**Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program**

Find more information on the SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans at: [SBA.gov/Disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster).

The SBA will work directly with state Governors to provide targeted, low-interest loans to small businesses and non-profits that have been severely impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loan program provides small businesses with working capital loans of up to $2 million that can provide vital economic support to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing.

* [Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program](https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources#section-header-0)
* [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources#section-header-2)
* [SBA Products and Resources](https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources#section-header-4)

Guidance for Businesses and Employers

[The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America - 15 Days to Slow the Spread](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers the most up-to-date information on COVID-19. This interim guidance is based on what is currently known [about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html). For updates from CDC, please see the following:

* [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html)
* [Preventing Stigma Related to COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/related-stigma.html)
* [Share Facts about COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts.html)
* [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Web page](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
* [Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Prevention, Symptoms and FAQ](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html)

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use the guidance described below and on the [CDC’s Guidance for Businesses and Employers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html) web page.

Below are recommended strategies for employers to use now. In-depth guidance is available on the [CDC’s Guidance for Businesses and Employers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html) web page:

* Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
* Separate sick employees
* Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees
* Perform routine environmental cleaning
* Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps
* Check the [CDC’s Traveler’s Health Notices](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from designated countries with risk of community spread of Coronavirus, and information for aircrew, can be found on the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
* Additional Measures in Response to Currently Occurring Sporadic Importations of the COVID-19:
* Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure.
* If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure.

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Common Issues Small Businesses May Encounter:

* Capital Access – Incidents can strain a small business's financial capacity to make payroll, maintain inventory and respond to market fluctuations (both sudden drops and surges in demand). Businesses should prepare by exploring and testing their capital access options so they have what they need when they need it. See [SBA’s capital access resources](https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans).
* Workforce Capacity – Incidents have just as much impact on your workers as they do your clientele. It’s critical to ensure they have the ability to fulfill their duties while protected.
* Inventory and Supply Chain Shortfalls – While the possibility could be remote, it is a prudent preparedness measure to ensure you have either adequate supplies of inventory for a sustained period and/or diversify your distributor sources in the event one supplier cannot meet an order request.
* Facility Remediation/Clean-up Costs – Depending on the incident, there may be a need to enhance the protection of customers and staff by increasing the frequency and intensity by which your business conducts cleaning of surfaces frequently touched by occupants and visitors. Check your maintenance contracts and supplies of cleaning materials to ensure they can meet increases in demand.
* Insurance Coverage Issues – Many businesses have business interruption insurance; Now is the time to contact your insurance agent to review your policy to understand precisely what you are and are not covered for in the event of an extended incident.
* Changing Market Demand – Depending on the incident, there may be access controls or movement restrictions established which can impede your customers from reaching your business. Additionally, there may be public concerns about public exposure to an incident and they may decide not to go to your business out of concern of exposing themselves to greater risk. [SBA’s Resources Partners and District Offices](https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance) have trained experts who can help you craft a plan specific to your situation to help navigate any rapid changes in demand.
* Marketing – It’s critical to communicate openly with your customers about the status of your operations, what protective measures you’ve implemented, and how they (as customers) will be protected when they visit your business. Promotions may also help incentivize customers who may be reluctant to patronize your business.
* Plan – As a business, bring your staff together and prepare a plan for what you will do if the incident worsens or improves. It’s also helpful to conduct a tabletop exercise to simulate potential scenarios and how your business management and staff might respond to the hypothetical scenario in the exercise. For examples of tabletop exercises, visit FEMA’s website at: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-planning-exercises>

SBA Products and Resources

SBA is here to assist small businesses with accessing federal resources and navigating their own preparedness plans as described by the [CDC’s Guidance for Businesses and Employers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html).

Local Assistance

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SBA works with a number of local partners to counsel, mentor, and train small businesses. Contact us your local SBDC staff at:

Julie Jaksha jjaksha@headwatersrcd.org

Courtney Edwards cedwards@headwatersrcd.org

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**The Small Business Owner’s Guide to the CARES Act**

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The programs and initiatives in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was just passed by Congress are intended to assist business owners with whatever needs they have right now. When implemented, there will be many new resources available for small businesses, as well as certain nonprofits and other employers.

This guide provides information about the major programs and initiatives that will soon be available from the Small Business Administration (SBA) to address these needs, as well as some additional tax provisions that are outside the scope of SBA. To keep up to date on when these programs become available, please stay in contact with your local Small Business Administration (SBA) District Office, which you can locate here.

**Struggling to get started? The following questions might help point you in the right direction. Do you need:**

• Capital to cover the cost of retaining employees? Then the **Paycheck Protection Program** might be right for you.

• A quick infusion of a smaller amount of cash to cover you right now? You might want to look into an **Emergency Economic Injury Grant.**

• To ease your fears about keeping up with payments on your current or potential SBA loan? The **Small Business Debt Relief Program** could help.

• Just some quality, free counseling to help you navigate this uncertain economic time? The **resource partners** might be your best bet.

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**View the full guide here**: <https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/9/7/97ac840c-28b7-4e49-b872-d30a995d8dae/F2CF1DD78E6D6C8C8C3BF58C6D1DDB2B.small-business-owner-s-guide-to-the-cares-act-final-.pdf>

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# **Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employer Paid Leave Requirements**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.[[1]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn1) The Department of Labor’s (Department) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) administers and enforces the new law’s paid leave requirements. These provisions will apply from the effective date through December 31, 2020.

Generally, the Act provides that covered employers must provide to all employees:[[2]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn2)

* *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee’s regular rate of pay* where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
* *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay* because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor.

A covered employer must provide to employees that it has employed for at least 30 days:[[3]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn3)

* *Up to an additional 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay* where an employee is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Covered Employers: The paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA apply to certain public employers, and private employers with fewer than 500 employees.[[4]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn4) Most employees of the federal government are covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was not amended by this Act, and are therefore not covered by the expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA. However, federal employees covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act are covered by the paid sick leave provision.

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees may qualify for exemption from the requirement to provide leave due to school closings or child care unavailability if the leave requirements would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern.

Qualifying Reasons for Leave:

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for paid sick time if the employee is unable to work (or unable to telework) due to a need for leave because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for expanded family leave if the employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19.

Duration of Leave:

For reasons (1)-(4) and (6): A full-time employee is eligible for up to 80 hours of leave, and a part-time employee is eligible for the number of hours of leave that the employee works on average over a two-week period.

For reason (5): A full-time employee is eligible for up to 12 weeks of leave at 40 hours a week, and a part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

Calculation of Pay:[[5]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn5)

For leave reasons (1), (2), or (3): employees taking leave shall be paid at either their regular rate or the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to $511 per day and $5,110 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

For leave reasons (4) or (6): employees taking leave shall be paid at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to $200 per day and $2,000 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

For leave reason (5): employees taking leave shall be paid at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to $200 per day and $12,000 in the aggregate (over a 12-week period—two weeks of paid sick leave followed by up to 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave).[[6]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn6)

Tax Credits: Covered employers qualify for dollar-for-dollar reimbursement through tax credits for all qualifying wages paid under the FFCRA. Qualifying wages are those paid to an employee who takes leave under the Act for a qualifying reason, up to the appropriate per diem and aggregate payment caps. Applicable tax credits also extend to amounts paid or incurred to maintain health insurance coverage. For more information, please see the Department of the Treasury’s website.

Employer Notice: Each covered employer must post in a conspicuous place on its premises a notice of FFCRA requirements.[[7]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftn7)

Prohibitions: Employers may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise discriminate against any employee who takes paid sick leave under the FFCRA and files a complaint or institutes a proceeding under or related to the FFCRA.

Penalties and Enforcement: Employers in violation of the first two weeks’ paid sick time or unlawful termination provisions of the FFCRA will be subject to the penalties and enforcement described in Sections 16 and 17 of the Fair Labor Standards Act. 29 U.S.C. 216; 217. Employers in violation of the provisions providing for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid leave to care for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) are subject to the enforcement provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act. The Department will observe a temporary period of non-enforcement for the first 30 days after the Act takes effect, so long as the employer has acted reasonably and in good faith to comply with the Act. For purposes of this non-enforcement position, “good faith” exists when violations are remedied and the employee is made whole as soon as practicable by the employer, the violations were not willful, and the Department receives a written commitment from the employer to comply with the Act in the future.

[[1]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref1) Wage and Hour Division does not administer this aspect of the law, but notes that every dollar of required paid leave (plus the cost of the employer’s health insurance premiums during leave) will be 100% covered by a dollar-for-dollar refundable tax credit available to the employer. For more information, please see the Department of the Treasury’s website.

[[2]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref2) Employers of Health Care Providers or Emergency Responders may elect to exclude such employees from eligibility for the leave provided under the Act.

[[3]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref3) Employers of Health Care Providers or Emergency Responders may elect to exclude such employees from eligibility for the leave provided under the Act.

[[4]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref4) Certain provisions may not apply to certain employers with fewer than 50 employees. See Department FFCRA regulations (expected April 2020).

[[5]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref5) Paid sick time provided under this Act does not carry over from one year to the next. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement for unused leave upon termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

[[6]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref6) An employee may elect to substitute any accrued vacation leave, personal leave, or medical or sick leave for the first two weeks of partial paid leave under this section.

[[7]](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave#_ftnref7) The Department will issue a model notice no later than March 25, 2020.

**Grants:**

[Northwestern Energy](https://www.headwatersrcd.org/headwaters-northwestern-energy-gran) –Thanks to our partners at NorthWestern Energy we are offering $500 grants to businesses in the Headwaters region (Madison, Jefferson, Beaverhead, Butte-Silver Bow, Granite, Powell and Anaconda-Deer Lodge) for support during these challenging times.

[Northwestern Energy](https://contactus.northwesternenergy.com/CharitableGrantApp/applicationsb?fbclid=IwAR1tfsYYQ163R38ovewMRpNYBdrhH_EwPAFVYdSmKxyfu9tscRGLBdpcwhw) – Through shareholders dollars, the Company is providing resources in the form of $250 bill credits to a limited number of our locally-owned, stand-alone small business customers. Grant recipients must be a NorthWestern customer that was impacted by the state and local closure directives related to COVID-19. They also must have contacted NorthWestern to discuss management of their utility bill.

[Growth Through Ag](https://agr.mt.gov/GTA) – All projects will need to demonstrate how they expand Montana agriculture, but given the current public health situation with COVID-19, special attention will be paid to projects that strengthen and expand local food offerings, distribution, and infrastructure.

[Thryv Foundation](https://www.thryv.com/thryvfoundation/?fbclid=IwAR2HbS6MAOb8LMlLynDEavNL4qbmcy6r-aAOMEBioZikMnh0Wf4xA0woI6g) – To help businesses through the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Thryv Foundation will provide grants through its 2020 Small Business COVID-19 Program. Small- and medium-sized businesses can apply today.

[Music COVID Relief](https://musiccovidrelief.com/) – The information for the  Relief and Grants  section of MusicCovidRelief.com was compiled by the U.S. Music Community to help music professionals learn about organizations providing relief and potential grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

[James Beard Foundation](https://www.jamesbeard.org/relief-fund-application) – The James Beard Foundation Food and Beverage Industry Relief Fund application is now open. The application period will run through 3 P.M. ET on April 3, 2020. Please review the criteria and frequently asked questions before submitting an application.

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/business/boost/grants) – Facebook is offering $100M in cash grants and ad credits for up to 30,000 eligible small businesses in over 30 countries where we operate. We’ll share more details as they become available.

[JPMorgan](https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/news/pr/jpmc-makes-50mm-philanthropic-investment-to-address-impacts-of-covid-19.htm) – pledged $50 million global philanthropic commitment to support communities and people hit hardest by this public health crisis, including $2 million to existing nonprofit partners and $8 million to assist small businesses. [Learn more.](https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/news/pr/jpmc-makes-50mm-philanthropic-investment-to-address-impacts-of-covid-19.htm)

[MainVest](https://mainvest.com/blog/MSI) – a crowdfunding platform, announced its new Main Street Initiative: a $2,000, zero-interest, 120 day loan for restaurants or other brick and mortars affected by the shutdown.

[Opportunity Fund](https://www.opportunityfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Opportunity-Fund-_Covid-19-response_3.11.20.pdf) – which specializes in money lending to small businesses owned by women, immigrants and people of color, is collaborating with investors and nonprofits to put together a coronavirus relief fund that will provide grants and low-interest rate loans.

[Golden Rule Charity](https://www.goldenrulecharity.org/grant-application) – To qualify for a grant, you must be employed in a restaurant/hospitality establishment for 6 months. You must apply no later than 6 months after onset of need. Grants will only be awarded to applicants who currently (or at the time of injury or illness) work at least part-time.

[Go Fund Me](https://www.gofundme.com/c/small-business-relief-initiative-and-fund-faqs) – The Go Fund Me Relief Initiative is intended to support our local businesses facing financial loss. Make a difference today by donating or starting a fundraiser.

**Additionally, a list of other resources to help individuals and small businesses:**

[N](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MTDOC/bulletins/281f487)[orthwestern Energy](https://www3.northwesternenergy.com/our-company/media-center/current/news-article/2020/03/14/NorthWestern-Energy-announces-health-and-safety-response-suspends-service-disconnections) - NorthWestern Energy voluntarily suspended service disconnections for non-payment, effective immediately, to help customers who may be financially impacted as the result of this outbreak. This suspension will apply primarily to residential customers and will remain in effect until further notice. You are encouraged to contact us if you are having trouble paying your bill.

[Montana Housing](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MTDOC/bulletins/281f487) - At Montana Housing, within the Department of Commerce, we are closely monitoring the impacts of COVID-19. We will communicate with statewide housing partners any relevant information about COVID-19 and how it affects affordable homes in Montana.

[USDA](https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/17/usda-working-private-sector-response-covid-19) - U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced new contacts to encourage communication with USDA to help feed kids and ensure the United States food supply chain remains strong in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

[MT Dept. of Commerce](https://commerce.mt.gov/BusinessRecovery?fbclid=IwAR2Oj4wfmmbJvxXNP4-QgVN_Tukr0fc8LCC720cFPvtSidKPAmFCy9cdAH4) - Please visit this one-stop-shop for business, community, and housing recovery resources to utilize during this crisis.

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[Bartender Emergency Fund](https://www.usbgfoundation.org/beap) - Be a Bartender or the spouse or child of a Bartender. The Bartender Emergency Assistance Program defines a “Bartender” as an individual employed in serving beverages or otherwise engaged in the production, promotion or distribution of alcoholic beverages.

[Kabbage](https://www.kabbage.com/helpsmallbusiness) - Kabbage has launched an online hub to help boost [gift-certificate sales for small businesses](https://www.kabbage.com/helpsmallbusiness) impacted by Covid-19. While the service is free, there is a 2.5 percent payment processing charge per gift certificate that goes to the third party facilitating the service.

[Google](https://blog.google/inside-google/company-announcements/commitment-support-small-businesses-and-crisis-response-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR0PUXM62ve87NfZZ2q4mFV7X2z4QWwKxmRCxjrYCJexbwOgRZvINMeVnEc) - $340 million in Google Ads credits available to all SMBs with active accounts over the past year. Credit notifications will appear in their Google Ads accounts and can be used at any point until the end of 2020 across our advertising platforms. We hope it will help to alleviate some of the cost of staying in touch with their customers.

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[Verizon](https://www.verizon.com/about/news/update-verizon-serve-customers-covid-19) - Due to economic circumstances related to the coronavirus and to keep customers connected during this economic and global crisis; Verizon waives late fees for residential and small business customers impacted by COVID-19, offers free international calling to CDC level 3 countries.

[Yelp](https://blog.yelp.com/2020/03/yelp-covid-19-response-and-support-for-local-businesses) - $25 million in relief, primarily focused on supporting independent local restaurant and nightlife businesses, in the form of waived advertising fees, and free advertising, products and services, [during this period](https://blog.yelp.com/2020/03/coronavirus-relief-for-restaurants-and-bars?utm_source=news_blog&utm_medium=yelp_blog). As part of this relief effort, restaurants and nightlife businesses that remain open will receive [free access to Yelp page upgrades](https://blog.yelp.com/2020/03/setting-up-call-to-action-business-highlights-connect), including [Business Highlights](https://blog.yelp.com/2019/06/yelp-announces-business-page-upgrades#business-highlights?utm_source=biz_blog&utm_medium=yelp_blog&utm_content=blog_text_link) and [Call To Action](https://biz.yelp.com/support/call_to_action/info), as well as [Connect](https://blog.yelp.com/2019/09/yelp-connect-a-new-voice-for-restaurants-to-reach-locals?utm_source=biz_blog&utm_medium=yelp_blog&utm_content=blog_text_link), which will help them communicate timely information to their customers.

[GoFundMe](https://www.gofundme.com/c/small-business-relief-initiative-and-fund-faqs) - GoFundMe, the social-fundraising platform, has launched the [Small Business Relief Initiative](https://www.gofundme.com/c/small-business-relief-initiative-and-fund-faqs), partnering with Yelp to provide small-business owners with grants and resources. GoFundMe and Yelp have each donated $500,000 to the [Small Business Relief Fund](https://www.gofundme.com/f/smallbusinessrelieffund), and it is open for anyone to make a donation. There will also be $500 matching grants to qualifying businesses that raise at least $500 on GoFundMe.

[American Express Financial Hardship](https://thepointsguy.com/news/amex-waiving-interest-late-fees-accounts-requesting-covid-19-relief/) — Amex is evaluating accounts on a case-by-case basis under its Financial Hardship Relief program to provide support for cardholders impacted by COVID-19. If approved, your interest rate may be lowered to rates as low as 0%, and you may receive a waiver on late and other account fees. Just note that if you accept the relief, your accounts may be frozen, and you won’t be able to use them until paid off. Your Membership Rewards balance will also be frozen, and the issuer may notify the credit bureaus that your account limits were lowered.

[American Express Working Capital](https://www.americanexpress.com/us/business/financing/working-capital-terms/index.html) — Amex business cardholders can enroll with no credit check and get ongoing access to funds used for vendor payments between $500 and $150,000 with repayment terms of 30, 60 or 90 days. These charge a fixed fee between 0.6% and 5.25%.

[Chase](https://www.chase.com/digital/resources/coronavirus) — You can call the number on the back of your card and ask to speak with an account representative about the possibility of relief from fees and interest. Multiple readers have reported success in having interest and late fees waived due to hardship related to COVID-19.

[Internal Revenue Service (IRS)](https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus) — The Treasury Department and IRS just announced a three-month delay for any tax payments owed up to $1 million. You’ll still need to file your returns by April 15, 2020 but will have until July 15 to pay. This will apply to individual tax returns but should also cover many pass-through entities and small businesses.

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**Resources & Guides**

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[OSHA](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf) - A publication on Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

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[The Small Business Owner’s Guide to the CARES Act](https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/9/7/97ac840c-28b7-4e49-b872-d30a995d8dae/F2CF1DD78E6D6C8C8C3BF58C6D1DDB2B.small-business-owner-s-guide-to-the-cares-act-final-.pdf) - The programs and initiatives in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was just passed by Congress are intended to assist business owners with whatever needs they have right now.

[Open for Business Hub](https://openforbusiness.org/) - The Open for Business Hub lists technology companies that are helping small businesses by enabling remote work throughout this period.

Find the list of offers [here.](https://openforbusiness.org/)

[Family Resources](https://2b973104-6c64-425e-b238-c2f8fa714784.filesusr.com/ugd/9116a7_5a788a75712e4469a118033b0e7efe91.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3zsmMyv3Xreu-oW0pU921oZzDs2M3ZMzCjLeHIBoFCrl-W9oKlpuKFgxQ) - Need help sorting through all the information out there on COVID-19? Check the new Zero to Five Page on the website to help you navigate all the info and resources. There are sections for Parents/Caregivers, Child Care Providers and more.

[Seated Hotline](https://seatedhotline.com/) – Free Finance and Law Hotline for Restaurant Owners

**Tips for Businesses on Responding to the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

(current as of 4/1/2020)

Things small business owners should consider and do right now so you’ll be better prepared to survive through the COVID-19 pandemic. These, incidentally, are smart preparations to undertake at any time, so you’re not wasting the effort.

**1. Cut costs and reach out to all creditors**

Cut the things you don’t HAVE to spend your money on.

* Bank - What debt payments are due? What fees can be waived? Can you get deferments on debt or go interest-only?
* Credit Card Company - Can you get deferred payments, maybe no interest for a few months
* Landlord/Mortgage Company - Can you defer payments, can you get reduced rent?
* Utilities - Can you defer or delay payments?
* Insurance companies - If you have monthly payments see if payments can be delayed

**2. Look at your financials and cash flow.**

How long can you “make it through” in case of a quarantine, lost wages, employee absenteeism (when you are paying for sick leave AND not bringing in revenue). Put together an outline of your fixed costs over the next six months. What do you need to bridge the gap? Plan on a 6-8 month drop in revenues. Map out cash flow now.

* Get a credit line approved now. You don’t have to use it. But you’ll have it when you need it.
* Aggressively pursue accounts receivables.
* Negotiate payment reductions and extensions.
* The Federal income tax deadline has been extended to July 15th. Normal filing, payment, and deposit due dates continue to apply to both payroll and excise taxes. See IRS [FAQs](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/filing-and-payment-deadlines-questions-and-answers) for additional information.
* Do the math - staying open may be costing you more money then closing your doors.

**3. Understand your insurance policy.**

What does your insurance cover? What doesn’t it cover? [Business interruption insurance](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1s-3xe299Z7wrJqlb53b7L_bgspIA-jkzyCvqZhYeXr8) is insurance coverage that replaces business income lost in a disaster. Business interruption insurance is not sold as a separate policy but is either added to a property/casualty policy or included in a comprehensive package policy as an add-on or rider. If you don’t have business interruption insurance, it may be too late to help you in this emergency, but you should know what it is, how it works, and how much it costs.

A government-mandated closure (hospitality businesses, for example) most likely will enable business interruption insurance to kick in.

**4. Prepare for a disaster loan.**

[SBA pandemic disaster loans](https://drive.google.com/open?id=12xv4xcsg_9xoVeEE_Y1j2sicNbCvl2GAVinSowU2zgg) offer a variety of options for funding at attractive rates, and include a $10,000 Economic Injury Disaster Grant.

* Complete and assemble 2019 and prior year financial statements.
* Start documenting and forecasting the impacts of the situation.

**5. Evaluate Your Ability to Retain Employees**

* If you need to layoff, furlough or terminate staff, consult with an employment attorney - current labor laws were not designed for this situation.
* Laid off employees are eligible for increased unemployment benefits - The current maximum unemployment benefit is increased by $600 per week and ensures that laid-off workers, on average, will receive their full pay for four months.
* Recovery Rebates will be sent to all Americans and are direct payments of up to $1,200 for individuals earning up to $75,000 or $2,400 for married couples filing jointly earning up to $150,000. The amount will increase by $500 for each qualifying child and decrease as income increases, phasing out completely at $99,000 for individuals and $198,000 for married filing jointly.

**6. Leverage Tax Changes**

Recent changes include paid leave for workers and two new refundable payroll tax credits for small and midsize businesses to reimburse them, dollar for dollar, for the cost of providing coronavirus-related leave.

* Deferral of Employer-side FICA Payroll Taxes - Can defer the employer portion of FICA taxes through the end of 2020, with all 2020 deferred amounts due in two equal installments, one at the end of 2021, the other at the end of 2022.
* [Retention Tax Credit](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-employee-retention-credit-available-for-many-businesses-financially-impacted-by-covid-19) - Adds a tax credit for employers to encourage businesses to keep workers on payroll during the crisis.
* [Filing Due Date](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/filing-and-payment-deadlines-questions-and-answers)s are pushed back

**7. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate and Get Online!**

Keep staff and customers informed and up-to-date on your operations. Share as much information with your employees as you can (within reason) they have bills to pay as well.

***Create a marketing plan based on the new economic environment.***

It’s important for businesses to keep in touch with customers to help maintain them through this incident. Let them know what steps you are taking to ensure a safe and clean establishment; what your open hours are and how to communicate with you; use email auto-reply with answers to frequently asked questions to help your customers get information quickly; offer alternative methods of good deliveries (curbside service, at home delivery, drive thrus, etc.).

Use online platforms, like Facebook and your website, to inform customers of your operating status and how to purchase your products or services. Communicate this information through direct email to customers and through social media such as Twitter. Make sure you have a [Business Profile on Google](https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/college-and-continuing-education/en/create-your-business-profile-on-google/create-your-business-profile-on-google/introduction-to-create-your-business-profile-on-google.html?utm_source=google-applied-digital-skills&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2020310-GwGRemote--cce-stu-&src=em-2020310-GwGRemote--cce-stu-). Postal mail might be a way for your message to get customers’ attention who are being bombarded with emails.

**8. Look at your supply chains.**

Are they diversified or are you relying on one source for your products? Supply chain management is essential in any global pandemic. Travel, workforce absenteeism, and financials will impact supply chains across the world. It’s important you have multiple providers of a resource that is the core of your business. Consider partnering with other businesses to share a vendor contract. That will make your order larger and a higher priority to the provider and may help to reduce the costs of goods.

**9. Develop an incident response plan.**

What do you have in place in case of a quarantine? Can your employees work from home? Can you sell online or deliver instead of staffing brick and mortar? What kind of technology can be implemented to reach your customers? What communication is in place to your customers and employees?

Identify essential functions and cross-train employees now so several can perform those tasks. Consider what programs or services could temporarily be shut down.

Think about potential disruptions in supplies, services and transportation in the likelihood those organizations experience employee absenteeism. Identify alternative vendors / suppliers / etc. and how to reach them.

Store information on your employees, vendors, and clients in an online account so it’s accessible from any device.

**10. Practice Physical Distancing!**

Physical distancing is a term applied to actions to stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease. Here’s some action items you can implement quickly in your business:

• Encourage staying more than three feet apart

• Do not high five, shake hands or have close physical contact

• Wash your hands more frequently and use hand sanitizer

• Clean and disinfect your work and customer areas more frequently

• Avoid touching your face, nose, or eyes

It may seem silly to have to continue to tell your employees to – wash your hands, cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough. But the truth is, habits are hard to break. Printing signs on your office printer can help as subtle reminders to your employees and customers to practice better personal hygiene – key to recovery from this illness, according to the public health experts.

**11. Encourage Good Hygiene.**

Purchase hand sanitizer and encourage employees to start using it or washing hands per health agency guidance (alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds). Begin a “no handshaking” protocol NOW so it’s ingrained in our daily routine if/when things get worse.

Encourage employees to regularly clean their work areas. Be prepared to do a thorough cleaning of your facility should you need to if employees are directly affected and have been on the property.

**12. Dealing with COVID Exposure**

* Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure.
* If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html) of their potential exposure.

**13. Reevaluate your sick leave policies.**

Under pandemic circumstances employees should be encouraged to stay at home beyond their currently authorized sick leave. Also take the time now to review what additional benefit options might be available to support and continue paying employees beyond usual sick leave periods when they may be infectious or need to stay home to take care of family members. An example would be “borrowing” sick leave from the next year, or providing “administrative leave.” Another approach is to establish special provisions just for COVID-19 circumstances.

**14. New Paid Sick Leave Requirements.**

Businesses with 500 OR FEWER EMPLOYEES must provide:

* Paid Sick Leave – 2 weeks paid leave at 100% of employee’s normal pay, up to $511 per day.
* Paid Family and Medical Leave – additional 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave at 67% of normal pay, up to $200 per day (small businesses can apply for a waiver of this in some limited circumstances).
* Small businesses will get a tax credit to cover these costs.
* Gig workers and independent contractors will get the same benefits in form of a tax credit.

*Small Businesses*: you must provide paid sick leave and/or family/medical leave for any of your payroll workers (not contractors). The Federal Government will pick up the cost of this paid leave—by applying a credit for your 6.2% payroll social security taxes. If the credit is insufficient to cover those costs, the Federal Government will pay you directly. You or your workers do not have to be sick to qualify! Anyone told to quarantine, who is exposed to the virus, showing symptoms, or needs to get tests or preventive care qualifies. Family leave is easier—up to 3 months of paid leave to adhere to quarantine, take care of a sick family member or a child who is home because of their school being closed.

Gig Worker/Independent Contractor: if you are paid by another company (e.g., a ride share company, a caterer, a worker platform like Upwork, another contracting company), you’re eligible for a tax credit of up to 2 weeks sick leave at your average pay and 12 weeks of family/medical leave at 2/3 your average pay. The same caps apply--$511/$200 per day. You must show you had to comply with self-isolation or care for family members, including children whose schools had been closed due to the coronavirus. Tax credits will be applied against your tax payments, or you will get a rebate if your tax is lower than the credit.

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**15. Update Your Business Plan**

Even if you’re not currently negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, you could be in the future depending upon circumstances, or you could face another type of business interruption. Some items to consider:

* Determine whether flex working is an option: Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours. Supervisors should educate employees that if they become sick they should telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved.
* Create an employee communications plan: Establish a process to communicate the latest coronavirus information to employees and business partners. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
* Decide how to handle spikes in absenteeism: Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school.
* Prepare to adjust: Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, consider digital meetings, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
* Be [cybersecure](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/20_0306_cisa_insights_risk_management_for_novel_coronavirus_0.pdf) as operations move online.

**16. Support other businesses.**

If you are planning a large event, small event, or a gathering…try not to cancel those events. The other small businesses you are working with depend on that cash flow too to survive. Rather, look at your contracts and see if you can reschedule the event for later in the year when this crisis subsides.