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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Business Continuity Plan**

Guidance Notes

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice.

This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary. Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**Why an organisation needs a business continuity plan**

Business continuity is about having a plan to deal with difficult situations, so your organisation can continue to function with as little disruption as possible. A business continuity plan assists the organisation to keep going under any circumstances and to keep operations functional during the difficult event and immediately after. All organisations, whether Type A, B and C, should have a business continuity plan in place in case of this eventuality.

Having a business continuity plan speaks especially to principle 2, ‘Exercising Control Over Our Organisation’.  Sub-principles 2 and 3 state that the organisation should:

* Making sure there are appropriate internal financial and management controls.
* Identifying major risks for our organisation and deciding ways of managing the risks.

A business continuity plan supports the decision making around major risks for the organisation, and provides a management control to help mitigate risk.

It is important to account for a multitude of possible risks, disasters and threats. Possible disasters are often classified as either naturally occurring or artificial events. Examples of artificial man-made threats include cyber-attacks, terrorism threats, and theft. Natural threats include fires, power outages, earthquakes and of course: pandemics.

There are a number of reasons why a business continuity plan is important:

* It helps the organisation maintain resiliency in responding quickly to an interruption.
* It saves money, time and reputation.
* It supports continuity for members and athletes/participants.
* It provides direction to employees and volunteers.
* It protects the people within the organisation, and any property or assets
* It mitigates risk by being proactive in managing those risks
* It enables better communication and ensures that employees/volunteers are effectively directed on how to perform during a crisis.

**Whose responsibility is it to develop a business continuity plan?**

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered.  It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure there is a business continuity plan in place in the organisation, and to regularly review the implementation of that plan and evaluate its effectiveness.  The executive lead / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is often tasked with ensuring that the principles of the Code are being implemented in the organisation and thus will likely be responsible for developing and drafting the business continuity plan.

**How to develop a business continuity plan?**

**The following are the suggested steps involved in creating a strategic plan:**

How do you write a business continuity plan?

A Business Continuity Plan outlines the processes and procedures that an organisation must follow in the event of a disruption. The plan must identify relevant risks that could cause issues, be they cyber-attacks, internal vulnerabilities, weather events, pandemics or technological problems.

**This involves six general steps:**

1. Identify the scope of the plan.
2. Identify key business areas/areas of operation.
3. Identify critical functions.
4. Identify dependencies between various business areas/areas of operation and functions.
5. Determine acceptable downtime for each critical function.
6. Create a plan to maintain operations.

**How to resource and implement the business continuity plan**

Testing the business continuity plan and how it can be implemented is important, to understand that it will work, and can be put into effect quickly, in the case of an emergency taking place. Naturally, most organisations will hope that the plan remains hypothetical and will not ever need to be used, but need to know that it will work if an incident does happen.

Some further steps that need to be taken to resource and test/implement the plan, once the plan has been created, are:

* Create a team who will be responsible for leading the implementation of the plan
* Ensure that the team are fully au-fait with the detail of the plan and the steps they need to take in its implementation
* Test the plan and its effectiveness, and undertake an annual test of the plan
* Identify any gaps and risks with the plan, for example offer training to staff should a skills gap be identified

Further links and resources

[Government Guidance - Business Continuity Planning](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/acc45-business-continuity-planning/)

[Government Guidance - Emergency Planning](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/624e4-emergency-planning/)