



Identifying and Supporting Mission Essential Functions

Welcome back for the second article in our COOP Chat Series. This week we will focus on Mission Essential Functions: what they are and what they are not, how to support them during a disaster, and what resources are needed to keep those functions operating.

Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) are a succinct, manageable list of functions that an organization/department/division **MUST** continue, or resume rapidly, following a disruption of normal operations. These are functions that cannot be deferred during an emergency or disaster. These functions typically provide vital services (public safety, health services, etc.) but will also include those functions necessary for Continuity of Government.

One of the most challenging aspects of identifying a Mission Essential Function (MEF) is to avoid being too broad or too narrow. A very broad MEF may start to include functions that are not essential during a disruption. On the other hand, being too narrow focused, you may end up identifying too many MEFs to be effective. Finding the right balance allows the organization to still deliver their critical services without ambiguity and without overwhelming resources.

Part of understanding that balance is differentiating between a MEF and a *supporting* function or activity. Several plans become unmanageable because the list of MEFs is actually a compilation of long lists of supporting activities. For instance, a department or division whose mission is to clear the roads after a snowstorm has to maintain its vehicle fleet. But vehicle maintenance is not the mission. The mission, and the mission essential function, is to clear the roads. Maintaining the vehicle fleet is an important function, but it is one that *supports* the performance of a MEF.

Here are some more examples:

Mission Essential Functions (MEFs)
Repair/clear roads
Provide medical care
Fight fires
Manage the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
Provide public awareness messaging

Supporting Activities (Not MEFs)
Manage human resources
Provide IT support
Maintain service vehicles
Provide food for essential employees
Stand up an emergency call center

One of the goals of the COOP Program will be to provide opportunities to workshop and brainstorm what each groups' Mission Essential Functions are or should be during a disruption of service.

Keep in mind that identifying your Mission Essential Functions is only the beginning of a much larger process. The next step will be to conduct a risk assessment against those MEFs. Although this sounds like a daunting process there are plenty of resources available to walk you through it. The purpose of a risk assessment is to determine which hazards pose the greatest threat to your group's ability to successfully implement your COOP. Questions you may want to ask are: What is our greatest hazard as it relates to the service(s) we need to provide? What actions can we take to mitigate some or all of this risk before an event? What actions can we taking during an event to overcome barriers that the threat may pose?

A great place to start with your risk assessment is the Multnomah County Multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan which can be found on the MCEM website here:

<https://multco.us/em/natural-hazard-mitigation-planning>.

This plan covers not only natural hazards, but man-made and technological hazards as well. It includes recommended mitigation strategies that address a variety of vulnerabilities. Each hazard is described in great detail and includes risk rankings and probability.

If you are the COOP point of contact for your group and you have a BOLD Planning login you can review the previously documented Mission Essential Functions by clicking on the “Essential Functions” tab. From there you can review, add or edit the content for your Continuity of Operations Plan. Now called Veoci, Bold files should have been migrated to this new platform as of July 2023. Training for the use and understanding of this platform will be forthcoming from the state.

If you are unfamiliar with BOLD or Veoci, do not have a login, or just need more information, you can contact the COOP Program Manager, Yvette Osborne. Her contact information and more details regarding COOP can be found on the [Emergency Management website](#).

Remember - it's always better to be COOPed up together!