



ENGAGING SMALL BUSINESSES IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is meant to show the following organizations how to effectively link small businesses with business continuity resources and engage them in disaster preparedness activities:

- + Chambers Of Commerce
- + Economic Development Organizations (EDOs)
- + Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)
- + SCORE offices
- + Community Colleges
- + Business Schools
- + Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)
- + Local Banks
- + Nonprofits that serve small businesses

WHAT IS BUSINESS CONTINUITY?

Business Continuity is planning for future crises and equipping businesses with the defenses needed to survive threats, emergencies and disasters. It centers on establishing recovery strategies for critical business functions and making contingency plans to continue operations under different types of disasters.

**Practical Tips and
Guidance for
Community &
Business
Organizations**

Why Engage Small Businesses in Business Continuity?

Small businesses play a critical role in the local economy as they provide needed services and products to both residents and major employers. Following a major disaster, their absence is keenly felt when gas stations and groceries stay closed, local supply chains are disrupted, and residents can't get access to needed services for their quality of life. Small businesses fail to prepare for a major disaster for three reasons: 1) they lack the financial resources and 2) they lack the knowledge for how to prepare and 3) they tend to underestimate the impact an incident will have on their business. Impacts such as:

+ One in four small businesses do not reopen following a large-scale disaster.

+ At least 60 percent of small businesses fail to make preparations before an emergency.

+ Of those businesses without a plan, 43 percent won't re-open and 75 percent will fail within three years of a major event.

+ Companies that aren't able to resume operations within ten days of event are not likely to survive.

“Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.”

Albert Schweitzer

Lead by doing. Before engaging businesses in preparation measures, make sure your organization has a well-developed business continuity plan. Ensure to test, revisit, and adjust the plan periodically.

Top Ten Ways to Engage Small Businesses in Preparedness

1. Engage and partner with other community and business organizations to access their networks of businesses.
2. Develop a network of business continuity professionals to connect with local businesses.
3. Identify storytellers of disaster-impacted businesses to motivate others with personal testimonies.
4. Create a speaker's bureau of subject-matter experts to deliver messages on why businesses should care.
5. Deliver workshops on business continuity content to instruct on the how-to's.
6. Engage emergency managers in business continuity training events to inform attendees of local government response plans.
7. Publicize activities through local media channels, social media, and utility bills.
8. Promote key activities through the city's business license renewals.
9. Educate & promote activities through fire inspections by passing out flyers and adding item to the fire chief's checklist.
10. Track the progress of your efforts through surveys to measure the resiliency and growth of businesses which do have plans.¹

90% of businesses with a risk management plan spend less than one day a month preparing and maintaining them.²

How to Market to Small Businesses

- + Recruit a community champion to communicate & push message(s).
- + Promote efforts in local marketing channels.
- + Use the media to publicize messages with considerations for:

AUDIENCE

Know your target population and what appeals to them.

FREQUENCY

It takes almost 20 exposures to internalize a message.

POSITIONING

Serve as the source for continuity planning services.

UNDERSTANDING

Communicate the value proposition consistently.

94% of small business owners believe that a disaster could seriously disrupt their business within the next two years.³



Ways to Engage the Business Community More Broadly

Influence the “big gorilla” businesses in your community to integrate business continuity efforts into supply chain processes. Recruit major employers to request their suppliers develop a business continuity plan in the contract negotiation phase. Ensure plans are kept up-to-date through periodic review.

Integrate business continuity into your organization’s core activities. EDOs can use business retention and expansion surveys to assess the business community’s resilience. SBDCs can use interviews to improve business continuity initiatives already in place.

Keep business continuity events and online resources short and convenient. Workshops are better attended when they last six hours or less, rather than all day long. Consider recording events and making them available online for business owners to watch at their convenience.

Continuity planning should be tailored to address the unique needs of local businesses and your region. Consider the culture, composition and qualities of local businesses when seeking to serve them. Businesses with more than 50 employees seek professional help when drafting a continuity plan.

Case Study

'A Day Without Business' Workshop in Tulsa, OK

Following the 2001 floods in Tulsa, Oklahoma, community leaders came together to support the formation of Tulsa Partners, an organization to unite stakeholders to support a more disaster-resilient, sustainable community. They partnered with the Disaster Resistant Business Council (DRBC) to create the 'A Day without Business' symposium.

This annual symposium links small to mid-sized businesses with subject matter experts on business continuity, insurance, IT, public health and disaster recovery. The program includes a panel of presenters from recent catastrophes such as Joplin, MO or Moore, OK. At the end of the event, participants receive a thumb drive with all the presentation slides and other resources made available through the event.

Partners for the event include the state, Greater Tulsa Regional Chamber, United Way and other chambers and non-profits. The workshop is often funded by in-kind donations, grants, registration fees and the selling of booth space. External partners such as Tulsa Regional Chamber help market the event to its membership of over 3,000 businesses.

Businesses have responded well to the symposium – attracting from 100 to 150 attendees. Prior to their destructive tornado, Joplin Chamber staff participated in the workshop, which helped equip them for future events.

The Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce was prompted to create its own continuity plan after attending the first Day without Business Symposium in 2006. Joplin Area Chamber's plan has been recognized by the US Chamber of Commerce as a best practice. The Chamber makes it a priority to regularly update its business continuity plan.

Resources

PS-Prep
www.fema.gov/about-ps-preptm

American Cross' ReadyRating
www.readyrating.org/

Ready.gov
www.ready.gov/business-continuity-planning-suite

PrepareMyBusiness.org

Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI)
www.resilientus.org/

OFB-EZ™ - Free Business Continuity Resource

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety's (IBHS) OFB-EZ™ is a free business continuity toolkit designed specifically for small businesses. Small business owners can download the OFB-EZ toolkit and create their own business continuity plan using fill-able forms in eight modules. The toolkit can be accessed at:

<https://www.disastersafety.org/open-for-business/>



RESTORE YOUR ECONOMY.ORG RestoreYourEconomy.org provides resources and best practice information for business leaders, government officials, and community stakeholders

seeking to rebuild their local economies and assist businesses after a disaster. It is a one-stop shop of disaster preparedness and post-disaster economic recovery resources, tools, event announcements as well as opportunities to connect with peers through social media groups.





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Notes

¹ Scott Cave of Atlantic Business Continuity Services. Adapted from Train the Trainer Presentation.

² <http://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/small-business-research/clean-energy/climate-change-preparedness-and-small-business.php>

³ <http://lancaster.score.org/workshops/10-steps-prepare-any-organization-disaster>

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