

Table Top Exercise for Business Continuity Planning

Overview

This exercise entails a facilitated discussion based on a scenario that is hypothetical yet realistic. This scenario was developed by Multnomah County to help your organization think through and discuss your business priorities, how your operations may be impacted, and what actions you would take in response to COVID-19.

How to use this table top exercise

Involve your leadership team. Include key decision makers, senior leadership and managers in this exercise.

Don't fight the scenario. Table tops are not expected to be easy. The scenario was designed to help your team discuss and problem solve difficult situations during a calm state.

Table tops are a no fault environment. There is no one way to approach the questions. The discussion should be facilitated in a fashion that encourages full group participation and creative problem solving. Comments made during the exercise are not precedent or policy setting. They are merely considerations.

Decisions align with policy. Decisions made during the exercise should be aligned with existing plans and policies within your organization. If no plan or policy exists related to a decision made during the exercise, the discussion can help identify or inform new policy needs.

Scenario

As of March 4, 351 cases have been confirmed in the continental United States, with 100 confirmed in the State of Oregon (75 in the Portland Metropolitan Area and 25 in Eastern Oregon). The Multnomah County Health Department, in coordination with state and federal agencies, have confirmed we are seeing sustained community spread in the Portland Metro Area. Sustained community spread means that people have been infected with the virus, but how or where they became infected is not known, and the spread is ongoing. More confirmed cases are expected. Multnomah County Health Department has not recommended any closures at this point but is encouraging businesses to prepare for a drop in staffing. Several small business owners have decided to close due to lack of staffing. A few private schools have also closed because they don't have any teachers. There is currently no vaccination against COVID-19. Numerous government organizations are reporting a high level of absences.

Questions

1. Who is in charge of making business continuity decisions in your organization?
2. If 30% of your staff were to call in sick, are there essential functions your organization would not be able to accomplish?
3. If 30% of your staff were to continue to call in sick for two weeks, how would that impact your ability to complete organizational essential functions?
4. Are there ways to support your essential functions that can reduce person-to-person interaction (ex: teleconference, phone calls, telework)?
5. How can your telework agreements, sick policy, or other social distancing methods be implemented to support your operations?
6. Which staff are able to make the decision to implement telework, other social distancing policies, or modify your sick leave policy?
7. What actions can your organization take to help staff with special health conditions?
8. How can your organization handle confidentiality on sick leave and clients who have shown illness to ensure privacy and minimize rumors that could impact staff, clients and operations?
9. If the decision was made to reduce your organizations' functions and fewer staff were required, how would you communicate to your employees the decision to close, the length of closure, and the decision to reopen?
10. If the decision was made to reduce your organizations' functions and services, how would you communicate to your clients the decision to close, the length of closure, and reopening?
11. If the decision was made to reduce your organizations' functions and fewer staff were required, what are the impacts to your staff?
12. If the decision was made to reduce your organizations' functions and services, what are the impacts to your clients?
13. If mass transit was not available, or if your staff are uncomfortable taking mass transit, how does that impact your ability to complete essential functions?