emergency response agencies if needed and time allows
- **Evacuate all customers in the building**
- Shut off all electrical equipment if possible
- Walk; do not run, to the nearest exit
- Proceed to the designated staging area for your office and check-in with your manager/supervisor.
- Do not return to the building until instructed by your manager/supervisor to do so.

All offices have a designated place to congregate after an evacuation, both short and long term. Office management will account for all staff and report the names of missing staff to emergency responders. Career Office Management will give instructions regarding whether it is safe to return to the building and assign staff to work at alternate locations when necessary.

5.3 Sheltering in Place

All offices have a designated location in the event of an emergency that would require individuals to shelter in place. The shelter in place area should be located in a safe building area, away from windows, doors and outside walls. Employees should be aware of the location and offices should post the information in a public place.

Career Office Management will announce the shelter in place order. Staff will relocate immediately to the shelter in place location and direct customers to do the same.

The Office Manager will account for all staff and customers to the best of their ability. Staff will remain in the shelter until it is determined it is safe to leave and return to the office or designated area.

5.4 **Telecommute**/Alternate Site Reporting of Offices/Staff

Contractor management will designate an alternate worksite for all career office staff. Career office management will assign staff to report to their alternate worksite when their primary office closes for emergencies lasting more than 24 hours. Managers are responsible for the alternate site determination. **Staff with VPN access may be allowed to telecommute.**

5.5 Emergency Procedures for People with Disabilities

Each facility emergency plan will include a plan to assist individuals with disabilities. Although a person is not required to disclose a disability, it is a good idea they identify his or herself as needing assistance prior to an emergency. Contractor management will work with the staff person to develop a plan to accommodate their needs, discuss it with them periodically and practice the plan in regular drills. Discussions should include evacuation techniques, carrying techniques where applicable, and methods of communication during times of rescue. Contractor management will also establish a personal support network for the staff person consisting of coworkers who regularly work in the same

area. The support network should include multiple staff, and these individuals should be aware of the accommodations needed prior to and during an emergency.

6. Return to Operation

Career Offices operate with staff, electrical power, computer systems, telephones, water and sanitation. These six elements are critical and must be operative for an office to return to full service. In instances where computer systems and telephones are unavailable, career offices may be able to provide limited services. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, access to information is the most critical service the career office provides.

6.1 Alternate Sites

In the interest of continuing services during and after an emergency, contractor management will assign all career office personnel to alternate worksite locations to report to when their primary office closes due to emergencies affecting their office for more than 24 hours. Managers are responsible for the alternate site determination.

6.2 Restoring Site Operations

When it is safe to return to a site, contractor management must determine which essential systems are operable. The office may be able to return to full service once staff, electrical power, telephones, computer systems, water and sanitation are operational. In most instances, a career office may be able to provide limited services in the absence of telephones and computer systems. Upon assessment, if it is determined the site requires repair to any of the critical services to resume operation, notify the appropriate party and begin working to restore the needed services.

At a minimum, career office contractors will staff office to provide information services to the community.

6.3 Additional Considerations

To restore services in a timely manner, contractor management must be prepared to use alternative plans and equipment, including the following:

- Alternative Internet plans (**Hotspots**)
- Computer Equipment – identify a vendor outside the area to replace needed equipment
- Alternative cell phone plans – identify alternate cell phone plans for use when one cell phone plan is not in service or delivers poor service.
- Corporate office relocation site – identify a site to relocate temporarily.
- **Provide telecommute options for staff with VPN access.**
- **Provide Web-and mobile-based communication and services, if possible. Increase the use of email, conference calls, video conferencing, and web-based seminars.**
- **Develop a system-wide phone bank to answer calls from customers.**
- **Forwarding office phones to designated cellular phones.**