
DOWNTOWN & COMMUNITY LEADERS TIPS & RESOURCES

TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY

#SupportLocalSafely | #NCDowntownStrong | #NCSmallBizStrong

Note to Users: The references to companies mentioned herein are not intended as endorsements of services by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. However, now, more than ever, is the time to share best practices and borrow from one another to provide resources for our communities.

"Amidst this uncertainty, however, one thing is clear: Main Street organizations have an essential role to play in supporting businesses during this difficult period, and our Main Street leaders will be even more important when fears about the virus subside and we are actively supporting businesses and communities in the recovery process."

~ Patrice Frey, President and CEO of the National Main Street Center



Tips on What You Can Do to Help Small Businesses

Communicate Health & Safety:

- Make sure that businesses are following the [NC Department of Health and Human Services guidelines](#).
- Make sure that you and your businesses are following the [Governor's Executive Orders](#). **NEW Executive Orders Added**
 - Statewide Stay at Home Order went into effect on 3/30/2020 at 5:00 p.m.
- Text 898211 and write COVIDNC to receive Coronavirus text alerts.
- Food banks have an urgent need for donations. Get or give food through a food bank near you. www.feedthecarolinas.org

Provide Leadership:

- Be a leader in the community and set the example for supporting small businesses.
- Provide Technical Assistance to small businesses to tap into Federal, State and Private resources for assistance and share with your neighboring businesses. See the [NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's Webpage for COVID-19 Resources](#)
- Designate public on-street parking spaces for curbside pickup for restaurants and retailers in order to increase convenience for customers.
- Dedicate a page on your website where resources can be easily found by your downtown business owners.
 - Example - Information Clearinghouse – Together, the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, Rowan Economic Development Commission, and Rowan County Tourism developed a [website](#) that is serving as a clearinghouse for guidance and resources available to workers and local

businesses impacted by COVID-19. The groups are committed to keeping the information up-to-date and easily accessible.

- Research business interruption insurance and disseminate information to your businesses.
 - Help business owners find new forms of revenue.
 - Example - Work with small business owners to help them identify new needs being generated by COVID-19. Are there products or services that are and could be in demand that existing businesses could provide, at least in the short-term? Ask business owners to participate in brainstorming sessions with five other businesses, for example, to discuss potential business opportunities.
- Source: [Hitting the Pause Button on the Economy: Fund Small Business Relief of COVID-19 Now](#)
- NEW 4/21/20 – Help businesses find ways to add [Small Scale Manufacturing](#) to their business model to increase and expand revenue.
 - NEW 4/21/20 – [Share Articles](#) to help grow their businesses during this difficult time.
 - NEW 4/21/20 – [Help businesses pivot their business plan](#) to provide much needed COVID-19 products.
 - NEW 4/21/20 – Share Opportunities to businesses to add [Military Contracts](#) to their business model.
 - NEW 4/21/20 – Help businesses brainstorm for recovery. Develop opportunities to cross promote personal service businesses, i.e. hair & nail salons, spas, gyms etc., with retail and restaurant businesses that share common customers.
 - NEW 4/21/20 – Develop creative, innovative [marketing and promotion opportunities](#).
 - Work with property owners to offer free or reduced rent for business tenants for a specified period (or defer it). Business retention is a better long-term economic development strategy than business recruitment.
 - Offer some online business courses during this time when businesses owners may be at home so that your businesses will come back stronger when they reopen.
 - Create a [low-interest loan program](#) that will get businesses back on their feet.
 - Participate in webinars and educational opportunities to help keep businesses informed.

Communicate with Businesses:

- Use a multi-faceted approach to regularly communicate with businesses.
- Be safe but be present. That means being seen in person and virtually, even as one engages in social distancing, not necessarily every day, but perhaps every two to three days.
- Assign businesses to your downtown board and committee volunteers, in order to check on the businesses in the district. Make sure you are following the recommended guidelines for social distancing and taking into consideration the board members that are in vulnerable groups.
- Survey small businesses to better understand their needs.
 - Example - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AvlChamber-COVID>
 - Example - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TransylvaniaCOVID19>

Communicate with the Community – Make it EASY to Support Local Businesses

- Compile (and frequently update) a list of local businesses offering online shopping and share it widely via website(s) and social media. Ask volunteers to help you keep this updated.
- Compile (and frequently update) a directory of restaurants providing take-out and delivery services and share it widely via website(s) and social media.
- Make videos to help promote takeout service offered by local restaurants.
 - Example - Video from Belmont, NC - (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qu0So_4n4I)
- Share web and social media posts from local businesses through your social media outlets.
- Write and share stories about the businesses in your downtown. Create a personal connection to encourage the community to support their neighbors in this time of need.
- Share the commitment businesses are showing to protect public health and the safety of customers, staff, etc., and the actions they are taking to do so.
- Promote locally sourced products and local supply chains on web and social media platforms.

Provide Technical Assistance

- Work one-on-one with businesses that may need assistance to increase their online presence through their website, social media, email newsletter, etc. Also, help businesses as needed update their [Google My Business](#) profile.
- Work one-on-one with businesses to use technology (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, Facebook Live, and others) to have live, face to face, interactions/events with customers for buying/selling, responding to inquiries, conducting meetings, etc.
- Work one-on-one with businesses to livestream educational programs, fitness training, music and art lessons, gallery tours, and more.
- Work one-on-one with businesses to provide social activities/interactions with and between customers (e.g. a brewery offering a virtual version of its trivia nights or a salon previewing new trends, styles, and techniques).
- Work one-on-one with professional and service businesses to offer virtual services such as telemedicine, counseling, and other appointments/consultations.
- Organize a website through which interested businesses can sell their gift cards/certificates to generate additional cash flow.
 - Example - [#AshevilleStrong](#) established to help western NC businesses sell gift cards. FAQs section has a video on setting up a site in a few hours.
 - Example - [#LoveHendo](#) and [LoveHendo.com](#) established to support small businesses in Hendersonville and Henderson County, NC.

Our sincere thanks to the National Main Street Center, various state and local Main Street organizations, and many other partners for sharing information used to create this publication.