PRINCIPLES OF A RESPONSIBLE RETURN
Principles of a Responsible Return

The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber in partnership with the Cincinnati Business Committee and Cincinnati Regional Business Committee launched the RESTART Task Force on March 23, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This business-led group of Cincinnati region CEOs, executives, and community leaders is working together to ensure the region regains its pre-COVID-19 economic momentum. RESTART comprises six sub-teams focused on economic development, public and social health, commerce, arts/culture/sports, education, and government. The groups are collaborating in real-time to define focus areas and actions to restore the Cincinnati region’s economy. A subset of leaders, including Dr. Richard P. Lofgren, MD, MPH, FACP, president & CEO of UC Health, Michael Fisher, president and CEO of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, and Mike Venable, CEO of CincyTech, have been working to offer principles of a “Responsible Return” to inform State and local officials, businesses, and citizens on the region’s plan for returning to work and other activities after peak COVID-19 risk has passed.

We present the following rubric to inform actions state and local government can adopt, and to show what the Cincinnati region is prepared to do to ensure a safe and healthy Responsible Return that lets people get back to work.

Importantly, we recognize that for some time, our society will exist with new norms and changes to the way we work, interact, and transact. As we learn more about the virus, we expect to continue to experience social distancing, limitations on group sizes, and “ways-of-working” arrangements that have become our new normal. Even with those changes, we know we must find ways to begin to open our economy, put people back to work, and keep businesses alive.

In developing these principles, we have consulted well-known work from The American Enterprise Institute, McKinsey & Company, the US Chamber of Commerce, Johns Hopkins University, and regional experts in epidemiology, treatment, disease surveillance and case tracking, testing, virology, and vaccinations. As global knowledge about COVID-19 risks, treatments, and mitigation strategies evolve, the Cincinnati region’s Responsible Return working group will continue to adapt our local response accordingly.1 Aggregating, curating, and using new knowledge about COVID-19 allows the region to proactively apply and improve best practices across all domains. The Cincinnati region first embraces these key prerequisites for a Responsible Return, adapted from the AEI Responsible Roadmap2:

---


2 From “National Coronavirus Response: A Roadmap to Reopening”, Scott Gottlieb, MD and others, Copyright 2020 by The American Enterprise Institute.
Principles of a Responsible Return

- Agreement by our region’s health care leadership that the system has achieved readiness to safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization without reverting to crisis standards of care.

- Agreement that the region is able to broadly test people with COVID-19 symptoms and report results quickly.

- Agreement and evidence that the region is taking steps toward active monitoring of confirmed cases and their contacts, recognizing that this will take time to build to full capacity and need.

With these prerequisites satisfied, the Cincinnati region will guide our response to post-peak COVID-19 activities with the following principles:

I. Prioritize Regional Case Level Interventions and Population Management

II. Plan for Managing Flare-ups, Not Implementing Shutdowns

III. Protect Vulnerable Populations

IV. Leverage Business Ingenuity + Certifications

V. Prioritize Regionally Specific Communications

We recognize that customers and employees will experience the workplace differently for the foreseeable future, and we have a responsibility to those customers and employees that the workplace must be a safe place. The RESTART Task Force believes the above principles are consistent with that priority, and is consistent with best practice recommendations from recognized thought leaders and, therefore, should be incorporated into the restart plans for state and local governments that serve our diverse, multi-state region.

I. Regional Case Level Interventions and Population Management

Without question, the safest and most effective way to keep the COVID-19 pandemic from spreading once the economy begins to operate again is to create a model that encourages ongoing testing, tracing, and broad surveillance. While we know that the state can encourage processes and procedures to facilitate this, we also encourage the state to direct regions to rely on their local health care infrastructure, public-private partnerships, and testing facilities to deliver on this need.

The Cincinnati region is well prepared for this challenge, with an existing healthcare system collaboration infrastructure through The Health Collaborative. The surge response to COVID-19 has already activated using this infrastructure, which is the foundation for managing the healthcare aspects of our Responsible Restart.

The restart is also supported by a metrics and analytics team from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital’s Anderson Center for Healthcare Improvement. This team, with two decades of outcomes and analytics research and application, has developed a regional surveillance model, metrics, and dashboard to guide
Principles of a Responsible Return

decision making during the Responsible Restart. Working collaboratively with regional public health officials, this infrastructure ensures the Cincinnati region’s readiness to restart.

The current critical path challenges faced by our region are, first, a continued need to increase test capacity as we increase case tracking; protections for healthcare workers, first responders, nursing home staff, and others of highest risk; and, symptomatic surveillance. Second, there is an urgent need to understand and adapt to the state’s plans/preferences for case tracking and data reporting to ensure local infrastructure for these activities are compatible.

State government should bring its full attention to increasing testing capacity on a daily basis with the utmost urgency. Broad testing and tracking are the foundation of managing COVID-19 going forward.

To facilitate integration with state government plans, elected and health policy leaders should immediately define and communicate preferred systems and reporting requirements to allow time for regions to adapt processes and data aggregation/integration.

The Cincinnati region encompasses both Kentucky and Indiana, with significant cross-border employment and commerce. Policies should enable local leaders to align with bordering states’ policies and systems to the region’s interventions and activities are coordinated.

II. Plan for Managing Flare-ups, Not Implementing Shutdowns

Following a Responsible Return our region will continue to see new cases of COVID-19. Systems activated to manage this reality should be designed to identify and mitigate any concentrations of cases with proven control measures. They follow best practices utilized in countries such as South Korea, Singapore, and Germany. In some cases, their challenges were more immediate and daunting than our region’s current situation. As explained above in Section I, a prioritized, funded, and innovative testing and tracing program is critical.

In conjunction with that testing and tracing program, states should avoid future broad-scale shutdowns of societal norms, and instead, allow organizations, businesses, retailers, and communities with infected patients to return to a temporary status of operation while proven protocols are implemented. In the event an organization must be shut down, the quarantine must be temporary, and organizations should be allowed to rapidly follow an established protocol to quickly reopen.

To ensure clarity and alignment in policy, states should provide guidelines on managing incidence clusters that are consistent with national policies and allow regional authorities to manage implementation and response.
III. Protect Vulnerable Populations

The impact of COVID-19 falls heavily on clearly identified populations. Age, preexisting conditions, and/or having a compromised immune system are obvious risk factors for severe disease progression and mortality. We also recognize that the African American community, in particular, is especially vulnerable to complications from COVID-19 because of disparate public health outcomes. Prison populations, some seniors, those in nursing homes, and others in confined conditions are especially vulnerable and deserve targeted interventions.

Consistent with Federal and State guidelines, the Cincinnati region is prepared to be bold and to prioritize supplemental actions to address risks among these populations. Working inclusively as a community, we will leverage existing organizations to identify solutions and offer a broad array of services to at-risk, at-home populations. These actions could include check-ins, education on prevention, and other methods to prevent infections and act quickly to respond to individuals outside who have unique needs. For instance, Kroger has made significant changes to their operations, from store hours to adding plexiglass barriers, and have seen positive results from those changes.

Recognizing COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on African Americans, we must empower and support community leaders, health care professionals, and other influential organizations to identify solutions and options that will increase the pace, reach, and specificity of public health outreach to citizens of color. Existing infrastructure includes nonprofits, churches, media, and schools. In addition, we know that minority groups and immigrants require additional public health outreach that transcend language and cultural complexities. We will work in partnership with our neighbors to reduce disparities that have existed for too long.

States should provide incremental funding through existing Federal programs, CARES Act funding, and other emergent sources to support regional leadership in these efforts to aggressively protect vulnerable populations.

IV. Leverage Business Ingenuity + Certifications

We encourage the state to quickly allow businesses, particularly those that serve customers, to reopen with well-informed guidelines based on science and experience.

States should recognize that businesses will be innovative and aggressive in changing policies and procedures during a Responsible Return. Most importantly, we believe that the workplace must be a safe place. We believe that businesses will drive ingenuity, communication, and broad compliance, with isolated exceptions that should be the subject of local response and remediation. Lessons on employee and customer safety are readily available from the many essential businesses that have continued to operate, and we urge the states to work closely with those that have adapted during the stay-at-home
Principles of a Responsible Return

period. We believe market dynamics will play a positive role. Customers will choose to patronize the businesses that are visibly demonstrating actions to protect their health and safety. We also believe that businesses will adopt an approach that signals health and safety is pre-competitive. We are encouraged that we are seeing examples of best practice sharing between businesses that ordinarily compete with one another.

We recommend that specific industries be engaged to co-author guidelines for bringing employees back to work effectively. Ohio has a robust and effective network of industry associations, and they should be empowered to draft guidelines for a Responsible Return by industry. The State should solicit plans from industry associations now and endorse specific industry/business guidelines in concert with relaxing restrictions statewide.

We believe businesses and organizations will be able to quickly adopt new social distancing norms, cleaning procedures, and policies that prevent the coronavirus from spreading. We encourage the state to allow organizations to create policies and principles that account for nuances and unique operational considerations. As businesses begin to reopen, we encourage a process where businesses can choose to post Responsible Return plans online or in a publicly available forum to be viewed by customers and employees.

COVID-19 certification processes and requirements for employers should be implemented using existing processes and infrastructure. States should consider new technologies and models that would allow businesses to self-certify as part of new cleaning, environmental, and space utilization measures. The role of existing industry and professional associations can also be leveraged in many cases. Acknowledging the restart will not be like “flipping a switch,” we believe broad certification should be implemented in a reasonable time frame, not as a prerequisite to reopening.

We recommend exploring the Safety Council process that currently exists through the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation [and other similar programs in Kentucky and Indiana] to certify that businesses are taking steps to reduce the spread and ensure proper protocols are followed. Existing Safety Council organizations can quickly facilitate these certifications. Businesses could be encouraged to take a certification class to be updated by the state on changing rules, and to certify that they are following proper protocols. Once certified, businesses could display their certification the way some restaurants display their restaurant health inspection scores. These certifications could be criteria for additional state benefits that may be forthcoming.

In terms of ongoing compliance, the scale of inspections required to ensure compliance makes existing methods impractical in the near and longer term. The State should prioritize inspection resources to high impact, high risk environments. We expect there will be an official “complaint” process. We would encourage a system that balances an appropriate level of accountability with a minimized risk of
disruption due to unreasonable inspection protocols or unwarranted or baseless claims. Employers and organizations should have a way to quickly address “complaints” and resume safe operations.

Finally, we should leverage regionally located federal organizations such as NIOSH to create best practices and protocols to keep people safe. Where possible, we should encourage NIOSH, CDC, and the FDA, as well as private sector leaders in each state, to adopt a consultative approach that prioritizes protocols that keep pace with changing science and research.

The State should leverage businesses and industry associations, as well as existing state safety networks, to create protocols for restarting the economy. Certifications and customer- and employee-facing communication is critical and should be encouraged.

V. Deploy Regionally Tailored Communication Strategy

States should prioritize and fund regionally-specific communication campaigns and public health messaging. Communications should feature ongoing and clear local advice for a post-pandemic environment. Regional leadership has the right connectivity, knowledge, and experience with existing channels to reach residents and businesses in the best way. We encourage the state to prioritize communications through local organizations, businesses, and nonprofits. This will ensure the message is timely, resonant, engaging, and meaningful. Critical in our regional communication strategy is engaging existing organizations and channels that can reach vulnerable populations, including minorities, rural residents, and seniors living at home.

The Cincinnati region will work to create a regional communications plan to ensure there is a consistent and health-focused message campaign to accompany the Responsible Return activities in the state. We will be working at the grassroots level and through mass media channels to share information, tips, and messages that encourage residents and citizens to be vigilant and open to new ways of working, shopping, and experiencing their communities.

These messages must underscore that though we will be living in a post-COVID-19 economy and society that is different, we can adopt health and safety-focused changes that allow people to get back to work and keep businesses alive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Case Level Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for Managing Flare-Ups and Not Implementing Shutdowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Vulnerable Populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage Business Ingenuity and Certifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deploy Regionally Tailored Communication Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCEDURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States should define and communicate preferred systems and reporting requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States should provide guidelines on managing incidence clusters that are consistent with national policies and allow regional authorities to manage implementation and response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow regions to lead these efforts and act to aggressively protect vulnerable populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage industry to co-author guidelines and share best practices among businesses and organizations to safeguard populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cincinnati region will work to create a regional communications plan to ensure there is a consistent and health-focused message campaign to accompany the Responsible Return activities in the state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
John Barrett, Western & Southern
Cynthia Booth, COBCO
Kerry Byrne, Total Quality Logistics
Greg Carmichael, Fifth Third Bank
Keith Dailey, The Kroger Co.
Phil Castellini, Cincinnati Reds/Castellini Management Company
John Cranley, Cincinnati Mayor
Michael Fisher, Cincinnati Children’s
Tim Fogarty, WCM Holdings
Brian Hodgett, Procter & Gamble
Delores Hargrove-Young, d.e. foxx & Associates
Kris Knochelmann, Kenton County Judge Executive
Patrick Lafley, Constellation Wealth Advisors
Joe Lanni, Thunderdome
Dr. Richard Lofgren, UC Health
Candace McGraw, Cincinnati/Northen Kentucky International Airport
Rodney McMullen, The Kroger Co.
Mary Miller, Jancoa
Bimal Patel, Rolling Hills Hospitality
Dr. Neville Pinto, University of Cincinnati
Carl Satterwhite, RCF Group
Steve Shifman, Michelman
Tim Spence, Fifth Third Bank
David Taylor, Procter & Gamble
Paul Verst, Verst Logistics
Tom Williams, North American Properties

The RESTART Task Force is a collaborative effort of