



Guidebook for departments on easing of restrictions

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This Guidebook on the easing of restrictions in the workplace was published for the purpose of guiding Departments in planning for and managing an initial resumption of activity in the workplace at the time. The pandemic environment has since continued to shift with multiple waves impacting public health restrictions, and with vaccination efforts continuing across jurisdictions.

The Guidebook covers general planning and considerations. Departments are encouraged to manage and adjust plans in consideration of the changing pandemic environment and consider the latest developments therein. Planning should be augmented and/or updated as needed, based on the latest information and new complementary guidance's available.

Also refer to the [latest guidance on vaccination](#).

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Executive summary: Guidelines for easing of COVID-19-related restrictions at federal public service worksites – Guidance for Deputy Heads

From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

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This Guidebook on the easing of restrictions in the workplace was published in June 2020 for the purpose of guiding Departments in planning for and managing an initial resumption of activity in the workplace at the time. The pandemic environment has since continued to shift with multiple waves impacting public health restrictions, and with vaccination efforts continuing across jurisdictions.

The Guidebook covers general planning and considerations. Departments are encouraged to manage and adjust plans in consideration of the changing pandemic environment and consider the

latest developments therein. Planning should be augmented and/or updated as needed, based on the latest information and new complementary guidance's available.

Also refer to the [latest guidance on vaccination](#).

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Objective

To support robust delivery of programs and services to Canadians during a gradual, safe and sustainable easing of COVID-19 restrictions related to federal public service worksites, while supporting the physical and mental health of federal public servants.

Principles

While organizations in the public service deliver a broad range of programs and services to a diverse population, to economic and social sectors, in a variety of worksites and over a territory governed by multiple jurisdictions, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected various parts of the country differently. At the same time, the Employer has strived to ensure attentive and coherent support to its workforce, in full respect of the accountabilities of Ministers and Deputy Heads.

Collectively, our planning for the easing of restrictions must adhere to the First Ministers' April 2020 Joint Statement, with due consideration for provincial and territorial decisions. The following principles continue to guide this planning:

- the health, safety and wellness of public servants are paramount;
- public health instructions to contain the spread of the coronavirus will be adhered to; and
- programs and services that the Government of Canada and Canadians rely on will be maintained.

Context

The COVID-19 crisis has required an abrupt, widespread shift to remote working arrangements for public servants in all jurisdictions, as Canadians made every effort to stay home and practice physical distancing. As a general rule, only essential front-line workers who could not work remotely have reported for duty in person, with a vast majority of federal public servants working remotely. As epidemiological conditions improve, Deputy Heads are being called upon to determine, in keeping with the principles set out above, the extent to which employees ought to be asked to return to their usual workplaces to support critical services, economic recovery or government priorities.

Detailed guidance to assist with departmental planning for the easing of restrictions is set out in the companion document – [Guidebook for Easing Restrictions: A guide to support a gradual, safe and sustainable easing of COVID-19 restrictions at federal worksites](#) – which encompasses advice from Treasury Board Secretariat, Health Canada, and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Key considerations

▼ In this section

- Planning
- Preparing
- Ongoing
- Conditions that will support increasing access to worksites

It is important that decisions be taken in accordance with the following underlying considerations:

Planning

- Adherence to the Chief Public Health Officer's advice and direction on public health measures and local public health officer's advice across the country
- Protection of the physical and psychological health and safety of federal employees, including all legislative requirements under Part II of the Canada Labour Code, recognizing that COVID-19 has resulted in unique challenges related to both physical and psychological well-being
- Inform and consult with bargaining agents, the department's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policy and workplace committees and other stakeholders during the development and implementation of departmental plans
- Align implementation of the plan according to the easing of measures in each province and territory where the department or agency has physical workplaces (i.e., plan for an asymmetrical implementation)

- Plan for a reduced use of facilities (as physical distancing requirements continue) by undertaking an assessment of each facility's capacity based on appropriate physical distancing practices, including all assets classes and types of work locations (e.g. offices, labs, vehicles, conveyances, shared worksites, etc.)

Preparing

- In determining whether work must be done onsite, prioritize work based on: ensuring services to Canadians; support of Government priorities; support for areas of the economy that are re-opening; and supporting productivity for employees
- Maximize the work that can be delivered remotely; consider rotational remote working schedules to support employee wellbeing
- Assess the privacy impacts of the measures that are considered and take appropriate steps to protect privacy rights
- Continue to ensure the proper secure handling of all documents including in remote locations;
- While maximizing remote work, ensure equivalent support for workers who are onsite and working remotely, to support the ability of every public servant to make a full contribution as applicable (including any workplace accommodation tools or supports to enable employee success)
- Comply with collective agreement provisions and terms and conditions, as may be negotiated
- Continue to build the resilience and sustainability of our organizations and workforce, by strengthening digital and general skill acquisition for public servants, and leveraging digital infrastructure investments
- Make sure employees are aware of mental health supports and services

Ongoing

- Foster trust, safety and security of the public and the workforce, and communicate in both official languages and in accessible formats
- Ensure communications to employees are clear, direct and timely to establish trust and to successfully manage the complex and challenging process for return to the worksites
- Communications should be coordinated to ensure coherent messaging. Deputy Heads should consult with central agencies in this regard and departments should develop their own communications strategies that align to a government-wide framework and guidance
- Lead with empathy and communicate with care, compassion and support
- Continuously adapting to “living with COVID-19” in Canada as long as it is needed
- Implement robust change management methods and best practices to support employees in successfully adopting the changes/new measures being implemented including effective communications, employee engagement, change leadership and learning strategies
- Incorporate wellness, accessibility, inclusion, and diversity such as by using Gender-Based Analysis +, to identify employees’ experiences based on their various identity factors (age, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, etc.)

Conditions that will support increasing access to worksites:

- Early collaboration of Workplace OHS Committees
- Availability of public transit and childcare/schools
- Availability of PPE for employees who require it
- Capacity to prepare and maintain a clean and safe physical space

- Information to employees and bargaining agents regarding the priorities and sequence
- Clear leadership and oversight responsibilities
- Coordination mechanisms to plan, oversee, and monitor the transition

Key decisions and actions

- Adapt your pace based on geography, function, physical space and individual employee circumstances.
- Test your plan from the perspective of the workforce, the workplace, the work and the stakeholders.
- Develop and implement a plan to address the gradual and sustainable easing of workplace restrictions.
- Prioritize efforts to resume services to Canadians and support to government priorities through remote work, technology and further re-opening of workspaces.
- Consult with Bargaining Agents and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- Define ways to maximize remote work and increase productivity for all workers.
- To create effective plans, develop comprehensive scenarios, based on specific departmental factors, that take into consideration the workforce, the physical space, the work itself, and stakeholders to help build successful plans – use these scenarios to test the plan to ensure they are robust and effective.
- Implement the appropriate measures to minimize the risk of transmission (e.g. physical distancing, PPE, work schedules, protective barriers, etc.).

- Continue to monitor COVID-19 cases through the enterprise application.

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Guidebook for departments on easing of restrictions: Federal worksites

From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

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This Guidebook on the easing of restrictions in the workplace was published for the purpose of guiding Departments in planning for and managing an initial resumption of activity in the workplace at the time. The pandemic environment has since continued to shift with multiple waves impacting public health restrictions, and with vaccination efforts continuing across jurisdictions.

The Guidebook covers general planning and considerations. Departments are encouraged to manage and adjust plans in consideration of the changing pandemic environment and consider the latest developments therein. Planning should be augmented and/or updated as needed, based on the latest information and new complementary guidance's available.

Also refer to the [latest guidance on vaccination](#).

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Preamble

As jurisdictions prepare for the easing of restrictions at worksites, including government worksites, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) assembled representatives from departments and centres of expertise to develop a practical guidebook that could be adapted by Deputy Heads for a range of circumstances across the public service.

This work must adhere to the First Minister's Statement on Shared Public Health Approach to Support Restarting the Economy and its principles, with due consideration for provincial and territorial decisions. We must plan for a gradual and sustainable easing of restrictions, based on public health guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and applicable advisories, and prepare to manage a workforce that, in most cases, will be split between employees working onsite and working remotely.

Additionally, we must take into consideration that there may be a next wave that could require the retightening of restrictions.

The working relationship with Bargaining Agents will be critical as departments build plans for the reopening of specific worksites. Consultations at the national level as well as at the departmental level will provide constructive feedback, expertise, and innovation as we all – Canadians and public servants alike – learn to live with COVID-19.

While this document is generally applicable to most worksites, its interpretation must consider that departments have different operational realities and have unique worksites which require unique considerations.

The decision to reopen any specific worksite will have implications for individual employees and their families. We are mindful in providing this Guidebook that such decisions are taken in the context of a legal framework, that includes, among other instruments, collective agreements and legislation (e.g. the *Canada Labour Code* among others).

In addition, this Guidebook, which is designed to assist in formulating plans for the reopening of worksites, must be read in the context of existing guidance. In the case of discrepancy, the most recent published authoritative and formal guidance will take precedence.

Objective and contents

This guide aims to support robust delivery of programs and services to Canadians during a gradual, safe and sustainable easing of COVID-19 restrictions related to federal public service worksites, while supporting the physical and mental health of federal public servants.

The guide summarizes roles and responsibilities of key parties and points to available resources. It is meant for the Core Public Administration and separate employers alike, as applicable.

Principles

While organizations in the public service deliver a broad range of programs and services to a diverse population, to economic and social sectors, in a variety of worksites over a territory governed by multiple jurisdictions at the same time, the Employer has strived to ensure attentive and coherent support to its workforce, in full respect of the accountabilities of Ministers and Deputy Heads.

To this end, the following principles have informed the guidance to manage the work and the workforce and will guide the approach for the easing of restrictions:

- the health, safety, and wellness of public servants and Canadians are paramount;
- public health instructions to contain the spread of the coronavirus will be adhered to; and
- programs and services that the Government of Canada and Canadians rely on will be maintained.

Deputy Minister framework

Please refer to [guidance on vaccination](#) for additional information and requirements.

Federal public servants have contributed significantly to preventing the spread of COVID-19, saving lives, and reducing pressure on Canada's health care system. As epidemiological conditions improve, every measure must be taken to protect our employees within safe and inclusive work environments. This includes physical and psychological health and safety, and all legislative requirements under the *Canada Labour Code*. In keeping

with GBA+ and inclusion for all, individualized attention will be required, as needs and the ability to return to the worksite may vary significantly between employees and every effort made to ensure employees have the tools and resources in regard to mental health services and assistance.

As conditions improve Deputy Heads will normalize programs and services incrementally, in a way that protects both Canadians and employees.

Integrated business plans designed to align with government priorities should be reviewed for relevance and coherence with the new context. As plans are developed, the interdependencies with local partners should be considered.

It is important that plans be developed and decisions be taken in accordance with the following considerations:

- Adherence to the Chief Public Health Officer's advice and direction on public health measures and local public health officer's advice across the country;
- Protection of the physical and psychological health and safety of federal employees (including all legislative requirements under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*);
- Incorporating wellness, accessibility, inclusion, and diversity (such as by using Gender-Based Analysis +), to identify employees' experiences based on their various identity factors (age, ethnicity, gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, etc.);
- Leading with empathy and communicating with care, compassion and support;
- Continuously adapting to "living with COVID-19" in Canada as long as it is needed;
- Compliance with applicable legislation, collective agreement provisions and terms and conditions (as may be negotiated, where applicable);

- Optimizing operational capacity and flexibility;
- Deputy Heads will have to determine how and when – particularly in highly operational settings – protective measures will need to be emphasized to protect the health of employees and Canadians;
- Continuing to build the resilience and sustainability of our organizations and workforce, by strengthening digital and general skill acquisition for public servants, and leveraging digital infrastructure investments;
- Fostering trust, safety and security of the public and the workforce, and communicating in both official languages and in accessible formats;
- Assessing the privacy impacts of the measures that are considered and taking appropriate steps to protect privacy rights; and
- Implementing robust change management methods and best practices to support employees in successfully adopting the changes/new measures being implemented including effective communications, employee engagement, change leadership and learning strategies.

Consultations

The Employer will continue to ensure that guidance related to the reopening of worksites is based on the guidance from public health authorities. Bargaining Agents are being engaged at a national level, including through the National Joint Council and the Service-Wide Occupational Health and Safety Committee. These efforts at a national level are complementary to the consultations that will be undertaken by each department.

Deputy Heads should initiate the required consultations with bargaining agents as early as possible through their occupational health and safety committees regarding their departmental plans. The Employer has the authority to establish schedules to address operational requirements in accordance with collective agreements and to ensure the continuity of business. On-going consultation with Bargaining Agents will be important as we strive to protect the wellbeing of employees while providing services to Canadians.

Roles and responsibilities

▼ In this section

- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)
- Health Canada (HC)
- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)
- Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)
- Real Property Custodian Departments
- Shared Services Canada (SSC)
- Deputy Heads
- Managers
- Employees at all levels

The following roles and responsibilities specific to this guidebook:

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

- Provide evidence-based public health guidance and tools upon which the federal public service can base decisions (e.g., occupational health and use of PPE, use of non-medical masks/face coverings by public

service employees and/or clients, policy decisions such as testing public servants for COVID-19, environmental cleaning standards, use of and standards for physical barriers such as Plexiglas in federal worksites, etc.).

- Monitor evidence on, and epidemiology of, COVID-19 nationally and internationally and adjust public health advice, guidance and tools accordingly.
- Undertake public health measures at the border, including quarantine and isolation as appropriate for international travellers.
- Support key departments with federal populations, such as Correctional Service Canada, with infection prevention, coordination with local public health authorities, and provide surge support for outbreak investigation and surveillance through the Canadian Field Epidemiology Program.
- Work with PSPC to validate the PPE procurement requests from departments.

Health Canada (HC)

Public Service Occupational Health Program

- Provide occupational health advice and guidance to federal organizations in Schedules I and IV of the *Financial Administration Act*. Departments and agencies determine what advice applies to their occupational health needs.
- Offer the following services to departments and agencies:
 - Pre-placement and periodic health evaluations
 - Immunization and communicable disease screening services, as well as education on disease prevention, including COVID-19
 - Advice to Heads of Missions overseas regarding emergency medical situations and evacuations

- Occupational hygiene advice and consultation
- Fitness to work evaluations
- Services to support the Public Service Pension Plan (i.e., medical review of applications for retirement on medical grounds and service buybacks)

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)

- Provide guidance and support to Deputy Heads regarding strategies to address the easing of COVID-19-related restrictions at federal public service worksites.
- Provide guidance and advice to executives and managers about workplace (physical and psychological) health and safety measures in the context of COVID-19.
- Use existing flexibilities to adapt policy implementation as needed.
- Support departments and agencies in implementing occupational health and safety measures and duty to accommodate requirements.
- Provide advice on leveraging people management policies to respond to emerging situations related to worksite resumption (e.g., EAP, flexible work, Interchange Canada for agile staffing solutions).

TBS - Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (including the Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace, and the Centre of Excellence on Official Languages)

- Assess the need for new or updated policies, or consider guidance during this transition and for the future of work.
- In partnership with Health Canada's Psychosocial Emergency Preparedness and Response Team, assist organizations in addressing the psychosocial risk factors for employees and how best to incorporate psychological health and safety into Business Continuity and transition plans.

- Assist organizations in addressing challenges with regard to communicating with the public and employees in English and French.
- Support departments and agencies in creating safe, healthy, accessible and inclusive worksites.
- Continue to fulfill these responsibilities in collaboration with departments and agencies and consultation of the National Joint Council.
- Establish, negotiate and ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of employment and collective agreements.
- Consult with bargaining agents at the national level and other partners and stakeholders.
- Deliver public service group insurance benefit programs to support plan members' access to physical and mental health, dental and disability benefits as and when they need them.
- Along with Public Services and Procurement Canada, communicate to plan members the flexibilities and hardship provisions available to them under the public service pension and benefit plans.
- Collect data and information to support federal organizations and enterprise-wide efforts to understand risks, trends, and areas of focus during this transition, as they relate to the workforce and workplace.

TBS – Office of the Comptroller General

- Advice and guidance to departments on comptrollership policies and issues (i.e. financial, materiel, real property, projects, procurement, internal audit).
- Mobilize internal audit community to establish and implement agile tools and approaches to support business activities.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)

PSPC is a common services organization.

- Work with departments and agencies in procuring the supply of necessary equipment and personal protective equipment, if required.
- Is the designated custodian of general-purpose office accommodation for federal public servants and sets the standards for them.
- Operate and maintain an office portfolio and assign office space to clients.
- Provide advice, as appropriate, regarding the safe use of workspaces and common areas.
- Ensure that the occupants of PSPC buildings (i.e. non-custodian) have a safe environment in which to work, including augmenting standard cleaning specifications and delivering unique service requirements to tenants
 - PSPC has been proactively developing procedures to ensure healthy and productive work environments for occupancy in PSPC buildings. These include:
 - Water systems requirements to mitigate risks of water stagnation and associated bacterial growth;
 - HVAC maintenance activities to promote occupant wellness; and
 - Review of signage and communication material to support re-occupancy measures (i.e. physical distancing, elevator protocols, traffic management in buildings).

Real Property Custodian Departments

- Are the designated custodian for special purpose space in support of custodian specific program mandates excluding general purpose office space.

- Note: PSPC's guidance was primarily developed to respond to operational requirements in general purpose administrative environments, however, the core elements of the guide are transferrable to departments with responsibilities to manage special purpose buildings, with adaptation to suit those unique program operating requirements.

Shared Services Canada (SSC)

- Provide network and digital services to support GC departments in providing critical programs and services.
- Coordination of integrated service delivery management of IT infrastructure services to GC departments, who in turn deliver important digital services to Canadians.
- Leverage transformative technologies to enable the delivery of digital and cloud-based programs and products to GC customers in support of the Government's COVID-19 priorities, and in support of achieving a modern, secure and digital government.
- Support Partners and Clients who have developed and/or modified their IT systems through the SSC Security Assessment and Authorization service. This helps ensure confidentiality, integrity and availability of their systems and data. SSC has been committed to protecting the privacy of individuals, including their personal information and supporting Partners and Clients to protect their data and information on Government of Canada infrastructure.
- Provide, build, maintain and ensure the health and stability of the IT Infrastructure that hosts and supports all of the critical departmental applications that support the Government of Canada.
- SSC plays an instrumental role in working with other department's CIOs on their respective plans, to ensure remediation measures from a

technology stand point are in place and network and infrastructure readiness is addressed to support these plans. Departmental CIOs should engage respective Client Executive Teams at SSC, for the prioritization of Information Technology (IT) requests based on the level of urgency and operational requirements.

Deputy Heads

Please refer to [guidance on vaccination](#) for additional information and requirements.

- Develop and implement a plan to address the gradual and sustainable easing of COVID-19-related restrictions related to worksites for which the Deputy Head is responsible.
- Ensure that the plan is consistent with public health advisories (federal, provincial, territorial and municipal).
- Align implementation of the plan according to the easing of measures in each province and territory where the department or agency has physical worksites (i.e. plan for an asymmetrical implementation).
- Inform and consult with bargaining agents and the department's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policy and workplace committees during the development and implementation of departmental plans.
- Ensure that the plan is reviewed in light of accessibility, GBA+ principles, the diversity and inclusion lens proposed by the Joint Union Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, and the *Accessible Canada Act*.
- Review the criticality of services, usually in accordance with Business Continuity Plans and the related Business Impact Analysis.

- Determine how work must be performed, taking into consideration functional and operational requirements, the terms and conditions of employment, provisions in collective agreements.
- Plan for use of facilities by undertaking an assessment of each facility's capacity based on appropriate physical distancing practices, including all assets classes and types of work locations (e.g. offices, labs, vehicles, conveyances, shared worksites, etc.).
- Protect the physical and psychological health and safety of employees, including all legislative requirements under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*.
- Test the plan from the perspective of the workforce, the workplace, the work and partners and stakeholders.
- Ensure that privacy impacts of the plan – the collection, use or disclosure of personal information – are assessed, and risks mitigated.
- Aligned with the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard), identify psychosocial hazards, measure hazards and the impact hazards are having on employees, and manage risk/hazards accordingly.
- Ensure proper training and direction are provided on health and safety, duty to accommodate, and accessibility.
- Ensure proper training and direction are provided on wellness, inclusion and diversity, and that proper supports (such as the services of Indigenous elders) are made available. Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) and the Canada School for the Public Service offer a comprehensive suite of online training on GBA+ as well as diversity and inclusion.
- Set the expectation that executives and managers pay attention to priority business outcomes and have frequent and open discussions

with employees, and use judgement and flexibility in managing the workplace and workforce.

Managers

Please refer to [guidance on vaccination](#) for additional information and requirements.

- Implement the strategy defined by the Deputy Head and consult departmental OHS units, labour relations and other internal services as required.
- Protect the physical and psychological health and safety of employees, including all legislative requirements under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*.
- In supporting employees, including those that may contract COVID-19, particular attention should be paid to privacy rights and human rights. Promote and encourage the use of mental health supports and services.
- Address the 13 psychosocial factors that impact employees, and respond to psychological hazards that emerge (e.g. anxiety around contracting COVID-19 in the workplace, the loss of a team member or loved one, effects of discrimination related to COVID-19).
- Work with employees to address their concerns as they arise and advise them on what services are available, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Personal circumstances as well as issues related to health and safety, or the duty to accommodate should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Put in place controls to reduce risks related to exposure to COVID-19, in consultation with OHS committees. Communicate and provide training to the employees to ensure that they are able to carry out their duties

as per the established controls. Promote compliance, and monitor the effectiveness of the controls in line with the evolving risks.

- Ensure the alignment with OHS guidance on the maximum number of employees that could report to work at a given time while maintaining physical distancing and other public health measures related to COVID-19.
- Communicate with employees who will return to the worksite beforehand to reassure them of the measures in place to protect their health and safety. Take steps to ensure employees returning to the worksite are given appropriate notice.
- Regularly invite and consider the concerns of all employees, including those related to accessibility, wellness, inclusion and diversity, and the duty to accommodate.
- Collaborate with local union representatives as required, especially in duty to accommodate processes and to resolve workplace conflict.
- Ensure compliance with health guidelines and all preventative measures in force in the worksite.
- Ensure the provisions of safe occupancy are met.
- Ensure that all employees are treated with equal respect and value, understand the expectation for results, and are offered equivalent supports and opportunities.

Employees at all levels

Please refer to [guidance on vaccination](#) for additional information and requirements.

- Follow public health measures.
- Take steps to support personal mental health, including taking regular breaks. If mental or emotional health is suffering, access EAP or a

health care professional (e.g. a family doctor).

- Take all health, safety, and security precautions in accordance with all laws, policies and regulations, and maintain regular contact with their manager and colleagues.
- Collaborate with managers to maximize their contribution to the organization's objectives.
- Practice good information management, including appropriate documentation of decisions, and alignment with privacy and security requirements.
- Provide health attestations or certificates as may be required.
- Provide information and documentation supporting accommodation requirements in timely fashion.
- Follow the health and preventive measures necessary to protect the health, safety and physical integrity of others in the workplace.
- Work with others to maintain safe use of the workplace and create a healthy environment.
- Respectfully share concerns about their personal situation, the workplace, or the behavior of colleagues with management.

Practical considerations and checklists for the easing of restrictions (short-term considerations)

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- Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Diversity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Official languages

Preamble

Please refer to guidance on vaccination for additional information and requirements.

This section is intended to provide Deputy Heads and Managers with a practical list of considerations as we ease restrictions related to COVID-19. These considerations should apply to most worksites while taking into consideration that many employees work in unique environments. The objective is to protect the health and wellbeing of employees that are returning to federal worksites and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With this in mind; Deputy Heads and Managers are asked to focus their plans for the easing of restrictions on those employees who are necessary to provide critical services to Canadians, that need to be “onsite” to support government priorities, or whose work cannot reasonably be done remotely. As working remotely is the safest option available, managers are encouraged to adopt best practices to support high-functioning virtual teams where possible.

It is understood that as we transition to the next normal, that federal worksites will not be able to sustain a return of an important majority of their employees while respecting physical distancing measures. This ratio

will need to be calculated looking at office space design / square footage, as well as network capacity for the remaining virtual workers, in order to strike a balance that will ensure productivity of all employees.

Develop and implement a plan – overview checklist

Deputy Heads are responsible for developing and implementing a plan to address the gradual and sustainable easing of COVID-related restrictions related to worksites for which the Deputy Head is responsible. In developing and implementing the plan, departments should:

- Ensure that the plan is reviewed in light of GBA+ principles, physical and psychological health and safety consideration, the Diversity and Inclusion lens, and accessibility requirements.
- Ensure that the privacy impacts for any collection, use or disclosure of personal information in the plan been assessed, and risks been mitigated.
- Align implementation of the plan to conditions resulting from the easing of measures in each location (province and territory, municipality) where the department or agency has physical worksites (i.e. asymmetrical implementation).
- Ensure that the plan is consistent with public health advisories (including federal, provincial, territorial and municipal advisories).
- Inform and consult with bargaining agents during the development and implementation of the plan.
- Continue to monitor COVID-19 cases through the enterprise application.
- Where Business Continuity Plans have been activated, determine the date at which the Business Continuity Plan will be deactivated.
- Determine how many employees can be reintegrated in the worksite(s), taking into account Health Canada guidance for physical

distancing and the use of PPE.

- Include a protocol for visitors, with a view to minimizing in-person contact.
- Minimize the number of employees asked to return to the worksite by prioritizing work to be done onsite. To assess which work should be prioritized, the following considerations should be taken into account:
 - Is the work critical to business continuity and achieving the departmental mandate or service delivery standards?
 - Can the work be done remotely? For example, can the work continue to be done without the requirement for in-person interactions with the public or colleagues?
 - Does the employee have all the necessary equipment, technology, systems and/or data or does the work require access to information only available on-location?
 - Is the work suitable for remote working? (i.e. timing, deadlines, autonomy)
 - Is security and safety maintained if working remotely? (e.g. data, physical)
 - Does anyone else depend on this work being done in the office or a specific location? (e.g. security, clients)
 - How do GBA+, diversity and inclusion, and accessibility considerations impact the decisions? It is important not to make assumptions, give opportunities for employees to be heard.
- Identify the employees who are to return to the worksite. Communicate this list to the bargaining agent representing these employees.
- Provide employees with information regarding return to worksite protocols and a forum where they can ask questions and get the appropriate answers prior to their return.

- Provide employees with the information on their schedule of work, ensuring compliance with the collective agreement.
- Provide employees with information on the organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other mental health resources to support them when they return to the worksite.
- Provide employees with the available first aid attendants contact information.
- Put in place emergency protocols to ensure it is known how many employees are onsite for appropriate response in case of emergency. Provide employees requiring assistance during emergencies with the information they need to safely enter and exit the worksite.
- Provide employees with information on the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or other equipment, materials and measures that the employer will be providing when they return to the worksite.
- Review guidance on use of code 699 Other Leave with Pay to keep apprised of changes to eligibility as circumstances related to COVID-19 evolve, and ensure the continued appropriate use of 669 within organizations.
- Inform and consult with bargaining agents, the department's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policy and workplace committees and other partners and stakeholders during the development and implementation of the plan.
- Develop training material and information sheets for employees who are returning to the worksite. Ensure material is vetted by the departmental OHS committees.
- Ensure proper training and directions are provided to managers and employees on occupational health and safety matters.

Communications and engagement

- Frequent communications with Employees.
- Ensure alignment to enterprise-wide messaging, and alignment in messaging within the organization.
- In order to build trust and resilience, and avoid the spread of misinformation, consider the following when developing messaging: content, clarity, consistency, frequency, and tone.
- Be transparent and authentic.
- Encourage dialogue and flexibility to adapt to specific circumstances.
- Develop information sheets and clear signage for employees who are returning to the worksite. The material is to be vetted by the departmental OHS committees, and be provided in accessible formats.

Determining whether work should be performed onsite or by working remotely

- Consider occupational health and safety, duty to accommodate, accessibility, GBA+ considerations, and the diversity and inclusion lens.
- Take into consideration functional and operational requirements.
- In assessing which employees should be asked to return to the worksite, specific impacts to individuals will need to be considered as part of protecting the health and safety of employees. Some employees may have specific personal circumstances that may require accommodation, for example, medical conditions, family and childcare responsibilities, at-risk age group, living with people with elevated health risks, living in vulnerable communities, as well other considerations such as travel restrictions.
- Establish and/or modify work schedules using existing flexibilities (e.g., those in collective agreements and relevant terms and conditions of employment) while respecting:

- Collective agreements and relevant terms and conditions of employment;
- The *Canada Labour Code* and *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*; and
- Duty to accommodate requirements.

Training checklist – continuous learning and reskilling

When considering what training is required, the following should be considered:

- Occupational health and safety (including related legislation), duty to accommodate, privacy, and accessibility guidelines.
- Wellness, inclusion and diversity.
- Mental Health supports.
- Management and leadership – new normal means adapting the way we lead people.
- Virtual and remote work management tools and guidelines.

Psychological health and safety

The Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace offers tools and supports. In considering how to support psychological health and safety, the following should be taken into account:

- As this is a plan to mobilize people, and considering the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic on all Canadians, psychological health and safety and the potential impacts on the 13 psychosocial factors outlined in the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety should be a consideration in all people management decisions, including when developing scenarios for the easing of restrictions.

- Include OHS and HR/Wellness partners and stakeholders at the decision-making tables and/or consult them.
- Promote departmental and enterprise-wide mental health services, resources and training that are available for all employees and ensure ease of access.
- The approach to addressing psychological health and safety should align with the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in regards to critical event preparedness, which states that organizations “shall establish and sustain processes to:
 - a. ensure the psychological health and safety risks and impacts of critical events are assessed; and,
 - b. manage critical events in a manner that reduces psychological risks to the extent possible and supports ongoing psychological safety”.
- Psychological health and safety risks and impacts can be assessed through relevant workplace data (e.g., pulse surveys, programs and services utilization reports, etc.) and organizations should consider prioritizing top psychosocial risks (e.g., Leadership, Influence, Balance, Workload, etc.).
- Provide tools and resources to equip managers on how to support themselves and their employees in regard to mental health.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Make EAP contact information and Executive Advisory Services available to all staff.
- Promote the use of these services.
- Contact your EAP provider for options on other possible workplace supports.

Diversity, inclusion and accessibility

- Efforts should be made to help normalize wellness, diversity and inclusion as a regular topic of discussion.
- Embody an ongoing commitment to respect and civility in the workplace.
- Reflect on the fact that each person is experiencing this unprecedented period differently, with various factors impacting their health, safety, well-being, and ability to contribute to the work of the unit.
- Understand the unique circumstances of each employee, and remain flexible about each person's ability to contribute to the work of the unit, seeking guidance from executives as needed.
- Apply the principles for the management of a remote workforce and leading at a distance, remain aware of the state of mind and vulnerability felt by members of their work unit and remain vigilant about respect and civility in the workplace.

Official languages

- Seek support from official languages champion as the organization returns to work.
- Ensure that official languages implications are considered in all aspects of communications and decision-making (refer to the OL Checklist for Deputy Heads), including in the provision of tools that support telework, and that messages to employees in their organization are available simultaneously in both languages.
- Make messages to employees available simultaneously in both languages.
- When in a bilingual region, need to encourage the use of either official language in team meetings, engage employees individually in their

preferred official language and make information available simultaneously in both official languages.

- Encourage staff to work in their preferred official language, reach out to the person responsible for official languages in their organization to discuss how the crisis and return to the worksite may have affected official languages and, when referring employees to support services, make sure they are available in the employee's preferred official language.

The Joint Learning Program – empowering conversations in the workplace

The Joint Learning Program (JLP) is a unique partnership between the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) and the PSAC. In response to the current crisis, the JLP has launched a new series of short guided discussions to help employees and managers talk about the challenges they are facing due to COVID-19. Each discussion in the Empowering Conversations series stands alone and requests can be made for one, two or three sessions.

The guided discussions are led by two trained JLP facilitators and are intended for intact teams. Each session can have between 3 and 15 participants. The first two sessions are designed to take place remotely using the technology that is available to teams, while the third can be done remotely or in person.

Grounding Ourselves in Uncertain Times (1.5 hours – online)

This discussion aims to help participants:

- Discuss experiences and identify stressors
- Share tools for managing health during isolation

- Build stronger online connections, networks and relationships

Returning to the Worksite: Now What? (1.5 hours – online)

The second discussion will help participants:

- Review the available departmental information about the return to the worksite
- Identify questions and information needed
- Begin planning for returning to the worksite

During this time, dialogue between employees and managers is essential. There is a renewed sense of collaboration and a hunger for connection. Considering the impact of physical distancing and isolation on mental health and wellness and to foster a sense of community in COVID-19 times, *Empowering Conversations* creates space for focused, honest discussions about the impact the pandemic has had on employees and their families.

To request a facilitated discussion from [Empowering Conversations](#) for your team, please visit the [JLP website](#).

Footnotes

- 1 Note that the some federal collective agreements are subject to a statutory freeze pursuant to the *Federal Public Service Labour Relations Act*

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Date modified:

2022-03-22

Guidance and practices for the safe return to workplaces in light of the easing of restrictions

From: Public Services and Procurement Canada

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Purpose

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) is the designated custodian of general-purpose office accommodation for the Government of Canada (GC).

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has developed this PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) guidance and practices for the safe return to workplaces in light of the easing of restrictions during the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic primarily to support GC (Government of Canada) departments and agencies as the employer in their responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their employees in the workplace.

This document is intended for all client departments and agencies who occupy office space managed by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) real property services in Crown-owned, lease-purchase, and leased facilities, specifically those clients in functional areas of workplace design and utilization.

This workplace guidance document focuses on the health and well-being of occupants as the easing of restrictions begins and the federal government resumes a percentage of occupancy in our workplaces, specifically general administrative office space. The aim is to suggest practical approaches to maintaining physical distancing and facilitating frequent cleaning, enabling employees to circulate in a healthy workplace within a safe distance from each other (minimum 2 metres). The recommendations in this document are intended to be short-term tactics to allow occupancy of the workplace while physical distancing is required.

This functional guidance document is subject to change. The conditions of the pandemic in Canada are fluid, and Canadian public health authorities may issue new guidance or change those currently in place. Should new considerations and information impact the guidance and recommendations contained in this document, they will be integrated. The document will be updated and shared.

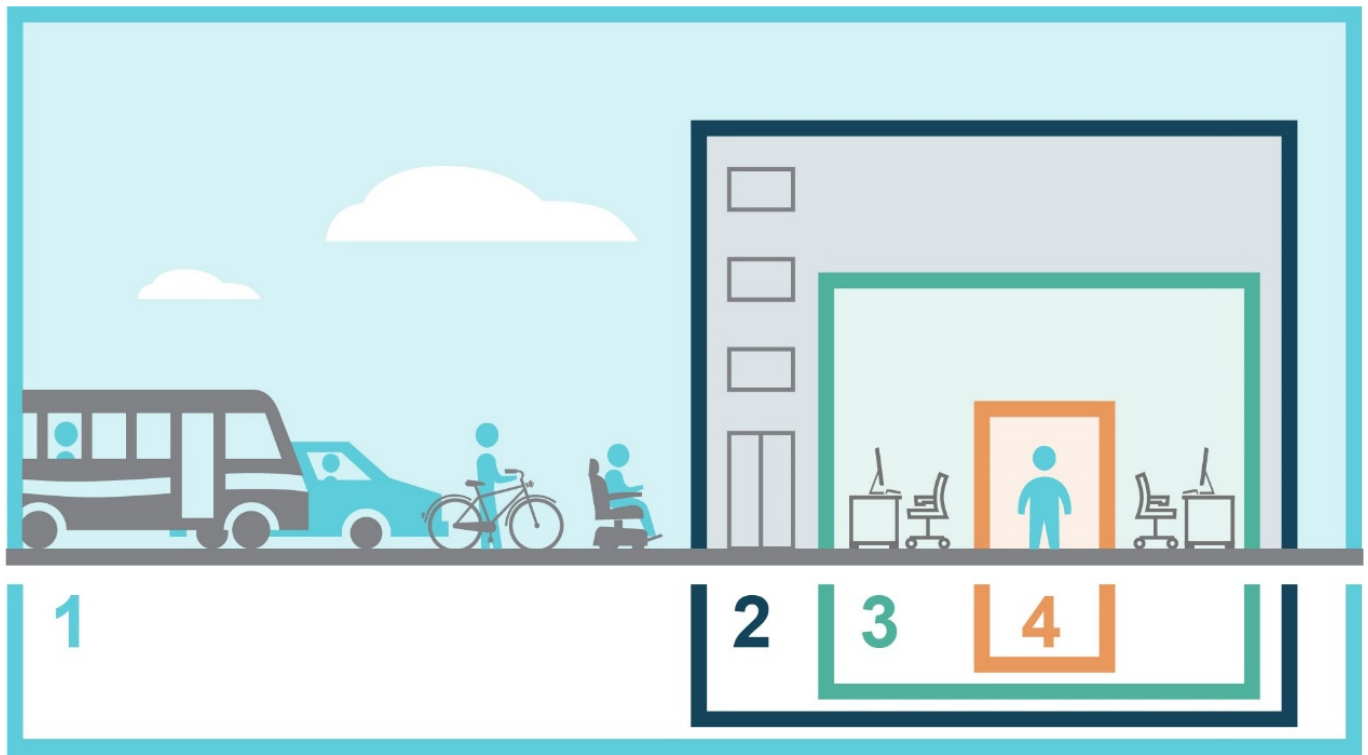
It is recommended that department and agency officials stay abreast of the evolving context. Organizations should refer to and integrate recommendations and guidelines provided by public health officials as well as departmental security officers (responsible for occupational health and safety and compliance with *Canada Labour Code* and other legislation) into their plans for re-occupation of physical workplaces in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guidance was prepared by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Real Property Services Workplace Solutions, its main contributors were the National Centres of Expertise for Interior Design, for Change Management and for Accommodation Management informed by global workplace industry documentation, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Real Property Service Sectors and broad consultation.

The core elements of the guidance may be useful and adapted for other custodians as appropriate.

Scope

Figure 1



► Text version: Figure 1

The scope for the progressive return to the workplace spans a number of levels of intervention and engagement beyond PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s role and spheres of influence and expertise. In broad terms:

- **Level 1:** includes those elements outside the building, such as transportation and parking
- **Level 2:** includes the building and its common services and functions, such as entrances, building systems, and elevators
- **Level 3:** includes operational zones and office layouts which may include open and enclosed workspaces and collaborative areas, as well as support spaces such as, business centres, kitchenettes and file storage
- **Level 4:** includes the workforce and how they use the space, the nature of their work, activities and behaviours, work processes and tools, as well as how all these are managed

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Real Property Centres of Expertise are available to provide support to departmental functional teams as they develop their approaches and determine the practices they will be adopting within their workplaces.

Departmental workplace and fit-up enquiries should be directed to the departmental client accommodations representative.

General enquiries on this document should be directed to the GCworkplace mailbox: tpsgc.similieudetravailgc-rpsgcworkplace.pwgsc@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca

Context

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China. The virus did not match any other known virus. On January 7, 2020, China confirmed COVID-19. Since then, there has been a global spread of the virus which has left health professionals on high alert.

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) are working with provinces, territories, and international partners, including the World Health Organization, to actively monitor the situation. Global efforts are focused on containment of the outbreak and the prevention of further spread. PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) is working closely with the medical community to ensure that any cases of COVID-19 occurring in Canada continue to be rapidly identified and managed in order to protect the health of Canadians.

By mid-March 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada and provincial leaders introduced social and physical distancing measures in an attempt to flatten the curve of COVID-19 spread within Canada. This meant that federal

employees in non-essential services were asked to work from home.

Since that time, after several weeks of social and physical distancing measures and business and workplace shut-downs, industry and governments are looking at gradually opening up the economy, including workplaces. The federal public service is preparing its workplaces for the progressive return of employees and seeking guidance on how best to gradually balance working from home with office presence.

Considerations

In this section

- Health and safety of employees is paramount
- Changing mindsets and behaviours
- Flexible approach is key
- Government of Canada modernization vision and goals

Health and safety of employees is paramount

Conditions for the return to the workplace hinge on whether employee health and safety in the workplace can be maintained through the effective implementation of Canadian public health authority measures in alignment with Part II of the Canada Labour Code. It is expected that employees will continue to have concerns about being in office environments where physical distancing will henceforth become necessary and where maintaining high levels of cleanliness (of surfaces and high touch areas) is the norm.

Changing mindsets and behaviours

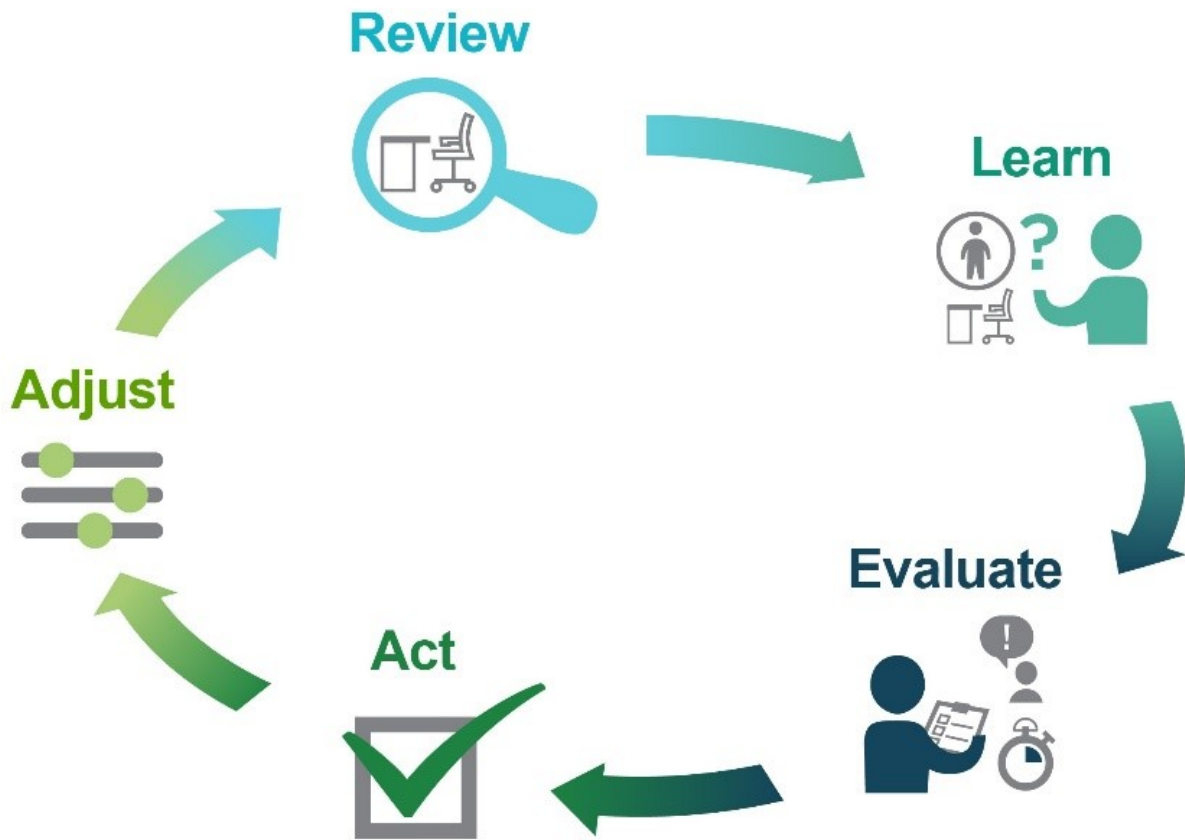
While the evolving COVID-19 pandemic has led to the immediate adoption of a work from home model across most federal departments and agencies, the Government of Canada must prepare for the eventual reintegration of its workforce into its physical workplaces. This planning effort must consider opportunities for accommodating flexible workplace options, and new strategies for ensuring employee health and wellbeing throughout the process of reintegration.

For some departments and agencies, returning to their existing office set-ups may present challenges, especially since, while working from home over the last number of weeks, both employees and managers have discovered effective methods of operating remotely. These new ways of working could come in conflict with decades-old office designs that don't consider this evolution and the resulting new mindsets and behaviours.

Flexible approach is key

Given the evolving context, a short-term, agile approach, that iterates through a review, learn, evaluate, act and adjust cycle will best serve organizations as they make their plans and consider adjustments to their workplaces. Many recommendations in this document are temporary in nature, focused on making best use of current layouts, and making minimal modifications only where required, including simply how space is used rather than permanent changes to layout or design of furniture.

Figure 2



► Text version: Figure 2

The return to the workplace will be progressive, and it is expected that only a fraction of the space will be occupied at one time. Under this assumption, the space will be used differently by those who return. Attempting to make permanent changes to office layout, furniture, or design in the immediate term may be time consuming, costly, and challenging, and, given the evolving context, may also prove ineffective or unnecessary; in some cases it may negatively impact building systems, egress, and other occupant health and safety measures. The conditions of the pandemic in Canada are fluid and Canadian public health authorities may issue new guidance or change those currently in place. It is recommended that department and agency officials stay abreast of the evolving context.

It is important to note that universal design is a key principle of the design of Government of Canada workplaces, and therefore all practices pertaining to the progressive return to the office must consider accessibility and inclusivity. Any modifications or functional adaptations of the workplace must continue to ensure functionality and consider a wide range of mobility levels in addition to different manual dexterity, visual and auditory capability, and cognitive function.

Government of Canada modernization vision and goals

Over the last number of years, the Government of Canada has taken important steps to create a confident and high-performing workforce that embraces new ways of working and mobilizes the diversity of its talent to serve the nation's evolving needs. The new GCworkplace vision and objectives, supported by the 2019 Government of Canada Workplace Fit-up Standards and design principles built on the agile and digital technology-forward activity-based working model, are a big part of making that vision a reality and stand to be integral in supporting our government's ability to respond quickly and seamlessly to future events and to serve and support Canadians, continuously, reliably, and dependably.

Workplace practices and guidance: Overview

In this section

- [Healthy workplace](#)
- [Physical distancing](#)

Healthy workplace

While a portion of the responsibility for a healthy workplace will be addressed by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) and departmental facilities management (FM) practices and procedures, as well as cleaning services provided to GC offices and buildings (Property management practices for coronavirus disease (COVID-19)), additional responsibility for maintaining a clean workplace will fall on managers and occupants of spaces.

In order to facilitate a healthy workplace, it is recommended that organizations consider significantly reducing the amount of surfaces to clean within the office and establishing clear user etiquettes and norms to facilitate frequent cleaning and reduce the risks associated with virus presence on surfaces and high-touch areas.

There are **3 key areas** for intervention:

1. Individual use spaces, furniture (work surfaces, drawer handles, seating), and equipment (accessories that you contact to power on or off, adjust height or proximity)
2. Common use spaces, furniture (table surfaces, seating), and equipment (accessories that you contact to connect for collaborative work)
3. Personal hygiene (frequent hand washing, avoid touching the face, and the use of hand sanitizer). Refer to the PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) guidance documents

For those 3 key areas, organizations should:

- Implement a cleaning protocol to ensure surfaces and tools are cleaned after usage
- Reinforce cleaning protocols for individual and common spaces by using various methods and communication channels: signage, emails,

screen pop-ups, hallway TV messages, etc.

Physical distancing

Some recommended measures of physical distancing in federal general administrative office space will apply to common areas outside of the operational zones, such as entrances, stairwells, washrooms, elevators, and lunch rooms; other measures will apply to the office spaces themselves, where people meet, work, and eat. This guidance addresses the latter, with the [property management practices for coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#), addressing the former.

When it comes to the workplace, the following areas may require intervention regarding physical distancing:

- individual workplace areas, including enclosed offices and workstations
- collaborative areas, including open and enclosed meeting areas as well as social areas \ lunch rooms that are within operational zones
- equipment rooms and other support spaces
- circulation paths and open areas

Exploring the potential flexibility of the current workplace

In this section

- [The Occupancy Strategy](#)
- [Current workplace layout and design](#)
- [Circulation areas](#)
- [Special purpose space](#)
- [Public contact spaces](#)

The Occupancy Strategy

Organizations need to have an understanding of who needs to be in the office and how they need to use the space based on function. With that understanding, an occupancy strategy should be developed. The goal of this strategy is to determine the maximum allowable occupancy of the workplace in order to respect physical distancing and help keep occupants as safe as possible. Density will most likely need to be reduced as many factors may affect this maximum allowable occupancy, such as elevator and washroom capacities and points of egress.

As a starting point, the workplace should be assessed for suitability of use as currently designed, then for potential modifications that can be implemented, which will lead to the determination of the maximum quantity of workpoints to be used at any given time. The next step would be to determine which amenities of the workplace should be made available (or restricted) and how they should be used. Every workplace is unique and each may have specific opportunities and challenges.

Current workplace layout and design

In this section

- Workstations and open workpoints
- Enclosed offices or other workpoints
- Meeting rooms and open collaborative areas
- Equipment rooms, kitchenettes and other support spaces
- Lockers, coat closets and other storage areas

Simple short-term tactics and utilization protocols in the workplace are recommended at this time to make it safe for return to the workplace without requiring physical changes to the environment. If feasible and supportive of operational requirements, consider limiting permanent physical changes to the workplace until the long-term requirements can be thoroughly assessed.

The following are the main factors to consider when examining the current layout and design:

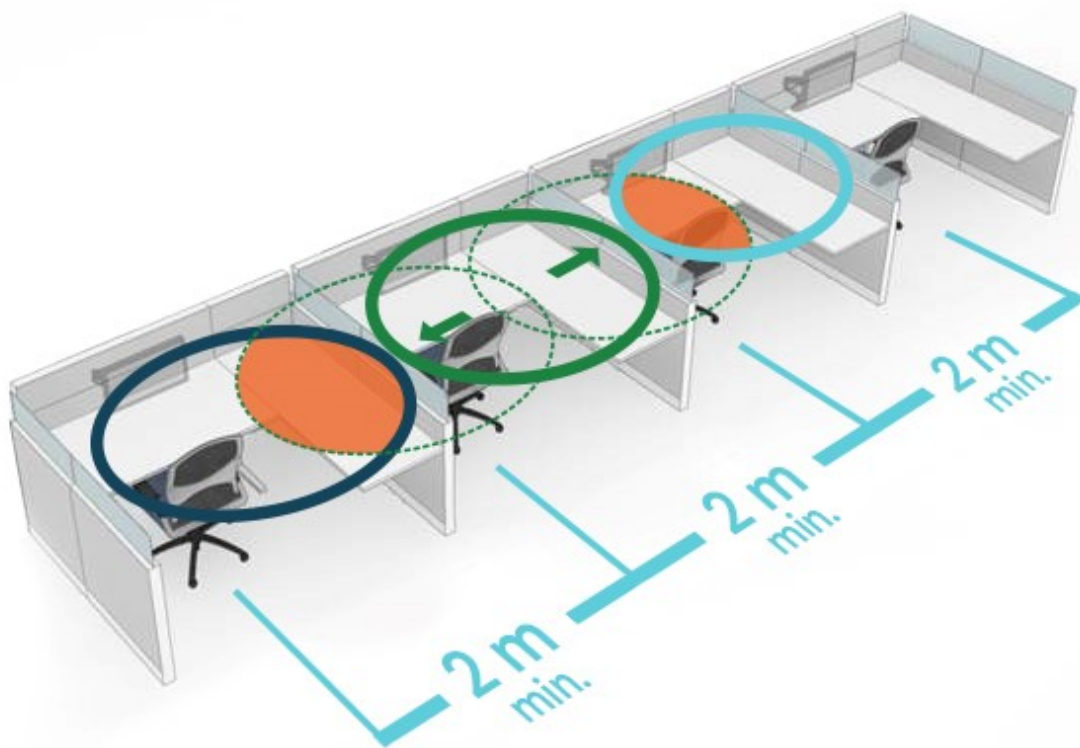
- Ability to keep occupants at least 6 ft.(feet) or 2 metres (m) apart (measured from the centre point of every chair in the office or between people to ensure physical distance between occupied workspaces as well as collaborative areas)
- Reduction of circulation congestion points
- Reduction of circulation intersections
- Limitation of occupancy in enclosed rooms

Every workpoint or amenity type in the workplace requires different examinations and has the potential for different utilization strategies. The following section explores each workplace amenity and provides guidance on its assessment and recommendations for use.

Workstations and open workpoints

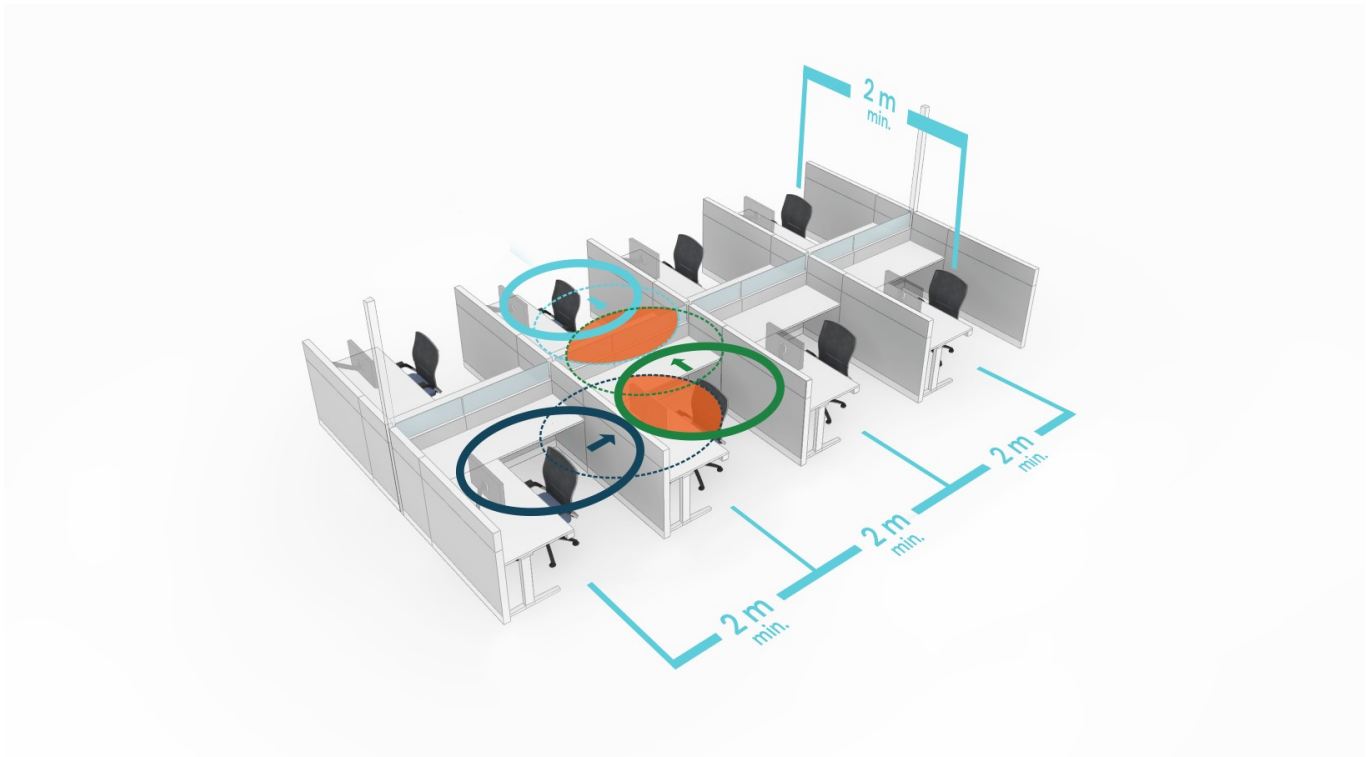
Examine current workstation layout to measure all possible distances between occupants. As shown in Figures 3 and 4 below, 2 m.(metre) distance colour-coded circles around the blue, green and turquoise occupants overlap as they move their chairs around the workstation or as they enter and exit the workspace, making it impossible to maintain the 2 m.(metre) physical distance between workstation occupants.

Figure 3



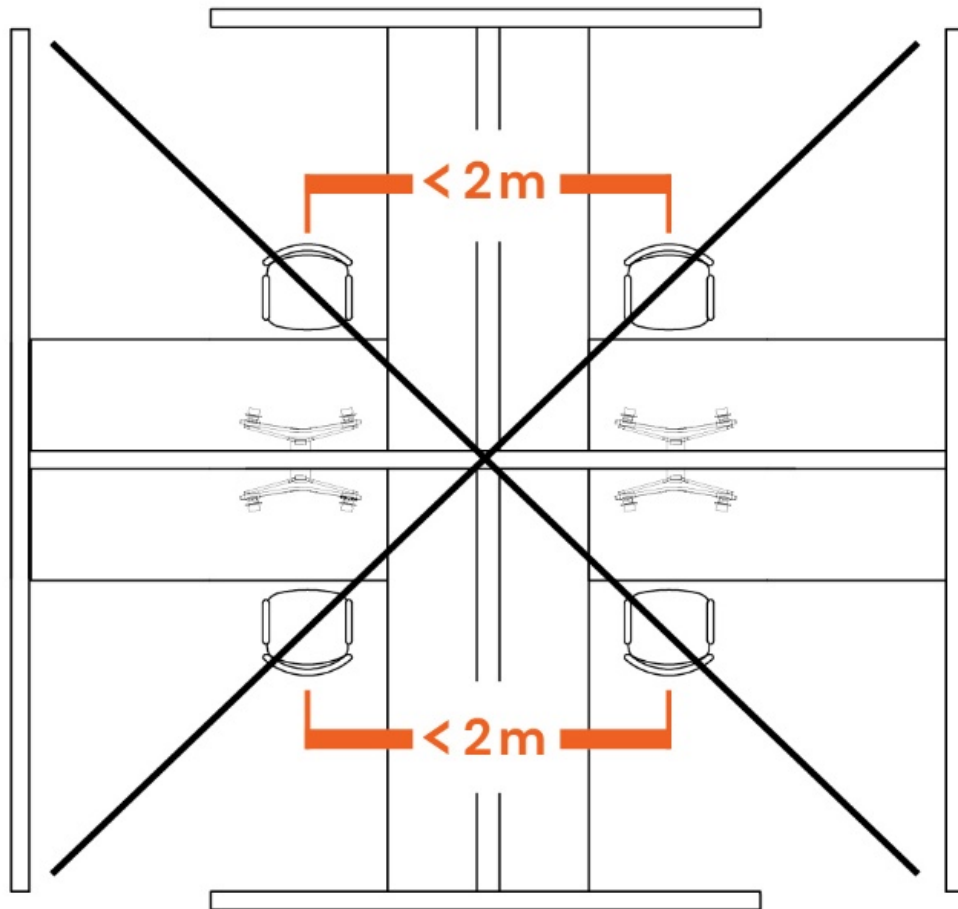
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Figure 4



► Text version: Figure 4

Figure 5

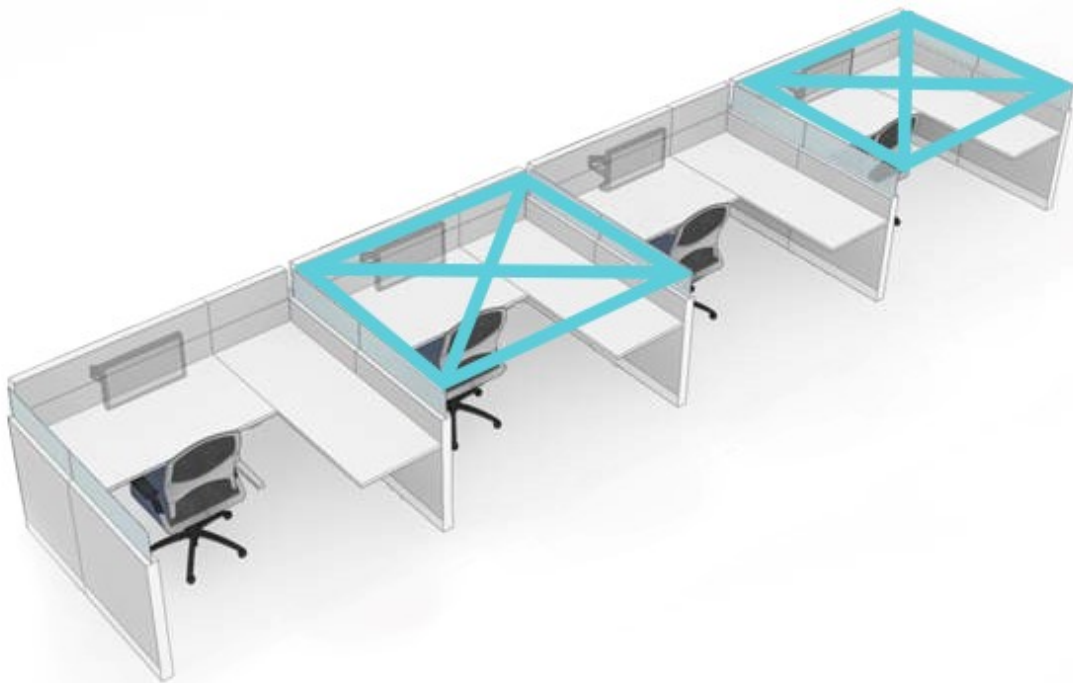


► Text version: Figure 5

Many workstation configurations will not allow proper distance between adjacent occupants. Even in a large traditional cubicle layout such as is shown in Figure 5, 2 metres of separation between occupants cannot always be met. It is important to note that at this time, there is no evidence that partitions provide sufficient safety between occupants, and should not be the first line of defence.

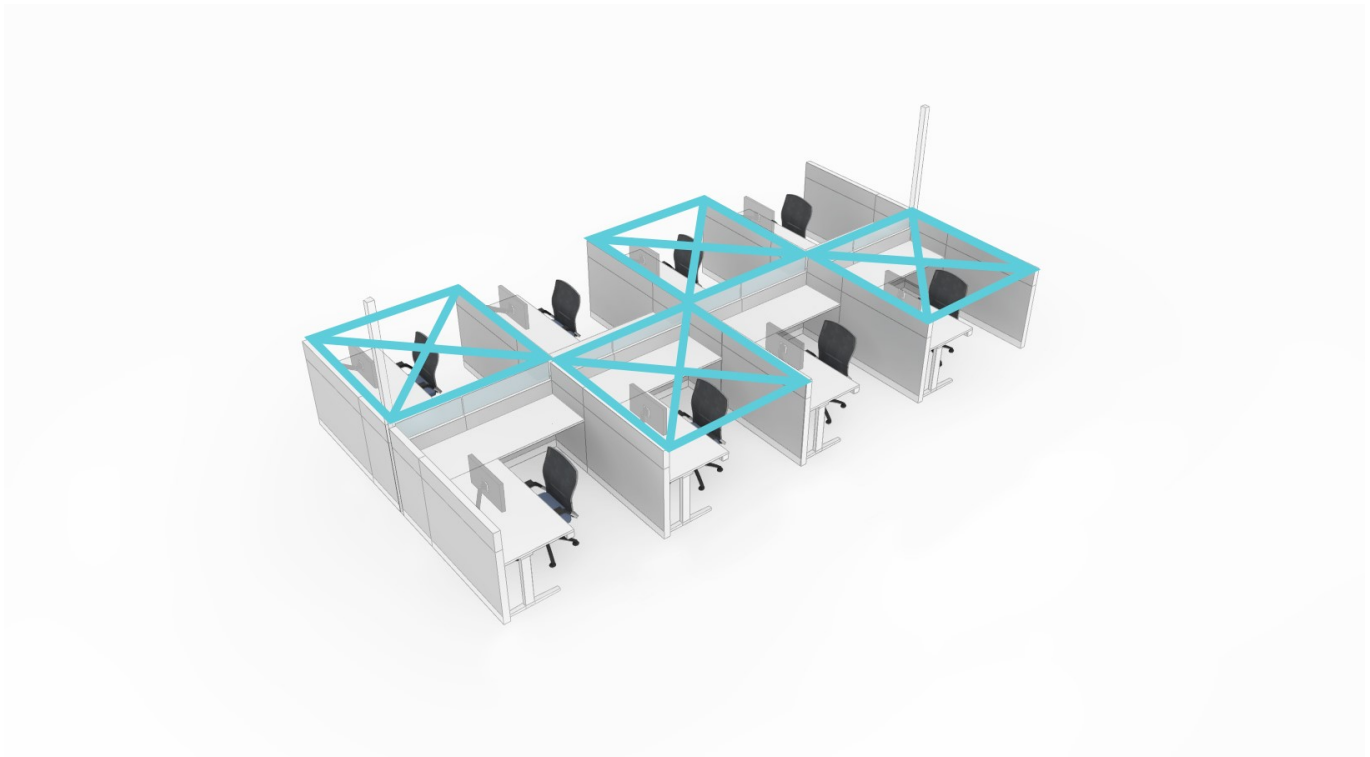
If workstations don't have the minimum spacing of 2 metres between occupants at any point in their workspace, then a staggered seating plan is recommended. Face-to-face seating is discouraged; staggered seating can also remedy this problem.

Figure 6



► Text version: Figure 6

Figure 7



► Text version: Figure 7

Figure 8



► Text version: Figure 8

The more flexibility an occupancy strategy provides, the more it will ensure that staggered seating can be easily implemented, which will maximize workspace use and leave very few unavailable for use.

The occupancy strategy should also include direction on the use of enclosed spaces, open collaborative areas, and circulation patterns.

Enclosed offices or other workpoints

Users may find themselves needing to isolate in response to uneasiness or anxiety during this return to the office phase.

- Enclosed individual spaces could be made available in order to allow all users access to a private space for respite when needed
- Occupancy limitations should be implemented depending on the size of the room, in accordance with physical distancing protocols
- Consider signage indicating utilization protocol

Figure 9

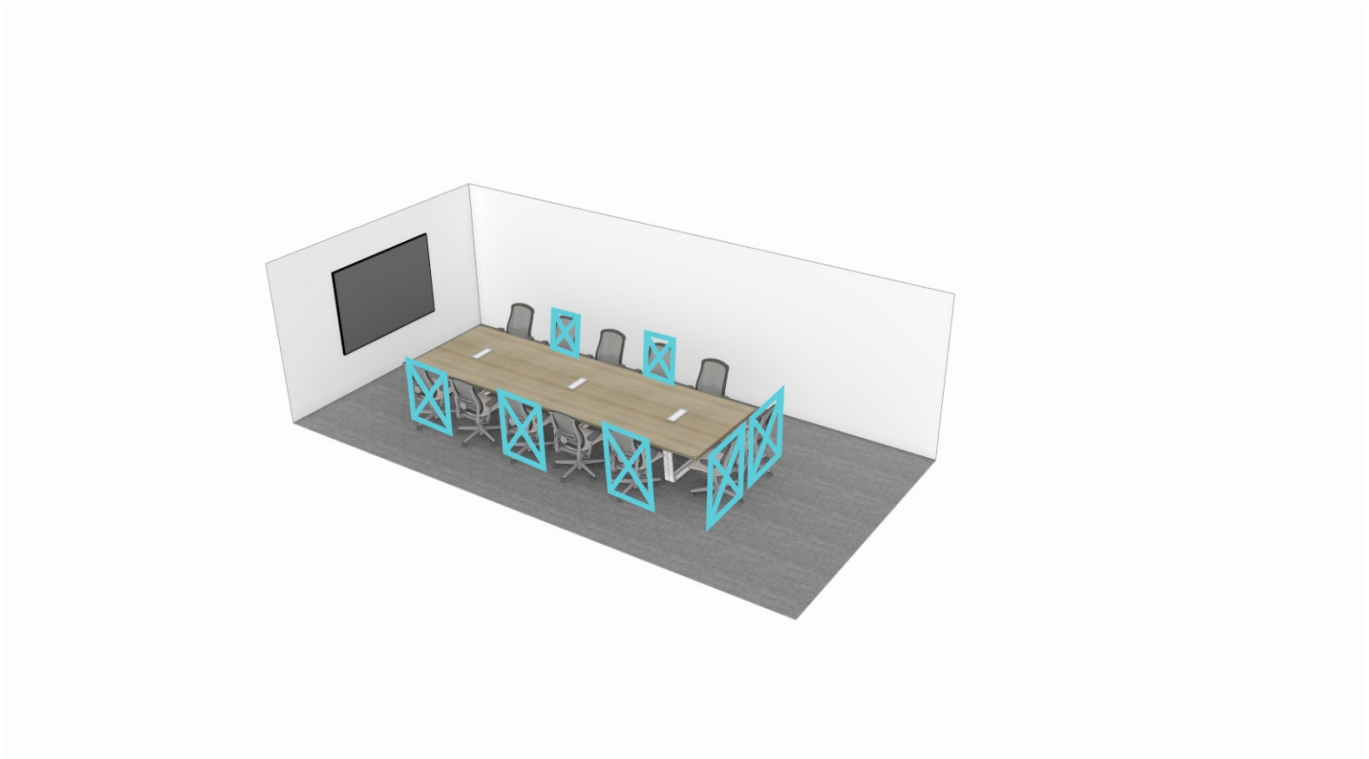


Meeting rooms and open collaborative areas

Given that workplace occupancy will most likely be reduced, meeting room and collaborative spaces may not require as much use. Nonetheless, minor changes can be made to maximize their use and safety at this time.

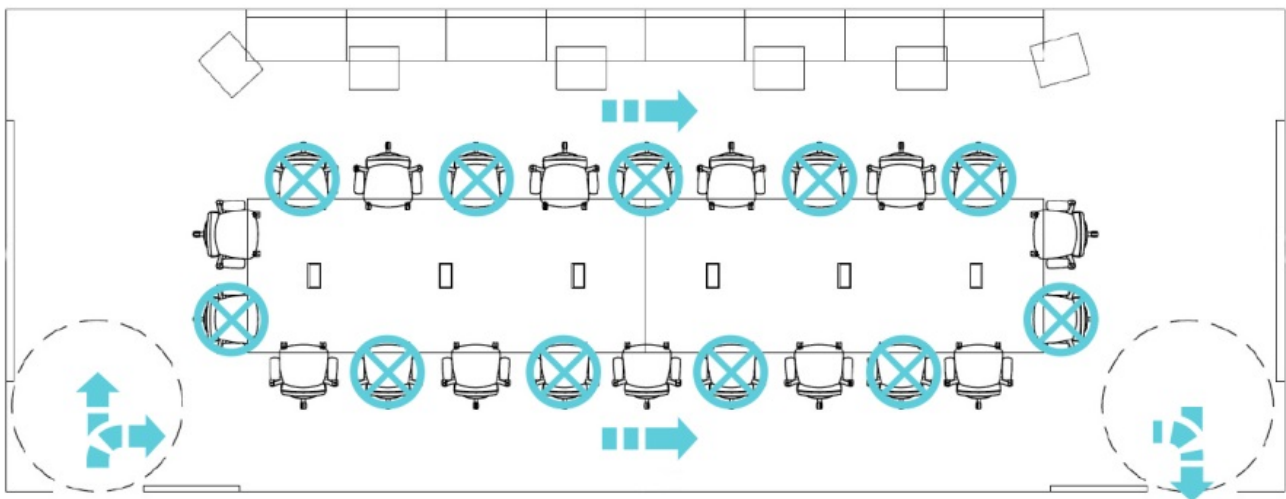
- Enclosed meeting rooms or other collaborative spaces should have reduced occupancy by removing chairs in order to maintain proper distance
- When employees are seated in a face-to-face manner, table surfaces—for example 36 inch (in) round or 48 in.(inch) wide surfaces—can be used as distance indicators
 - when the distance is less than 2 metres (6 ft.(feet)) a staggered seating approach should be used
 - consider indicating table widths to inform occupants
- Whenever possible, doors to rooms should remain open to encourage air circulation
- Consider indicating path of travel and dedicating some doors to entry and some to exit

Figure 10



► Text version: Figure 10

Figure 11



► Text version: Figure 11

Open collaborative areas should ensure proper distance between seats. This may mean the removal of seats as necessary.

Figure 12



► Text version: Figure 12

Equipment rooms, kitchenettes and other support spaces

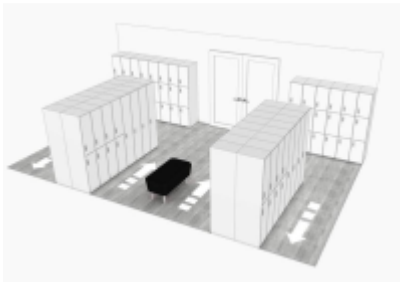
- Re-consider the immediate requirement for microwaves/fridges
 - if kept operational, consider limiting access and proximity to 1 person at a time with indicators on the floor to mark the distance to be respected
- Sinks and other appliances should be used by one person at a time respecting distancing at all times (marking the floors where applicable)
- Due to their small size, consider limiting the use of equipment rooms, copiers, and printers to 1 person at a time
- Consider signage indicating utilization, circulation direction, and cleaning protocols

Lockers, coat closets and other storage areas

- Locker areas should follow unidirectional travel (indicated with floor markers)

- Users should refrain from accessing their locker when someone else is nearby (within 2 metres) and wait for access
- Consideration should be made to prohibit the use of shared coat closets
- Consider signage indicating utilization, circulation direction, and cleaning protocols

Figure 13



► Text version: Figure 13

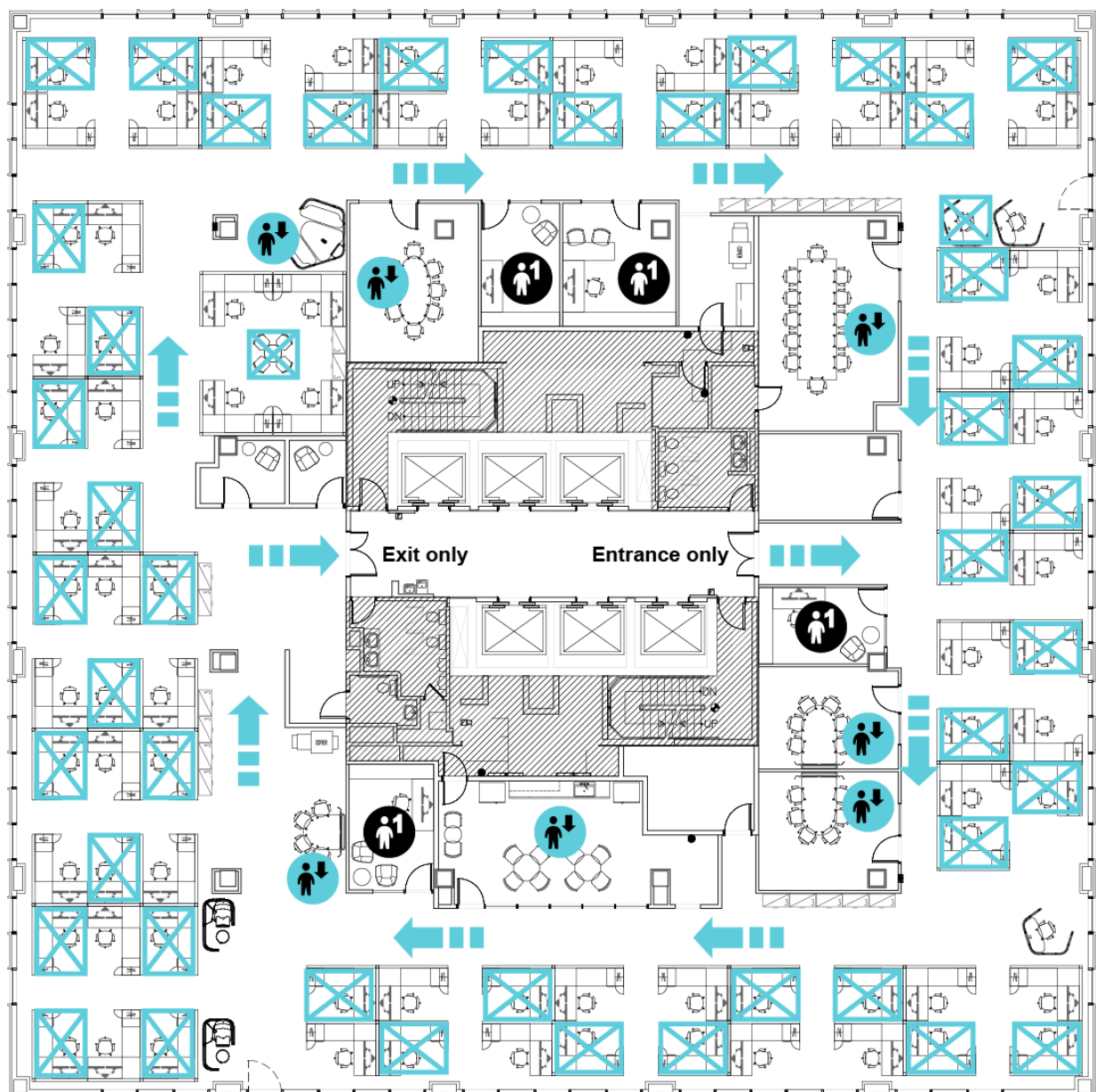
Circulation areas

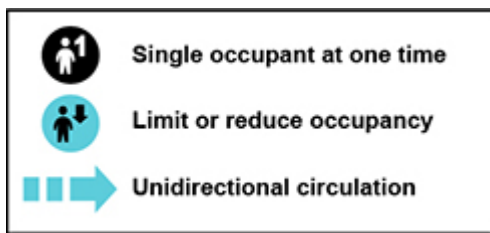
- Due to the width of circulation areas in most office environments, unidirectional circulation patterns for corridors throughout offices and workstations should be considered where possible
- The restriction of movement will assist with maintaining physical distance and limiting the potential spread of germs
 - marking floors and providing adequate signage to reinforce the practice is recommended
- Spaces outside meeting rooms could be marked for those waiting to enter, leaving adequate distance for people exiting and avoiding congestion points
- Consider conducting a scan of circulation areas and flows; this will help to disencumber pathways and limit potential for bottlenecks

- Any modifications to circulation widths or patterns should be done with consideration for accessibility requirements

The following floor plan provides an example of a staggered seating strategy across an entire floor. It indicates which workpoints shouldn't be used, modifications to use of enclosed rooms, and how to circulate in 1 direction (as much as possible) on the floor.

Figure 14





► Text version: Figure 14

Special purpose space

Although PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s mandate is for federal general administrative office space, many organizations may have special purpose spaces (SPS) where they need to apply similar physical distancing. When it comes to SPS (Special Purpose Spaces), the original design was based on the space supporting a program-specific function that required specialized construction, such as fixed millwork, added security, air or temperature control, etc.

- Special purpose spaces can include any of the following: warehouses, libraries, laboratories, records rooms, secure zones, drafting rooms, etc.
- In order to support social and public distancing in special purpose spaces, Canadian Public Health guidance and protocols should be considered providing signage and cues outside the points of egress to the SPS (Special Purpose Spaces) and inside the space
- Consider following the guidance for specialized areas such as laboratories, libraries and courtrooms from the subject matter experts of that particular cluster within the federal government, e.g. Health Canada, Library and Archives Canada, and Courts Administration Services

Public contact spaces

Employees may feel particularly vulnerable returning to workplaces that require them to interact directly with members of the public. As many grocery and retail establishments have had to adapt where there are close proximity interactions, temporary measures can be adopted to help employees safely integrate back into the workplace and to allow members of the public to safely receive required services.

- Where a 2 metre distance is not possible, like a transaction counter, it is recommended to add a visually clear barrier between the employee and members of the public, as suggested by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS).
 - It is important to consider that additional panels in the workplace may impact air circulation and the effectiveness of the ventilation systems; these should therefore be implemented in consultation with facilities and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) expertise
 - As a custodian, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has issued the following 2 documents (updated regularly on GCpedia) that should be referenced:
 1. Building water systems minimum requirements: (COVID-19) (GCpedia—accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
 2. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) minimum requirements (English/French) (GCpedia—accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
- It is recommended to temporarily remove or restrict some of the seating in public waiting areas to achieve a 2 metre separation between seats
- The CCOHS (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety) also recommends to add 2 metre markers to floors to promote distancing

for any potential line-up areas

Potential workplace modifications and enhancements to support a healthy workplace

In this section

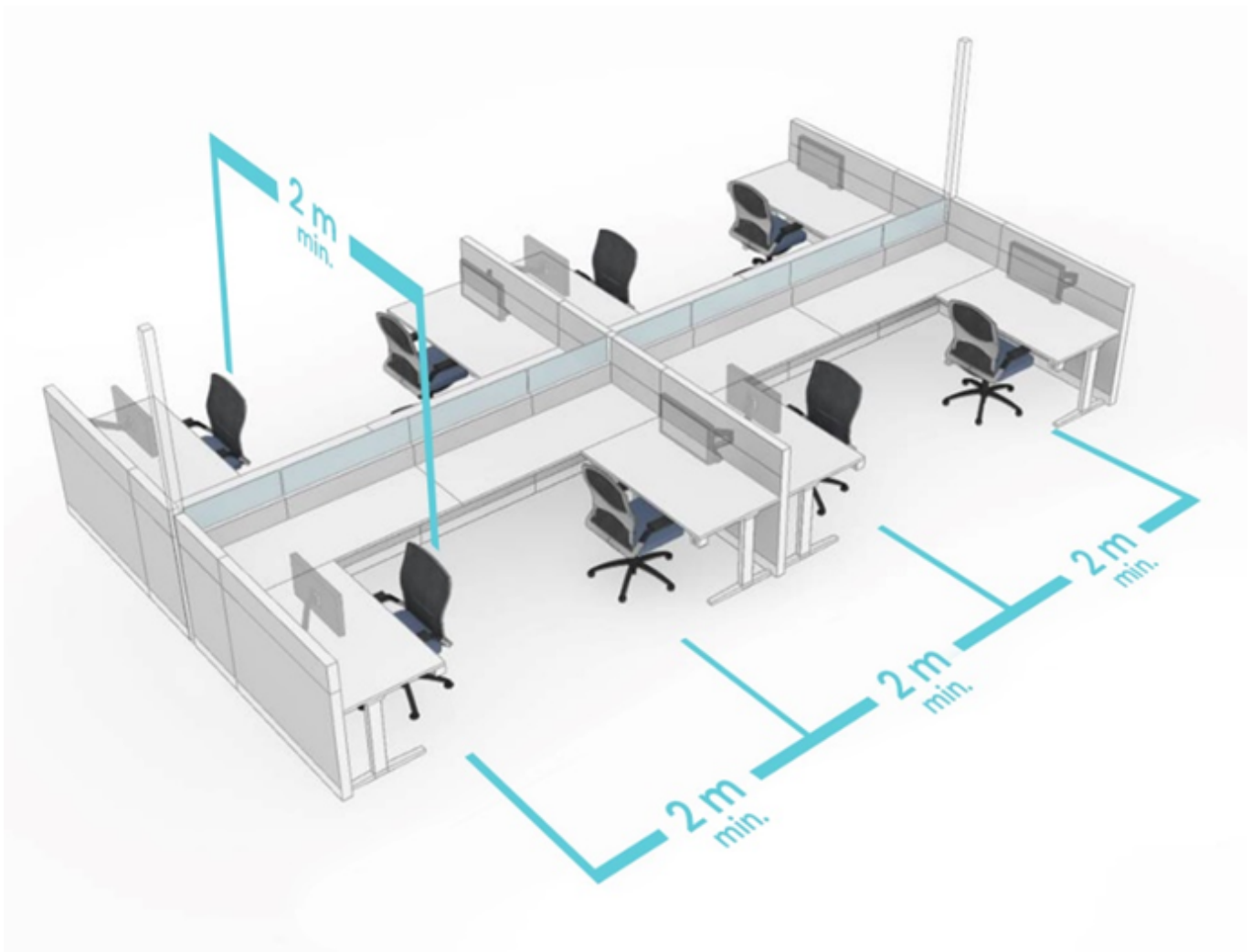
- Furniture reconfigurations
- Accessories
- Signage
- Temporary added measures for personal hygiene

Once the assessment of the current workplace layout and design is complete, there may be a requirement for small adjustments or additions to the workplace in order to maximize its use and provide reassurance and guidance to occupants.

Furniture reconfigurations

If workstations are easily reconfigurable (freestanding), it may be possible to space them out or reorient them in order to avoid face-to-face placement.

Figure 15



► Text version: Figure 15

Accessories

Creating physical and perceived boundaries in the workplace may help to maintain people's comfort and safety as they come back to work by providing visual cues for proper distancing. One way to achieve this is with the addition of screens and panels. Although at this time it is unclear if screens of any kind prevent the spread of infection, they can offer some level of psychological comfort to the people who occupy a space. These solutions should be applied with caution in order to not promote a false sense of safety and to consider their potential environmental impact should these items be deemed unnecessary in the future.

- Additional privacy panels between employees are not recommended if a 6 foot/2 metre distancing is possible
 - these are mostly required between employees and customers where there is public contact
- It is important to consider that additional panels in the workplace may impact air circulation and the effectiveness of the ventilation systems; these should therefore be implemented in consultation with facilities and HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) expertise
 - for more information on HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) recommendations please consult Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) minimum requirements- (COVID-19) (GCpedia – accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
- Freestanding privacy screens can help delineate space and provide cues for circulation

Figure 16



► Text version: Figure 16

i Note

These products should be added in consultation with professional and technical expertise to ensure potential egress issues are avoided and accessibility is maintained..

Signage

Consider that any design/usage modification or healthy workplace protocol put in place requires communication. Where new office etiquettes or norms are instituted, it is recommended to provide appropriate and comprehensive guidance to users via common communications channels to ensure they are aware of what is changing, what the expected behaviours are, and how these measures are intended to protect their health and wellbeing and that of others.

- Avoid overloading messaging and consolidate messages about usage etiquette and cleanliness specific to each area
- Consider using available technology such as large monitors as information screens to distribute communication on how to use the space
 - the placement of these information screens should avoid causing congestion in circulation areas, and avoid groupings larger than 5 people
- Consider the unexpected duration of this time period and multiple changes that could occur to protect public health.
 - signage placement and ease of modification should be considered as well as a consistent height and location throughout the workplace in every type of space, corridor intersection, or open area
- Consider accessibility by ensuring a universal approach to all signage so that it conforms to applicable guidelines
 - information should be made available in a diverse range of accessible formats, and using multi-lingual, culturally, and functionally appropriate language and format

Temporary added measures for personal hygiene

In order to support Canadian public health guidance and protocols, consider providing signage and cues within the workplace as reminders to employees to:

- wash their hands often and avoid touching their face
- encourage other effective hygiene practices to avoid the spread of germs such as coughing in elbows, not shaking hands, avoiding touching surfaces where not necessary
- stay home if feeling unwell

Refer to the PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) guidance documents](#)

To facilitate these practices, provide hand sanitizer stations where appropriate, especially at entrances to office areas, asking employees to sanitize their hands as they enter operational zones. Also consider these stations in areas that are furthest from the available washrooms and avoid creating bottlenecks so employees can maintain proper distancing.

Behavioural and utilization recommendations

While this document provides advice and guidance regarding the built environment, behavioural changes may be the most critical factor in maintaining a healthy workplace. And while the environment can be a significant catalyst for changing behaviour, the environment alone cannot keep people safe.

As part of the occupancy strategy, the following options may be explored:

- individual work points dedicated to daily use by any user

- reservation systems or strategies could be considered in order to monitor occupancy levels at all times
- a clean desk policy could be adopted to facilitate frequent cleaning of work surfaces
- encourage limited circulation throughout the workplace

In order to enable a healthy workplace in collaborative areas, consider:

- temporarily removing all non-essential chairs
- disencumbering common use areas to facilitate circulation and access by cleaning services
- having wipes/sanitizer available for broad and frequent use

Enquiries

Departmental workplace and fit-up enquiries should be directed to the departmental client accommodations representative.

General enquiries on this document should be directed to the GCworkplace mailbox: tpsgc.similieudetravailgc-rpsgcworkplace.pwgsc@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca

Resources and useful links

- [Government of Canada Workplace Fit-Up Standards](#) (GCpedia—accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
- [GCworkplace design guide](#) (GCpedia—accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
- [Government of Canada coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Awareness resources](#)
- [Interdepartmental Community on COVID-19](#) (GCpedia—accessible only on the Government of Canada network)

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Date modified:

2020-06-22

Building management direction for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

From: Public Services and Procurement Canada

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Scope

The purpose of this document is to communicate Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) property management approach during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

This functional guidance applies to all PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) real property inventory, including Crown-owned, lease-purchase, and leased facilities including those managed by a thirdparty real property contractor.

While this guide was developed for general purpose office space, other government departments who have real property custodial responsibilities may adapt this guide for their own unique program requirements as appropriate.

Context

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China. The virus did not match any other known virus. On January 7, 2020, China confirmed COVID-19. Since then, there has been a global spread of the virus, which has left health professionals on high alert.

Health Canada's Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is working with provinces, territories and international partners, including the World Health Organization, to actively monitor the situation. Global efforts are focused on containment of the outbreak and the prevention of further spread. PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) is working closely with the medical community to ensure that any cases of COVID-19 occurring in Canada continue to be rapidly identified and managed in order to protect the health of Canadians.

By mid-March, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and provincial leaders introduced social and physical distancing measures in an attempt to flatten the curve of COVID-19 spread within Canada. This meant that federal employees in non-essential services were asked to telework.

COVID-19 information

In this section

- [Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [Protecting yourself from getting COVID-19](#)

Spread of COVID-19

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets that are spread when you cough or sneeze
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

Cornerstones of the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) building maintenance program are proper operation of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC), water systems maintenance, and robust cleaning protocols to ensure the workplace, which also extends to building common areas and high touch surfaces are regularly disinfected.

Recent media articles and coverage concerning the role of air conditioning systems in spreading the virus may intensify employee concerns about the possibility of developing COVID-19 in the office environment.

In response to COVID-19, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has implemented the following additional HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) measures to enhance occupant wellness in our buildings. These measures are in keeping with industry guidance and consultation with Health Canada.

- Increasing the amount of outdoor air being provided to the space above code requirements
- Increasing the hours of operation of the HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems to promote increased dilution of contaminants and improved air circulation that promotes removal of fine particles
- Ensuring appropriate temperature and humidity levels in occupied spaces to promote occupant comfort and wellness
- Ensuring appropriate filtration is installed
- Ensuring that there is no potential cross contamination between washroom exhaust air and ventilation airflow

PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada), which is qualified to assess the risk of transmission through different modes, has indicated that the virus is not known to spread through ventilation or water systems. In addition, these adjustments are consistent with the updated recommendations on COVID-19 from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers.

However, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) will continue to monitor ongoing research in this area and be prepared to implement new measures if necessary, supported by science, to respond to concerns.

Protecting yourself from getting COVID-19

You can help prevent the spread of infections by:

- washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- coughing or sneezing into your sleeve and not your hands
- staying home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others

Building operations

In this section

- [Operation of Public Services and Procurement Canada buildings during COVID-19](#)
- [Posting of COVID-19 publication material in buildings](#)
- [Installation of hand sanitizers within our assets](#)
- [Use of facial coverings or other protective equipment by building personnel](#)
- [Role of the Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations](#)

Operation of Public Services and Procurement Canada buildings during COVID-19

While physical distancing measures are being imposed across the country and non-essential federal employees are teleworking, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) buildings remain open. Life safety systems continue to operate normally with completion of mandated and lifecycle maintenance. Contractors operating in federal buildings are performing necessary and preventative work.

Technical expertise in the following areas of building operations should be reviewed for continued health and safety of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) locations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) requirements are to supplement the completion of regular maintenance activities to provide enhanced indoor environmental quality to promote occupant wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic in buildings with reduced occupancy and full occupancy.

This includes:

- increasing outdoor airflow into buildings from the minimum required by code
- increasing operating hours of ventilation systems to ensure good airflow and dilution
- ensuring that the highest level of filtration that the HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system intend to use is installed
- ensuring appropriate humidity levels
- avoiding potential for cross contamination between exhaust air and supply air
- ensuring proper operation of cooling towers to address Legionella risks

Prior to re-occupancy of unoccupied buildings, the property manager will ensure that the building is flushed with the maximum amount of outdoor air for at least 24 hours.

As fewer people use the building water systems due to reduced occupancy as a result of COVID-19, there is increased potential for water stagnation that can increase the risk for bacterial growth (such as Legionella) and lead.

The water systems requirements, developed in consultation with Health Canada, include the following measures to mitigate these risks:

- regular flushing of the buildings hot and cold water systems to ensure continued water use while a building is partially occupied or unoccupied
- additional flushing of all fixtures before re-occupancy
- prior to re-occupancy, water sampling and analysis of the building water entry and most remote fixture where a building was unoccupied for more than a week

The above adjustments have been developed through the guidance of PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) as well as industry best practice associations such as Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada and using recommendations from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). They are also in compliance with the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations sections 10.17 and 10.18 on ventilation.

Requirements will continue to be reviewed and measures updated as required (for example change in PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) determination for transmission mode for the virus).

Posting of COVID-19 publication material in buildings

In an effort to increase awareness on proper handwashing techniques and factual awareness on COVID-19 in general, tenant department accommodation and facility managers are requested to post the following:

- elevators and/or common space areas: Know the facts about coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
- washrooms: Get the upper hand on germs poster

- any other relevant signage and wayfinding posters that are made available by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) or Health Canada to promote physical distancing in the workplace

Installation of hand sanitizers within our assets

As of March 6, 2020, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) committed to enhancing our proactive disease prevention measures by installing hand sanitizers outside tenant space (such as building entryways).

Hand sanitizing stations installed and maintained within tenant space should be done so via tenant service/additional building service.

Use of facial coverings or other protective equipment by building personnel

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) leverages the private sector to meet many of our real property needs and differing COVID-19 preventative measures may be observed across service providers in their role as employers and within their workplace safety policies (for example: use of facial coverings). Any additional measures imposed by service providers to their staff are not meant to replace proper handwashing or remaining at home when ill and should not be perceived as a concern within the work environment.

For example, Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions (BGIS), PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s service provider under the Real Property-1 and Real Property-2 contracts, has implemented the use of facial coverings by their personnel and vendors where physical distancing due to the nature of their work is not feasible.

Role of the Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations

TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) Directive on Building Emergency and Evacuation Teams assigns responsibility of the Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations (LSMEE) in a multi-tenant asset as the senior departmental manager of the primary tenant department that has the most employees in the building.

The LSMEE (Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations) role, historically known as the responsible building authority (RBA), is responsible for leading the emergency response at the building level, including common areas such as lobbies, with PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) undertaking a supporting role. The LSMEE (Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations) is accountable for building centric emergency plans and the overall health and safety of all employees in the building and, therefore, is empowered to make building wide decisions that affect the health and safety of employees. For example, the LSMEE (Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations) retains the authority to close buildings for various health and safety issues such as high temperature, unavailability of potable water, etc.

The LSMEE (Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations) is supported by a building emergency and evacuation team (BEET) organization. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) or their service providers play an important role in advising the LSMEE (Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations) and BEET (building emergency and evacuation team) at a local level on building operation matters.

Building cleaning

In this section

- Modifications to cleaning protocols

- Levels of cleaning services offered during COVID-19 pandemic
- Requests for additional cleaning/disinfecting
- Refrigerator cleaning services

Modifications to cleaning protocols

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) technical service experts have worked closely with Health Canada (HC) to develop the enhanced proactive cleaning/disinfecting protocols that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has implemented within our assets.

Consequently, effective March 23, 2020 and until further notice, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has amended their standard cleaning specifications to increase the cleaning/disinfecting frequency of high touch points to twice daily (from once daily). Health Canada guidance is that standard cleaning products can continue to be used. A list of high-touch points were included in the March 20, 2020 communication to the property management community, which included, but were not limited to, doors, handles, washrooms, stairwells, elevators, kitchenettes, boardroom tables, etc..

Effective April 20, 2020, tenant business centres and other stand-alone business equipment were also included in cleaning/disinfection of high touch points to twice daily.

It is expected that the above amendments to PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s standard cleaning specifications will continue until a vaccine for COVID-19 is available.

Note that these new provisions do not include the cleaning/disinfecting of individual workstations or any equipment within. These, as well as other services above the new protocols, would still be considered an additional

building service which employers are able to request from PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada). Health Canada has also published guidance on Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during (COVID-19).

Reinforcing the importance of frequent hand washing remains the cornerstone of preventing the spread of infections. Enhanced cleaning and the installation of additional sanitizing stations above the new proactive protocol now in place can be requested and are available through the normal tenant service processes.

Ongoing consultation between PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada), service providers and clients are instrumental to understanding client needs and the need to mobilize or supplement cleaning resources. Continued reinforcement of the cleaning specifications with the cleaning community is important in PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s commitment to nationally consistent service delivery.

Cleaning protocols are in line with Health Canada guidance as well as industry best practice associations such as Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada.

Levels of cleaning services offered during COVID-19 pandemic

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has always offered cleaning services to client tenants above the standard specifications for their unique program requirements. During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is using the following 3 definitions of cleaning:

Standard cleaning:

Cleaning that follows the standard cleaning specifications of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) or its service providers. This cleaning is offered at no additional cost to the tenant.

Enhanced cleaning:

Any request for cleaning/disinfecting services requested by the tenant that exceeds the services laid out in the standard cleaning specifications.

Specialized cleaning and disinfection:

Cleaning/disinfecting services requested by a tenant as a result of an employee with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or other similar type of infectious virus.

Requests for additional cleaning/disinfecting

There are numerous areas where tenant departments and agencies may approach building and facility managers to discuss implementing enhanced cleaning protocols needed to support their particular business needs. These may include public-facing services (for example: border crossings), areas with a high flow of visitors, high traffic areas, employee apprehension, etc.

If enhanced disinfection/cleaning is requested, a cleaning plan can be designed in collaboration between the tenant department and the cleaning contractor as a tenant service/additional building service.

Tenant department requests that are national in scope are being coordinated through the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) client account executives assigned to each department or agency and will be reported through the National Service Call Centre (NSCC). All other requests should be reported to the NSCC (National Service Call Centre) for tracking purposes.

Refrigerator cleaning services

The cleaning of the interior of refrigerators, their contents, and other appliances remain the responsibility of employers. Tenant departments are encouraged to discuss requests for additional building services with their

designated PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) client account team.

Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a building

In this section

- Reporting protocols for suspected or confirmed cases
- Cleaning/disinfecting process after suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 is reported
- Use of electrostatic sprayers in applying disinfectant
- Communicating to building occupants with a confirmed case of COVID-19

Reporting protocols for suspected or confirmed cases

All suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a building should be reported immediately to PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s National Service Call Centre. Due to privacy laws, employees should remain anonymous; manager names and general work area should be used for investigation and follow-up. Anonymous reporting has been integrated into NSCC (National Service Call Centre) procedure manuals, and agents have been trained in this regard.

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) property managers or their service providers should report all suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 following the 10A critical incident reporting protocols.

Based on advice from PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada), evacuation of the building is generally not required, however, this is an employer decision and not a PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) decision and will also depend upon the cleaning and disinfection product(s) being used and their application method.

Employers should notify the building's occupational safety and health committee as part of their employer responsibility for direction on how to further prevent the spread of disease.

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) or their service provider will react quickly in mobilizing cleaning contractors for required disinfecting processes (as reference in the cleaning/disinfecting protocol section below). Given that employers are more familiar with employee routines, touch points, and the general work environment, it is imperative that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) or their service provider work with the employer to design and implement an appropriate disinfection plan, including identification of disinfecting agents to be used, which may include (but not limited to):

- employee's and surrounding workspaces
- elevator control panel and buttons
- horizontal surfaces in boardrooms
- door handles/knobs
- frequently touched horizontal surfaces in stairwells and landings
- water taps, dispensers, door plates, counter tops, and flush valves in the washroom
- washroom partitions, doors and door latches
- kitchen and lunch room areas including appliances, sinks/faucets and furniture

Please note that reactionary measures in response to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 are to be funded by the tenant organization as a tenant service/additional building service.

Cleaning/disinfecting process after suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 is reported

When performing cleaning and disinfection as a result of a suspected or confirmed case, the following 2 stage process should be followed.

It is important to engage the health and safety committees and employer representatives when performing these cleaning and disinfection activities so that they are aware of the products and application methods being used in the work space. Some employees may have increased sensitivity to the products being used. As such, their employers need to be aware of products being applied in the workplace so that they can evaluate the need for alternative work arrangements.

Stage 1: Cleaning

Cleaning products remove germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces by using soap (or detergent) and water. Cleaning does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Stage 2: Disinfection

Disinfecting products kill germs on surfaces using chemicals. Health Canada has provided guidance that a solution of 1 part bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) to 9 parts water can be used for disinfecting most surfaces. Health Canada has also published a [list of hard-surface disinfectants with](#)

evidence for use against COVID-19). These should be reviewed by cleaning contractors to ensure their disinfection agents conform to the recommendations.

A disinfectant can be applied either by a manual method or mechanical sprayer (for example: electrostatic).

The product (disinfection chemical and application method) technical sheet **must** be consulted to ensure proper product application. Key elements to review include:

- dilution
- appropriate usage
- application methods
- product dwell time

The product material safety data sheet **must** be consulted to ensure proper safety measures. Key elements to review:

- personal protective equipment for the person applying the treatment (employer responsibility)
- active chemical ingredients
- occupants not wearing personal protective equipment are to vacate the area while treatment is being performed
- determine ventilation requirements for the space before occupants return

Use of electrostatic sprayers in applying disinfectant

The electrostatic sprayer can be an acceptable method for application of disinfectant but Health Canada has not provided guidance indicating that it is any more or less effective than traditional disinfectant application processes. As such, the use of the electrostatic sprayer relates to

operational considerations (for example: speed of application) as opposed to effectiveness. The electrostatic sprayer is another tool that can be deployed and is likely most useful in situations where there is a large area to disinfect.

Communicating to building occupants with a confirmed case of COVID-19

Communication with employees is an employer (tenant department) responsibility.

The *Canada Labour Code* Part II sections 125(1) (s), states that the employer shall "ensure that each employee is made aware of every known or foreseeable health or safety hazard in the area where the employee works"; and (z.11), which states the employer shall "provide to the policy committee, if any, and to the workplace committee or the health and safety representative, a copy of any report on hazards in the workplace, including an assessment of those hazards."

With alternative working arrangements being imposed for many federal employees, the impact on building occupancies, and the ways in which a positive case could be reported (for example: by employer, manager, through Public Health case tracing, etc.), it would be prudent during this health crisis that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) or its service providers confirm with the employer that the building's occupational safety and health committee has been notified.

In accordance with privacy laws, the identity of the person with the confirmed case should remain private.

Commercial operations

Support for commercial tenants affected by COVID-19

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat released guidance on rent relief on March 31, 2020. The authority to provide relief rests with each department and rent deferral put in place by PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) aligns with the TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) guidance provided. PSPC has implemented interim measures to allow tenants to defer rent payments, up to 90 days, on a case-by-case basis beginning April 1, 2020.

On April 24, 2020, the Prime Minister announced a partnership with provinces and territories to deliver the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance for small businesses. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is liaising with TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) on the implementation details as it provides for potential rent relief for commercial businesses leasing space from PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) where they can demonstrate certain impacts to their business. Specific direction on the implementation is forthcoming.

Return to the workplace

In this section

- Public Services and Procurement Canada's role in re-occupancy preparations versus that of employers
- Steps involved in preparing assets for occupant return to work
- Expectations when entering buildings
- Building entrance assistance
- Building entrance self-assessments
- Disposal receptacles for non-medical masks and face coverings
- Plexiglas partitions

- Assistance for commercial food services and retail re-openings

Public Services and Procurement Canada's role in re-occupancy preparations versus that of employers

Employers

Employers are responsible for formulating and implementing return to workplace strategies that are specific to the nature of the work performed, services provided to Canadians and the current set-up of their workplaces. In alignment with recommendations from Health Canada, employers should introduce physical distancing measures within the workspace in areas such as workstation utilization, conference rooms and other collaborative spaces, as well as, in shared areas such as kitchens and eating areas. Signage and barriers (such as Plexiglas) can be installed in appropriate areas of the office space to aid in the safe movement of employees and the public within federal facilities.

Employers are encouraged to implement workplace visitor guidelines to restrict traffic flow within a building and encourage physical distancing during the pandemic.

The Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer has assembled representatives from departments and centres of expertise to develop practical guidance that could be adapted by deputy heads for a range of circumstances across the public service in their return to occupancy preparations.

Public Services and Procurement Canada

As the common service provider of office accommodation for the Government of Canada, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is implementing building operational level procedures to ensure healthy and productive work environments for the eventual return to occupancy. PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is working with tenants to establish introductory occupancy limits, traffic flow management and signage installation to promote physical distancing, and will continue to monitor operational protocols for water, ventilation and life safety systems (fire alarms, emergency lighting, exit signs, etc.). In addition, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is participating with TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) and Health Canada to provide federal departments and agencies with overall guidance to support them in establishing their plans for a progressive return of employees to the workplace.

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) has developed additional workplace resumption advice to provide deputy heads and departmental interior design team guidance on how departmental operational zones can best be adapted to accommodate new Health Canada Public Service Occupational Health Program precautions.

Steps involved in preparing assets for occupant return to work

While physical distancing and telework provisions are reducing general occupancy rates in PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) buildings at this time, we recognize that, in the future, occupancy levels will begin to increase.

While incorporating nationally consistent guidance, it will be important for PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) and their service providers to develop and implement building specific operational plans to prepare

the building for re-occupancy and encourage physical distancing. Examples of upcoming special provisions at the building operations level include:

- working with tenants to establish introductory re-occupancy limits
- traffic flow management for common areas which may include building entrance/exit protocols, one directional hallways/stairwells and elevator/washroom capacity restrictions
- appropriate signage, floor markings and communications to guide occupants and encourage physical distancing
- reinforcing protocols with tenant departments on physical distancing awareness in high traffic areas
 - the publication of TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) or Health Canada workplace signage and wayfinding is an essential element of maintaining workplace awareness
- quickly and efficiently responding to any additional cleaning and disinfection requirements tenant departments may have to support employee level comfort and confidence in the workplace
- continuing to provide disinfection of high contact surfaces twice daily, and also extending the scope to include tenant business equipment such as photocopiers and shredding equipment (where tenant permissions are provided)
- compliance with heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) minimum requirements— COVID-19: monitoring HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) to ensure the comfort of the occupants (includes outdoor air ventilation assurance, filter checks, and humidification systems management)
- compliance with building water systems minimum requirements: COVID-19: progressively flushing building water systems, as well as conducting water filter checks, to protect the integrity of potable water and enhance the efficacy of Legionella management programs in place

- continuing pest monitoring programs where applicable (which also includes visual inspections of the space)
- continuing elevator maintenance programs to ensure efficient transportation of employees to their work points and ensure other alternative circulation pathways (stairwells) are well serviced. Where the building characteristics permit, one set of stairs can be designated for upward moving traffic and an alternate set for downward moving traffic

It is important that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) be informed ahead of time of occupants intended date of re-occupancy so that the appropriate measures can be taken to ensure a safe, healthy and welcoming environment for employees.

Expectations when entering buildings

Building managers will work with the building's Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations, Building Emergency and Evacuation Team and tenant occupational health and safety communities to implement physical distancing and traffic flow measures within common building areas. While re-occupancy preparations will be specific to the individual building, examples include:

- Designated one-way entrance and exit points
- Elevator protocols limiting passengers
- Hand sanitizers
- Wall signage and floor markings promoting physical distancing
- Reduced seating in commercial areas
- Designated stairwells for one-way traffic
- Washroom occupancy restrictions
- Modifications to security desks (for example: Plexiglas barriers)

Accessibility considerations for persons with disabilities will be at the forefront of all re-occupancy measures—this includes height appropriate signage, floor markings that do not cause obstruction, and elevator priority for those with physical or mobility impairments.

TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)'s Federal Identity Program has developed "Temporary Signs and Markings Guide for Federal Workspaces" which can be adapted to meet unique building requirements to help occupants navigate through the environment.

Building entrance assistance

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is encouraging the Lead Senior Manager for Emergencies and Evacuations for each location to engage their BEET (building emergency and evacuation team) and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) committees to assign a resource to fulfill a Workplace Ambassador role. This resource would be responsible to welcome people, reinforce physical distancing and traffic flow behaviors, and provide help to anyone needing assistance.

To support employer roles in large multi-tenant complexes, Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions has developed a common space concierge program as a supplemental support to monitor distancing practices, provide roving support to patrons, and assist in overall return to workplace experience. This support would be client funded.

Building entrance self-assessments

PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) will work with tenant departments to promote the use of self-assessment measures through signage at the entrance of buildings.

Upon arrival, employees and visitors will observe signage posted on entrance doors which prohibits individuals from entering the facility if they are experiencing symptoms of illness or have, in the last 14 days:

- traveled outside of Canada
- had close contact with someone with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19
- had close contact with a person who developed respiratory illness after returning to Canada

It is important for employers to reinforce the significance of individual self-assessments in promoting workplace wellness.

At this time, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) is not deploying the use of temperature screening of occupants at entrances prior to entering office buildings.

Disposal receptacles for non-medical masks and face coverings

The Public Service Occupational Health Program (PSOHP) has confirmed that used non-medical masks and face coverings do not need to be disposed of separately from regular building waste. If possible, they should be placed in a no-touch plastic-lined waste receptacle to minimize handling and prevent cross-contamination but it does not need to be a separate waste receptacle than the one used for other regular waste.

Hand hygiene should be performed after disposing of a used non-medical mask or face covering.

Plexiglas partitions

Plexiglas can be an effective barrier that reduces the risks of droplet transmission between individuals who are not able to physically distance at least 2 metres (like shared workstations or small boardrooms).

However, there are potential adverse impacts of Plexiglas installation that require consideration:

- depending on height and placement, partitions can decrease the effectiveness of ventilation airflow in an occupied space by creating areas of airflow stagnation (like dead zones)
- partitions can reduce the effectiveness of the ventilation system in controlling fine particles and providing ventilation air to building occupants
 - this may adversely affect the indoor air quality in the space
- depending on location, they may affect circulation paths and egress routes in the event of an emergency

Recommendations

- The height of Plexiglas partitions should be set to ensure proper balance of both protection and airflow
- The partition placement needs to take into consideration the placement of supply air diffusers and return air grilles in the space
- To minimize the use of Plexiglas partitions consideration should be given to:
 - spacing occupants at workstations to promote physical distancing
 - re-orienting occupants in their workstations to promote physical distancing and direct their faces away from each other

Inquiries related to barrier installations should be discussed with your PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) account executive.

Assistance for commercial food services and retail re-openings

Commercial retail operations within PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) national real property inventory have been affected by physical distancing measures, reduction in building occupancies as well as the

mandatory shutdown directives of many provincial/territorial jurisdictions across the country. Despite reduced occupancies, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) buildings have remained open and life safety systems continue to operate normally with completion of mandated and lifecycle maintenance. In addition to this, additional instructions for increased outdoor airflow through HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems and ongoing flushing of water systems to prevent water stagnation and bacteria growth have been reinforced.

While commercial vendors are responsible for their own business resumption activities and the adherence to jurisdictional restrictions and best practices to attract and retain clientele upon reopening which include sanitization measures, PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) will offer support to vendors in their business resumption activities in common building areas under federal control to promote safe reintroduction of retail business activity such as physical distancing signage and communication, removal or spacing of dining furniture, and overall monitoring of these areas.

Enquiries

Building-specific enquiries should be directed to the real property team assigned to that building.

General enquiries on this document should be directed to the National Director, Property and Facilities Management Services Directorate, Real Property Services, Public Services and Procurement Canada.

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Guidebook for departments on easing of restrictions: Guidance for Information Management and Technology

From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Shared Services Canada (May 2020)

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Context

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Government of Canada departments and agencies have put in place various interim measures to ensure business continuity in the context of the pandemic. The following should be considered as physical distancing measures are lifted and federal employees reintegrate the workplace.

Information management

- Remind your staff of the importance of good Information Management (IM) practices.
- Employees have a core responsibility for strategically managing information and data assets throughout their lifecycle, as per the Policy on Service and Digital.
- It is of particular importance that decisions and activities of business value are documented, regardless of medium or form, and moved into a departmental corporate repository (e.g GCdocs, RDIMS). This includes, but not limited to, email messages and attachments, information created in collaboration tools such as MTeams, information saved on employee desktops etc.

Network capacity

Complete network assessment if the Microsoft Office 365 (M365) suite was deployed in your organization.

- If the network assessment was completed, monitor the status of the remediation work.
- If the network assessment was not completed, consider limiting the use of certain tools, such as Microsoft (MS) Teams, upon return to the office.

Prioritization of information technology requests

(Infrastructure/Network/Project)

- Update Departmental IT Plans to ensure GC prioritization of IT requests, specifically where SSC services are required.
- Engage with respective Client Executive Teams at Shared Services Canada (SSC), for the prioritization of Information Technology (IT) requests based on the level of urgency and operational requirements. SSC Client Executive teams will then ensure proper escalation against GC prioritization with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). This collaboration will ensure a balance between departmental business needs, load on government-wide IT infrastructure, and efficient coordination of support provided by SSC Service Lines.

Collaboration tools

- Identify and decommission unsanctioned and/or temporary tools that were utilized in the context of the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. GCCollaboration.ca, Zoom, etc).
- Engage with departmental IM teams in any decommissioning efforts to ensure that documented decision making and information of business value are moved into a departmental corporate repository (e.g GCdocs, RDIMS).
- Consider how automated tools can be leveraged, where possible, in moving information and data to corporate repositories and during clean-up exercises.
- Encourage the use of GC managed collaboration tools moving forward (e.g. M365, Cisco Jabber)

- In collaboration with SCC, assess the utilization of existing tools (e.g. Webex) to determine the impact of the newly deployed tools (e.g. MS Teams).
- Restore provisioned infrastructure and licensing, which was increased during the crisis to improve efficiency and application performance from remote locations, to normal capacity as departmental staff return to GC sites to perform duties.

IT service operations

- Data Centre Infrastructure Hosting Capacity
 - Additional DC infrastructure capacity was procured and/or provisioned into production across several GC department application environments to ensure the stability and performance with extraordinary transaction levels due to COVID-19.
 - Application assessments should be conducted to determine where and how much of the additional capacity should be decommissioned for ongoing system maintenance and cost management reasons.
- Data Centre Facilities Management
 - Resume regular electrical and cooling systems maintenance schedules at all GC data centres as support and vendors are permitted to return to regular work schedules.
- Data Centre Operating System Patching and Maintenance, Changes, Upgrades
 - With limited change windows and Covid-19 workload prioritization, normal patching schedules and system changes were disrupted and/or deferred.

- GC Departments should proactively determine appropriate extended change windows to allow security patching and functional change requests back log to expected standards.
- Ever-greening projects / IT Refresh
 - Project activities to refresh infrastructure hardware and software versions were slowed down due to COVID-19 workload prioritization. Funding and prioritization schedules should return to normal governance to ensure sustainability of application health.

IT assets

- Based on a review of your departmental teleworking practices, ensure GC IT equipment continues to be provided to employees and the balance of equipment that was provided strictly for teleworking activities during the pandemic are returned once GC workplaces are reintegrated.

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