

BROOME COUNTY COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN

Draft - June 2020

**Broome County Department of Planning and
Economic Development**



Post-Disaster Recovery Plan

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a nationwide emergency pursuant to Sec. 501(b) of Stafford Act for COVID-19, precluding the need for the states to issue individuals orders. On March 20, 2020 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued notice of the Presidential declaration of a major disaster for the State of New York (FEMA-4480-DR). This declaration made federal emergency aid available to the state of New York to supplement recovery efforts in the areas affected by the COVID-19 pandemic beginning on January 20, 2020, and continuing.

According to Section 28-A of NYS Executive Law, when a state disaster emergency has been declared, any county, city, town or village included in such disaster area shall prepare a local recovery plan. This plan has been prepared in accordance with this law.

A post-disaster recovery plan is a tool that the local municipality can use to identify the community needs and issues resulting from a disaster event and prioritize actions for mitigating the impacts on residents, businesses, agencies and organizations. This plan will help the County to guide our actions as we transition from the response phase to recovery due this widespread and significantly impactful pandemic. We also recognize that the changing nature and uncertainty surrounding the event will necessitate flexibility and coordination surrounding response and recovery actions into the near future and beyond.

COVID-19 Recovery Task Force

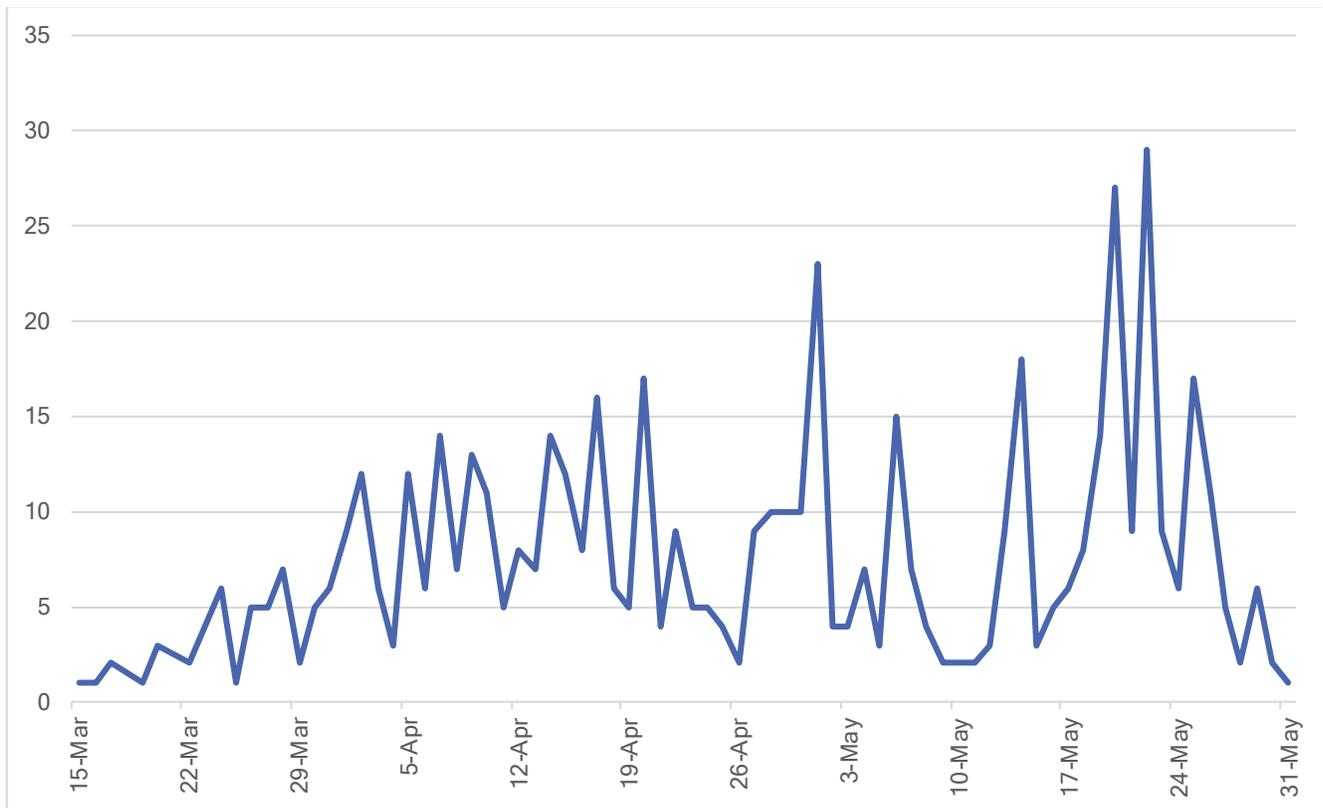
This Plan has been developed by the Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development with the participation of members of the Broome County COVID-19 Recovery Task Force. This group is made up of community stakeholders and government agencies that play a role in recovery activities following a disaster. Individuals were identified that could represent and communicate the needs of their agency/organization, clients and partner agencies. Members of the Task Force include representatives from the following:

- Broome County Executive Office
- Broome County Legislature
- BC Office of Emergency Services
- Broome-Tioga Workforce
- The Agency/BC Leadership Alliance
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome
- BC Department of Social Services
- United Health Services
- Legal Aid Society
- YWCA
- BOCES
- Binghamton University
- SUNY Broome
- BC Community Organizations Active in Disaster
- BC Planning
- Local Municipalities
- Local Fire District/EMC
- NAACP

Current Situation

As of the date of preparation of this plan (6/3/20), there have been a total of 577 positive cases of COVID-19 in Broome County with 123 currently active. There have been 45 deaths and 409 individuals have recovered. Approximately 12,500 tests have come back negative. New daily cases through the end of May are shown in the chart below.

BROOME COUNTY NEW DAILY COVID-19 CASES



The Broome County Health Department has identified the following locations as COVID-19 hot spots:

- Broome County Correctional Facility
- Susquehanna Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility
- United Methodist Homes - Hilltop Campus
- Vestal Park Rehabilitation and Nursing Center
- Willow Point Nursing Rehabilitation and Nursing Center
- Bridgewater Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing

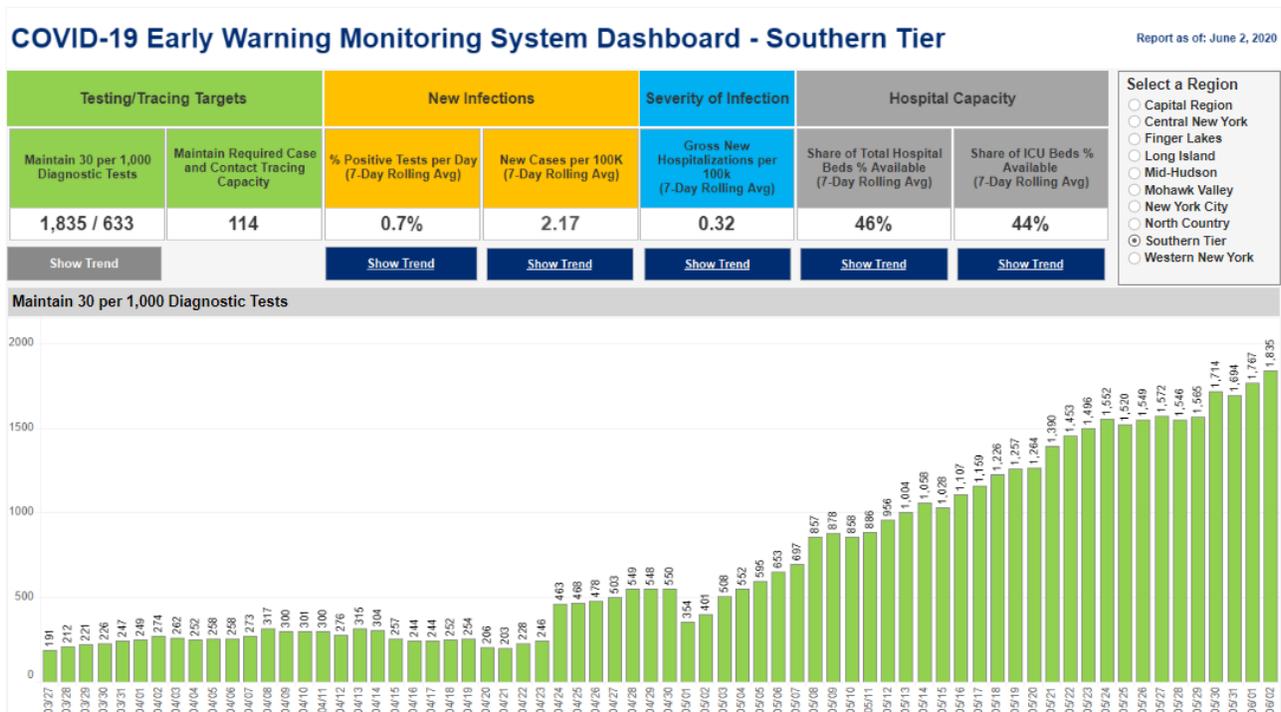
As per Executive Orders issued by the Governor, the economy for New York was ‘paused’ and residents are required to ‘socially distance’. The Broome County Executive has issued Executive Orders to establish day care for essential employees and first responders, banning unnecessary travel, closing County buildings, restricting public gatherings and more. Many towns in Broome County have issued similar orders. The County has issued protective masks

to County Employees and has distributed masks to the general public at county parks and through the free lunch program.

Beginning on May 15th, Broome County, as part of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council was determined by New York State to meet the designated criteria to begin a phased reopening of the economy. The Regional Control Room is charged with monitoring the established metrics and alerting the State in the event that they no longer meet the established requirements. These include hospitalization rate, death rate, number of new hospitalizations, hospital bed capacity, ICU bed capacity, testing and contact tracing.

This initial reopening allowed for Phase 1 businesses to reopen with an affirmed reopening plan to demonstrate that they would implement social distancing and other protocols to keep their workforce and patrons safe for the duration of the pandemic event. Businesses in this phase included non-essential construction, manufacturing, agriculture and forestry. Two weeks later, on May 31st, the region met criteria to proceed with the Phase 2 reopening, including offices, real estate, vehicle sales, hair salons, outdoor food services, and some retail. The region is currently in Phase 2 and anticipates moving to the final two phases (Phases 3 and 4) in the coming weeks and months.

The regional dashboard for the Southern Tier region provides current data to show where the region stands from the standpoint of meeting the reopening metrics. The image below shows the region's status as of the date of this report.



Projected Economic Impacts

While the phased reopening of the economy is underway, the economic impacts of the extended shut-down are anticipated to have long-lasting impacts on the economy from the local level to the global economy. While it is difficult to ameliorate the impacts of the event at the local level due to the wide-spread nature of the event, understanding the anticipated local impacts is critical to implementing the appropriate actions needed to support local businesses, workers, and the public at large through this time.

The New York State Division of Budget contracted with Boston Consulting Group to prepare the NY COVID-19 Preliminary Economic Impact Assessment on the New York State economy and government revenues. For the Broome County plan, the key takeaways are as follows:

- The total impact on the NY economy will be \$243B over the course of the full recovery to pre-Covid economic levels which is -14% of NY's 2019 GDP
- The economy will recover to the Pre-Covid level in Q1 of 2023, but will still be 7% below where they would have been without the pandemic impact.
- The degree of impact and recovery paths will vary by industry:

Accommodation and Food Service: Recovery path is likely slower than other sectors due to social distancing

Construction: Recovery likely slower than average industry

Finance and Insurance: Impact has been milder, but expect an accelerated shift to digital channels could drive downward pressure on total employment

Healthcare (Ambulatory Services): Likely return of 'pent-up' demand, although social distancing protocols & telehealth shift may impact models and profits

Retail: Shift to online channels may persist and drive store closures. Expect a quick, partial recovery immediately after end of lockdown followed by slower path due to social distancing

Transportation: Likely slower recovery as consumers shift to teleconference vs. in-person and avoiding crowded planes (and buses)

Recovery funding made available so far helps mitigate certain impacts but leaves significant gaps.

- Most funding is aimed at avoiding damage vs. recovering from damage to date. In some cases, Federal funding is being allocated based on existing formulas and not distributed based on COVID-19 impact/economic need
- Economic impacts translate into pressures on government revenue - NY forecasts that tax revenue could decline by \$13.3B in State Fiscal Year 2021.

- Statewide unemployment insurance claims have increased 2,104% and credit card sales have dropped 20%. Removing NYC from these numbers, unemployment claims grew even faster (2,239%) while credit card sales dropped less (14%) in the rest of the State.
- Manufacturing activity dropped to levels not seen since 2000
- COVID-19 is accelerating trends that predate the event such as fewer brick-and-mortar retail branches
- The single hardest hit sector is Arts, Entertainment and Recreation with a 71% drop in hours worked
- Historically, many outbreaks such as Spanish Flu and Mers experienced multiple waves. Risks remain until a vaccine is in hand.

Sienna College conducted a survey of business leaders across upstate. The key findings of their survey are as follows:

1. Majority of Upstate CEOs Say Return to Pre-Virus Economy Will Take Longer than 6 Months
2. Nearly 90% Downgrading 2020 Revenue & Profit Expectations
3. 40% Have Laid off Workers
4. 58% Cutting Back on Buying Equipment
5. 89% Say They Will be in Business a Year from Today

The Agency and the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce have coordinated the local economic development response and recovery efforts for this event. They have documented the following local impacts:

Local Tourism Impacts:

- 71% of tourism businesses are closed
- 100% of tourism related businesses have seen negative impacts: 34% report 'softening', 41% have had cancellations, and 25% have had postponements.
- 50% of Restaurants, Bars, Hotels/Motels and other Accommodations are closed
- 1/3 of Retail is closed
- 100% of Attractions, Cultural Organizations, and Entertainment (Theaters, Concert Venues, and Performing Arts) are closed
- Hotel/Motel Occupancy is 22% of its 2019 rate

- The estimated economic impact of the losses across this sector is \$8.3M to the local economy

The Agency surveyed local business leaders regarding their needs to recover from this event. Local business expressed the following needs (note that this survey was conducted early in the disaster and needs may be since shifted):

- Business Promotion, 40%
- Financial Assistance, 22%
- Clear Consistent Information, 16%
- Employee Resources 7%
- COVID-19 Supplies 7%

Broome County Planning conducted a survey of stakeholders and service providers in the following areas: Healthcare, Mental Health, Housing and Homeless Services, Education, Legal Aid, Local Government, Food Systems, Economic Development and Workforce Training. The top expected impacts of these groups is as follows:

How much of an issue are the following impacts for you, and/or your clients, right now?	Major Issue Right Now	Expected to Worsen Over Next 60 Days
Loss of revenue	67%	67%
Workforce/Client Anxiety	47%	47%
Inability to pay fixed costs	40%	47%

Stakeholder comments on the Planning Department survey focused on the following:

- Concern about keeping workers and clients safe.
- We need to know that our workforce is healthy and not carriers of COVID in order to safely deliver services
- Residents are seeing increased hostility from landlords during eviction moratorium.
- Mandates of how to do recovery could cause impacts. Backed up work could cause overtime expenses in recovery
- Expect to see increased unemployment, rent and mortgage arrears, domestic violence and custody visitation issues
- We need to move thoughtfully to prevent a relapse.
- If the virus comes back, it will be even more devastating than it is now.
- Concerned that we move too quickly back to 'normal'.

Recovery Plan

Based on these impacts and needs, two guiding principles have been established moving into recovery phase:

The focus must remain on protecting the public health. Any recovery which loses sight of this will fail to maintain the public trust and may be more vulnerable to future outbreaks.

We should temper expectations for a quick recovery. The economic impacts from this event are deep and widespread. They extend across all sectors and are international in scope. Impacts like this will be long lasting. Any recovery will take an extended period of time.

The following sections outline the items identified as priorities for our long-term recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The intent is to develop effective, resilient strategies that will carry our community through this difficult time and help mitigate impacts associated with uncertainty into the future.

1. PROVIDE RELIABLE AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION

- Establish one source for information.
- Provide clear and consistent messaging across all platforms.
- Promote 2-1-1 as a source of information for residents.
- Utilize all County information avenues for messaging. This includes:

Arena and Forum Electronic Message Boards

Bus Inserts

Social Media Accounts

Email Signatures

Email Lists

Newsletters

- Recognize that the digital divide has different impacts based on the geography (rural vs. urban), age (young vs. elderly) and class (poor vs. affluent) of residents. Any communication plan needs to be aware of these disparities in access and be designed to reach all residents. For example, the “poorest of the poor have very limited data plans” and therefore are unlikely to participate in a Facebook live event.
- Research and deploy alternate civic engagement methods to reach all residents.
- Physical distancing will make it impossible to host events and public meetings. We need to find ways to reach residents through multiple avenues. This can include traditional media, physical mailings, Twitter, and Facebook.

- Utilize partnerships with community, ethnic, and faith-based groups that may already have means of connecting with hard to reach groups.
- Be prepared to redirect misplaced blame at the perceived causes of COVID-19 or its transference. If possible, try to discern underlying causes for these feelings and direct questions in a more productive direction.
- Communicate in a regular, predictable manner. One example is weekly briefings that are at a consistent date and time and live streamed for residents.
- Collect and highlight positive stories of community coming together. For example, the YWCA getting supplies from Lowes and Raymond to add COVID-19 protection measures at their downtown Binghamton facility.
- Ensure that all communications are accessible to all residents. This includes close captioning and providing transcripts.
- Adopt a ‘No Wrong Door’ policy for residents visiting public facilities. To achieve this, ensure that highly traveled public places such as the Department of Social Services and Broome-Tioga Workforce are staffed and equipped to with enough information and access to resources to help visitors to the fullest extent practical.

2. ASSIST WITH PROVISION OF NECESSARY SUPPLIES

- Work with local governments to assist with the provision of necessary supplies.
- Coordinate donations from the private sector to ensure they reach their intended target.
- Provide access to PPE to seniors and disadvantaged residents.

3. AID IN IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFE REOPENING/OPERATING

- Continue to share information with stakeholders regarding reopening planning and best practices, and to emphasize continued vigilance. Stakeholders include:

Local Businesses

Local Government

Non-profits

Schools

Daycare Centers

Residents

- Assist with pooled purchases and consortiums.
- Ensure that County operations are consistently following all COVID-19 recommendations - lead by example.

- Assist local municipalities with development of planning and zoning policies that reduce barriers to businesses looking to implement creative solutions for meeting reopening guidelines such as outdoor dining, outdoor pop up shops, and drive-in theaters. Strategies may include assessing and modifying zoning codes to remove barriers to implementation, expediting reviews, providing guidance for state level policies and policy changes as they evolve, and reduced fees.

4. PROTECT THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

- Establish protocols for workplace health practices that begin with employee self-screening and includes prioritized testing to reduce the incidence of transmission.
- Support efforts for telehealth and virtual care. This includes improving broadband access in rural areas.
- Be alert to the impacts of addressing the backlog of health care issues that have accumulated while patients deferred care.
- Advocate for financial support of healthcare providers who are providing care to unemployed/uninsured residents.
- Communicate the importance of continuing to seek medical attention for non-COVID-19 related issues.

5. ENSURE THAT DAY CARE PROVIDERS CAN CONTINUE TO OPERATE

- Share and promote COVID-19 standards for daycare operations to reassure families that all necessary precautions are in place and that their children are safe. As these families return to the workforce, their children will need childcare and the families will need peace of mind.
- Recognize the importance of summer camps such as Summer Fun, Discovery Center, JCC, YMCA and others as a necessary part of daycare.
- Promote increased income standards of DSS assistance for daycare for families that need assistance.
- Recognize that with fewer daycare centers operating, there are fewer safe places for children to report abuse and neglect.
- Work to address real and perceived dangers of children in day care.
- Recognize that the solution to limited daycare will be multi-faceted. Partial solutions include allowing telework and providing staff with an opportunity to work staggered hours.

6. RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Promote the *Broome Includes* initiative (<http://broomeincludes.org/>) to ensure access to services for residents in need.
- Take mental health impacts seriously. Encourage businesses, schools, and non-profits to educate all staff members to recognize the impacts of stress on employees, students, and clients. Utilize training programs like Mental Health First Aid to identify individuals in crisis and direct them towards services.
- Be alert to the potential for increased mental health impacts 6 to 8 weeks **after** reopening. The initial 'sigh of relief' may be greeted by eventual impacts when the full scope of this recovery process sinks into residents.
- Direct residents to social activities that maintain adequate social distancing.
- Maintain resources for substance abuse and domestic violence programming.

7. PROTECT OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS FROM THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

- Ensure that workers do not have to choose between a job and exposure to COVID-19.
- Ensure that public transit continues to meet the needs of and maximizes safety of workers dependent on this resource.
- Take special care to provide socialization programming to seniors who already face issues related to isolation.

8. DOCUMENT IMPACT COSTS ACROSS ALL SECTORS

- Document the financial costs associated with COVID-19. Examples include PPE, overtime expenses, IT infrastructure related to remote working.
- Document intangible impacts such as the health impacts of increased stress, impacts to education related to distance learning, etc.

9. ADVOCATE FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

- This event has had devastating impacts to the resources of local and county governments. Revenues from Sales Tax and Hotel/Motel Occupancy Taxes will be severely reduced at a time of increased demand for services. Local and County Governments need relief in the following forms:
 - Mandate Relief
 - Increased Financial Support
- Advocate for changes to PPP and other programs to assist businesses with filling open positions.

10. COORDINATE COVID-19 RECOVERY EFFORTS WITH LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND STATE PARTNERS

- Establish a framework for continued coordination of the COVID recovery task force.
- Coordinate regional efforts through the Regional Control Room and other regional entities.

11. WORK TO ENSURE AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- Identify businesses that will have staffing shortages as a result of COVID-19 and work to fill those gaps.
- Provide a uniform logo to self-certifying businesses and organizations to help restore consumer confidence in visiting local businesses.
- Provide business mentoring through SCORE and SBDC to struggling businesses.
- Assist businesses with setting up e-commerce operations to diversify their income streams.
- Closely coordinate with the Agency to ensure that efforts are not duplicative and that gaps do not appear in our response.

12. HOUSING AND HOUSING INSECURITY

- Monitor homelessness, evictions, and foreclosures.
- Work to ensure access to credit to finance home buying.
- Promote programs for affordable housing and home improvement such as rental assistance, CDBG, and various home rehabilitation programs.
- Work to ensure compliance with Spiegel Law/educate people about their housing rights.
- Develop Landlord/Tenant Resource Pages on BC website.
- Streamline/coordinate housing referral processes.

13. MAINTAIN EFFORTS OVER THE FULL RECOVERY PERIOD AND BEYOND

- Encourage business continuity planning so that the impacts of future shutdowns will be lessened.
- Arrange to provide new and replacement PPE over the full timeline of this event.
- Explore options to improve broadband in rural and underserved areas. Access is essential for remote work, telemedicine, and distance learning.
- Assist local municipalities in implementing creative long-term solutions that will enhance flexibility of local regulations to accommodate present and future uncertainty through this pandemic event and beyond. These may include conversion of active

outdoor spaces like minor streets and parking lots for pedestrian/patron use, identifying opportunities for permanent modifications to local regulations when temporary practices have proven successful, and others.

14. PREPARE FOR SECOND WAVE/PARTIAL OR FULL SHUTDOWN

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of our COVID response and address service gaps for any future waves.
- Identify opportunities to improve online provision of services for County services and assist local municipalities with provision of services through shared services (online bill pay, online form submission).
- Making sure our testing and contact tracing are adequate.

Ongoing Recovery

While New York State and the Southern Tier continue to proceed with the phased reopening of the region's businesses, models indicate that the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic will persist for the foreseeable future. We must continually assess changing conditions and needs and adjust appropriately. Coordination and collaboration in recognition of overlapping response and recovery efforts will be essential for continued mitigation of the negative community impacts that have been identified for this event.