

Research Operations Continuity Considerations: Lab Level Continuity Plan

Getting Started

- Update your contact list of all employees, students, and post-docs, including mobile numbers. Make sure your team has this information always accessible and available.
- Define your essential functions and build your plan around them.

Scenario and Assumptions

Please consider the following for planning purposes:

- Lab members may be out sick or unable to come to work. Prepare your plan as if only a limited number of researchers can work in lab facilities for a 45- to 60-day period.
- The following may be delayed or unavailable:
 - orders for critical supplies;
 - lab member and visitor travel;
 - scientific service centers and other fee-for-service resources; and
 - repairs performed by facilities and other service providers.
- In the event of a local illness, decontamination of your workspace may be necessary.
- Assume that power and utilities will continue without disruption.
- In consultation with public health experts and officials, the campus administration may determine that curtailment of research activities is necessary in individual buildings or communities within campus.
- The university will communicate any disruptions to laboratory access.

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Key People

- Who are the key people (staff, students, faculty) whose positions or knowledge deem them “key”?
 - Resist the temptation to identify all lab staff as "Key People." The staff you identify should be those you would call upon first in time of crisis -- who have the experience, skills, or authority to perform critical essential tasks and/or make decisions.
- Who are the most important people from elsewhere on campus?
- Who are the key external partners and vendors that your staff rely on?
- Who are the other stakeholders that your staff may need to contact during and after the pandemic period? (e.g., project partners, collaborators at other universities, donors, or sponsors)

Vital Tasks

- Which tasks must be performed by a staff skeleton crew to sustain only the most important essential functions?
- Which unique specimens, research materials, and projects are important and also require staff maintenance?
- What task modifications may be necessary under pandemic conditions? Consider possible health, safety, and security aspects.
- How can the duration of important lab tasks be minimized?

Vital Equipment

- Which equipment are vital to maintaining the essential functions of your lab?
 - Examples:
 - NMR/MRI/other magnets requiring cryogenes
 - GC/MS, PET, EM, irradiators
 - Glove Box(es)
 - Solvent Purification Systems
 - Incubators
 - Refrigerators/Freezers
 - -80 Freezer(s)
- What does the equipment require at what frequency (daily, weekly) for human operation, maintenance, and troubleshooting?
- What mitigation activities could protect vital equipment?

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Vital Research Material

- Of the supplies needed to conduct your research, which are vital to your operations?
- Which supplies are most important and potentially limited? Should additional stocks be ordered?
- Which personal protective equipment (PPE) is required for essential functions? Which PPE may be subject to shortages (e.g., gloves) in the current pandemic? What is the best approach to conserving limited supplies while adequately protecting staff?
- What would you do if timely delivery is interrupted? What duration of interruption would cause irreparable damage to your research?
- What are alternate back-up sources to your primary suppliers?
- Does your laboratory need to have duplicate samples of novel compounds, specimens, etc. to continue research?
 - Examples:
 - Samples and specimens (live, fresh, frozen, and fixed)
 - Novel compounds and biochemicals
 - Type specimens
 - Cell lines
 - Seeds
 - Animals (note: SU-wide continuity plan in place)
 - Specialized reagents and chemicals

Communication and Collaboration

- How will your staff communicate with each other and provide regular updates?
- Do staff have the necessary equipment, knowledge, and skills to work remotely? Are documents and reference materials available to facilitate remote collaboration? Which special IT security and privacy requirements need consideration?
- How can reliance on key people be mitigated temporarily during the pandemic? (e.g., cross-training, written instructions or notes)
- What should be communicated when and to whom about the potential for and impacts of disruption? Consider materials transfer agreements (MTA) and external research collaborators.