

## HELPFUL TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

While there are federal guidelines for reopening state economies, stay-at-home orders and the reopening of small businesses will be left to each state to decide. As such, reopening will occur over the course of many months, with each state operating independently with its own set of guidelines and recommendations for small business operations. It is also safe to say that consumers will ultimately dictate what reopening looks like in commercial districts through their actions.

As such, Main Street programs and other community-based organizations and small business owners should **first** follow guidelines as established by local and state officials, which outline conditions for reopening. Many may also have specific guidelines based on industry sector, for example restaurants and fitness centers. The following represent other elements to consider as operating practices for small business owners:



### 1. Develop Safe Practices for your Business.

There remains very limited information on how reopening guidelines will address safe shopping practices. Absent having federal or statewide requirements, we would suggest, in conjunction with guidance from local public health officials developing a set of safe shopping practices.

Practices could include:

- Consider having a designated queue area outside of stores with markers on the ground spaced six feet apart to maintain social distancing recommendations.
- Consider criteria that limit the number of customers inside at any one time. This should be based on store layout and size that assures some social distancing practice. Some states are also providing guidance as to percent of occupancy allowable in phased reopening situations.

- Develop and promote store cleaning protocols.
- Educate your employees on how to keep the space clean. Provide personal protection equipment for employees, like masks and gloves.
- Incorporate touchless pay systems through your point of sale.
- Provide the following for your customers:
  - Hand wipes
  - Hand sanitizer stations
  - Personal protection equipment

**2. Understand Industry Specific Guidance.** Look for guidance from your industry sector association. For example, the Georgia State Board of Cosmetology and Barbers has [issued guidance](#) to their members across the state. The Occupational Safety and Health Agency has also developed [safe operating guidelines](#) that, while geared to larger-scale businesses, have helpful guidance.

**3. Create a safe work environment for your employees.** Employees who are sick should be advised to stay home. Employers should provide training, educational materials, and put in place strong protocols for cleaning the premises and personal hygiene practices.

a. Consider asking screening questions: Have you had a cough? Have you had a fever? Have you been around anyone exhibiting these symptoms within the past 14 days? Are you living with anyone who is sick or quarantined?

b. Consider using contactless thermometers to test employees each day

**4. Evaluate your Vendors.** Businesses will likely need to be much more focused on lead times for inventory. Given that many suppliers will also be ramping up, distribution channels may be slow to respond with product orders.

Also, note that many businesses may need to find new suppliers as some unfortunately may be out of business.

**5. Deepen your Online Presence.** E-commerce was growing at nearly 15 percent annually prior to the pandemic, which has only accelerated during stay-at-home orders. Even with reopening, foot traffic will lag. Now is the time to dedicate some time and resources to developing your social media and e-commerce presence. There are many low-cost starter options, like eBay, Etsy, Facebook, Shopify, etc. that can quickly help you obtain an e-commerce presence in the short-term, while you explore your e-commerce and social media marketing strategies.

**6. Partner with other local businesses and community organizations.** Work with businesses in your local community to promote reopening and find ways to work together to reach customers. Consider working with your local Main Street Program or community-based organization and municipal government to dedicate certain parking spaces as delivery/pick-up zones for downtown businesses. It is likely that many customers will have become used to delivery and pick-up options, and they will still prefer those shopping options for safety and convenience after reopening.

