



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Accomack County 2022 VACo Achievement Award Application Category – Organizational  
Development – Continuity Program**

**Executive Summary**

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Accomack County used CARES Act funds to create a robust Business Continuity Program as a means to manage and mitigate the effects of future disruptions. Initially collaborating with a third-party consultant and appointing a member of staff as Continuity Coordinator to spearhead the effort, the County developed a series of plans, formulated response groups, trained and exercised leadership, identified and began outfitting an alternate workspace facility, and designed a framework for continued program maturation in just over an eighteen-month period.

**Accomack County 2022 VACo Achievement Award Application Category – Organizational  
Development – Continuity Program**

**Overview:**

Accomack County has realized the need for business continuity planning for some years, but at no time was the need more evident than during the COVID-19 Pandemic. While the County was able to respond to the Pandemic by quickly adopting temporary remote work strategies, it was clear that a more robust continuity program was needed to be in place to manage future disruptions to business functions.

Using CARES Act funding, the County began work with a consultant to develop a series of plans, formulate response groups, designate and outfit an alternate workspace facility and create a Continuity Coordinator position to oversee the program.

**The Problem:**

Disruptions to business continuity in government are common, but seldom are they organization-wide in scope or long lasting. The recent COVID-19 Pandemic was both - and it presented a serious challenge to the County's ability to provide critical services to its citizenry. While the County was eventually able to meet that challenge, the need for an established program to manage future disruptions was never more evident.

**The Solution:**

In 2017, the County collaborated with a third-party consultant to begin the development of its Information Security Program. During this project, department heads and constitutional officers were interviewed in what is known as a Business Impact Analysis (or BIA) to identify business functions and assess the impacts of various disruptions to those functions. Through this process, it became clear that many of the County's functions were critical in nature and needed protection.

In the spring of 2020, with the Pandemic beginning to seriously affect County operations, the County Administrator requested assistance from the aforementioned consultant to begin work on a Continuity program. In August 2020, the Administrator designated the County's Special Projects Manager to serve in the capacity of Continuity Coordinator, and the program began in earnest.

From September 2020 onward, the Continuity Coordinator worked closely with the consultant to develop a series of plans: a Department Recovery Plan for each department, a Crisis Management Plan and a Countywide Continuity Plan. These plans, along with the already existing Emergency Response Plan and the IT Disaster Recovery Plan, formed the nexus of the Continuity Program. As in 2017, all department heads and constitutional officers were interviewed and played a pivotal role in providing critical data for the development of these plans.

In March 2021, the final draft of the Countywide Continuity Plan was finalized and approved. Shortly thereafter, a "virtual" tabletop exercise was conducted by the Continuity Team to train leadership and test the plan. A lessons-learned analysis was included as an addendum to the plan and an annual exercise regimen established.

In August 2021, as part of the implementation of the Countywide Continuity Plan, the Accomack County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was identified as the Alternate Workspace Facility for continuity purposes. Since then, the Continuity Coordinator has been collaborating with key

stakeholders (Administrator, Public Safety, IT, etc.) to outfit the facility with supplies and develop a plan for its use.

Future program goals include:

1) The development and maintenance of a Countywide “Risk Register” where the Continuity Coordinator will actively work with leadership to target continuity risks and monitor progress on mitigation strategies;

2) The development of a staff-level eLearning training program to introduce continuity concepts, offer instruction on alternate facility usage and promote a healthier continuity culture in the work environment.

**Financing:**

The initial costs associated with the program have been largely covered by CARES Act funding. In harmony with the “Economic Security” portion of the Act’s name, the Administrator felt that using some of these resources to promote resiliency within the County was an appropriate and responsible application. Going forward, the Continuity program will be included as a budgetary item; however, as the program transitions from the establishment phase to maintenance, future costs are expected to be low. Following is a general statement on project costs and projections to-date:

- Consultant fees from August 2020 to present: \$131,000, with the majority of third-party involvement ending by April 2021;
- Continuity Coordinator position (encompassing roughly 60% FTE time): ~\$35,000 annually (salary and benefits);
- Alternate Workspace Facility supply costs: \$10,000 (maximum projected).

**The Results:**

Overall, the County is in a much better position to handle disruptions than it was prior to the Pandemic. Through the BIA process, department heads are now more keenly aware of the threats to continuity of their critical business functions, such as single source-points of knowledge and supply chain constraints. Through the Continuity Plan, County leadership now has a detailed blueprint that prioritizes functions and coordinates restoration activities. Through the Alternate Workspace Facility project, staff will have a ready-made “hot site” to continue critical business functions immediately following a disruption. Finally, through the Continuity Coordinator position, plans are maintained and regularly tested, staff is trained and exercised, and business continuity remains perpetually in focus on an organizational level.