
The latest from the government and leadership office of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce

INSIDE

Resilient Business Initiative Week 12

Hot Topic: Data Centers



Week 12 - Exercise, Validation & Certification

Purpose

The final week is designed to confirm that the systems, roles, and decisions developed throughout the Resilient Business Initiative can be used under pressure. For chamber business leaders, this is the point where planning becomes operational confidence and where a written program becomes a practical leadership tool.

Why This Matters to Venice-Area Businesses

Venice-area businesses operate in an environment shaped by hurricanes, flooding, cyber disruption, utility outages, supply chain interruptions, and public safety events. Chamber leaders need a close to this series that helps employers move from awareness to action, ensuring that owners, managers, and key staff can make timely decisions, protect people, stabilize operations, and re-open with confidence.

Key Concept

In emergency management, validation means testing whether your plan works as intended, and certification means leadership can stand behind it with credibility. Even a short tabletop exercise can show

whether responsibilities are clear, communications are reliable, and critical decisions can be made quickly enough to reduce business interruption.

Business-Friendly Incident Command Insight

Incident Command System principles translate well for business use: assign who leads, who communicates, who tracks resources, and who manages continuity decisions. Exercises help leaders practice command, coordination, and information flow before an actual incident, which reduces confusion and supports faster, more disciplined response across locations, teams, vendors, and public partners.

10-Minute Weekly Task

- Walk through one realistic scenario such as a hurricane warning, cyber incident, or extended power outage.
- Validate who makes key decisions, how employees are notified, and what actions must happen in the first operational period.
- Record improvements, assign ownership, and schedule the next review so the plan stays current.

Deliverable

A completed readiness validation record (checklist below) that confirms the business has reviewed a scenario, identified responsible leaders, documented improvement items, and affirmed that the continuity framework built over the last 12 weeks is ready for use.

Readiness Outcome

- We have tested our planning assumptions and can lead more confidently during disruption.
- We are better prepared to protect people, maintain essential functions, and support recovery in our organization and community.

Connection to Local Emergency Partners

Business resilience improves when it aligns with public-sector response structures. By exercising internal plans and understanding when to connect with county, state, and federal partners, chamber businesses strengthen the broader emergency management network that supports response, re-entry, recovery, and public information during critical incidents.

Next Week

Program complete: this closing edition confirms that resilience is not a one-time project, but a leadership discipline that should be reviewed, exercised, and improved throughout the year.

Closing the 12-Week Initiative

Over the course of 12 weeks, the Resilient Business Initiative has moved chamber leaders from awareness to organization, from organization to planning, and from planning to validation. The most effective business resilience programs are not built on binders alone; they are built on leadership habits, clear assignments, reliable communication, and regular review. For Venice-area businesses, that means being ready not only

to withstand disruption, but also to support employees, customers, and the wider community when incidents affect daily life and commerce.

A chamber-ready resilience mindset recognizes that local businesses are part of the community's response capacity. When owners and managers understand their role, exercise their plans, and maintain relationships with trusted partners, they become more capable of leading through hurricanes, cyber events, utility failures, facility incidents, and other disruptions that can affect operations in Sarasota County and across the region.

12-Week Resilient Business Initiative Wrap-Up Checklist

Use this checklist to confirm that your organization has completed the core actions of the 12-week initiative and is prepared to review, exercise, and improve its resilience program over time.

- ☐ Week 1: Leadership Commitment – Leadership commitment is defined, and key decision-makers understand their roles during disruption.
- ☐ Week 2: Critical Functions – Core business functions and priority services have been identified.
- ☐ Week 3: Staffing & Succession – Essential staff, backups, and succession responsibilities have been assigned.
- ☐ Week 4: Risk Review – Risks most relevant to Venice-area operations—such as hurricanes, flooding, cyber incidents, outages, and supply disruption—have been reviewed.
- ☐ Week 5: Communications – Employee communication methods, emergency contacts, and notification procedures are current.
- ☐ Week 6: Dependencies – Vendor, supplier, and partner dependencies have been identified, with alternates considered where needed.
- ☐ Week 7: Protection Measures – Facility, technology, records, and data protection needs have been reviewed.
- ☐ Week 8: Continuity Planning – Continuity procedures are documented for how the organization will operate during short-term and extended disruption.
- ☐ Week 9: Incident Leadership – Internal leadership responsibilities reflect simple incident command principles: who leads, who communicates, who coordinates resources, and who manages continuity decisions.
- ☐ Week 10: Exercise – A realistic scenario has been discussed or exercised to validate assumptions and reveal gaps.
- ☐ Week 11: Improvement Tracking – Improvement items have been recorded, assigned, and scheduled for follow-up.
- ☐ Week 12: Partner Coordination – The business knows when and how to coordinate with local, state, and federal partners during major incidents.
- ☐ Ongoing: Program Maintenance – Leadership has committed to reviewing and updating the resilience program on a regular schedule.

If most boxes can be checked today, your organization has built a strong foundation for resilience. If not, this checklist can serve as your action list for the next review cycle.

Helpful Emergency Preparedness Websites

- **Venice Area Chamber of Commerce Hurricane Prep Guide** – https://issuu.com/cmp_online/docs/prepare_and_recover_from_a_disaster_-_business_con
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** – <https://www.fema.gov/>
- **Ready Business** – <https://www.ready.gov/business>
- **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)** – <https://www.cisa.gov/>

- **Sarasota County Emergency Management** – <https://www.scgov.net/government/emergency-services/emergency-management-4420>
- **Alert Sarasota County** – <https://www.alertsarasotacounty.com/>
- **Florida Division of Emergency Management** – <https://www.floridadisaster.org/>
- **Florida Business & Industry Disaster Resources** – <https://www.floridadisaster.org/business/>
- **FloridaDisaster.biz Private-Sector Coordination Resources** – <https://www.floridajobs.org/floridadisaster.biz>
- **National Hurricane Center (NOAA)** – <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/mobile/index.html>
- **CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages** – <https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools>

Executive Summary on Data Centers

AI data centers are increasingly viewed as strategic infrastructure for the digital economy, but their rapid expansion is also raising concerns about electricity demand, water use, and local community impacts. For executive leaders, the core policy question is straightforward: do the long-term strategic and economic benefits justify the pressure these facilities may place on public resources and local infrastructure?

Key Takeaway: Public opposition has centered on whether AI data centers impose disproportionate costs on local water and power systems relative to their long-term economic return.

Resource Demand: Recent estimates from the U.S. Department of Energy and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory indicate that data centers consumed about 4.4% of total U.S. electricity in 2023 and could account for roughly 6.7% to 12% by 2028. That range illustrates how quickly AI-driven computing demand is becoming a major grid planning issue.

Water Use: Water demand is a parallel concern because many large facilities rely on water-intensive cooling systems. Widely cited estimates place total U.S. data center water use at about 449 million gallons per day, or 163.7 billion gallons annually, in 2021. While some newer facilities are pursuing closed-loop or lower-water cooling approaches, overall pressure on water resources is still expected to rise as more large-scale sites come online.

Strategic Argument in Favor: Supporters argue that expanding domestic data center capacity strengthens U.S. competitiveness in artificial intelligence and reduces the risk of falling behind foreign rivals. From this perspective, data center construction is viewed as both an economic development strategy and a national competitiveness issue.

Economic Tradeoff: Data centers can generate a short-term boost in construction activity, but permanent employment is often modest relative to total capital investment. For executives and local policymakers, the practical issue is whether tax revenue, supplier activity, and strategic value are sufficient to offset long-term demands on utilities, land use, and community infrastructure.

Florida Implications: In Florida, the discussion is no longer theoretical. Public reporting in 2026 indicates that DeSoto County approved rezoning for an initial 34-acre data center site tied to a much larger proposed development. Even when developers state that projects will minimize grid dependence or reduce water use, facilities at this scale can still prompt questions about infrastructure capacity, environmental impact, and whether long-term community benefits will match the local burden.