COVID-19

Reopening for Business

Craft Sector Recovery

JUNE 1, 2020

This document gives general advice to members of the craft community for businesses such as craft studios, craft shops and galleries preparing to re-open. This document does not constitute any formal rules or regulations and is an interpretation of the rules as set out by public health directives at the time of publication and is subject to change.



Introduction

The most important aspect of re-opening businesses is to follow your provincial Public Health Directives. It is important to note that in Atlantic Canada, all 4 Atlantic provinces are at different phases in the COVID-19 recovery, so COVID recovery will be different in each province and region.

The changes to public health directives are ongoing, so as recovery phases change, the requirements for social distancing, mask wearing, group gathering limits and other measures will also change. Businesses should stay informed by following updates on their respective provincial government's COVID-19 information web pages. (see resource section below)

BE AWARE that while provinces are moving towards recovery, it is possible that public health may from time to time adjust levels of restrictions based on what is happening in each province. Given that a second wave of the COVID-19 virus could happen, businesses need to stay informed and adapt to the current situation as it develops.

Key Activities

The following are guidelines to consider for various elements of the craft sector. Whether you are a craft shop, maker studio, gallery or organization, planning is key to a successful reopening.

- **Develop a Reopening Plan**
- **Implement and Enforce Your Plan**
- **Keep Up to Date on Changes in Public Health Directives**
- **Communicate Your Plan**

Think about the activity that happens within your space—direct sales to consumers, craft production, demonstrations, workshops, etc. Consider how you adjust your workflow to adhere to public health measures like social distancing and social gathering limitations.

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Your plan should consider all areas of work which may include: retail sales area, public areas, washrooms, dressing areas, production areas, waste disposal, cleaning, entry/exits, merchandise sales, security, seating, parking and staff areas. Consideration for adjustments that reduce the risk of exposure at your space to you, your staff and customers should be made.

This has been a difficult time for many, so keeping in mind everyone's mental health is key too, including yourself, your staff and your customer.

Communication

It is critical to maintain and adapt a communication plan that addresses the needs of your business, whether it is a retail shop, gallery or studio. You should communicate your plan and ensure people understand it. If possible, depending on your situation, maintaining a visitor registry (names, dates, time, and contact information) is a good way to facilitate potential public health contact tracing, if that became a priority.

Some considerations when building your communication plan:

- **Develop communication protocols** to determine how employees, suppliers, visitors and others are notified of a case of COVID-19 and actions to be taken, as a result.
- **Ensure employees and customers receive new and important public health information** in a timely and efficient way
- **Actively promote messages that discourage people who are sick from visiting your shop or studio.** Make sure policies are clearly posted on site, particularly any changes to existing policies (ie: payment processes, more flexible refunds). Social media and other communication channels should continue to be used regularly to advise your customers

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Your Employees

Consider how employees will prepare to return to work. Outline their duties and responsibilities for understanding, implementing, and enforcing your COVID-19 prevention and reopening plan.

Things to consider when developing this part of your reopening plan include:

- How will you screen employees for symptoms?
- What information will you give them to make sure they're self monitoring?
- How will you support staff to stay home if they're sick?
- If an employee is required to self-isolate, how will they be assessed before or after returning to work?
- How will you make it easier for employees to keep their hands clean?
- How will you communicate this plan with your staff?

It is especially important to take steps to stay safe at work. Make sure to include what actions employees need to take for:

- Self-assessment
- Training
- Understanding duties and responsibilities under your prevention plan
- Monitoring and enforcing the plan
- Address non-compliance
- Personal protective equipment

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Some considerations for developing employee policies:

- Assessing how your shop or studio will be affected if one of your employees is ill
- Maintaining up-to-date important medical contact information (e.g., medical officer, health department, health clinics, etc.)
- If essential travel is required for you or your employees, documenting how the can travel safely and in compliance with public health directives for self-isolation upon returning to Nova Scotia (if required)
- Revising work schedules to reduce the number of employees assigned at a given time
- Creating plans to address an outbreak or respond if public health measures are tightened again
- Training staff on what is expected of them (including hand hygiene, how to correctly wear and maintain PPE, etc.)
- Training staff on how to enforce non-compliance with customers
- Training staff to answer questions about new policies and procedures
- Creating incident reporting guidelines should a customer or guest report having COVID-19
- Increasing staff breaks to create opportunities for more frequent hand-washing

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Welcoming Visitors Safely: Site Specific Plans

Customer Self-Screening: post signage on your door or entrances to remind customers of general protocols around preventing the spread of COVID-19, such as self-isolation for recent travelers, and listing the symptoms related to COVID-19.

Promote the Use of Masks: especially in circumstances where physical distancing is not possible. While not mandatory in most of Canada, masks have been proven to help limit transmission and voluntary use of masks in public is another way we can help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.

Hand sanitizer at entrance and exits provides customers with the ability to quickly disinfect their hands and reduce the risk of transmission

Post your policies, hours of operation and anything specific to your location that may be important to your location for those visiting your shop.

Consider offering disposable gloves to shoppers—craft objects are tactile; people want to touch without worrying about germs! Implement a quarantine procedure for items for sale that are exposed to large numbers of people. If gloves are used, ensure there are proper disposal receptacles

Support local makers who are producing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by selling items like masks in store. Consider having a donation box upon entry that allows shoppers to pick up their mask for immediate wear! (Masks sold at retail should be properly packaged to avoid pre-wear contamination)

If baskets or shopping aids are available to shoppers, sanitize after every use

Washrooms facilities, if available, will also require special consideration for cleaning, sanitizing and a process to provide effect cleaning during business hours. Provide a visual poster of proper handwashing protocols

Develop and implement a symptom-free staffing policy that supports staying home when sick. Plan for the possibility that you may need to clean and sanitize should a covid-19 case be identified through contact tracing to yourlocation.

Remove non-essential items like magazines, brochures, playbills, flyers and other items that can't be easily cleaned from public areas

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Social Distancing:

Current best practice is to limit the total number of individuals within a retail location at any one time to enable social distancing—consider using the current provincial guidelines on group limits to determine how many customers should be allowed in-store at once.

- **Re-organize retail shop layout** to allow for better social distancing; use arrows on the floor to direct a flow of traffic (if applicable)
- **Protect staff**—install protective barriers for cashiers, if possible
- **Place floor-markers** to indicate 6' distances between people in cashier queue
- **Place signage** around shop to remind people to socially distance
- **Considering ways to reduce the number of visitors** in your shop at any given time. A queue outside can work and help manage flow through shop.
- **Reviewing seating arrangements** to account for social distancing
- **Discouraging unnecessary physical contact** between employees and customers
- **If you plan to offer online shopping and curb side pick-ups, have a process in place and communicate that to customers**. Ideally, time slots and traffic control along with placement in trunks of vehicles would be a best practice.

Payment:

- **Promote a single source**, cashless & touchless payment, where possible
- **Clean & wipe down** payment terminals between use
- **Consider equipping employees with PPE** to reduce transmission risk whendealing in cash payments
- **Encourage customers to bag** own purchases

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Store Cleanliness:

Refer to your PROVINCIAL Public Health Directives website for Coronavirus for detailed information on Cleaning Guidelines

- **Implement frequent, scheduled cleaning & sanitization**—because COVID-19 spread can occur via surfaces, commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized regularly. Pay special attention to high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, railings, and commonly used areas such as countertops and cashier areas.
- **Provide training** to staff on hygiene and sanitation practices
- **Consider operating with reduced hours** to allow staff extra time for cleaning and disinfecting before opening.
- **Actively ask for employee input** on protective measures—they are your front-line workers, and can help you see issues that may be less obvious

For further reading, we recommend downloading the Retail Council of Canada's "Road to Recovery Playbook" for a deeper examination of key issues, detailed guidelines and best practices.

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This section concerns craft studios where the maker is inviting the public into their space, whether for direct retail, demonstrations or workshops. These locations may be individual makers, small group makers spaces or cooperative spaces.

Special consideration should be given in cases where the makers studio space is located within the home of the maker or business owner, as situations where direct contact with the living space could impact their entire family. You will need to determine whether visits from clients are possible in this situation.

Consider studio visits "by appointment only"—taking online or phone appointments, in advance, to visit your studio will also allow you to pre-screen your visitors to ensure they are in compliant with public health regulations and that you have appropriate facilities to ensure a safe visit. Designated appointment times will also allow proper time spacing to allow for cleaning and sanitizing between appointments.

Retail Operations for Studios:

(See the above guidelines for retail shops)

It is suggested that makers with retail spaces within their studio environment, alter their floor plans and layout to clearly define and separate the retail space from the working space within the studio, to minimize the risk to your work space and your staff.

Publish your COVID-19 policies online. Advise clients and potential customers on your website and your preferred methods of social media, so that customer know what to expect when visiting your studio.

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Demonstrations:

If your studio visits involve scheduled or ongoing demonstrations, consider implementing the following measures to ensure the safety of all those involved and observing.

- **Social distancing:** de-lineate a viewing area for demonstrations by placing floor markers or barriers at 6' ft.—intervals that family groups can fit in, as well as audience-to-demonstration separation of at least 6' feet.
- Based on studio size and layout, **consider the maximum number of participants** that can occupy the space and post signage at the entrance.
- **Ask visitors to wear a mask**, if social distancing is not possible.
- During busier periods, **create timed-interval demonstrations** that enable viewers to take turns observing
- Weather permitting, **consider moving demonstrations outside**, where there may be more space for social distancing and provide better viewing
- Any studios offering demonstrations with audience interaction should **ensure equipment is properly sanitized** between each demonstration

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Workshops:

Measures should be made to ensure social distancing is possible for all workshops, allowing at least 6' of space between participants and encourage the use of PPEs (masks & gloves)

- **Tools and equipment should be sanitized** after each session
- When possible, workshop participants should **avoid sharing of tools and materials** (consider including a personal set of materials as part of the workshop fee)
- If sinks are not available for hand washing, **make hand sanitizer available** to workshop participants
- **Washrooms facilities**, if available, will also require special consideration for cleaning, sanitizing and a process to provide effect cleaning during business hours.
- Weather permitting, **consider moving workshops outside**, where there may be more space for social distancing and provide better movement of participants

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Workplaces:

We recognize that many craft related organizations also house offices, studios, retail spaces, galleries, incubator programs, workshops and more. We suggest that these organizations should have a detailed, individualized reopening plan that addresses all the areas of staff interactions and public access within their organizations, buildings and spaces. Please review all the areas contained in this document and consult your provincial public health reopening guidelines.

Craft Organizations returning to work can take several measures to ensure the safety of their employees and clients, such as:

- **Ensure that all employees are able to return** to the workplace, given any medical issues or restrictions they may have
- **Equipping your office space with hand sanitizer** and sanitization wipes
- **Encourage personal cleaning routines** and offer staff cleaning & sanitizing materials to help maintain a concerted effort towards overall cleanliness
- **Rearrange office space** and common areas to ensure social distancing is possible
- **Communicating to employees** what you are doing and ask for their input
- **Consider gathering limits** before organizing staff-wide meetings – break into smaller groups instead. This will also allow staff members a better opportunity to have their opinions heard in a smaller group setting.
- **Boards & Stakeholder Meetings:** Organizations should strongly consider holding virtual meetings instead of in-person board meetings and AGMs

STAY INFORMED: Be sure to clearly communicate your re-opening plans to customers, and stay safe! Use your website and social media to indicate your COVID policies, hours of operation and direction when visiting your studio.

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Craftspeople and retailers in Atlantic Canada can stay up-to-date and access more guidelines and tips for re-opening on the following provincial recovery web pages:

- Nova Scotia
- New Brunswick
- Prince Edward Island
- Newfoundland & Labrador

Some other Resources for COVID-19 Support and Re-opening:

- Retail Council of Canada: COVID-19 Resources for Retailers
- Retail Council of Canada - Retail Recovery Playbook
- Factsheets and posters (for displaying social distancing reminders, self-isolation instructions, etc.)
- Federal support for businesses

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This FAQ section is based on actual questions posed to craft organizations in the region from small businesses and makers.

Craft is Tactile – with people coming to shops, what are the protocols around touching product and sanitizing product?

Consider offering hand sanitizer upon entry to the shop, as well as disposable gloves. You can consider sanitizing product on display if you are not worried about the risk of surface deterioration.

Are there protocols around people trying on clothing?

Protective mask wear by customers should be recommended to help reduce spread of droplets onto clothing items. Consider offering assisted shopping, with sales associates holding up items for customers to see. It is recommended to sanitize fitting rooms regularly/after each customer. Consider quarantining items for 24-72 hrs after try-ons or returns, if accepting. Other recommendations: increased use of mannequins, modeling clothing items on social media & websites, create at least 6'-8' of space between clothing racks to allow for comfortable browsing.

What are the rules around hosting craft workshops in studio in groups of 4-6 people? Is there a square footage rule for the social gathering group limit?

The use of protective eyewear and gloves should be considered for workshops where the sharing tools or materials (including water) occurs. Even within the current guidelines for social gatherings (ex: groups of 5, 10 or more, or based on the provincial phase at the time), people are expected to be socially distancing. Protective masks are additionally recommended for situations where individuals' proximity to each other may pass within 6 feet. There is no current rule or guideline in place allowing for an expanded group limit for larger spaces.

Is Covid-19 transmitted via water?

Although there is no current evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be spread directly through water, you should use precaution where all shared spaces are concerned. In occasions where water is used for craft workshops, personal wash/water basins are recommended.

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To access my home studio and shop, visitors need to walk through part of my home. Is it safe to open it?

Ideally you should maintain a separate space from your home which can be easily and reliably sanitized. Consider an outdoor display you can easily put up and down on nice days, to minimize the need of exposure to your home space.

If customer exposure to your home is inevitable, you should establish procedures that allow for minimal contact with surfaces, such as propping doors open and using floor markings to direct traffic through to your primary shop or studio space. Studies have shown that sustained exposure is the biggest factor for infection. However, a single cough or sneeze has been shown to release significant enough droplets containing virus particles to cause infection (these droplets travel quickly and may land on any given surface in your home, opening you up to the risk of infection).

Should I require visitors to bring and wear their own masks, and wear one myself?

Mask wearing is currently being recommended by the province in all situations where proper social distancing is not possible.

If there is more than five in a family coming to the studio does the five-person rule apply?

Same-household groups of more than 5 people and family bubbles are exempt from social gathering limits. Consider asking families and family bubbles to identify themselves before entering your space; if you are not comfortable hosting groups of more than 5 or the current provincial limits, in your shop or studio, you should make it known on your welcome signage, along with your website and social media.

Is there increase risk using air conditioning in small space?

Possibly – directed airflow stemming from an air conditioner may increase the risk of person-to-person droplet transmission. If you are adhering to social gathering limits and enforcing proper social distancing, this may not be a concern. See ref: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/7/20-0764_article

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Is there a need to disinfect outdoor sculptures?

Not likely, unless there are surfaces that are regularly touched by visitors—abstaining from touching should be advised. We recommend posting signage to discourage touching of surfaces that are not for sale in shops and studios (or outdoor sculpture gardens, etc.).

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