



# Back to Business Toolkit

## Dear Accredited Business,

The purpose of this toolkit is to help business owners get the information they need in order to open, what steps should be taken to put you on the best path of success, and how to assess your business needs.





# What's Inside...

Page 3	<b>Reopening</b>
Page 4	<b>General Safety Tips for All Industries</b>
Page 4-5	<b>Building and Maintaining Trust with Your Customers and Employees</b>
Page 5	<b>Working Virtually</b>
Page 6	<b>Financial Resources for Your Businesses Reopening</b>
Page 6	<b>What This All Means</b>
Page 7	<b>The New Customer</b>
Page 8	<b>Breaking New Ground</b>
Page 9	<b>Resources</b>
Page 10-11	<b>Ways Your Business Can Impact the Community</b>



# Reopening in the time of COVID-19

Many states across the country are preparing to reopen amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision on whether to reopen your business or not is an individual one and, for some, not a reality at this time. On the other hand, some are ready, and want to know how to do so safely! Guidelines will vary greatly across states and industries, so check with your local representatives for more information on what is allowed or not in your state. In the meantime, **BBB has general tips for you to consider as you prepare to reopen and for those who continue to operate under restrictions.**

## Reopening:

As you take steps to re-open your storefront, first find out if there is any required signage in your state for entrances and exits. Many states are requiring signage at all doors. Plus, having safety signage can help customers and employees feel safer in your establishment.

You'll also need a plan in place on day one to eliminate unnecessary contact and prevent the spread of COVID-19 throughout your establishment. Try the website and official communications channels from your governor or state health department to get industry-specific guidelines and area-specific guidance.

### Areas of consideration could include:

- The availability of space for safe social distancing
- Daily sanitizing of the establishment, as well as regular sanitizing of "high contact" areas such as payment terminals, pens, tables, etc.
- Indoor face-covering requirements
- Personal Protective Equipment required for your type of establishment.





## General safety tips for all industries:

No matter your type of business, you'll want to enact certain policies to keep yourself, your family, your customers, and your employees, safe. Here are some suggestions:

- Follow [CDC guidelines for safe distancing](#).
- Reduce general occupancy and gatherings to allow room for customers to spread out.
- Limit the number of people in your business and create safe-distance queues outside ("one out, one in").
- Allow employees who *can* work from home to do so.
- Maintain touchless and virtual options, such as pick-up and delivery.
- Consider removing "self-service" tools, such as salt and pepper shakers, napkin dispensers, pens, community devices, etc. Control the use of these so you can sanitize properly.
- Have sanitizing wipes, sprays, gels, etc. readily available and in multiple positions throughout your establishment.
- Start a regular regimen of sanitizing door entrances, handles, light switches, etc.
- Find reputable [tips for cleaning during our "new normal."](#)

## Building and maintaining trust with your customers and employees:

Some of your customers will be hesitant to return to your establishment or use your services, while others will not. Regardless, there are several ways that you can build and maintain trust among your community throughout this trying time. Examples include:

- Publicize your new self-service, virtual, or pick-up options prominently on your website and frequently on social media.
- Publicize the measures you're taking to sanitize your facility and keep others safe.
- Now is not the time to slack on your digital marketing - emails, social media, conference calls, and digital messages are critical to monitor AND advertise during this time.
- Share pictures or videos of your employees in their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Post photos of customers in the store, of your new safe practices, and you and your staff operating the business, to remind people you are open - or make posts showing your staff conducting phone or video conferences.
- Show your customers that you care about their safety with sanitizing wipes, sprays, gels, etc. readily available and in multiple positions throughout your establishment.

It's also important to remember that employees may have a hard time returning to work because of their "new normal". Some may have health conditions that will make them fear the return to work, or they may be responsible for children whose schools are not open. In general, all employees should feel safe enough to want to return. Here are suggestions on how you can help:

- If remote work is an option for some, keep it as an option for the safety of all involved.
- Keep an open mind toward scheduling and accommodations. Daily schedules have radically changed. While some may have more time to be at work, some may have less.
- If employees are sick, allow them to stay home without pressure to come in.
- Provide employees with as many safeguards as possible - PPE, sanitizing aids, distancing, etc.
- Post safety rules in all areas and allow for social distancing. [Follow CDC guidelines](#).
- Follow new [FMLA guidelines](#) for those who may contract COVID-19.
- Offer support and an open ear for your employee's concerns.
- Create a "whistleblower" system where employees can report violations or health concerns without fear of retaliation.

## Working virtually:

You may not feel comfortable returning to "normal operations" yet or you may be functioning just fine from the comfort of your home! Many will not be able to return to a full-time or "normal" schedule at this time. Much of the workforce these days are mobile and or/home-based, so there is no need to feel guilty if you do not feel you can return to the office safely or have your regular company and community gatherings at this time. There are MANY resources available so that you can work - and stay connected - comfortably, efficiently, and safely from your home office.

### **To stay connected with your staff and clients, definitely consider the following:**

- Conference call, meeting, and webinar software. (Don't forget your [virtual meeting etiquette](#)!)
- Also, stay in touch with your clients through email platforms. There are many of these platforms available and they make sending robust or regularly scheduled emails a breeze. You can download [sample communications](#) to help with getting started communicating regular COVID-19 related updates.

### **For your word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation needs:**

- Look into cloud-based services that offer these tools. Both Microsoft and Google offer cloud-based services for document processing. This will allow you to take your work with you.

### **Lastly, cybersecurity will be a top concern while working from home:**

- BBB has tips for [staying cyber secure while working from home](#).
- You'll want to implement cybersecurity protocols and policies for your remote employees and yourself. If you haven't already, installing anti-virus software is a MUST to keep your organization secure.

If needed, consult with a [local IT company](#) to help you implement your business or orient your employees' workspaces to be optimized for home use. You can also consult a [local cybersecurity firm](#) to help you with safety and employee training. Check out [BBB's Cybersecurity resources](#) and [sample telework policies](#) for assistance! You should also consider creative ways to [manage and motivate remote teams](#).



## Financial resources for your business's reopening:

Check the Small Business Administration (SBA) for information on Disaster Relief Loans to businesses impacted by the pandemic. Check SBA for the most recent information on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and find a lender here. Another option for funding is the Main Street Lending Program. Your state may also have resources and grants available. Check with your local SBA, financial institutions, and economic commissions.

## What This All Means

There are some bright spots and potential opportunities for trustworthy businesses. Data suggests that a new customer is emerging – one who is more aware and intentional about how they spend their money and who gets their business. For BBB Accredited Businesses, this presents an even greater opportunity of elevating their brands by differentiating themselves with the BBB Standards for Trust.

1. **Build Trust** - Establish and maintain a positive track record in the marketplace.
2. **Advertise Honestly** - Adhere to established standards of advertising and selling.
3. **Tell the Truth** - Honestly represent products and services, including clear and adequate disclosures of all material
4. **Be Transparent** - Openly identify the nature, location, and ownership of the business, and clearly disclose all policies, guarantees, and procedures that bear on a customer's decision to buy.
5. **Honor Promises** - Abide by all written agreements and verbal representations.
6. **Be Responsive** - Address marketplace disputes quickly, professionally, and in good faith.
7. **Safeguard Privacy** - Protect any data collected against mishandling and fraud, collect personal information only as needed, and respect the preferences of consumers regarding the use of their information.
8. **Embody Integrity** - Approach all business dealings, marketplace transactions, and commitments with integrity.



**"Today's consumer appreciates honesty. Making a claim and not delivering on it will not work. All the more important in the new normal that consumers will return to in the following months."- Nielsen, April, 2020**

## The New Customer

In an April BBB/Google survey with consumers, BBB found that **nearly half of consumers are more selective on which businesses to trust**. In 2019, nearly 14-thousand businesses ranked credibility and customer care as the top benefits of BBB Accreditation, followed by integrity and trust.

In the BBB research, consumers also listed what type of business practices they favored during this pandemic, especially as their needs and demands continue to evolve. Social distancing and good hygiene remain at the top with 35%, followed by businesses that are readily available, and those transparent about refunds and cancellations.

**Hygiene/Protection/Social Distance: 35%**

**Availability/Speed: 27%**

**Handling Refunds/Cancellations Well: 15%**

**Other: 23%**

With trust on the mind of many consumers, we found that more people are visiting BBB.org to find Accredited Businesses over businesses that are not affiliated with BBB. Accredited Businesses not only meet and exceed BBB standards, but are companies that support the vision of an ethical marketplace where buyers and sellers trust each other. And while businesses are under no obligation to seek Accreditation – a 2017 Nielsen survey conducted with BBB showed that people familiar with the BBB Seal are 81% most likely to trust that business.

**Consumer Inquiries to BBB Business Profiles are up 16% year over year for the months of March and April, to over 27 million.**

## Breaking New Ground

Today, many businesses are forced to make tough decisions for their businesses, both during the pandemic and rebounding from it. According to BBB's survey, business owners expect the economy to recover when the pandemic ends, making preparation for recovery even more essential. Others have used this time to improve efficiencies, support the community, and rearrange finances.

**Information/Support/Guidance: 68%**

**Marketing/Communication/Advertising/Leads: 18%**

**Advocacy: 8%**

**Financial Support: 6%**

**68% of BBB Accredited Businesses say they need information, support, and guidance to navigate these trying times, and BBB has responded with webinars, resources pages, toolkits, and more.**

**"[BBB] Keep supporting all good businesses" - Business Owner**

## We're in this Together

Since 1912, BBB has been supporting businesses and consumers in its mission of advancing marketplace trust. Today more than 400,000 Accredited Businesses across North America support that mission. The need for trust has never been greater.





## Please check out our available resources.

[Become Accredited](#)

[Small Business Resource Page](#)

[Directory of BBB Offices](#)

[BBB AdTruth](#)

[COVID-19 Toolkit US](#)

[COVID-19 Toolkit Canada](#)

[Business Resource Page](#)

[BBB Webinar Series](#)

[\*\*Download the full PDF of the report.\*\*](#)



# Ways Your Business Can Impact the Community

During trying times, it's important to focus on the things you can control. You can't dictate what's happening around you, but you can control how you react. Now is the time to react with empathy, kindness, and ingenuity within your community.

The current health crisis is affecting everyone. Some harder than others, but no one is an exception. As a business, you have the resources available and the means to take action and impact your community. And when your business spreads empathy, you'll gain sympathy – which can help keep your business open.

**The following are ways your business can give back and stand out:**

## Provide Needed Materials

If your business has the resources to provide materials, such as masks or cleaning supplies, contact your local hospitals, shelters, etc. and offer to donate. Maybe your business can adjust its production efforts by making needed materials, like protective wear or hand sanitizer.

## Communicate Health & Safety Measures

Openly communicate with your employees and customers about all the efforts (see suggestions in the next section) you are taking to ensure their safety and well-being. Communicating that your employees and consumers are your priority demonstrates that your business cares and is an asset to the community. Take advantage of the increase in phone and computer usage by using social media platforms and email marketing to communicate with your customers. To better understand how your business can help, ask what your employees and customers need during this time.

## Commitment to Employment

By doing all you can to keep your employees, you are demonstrating your commitment to the community. Your business creates jobs for the community, keeping the local workforce and economy working.

## Adapt Your Business

Communicate to your employees and customers that you are adapting your business model and encouraging consumers to continue buying. Adapt by providing a delivery, take-out, drive-thru, or curbside option. You can use social media and video technology to do virtual shopping tours through your store or offer virtual one-on-one appointments.

## Encourage Customer Support

Encourage consumers to continue shopping by turning your business website into an Ecommerce landing page or think about developing one. Use social media to create an online retail experience and generate awareness through social media ads. Offer customers the ability to buy gift cards and gift certificates to use later. Encourage clients to skip receiving a refund and instead opt for a "rain check." Commit to future projects now and provide a schedule of services. Ask consumers to leave reviews on your [BBB Business Profile](#) or other online review platforms.

## Offer Goods & Services

Your business can offer its goods and services as a charitable resource. Help feed first responders by providing meals or offering discounts on food. Create free online or printable activities for kids to help parents struggling to find balance while working from home. Offer your business's driving or delivery services to other businesses that need help with supply chain demand.

## Spread Positivity

With the health crisis constantly changing, the news providing continuous updates, and stress levels at an all time high, a well-received and easy action to take is to spread positivity. Highlight the "bright spots" happening with your business and in your community. Share heartwarming stories of staff, community members, or efforts your business is taking to help. Take to social media to show a more "human side" to your business by recognizing your amazing employees or show a behind the scenes of your business's daily workings with the people who make it all possible.

## Monetary Donations

If your company does not have the materials or manpower to provide any of the above (and you are able) you can still help by making a monetary donation. Research the different non-profits, relief organizations, medical centers, and emergency departments in your community. Don't feel like your business is helpless. By offering financial aid, you're providing others a platform for action. For more information on COVID-19 and its effect on charities, read BBB's [Special Report: COVID-19 and the Charitable Sector](#).

**There won't always be an international crisis or natural disaster affecting your community, but there is always the opportunity to react with empathy and offer help. When your business shows that it cares and is committed to your community, the members of the community will return the kindness.**

