

Critical Dependencies & Single Points of Failure Tool

Disaster Risk Management Authority | The Bahamas

Derived from the DRM Authority Business Continuity Planning Workbook



What this tool helps you do

Identify what each critical function depends on, uncover dependencies that could interrupt operations, challenge assumptions in your continuity planning, and identify single points of failure that require priority action.

Use this tool when...

- you have identified your critical functions and recovery priorities;
- you need to understand what those functions rely on to operate;
- you suspect the business depends too heavily on one person, supplier, system, location or service; or
- you want to identify weaknesses before selecting continuity strategies.

How to use the tool

1. Map the people, premises/equipment, utilities, technology/data, suppliers, transport/shipping, finance/banking and external services supporting each critical function.
2. Identify dependencies with no suitable alternative.
3. Challenge important assumptions your plan relies on.
4. Summarize the most serious vulnerabilities.
5. Carry the priority vulnerabilities into your Continuity Strategy Planner.

Key concept

Single Point of Failure

A single point of failure is one person, resource, system or arrangement whose failure could stop a critical function because no suitable alternative exists.

Dependency categories to consider

People Key staff, skills, decision-makers, authorized users	Premises / Equipment Worksites, machinery, vehicles, tools, physical assets	Utilities Electricity, water, Internet, mobile/telephone, payment systems	Technology / Data Systems, records, devices, backups, access
Suppliers Critical goods, services and supplier alternatives	Transport / Shipping Ports, airports, freight, inter-island movement, delivery routes	Finance / Banking Payments, payroll, banking access, emergency purchasing	External Services Regulators, professional services, outsourced providers, landlords/partners

1. Dependency Map

For each critical function, identify the people, places, systems, suppliers and services it relies on to operate. The purpose is to make dependencies visible so you can see where a failure in one area could interrupt the function.

Critical Function	People	Premises / Equipment	Utilities	Technology / Data	Suppliers	Transport / Shipping	Finance / Banking	External Services

Questions to ask as you complete the map

People

Is one person the only person who knows a critical process, has access, controls a key relationship or holds sole authority?

Finance / Banking

Can customers pay us? Can payroll and critical suppliers be paid? Can authorized personnel access banking?

Premises

Could the function operate elsewhere, remotely or at reduced capacity? Is an alternative actually arranged?

External Services

Which outside provider, regulator, landlord, partner or service must be available for this function to continue?

Utilities / Technology

How long could the function operate without power, Internet, mobile service, systems or records? Are backups accessible?

Independence

Is the backup genuinely independent, or could the same disruption disable both the primary and the alternative?

Suppliers / Transport

Does the alternative supplier depend on the same port, airport, shipping route, fuel source or other vulnerable link?

Access

Can the people who need the alternative actually access, activate and use it during a disruption?

2. Single Points of Failure

Review the Dependency Map. Record any dependency whose failure could stop a critical function because no suitable alternative exists today.

Single Point of Failure	Critical Function Threatened	What Happens if It Fails?	Adequate Alternative Today?

3. Challenge Your Assumptions

Continuity plans are built on assumptions - for example, that employees can reach work, mobile networks will function, suppliers will reopen quickly, fuel will be available, backups will work, roads will be passable, or key employees will be available. Test the assumptions that matter most.

We Are Assuming That...	Why Are We Relying on It?	What Happens if It Is Wrong?

Cascading disruption check: Ask what else fails if this dependency fails. One disruption can trigger another - for example: electricity fails -> Internet fails -> payments fail -> revenue falls -> inventory cannot be replenished.

4. Vulnerability Map

Bring the analysis together. For each critical function, identify its most important dependency, the main vulnerability, whether it is a single point of failure, and how concerned you are about the assumption behind it.

Critical Function	Most Important Dependency	Main Vulnerability	Single Point of Failure?	Assumption Concern H / M / L

Priority vulnerabilities to address

Priority 1 Vulnerability: Critical function affected: Why it matters:	Priority 2 Vulnerability: Critical function affected: Why it matters:	Priority 3 Vulnerability: Critical function affected: Why it matters:
Immediate next step: Owner: Target date:	Immediate next step: Owner: Target date:	Immediate next step: Owner: Target date:

What to do next

Take the priority vulnerabilities identified here into the Continuity Strategy Planner. For each one, decide what risk-reduction measure, backup or alternative is needed and what must be arranged in advance. For the complete planning process, see the DRM Authority Business Continuity Planning Workbook, Section 3: Dependencies, Assumptions & Single Points of Failure.

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