

# Mission Resilience

The New Imperative for High Performance  
in Public Service



Point of View

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A 2006 Accenture research project examined supply chain risk management by surveying 151 US organizations that rely upon supply chains as part of their operations. This research found that 73 percent of the organizations surveyed had experienced a significant disruption in the past five years. Ninety-four percent of these disruptions compromised the organizations' ability to meet the needs of customers and constituents. Nearly 32 percent of the organizations needed more than one month to recover and another 36 percent took between one week and one month.

"The unexpected" has always been a part of the human experience. Social upheavals, pandemics, foreign aggression and environmental cataclysms are some high-profile examples. However, the unexpected also covers life's routine disruptions. Millions of small-scale disturbances routinely impact people, societies, companies and public service organizations. Snowstorms and floods disrupt supply chains. Human foibles and technology glitches sap productivity. Compliance failures waste tax dollars, frustrate citizens and undermine reputations.

The unexpected has always been with us, and it always will be. What is changing, however, are citizens' expectations about how well unexpected events are handled. Citizens want their public service organizations to achieve high performance by fulfilling their mission to deliver critical services regardless of the surprises and impacts of large or small disruptive events. In effect, they want their public service organizations to become more "resilient." Achieving high performance requires consistency in results, which necessitates consistency in operations. Public service responses to recent major events provide

many examples that showcase the differences between a poor response and one where organizations work effectively in a crisis to protect and help citizens. One way to respond well in a crisis is to become more resilient—to excel at anticipating and managing disruptions.

Of course, businesses as well as public service organizations want greater resilience. In fact, the cutting-edge solutions businesses devise are often similar to those needed in public service. The big difference is that in public service the cost of failure is usually higher and less acceptable. People—not profits—generally suffer. This is why public

service organizations must be as, or more, committed to resilience than their commercial counterparts.

This Accenture point of view examines resilience as it applies to public service agencies. What can they do to more systematically anticipate, monitor, minimize, recover from and even prevent small and large disruptions? In the following pages, we look closely at what it takes to implement a formal mission resilience capability; the benefits that improved resilience can deliver; and how public service decision makers can begin to improve their agencies' mission resilience and enable high performance.

# More than disaster recovery

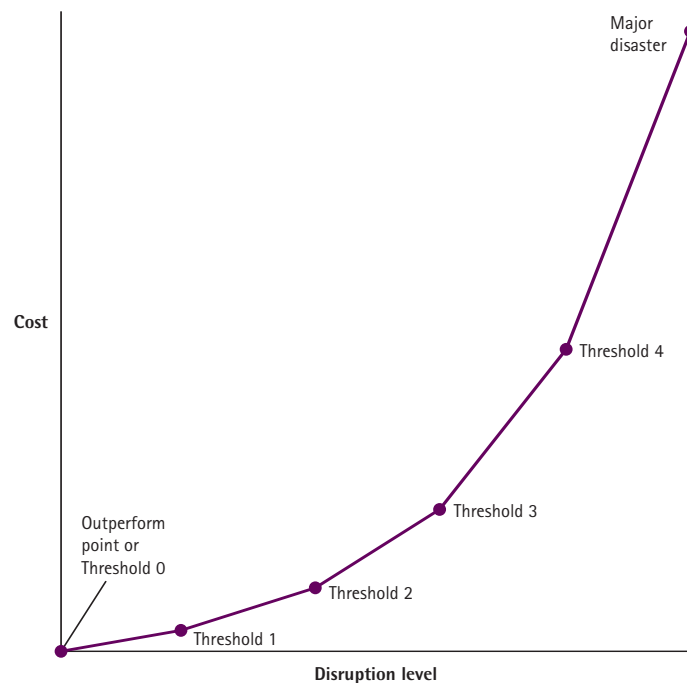
Today, many large organizations and agencies lack a formal means of quantifying, anticipating, mitigating and minimizing risk across their domains. More likely, their risk management strategies, or continuity of operations plans, focus on major disruptions and specific assets, such as backup data centers or off-site data storage. In effect, they are "asset resilient" but not fully "mission resilient."

In addition, few entities have evaluated the new resilience risks associated with new business models, such as increased global interdependencies, expanded outsourcing and new public/private partnerships. What agencies need are holistic, agency-wide resilience processes that work together to:

- Document the agency's mission-critical business functions and the specific disruptive events that create risks for each function.

- Identify and classify risks—using scenario-based planning, statistical modeling, vulnerability assessments and other tools to better understand the direct and indirect risks that could undermine an agency's ability to carry out its mission.
  - Calculate the entity's risk appetite by quantifying how a potential disruptive event will impact each business function and the agency's ability (appetite) to absorb that impact.
  - Set thresholds for each event's severity and decide, in advance, the specific actions to take when each threshold is reached (Figure 1).
  - Integrate the business functions, events, risks, thresholds and action plans into an end-to-end mission resilience strategy focused on enterprise-wide objectives and governance; action plans; and roles and responsibilities.
- Systematically anticipate, monitor and mitigate threats, through:
    - Leading-edge event detection and monitoring capabilities.
    - A reliable approach to information distribution and alerts.
    - Pre-planned, rapid-action responses.
      - Mechanisms for minimizing an event's disruptive effect.
      - Methodologies to maximize an agency's recovery speed.
    - Continuous improvement strategies based on concise metrics and measurements.

Figure 1: Mission resilience formally considers many levels of potential disruptions to improve both an agency's routine mission effectiveness and its disaster recovery capability.



# Benefits of day-to-day mission effectiveness

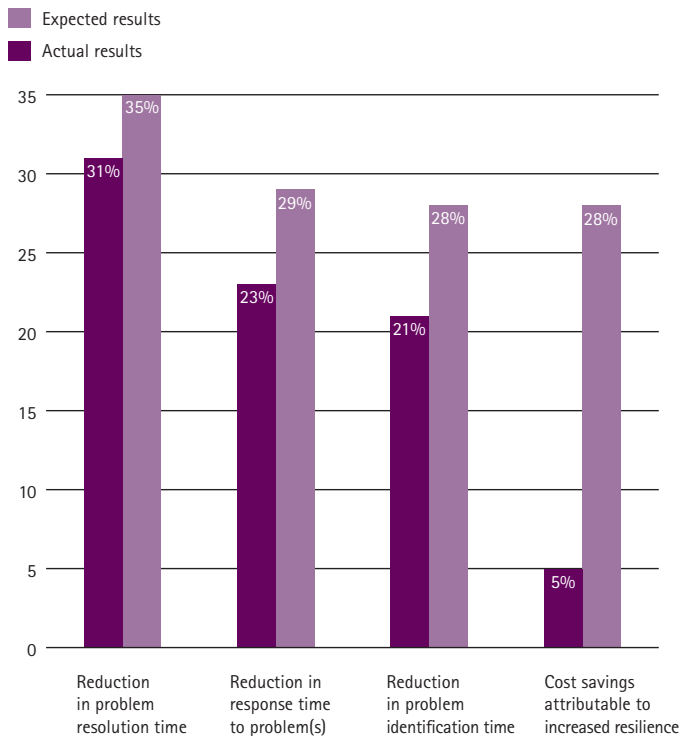
A surprising advantage of mission resilience over traditional approaches is that mission resilience can improve your daily mission effectiveness, not just improve your effectiveness in response to disasters. Mission resilience is a comprehensive approach that applies equal rigor to mitigating severe disruptive events (for example, snowstorms, traffic accidents, seasonal flu) that agencies typically consider to be part of business as usual. Mission resilience, by improving an agency's ability to operate during routine disruptions, also improves the agency's overall mission effectiveness even if no disaster occurs. Contrast this with traditional disaster recovery approaches where benefits typically do not start until after the disaster occurs.

A recent study of 11 manufacturing companies found many benefits from increased investment in supply chain security and resilience. According to the study, these 11 companies experienced:

- A decrease of 38 percent in lost cargo.
- A 37 percent decrease in product tampering.
- A 14 percent drop in excess inventory.
- On-time delivery improvement of 47 percent.
- An increase in customer satisfaction leading to a 26 percent drop in customer attrition.
- A 20 percent increase in new customers.

Given competing priorities and limited funds, agency management may be reluctant to invest in disaster recovery capabilities that they hope to never use. Mission resilience initiatives, which often improve routine mission effectiveness, can offer a much better business case for investment.

Figure 2: Benefits related to resilience: Expected and actual results



Source: The Manufacturing Institute and Stanford University, July 2006

# A changing world demands greater public service resilience

## Does your agency need mission resilience?

If you answer yes to most of these questions, then mission resilience should be on your agency's radar:

- Does your agency face rising citizen and legislative expectations about your ability to deliver services despite disruptions?
- Does your agency have a comprehensive event-response capability that uses routine disruption responses to build skills and experience that you will need when disaster strikes?
- Have large or small disruptive events (for example, blizzards, transit strikes, delivery delays) ever impaired your agency's mission-delivery capability?
- Are "routine" disruptive events (for example, power outages, seasonal flu epidemics, supply chain delays) considered part of normal operations that do not need a specific response plan and capability?
- Have you had to analyze how routine disruptions impact your agency's quality and financial costs?
- Do external events (regulatory changes, public panics, etc.) periodically cause spikes or troughs in citizen demand for your agency's services? Would better planning and execution improve your agency's ability to respond to these sudden demand changes?
- Do you require real-time visibility into the status of cross organizational actions being taken to mitigate disruptions, and escalations when corrective actions are delayed?
- Does accountability for disruption response need more clarity in your organization?
- Does your agency's disaster recovery plan focus on technology recovery rather than full mission recovery (people, processes, facilities and technology)?
- Could your agency benefit from automated response tools that would rapidly communicate status and begin response implementation following a high-impact disruptive event?
- Do your constituents become more dependent on your services during a disruption?

Why is a formal mission resilience capability more essential now than it was in the past? As noted above, principally driving public service response are citizens' rising expectations (fueled, undoubtedly, by endless media scrutiny). To many citizens, the world seems less safe and less predictable, and that creates more pressure on agencies to provide protection, recompense and relief. In addition, the enormity of recent catastrophes (Katrina, Rita, Indian Ocean Tsunami, Sept. 11, SARS) has highlighted our dependence on public service organizations, which often are the only entities with the scale needed to intervene effectively in a major crisis.

## A second driver is organizational structures—public and private.

Public service organizations are more complex than they were in the past. Gains from public/private partnerships and increased outsourcing to contractors have offered many benefits, but the organizational complexity they bring also creates unfamiliar risks from new directions.

## Globalization is another culprit.

As the geographic scope and interdependence of businesses and public service organizations grows, so does their exposure to major upheavals. This is true since much growth and attention are moving to parts of the world that are less stable. Global distribution networks have become increasingly complex, with many more potential failure points than ever before. Consider an agency that depends on a domestic vendor, which in turn relies on a variety of potentially less dependable, offshore parts suppliers. What new risks to mission effectiveness do these more efficient, but more complex, distribution networks bring to an agency?

## Global warming is often blamed for many problems, but increasing disruption risks clearly are part of the climate-change equation.

It seems likely that weather-related disruptions, such as forest fires, ice storms and threats to coastal property, will become more frequent. Public and private agencies must respond by becoming more resilient.

## The good news is that advances in technology are making the goal of achieving resilience easier.

The ability to maximize visibility and interactivity via the Internet and wireless devices has contributed mightily to faster warning and response capabilities. Advances in decision science have opened new doors for predicting not only the likelihood of future mishaps, but also their nature, severity and location. New modeling tools further abet these efforts by developing "what-if" scenarios that identify and assess alternative responses.

The bottom line is that building a resilience capability is more top of mind because of recent events and the enormous direct and indirect impact they have had on citizens and on nations' assets. At the same time technology has made resiliency a more achievable goal.

All these trends point to the same issue: Standard risk management and continuity programs are less and less likely to pass muster. Agencies need to upgrade to modern approaches that can keep pace with the accelerating growth in risk. Agencies need a holistic, life-cycle-based approach to mission resilience in public service.



## National Security and Homeland Security Presidential Directive: A powerful mandate for mission resilience

It's not just external events and expectations that are driving the need for increased resilience. Directives from within public service are also a motivator. NSPD 51/HSPD-20 establishes National Essential Functions and states that “continuity requirements shall be incorporated into daily operations of all executive departments and agencies.” In effect, mission resilience is not just a good idea—it is a good way to meet federal requirements.

# The essence of mission resilience

Resilience is “the ability of a government entity to continue to fulfill its mission and serve citizens despite unexpected disruptive events of any scale.” As noted earlier, this differs from continuity planning, which stresses capacities for returning to normal operations after a disaster. Resilience also differs from performance management, which speaks to execution during “normal” periods. Mission resilience is different mainly because of its scope and depth. Mission resilience is a multi-tiered, life-cycle-focused methodology for understanding, anticipating, mitigating and minimizing the effects of any material disruption.

A carefully designed resilience program helps agencies work more effectively during periods that lack disruptions. That's because a resilience capability can highlight all sorts of challenges, gaps and opportunities to provide services more effectively. Thus the mission, and the value, of resilience is **better management of the rules as well as the exceptions**. The implication is that resilient agencies are both more efficient and better positioned to provide consistently high-quality service to their constituents.

In addition, since mission resilience approaches use the same tools and methods to respond to disruptive events of all sizes, every response further hones an agency's skills and

experience. When agency personnel use resilience tools to respond to minor disruptions, that represents a “live drill” practice for responding to major disasters. When disaster strikes, a formal mission resilience program prepares an agency to respond much more effectively than an agency with only a disaster recovery plan practiced occasionally or pulled off the shelf when needed.

# Social resilience and mission resilience

In the public service setting, resilience has both a social and an operational context. On the one hand, many agencies' missions commit the agency to helping to preserve the stability and the resilience of major activities across a region or a country, such as health care, food supply, transportation, communications and financial markets. That is the social component of resilience, in which the agency works to improve its society's resilience. On the other hand, agencies need mission resilience to ensure that their internal operations continue to perform when disruptions occur. After all, an agency cannot meet its commitments to social resilience when its own operations are disrupted.

Social and mission resilience programs have common features and goals, and this Accenture point of view focuses on those commonalities. Still, improving mission resilience typically is the top priority, since these improvements usually create a stronger foundation for meeting social resilience commitments.



# Three keys to effective mission resilience programs

## 1. Effective resilience programs emphasize symptoms rather than scenarios.

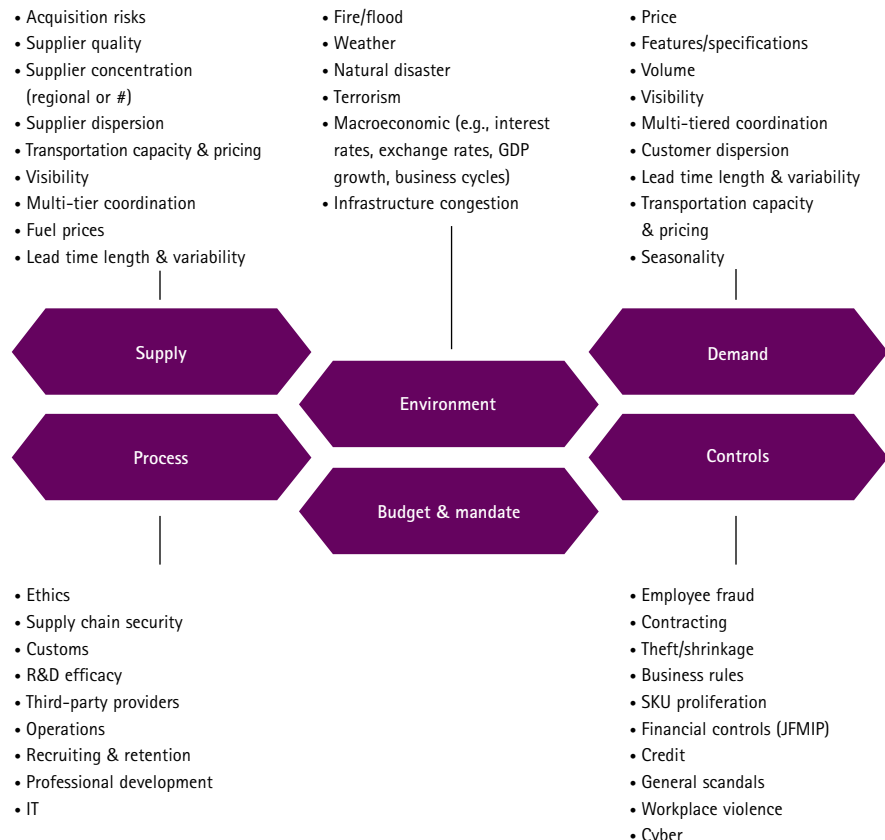
The guiding force behind any agency's resilience program is preparation: understanding what potential disruptions exist; the likelihood, severity and duration of their occurrence; and the range of ranked responses. However, Accenture's view is that ideal preparation shouldn't begin with exhaustive identification of every possible scenario. Today's complex environments make it nearly impossible to identify all the scenarios that might impact an agency. A better (and more practical) course is to focus on shared symptoms that are common across scenarios. This means developing resilience frameworks not for bird flu, hurricanes, terrorist attacks, etc., but rather for infectious disease,

destruction of property, supply chain disruptions, service outages, etc.

Building around symptoms (the effects) rather than scenarios (the causes) makes resilience development manageable because it recognizes that many events share characteristics, impacts and (most important) responses. As shown in Figure 3, there simply are too many potential disruptions for a business or an agency to develop comprehensive resilience programs for every one. Take infectious diseases and transport disruptions—both may cause absenteeism to rise and they share similar responses (for example, telework strategies can reduce infection risk and overcome transport difficulties). Even problems as varied as weather events and port closures share a similar need to preserve

Building around symptoms (the effects) rather than scenarios (the causes) makes resilience development manageable because it recognizes that many events share characteristics, impacts and (most important) responses.

Figure 3: Governments face a multitude of risks to citizen service delivery. Yet many risks share common symptoms where similar mission resilience approaches can be successful.



core services, food, medical supplies and so forth. We also cannot know in advance when or where upheavals will occur, but we can develop symptom-based programs that speak to the need for quick responses regardless of the specifics.

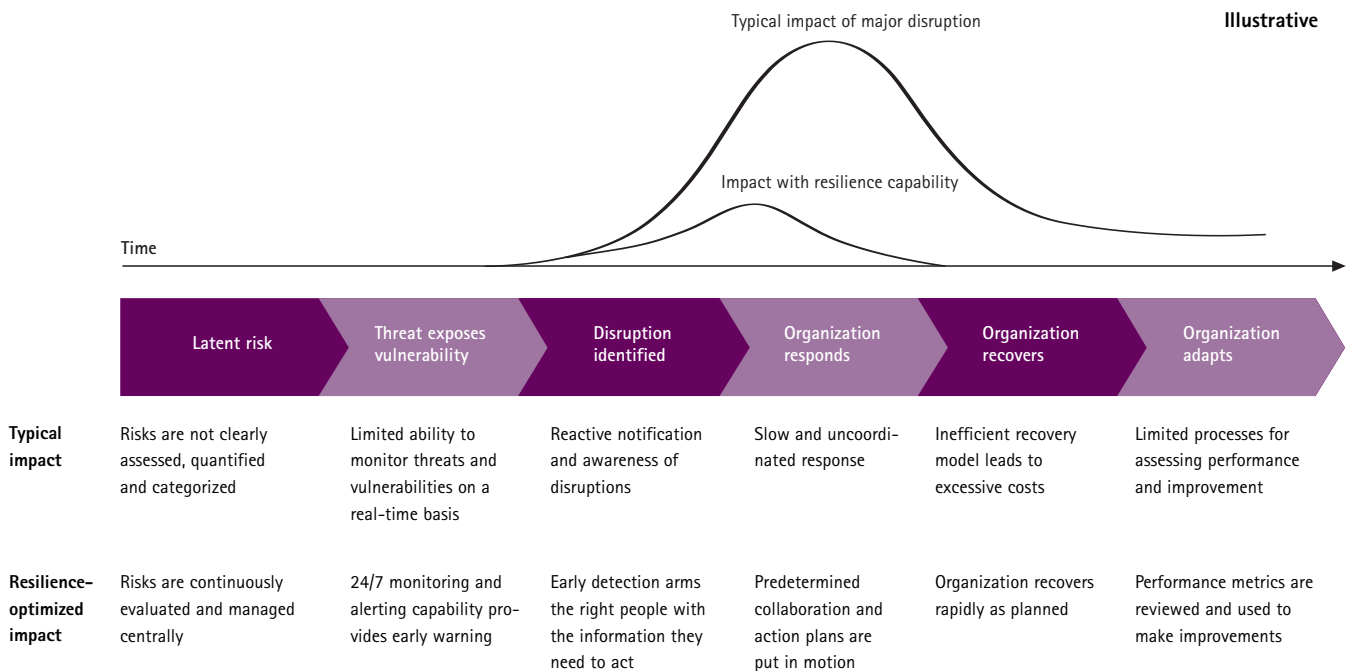
Taking a symptoms-driven approach also implies that resilience programs across agencies might not have to be all that different. Custom programs for foreign relations agencies, revenue agencies, defense security agencies and social service agencies are necessary up to a point. But a symptoms-driven foundation will include significant reusable components that potentially span them all.

## 2. Effective resilience programs are holistic.

Consistent with the need for a symptoms-based foundation, agencies need to think holistically about how to develop their resilience programs. Too often, an agency's risk management approach has mirrored the drawbacks of their organizational models: poorly connected "functional silos," inconsistent access to information, limited management-reporting tools, limited collaboration and insufficient risk awareness across the enterprise.

In recent years, many have sought to correct the problem by developing more enterprise-wide (end-to-end) approaches to process management and organizational structure. Many

Figure 4: A holistic resilience capability can reduce the magnitude and duration of major disruptions.



integrated risk management and organizational models reflect these insights.

However, these efforts still fall several steps short of a holistic, centrally guided and governed approach to maximizing resilience—an approach characterized by:

- Unified presentation of data.
- Real-time response capabilities.
- Robust, seamless reporting across all levels.
- Fully integrated access to information.
- Built-in collaborative tools.
- On-demand risk status and readiness assessments.

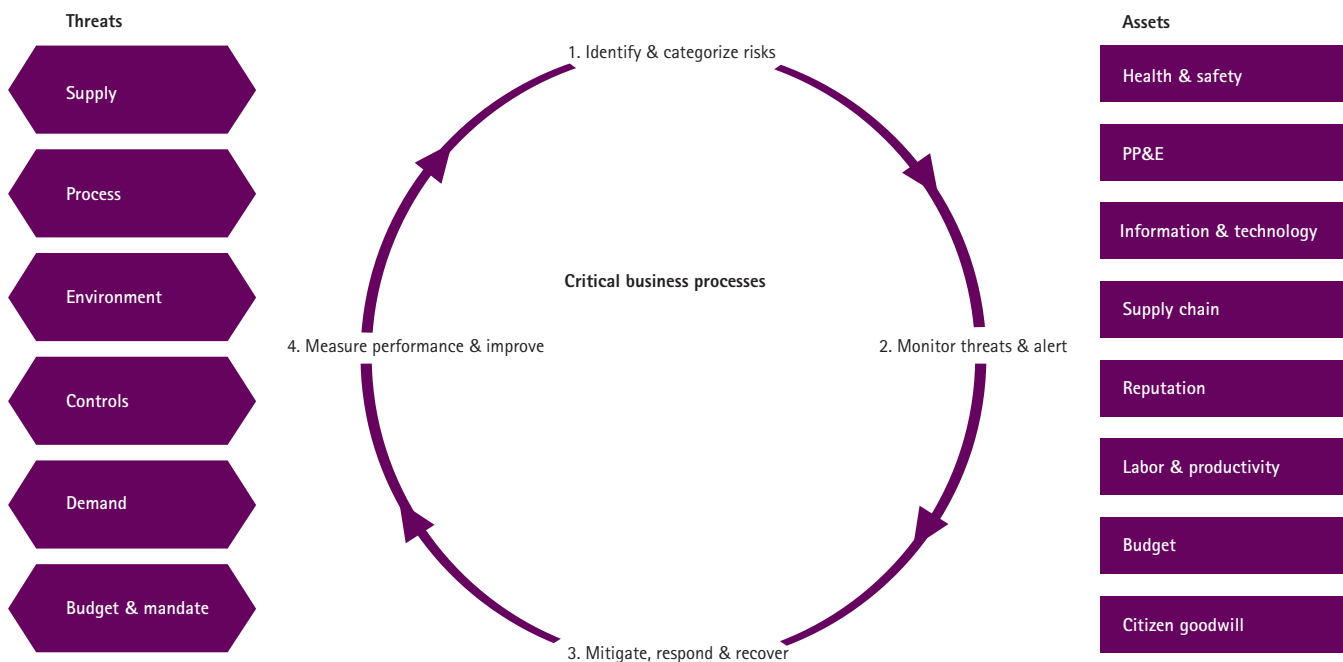
The net effect of holistic resilience is a capability that reduces both the magnitude and the duration of major disruptions (Figure 4).

### 3. Effective resilience programs focus on a “resilience life cycle.”

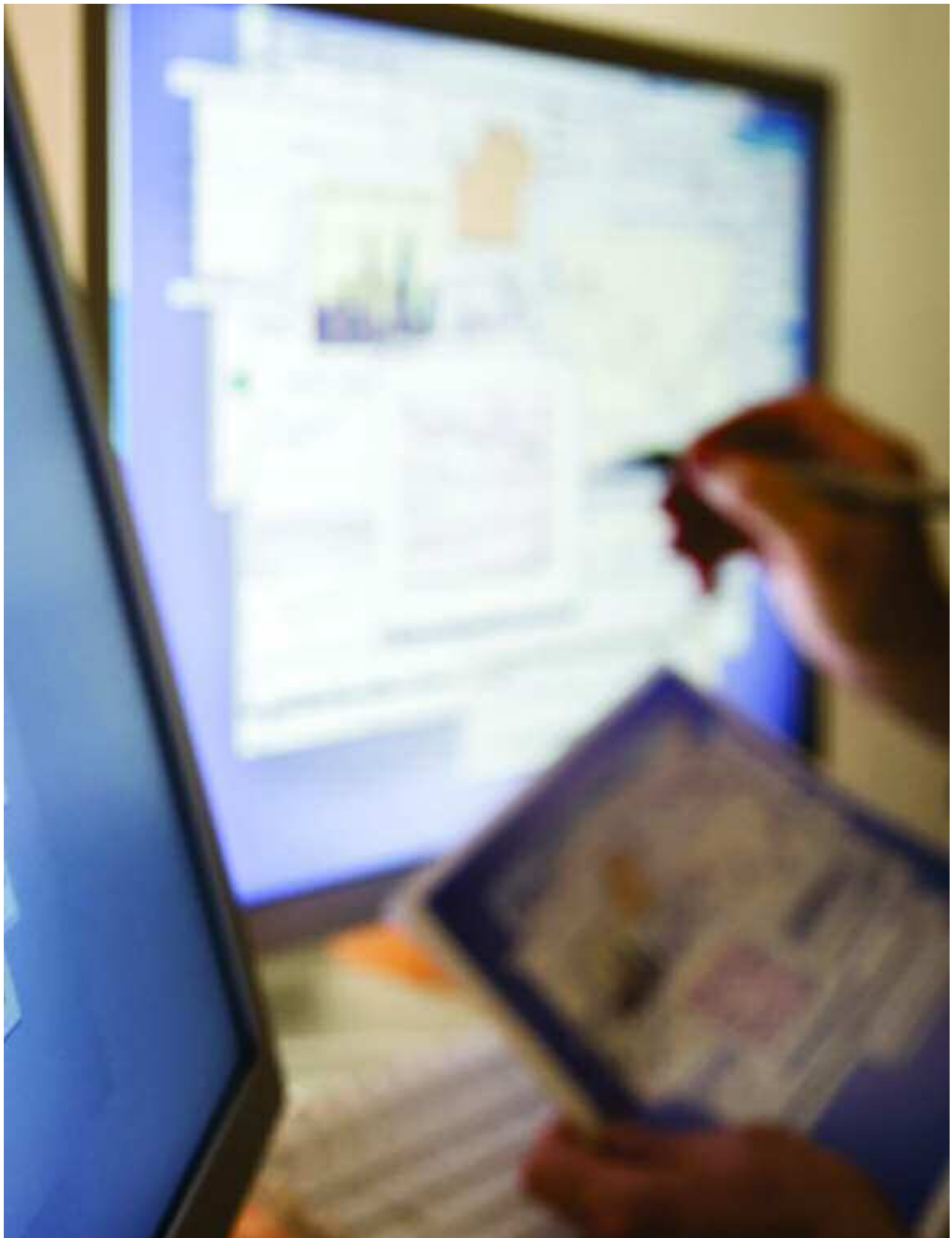
An agency can fully realize its mission resilience potential only if it manages the entire life cycle of mission delivery risk. Agencies need continuous improvement of their mission resilience efforts.

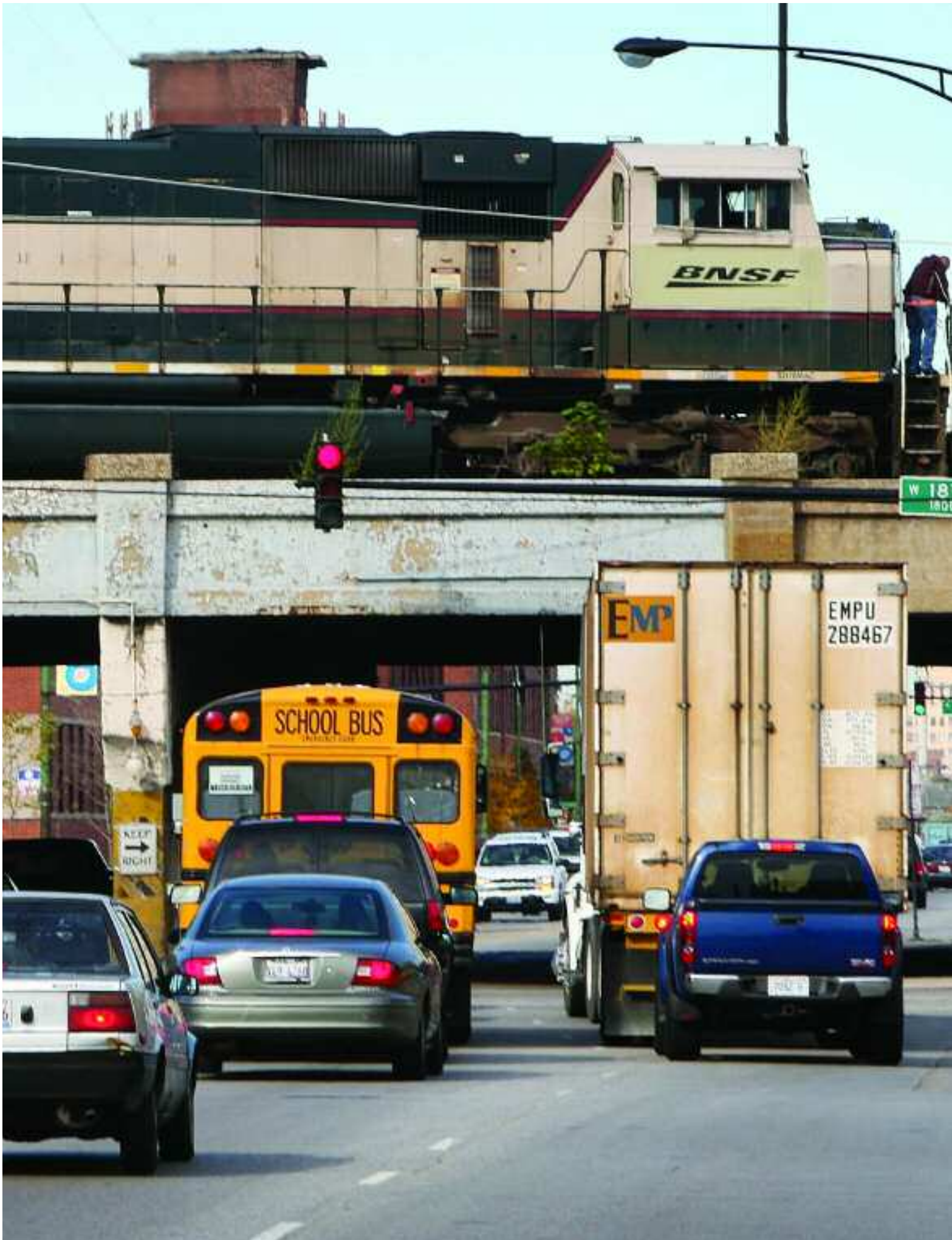
Figure 5 illustrates this concept.

Figure 5: Agencies fully realize mission resilience only when they manage the entire life cycle of operational risk.



- 1. Identify and categorize risks:** Identify the data points that can assess early indicators of potential disruptions and that underlie critical business processes.
- 2. Monitor threats and alerts:** Monitor any measurable data points, systematically and continually, as well as external and internal events to help assess emerging risks.
- 3. Mitigate, respond and recover:** Automate notification about key changes in monitored events and coordinate predefined or dynamic risk-mitigation activities with stakeholders, both within and across various agencies.
- 4. Measure performance and improve:** Evaluate and model new threats, their potential impact and candidate solutions.





# Common implementation steps

The first step in setting up a mission resilience program is to choose a place to start. Mission resilience solutions are modular; most organizations choose to start with a specific business function or area where better resilience would offer solid benefits. It is straightforward to add new functions and areas later, as an agency gains experience with mission resilience tools and approaches.

Once you select a target business function, the next step is to conduct a diagnostic risk assessment to identify risks, quantify their potential impact and likelihood, identify possible mitigation or prevention strategies, and rank risks for further action (see Figure 5). The idea is to apply a structured methodology to uncover and quantify risks by using interviews, surveys,

observation, benchmarking, modeling and high-level quantitative analysis. The product can identify gaps in strategy and capabilities—people, processes and technology—and leads to the creation of a high-level plan for closing gaps in a prioritized manner.

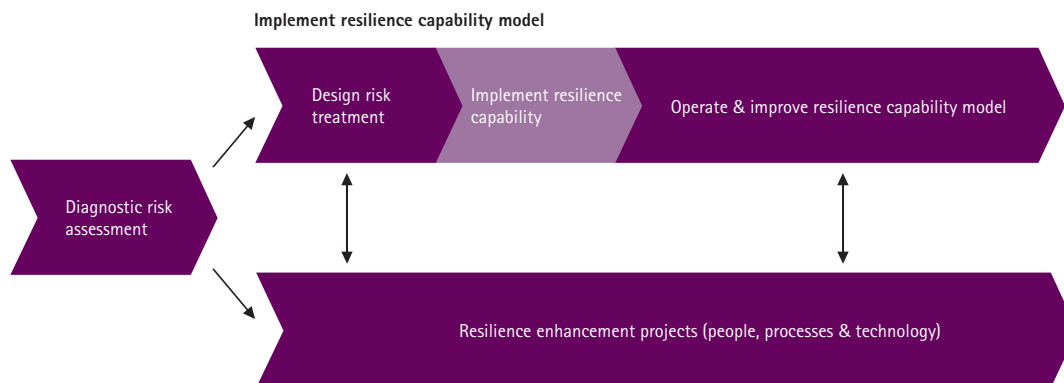
Diagnostic risk assessments examine every aspect of how a business function is delivered and the services and capabilities, internal and external, on which mission delivery relies.

The most effective resilience implementation programs include professionals with broad experience in multiple vertical and functional disciplines. They will have, for example, a solid background with agencies and business processes similar to those of the agency under assessment. Extensive depth in supply chain management is often

important, since a great portion of any resilience capability includes the smooth, integrated movement of people, materials and information. Lastly, a résumé laden with technology acumen, technology development skills and formal technology relationships is vital.

Pan-organizational visibility, seamless status reporting, dynamic data warehousing and sophisticated computer modeling are all part of the mission resilience equation—challenges that require any services provider to offer extensive technology depth. Developing this capability and fostering a culture in which resilience is a seamless part of day-to-day operations requires unequivocal commitment from the senior executive team within the agency.

Figure 6: A diagnostic risk assessment enables an agency to deploy and continuously improve its resilience capabilities.



# Common implementation steps

Two concurrent work efforts typically follow a diagnostic risk assessment: (1) design and implementation of a resilience capability model and (2) implementation of one or more resilience enhancement projects.

Mission resilience risk assessments provide agencies with a fresh way of looking at their operations. Many times, the resilience perspective will identify new improvement opportunities and/or clarify the rationale for setting up new capabilities. For example, risk assessments will typically result in initiatives to better enable an agency's workforce to work from outside the office, providing flexibility when disruptive events (such as a major snowstorm) impair access to the normal workplace. We call any initiative undertaken to change a business function to enhance its resilience a "resilience enhancement project." A strong risk assessment team with broad, deep skills and experience is best positioned to identify the highest-value resilience enhancement initiative for the agency.

While resilience enhancement projects seek to change a business process to make it more resilient, a resilience capability model aims to improve an agency's ability to detect disruptive events and respond quickly and proactively when events occur. "Risk treatment" refers to specifying what symptoms a given risk will cause, how best to monitor symptoms and how the agency will respond. This

phase results in an end-to-end mission resilience strategy. Specific activities often include:

- Designing mitigation, response and recovery processes.
- Identifying application touch points and interfaces.
- Defining system requirements.
- Confirming ownership and alignment with key stakeholders.
- Developing change programs.
- Determining roles and responsibilities across the enterprise.
- Designing and implementing organizational and governance structures to support coordination of risks across the enterprise.

The next phase concentrates on building, testing and setting up the resilience capability. Specific activities often include:

- Developing action plans, training programs, processes and applications.
- Launching information-distribution and alert systems.
- Setting up mechanisms for minimizing disruptive effects.
- Pre-fabricating and testing potential responses.
- Developing event-detection and monitoring processes.
- Developing functional designs, test plans and scripts, and populating configuration templates.
- Making technical designs.
- Implementing solution architectures and environments.
- Developing and launching training programs.

- Designing continuous improvement mechanisms that move past "recovery" to "better than ever."
- Delivering change communications.
- Measuring awareness, buy-in and acceptance.

By the close of the final phase, a resilience framework is in place and operational. Governance models (vision and direction, policy, administration, business integration) have been set. "Risk inventories" have been developed and classified. Risk-mitigation and response and recovery processes have been implemented across the enterprise. Supporting processes and technologies have been fully tested and implemented. Cultural issues—including preparedness training—have been fully inculcated.

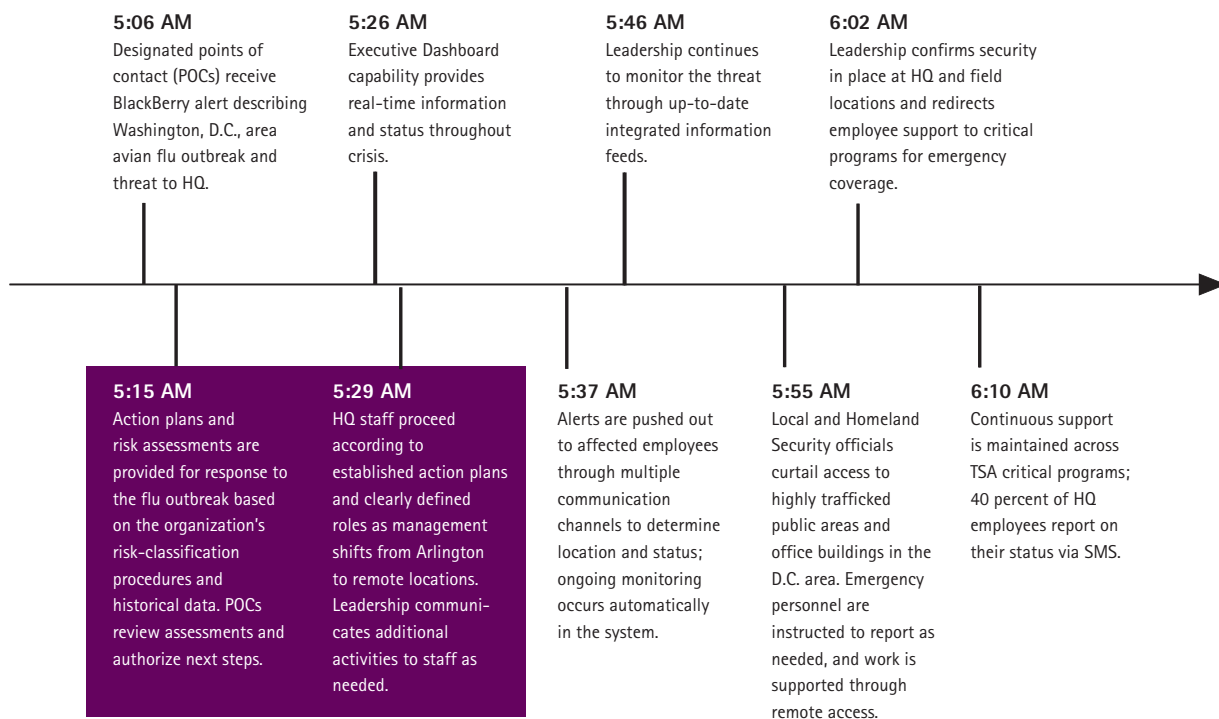
# Mission resilience in action—hypothetical scenario

Once fully integrated into an agency's business processes and routines, mission resilience enables a quantum jump in an agency's ability to operate during major disruptions that might have paralyzed the agency in the past. As an example, this scenario describes how a robust mission resilience capability could enable the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to sustain operations during an event that forced personnel to abandon their headquarters.

## Hypothetical event: Avian flu pandemic at TSA headquarters.

Centers for Disease Control officials confirm reports of several avian flu cases transmitted from human to human in Washington, D.C., and area suburbs. Hospitals indicate that a large number of people have sought treatment for their flu-like symptoms, several of them TSA headquarters' employees. The situation has been escalated to Phase 4 according to World Health Organization standards, and a subtrigger in TSA's mission resilience plan enacts a response. Leadership in Arlington faces a potential crisis and needs access to up-to-date information to manage the response effort and carry out contingency plans.

Figure 7: Hypothetical scenario time line



# Mission resilience and high performance

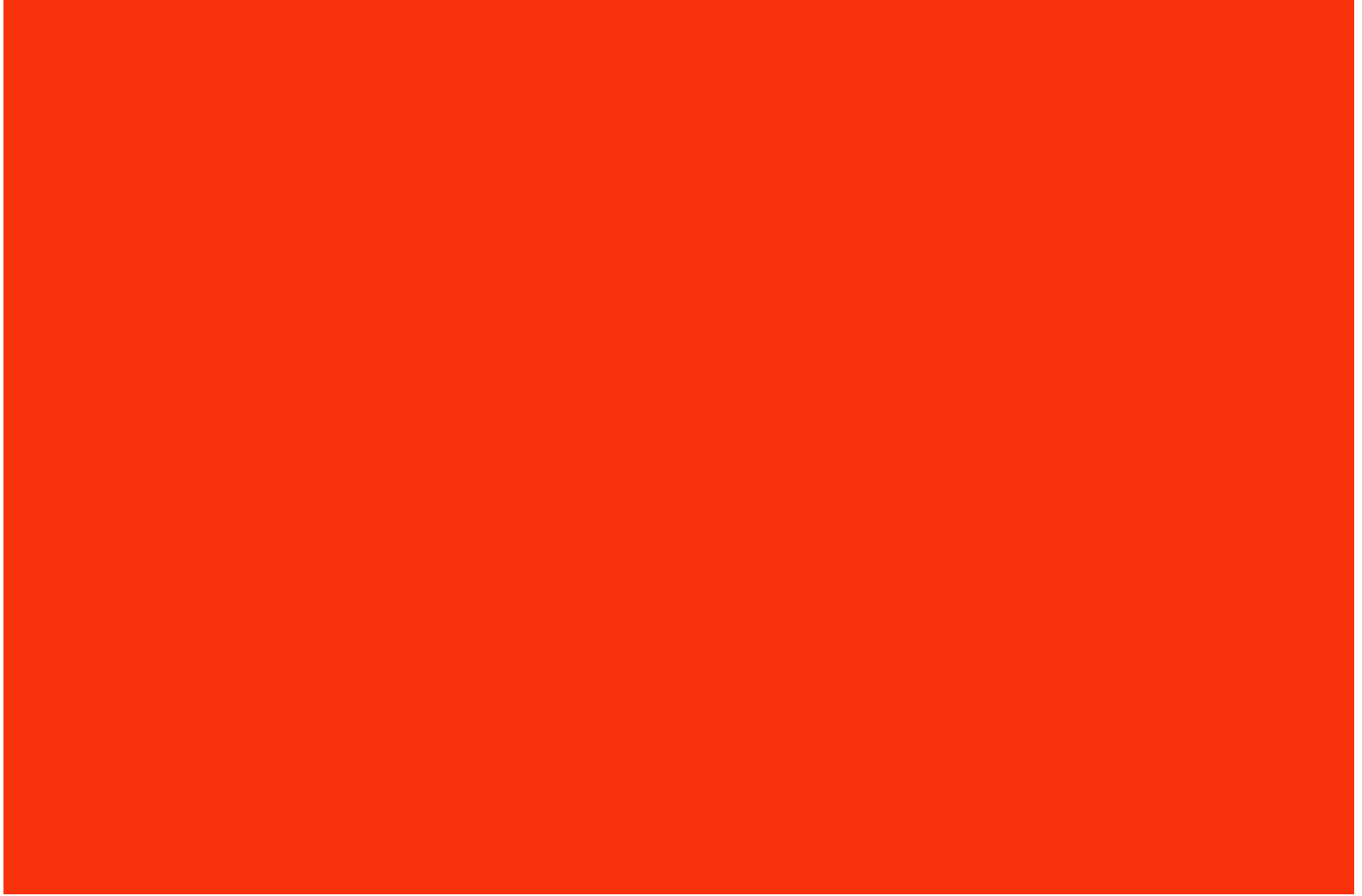
For several years, Accenture has studied high performance—the characteristics and behaviors of businesses that consistently outperform their peers. A *Harvard Business Review* survey recognized Accenture's High Performance Business research program as one of the 10 most notable initiatives in the field during the past quarter century. This program also speaks closely to the needs of agencies and aligns with the Accenture Public Service Value Model, which addresses the necessity for public agencies to increase outcomes while being more cost-effective.

Of course, most agencies are not concerned about outperforming other agencies, nor do they think of success in terms of increased margins, higher market share or more profitable growth. Yet the underlying capabilities that define success in public service—the efficient, innovative provision of services to citizens, agencies, municipalities and so forth—have a great deal in common with the business-focused tenets of high performance. Both sides thrive in an environment where innovation, standardization, accountability, collaboration, consistency and process/technology effectiveness are present. And few initiatives are more tightly focused than mission resilience on enhancing and preserving these abilities and, in the end, making efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The scores of benefits associated with a formal mission resilience program apply similarly to public service and to business. The common denominator is that disruptions to the mission can be avoided or minimized by creating a capability that allows the enterprise to seek and mitigate leading indicators of risks, and when disruptions cannot be predicted, ensuring that everything possible is done to minimize damage, preserve essential services and infrastructure, rapidly restore normalcy and learn from the experience. This applies to businesses and to agencies, as do the results of a mission resilience capability:

- Reductions of 50 percent or more in event management infrastructure and support costs
- More effective and disruption-resistant processes across the organization
- Avoidance of outage and recovery costs through increased incident prevention
- Tighter, more economical compliance with legislation and regulation, such as HSPD-20
- More complete integration of compliance measures and reporting requirements
- Improvements of 5 percent to 20 percent in supply chain and internal operational efficiencies

Achieving high performance demands consistency in results, which can be achieved only through consistency in operations. Mission resilience is all about consistency in service to people.



## About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With more than 186,000 people serving clients in over 120 countries, the company generated net revenues of US\$23.39 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2008. Its home page is [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).

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