Executive Office of the President
Office of Management and Budget

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MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

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SUBJECT: Aligning Federal Agency Operations with the National Guidelines for *Opening Up America Again*

The Federal government's aggressive response to the coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") saved lives and substantially mitigated overall damage and risk to the Nation. Along with its role in leading response efforts, the Federal government is the Nation's largest employer, with a significant presence and impact in communities across the country. The immediate response to COVID-19 included a calibrated re-alignment of various Federal activities and operations around the country, and operational shifts such as a dramatic surge in Federal workforce telework. Now, in partnership with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and the private sector, the Federal government is actively planning to ramp back up government operations to the maximum extent possible, as local conditions warrant, consistent with the National guidelines for *Opening Up America Again*.

The National guidelines allow objective assessments of epidemiological status and overall preparedness by states to follow a phased approach for individuals and employers to resume normal activities. The guidelines incorporate gating criteria which must be met in a state or county (in addition to core preparedness responsibilities) before proceeding to the phased reopening process: 1) influenza-like illnesses and covid-like cases of illness must trend downward for 14 days; 2) documented COVID-19 cases and prevalence of positive tests must trend downward for 14 days (while not decreasing the overall number of tests); and, 3) local hospitals must have the capacity to treat all patients without crisis care and jurisdictions must have a robust healthcare worker testing program and plan in place.

Once gating criteria are met, state and regional leaders will be able to assess appropriate mitigation strategies to move through a 3-Phased process to re-open America. The timeline for moving through the 3-Phased approach will be dependent on the ability to control infection levels, and maintain a constant decrease over time. The Federal government remains committed to this Federally supported, state managed, and locally executed model.

The plan to return Federal government operations to normalcy parallels the National guidelines. This guidance establishes near- to mid-term processes to align Federal agency operations to the National guidelines, and supports the transition of Federal government operations back to a normal state while maintaining practices which have proven successful in fighting the virus. In general, the Federal Government will calibrate its transitional strategy to return to normal operations to the Phase of a state, county, region, or metropolitan-area determined by the state assessment.

Given the diversity of Federal workforce missions, geographic locations and the needs of individuals within the workforce itself, this transition will require continued diligence and flexibility from Federal agencies and the Federal workforce. Federal agencies are held to a high standard for continuing operations and services to the American public. To this end, agency leaders must continue to ensure continuity in delivery of Federal government services, protect the health and safety of the Federal workforce, and provide Federal government leadership and momentum as an impetus toward a broader national return to normalcy. The Federal government's actions are critical for the Nation's response and recovery, and for maintaining a high level of trust in government services that millions of Americans depend on each day.

This guidance describes a process for agency heads and leaders to make decisions for their workforce operations while utilizing the different telework postures implemented during the outset of the COVID-19 response. Agencies should account for agency personnel and facility requirements when determining service levels and telework posture to meet their specific mission needs.

I. Parameters to Inform Agency Operating Decisions

The Federal government has a critical role to assist and lead the national recovery. This guidance provides the framework for agencies to take immediate actions to begin adjusting their operating status for a controllable, steady return to normal operations, and align agency operations through the "Gating Period" and the 3-Phase framework in the National guidelines. Federal government-wide operating decisions will be informed by states' phasing assessments and conditions, but implemented at the direction of agency heads or as delegated by the agency head.

Once agency heads have instituted policies and procedures consistent with "Guidelines for Employers: All Phases" (Appendix I), agency heads should begin transitioning federal operations to align with a geographic area's respective phase, while also accounting for agency operational needs, as appropriate and applicable. Agencies will coordinate with OMB and OPM as decisions are made, to apply consistent regional operational decisions where practical when considering varying mission requirements. For example, mitigation measures for an office

worker will likely look much different than the measures for those who perform their jobs in a non-office setting, and would result in potentially different operational phasing and mitigation decisions even within a single geographic location.
Agencies must remain vigilant to minimize and control the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace.

Additional recommendations for all workplaces from the President's National guidelines for *Opening Up America Again* are included as Appendix I. Federal agencies must incorporate these guidelines into agency workplace protocols.

Each phase of the National guidelines defines basic parameters that individuals and employers must adhere to and that agencies must consider during the transition to normal operations. Variances among agency missions, workforce demographics, geographic locations, occupations, facilities, and available resources will influence agency determinations to effectively operationalize an orderly phased transition to normal operations, consistent with the National guidelines.

Agency heads must make decisions in the following operational areas:

A. Geographic-Based Decisions

Federal agencies must establish a decision-making process that cross-references information in the geographic areas they operate with information in the gating criteria while assessing the ability to comply with employer parameters in the 3-Phase framework. For instance, 85% of the Federal workforce is outside the Washington DC area, so agency heads must be cognizant of the phasing status for all states and regions where an agency operates. Agency leaders must have a clear process to elevate phasing status and other information to decision-makers, to make decisions at the appropriate level, and to clearly and expeditiously communicate those decisions to Federal employees and contractors. Agencies should consider streamlining approval processes for key decisions, including issuing policy waivers and delegating decision-making where appropriate. For example, agency heads can delegate certain operational or personnel decisions to component- or bureau-level leaders, where appropriate.

State and regional assessments should be the starting point for discussions and decisions related to Federal agency operations, but additional factors may include: school and daycare closures, mass transit availability, parking availability, facility requirements, and missions.

Agencies will need to ensuring continuity of federal services, protecting the health and safety of the Federal workforce, protecting public health and promoting economic recovery. Agencies should tailor mitigation measures to the specific type of workplace and occupation.

B. Telework Status Guidelines

Agency heads maintain the flexibility to develop and continue to use appropriate telework protocols for their operations. As conditions change, agency heads should revisit telework policies and agreements in order to continue progressing to normal operations or address changing conditions while retaining the needed flexibility during the response.

Until agencies have resumed normal operations and risk is minimal, all Federal agencies are encouraged to maximize telework flexibilities to all eligible workers within those populations that the CDC has identified as being at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19 (CDC High Risk Complications) and to CDC-identified special populations including pregnant women (CDC Special Populations), regardless of location[1]. If a vulnerable employee's duty location is within an area that is classified as Phase 3, they may return to work at their duty location, but should continue physical distancing protocols and other mitigation measures. Agencies do not need to require certification by a medical professional, and may accept self-identification by employees that they are in one of these populations.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Telework. Agencies are encouraged to begin moving toward normal operations as conditions warrant by utilizing available telework levels, which will generally align to the designated phase of an office location pursuant to the guidelines for Opening Up America Again.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"Gating Period"</td><td>Agencies should continue in "Maximum Telework Flexibility" operating status, at the discretion of the agency head.

During the initial "Gating Period," agencies should assess and implement all-phase employer obligations that will need to be implemented to progress through the three phases. See Appendix I. These assessments should be done for all significant agency duty locations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Agencies should lift mandatory telework</td><td>Encourage telework whenever possible and feasible with agency operational needs. Agency heads should lift mandatory telework in these geographic areas, but should continue to apply the breadth of telework flexibilities, dependent on mission-needs, OMB and OPM guidance, and the Telework Enhancement Act.

Agencies must maximize telework flexibilities specifically for eligible workers within those populations that the CDC has identified as being at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19 (CDC High Risk Complications) and to CDC-identified special populations including pregnant women (CDC Special Populations).</td></tr>
</table>

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html

Agencies *should* lift maximum telework	**Continue to encourage telework whenever possible and feasible with agency operational needs.** Agencies should lift maximum telework orders. In general, employees could potentially begin resuming normal telework arrangements in these areas. Before requiring employees to resume normal telework arrangements on a widespread basis, agency leaders should assess employees' needs, such as childcare and transportation. Agency leaders may also establish alternative service levels or work arrangements to reduce the number of individuals in an office to promote social distancing. Agencies must continue to maximize telework flexibilities specifically for workers within those populations that the CDC has identified as being at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19 (CDC High Risk Complications) and to CDC-identified special populations including pregnant women (CDC Special Populations).
Operational Optimization	Implement optimized operations and new work arrangements.

In addition to updating telework policies, agencies may consider new work arrangements for the immediate future to support resumption of normal activities, while ensuring the health and safety of the workforce. As an example, agencies may create cohorts or teams within an office and place the cohort or team on alternating schedules of five days in the office and 15 days of telework per month. Adoption of alternative arrangements such as rotating cohorts may enable additional flexibility for employees to resume normal operations, regardless of phasing status, while maintaining social distancing and reducing contact among work units. When considering these new work arrangements, agencies should factor in operational constraints and employee needs – such as childcare and transportation. Where possible, agencies should employ creative and flexible solutions to meeting these needs.

Departments and agencies are further encouraged to approve leave for safety reasons to employees who are in a vulnerable population as identified by the CDC, not telework-eligible, and whose duty location is not returning to normal operations. Federal agencies may also grant weather and safety leave due to a "condition that prevents the employee or group of employees from safely traveling to or performing work at an approved location" (5 U.S.C. § 6329c(b)). Because COVID-19 may prevent employees who are at higher risk from safely travelling to or performing work at an approved location, agencies may grant these employees safety leave under 5 U.S.C. § 6329c(b) at the agencies' discretion. In determining their telework and leave decisions, agencies should consider the mission critical nature of their work. For further information please consult the Office of Personnel Management's guidance.

If employees are not eligible for telework, agency heads continue to have the discretion to offer weather and safety leave, or the agency's equivalent, including for employees who may not have been considered "at higher risk" under OMB M-20-13. In addition, agency heads may

continue offering limited excused absence allowances[2] to caregivers in instances where schools and daycares remain closed.

C. Personnel Guidelines

Federal employees and contractors should receive guidance from their agency leadership to apply policies and directives to individuals and work units within diverse operational environments and locations.

The alignment of phases and operating status of Federal agencies will vary based on conditions in different regions and localities. Agencies are encouraged to allow Federal employees and contractors to return to the office in low-risk areas.

Agencies should follow the guidelines for *Opening Up America Again* and consider for the following:

- Vulnerable populations. Agencies and managers must continue to take precautions for vulnerable populations that are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions. Agencies are expected to continue the maximum telework policy for these populations defined by CDC, or other populations that may be impacted by the type of work the agency performs, up until a duty station is back at normal operating status. Agencies may also take into consideration situations where an employee lives with or provides care for individuals in the vulnerable population.

- Employees in good health and under age 65. Employees may return to the workplace, based on local public health and agency leadership directions and in accordance with National guidelines. Employees may wear a face covering at all times while in the workplace. Agencies can issue facemasks or may approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings.

- Symptomatic Federal Employees and Contractors. Federal employees and contractors should follow their Agency's process if they are symptomatic or test positive for COVID-19. Agency processes should protect the anonymity and privacy of Federal employees and contractors, to the extent possible, while disclosing only the information necessary for agencies to take appropriate actions of notifying potentially affected employees and cleaning the facility. Federal employees and contractors who believe they have COVID-19 symptoms should contact their healthcare provider or local health officials for further medical advice or testing.

[2] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19/options-for-telework-eligible-employees-with-caregiving-responsibilities/

- Federal Employees and Contractors that must work on site. In high- and moderate-risk areas, critical infrastructure and other employees that cannot telework must adhere to the practices in relevant guidance[3].

Additional personnel-related information can be found in OPM Questions and Answers available on the OPM website.

D. Facilities, Service & Operations Guidelines

- Customer Service Level Decisions. For most citizens, the Federal government that they see and recognize consists of local, customer-facing entities with a physical presence - like National Parks and Post Offices. Other Federal entities, such as Social Security benefits offices, Department of Agriculture and Small Business Administration loan offices, Veteran Affairs Medical Centers, provide services, benefits, and advice to citizens in a time of need. Therefore, agencies must prioritize capacity building for those services that are the most public-facing as well as those critical to implementing COVID-19 response efforts to help the nation's recovery. For those agencies with a customer-facing mission, agencies should determine how to prioritize reopening properties and facilities and provide increased public access to these facilities in a manner that is consistent with the National guidelines for *Opening Up America Again*.

- Facility-Level Status Decisions. Agencies and their regional office leadership should be aware that decisions to *open or close* a Federally owned or leased building under GSA's authority are, by regulation, made by the building's Designated Official (the chair of the building's Facility Security Committee, or FSC), in consultation with the building manager and law enforcement organization responsible for protecting the property (e.g. Federal Protective Service). The Designated Official is the highest-ranking official of the primary occupant agency, or the alternate highest-ranking official or designee selected by mutual agreement by other occupant agency officials. Beyond these "open or close" determinations, decisions concerning *utilization of specific space* (a floor, office, suite, etc.) within a multi-occupant facility are the province of the particular agency inhabiting that space. Telework can present challenges for the many Federal workers and contractors who work in facilities designed for the handling of classified information; therefore, the re-population of such facilities (which are typically designated security level IV or V buildings) should be prioritized to the extent possible by agencies.

- Facilities Screening. Agencies must ensure their policies and procedures restrict individuals infected with or at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 from accessing Federal facilities. The FSC is responsible for deciding building entry screening procedures. Facility screenings could include implementing a set of questions to be asked upon entry, temperature checks, visual inspection, or other

[3] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html

methods. These agency policies must include specific considerations for Federal employees, contractors and visitors. Agencies may consider purchasing facility screening services (including basic health screenings and temperature checks) now available on the GSA Schedule, subject to availability. These services may require agencies to provide appropriate PPE and equipment, including thermometers and masks, as outlined in standard procedures. Agencies may also request employees to take their temperature at home prior to reporting to the employee duty station. Each agency is responsible for determining the appropriate screening protocol for its facilities, and should work with GSA and joint tenants in the case of multi-agency building occupancy. This guidance applies to Federal facilities owned and leased by GSA.

Agencies shall review the relevant CDC and U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) guidance, as well as other appropriate resources, when developing and implementing new or modified policies and processes. Note that the guidance for healthcare settings differs from other workplace environments.

- Availability of Hygiene Supplies. In making decisions regarding space utilization, agencies should ensure they have – and can acquire – an appropriate amount of hygiene supplies, including but not limited to, hand sanitizer, hand soap, paper towels, toilet paper, and disinfectant wipes.

- Maintaining Facilities Cleanliness. Agencies are to follow CDC guidelines for cleaning a building – or portion thereof – following a confirmed or suspected case. Hard surfaces in common areas should be cleaned and disinfected routinely as part of the regular custodial service. For additional cleaning protocols, GSA follows these CDC guidelines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

- Maintaining Social Distancing & Vigilance in Workplace and Service Delivery. Agencies are responsible for implementing social distancing procedures to the extent practicable and across all phases, in accordance with the National guidelines. Federal employees and contractors onsite should follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines to the extent practical. Agencies must consider specific and unique office environments, such as open-space designs, when implementing social distancing measures. In addition, agencies should institute other policies to enforce social distancing and mitigation measures (e.g., closing common spaces, limited gatherings, reconfigured space, prohibiting communal food in workspaces and cafeterias), in accordance with the National guidelines.

Agencies may make cloth face coverings available for Federal employees and contractors, and visitor use in line with agency protocols.

Additional facilities related information can be found in the GSA Questions and Answers found on the GSA website.

E: Federal Employee and Contractor Travel Guidelines

Agencies may reconsider travel limitations currently in place based on mission needs and National guidelines for *Opening America Up Again.* For the most recent information on international travel considerations, please continue to monitor announcements from the CDC and the U.S. Department of State.

II. Decision-Making Process for Determining the Federal Government's Operating Status across the Country

The response and recovery from the effect of COVID-19 will continue to present Federal agencies with unprecedented challenges, as well as opportunities for improvement, that require clear roles and responsibilities and decision-making processes.

This guidance aligns Federal operational decisions with State and regional phasing determinations in accordance with the National guidelines. It also provides agency heads a framework for making consistent operational decisions driven by similar on-the-ground information, while allowing agency heads to make tailored mission-specific decisions as needed. To that end, agency heads should designate a point of contact for each office location to assist with gathering relevant local information. Agencies can use Appendix II as a template to collect local information. The local point of contact should also assist with communicating operating decisions to employees at that location. Agencies should utilize States' and Regions' phasing determinations with relevant information on local health and operational conditions.

Nevertheless, agency heads maintain discretion to manage the agency – including executing telework policies – in a manner that allows for Federal government mission delivery regardless of State phasing determinations or other local directives and orders.

As agencies determine the appropriate operational status for their offices, they must report those decisions to OMB and OPM, per forthcoming instructions. As appropriate, OMB and OPM will convene agency heads, or their designee, with high populations of employees in similar locations to bring further consistency to regional decisions.

Agencies will post on their website the operating status of their public facilities and OPM will maintain a public site that provides a compilation of this information across all Federal agencies. These websites will be continually updated as necessary.

III. Conclusion

Federal employees across the Nation are dedicated to serving the public. The role of a public servant requires a unique responsibility to lead in times of crisis and during a period of recovery. In the face of this historic pandemic, the Federal workforce has continued to ensure mission critical and essential services continue to meet the Nation's needs. Across the Nation, public servants will continue to perform a key leadership role in supporting the American people.

Guidelines for All Phases: Employers

Develop and implement appropriate policies, in accordance with Federal, State, and local regulations and guidance, and informed by industry best practices, regarding:

- ✓ Social distancing and protective equipment
- ✓ Temperature checks
- ✓ Testing, isolating, and contact tracing
- ✓ Sanitation
- ✓ Use and disinfection of common and high-traffic areas
- ✓ Business travel

Monitor workforce for indicative symptoms. Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to work until cleared by a medical provider.

Develop and implement policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing following employee COVID+ test.

Appendix II

Regional Data & Information Template to Inform Federal Agency Operating Decisions

Federal Agency Considerations

1. Number of Federal employees in Region _____
2. Locations (and co-locations) of Federal Agencies _____
3. Federal Public Facing Facilities or Functions
    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____
    e. _____
4. Availability Of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Frontline Federal Employees/ Contractors_____
5. Capacity for Adequate Cleaning of Federal Facilities (Based on discussion with GSA building manager)_____
6. Status of Childcare Facilities within Federal Agencies_____

Community Characteristics

1. Office Location _____
2. State-wide Directives _____
3. County-wide/City Directives _____
4. Status of Mass Transit Operations _____
5. Status of School_____
6. Status of Childcare Services_____
7. Status of Dependent Care Services_____
8. Other Local Services_____