

SAFE AT WORK

A Preliminary Framework for Louisiana’s Economic Recovery

Recommendations from the Louisiana Business Community

Executive Summary

The Louisiana economy has seen job losses top 300,000 with thousands of businesses shuttered entirely. No industry sector is unaffected. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an unprecedented shut-down of the economy to manage the virus. While Louisiana is succeeding at “flattening the curve,” the consequence has been staggering job and business losses. Federal aid, combined with state programs, is providing some short-term relief, but it is critical that we restart the economy as soon as safely possible. Not doing so will have grave economic and health consequences of its own.

This document has emerged from conversations with groups of business leaders and a widening array of business associations and groups around Louisiana. Overall, there is broad support for the social distancing that the “Stay At Home” order has established and recognition that it should remain through April 30th, and until the healthcare system can support a gradual reopening. At the same time, there is also recognition that the “Stay At Home” order and a potential “Safe At Work” order may not be in conflict with one another. This can be seen in those business sectors that have remained open as “essential” businesses and industries over the last month of “Stay at Home.” These many essential businesses that have remained open and provided for the safety of their people can guide the development of protocols for safely working in both closed-but-essential and non-essential businesses. Nearly all sectors could potentially develop a protocol for safely working while “Stay At Home” is in place. **This recommends moving toward a “Stay at Home, Safe at Work” order.**

In addition, this document is meant to serve as a start to the conversation. It is not meant to be a complete or perfected strategy but is instead a working document to catalyze this discussion. We expect it will continue to be modified as new details, viewpoints and suggestions emerge.

With transparent public health benchmarks, economic recovery should begin to take place in phases. Based on input from a diverse set of business stakeholders and health experts, the Louisiana business community submits the following framework for consideration:

Health and Safety First

- Having enough **hospital capacity** to safely treat patients
- Ample **COVID-19 testing capacity** to support community and workplace safety, especially rapid diagnostic testing widely available across the state at multiple, accessible locations
- Creation and promotion of official guidance for **work safety and illness protocols** to include such features as testing, temperature and verbal screening of employees, PPE use, aggressive sanitation, workplace social distancing, and remote work where possible
- Precautions for **high-risk populations**, and those living with high-risk individuals, prior to returning to a work-place environment

- Health systems in each region should coordinate and speak with **one voice for health care** in their communities
- Creation of a plan for **second wave response**, including expanded public health capabilities, contact tracing, rapid testing, isolation of high-risk individuals, and public alerts

Critical Considerations for Officials and for Employers Prior to Reopening

- Public assistance to procure **PPE supplies** for businesses to purchase, particularly sanitizer, disinfectant, masks, and temperature scanners
- State and regional efforts to stand up **childcare** that begins with official guidance for safe daycare and summer school or camp
- **Legal protections** from the State for employers that follow official guidance for safety protocols, such as those specified by OSHA, CDC, and federal and state authorities
- Encouragement to **consumers** to do business with those essential businesses that remain and eventually become allowed to open, while maintaining CDC guidelines for social distancing. Without consumers businesses, particularly small businesses, cannot survive.

Gradual Reopening of the Economy

1) Maximize Employment in All Current “Essential” Sectors

- Full restart to the **healthcare** industry, to include restarting elective procedures, clinical visits, routine screenings, and preventive and mental health care following proper safety and social distancing protocols
- A return to full operations for those businesses already deemed **essential** (if currently scaled back or limited), including all eligible small businesses, industrial construction, manufacturing, etc.
- Additional guidance for **transportation services**, including public transit, airports, ride sharing and delivery services, and taxis, to define cleanliness standards and safety protocols
- Full restoration of **state and local government** services, particularly the courts, adhering to safety and social distancing guidance with remote work where possible
- Reopening of **retail stores and malls** with worker screening and PPE, and limited occupancy based on a percentage of Fire Marshall capacity
- Controlled access to **professional offices** such as attorneys, engineers, architects, accountants, banks and finance, corporate headquarters, veterinarians, school staff and administrators, potentially with smaller daily staff combined with remote work to ensure social spacing

2) Expand Reopened Sectors

- Restoration of in-house **restaurant operations** and the reopening of bars with worker screening and PPE, limited occupancy based on a percentage of Fire Marshall capacity, spaced seating to six-foot distances, and maximum party number standards
- Limited access to **salons and barber shops** with worker screening and PPE, less frequent appointments scheduled in advance only, and customer spacing at six feet
- Restricted reopening of **health clubs and fitness centers** with limited occupancy based on a percentage of Fire Marshall capacity, six-foot spacing requirements between customers, no minors present, thorough cleaning and sanitation of all equipment between each individual use, and the ongoing closure of showers, pools, or spas

- One-by-one review and development of a reopening strategy for all other sectors of industry, social, and civic life that were **explicitly closed**, including places of worship, places of public amusement, personal care businesses, and large-scale events

3) A New Normal Across All Sectors

As health benchmarks are met, operations in each industry sector should be expanded beyond the limitations and mandates outlined above. While business leaders are aware there will be no return to “normal” as we knew it pre-COVID in the near future, the economy should be able to operate as safely as possible in a new normal that the public and private sector work together to define.

Organizations supporting this document include:

- Acadia Parish Chamber of Commerce
- Ascension Chamber of Commerce
- Associated Builders and Contractors of Louisiana
- Baton Rouge Area Chamber
- Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce
- City of Central Chamber of Commerce
- Committee of 100 for Economic Development, Inc.
- Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance
- Greater Iberia Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Minden Chamber of Commerce
- Greater New Orleans, Inc.
- Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce
- Jeff Davis Parish Economic Development/Tourism Commission and Chamber of Commerce
- Jefferson Chamber of Commerce
- Livingston Parish Chamber of Commerce
- Louisiana Association of Business and Industry
- Louisiana Chemical Association
- Louisiana Forestry Association
- Louisiana Home Builders Association
- Louisiana Independent Pharmacies Association
- Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association
- Louisiana Motor Trucking Association
- Louisiana Oil and Gas Association
- Louisiana Pulp and Paper Association
- Louisiana Restaurant Association
- One Acadiana
- Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce
- New Orleans Chamber
- North Louisiana Economic Partnership
- Northshore Business Council
- Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce

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- South Louisiana Economic Council
- St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce
- The Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance
- West Monroe West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce
- Youngsville Chamber of Commerce