

Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance for Small Business Owners

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused disruption and closures for millions of small businesses. Business owners are trying to keep their businesses financially afloat and meet the needs of their workers whose lives are facing unexpected challenges. The following is some practical guidance for surviving the economic downturn.

Preparing your business to stay up and running during the pandemic

Whether or not your business is deemed essential, you will need to adjust the way it operates because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

- **Create a safe environment.** If you are an essential business, create a workspace that meets [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidelines](#) for a safe workplace that includes social distancing and preventing the spread of the disease.
- **Go online.** Utilize tools, such as Shopify and GoToWebinar, to move your business online to engage your customers in the digital space. Keep your employees connected through online tools, such as Zoom and WebEx.
- **Update Existing Policies.** Institute flextime, telecommuting, or part-time opportunities for your employees to respond to the changing nature of work during the crisis. These policies will help your employees stay healthy and better manage their responsibilities at work and at home.
- **Connect with local resources.** Reach out to your local [Small Business Development Center](#), [Women's Business Development Center](#), or [Minority Business Development Agency Business Center](#) to get advice on how to help to respond to this crisis.
- **Inform your customers how you have prepared your business for the COVID-19 outbreak.** Let your customers know if your business is open and how you are meeting CDC guidelines or how your products or services can be purchased online. There are a number of online tools including marketing platforms, social media sites, and website builders to help you keep in touch with your customers.

Communicating with your employees

This is a stressful time for you and your employees and overcommunication is critical.

- **Clearly and frequently communicate with your employees.** Tell your employees what you are thinking, what plans are in place for employees that have caregiving responsibilities, and how you will continue to provide them updates during this unpredictable time.

- **Review your sick leave and remote work policies** to ensure they are consistent with recommended guidance and clearly communicate these policies to employees. It is important to advise them to take standard steps to prepare for staying at home.
- **Direct your workers to financial employee assistance programs if available.** Workers across the country are experiencing financial hardships because of the COVID-19 pandemic and employee assistance programs are being established to help them through this time. Check out [this regularly updated list](#) of resources. Be sure to search for state and local specific resources as well.

Preparing for the future

The fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak will last for months and you should take steps to give your business the cash-flow it needs to see it through.

- **Obtain financial support that is available.** The [Small Business Administration](#), has extended and created loan and grant programs for businesses impacted by the pandemic. Be sure to reach out to your [local SBA office](#) to learn more about lenders in your area and read the [US Chamber of Commerce's Coronavirus Loan Guide](#) to determine your businesses loan eligibility.
- **Utilize the current tax regulations.** Certain tax regulations have been amended to support businesses during this time. For example, recently passed federal legislation provides small and midsize employers [two new refundable payroll tax credits](#) for the cost of providing COVID-19-related leave to their employees.
- **Explore renegotiating your contracts and current loans.** Be proactive in discussing options for adjusting contracts and delaying payments to make it through the COVID-19 pandemic. Several large lenders have already waived late fees and issued statements about current loans, so check with your lender to see what guidance they have issued.

Resources:

- [Small Business Administration COVID-19 Guidance and Resources](#)
- [CDC Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Forbes Small Business Relief Tracker](#)
- [Public Private Strategies COVID-19 Resources](#)