BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING GUIDE FOR PANDEMIC EVENT

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WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT THIS?

There are two compelling reasons why you should care about this:

1. No one knows what is going to happen, no one. Anything from mild to severe disease is possible.
2. There will **not** be a "silver" medical bullet.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

First of all, you don't have much time. It is recommended that you put a very large calendar on your wall as a reminder of the passage of time. With a limited amount of time, stay focused on these six areas:

1. Continuity of Operations
2. Infection Control
3. Workforce
4. Workplace
5. External Dependencies
6. Recovery

The following are suggested steps for responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Event and can be used for future infectious disease response. It also contains how to keep essential operations going and more importantly keeping your workforce safe, healthy and available for work.

Continuity of Operations

1. Establish crisis management team (CMT)
   a. Should be key leadership positions from across the organization
   b. Define Delegation of Authority
   c. Determine lines for reporting across the organization
   d. Review triggers for escalation
   e. Review HR policies and tolerance for risk
   f. Be ready to make difficult decisions
   g. Approve recommended plan of actions based on Public Health and Government Authorities as well as input from the infection disease response team
   h. Review current operating and capital budgets and assess what changes need to happen to address current situation, 3 months from now and possibly 6 months or later.
      i. Review any projects either in progress or projected to start and whether they continue.

Continuity of Operations *continued*

   i. Review process for extraordinary financial expenditures to respond to the pandemic event
      i. Reduced revenues due to reduction or closure of business
      ii. Increased expenditures associated with sick-leave, death, and re-staffing
      iii. Acquisition of goods / services to deal with pandemic.
   j. Develop key messages / designate spokesperson(s) depending on different audiences.
   k. Regularly provide updates to staff and stakeholders.
   l. Approve communications to staff and stakeholders

2. Establish an infectious disease response team to gather credible information
   a. Ensure those responsible for the following functions: OHS, employee relations, employee benefits, risk / safety management, business continuity, emergency management, communications, facilities, critical operations, IT, etc.
   b. Establish frequency of these meetings.
   c. Design an issue log and status reporting tools include an approach to collect, analyze and report
   d. Determine credible sources for gathering information
   e. Document outcomes of the meetings and provide situation reports to CMT regularly (e.g. daily). They may include:
      i. Latest health news
      ii. Absenteeism
      iii. Local events
      iv. Known business impacts
      v. Supply chain issues

3. Refer to your business continuity plans for assessing priorities and determine whether they will change due to the COVID-19 event.
   a. If there are no business continuity plans, then each department must define what are critical operations to continue and what are their key dependencies and required resources.
   b. Once the departments have completed this assessment, the prioritized list of critical operations must be presented and approved by CMT.

4. Streamline administrative procedures where possible.

5. Consider how to handle complete shutdown of your operations if you are unable to continue (e.g. directed to close by government officials)
   a. What measures would be required to secure the workplace and its assets, then look at the impacts on your workforce.
   b. What measures would be required to maintain the building in good working order.

6. Ensure cybersecurity measures are being stepped up to address staff working from home.

Continuity of Operations *continued*

7. Ensure capacity is sustainable for online services but be caution of third-party telecommunications disruptions due to heavy outage.
8. Review ongoing payroll obligations for staff working and those that can't work.
9. Forecast financial position for next 3 months, 6 months and a year for payroll and debt obligations
10. Discuss business interruption coverage with insurance provider
11. Develop pay and benefit policies
    a. Personal illness
    b. Extended medical or family leave
    c. Overtime
    d. Workforce attrition
    e. Community containment measures and quarantine
    f. School Closures / Child Care concerns, etc.
    g. Bereavement
    h. Return to work (once recovered)
12. Discuss whether procurement process has to change
13. Consider how long the organization can sustain operating in this continuity mode (i.e. potentially months).

Workforce

1. Categorize staff as follows:
    a. Those that perform critical functions and must be onsite.
    b. Those that perform critical functions and can work remotely.
    c. Those that perform non-critical function but could "backfill" category (a) or (b).
    d. Those that perform non-critical functions and cannot work remotely.
2. Identify any employees who may be at higher risk due to existing health conditions.
3. Identify impacts of major reduction of staff and develop contingency procedures (e.g. how will you deliver services with 15%, 25%, 40%, or more than 50% staff unavailable).
4. Identify how to handle staff coming back from travel abroad.
    a. Refer to your Provincial/Federal guidelines.
5. Stop all non-essential travel and determine how to bring employees back from business travel.
6. Assign staff into critical teams and consider sequestering those staff to stay home until they are needed to potential replace those on "frontline" (Category A).
7. Discuss how to sustain increase need for IT staff to support remote connectivity.
8. Work with HR (and Union if applicable) on any issues related to temporarily filling positions vacated by prolonged illness, staff supporting loved ones or death among staff
9. Review key staff succession plans
    a. Ensure certain staff are not being designated for more than one key role.

Workforce *continued*

b. Consider the longevity of the event and how to maintain staffing levels.
10. Investigate staffing options to bring back retired staff, contractors or temporary staff if feasible. Develop a listing of contact information for those potential replacements.
11. Identify any issues with certification, temporary licensing, etc. with these replacements.
12. Educate staff and keep them up to date
    a. Validate health contact for employees
    b. Validate employee contact information and confirm the best way to reach them.
    c. Determine methods and platforms for communicating (e.g. hotline, designated email account, intranet, social media, website, mass notification tool).
    d. Consider daily updates to staff
13. Setup a process for Q&A from staff
    a. Ensure that staff feel like they are informed and involved.
14. Consider alternative options for staff who take public transit
15. Consider the following options for the workforce:
    a. Reduce staffing levels,
    b. Stagger breaks,
    c. Establish shift work, and
    d. Flexible scheduling options
16. Conduct cross training
    a. Consider whether HR training resources can be redeployed to conduct or test cross-training and/or third-party vendor for training needs
17. Ensure staff personal / family obligations are met and assess whether they can continue to work from home for extended period of time.
18. Ongoing checkpoints for staff wellbeing especially those working remotely.
19. Provide employee assistance program for mental stability.

Infection Control

1. Monitor reliable sources for public health information (refer to **Resources** at end of this document).
2. Review current HR absentee policy and guidelines.
3. Monitor staff absenteeism/illness and report to CMT.
4. Inventory onsite personal protective equipment (PPE) / sanitation supplies.
    a. Secure supplies as appropriate.
    b. Refer to PPE / Sanitation guidelines from your Provincial Public Health
5. Establish infection control measures (e.g. awareness sessions, posters, fact sheets, links credible websites) in the workplace and your fleet operations (if applicable)
    a. Promote proper hand washing practices.

Infection Control *continued*

     b. Ensure work surfaces are cleaned regularly, especial common touch surfaces and eating surfaces e.g. doorknobs, kitchen areas, phones, computer keyboards, mice, headsets, vehicles, and any other shared item.

     c. Provide personal protective equipment to those at higher risk of exposure.

6. Establish workspace cleaning by your staff before, during and after shift. Especially if it is shared workspace.

     a. Ensure cleaning staff has appropriate supplies and personal protective equipment as well as training.

7. Increase / enhance workplace cleaning by janitorial services (e.g. deep cleaning regime of customer facing sites).

     a. Assess whether external janitorial service have sufficient contingency plans to maintain their services.

     b. Potentially identify alternate source.

8. Encourage and/or facilitate routine annual influenza vaccinations of staff.

9. Increase social distance at the workplace.

     a. Institute a no-handshaking policy.

     b. Limit face-to-face meetings and other types of gatherings.

     c. Consider closing off area for staff to congregate (e.g. breakroom, kitchen)

     d. Depending on the situation, it may require shutting down organization's cafeteria, fitness centres, childcare centres and recreation areas.

10. Setup either a dedicated medical room or repurposed office where staff exhibiting symptoms can immediately isolate.

11. Develop policies on the role and responsibility for First Aid Attendants for those working in workplaces.

12. Consider how to accept goods and service providers in your workplaces including mail / courier services.

Workplace

1. Develop alternate approaches to limit employee contact with clients/public (e.g. online services, off hours drop boxes, offset penalties on delayed payments/reporting requirements).

2. Minimize public facing contact between clients and staff (e.g. barriers).

     a. Redesign workspace

     b. Restrict or limit visitors to workplaces. Refer to guidelines for public gatherings.

3. Establish social (physical) distancing protocols.

     a. Recommended 2 metres (6 feet)

     b. Refer to guidelines for social distancing (see **Resources**).

4. Consider alternate ways for shipping and receiving if applicable including courier.

Workplace *continued*

5. Develop work from home policy
    a. Ensure those staff are capable of working from home and ready to do so.
6. Accommodate increase in computing equipment for remote connectivity.
7. Establish teleconferencing, video conferencing and/or online service options for staff as well as with clients.
8. Ensure IT capacity and support for teleworking and remote operations including licensing.
9. Ensure teleconferencing / videoconferencing capacity is manageable as there will be disruptions / issues as more organizations are using it and continue to use it.
10. Redesign workspace to increase physical distance and reduce time of exposure (e.g. for shared workstations, provide staff with his/her own keyboard, headset, mouse and phone.

External Dependencies

1. Take inventory of critical assets and services, and assess what may be impacted by supply chain issues / current demands.
2. Survey existing key suppliers for continuity strategies and determine ongoing communication process.
    a. Identify those that are International and those local suppliers.
    b. Establish early warnings of any issues.
3. Consider alternate suppliers and/or method for doing operations.
4. Consider transportation disruption, utilities and government service reduction/interruption.
5. Setup communication process with key stakeholders
    a. Develop platform (e.g. email, website, hotline)
    b. Identify key liaison representative(s) from organization to link with suppliers.
    c. Ensure all messaging is approved by Crisis Management Team.
    d. Provide regular updates to key stakeholders on any changes to your operations.

Recovery Planning

The organization needs to start planning for how they will return to business as usual. This can be initiated now, but not implemented until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.

1. Develop return to work plans considering the following:
    a. Whether all staff return at once, or
    b. Staggered return based on .
2. Inform staff of return to work plans and how to process backlogged work if applicable.
3. Ensure enhanced cleaning of workplace and necessary supplies are in place.
4. Discuss measure to restart your operations including delivery services, backlog and fleet operations if applicable.

Recovery Planning *continued*

5. Contact critical vendors/suppliers on their current and projected status for return to operations.
6. Discuss how to retain staffing level as well as recruitment if staff don't come back
7. Outline any type of compensation and/or adjustments to payroll
8. Document plan to transfer to business as usual
9. Provide ways to help your staff adjust and provide counselling
10. Be aware of psychosocial needs
11. Discuss strategies to bring back business and revive the community
12. Once operations are back on track, conduct an after action meeting with CMT, Infectious Disease Response Team and other lead business owners. Document results and create an action plan.

Post Pandemic Review

Once operations is business as usual, the following are suggested activities:

1. Gather information by reviewing the following tracking process for responding to the COVID-19 event:
    a. Financial expenditures
    b. Sick leave
    c. Absenteeism for other reasons
    d. Incident / Status reporting
    e. IT and telecommunications capacity
    f. Continuation of business
    g. Labour relations
    h. Supply Chain / Procurement
    i. Communications process
    j. Working Remotely
    k. Workplace
2. Document observations and recommended actions from the above review.
3. Design post-event evaluation form to collect data from all those involved. Consider gathering feedback from all staff on general observations.
4. Prepare and conduct a briefing with CMT, Infectious Disease Response Team and Key Management to:
    a. Review the above results, and
    b. Discuss what worked well, where to improve and what changes may be imposed in how to conduct business in the future.
5. Ensure these outcomes are documented into After Action Report and present recommendations to the Leadership.

Post Pandemic Review *continued*

6. Create/Update your Pandemic Plan for Infectious Diseases as well as your organization's Business Continuity Plan. The Pandemic Plan can be an appendix to your Business Continuity Plan.
7. Communicate outcomes to all staff.
8. Establish a maintenance process to keep your Business Continuity Plan exercised and updated regularly (e.g. annually)
   a. Include an exercise of your Pandemic Plan as part of this process.

RESOURCES

World Health Organization (WHO)

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Post Pandemic Review
https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html

BC Centre of Disease Control

http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19

HealthLink BC

https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19

BC Government

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support

Alberta Government

https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx

Alberta Health Services

https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx

Saskatchewan Government

https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus

Saskatchewan Health Authority

https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca

Manitoba Government

https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html

Manitoba Health Authority

https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/

RESOURCES *continued*

Ontario Government

https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus

Ontario Health Authority

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources

Quebec Government

https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/

Nova Scotia Government

https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/

Nova Scotia Health Authority

http://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirus

New Brunswick Public Health

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html

PEI Government

https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/covid-19

Newfoundland Government

https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/

Yukon Government

https://yukon.ca/covid-19

NWT Government

https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/coronavirus-disease-covid-19

Nunavut Government

https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus