New York state requires businesses to develop plans to protect employees and consumers, make the physical work space safer and implement processes that lower risk of infection in the business. This overview provides recommendations, procedures and considerations to develop safe, effective, and thorough re-opening plans. All businesses should also refer to CDC guidance, the Governor Cuomo’s New York Forward re-opening guidelines, and local authorities for the phased re-opening of industries, and current health and safety protocols. This guidance is intended for informational and planning purposes only.

For our complete Back to Business Re-opening Toolkit, visit www.centerstateceo.com/re-openingtoolkit.

Pre-opening Considerations

- **Workplace safety:** employers must ensure workplaces are safe as employees and customers may have fears of returning to business as usual. Preparing for and communicating how safety is a top priority will allay fears and increase brand loyalty.

- **Recall procedures:** a plan should outline how and when employees will return to work or worksite to create an organized and controlled approach.

- **Employee benefits:** whether employees remained on the employer’s benefits plans or not, certain notices or actions may be required to stay compliant.

- **Compensation:** employers may have made compensation changes during the crisis or may need to make them in order to re-open. The disruption’s effect on compensation policies going forward will also need reviewing and communicating to affected staff.

- **Remote work:** telecommuting may have proven to work well during the pandemic for some employers and employees. It should be evaluated both as a short-term emergency tool to survive the next year and as a permanent work/life balance and cost-saving measure.

- **Communications:** establishing a clear communications plan will allow employees and customers to understand how the organization plans to re-open or re-establish business processes.

- **New hire paperwork:** employees returning to work who remained on the payroll would generally not need to complete paperwork. However, for those separated from employment, such as laid-off workers, it may be best to follow normal hiring procedures.

- **Policy changes:** it is no longer business as usual, and employers will likely need to update or create policies to reflect the new normal.

- **Unions:** employers with unionized workforces may have additional considerations.
Operational Considerations

- **Physical space**: employers will need to consider their physical space and needed supplies for staff, including providing tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles; soap and water or if soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- **Staff protocols**: employers should consider new protocols, including assigning a person to rotate throughout the workplace to clean and disinfect surfaces; establishing handwashing breaks, so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; conducting temperature screenings; and incorporating social distancing measures.

- **Cleaning protocols**: performed at least once a day to clean and disinfect surfaces frequently touched by multiple people. This includes door handles, desks, phones, light switches and faucets.

- **Customer interactions**: employers should consider options to increase physical space between employees and customers; discourage handshaking; encourage wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Strategic Considerations

- **Business continuity plans**: employers will have learned valuable lessons regarding their business continuity plans. Now is the time to review and revise the plan to prepare for future emergencies.

- **Assess your essential functions**: employers should evaluate the reliance that others and the community have on their services or products.

- **Timing of re-opening**: pick the right time to re-open by planning and budgeting for a necessary period of re-staffing and re-training to be able to bring the business back to life responsibly, and target a return to market that will be sustainable in the long term.

- **Capital resource planning**: review how much capital has been secured to sustain the business beyond the first month of operation; funnel any profits or payments into cash reserves; focus on maintaining essential workforce while tightly controlling additional labor; and leverage new capital investment to prepare a cash reserve.

- **Ongoing communications**: employers should acknowledge employee fears about returning to work and develop regular communications strategies, including rapid response procedures for internal and external audiences.