COVID-19
Operational Plan Guide:

Keeping New Brunswickers Safer Together

This guide will help you to develop an operational plan.
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How to Use This Guide:

Who this applies to:

All operations need to develop a COVID-19 operational plan. ‘Operations’ include services, businesses, and organizations, including for-profit, non-profit, and volunteer. Whether your operation has one person or fifty, a COVID-19 operational plan is required for the safety of operators (e.g., owners, staff, employees, volunteers, vendors) and patrons (e.g., public, customers, clients).

Public health alert levels:

When developing your operational plan, consider the public health alert levels and how you would adjust your plan (note that operations and activities that are permitted during the yellow alert level may not be permitted during orange or red, so you will need to adapt as required). Click here for a description of the public health alert levels and triggers.

Why it is important:

All operations are required to develop a COVID-19 operational plan. An operational plan will enable your operation to implement public health measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in New Brunswick. Creating the operational plan will help you to think through aspects of your operation as they relate to COVID-19 transmission and infection risks. A COVID-19 operational plan may sound daunting, but it does not need to be; keep in mind that the goal is not to eliminate all risk, but to do your very best in making the context or activity safer.

What to do with your completed COVID-19 operational plan:

Operational plans should be kept on-site and easily accessible. Public Health inspectors may ask to review your plan through an inspection process and can provide feedback and guidance to help improve your plan, if required. A punitive approach will apply only to those operations that have intentionally disregarded the public health measures.

Follow your operational plan and communicate it well to any operators and patrons. Update your operational plan as needed – follow COVID-19 updates on the GNB webpage and updates to the Mandatory Order that may apply. The Mandatory Order is renewed every two weeks and often undergoes changes during that time.

What this guide offers:

The following guide will walk you through the process of creating your own unique COVID-19 operational plan. The guide provides questions for consideration, implementation guidance, and planning advice to help address the following key Public Health measures that reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission. Please be sure to review the Guidance Document of General Public Health Measures During COVID-19 for important details.
Before proceeding, review the linked content below to both provincial and federal resources for public health measures. You can access posters, videos, and frequently asked questions:

- Physical distancing
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Staying home when sick
- Hand hygiene
- Respiratory etiquette (cough/sneeze into tissue and dispose, or into sleeve or elbow if no tissue present, and follow with handwashing)
- Community face mask
- Addressing context-related risk (See Guidance Document of General Public Health Measures)

This document is for general guidance only and will not provide details for specific sectors. For additional information on what to include in your operational plan, please review the following document: Embracing the New Normal As We All Safely Return to Work: Guidelines for New Brunswick Workplaces Re-opening in a COVID-19 Environment.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit: www.gnb.ca/coronavirus
Step 1: Decision-Making

Identify and clarify who the decision-makers are in your operation. Identifying and delegating responsibility early on will help to pave the way for a smoother process. Checklists and schedules can help you with this.

To do:

- **Identify decision-makers.**
  - Who is responsible for decision-making in your operation?

- **Consider relevant resources.**
  - Will you want or need to consult with anyone prior to making any operational decisions/changes?
  - If you are a smaller operation (e.g., community volunteer group), is there a way to find similar groups that share common risks and solutions with which you can collaborate?
  - Each operation will require a plan that is tailored to their unique setting but working together may make the process easier.
  - Will you be required to connect with a trade association? Professional regulatory bodies? WorkSafe NB? Public Health?
  - Unless otherwise specified and communicated to you, you will need to make your own operational plan; you will not be required to submit it for review or approval unless otherwise specified and communicated to you.

- **Assign responsibility for the development, implementation, and monitoring of your operational plan.**
  - Who will be responsible for developing the operational plan? Will this be a shared task?
  - Who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the operational plan? Will this be a shared task?
  - Consider assigning someone to monitor key supplies (e.g., for cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, posters and screening tools, face masks, as applicable) and develop an appropriate cleaning and disinfection and supplies-monitoring schedule.
Step 2: Risks and Solutions

This step will require you to think about how each of the public health measures will be applied and upheld in the context of your specific operation.

Take note of your observations. This will inform the development of your operational plan.

Each operation in New Brunswick will have unique settings, circumstances, and risks across each of the public health measures. Consider all aspects of your operation from the perspectives of both operators and patrons, as applicable.

Based on the risks you identify, begin selecting appropriate solutions.

We encourage the use of signage resources available on the GNB COVID-19 website, as well as redesigning your operation for this new normal. A sign on the door alone will not ensure the safety of all those connected to your operation – it’s time to be creative and discover new ways to operate. Involve staff/volunteers in the process, get customer or client feedback, and look to other operations for ideas. Adapting will not be easy for some, but it is critical to keeping our communities and loved ones safer.

To do:

• **Consider the physical setting(s) of your operation.**
  » Make a list of your unique locations (e.g., entrance, staff/volunteer room, areas where patrons frequent, outdoor spaces where people gather, washrooms, eating areas). If you have floor plans, use them as a guide, or draw up your own informal, rough sketches.
  » Consider how individuals move through your setting, from parking lots to exit points, and everywhere in between; and how people interact within your operation.
  » Think about the areas and issues that might require adaptation, modification, or closure to operate safely.

• **Document your findings and observations. Use this information to guide your thinking as you progress through the following steps.**

• **Consider the personal interaction(s) of your operation:**
  » Consider how many people interact in daily operation and if they are able to maintain physical distance (2 metres) from one another. Remember that a critical aspect of COVID-19 risk of transmission and infection relates to close physical contact. Risk is greater at closer distances (less than 2 metres) for longer periods of time (over 15 minutes) and is cumulative in nature.
  » Examine whether your operation interacts with people who are at higher risk from COVID-19. Higher-risk groups include older adults, people with medical conditions (heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes, cancer), and people with weakened immune systems. Think about whether it will be possible to operate safely at this time. Consider trying a new approach to your operation if your previous format would now be considered too high-risk. Plan to communicate risk to everyone who may interact with your operation. Use this information to better protect those who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, but do
not discriminate or force the sharing of personal health information. Do what you can to accommodate the people who interact with your operation.

- If your operation is more social in nature (e.g., seniors volunteer community group) and you are aware of individuals refraining from participating due to higher-risk status, support and respect their decision and consider ways of maintaining a connection by phone or virtually. Check-in and find new ways of keeping connections during this public health event.

Decrease risks by addressing the following public health measures:

A) Physical distancing

**Goal:** Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring staff/volunteers and patrons are kept 2 metres (6 feet) apart.

**Guiding questions to get you started:**

- Are there areas where individuals tend to congregate in your setting (e.g. social settings, eating areas, lounge, order points, queues)?
- Are there areas where individuals may find it difficult to practice physical distancing due to spatial restrictions or structural design (e.g., small rooms/entrances, line ups, rows of desks, walkways or aisles)?
- Is your operation more social in nature; will you need to communicate expectations on hugging and handshakes for example? While we may interact closely with members of our close friends and family bubbles, these bubbles are meant to be kept smaller; the easing of physical distancing requirements does not extend to wider social circles. Communicating these new expectations in advance will set everyone up for success.
- What aspects of your operation would need to change to address physical distancing? Will this be difficult to achieve? You may need to change aspects of your usual operation, so think about creative ways of adapting to better enable physical distancing for everyone present.
- Think about how you can make it as easy as possible for individuals to practice physical distancing in your operation.

B) Cleaning and disinfection

**Goal:** Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that frequently-touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected properly and regularly (at least twice a day; more frequently if surfaces are soiled).

**Guiding questions to get you started:**

- Are you aware of proper cleaning and disinfection guidance? Click [link](#) for more information.
- If necessary, how will you change your previous cleaning and disinfection procedures to address the current risk of COVID-19?
- How will you ensure that cleaning and disinfection is done properly and regularly? Who will be responsible for this? Will you use a chart or schedule to keep track? How will you educate your operators about cleaning and disinfection processes?
- What surfaces are frequently touched in your setting that may require more frequent cleaning and disinfection (e.g., door handles, cart handles, counters, washrooms, cashier equipment, phones, computers, kettles, shared equipment/supplies, vehicles)?
• Think about how you can make it as easy as possible for individuals to follow cleaning and disinfection measures.

C) Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

Goal: Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by promoting and enabling frequent and proper hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

Guiding questions to get you started:

• Are you aware of proper hand washing and respiratory hygiene procedures? Click link (here and here) for more information.

• In your setting, will you have the supplies needed to enable hand washing and respiratory hygiene (e.g., running water, soap, paper towel, disposal bin; minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues)?
  » Can you provide (minimum 60% alcohol-based) hand sanitizer where frequent hand washing would be beneficial but difficult to achieve (e.g., checkout points, outdoor operation settings)?

• Where will you post hand washing and respiratory hygiene posters in your setting? Consider directing individuals to hand-wash points (e.g., signs directing towards washrooms, clearly visible hand sanitizing dispensers).

• Think about how you can make it as easy as possible for individuals to follow this measure.

D) Staying home when sick

Goal: Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that individuals stay home when sick.

Guiding questions to get you started:

• Do you have a workplace or operation sick leave policy that enables employees to stay home when sick (e.g., do you offer sick leave pay and encourage individuals to use this when they are ill)?

• How can you make it as easy as possible for individuals to follow this measure?

• Will you check in with individuals when they are off sick?
  » Consider how you will support their safe return to the operation.

• Do you feel that you have a workplace culture and system that supports individuals to feel comfortable staying home when sick?

• Do you have enough staff to cover sick leave?

• Do you have enough volunteers to call upon if a volunteer can’t perform their tasks due to illness?

• How will you incorporate screening measures within your operation (e.g., post posters of updated screening questionnaire at common entrances; communicate to operators and patrons as applicable, the screening criteria and conditions for staying home when sick; apply active screening when necessary)?
  » Where will you post these materials? How will you ensure that they are up-to-date? How will you educate operators about screening criteria and the importance of staying home when sick or required to self-isolate?
E) Community face masks (for non-healthcare organizations)

Goal: Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by staying up to date and following guidance for community masks. Review Mandatory Order for potential changes.

Guiding questions to get you started:

- Does your operation already have guidelines that require the use of masks? If so, follow those requirements and add additional COVID-19 related measures as needed.
- Do you have a plan for staying up-to-date on changing public health requirements (e.g., community-wide mask use requirements) and adapting your operational plan as needed?
- In your setting, consider whether you may need to go beyond current recommendations for community masks to best address public health measures (e.g., where physical distancing poses challenges, where your operation interacts with individuals who are at higher-risk of COVID-19).

F) Context-related risk

Goal: Protect against the spread of COVID-19 by addressing context-related risks in your operation

Guiding questions to get you started:

- Is your operation hosting a large event? Verify whether there are specific event-related restrictions or requirements you may need to follow.
- Does your operation function indoors? Remember that outdoors is safer than indoors, move outdoors as weather permits.
  » Consider the size of your facility. Will you need to reduce occupancy to enable physical distancing? Consider staggering schedules if so and breaking larger groups into smaller segments. Consider finding a larger space if possible and necessary.
  » Does your indoor space have good ventilation? Ventilation is important for reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission. Verify the quality of ventilation in your space and see if you can make improvements where needed.
- Does your operation involve higher-risk activities that may require additional risk mitigation (e.g., group singing, group physical activity)?
  » Activities such as singing, cheering, talking loudly may generate greater respiratory particle spread which increases risk of COVID-19 transmission. Physical exertion and activity may have a similar effect. If your operation has higher-risk activities, consider further modifications like moving outdoors, further decreasing occupancy, further increasing physical distancing, modifying practices, or cancelling practices altogether.
- Does your operation involve higher-risk groups? Higher-risk groups include older adults, people with medical conditions (heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes, cancer), and people with weakened immune systems. If so, consider implementing additional safety precautions (e.g., further decrease occupancy, ensure proper ventilation, reinforce physical distancing measures) depending on the recovery phase (Yellow alert level carries risk, but is safer than Orange; Red alert level is the most restrictive and risky. Click here for a description of the public health phases and triggers). It is important to communicate the risks to these individuals so that they can make informed decisions.
Does your operation provide food?

Based on current research, the risk of becoming ill with COVID-19 from ingesting food or contact with food packaging is very low. Risk does increase during food-based events when gathering for an extended period of time occurs, through common touch items such as serving utensils and condiments, and generally close proximity (less than 2m) to others while eating.

- Follow any applicable food safety or organizational requirements that may already apply to your operation where applicable.
- If you are a community group who usually gathers with lunch, tea, or snacks, it is still okay to do so in yellow alert level. In other phases, guidelines may change.
  - Guests and hosts should practice good respiratory hygiene, wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to and after eating, and before and after handling food or food packaging.
  - Avoid self-serve style food arrangements (i.e. buffets) to encourage physical distancing and reduce contact with common items. Consider having one person serve tea, snacks, or meals, rather than self-serve.
  - Avoid shared food containers, such as shared pitchers of water or juice in dining areas and ensure self-serve items are individually wrapped.
  - People may choose to bring their own snacks.
  - Clean and disinfect glassware, dishes and tabletops well after use. See cleaning and disinfection section above for more details.
  - When gathering with food, limit time spent without wearing a mask.
  - If you are serving alcohol, note that alcohol consumption or intoxication make it less likely for the public health measures to be upheld. Consider how you will limit likelihood of intoxication.
  - Gathering around tea, snacks, or meals is good for community connection. Remember that physical distancing and the other public health measures still apply. Once you get the hang of the basic public health measures, you will see that it isn’t that difficult or complex to accommodate – everyone can do it successfully. Know when to stay home, keep your distance, wash your hands, wear a face mask, practice good respiratory hygiene. If you run an operation, make sure that you make it as easy as possible, and as likely as possible, for individuals to do this. We can’t eliminate all risk, but we can decrease it as much as possible.

Guiding questions to consider while developing your operational plan:

- Have you thought through how the public health measures might impact different areas of your operation in enough detail to start identifying helpful actions and solutions to reduce risks?
- After working through the risks you identified, can you think of ideas and ways to reduce some, most, or all of these risks? How will you address any gaps?
- Try to imagine walking through your setting from the perspectives of both operators and patrons (as applicable). Imagine coming across the risks you previously identified. Can you think of changes that would reduce the risks? Think through and make note of what actions you plan to take. Some changes may be surprisingly easy to make, so start small and work your way up to the bigger challenges.
• Will your operation face significant challenges in addressing the public health measures? For example:
  » Does your operation rely on peak periods where individuals are more crowded on the premises?
  » Is your physical location too small to easily address physical distancing? Higher-occupancy within closed indoor spaces poses greater risk of COVID-19 transmission and infection. Consider that outdoors is safer than indoors. Good ventilation is important within indoor spaces. Physical distancing is essential. You may need to reduce occupancy, stagger scheduling, find a new setting, improve ventilation, etc.
  » Consider whether it is difficult to encourage public health measures with the individuals served by your organization (e.g., children, individuals with cognitive challenges)
    - How will you overcome these challenges? How will you navigate around operational impacts?
  » Will you be able to continue to operate safely?
  » Is additional support available for your operation?

For more information, you can reach out to:

**For-profit businesses and operations:**
New Brunswick Business Navigator Line
Number: 1-833-799-7966
Email: nav@navnb.ca

**Non-profit operations, volunteer organizations, community groups:**
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agencies (ACOA)
Number: 1-800-561-7862 or 1-888-576-4444
Email: acoa.bis-sie.apeca@canada.ca

**To do:**

**At this stage, you have:**

• Identified decision-making authority for your unique operation.
• Identified and documented risks in your setting, for all individuals who may be present.
• Identified the actions that you will take to meet the public health measures and considered how this may impact your operation.

**Now begin to work towards:**

• Identifying the actions you will take for each identified risk.
• Implementing a plan that will bring your action items to life and deciding on how and when you are going to apply your action items.
• Communicating this plan to relevant parties (e.g., operators and patrons as applicable to your operation) to manage and prepare expectations and to promote understanding of the importance of the public health measures and adaptations.
• Planning for any training, engagement, or communications that may be required to see your operational plan through to successful implementation and maintenance. Remember to involve operators, as applicable, in the process.
Step 3: Creating schedules and processes

Consider developing schedules and processes to help make sure implementation and ongoing monitoring take place.

Guiding questions to consider:
- Are you able to create a daily checklist to monitor that your plan is in place and functioning?
- Are you able to follow-through on the solutions you identified to reduce your risks?
- Would developing or adapting an existing cleaning and disinfection checklist and schedule help to keep you on track with your efforts to address the public health measures in your setting?
- What additional supply/inventory or process checklists may be helpful?

To do:
Checklists and schedules can help you keep on track and pre-emptively identify which key supplies may be running low.

Make this easier and more likely to occur by delegating responsibility early on. Remember to work as a team and keep spirits high!
Step 4: Writing your operational plan

At this point in the process, you have identified your risks and have planned how you are going to address public health measures during COVID-19 - well done!

Please refer to WorkSafe NB’s Embracing the New Normal As We All Safely Return to Work: Guidelines for New Brunswick Workplaces Re-opening in a COVID-19 Environment document for additional guidance. WorkSafe has developed a template that can be adapted, or you can develop your own operational plan.

Guiding questions to consider:

- Who is going to put your operational plan on paper?
- Where are you going to keep copies of your Operational Plan to have it ready for individuals to refer to for guidance? This way it will also be readily available for potential spot checks when necessary.
- What revision date will you put in place to revisit the Operational Plan, consider how it is working and plan for any additions? Are you going to share your Operational Plan publicly so that other operations who may function in a similar field/area may benefit from learning from your good work? This may also promote confidence in your approach.

To do:

Remember that according to New Brunswick’s public health alert levels, operational plans are required for all operations as they enter back into service. Your written plan does not need to look fancy or formal.

At minimum, your plan needs to include the following to ensure that community members (including your own operators and patrons as applicable) are kept as safe as possible:

- Identification and documentation of unique risks and solutions that include:
  - Screening and enabling individuals to stay home when ill.
  - Enabling physical distancing for all present across all aspects of your operation.
  - Facilitating personal hand and respiratory hygiene.
  - Ensuring adequate daily cleaning and disinfection of frequently-touched surfaces.
  - Following guidelines and requirements on community masks.
  - Providing additional protection where warranted based on risk assessment (e.g., plexiglass barriers, additional mask requirements, additional modifications, cancelling some aspects of operation if needed).
  - Considered the level of risk mitigation required for the community you are serving.
  - Communicating COVID-19 public health measures and risks adequately in your setting.
  - Incorporating guidance on accountability and monitoring into your plan.