

What is a Readiness Plan?

A **Readiness Plan** is a combination of documents, processes, and training that formulates what your organization will do should the unexpected occur. It follows an “all-hazards” approach, because anything can and may happen to your organization. Creating a Readiness Plan means making decisions about how you will respond, and collecting all of the information and documents that you will need, **before** a crisis hits, so you can respond and get your business back up and running smoothly.

An all-hazards Readiness Plan focuses on your critical business functions rather than a specific disaster to cover all aspects of your operations against crises of any type or size. A crisis is a loss of resources or the ability to function normally, whether brought on by theft, natural disaster, loss of a key individual, technology failure, or any other unexpected event. Components of your Plan can be any length or size.

You decide based on your assets, activities, and the risks of your organization in your particular environment. The scope of your organization determines how complex or layered your Plan should be. There is no one correct design.

Your Readiness Plan should ensure the safety of your people (staff, artists, audiences) and property, and the continuity of your business activities. Crucial documents for your Plan should be stored on- and off-site, physically and digitally, so you can access them at any time. Here are suggested steps to start your all-hazards Readiness Plan:

- 1) **Identify and describe your Critical Functions.** These are the activities and resources of your organization – internal and external – that are crucial for you to carry out your business. For most arts organizations, these include: Programs (performances/presentations/installations/screenings/classes); Communications (including communications with staff, volunteers, artists, patrons and stakeholders); People (volunteers, staff, board and vendors); Facilities (administrative, programming and storage); Finances/Insurance/Legal; IT/Data Management; Trainings/Drills; and Collections and Assets (artwork, instruments, libraries, equipment, costumes/properties, archives/recordings, etc.).
- 2) **Develop and assign Action Items to increase your readiness.** For each Critical Function, identify what you need to protect, and develop a “**Plan B**” - a way to operate if your standard mode isn’t available. Incorporate alternate communications methods, cross-training of staff/ volunteers, remote banking, etc. Think about insurance, documentation of your facility and equipment/ artwork, lists, calendars, crisis communications plans, backup systems, cross-training of staff/volunteers, and drills. **Collect the Information** that will enable functioning during crisis. This includes everything from data backups in a remote site, to contact information/ phone trees, to copies of insurance documents, to workplans/action calendars that alternate staff can access.
- 3) **Share the Readiness Plan.** Train key individuals and departments in its execution.
- 4) **Review, update, and retrain in the Readiness Plan.** Do so at least once a year, or any time your organization undergoes a significant change including shifts in staffing, changes in programming, changing/new facilities, acquiring new assets, etc.

We all learned crisis management hands-on in 2020. Likely you have one or more of the **12 Readiness Must-Haves** on the reverse already in place. *Another recommendation:* Document what you did and how you made decisions during recent periods of uncertainty, so that in the future you can use your time to move quickly and be proactive instead of re-creating your process.

Visit www.artsready.org to learn more.

12 Basic Readiness Must Haves

For more resources, sign up at www.ArtsReady.org

1. **Your Safety Plan/Drills** - Have a current evacuation plan documented and posted for each building, including work, exhibition, performing, and storage spaces, and which provide for the evacuation of people with disabilities. Regularly hold scheduled trainings and surprise drills.
2. **Your Phone/Text Tree** – Document how to contact your immediate stakeholders (staff/board/artists/contractors) during and post-crisis. Include cell phones and personal email addresses as alternative ways to contact them; then diagram the order of contact to minimize duplication of efforts.
3. **Your Crisis Communications Plan** – Identify who is authorized to speak publicly on behalf of your organization during and post-crisis, and who will research the situation and develop your message. Determine how they will communicate your situation, and which channels you will use to reach audiences/members, the public and media.
4. **Your Important Account Numbers** – Collect and centralize contact information and account/policy numbers for your bank, insurance company, utilities/IT providers, security/alarm companies, and building maintenance. Store this information in multiple secure locations.
5. **Your Facility Walkthrough** – Develop a checklist and assign personnel to do a complete walkthrough of your facility on a regular basis to assess for any risks (faulty locks or security equipment, valuable items unsecured, items blocking emergency exits and accessible routes, suspicious items or people, water leaks, etc.).
6. **Your Data Backup Protocol** - Store important electronic documents/recordings in multiple safe offsite places, including cloud-based storage, on a regular automated backup schedule.
7. **Your Current Inventory** - Regularly document your assets and collections such as artwork, instruments, technology and specialized equipment, libraries/recordings/archives (including those stored off-site), and their value. Maintain environmental conditions which protect and preserve your collections/assets.
8. **Your Up-To-Date Insurance** – Make sure you update your policy(ies) annually so you have enough, and the right type, of coverage. Talk to your agent to determine what types of liability, property, D&O, event, business interruption, or other insurance you should have in place.
9. **Your Offline Payment Process** – Have in place a way to process ticket sales/transactions even when the power goes out, the phone line gets disconnected, or the website goes down (whether a technology like Square, or a paper form).
10. **Your Documented Refund Policy** - Train your people to manage cancellations and less-than-optimal event conditions. Make sure your procedures are shared with your visitors at the point-of-sale, in printed materials and electronic communications.
11. **Your Alternative Staff Structure document** – Delegate key responsibilities and train alternate people in the event one of your key people becomes incapacitated (e.g., payroll processing, authorized signatories on official documents and checks, programming, grantwriting/reporting, etc.).
12. **Your Commitment** – Readiness planning requires training and ongoing updates to your information. Your Readiness Plan should be **current** (updated at least annually), **comprehensive** (addressing all critical business functions), and have **content** specific to your organization and activities. Cover your bases. Be ArtsReady. Sign up for ArtsReady Alerts at www.ArtsReady.org.