



# **KC RICE-SLICE '21**

## **After-Action Report**

*FEMA Region VII*



**FEMA**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
11224 Holmes Rd.  
Kansas City, MO 64131

This page is intentionally blank.

## ADMINISTRATIVE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The title of this document is the *KC RICE-SLICE '21* After-Action Report (AAR).
2. The information gathered in this AAR is *CONTROLLED/UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION (CUI)*. The control of information is based on public sensitivity regarding the nature of the exercise than on the actual exercise content. Reproduction of this document, in whole or in part, without prior approval from the exercise planning team is discouraged.
3. Points of Contact:

**Exercise Sponsor**

Larry Hisle  
Federal Executive Board Executive Director – Kansas City  
2300 Main St., Suite 2NE-521  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
(816) 823-5100  
[larry.hisle@gsa.gov](mailto:larry.hisle@gsa.gov)

**Exercise Sponsor**

Anita Leach  
Federal Executive Board Executive Director – St. Louis  
1222 Spruce Street, Suite 1.205  
Saint Louis, MO 63103  
(314)539-6313  
[anita.leach@gsa.gov](mailto:anita.leach@gsa.gov)

**Exercise Director**

Lisa M. Chalifoux  
Co-Chair FEB Continuity Working Group  
DHS-FEMA Region VII  
11224 Holmes Rd.  
Kansas City, MO 64131  
202-710-6299  
[lisa.chalifoux@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:lisa.chalifoux@fema.dhs.gov)

Mark McConnaughay  
Co-Chair FEB Continuity Working Group  
GSA Office  
2300 Main St., Suite 2NE517  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
312-350-2313  
[mark.mcconnaughay@gsa.gov](mailto:mark.mcconnaughay@gsa.gov)

This page is intentionally blank.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Administrative Handling Instructions .....i**

**Table of Contents .....iii**

**Executive Summary .....5**

**General Analysis of KC RICE-SLICE '21 .....6**

    Objective 1: Discussion on Reconstitution..... 6

        Strengths ..... 6

        Areas for Improvement..... 6

    Objective 2: Demonstrate Reconstitution ..... 6

        Strengths .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

        Areas for Improvement.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    Objective 3: Provide Situational Awareness..... 3

        Strengths ..... 3

        Areas for Improvement..... 3

**Appendix A: Agencies Feedback.....A-1**

    Kansas City ..... 1

    St. Louis .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Appendix B: Participant Feedback .....B-1**

    Kansas City .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    St. Louis .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Appendix C: Exercise Participants.....C-1**

    Number of Participants ..... 2

**Appendix D: Acronyms.....D-1**

This page is intentionally blank.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The exercises of the Kansas City and St. Louis Executive Boards are intended to build upon ongoing efforts to evaluate, test, and exercise the agencies continuity capabilities, including no-notice exercising and external evaluation of the Federal Community's continuity programs. This year's Continuity Exercise was conducted virtually and it allowed the agency's to either discuss or conduct reconstitution capabilities of the agency's Continuity of Operations (COOP) and evaluate reconstitution plans procedures. The purpose of the exercise was to test the Federal community's ability to activate, mobilize, and commence initial emergency Continuity of Operations under guidance outlined in the Federal Continuity Directive 1, federal statutes, Executive Orders, and Agency plans in response to a pandemic that affects the Kansas City and Saint Louis metropolitan areas.

KC RICE-SLICE '21 focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred began in January 2020. The global pandemic has been ongoing for over a 1 1/2 years and it has yielded over 115 million global cases and 3 million fatalities. The United States has over 30 million cases and over 550 thousand fatalities and the pandemic has affected Federal, State, Local government facilities and private organizations across Kansas City and St Louis Metro areas. Agencies and Departments have been utilizing telework and alternative work locations as a COOP strategy. As the cases begin a downward trend and vaccination have been available, the D/As are preparing for the reconstitution of the Primary Operating Facility (POF).

Overall, KC RICE/SLICE '21 successfully provided a learning environment that presented an opportunity for agencies to review and discuss their reconstitution plans and procedures, interact with other agencies, and reinforce the need for robust continuity planning, training, and exercises. This report will analyze the exercise results, identify strengths, and identify potential areas for further improvement.

### Major Strengths

The major strengths of the KC RICE/SLICE '21 exercise are as follows:

Senior leadership was able to convene to discuss or make the decision to reconstitute their POF.

The reconstitution of the pandemic has become routine over the past year, so D/As were able to focus on other aspects of the COOP Plan.

The D/As were able to discuss response measures on how to manage a positive case at their POF.

### Areas for Improvement

The evaluators identified the following opportunities for improvement:

There were some difficulties with communication due to the virtual environment.

Some D/A leadership were unable to participate and they played as if they were affected by the pandemic.

## GENERAL ANALYSIS OF KC RICE-SLICE '21

As the agencies continue to enhance and mature their continuity programs and response and recovery capabilities, they also should continue to identify, document, and incorporate best practices and lessons learned.

During this exercise, various Department and Agencies (D/As) Evaluators and Controllers identified several strengths and areas for improvement. As Lessons Learned Advisors and other Continuous Improvement Program personnel work with the agencies to conduct root cause analysis, develop corrective actions, and build an Improvement Plan for this After-Action Report (AAR), they should consider whether these items are best practices or lessons learned to share across Region VII.

### Objective 1: Discuss and demonstrate the pandemic re-occupancy planning, logistics, operations, and finance/administration requirements

#### Strengths

**Strength 1:** D/As convened senior leadership to discuss reconstitution and re-occupancy of the POF. Discussions also included notification of COVID-19 positive cases after reconstitution and additional cleaning in response. Identification of Reconstitution Manager were apart of the discussions.

**Strength 2:** Leadership was fully engaged with the exercise discussions and planning solutions. This allowed for great communication with employees, which aided in the successful completion of each objective.

#### Areas for Improvement

**Area for Improvement 1:** The response to the pandemic with telework and the virtual environment has become routine of the past year, so discussions of reconstitution could have been more in depth.

**Area for Improvement 2:** Some D/A leadership didn't participate in the exercise, so they played the exercise that leadership was affected by the exercise scenario. Suggested that all managers be trained on COOP procedures and provide an orientation before the exercise.

### Objective 2: Discuss and demonstrate the capability to reconstitute the POF.

#### Strengths

**Strength 1:** D/As were able to discuss the reconstitution processes and procedures. This gave them the opportunity to discuss the Reconstitution Manager's role and responsibilities, along with the reconstitution team's responsibilities.

**After-Action Report**

---

**Strength 2:** D/As have embraced the telework concept. It has supplemented and enhanced the capability to complete PMEFs. Telework has become a useful tool to assist Leadership when making decisions on COOP activities

**Areas for Improvement**

**Area for Improvement 1:** D/As were not able to perform reconstitution capabilities, due to the ongoing pandemic and still in a telework environment.

**Area for Improvement 2:** Some D/As indicated that they needed to provide a pre-exercise briefing for their players.

## **APPENDIX A: AGENCIES FEEDBACK**

The responses captured in this section are from the Agencies in the Region VII KC RICE-SLICE '21 Exercise.

### **Kansas City/Saint Louis**

#### **Agency Specific Objectives**

##### **A. General Observations**

- The exercise was more challenging due to the ongoing virtual environment and not able to physically perform the reconstitution phase.
- In general, the exercise went well, and staff were able to discuss the reconstitution processes and procedures.
- D/As were able to discuss their specific injects and the layout allowed some time to discuss the reconstitution decision-making processes.
- The exercise went well and was received positively by all D/As.
- Some D/As indicated they need to provide more training for the participants.

##### **B. Exercise Structure and Flow**

- The exercise flow was affected by the virtual environment, but D/As were able to have productive discussions on reconstitution.
- D/As used email as the primary means of communication, since they were in a virtual environment.

##### **C. Preparation for the Exercise**

- The preparation allowed for the D/As to ensure their organization and personnel were ready for the exercise.
- The Controller/Evaluator training allowed personnel the skills and knowledge to ensure the exercise met the objectives.
- The documentation and MSEL provided the information to drive the scenario, which led to successful completion of the exercise.

##### **D. Participation in the Exercise**

- The D/As that participated indicated the exercise was a success; however, we had fewer people participating this year due to the virtual aspect of the exercise.
- Many D/As developed specific injects to ensure their agency could fully meet the exercise objectives.

---

After-Action Report

E. Strengths Observed

- The MSEL drove the major injects and they improved and added injects into the scenario.
- The exercise allowed for D/As to become familiar with their reconstitution plan.
- D/As acknowledged that telework is a great capability to use for COOP.

F. Weaknesses Observed

- Mixed coordination and engagement levels between agencies were not apparent due to the low number of D/As participating and the virtual environment.
- Some D/As realized that they didn't have contact information readily available.

**Conclusion**

A. Exercise Takeaways

- The exercise was more challenging this year than it has been in the past, due to the virtual environment.
- D/As want to encourage more participation to include agencies outside of their organization.

B. COOP training or practice procedures

- This was a plausible scenario and allowed the D/As to discuss their reconstitution plans.
- The exercise allowed most D/As to use their virtual environment to bring together leadership and ERG members to discuss the reconstitution procedures.

C. Additional Comments

- The exercise went well, despite the virtual environment.

## **APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK**

The scenario was well-planned and realistic with the pandemic playing out in real time, this added a true realism to the scenario and these types of events. Participation would have been better had the COOP exercise been able to be conducted in person, rather than virtually, however this is the reality of a pandemic. The exercise helped to clarify roles and responsibilities during a continuity event. Some agency's expressed a desire to have their leadership play in the exercise, but this also added a reality to the exercise because leadership may be affected by the pandemic and cause the agency to invoke their succession and delegations of authority processes and procedures. There was a lack of participation in this year's exercise believed to be affected by the pandemic and the virtual aspect of the exercise. Agencies concur with the findings of this after-action report.

## APPENDIX C: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

KC RICE '21
General Service Administration
USCIS NRC
TSA
FEB
HHS
HUD
TSA
DOL
GSA-Omaha/Des Moines

SLICE '19
General Service Administration
HUD
FEB

### Number of Participants

- 14 agencies & organizations
- ~ approximately 90 Participants
- ~ 20 alternate sites (including telework locations)

## APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
AAR	After-Action Report
COOP	Continuity of Operations
D/As	Department and Agencies
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
ENS	Emergency Notification System
ERG	Emergency Relocation Group
ERT	Emergency Response Team
HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
ICS	Incident Command System
IT	Information Technology
IM	Instant Message
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GETS	Government Emergency Telecommunications System
GSA	General Services Administration
MEF	Mission Essential Functions
MSEL	Master Scenario Events List
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PMEF	Primary Mission Essential Functions
SimCell	Simulation Cell