



Townsend, MA – Business Continuity Best Practice

Prepared by: Allison Poirier & Amelia Percentie

Office of Municipal & School Technology

EOTSS | Executive Office of Technology Services & Security



Image: Memorial Hall, Townsend MA¹

Executive Summary

In September of 2015, the Town of Townsend became an active member of the Community Compact Cabinet, an initiative created through Governor Baker’s first executive order to strengthen relationships between cities and towns, and the administration. Through the Community Compact, Town leadership selected Business Continuity as an IT Best Practice. They pursued this option because previous IT Assessments identified that business continuity was an area of the Town’s IT environment that needed attention. Leadership requested assistance from the State to address any gaps in the Town’s business continuity processes and to develop a set of deliverables that could help them move forward. Leveraging Community Compact resources, Townsend completed an analysis of their business functions and hired AKUITY Technologies to evaluate their IT environment.

¹John Phelan. “Memorial Hall, Townsend Massachusetts.” *Wikimedia Commons*. Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license. Accessed November 21, 2017.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Memorial_Hall,_Townsend_MA.jpg

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Townsend is located in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, along the New Hampshire border and has a population of 8,926 residents and median household income of \$81,047². In 1732, Townsend became an incorporated municipality and was named after British cabinet minister, Viscount Charles Townshend. Today, some of Townsend's most sought-after attractions include the community's first mill located in Townsend Harbor; the Squannacook River³ and Townsend State Forest. Townsend cherishes, and aims to preserve, their natural and historical resources; in addition to their IT assets. This Community Compact initiative is clear evidence of the Town's desire to provide efficient, secure technology-related services to their constituents.

Project Process

IT ASSESSMENT

The State provided Townsend with a Community Compact grant to hire a vendor that could perform an IT assessment for the Town. Leadership chose AKUITY Technologies to evaluate their technology infrastructure. This engagement consisted of an on-site evaluation and a comprehensive report containing their findings and recommendations for remediation. The results of the assessment were later used to augment the Business Continuity work being done in-house.

Site Evaluation – AKUITY evaluated four locations in Townsend: Town Hall, the Library and Senior Center, the Highway Department, and the Water Department. At these locations, Townsend's network and server infrastructure were evaluated with focus on the following areas.

- Server Infrastructure
- Environment (Active Directory)
- Network Infrastructure
- Wireless Infrastructure
- Security Infrastructure
- Data Protection (Backup)
- Email Infrastructure

²2010 Census. "Community Facts". U.S. Census Bureau. *American Factfinder*. Accessed on November 21, 2017. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

³*CityTownInfo.com*. Townsend, Massachusetts. Accessed November 21, 2017. <https://www.citytowninfo.com/places/massachusetts/townsend>

Findings – Following the site evaluation, AKUITY created a list of findings that were discovered during the assessment and provided suggestions to potentially enhance the performance, security, and manageability of the Town’s systems. They ranged from simple recommendations for improvement to critical issues that should be addressed immediately. Each finding was accompanied by a description of the problem, an explanation on why it was identified as a risk, and a suggestion of how it could be remediated. Below is a sample from the AKUITY assessment that shows how the findings were ranked (I.e. High, Medium, Low) based on their level of severity, estimated cost to resolve, and whether downtime would be needed to implement the resolution.

Finding	1	[Finding Name]				
Severity	High	Cost	Medium	Downtime	No	
Risk	[Type of Risk Involved]					
Remediation	[Recommendation to Remediate Finding]					

IN-HOUSE BUSINESS CONTINUITY WORK

Townsend partnered with EOTSS to internally evaluate the Town’s business functions, identify gaps, and brainstorm ideas for remediation. To initiate this process, EOTSS provided leadership with a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) template to document the Town’s essential business functions, IT environment, services, and systems. In doing so, the team identified and prioritized recovery time frames for business functions and applications by assessing tangible and intangible impacts that might result if Townsend were to experience an interruptive event. The following steps were taken to complete the BIA process.

Step 1 – Identify Essential Functions (EF)

Leadership worked internally to document their Essential Functions and validate the current Recovery Time (RTO) and Recovery Point Objectives (RPO) for essential systems. The framework bellow was used to capture this information.

EF Management Area	Departments & Offices	Description	Essential Function	Essential Services	RTO	RPO
--------------------	-----------------------	-------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----	-----

Step 2 – Develop Findings for Each Essential Function, and the Applications/Systems that Support Them
AKUITY’s IT Assessment provided Townsend with a comprehensive list of findings discovered during the data collection phase of the assessment.

Step 3 – Create an Action Plan for Functional Gaps (Based on Findings/Recommendations)
This step was completed by AKUITY Technologies.

Step 4 – Create a Remediation Plan
This step was completed by AKUITY Technologies.

Conclusion

By completing this Community Compact initiative, the Town of Townsend has displayed their commitment to the Business Continuity best practice. With the completed in-house Business Impact Analysis and the IT assessment provided by AKUITY, Townsend has the foundational building blocks for strategic IT planning. This engagement provided high-level insight into their current technology infrastructure. It also provided an opportunity to effectively plan for improvement, with respect to the Town’s business needs and objectives. Today, Townsend is better positioned to for successful technology implementations.