BOLD planning

CREATING A
CULTURE OF
PREPAREDNESS

With the BOLDplanning
Preparedness Cycle Framework™

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THE CONTENTS

THE CHALLENGE:
CREATING A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS

The phrase "culture of preparedness" has become popular in today's emergency management circles. It is often used in describing efforts to engage and motivate citizens to prepare themselves before a disaster strikes. While this is a smart and highly worthwhile goal, agencies themselves also have a responsibility to develop and maintain their own culture of preparedness.

While it may seem obvious that an emergency management agency, with its sole purpose of preparing for and responding to critical events, should develop and foster a culture of preparedness, most organizational leaders will admit there is room for improvement.

Consider the following "red flags" that indicate an advancement in preparedness culture is needed:

- Missing, incomplete or outdated HMP, EOP or COOP plans

- A "check the box" planning mentality (doing the minimum needed to meet funding requirements)

- HMP, EOP and COOP plans that do not leverage today's technology, but exist solely in hard copy binders

- Plans that are standalone and siloed, not leveraging common information across documents

- Insufficient collaboration with community and partner stakeholders

- Inadequate regional and cross-jurisdictional planning

- Erratic or loosely managed exercise programs

- Unmanaged or poorly focused training

While it may seem obvious that an emergency management agency should develop and foster a culture of preparedness, most organizational leaders will admit there is room for improvement.

THE SOLUTION:
THE BOLDPLANNING
PREPAREDNESS CYCLE FRAMEWORK™

Creating a culture of preparedness internally starts with a commitment to managing preparedness in a strategic way with a longer-term view. Improving culture requires managers to formulate and adopt a vision for their agency and their community as a whole.

To assist emergency managers in long-term planning, BOLDplanning developed the Preparedness Cycle Framework™ based on guidance from FEMA, 15 years of emergency preparedness consulting and more than 10,000 preparedness plans created. This culture-impacting process encompasses the various types of plans an agency should produce, timeframes for producing them, exercise schedules and ongoing training efforts.

This framework aligns with the emergency management preparedness cycle and illustrates the agency's commitment to a thorough, well-managed process over the course of five years.

THE BOLDPLANNING PREPAREDNESS CYCLE FRAMEWORK
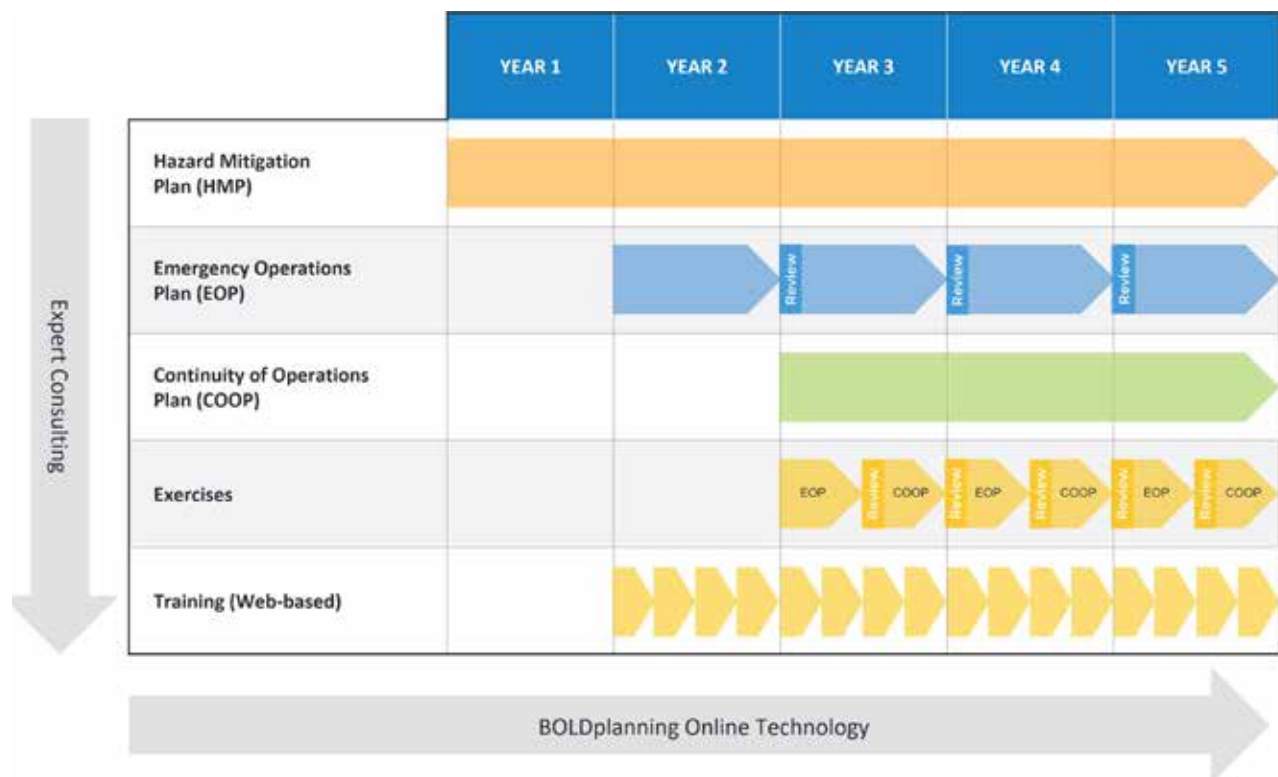
The BOLDplanning Preparedness Cycle Framework outlines a five-year planning cycle along with supporting activities. Following this framework will help agencies and organizations better create a culture of preparedness.

STEP 1:
THE HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

While it is possible to enter the Preparedness Cycle Framework at any phase, the most logical starting point is the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).

Hazard mitigation is the focused effort around reducing the impact of disasters of various types. The process generally includes identifying prevalent risks to the community, understanding their likelihood of occurring and potential severity, and determining long-term strategies that can be implemented to reduce the negative effects of these events. These plans help reduce the cycle of repeated damage over time from common threats.

Developing hazard mitigation plans is extremely important as it enables agencies to:

- Increase education and awareness around threats, hazards and vulnerabilities

- Build partnerships for risk reduction involving government, organizations, businesses and the public

- Identify long-term, broadly-supported strategies for risk reduction

- Align risk reduction with other state, tribal or community objectives

- Identify implementation approaches that focus resources on the greatest risks and vulnerabilities

- Communicate priorities to potential sources of funding

The HMP is so important, in fact, that FEMA will not provide certain non-emergency disaster assistance/funding unless a plan has been developed according to FEMA guidelines.

This focus on mitigation strategies makes sense, as evidenced by the National Institute of Building Sciences. The organization estimates that every dollar invested in mitigation saves six dollars in prevented damages (up from four dollars in previous years).

The HMP should be based on guidance from FEMA following the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) process. THIRA is a three-step risk assessment process that helps communities answer the following questions:

- What threats and hazards can affect our community?
- If they occurred, what impacts would those threats and hazards have on our community?
- Based on those impacts, what capabilities should our community have?

The THIRA helps communities understand their risks and determine the level of capability they need in order to address those risks.

Additionally, community capabilities should be analyzed following the Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) methodology. The Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) is a self-assessment of a jurisdiction's current capability levels against the targets identified in the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA). Using the targets from the THIRA, jurisdictions identify their current capability and how that capability changed over the last year.

Both the THIRA and SPR processes are detailed in FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 201, Third Edition, a foundational document for risk assessment.

Based on FEMA requirements, HMPs should follow a five-year planning cycle.

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STEP 2:
THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) focus on defining the right actions to take during a critical event. Local EOPs generally focus on measures taken to protect the public within the immediate community, while state EOPs are centered on actions taken to ensure all levels of government are able to mobilize in a uniform way to protect state citizens.

Specifically, a jurisdiction's Emergency Operations Plan:

- Assigns responsibility to organizations and individuals for carrying out specific actions at projected times and places in an emergency

- Sets forth lines of authority and shows how all actions will be coordinated

- Describes how people and property will be protected in emergencies and disasters

- Identifies personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available for use during response and recovery operations

- Identifies steps to address mitigation concerns during response and recovery activities

Given continuous organizational change, employee turnover, etc., the EOP should be revised an on annual basis.

STEP 3:
THE CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN

Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning is a preparedness effort to ensure an organization's Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) and Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) continue to be performed during a critical situation. Any event that makes it impossible for employees to work in their regular facility could result in the activation of a COOP plan.

A COOP answers the following basic questions for an organization facing a disruption:

- Where could/would we go?
- How would we communicate and what would we say?
- What do we do and what functions are most important?
- What equipment is needed to continue our job?

Key components of a COOP plan can be categorized simply as People, Places and Things. Specifically, the COOP plan contains the following:

Essential Functions -- The critical activities performed by an organization

Orders of Succession -- Leadership plan if senior officials are unable to fulfill their duties

Delegations of Authority -- Specific decision-making authority by position, triggers for activating delgations and limitations of delegations, enacted when typical channels are not available

Continuity Facilities -- Locations, other than the primary facility, used to carry out essential functions during a continuity event

The key components of a COOP plan can be categorized simply as People, Places and Things.

Communications -- Communication capabilities across all agencies that support the continuation of essential functions

Vital Records Management -- The identification, protection and availability of key information sources (documents, files, software, data management resources, etc.) needed to support Essential Functions during a continuity event

Human Capital -- Emergency and other personnel activated to perform response duties during a continuity event

Tests, Training & Exercises (TT&E) -- Measures to ensure an agency's continuity plan is capable of supporting Essential Functions throughout the duration of a continuity event

Devolution of Control and Direction -- Capability to transfer statutory authority and responsibility for Essential Functions from an agency's primary operating staff and facilities to other agency employees and facilities

Reconstitution -- The process by which surviving and/or replacement agency personnel resume normal operations from the original or alternate facility

People
- Orders of Succession
- Delegations of Authority
- Human Capital
- Teams, Roles and Responsibilities

Places
- Primary Facilities
- Alternate Facilities
- Facility Security
- Facility Evacuation

Things
- Essential Functions
- Communications
- Vital Records
- Equipments

STEP 4:
EXERCISE PROGRAM

Plans by themselves do not guarantee a proper response to incidents. Practice makes perfect (or more accurately, *perfect* practice makes perfect). As such, it is crucial to develop a regular exercise regimen that helps guarantee all stakeholders are clear what to do in a given circumstance.

To ensure exercises follow accepted best practices, Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) trained facilitators should be utilized to lead key exercise sessions. Even better, seek facilitators who have earned a Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP) certification from the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) to lead these efforts. Master Exercise Practitioners are experts on design, development, conduct and evaluation of emergency management exercises consistent with HSEEP principles.

Following the Culture of Preparedness Cycle, it is recommended two tabletop exercises, multiple drills, or a functional exercise be conducted annually. Full-scale exercises should be conducted every three years if possible. Additionally, After-Action Reports (AARs) should be developed and reviewed following each exercise to determine where expectations were and were not met.

Bi-annual exercises may alternate in focus between operational tests found in the EOP and continuity challenges found in the COOP plan.

STEP 5:
TRAINING REGIMEN

In addition to exercises (which focus on implementing what has already been learned), it is crucial to conduct regular and frequent training sessions for all plan stakeholders. It is recommended training sessions occur on a monthly basis (a higher frequency is desirable) particularly given the ease of access and wide availability of online training.

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) offers a wide range of courses online at no charge. These courses can earn learners Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and certificates of completion.

Additionally, training centered on technology and software solutions should be incorporated into the schedule to ensure administrators and users are comfortable with the various solutions used for planning, response and recovery.
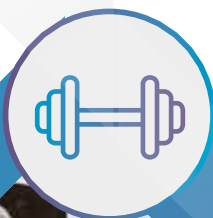
BENEFITS OF
ONLINE PLANNING TOOLS

In the past, preparedness planning relied on hard-copy, binder-based documents. These outdated methods of storing and updating plans could place agency reputation and the community at risk. In today's world of online Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) planning solutions, such risks are unnecessary and avoidable.

Top online planning solutions offer a step-by-step, templated approach to compliance. Like tax preparation software that guides users to accurately formulating income tax returns, leading emergency planning solutions provide guidance for capturing the right information, making it easier and faster to maintain actionable plans.

Consider the following ways technology enhances building a culture of preparedness.

Better Planning Collaboration

Emergency preparedness planning cannot be conducted successfully in isolation. It requires deep collaboration between multiple individuals, departments and external agencies. In the past, manual collaboration and data collection efforts (such as emailed documents, post-it notes, whiteboard scribblings, etc.) made the plan development process more complex and time consuming.

Today, online planning solutions are easily accessible at any time. Further, with flexible administrative controls, access and editing permissions can be tailored to ensure only the right people gain entrance and have input.

Easier Editing and Maintenance

Binder-based plans will rapidly become outdated given the perpetual personnel and organizational changes within an emergency management agency and partnering organizations. Updating hard-copy plans may require a reprint of an entire contact section each time an employee joins or leaves the organization—an impractical practice.

Online planning solutions make editing records, teams and plans simple. Users simply log in, make changes and save. Assignments, duties, team memberships, etc. will be updated automatically throughout the entire plan.

Faster Response

A comprehensive emergency preparedness plan is really a conglomeration of multiple mini-plans. Various hazards and scenarios each have their own activities, response teams, etc. It's the reason why most plans consume, not just a single binder, but entire shelves of binders. As such, precious time can be wasted manually scouring printed tables of contents or indexes looking for the right piece of information.

With well-designed online planning software, information is easily accessed, and key elements can be searched electronically to uncover crucial data within seconds.

Superior Mobility

A binder-laden shelf is difficult, if not impossible, to move in the event of a disaster impacting an organization's facility. Even computer-based applications can be inadequate if key members of the crisis response team are off site without laptops, riding in vehicles, etc.

In addition to offering browser-based solutions, today's leading planning software providers also offer mobile capabilities. These mobile apps place emergency response plans quite literally in the hands of the right people wherever they may be. In all, these mobile capabilities extend the practical application of crisis planning.

Online planning solutions make editing records, teams and plans fast and easy.

BENEFITS OF
CONSULTING SERVICES IN PLANNING

Depending on your organization, emergency preparedness plans can be tricky and complex. While a DIY strategy may be great for improving your landscaping, it may fall short when applied to such a critical process as emergency planning. Consider the following benefits to adding the right consultants to your team.

Credentialed Professionals

The right preparedness consulting group will have highly skilled and certified planners on staff. These certifications help ensure the right processes are being followed to create optimum preparedness plans.

Look for consultants with credentials such as Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP), FEMA certified continuity professionals such as Professional Continuity Practitioner (PCP) and Master Continuity Practitioner (MCP), and IAEM Certified Emergency Manager (CEM). Also seek consultants and facilitators who have real-world experience.

Up-to-Date Guidance

It is often difficult for professional emergency managers to stay up-to-date with new requirements and industry best practices.

Leading consulting providers stay abreast of all new FEMA guidance, funding sources, industry trends, etc. to ensure plans are effective and compliant.

Consultants typically monitor resources such as:

- DHS/FEMA FCD 1 & FCD2
- Continuity Guidance Circular
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- CPG 101 & 102
- DMA2000
- 44CFR Section 201

Expert Facilitation

In addition to planning subject matter expertise, top consultants are experienced in the art and science of facilitating groups and engaging stakeholders. Group participants may be more open with a consultant, and sensitive political environments can often be navigated more effectively with a third-party expert.

This combination of skills helps ensure plans are accurate and fully encompass the inputs of a variety of stakeholders.

CONCLUSION
ADOPTING THE CYCLE OF PREPAREDNESS FRAMEWORK

The BOLDplanning Cycle of Preparedness Framework is a useful planning model for ensuring emergency managers take a longer-term view of preparedness. Instead of viewing plans, exercises and training as individual silos of work, the framework encourages managers to view their preparedness in a holistic way.

Further, the framework suggests tying various plans together through the facilitation of expert consultants and the use of today's online technologies.

By adopting and pursuing the Cycle of Preparedness Framework, emergency managers will have taken great strides towards creating a culture of preparedness for their organization and community.

THE BOLDPLANNING PREPAREDNESS CYCLE FRAMEWORK
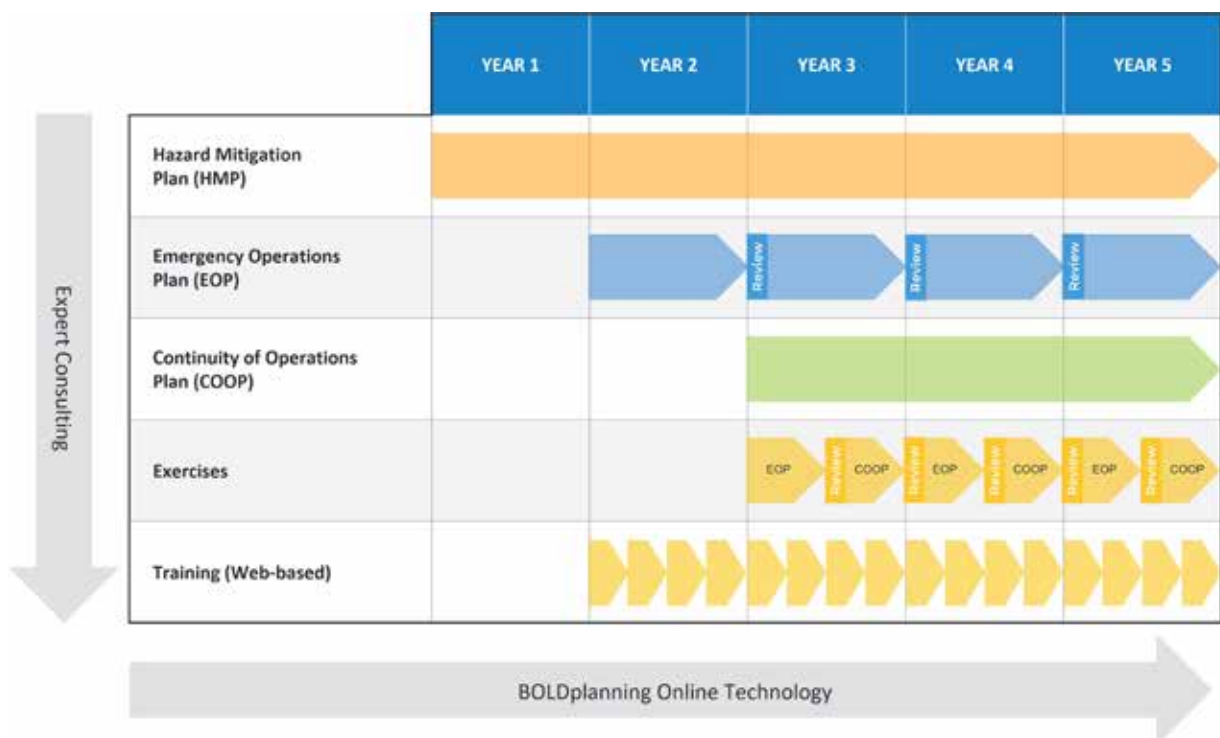
About BOLDplanning Inc.

BOLDplanning Inc. is the preeminent developer of online solutions for Emergency Operations Planning (EOP), Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP), Business Continuity Planning (BCP) and Hazard Mitigation.

Our comprehensive online platform walks planners through each step of the continuity and emergency planning process, becoming the central resource for an organization's plan development, training and ongoing maintenance. Our consulting team is unrivaled in its knowledge and experience, and includes internationally certified CBCPs, CHPCPs, FEMA- certified continuity professionals (PCP/MCP) and IAEM Certified Emergency Managers (CEMs).

The BOLDplanning approach provides an unparalleled platform for both the public and private sector, making the critical process of preparedness planning easy and efficient. Currently, BOLDplanning is the solution of choice for more than 10,000 organizational plans.

10K+
OVER 10,000 PLANS CREATED

39
39 STATES SERVED

95%+
95%+ CUSTOMER RETENTION RATE

CONTACT US

4515 Harding Pike, #325
Nashville, TN 37205

615.469.5558

info@boldplanning.com

BOLD planning

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Be prepared. Be **BOLD**.

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