GSA Safer Workplace Strategy Book

October 8, 2021 | VERSION 7.0

Introduction

OUR COMMITMENT

GSA is committed to helping agencies lead a safe and effective return to on-site operations. This strategy book is a compilation of information from across government and industry that can be used as a framework of considerations for returning to GSA owned and leased facilities.

We have included practical solutions from GSA's own return to the workspace planning, however, the solutions may need to be adapted to fit your own agency's needs.

The information in this strategy book should not be interpreted as directives or requirements from GSA.

Your Charge

We are living in a world that is rapidly changing, and guidance is constantly being updated.

The information in this strategy book represents of the moment guidance, however, your agency should continue to monitor CDC guidance and adapt reopening and reoccupancy plans as more information is made available by federal and local resources.

This strategy book will help your agency determine its reopening strategy and is just one tool in your toolkit.

Plan and Reassess

Every agency will have its own timeline for reopening offices (most likely in tandem with continued telework) and should conform to the White House Priorities for Combating COVID 19.

Phased reopening is based on state and local recommendations for when it is appropriate to reintroduce employees to the worksite.

After initial reopening, changing local conditions will require agencies to continue to monitor and adapt their plans.

In addition to reopening preparations and early phased occupancy, a review process will be key.

This Book is:

- A sequence of steps that apply what we have learned over the past year
- A framework for how to approach decision making for the future workplace
- Practical examples for how your agency may approach a return to facilities plan
- Intended to complement information from other federal agency resources

This Book is NOT:

- A step by step guide of how to safely reopen your office
- A series of directives or requirements from GSA
- A one size fits all solution

Refer to GSA.gov for updated guidance.

How to Use This Strategy Book

This strategy book guides agencies' plans for resuming use of administrative offices.

Strategy Book Organization

This strategy book addresses a wide range of business, operational, and facilities considerations for reopening workplaces. The point of view is high-level. Each agency will need to address specific conditions, location by location.

Readers can access each section of the strategy book by clicking on the desired section tab at the top of the page.

Each section represents a separate sequential strategy for agencies to reference when developing their return to workplace plans.

BUSINESS PLANNING

This section addresses a framework for planning the timing, approach, and other elements of reopening. It also offers specific guidance for the phased reopening of workplaces.

Considerations include:

- Who is requested back to the office, with emphasis on essential on-site functions
- Building and workspace capacity
- Management of flow and number of people working in the office at one time

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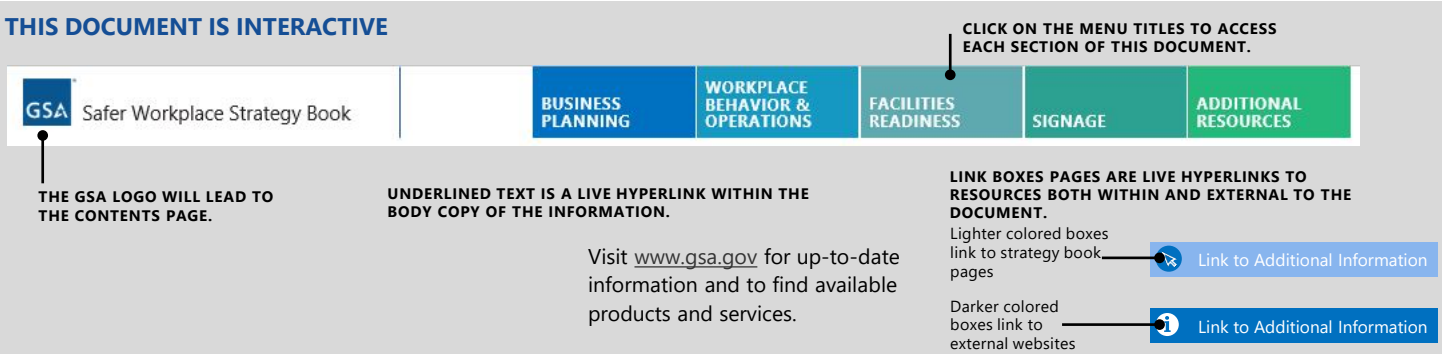

WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR AND OPERATIONS

This section details behavioral and operational protocols for individual and shared workspaces, access control, and specifically addresses cleaning, disinfection, HVAC and workplace safety.

FACILITIES READINESS

This section details reopening preparations for a building and its workspaces. Subjects include physical distancing and space readiness, and provides guidelines for excess seating, physical barriers, occupancy planning considerations, and natural range of movement.

The section includes specific considerations for:

- Reception and waiting areas
- Open work areas
- Circulation
- Individual workspaces
- Meeting rooms
- Pantry and breakroom spaces
- Common spaces
- Restrooms
- Outdoor areas

SIGNAGE

This section includes information on signage in building common areas and within a tenant's space.

Also provided is a complete, printable signage package that can be downloaded from gsa.gov.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section discusses future workplace strategies, desk sharing and provides GSA resources for workplace assistance.

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Business Planning

This section includes best practices for workforce reentry. Some concepts shown in this section may not be applicable for your agency or may be applicable for your workplaces of the future.

The concepts shown are meant to be conversation starters—**not specific solutions**.

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Phases for Reopening the Office

Define a plan for bringing employees back in phases, building in flexibility to reassess and adjust to changing conditions.

Link to CDC Assess Essential Functions

Link to OPM FAQs

Assess Supply and Demand

Determine Building Capacity

Work with your GSA Building Manager or GSA Lease Administration Manager to assess the number of people that your building can safely accommodate at one time.

Also consider :

- Vertical circulation: How many people can stairs and elevators safely support in the building given physical-distancing considerations?
- Public transportation: Access, availability and use of public transportation may affect how employees will arrive at the office.

Determine Workspace Capacity

Compare the headcount of in-office staff that are needed per phase with the building capacity once physical-distancing considerations are applied. Follow current CDC guidance on physical distancing.

Determine if the required headcount can be accommodated within your footprint. If the required headcount cannot be accommodated, re-evaluate the number of staff in each phase or consider shift work.

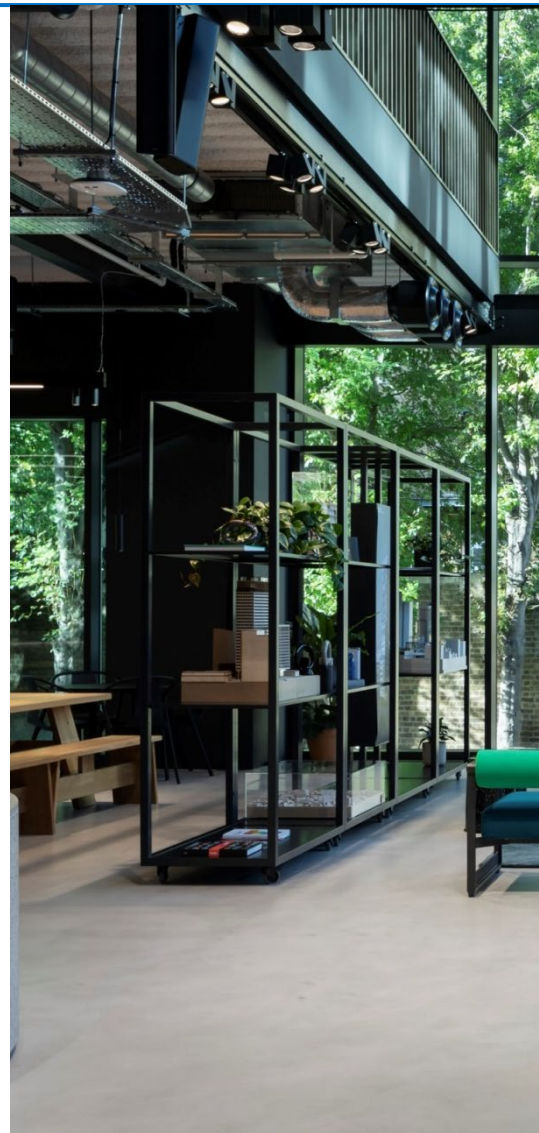
Also keep in mind that if your agency has mission-specific spaces (e.g., labs, SCIF, etc.), the reduced capacity of these spaces may affect the number of people who can return to the workplace per phase.

GSA's Center for Workplace Strategy has contracts available to assist agencies with capacity planning. Contact us at workplace@gsa.gov for more information.

Continual Assessment

A reopening plan also requires a period of monitoring and adjustment.

The plan should be adapted to evolving regulations and guidelines. Use federal and local guidelines and employee feedback, as well as guidance from your agency or other government agencies, to inform those modifications.



Preparing for Reopening

Support employees as they make plans for returning to the office. Prioritize safety and health in preparations and actions.

- Link to CDC Considerations for Masks
- Link to CDC People at Higher Risk
- Link to OSHA Preparing to Return
- Link to CDC Workplace Guidance

Other Considerations Before Reopening

Visitor's Policy

Your agency will determine its visitor's policy and may decide to limit visitors to only essential guests until guidelines change.

Childcare Centers in GSA-Controlled Buildings

Operating decisions for childcare centers are made by providers in consultation with their Board of Directors, as applicable. If GSA closes a building, the childcare center in that building will also need to close.

Local public health authorities can also close childcare centers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued guidance on childcare centers.

Mask/Face Covering Guidance

Mask/face covering guidance has changed over time. Please follow current CDC guidance, as well as applicable Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial guidance regarding mask/face covering usage. For additional information on mask/face covering guidance within GSA-controlled facilities, please refer to the GSA Safer Federal Workplace website.

Acquiring, Distributing and Using Personal Protective Supplies

Communicate if supplies will be provided by the agency, and which, if any, agency-provided supplies may be utilized by employees outside of the office.

Personal protective supplies can be procured through GSA Advantage!

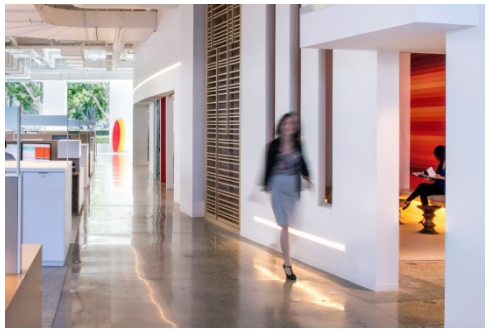
Reasonable accommodation may be required for an employee whose disability prevents or causes difficulty using personal protective supplies.

Government Owned Vehicles (GOV)

Refer to your agency's policy on the use of shared GOVs and the number of passengers, since guidance will vary from agency to agency.

Refer to GSA's Vehicle Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for COVID-19 for information on how to appropriately clean shared government vehicles.

For vehicle purchasing information, contact GSA Fleet at gsafleet@gsa.gov



Workplace Behavior and Operations

This section includes best practices for workforce reentry. Some concepts shown in this section may not be applicable for your agency or may be applicable for you workplaces of the future.

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Behavior and Etiquette at Workspaces

Some workspaces call for additional protocols and policies.

New Workspace Policies and Protocols

While the workplace will feel familiar, there may be new ways of working, new policies, and new protocols.

Individual Workspaces

Individual spaces include workstations, private and shared offices, and shared workstations.

Frequent Cleaning and Disinfecting by Individuals

Employees should clean frequently used individual workspace surfaces and equipment before and after use (e.g., desktop, keyboards, telephones). Employees should not rely on others to clean surfaces.

Cleaning supplies and materials provided by the agency may be for agency use only.

Shared Workspaces

Open Collaboration Areas

Inform employees of any tools that they can use to reserve open collaboration spaces.

Meeting Rooms

Consider the following questions for meeting rooms:

- Can the in-person meeting be replaced with a virtual meeting?
- Should the size of the in-person group be limited?
- Are you able to use digital alternatives to shared collaborative tools?
- Can the door be left open during the meeting to decrease the time spent in an enclosed space?
- Does the room technology support staff who are participating remotely?

Spaces for Wellness and Inclusivity

If possible, provide a space reservation tool for booking Nursing Mother's, All-Gender and Interfaith Rooms. Consider extending reservation blocks to allow users to have ample time to disinfect the rooms before and after use.

Other Shared Spaces

Other shared spaces include pantries, breakrooms, restrooms, copy/fax/print rooms, and shipping/receiving spaces.

Besides following current CDC guidance for mask use and physical distancing in shared workspaces, consider providing cleaning supplies and wipes so that employees have the ability to wipe down handles/pulls and buttons on personal property and equipment (e.g., coffee makers, microwaves, refrigerators, copy machines and phones) in frequently used spaces like breakrooms and copy rooms.

Occupant agencies are responsible for funding, procuring, and making available sanitizer products, disinfectant wipes and similar products for use by employees and visitors. To purchase cleaning supplies, visit the 2021 GSA Annual Supply Catalog. You will find photos, descriptions and prices for over 7,500 National Stock Numbers (NSNs) of the most commonly purchased items, including office supplies, furniture, furnishings and cleaning supplies.

For additional ordering options for products and supplies, visit the Disaster Relief and Pandemic Aisle of GSA Advantage! to identify needed items.

Access Control

Minimize uncertainty and maximize safety by managing entry points, establishing touchless protocols, and defining queuing at key zones.

Link to GSA Safer Federal Workplace site

Space Use

Establishing access control can help your agency set expectations for space use. Because these operations may represent a shift in people's day-to-day experience, constant and clear communication will improve adoption.

Planning should include consideration of the needs of employees with disabilities, and agencies should be prepared to handle requests for reasonable accommodation.

Touchless Environment

Evaluate the need for touchless devices or additional services that enable employees to access and utilize spaces hands-free.

If an agency wishes to make updates to its space, please contact your GSA Building Manager or the GSA Lease Administration Manager for pricing and approval. Agencies will need to provide a Reimbursable Work Authorization (RWA) through eRETA to fund updates.

Screening and Queuing

To implement enhanced entry screening procedures at a GSA-controlled facility, the building's Facility Security Committee (FSC) must convene and vote to determine whether enhanced entry screening, elevator capacity limitations, and other elements of access control need to be taken into consideration.

While agencies occupying leased locations may require COVID-19 screening for their employees or visitors, they cannot impose such restrictions on other building occupants. The FSC or the occupant agency should contact the GSA Lease Administration Manager to determine how to implement screening procedures within the confines of the occupant agency's space.

GSA is responsible for queuing protocols for building lobbies, enhanced entry screening areas (where applicable), and entry-level elevator banks within GSA-owned federal buildings.

For additional information on enhanced entry screening, visit the Safer Federal Workplace webpage.

Visitor Check-in and Access

Communicate which groups are considered essential visitors at building and floor entries:

- General public
- Business-essential visitors
- Deliveries
- Non business-essential visitors

Share the visitor list with security/reception to ensure that essential visitors have site access.

Consider check-in and delivery processes that minimize the sharing of tools and surfaces while maintaining a streamlined experience.

If applicable to your agency, consider restricting delivery of personal packages to reduce package volume.

Capacity Limits – Elevators

Within GSA-controlled facilities, GSA will work with each building's FSC to determine whether protocols must address the number of occupants in an elevator.

Agencies within leased locations cannot impose elevator capacity restrictions.

One-Way Traffic

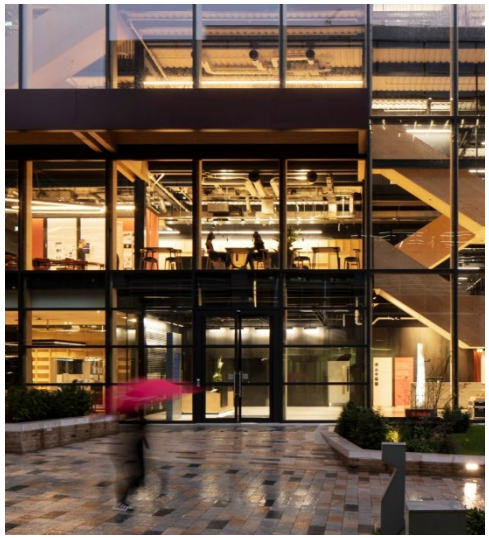
Consult with your GSA Building Manager or GSA Lease Administration Manager to determine whether your office entries/exits may be designated as one-way. One-way travel may impact building egress and could pose safety concerns, so consultation with GSA experts is critical.

If designating one-way travel, maintain an open line of communication with security, reception, and employees, where necessary, to provide critical assessment and refinement.

Density Monitoring

Once the workplace is operational, it is important to monitor peak flows and potential pinch points. This information—most easily retrievable from seat reservation software as well as entry/exit turnstile data—can be collected, analyzed, and assessed on a regular basis, to allow for modifications and adjustments.

Maintain an open line of communication with security, reception, and employees to provide critical assessment and refinement.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Workspaces

Employees want to know that their work environment is not only clean but is also protected. Different space types require different cleaning protocols.

- Link to CDC Guidance for Cleaning
- Link to OSHA Protecting Employees
- Link to GSA Cleaning and Disinfection

Maintain a Healthy Work Environment

To successfully reopen, the workplace should be a healthy and responsive environment.

GSA has modified the existing cleaning contracts for federally owned buildings based on CDC recommendations where buildings are cleaned using products containing soap or detergent for high-touch surfaces in common and high traffic areas as part of routine cleaning. Cleaning with a soap or detergent is very effective at destroying all virus variants on surfaces, without the use of disinfectants. CDC has confirmed that this cleaning, combined with other risk-mitigation actions (hand-washing, distancing, etc.) are effective at helping reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Cleaning staff must wipe down all solid, high-touch surfaces in building common areas (defined as those areas used or accessed by the government's employees and visitors) at least daily.

GSA has updated lease language for all new leases commencing October 2021 to incorporate daily cleaning requirements in accordance with the most recent recommended CDC guidelines. This new janitorial language includes the addition of text to address cleaning for high-touch surfaces in common and high traffic areas. Cleaning in accordance with these adjusted specifications aligns with CDC direction.

"Lessors are required to maintain the Premises and all areas of the Property to which the government has routine access, including high-touch surfaces (e.g., door knobs, light switches, handles, handrails, and elevator buttons) in a clean condition and shall provide supplies and equipment for the term of the Lease."

Concerning existing leases, the temporary cleaning/disinfecting language has expired and has been removed. However, all lessors were notified by letter specifying that GSA expects them to adhere to CDC's most recent cleaning guidance.

Refer to GSA's Safer Federal Workplace website for further cleaning and disinfection guidance for federal and leased locations.

An occupant agency is responsible for cleaning its individual workspaces, as well as government-issued personal peripheral property such as computers and screens, keyboards, computer mice, and telephones.

Occupant agencies are responsible for procuring and providing services and/or products to clean and disinfect these items as desired. This service is also available from GSA on a reimbursable basis, upon request.

Disinfection Supplies

An agency may wish to provide disinfectant wipes or cleaning supplies in common and shared space and throughout the office for employees to use for individual workspace cleaning.

Encourage employees to wipe down all surfaces and equipment before and after use.

Cleaning supplies and materials provided by the agency may be for agency use only.

Consider placing additional waste bins throughout the workplace to accommodate increased waste from frequent disinfecting of hands and surfaces.

Employees' active participation toward the protection of the public health in the workplace is important. Each employee has the opportunity to contribute toward a safer work environment.

You can find resources to help your agency procure disinfecting supplies at www.gsa.gov/coronavirus.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Workspaces

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- Link to CDC Guidance for Cleaning
- Link to OSHA Protecting Employees
- Link to GSA Cleaning and Disinfection
- Link to EPA's List N: Approved Products

GSA's Incident Response

When an occupant organization at a GSA-owned or leased facility becomes aware of a COVID-19 incident involving an employee, contractor or visitor of that organization, the organization must immediately notify all of its staff, contract employees and the GSA Facility Manager/LAM. The organization must also notify the Designated Official (DO) and the FCS for the facility. Furthermore, the building occupants must notify their visitors that if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms within 14 days of the visit, the visitor must notify the building occupant.

Once notified of a COVID-19 incident in a leased facility, GSA will notify the lessor and provide the date and time of the incident and areas accessed. The GSA Facility Manager/Lease Administration Manager will coordinate with the lessor vacating individuals from potentially affected areas, and to restrict access to those areas to the extent the areas can be restricted without compromising the means of egress in the event of an emergency, and to ensure complete cleaning and disinfection of all affected portions of the space.

- If 72 hours or less have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, it is cleaned and disinfected.
- Disinfection is performed, as required, using product(s) on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) N-List or equivalent.
- If more than 72 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

Notifications to POCs for building occupants, contractors, DO and FSC, must be as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours after the incident was first reported to GSA.

When an occupant agency notifies GSA of a COVID-19 incident, they must not send any PII, such as the affected individual's name, symptoms, COVID-19 status, or any other data that is likely to identify a particular person.

GSA must establish if the lessor has a pandemic plan in place that follows CDC guidelines and matches the GSA scope of work. If so, GSA must confirm that the cleaning for the immediate workspace of by the individual with the confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 will be done under General Clause #12, Maintenance of the Property, Right to Inspect. GSA must also confirm whether or not the cleaning will be provided free of charge to the federal government. If not, GSA will negotiate with the lessor to perform the cleaning according to the following directions.

- For confirmed or suspected coronavirus cases, GSA will fund and provide for detailed cleaning and disinfection of the impacted individual's immediate workspace according to CDC guidance, which may exceed GSA's National Custodial Specification or as otherwise described in the lease agreement.
- On a reimbursable basis, GSA will also provide for the cleaning and disinfecting of those portion(s) of the facility not accessed by the infected individual(s) according to the recommended CDC guidance.
- These procedures do not apply to leases that have been delegated to occupant agencies. For such leases, the occupant agency remains responsible for all cleaning and disinfecting services according to the terms and conditions of the delegation agreement and according to the lease.

Refer to GSA's Safer Federal Workplace website for additional guidance for confirmed or suspected cases in federal or leased facilities.

Workplace Safety

Behavioral change, coupled with environmental factors, can help prevent infection.

- Link to CDC Guidance for Business
- Link to CDC Worker Safety & Support
- Link to EPA Air Cleaners & HVAC Filters
- Link to EPA Indoor Air and Coronavirus
- Link to OSHA Hazard Identification
- Link to OSHA Preparing Workplaces

Safety in the Workplace

Workplace safety relies upon the employer setting policies, training workers in those policies, and upon employees following them. We have highlighted key policy and protocol considerations that relate to work-place operations. Links are provided for agencies that publish other definitive information about workplace safety.

Engineering Controls

Engineering controls and safe work practices can be used to respond to COVID-19 hazards in the workplace.

Engineering controls involve physical barriers (e.g., installing partitions and sneeze guards) and building systems (e.g., installing high-efficiency air filters and increasing ventilation rates). For information on physical barriers, refer to the Facilities Readiness section of this strategy book.

Building Systems

Building systems such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) are essential for maintaining a healthy work environment.

Work closely with your GSA Building Manager or the GSA Lease Administration Manager on the timing and planning for your agency's return to the workplace.

In GSA-operated buildings, the CDC's HVAC recommendations will be incorporated based on existing equipment, current configuration, and reoccupancy schedule, including disabling demand-control ventilation, increasing operating hours, increasing use of outside air, ensuring air filters are properly sealed, and upgrading air handler filtration efficiency.

GSA is documenting the specific actions taken and planned for each government-owned, non-delegated building and will share with the occupant agencies. The information will be shared with agency points of contact and will cover HVAC systems, air filtration and plumbing systems.

GSA is notifying lessors for all active GSA leases that they are expected to follow current industry practices by considering the application of the latest CDC guidance concerning building ventilation and water systems. These building ventilation and water systems guidelines are located in the CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), May 2020, under sections "Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system" and "Ensure the safety of your building water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown."

In accordance with current CDC guidance, GSA recommends lessors consider modifying the engineering controls using the building ventilation system, which may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase outdoor air ventilation, after taking into account the outdoor air quality of the surrounding area.
- Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).
- Further open minimum outdoor air dampers (as high as 100%) to reduce or eliminate recirculation. In mild weather, this step should not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold or hot weather.
- Improve central air filtration to the MERV-13 or the highest compatible filter with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Extend operating hours of systems to increase air exchanges in the building space.

Occupant Emergency Plan

As buildings are being reoccupied, GSA Facility Mangers are reminded to review the current Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP) and make revisions to the evacuation procedures based on which occupants return to the workplace.

Some facilities are being reoccupied in phases, and some of the individuals with specific responsibilities who assist in a building evacuation (e.g., floor wardens, stair wardens, etc.) may not yet have returned to the facility.

If designated assembly/rally points outside of the building have changed, or those individuals needing assistance during the evacuation have changed, this will need to be reflected in the updated OEP.

The OEP should reflect current office procedures, such as teleworking and other activities. The OEP review will be able to establish the minimum requirements with respect to how to maintain physical distancing, requirements for mask/face covering usage, and how to process occupants re-entering the building following an evacuation.

The OEP is just one element of the building's emergency management program. It is assumed that as the federal facilities are repopulated, the updated OEP and information related to the emergency's evacuation procedures are shared with the returning occupants as part of the communication associated with the COVID-19 procedures.

Facilities Readiness

This section focuses on reopening preparations for facilities and work areas commonly found in administrative offices, using diagrams to illustrate concepts.

The concepts shown are meant to be conversation starters—**not specific solutions**.

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Universal Considerations

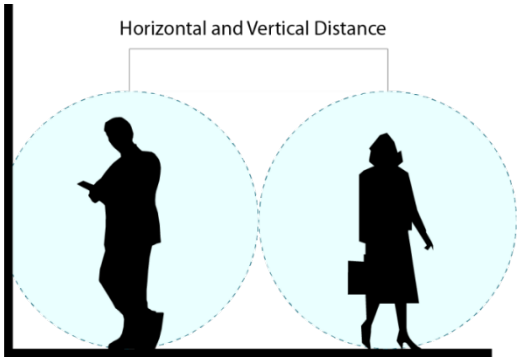
These are overarching considerations that either address the building as a whole or apply to multiple space types.

Link to CDC Guidance for Business

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is a key factor in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Refer to current CDC guidance, as well as other Federal, State, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance for physical distancing requirements. For additional guidance within GSA-controlled facilities, please refer to the GSA Safer Federal Workplace website.

The CDC has recommended distances to maintain. You should base your facility planning on current CDC guidance.



Touchless Experience

In addition to maintaining a cleaner facility, consider looking for solutions that minimize people's contact with surfaces.

Agencies who wish to install automatic hold-open devices on doors should consult with the GSA Building Manager or Lease Administration Manager and the GSA Regional Fire Protection Program Office. Plans for installing hold-open devices on doors must be reviewed by the GSA Fire Protection Officer.

Requests to modify tenant spaces and install touchless features in restrooms (e.g., motion activated toilets, faucets, and towel dispensers) must be approved by GSA or lessor and may require an RWA.

Occupancy Monitoring

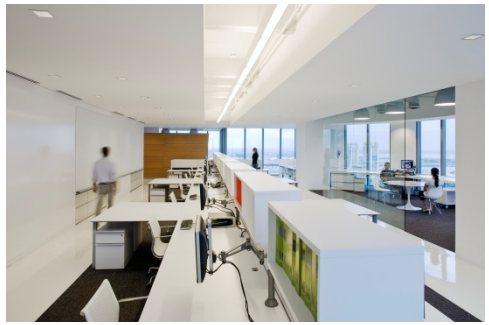
Consider installing sensors at your office entry, conference rooms, break areas, and other shared agency spaces to monitor the number of people occupying such spaces at one time—as an alternative to stationing staff at those locations for that purpose.

Natural Range of Movement

People do not always sit at the same spot at their workstations. Instead, there is a natural range of movement within the footprint of each individual workspace.

Similarly, when preparing a cup of coffee in a breakroom, a person may move quickly from the cabinet to the coffee machine, then to the refrigerator. The areas in front of the cabinet, coffee machine, and refrigerator form a natural range of movement for making coffee.

For optimal physical distancing, consider the distance from the outer edges of people's range of movement when estimating the capacity of a given space. Continue to follow CDC guidance on physical distancing for changes in recommendations.



Universal Considerations

There are numerous specific actions by which your agency can prepare your space.

Link to CDC Guidance for Business

Space Readiness

The following considerations can be used to limit capacity, where required, and visually communicate new space usage and protocols. Above all else, follow current CDC guidance.

Refer to CDC's Choosing Safer Activities guide.

Removal of Excess Seats

Removing or cordoning off excess seats in meeting spaces, workstation areas, break rooms, cafeterias, and other common spaces will provide a reminder to staff to maintain physical distancing, as appropriate, based on their vaccination status. Individuals are responsible to certify their own vaccination status, and follow the appropriate distancing requirements associated with their particular status, and based on current CDC guidance.

Limitations on Common Space Capacities

Meeting rooms, copy/print rooms, and other common spaces can accommodate a limited number of people at the same time without compromising physical distancing.

The precise number of people will depend on the size and configuration of the space. Signs may be posted both outside and inside the space to inform and remind users about recommended capacity.

Visibility of Workspaces

Using an online reservation system will provide digital visibility into the workspace, allowing staff to determine the overall planned occupancy of the workspace on the day(s) that they intend to come into the office.

Physical Barriers

When adequate physical distancing is not an option, the CDC recommends installing transparent shields or other physical barriers where possible. For physical barriers between workstations and hallways, consider using transparent or translucent acrylic or glass for any barriers extending above 54 inches to permit visibility and prevent unintended collisions.

In the case of sit-stand desks, installed barriers should move with the desk.

Physical barriers should be adaptable to changing circumstances and are not intended to extend to the ceiling, as this may impede air circulation, lighting layouts and building sprinklers.

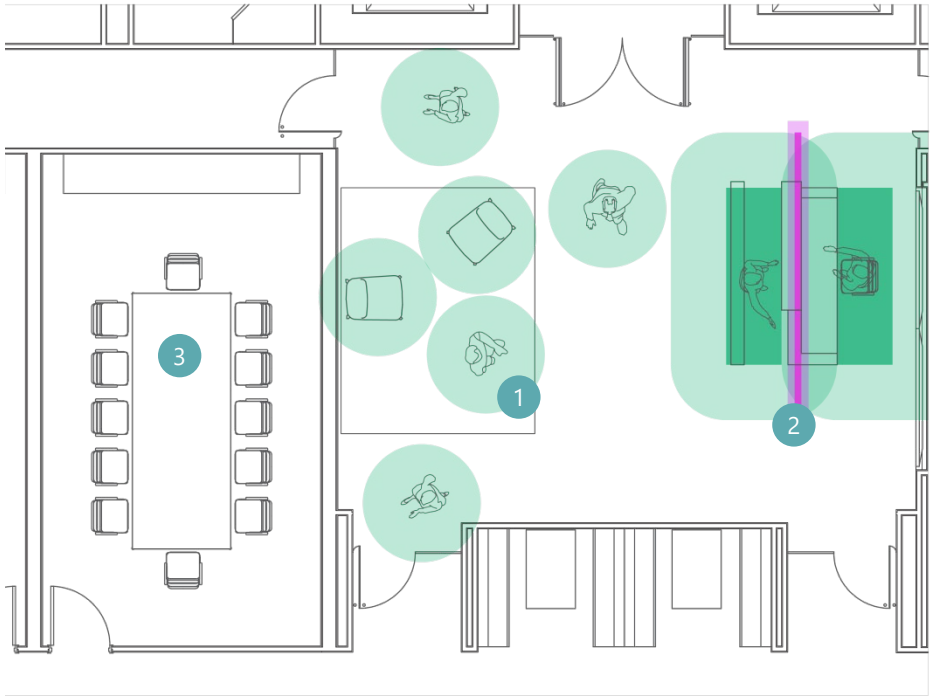
GSA Contract Support

If you require contractor support, the GSA Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) has contracting vehicle solutions available to help with space readiness. Please contact furniture@gsa.gov for more information on products and services available through the GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) to support your space readiness needs.

Agency Reception and Waiting Area

These are considerations for the reception and waiting areas within an agency's workplace.

Access Control
Cleaning and Disinfection



Circles with half of the required physical distance as the radius. For reference, the circles represent a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Natural range of movement

Physical barrier

Space Configuration

1. Where possible, your agency may choose to remove waiting-area seats in the waiting/queuing area. Alternatively, your agency may wish to cordon off or remove excess seats from the waiting area to promote physical distancing, when appropriate.
2. Consider installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, at reception. Physical barriers should not obstruct people's ability to communicate with the receptionist.
3. Where possible, provide visitor meeting spaces near reception to prevent visitors from entering employee workspace.

Your agency may want to place floor indicators in queuing areas to promote physical distancing.

Capacity

Consult the latest guidelines from your agency, as well as federal and local authorities for the maximum number of occupants recommended for group settings.

Other Considerations

Your agency may want to provide additional trash bins at entrances to accommodate disposal of single-use masks/face coverings and gloves.

If applicable, your agency may want to set up a station for health checks and to provide spare masks/face coverings as needed.

Consider introducing a touchless employee/visitor check-in system.

Open Work Area Considerations

An open work area typically consists of workstations, open meeting areas, storage cabinets, hallways, and aisles.

Open work areas

Location of lockers/partitions

Space Configuration

1. **Workspace zoning**
Consider strategically placing movable partitions to divide large, contiguous work areas into smaller work zones.

2. If they are adequately tall, lockers for storing individual belongings can also segment large open work areas into smaller zones.

Capacity

Consult the latest guidelines from federal and local authorities, as well as agency internal guidelines, for any restrictions on the maximum number of occupants in a work zone.

Other Considerations

Discourage employees from inviting visitors to their open work areas.

Your agency may decide to remove or cordon off guest chairs from employee workstations and offices to promote physical distancing.

Consider assigning employees and teams to work zones to limit commingling during early return to the workplace phasing.

If practical, adopt a space reservation tool, which may help limit the number of people occupying the same work zone at the same time.

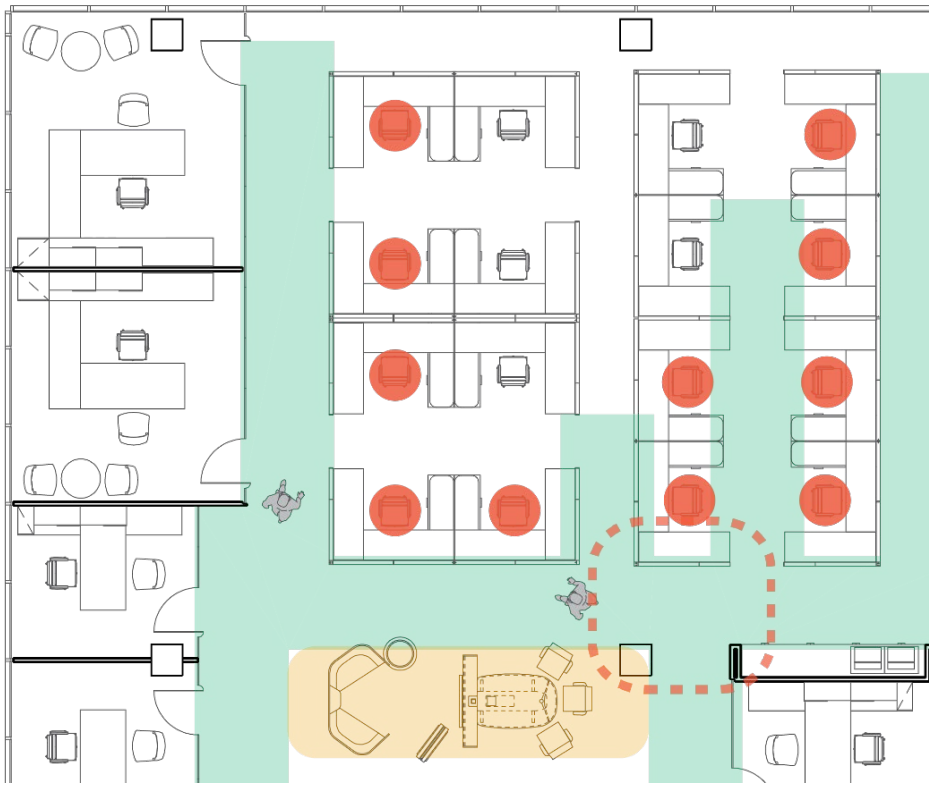
Consider using sensor technology or other means to monitor the number of people occupying an open work zone.

If utilizing adjustable height worksurfaces, determine if their raised position will impact the safety of nearby occupants, and determine if temporary barriers are needed.

Circulation Considerations

On a typical work floor, corridors, hallways, and aisles provide circulation for workstations, entries, and exits.

Cleaning and Disinfection



Circulation paths

Blind corners

Unavailable seats
too close to people walking by

Unavailable open meeting areas
too close to people walking by; consider removal or cordoning off

Space Configuration

As appropriate, maintain physical distance between circulation paths and seating—or consider installing partitions along paths.

Where feasible, create one-way corridors and aisles to encourage physical distancing during normal operations. Alternately, identify zones adjacent to two-way paths where people can step aside and wait for others to pass.

If one-way corridors and aisles are used, there should be signage to indicate the direction. It is recommended that signage is placed along the floor and at eye level for increased visibility.

Encourage people to slow down at blind corners to avoid collisions.

Furniture

Your agency may decide to remove or cordon off open collaboration areas and other seating areas that are adjacent to corridors, hallways, and aisles.

Other Considerations

Wayfinding signage and floor indicators can be used to promote physical distancing and other appropriate behavior.

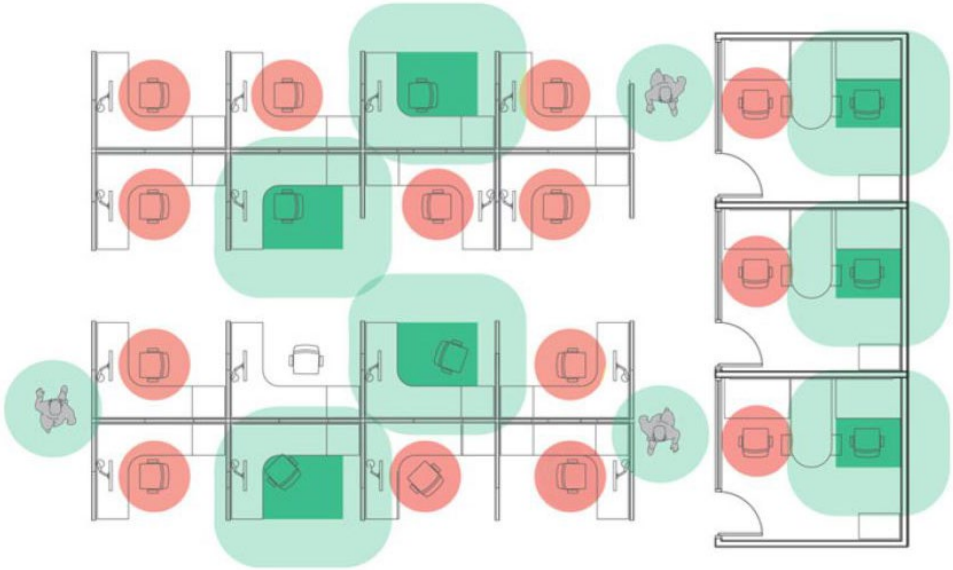
Consider your file storage footprint. If possible, digitize files to free up additional circulation space.

If your agency is seeking information on how to incorporate an Electronic Records Management solution, contact RecordsManagement@gsa.gov for more information on products and services available through the GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS).

Individual Workspace Considerations

Individual workspaces include private offices, shared offices, open workstations, hoteling desks, and other spaces that support individual work in the office.

Agency Practicing Desk Sharing
Behavior and Etiquette
Cleaning and Disinfection



Natural range of movement for individual workspaces

Half of required physical distance, measured from the edges of the natural range of movement. For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Unavailable seats
too close to people walking by and/or too close to people in adjacent workstations

Space Configuration

Promote Physical Distancing

Refer to current CDC guidance, as well as other Federal, State, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance for physical distancing requirements.

Where spacing of open workstations does not meet physical-distancing criteria, and is required, consider removing or cordoning off seats that should not be used.

Where feasible, reduce seats in shared offices or place dividers between the workstations.

Furniture

Consider installing physical barriers between workstations, and between pathways and workstations, to create physical distancing.

Seating Capacity

When estimating the number of usable individual workspaces with physical distancing, measure distance from the outer edge of the range of movement.

Consider physical distancing between people seated at workstations and people walking in a corridor or aisle.

When feasible, rearrange freestanding furniture and/or add partitions to increase the number of usable individual seats.

Other Considerations

Staggered Schedule

Consider staggering open workstation assignments for staff on alternate days/weeks to support cleaning shift flexibility and allow more employees to return.

Clear Desk Policy

Requesting that employees to leave individual desktops clear of all personal and work items at the end of each day will facilitate surface cleaning after use.

Technology and Equipment

Adopting an individual workspace booking system will help to manage the use of unassigned individual work seats.

Employees should disinfect desk phones, shared keyboards, and shared mice before and after use everyday. Alternately, consider eliminating personal peripheral equipment from shared desks by distributing it to staff.

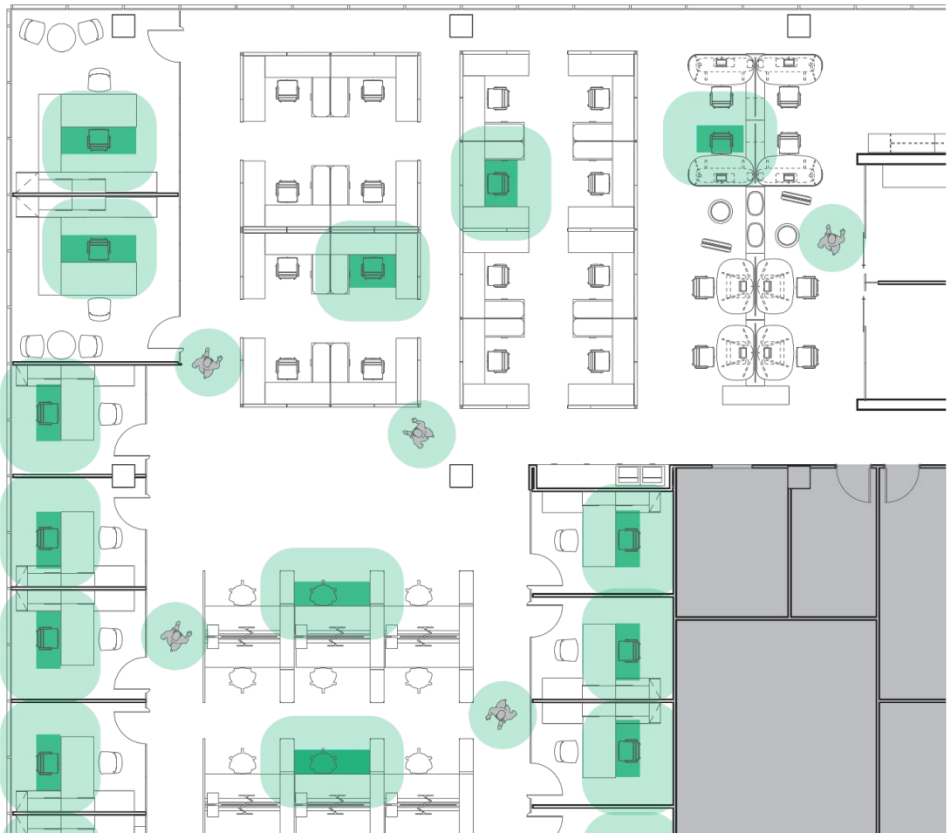
Discourage the use of personal desktop fans, because they can contribute to unintended circulation of airborne particles throughout the workspace.

Personal Storage

Consider providing lockers or similar units for employees to store personal items away from shared workspaces.

Individual Workspace Planning Example

This example is an example of conservative planning. It assumes that only 30 percent of seats are available to maintain full physical distancing.



Natural range of movement for individual workspaces

Half of required physical distance required - For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Added barriers (not used in this example)

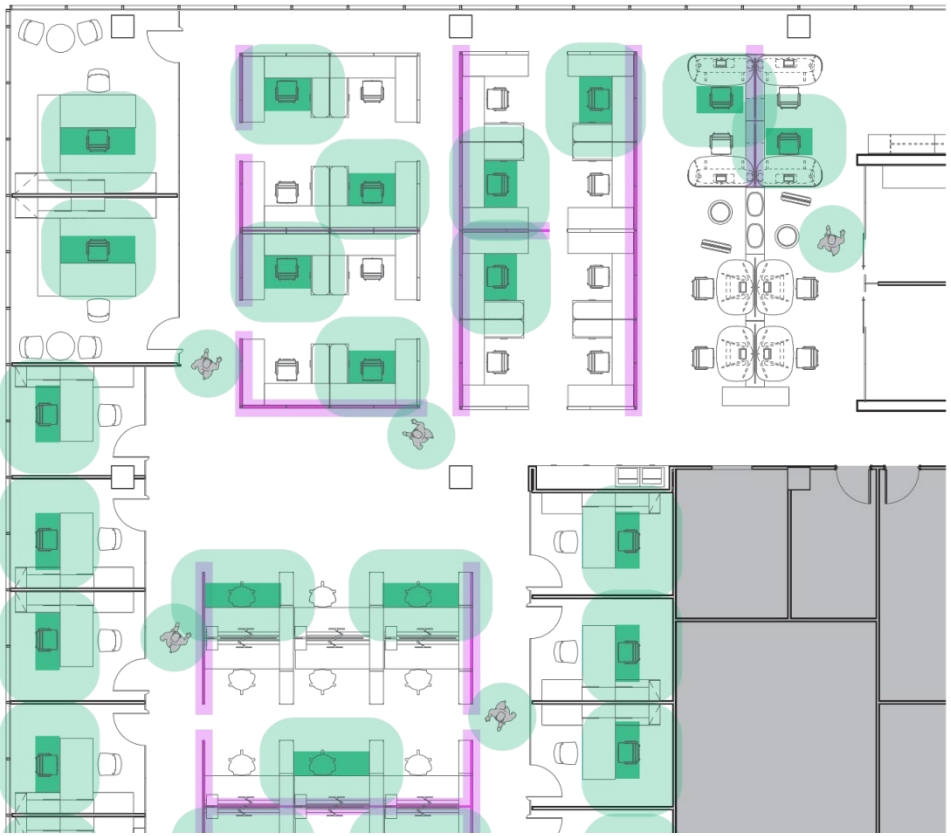
Scenario 1: 30% Seats Usable

- Full physical distancing at all times
- No clear barriers used
- No crossing paths in circulation
- Workstation assignments maximize the efficiency of individual travel paths

	AS DESIGNED	AVAILABLE
Private Offices	9	9
Workstations	33	5
Total:	**42**	**14**
% of Total Usable:		**33%**

Individual Workspace Planning Example

This example uses half of existing seating, with full physical distancing possible except when walking around the space.



Natural range of movement for individual workspaces

Half of required physical distance required - For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Added barriers

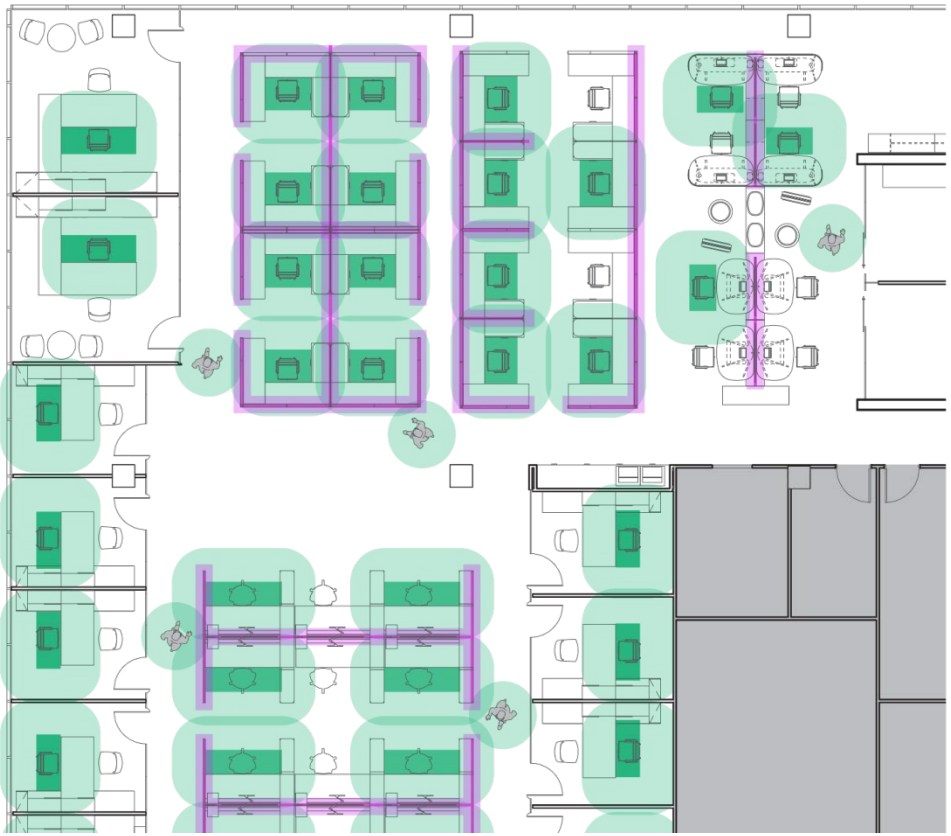
Scenario 2: 50% Seats Usable

- Full physical distance at most times
- Minimum crossing of paths
- Heavy use of partial height clear barriers at workstations in instances where physical distancing is not possible
- Barriers are added to the top of existing workstation partitions or added on top of the worksurface to provide a higher level of physical separation
- Workstations encroach circulation paths but not each other

	AS DESIGNED	AVAILABLE
Private Offices	9	9
Workstations	33	12
Total:	**42**	**21**
% of Total Usable:		**50%**

Individual Workspace Planning Example

When 75 percent of seats are used, physical distancing relies heavily on barrier use, individual awareness and personal responsibility. Circulation paths encroach upon workstation physical distancing.



Natural range of movement for individual workspaces

Half of required physical distance required - For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Added barriers

Scenario 3: 75% Seats Usable

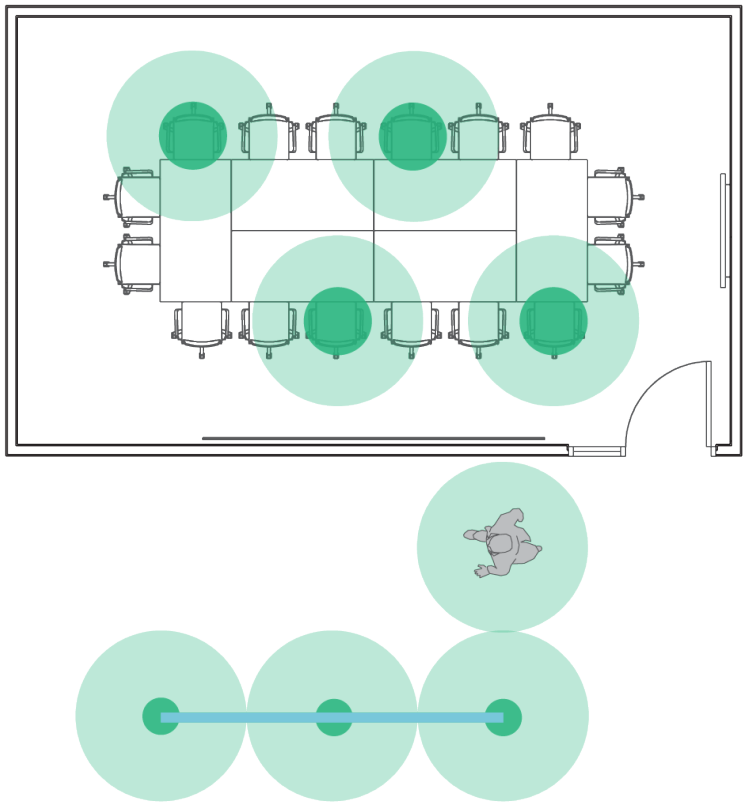
- Full physical distancing for some employees at most times
- Medium crossing of paths
- Heavy use of clear barriers at workstations where physical distancing is not possible
- Barriers are added to the top of existing workstation partitions or added on top of the worksurface to provide a higher level of physical separation
- Workstations encroach circulation paths as well as one another
- Some small meeting rooms may need to be converted into individual workspaces

	AS DESIGNED	AVAILABLE
Private Offices	9	9
Workstations	33	23
Total:	**42**	**31**
% of Total Usable:		**76%**

Meeting Room Considerations

Enclosed meeting rooms include conference rooms, huddle rooms, phone rooms, training rooms, and other meeting spaces that have full-height walls and at least one door.

Behavior and Etiquette
Cleaning and Disinfection



Designated spot

Half of required physical distance required. For reference, the circles represent a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Queue line

Designated spot	16
Reduced seating capacity	up to 4

Space Configuration

In enclosed meeting spaces, consider removing or cordoning off excess chairs to achieve physical distancing, where appropriate.

Stagger seats at the table so that people are not directly facing each other.

Consider marking floors or tabletops to indicate where people should sit.

If needed, add safe queuing areas in front of meeting rooms. The capacity of the queuing area should match the room's seating capacity.

Consider the location of nearby workstations when designating waiting locations outside of meeting rooms. Consider adding physical barriers to nearby workstations.

Seating Capacity

If there will be a presenter standing in front of the projection screen, or if wall-mounted writable surfaces will be used, then consider removing additional seats to create physical distancing around the presenter and the equipment.

For extra-large meeting and training rooms, consult the latest guidelines from national and local authorities for the maximum number of occupants recommended for group settings.

Other Considerations

Equipment and Tools

Consider providing a stylus for touchscreen devices like control tablets and provide individual sets of whiteboard pens for writing surfaces.

In small meeting rooms meant for one person, consider removing the conference phone from the room and encouraging employees to use cellphones or laptops for conference calls.

Encourage employees to project their laptops onto a screen as a digital whiteboard, rather than use that meeting room's shared writable surfaces.

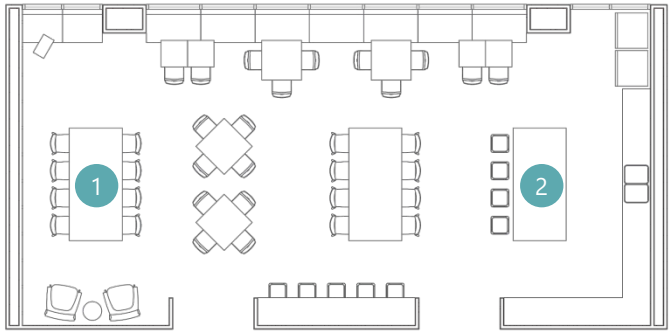
If feasible, encourage employees to continue hosting virtual meetings to eliminate the need to access meeting rooms entirely.

Pantry and Breakroom Considerations

These recommendations for small pantries and breakrooms differ from considerations/policies for cafeterias and mess halls.

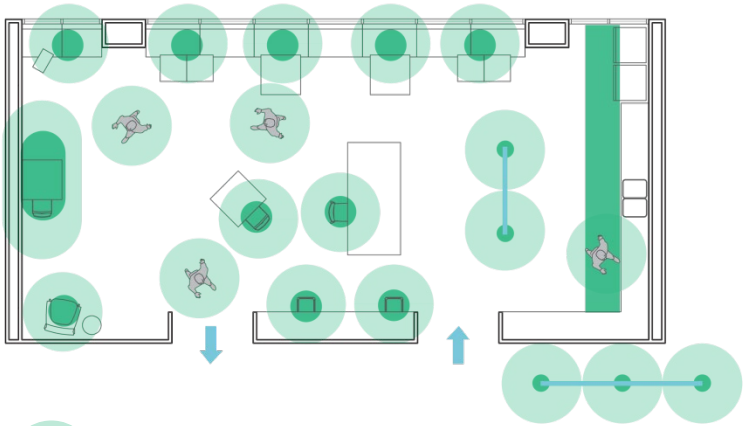
Behavior and Etiquette
Cleaning and Disinfection

BREAKROOM LAYOUT BEFORE RECONFIGURATION



1. Consider removing furniture to provide an effective circulation path
2. Consider removing table and chairs in front of the counter to create space for queuing

BREAKROOM LAYOUT AFTER RECONFIGURATION



Circles with half of the required physical distance as the radius

Natural range of movement for using the counter and refrigerator For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Queue line

Entry/exit direction

Total seats as originally designed	43
Reduced seating capacity	11

Space Configuration

When possible, remove or cordon off any group-activity elements to avoid congregation and sharing.

If needed, create queuing areas in front of the breakroom, vending machines, refrigerators, and kitchen counters.

Consider the location of nearby workstations when designating waiting locations outside of pantries and breakrooms. Consider adding physical barriers to nearby workstations.

Capacity

Consult the latest guidelines from federal and local authorities, as well as agency internal guidelines, for any restrictions on the maximum number of occupants within shared amenity spaces.

Other Considerations

Equipment and Tools

If vending machines, refrigerators, microwaves, and cabinets are used, consider providing cleaning and disinfectants for keypads and handles so that users may wipe down surfaces as needed.

If feasible, temporarily replace amenities that are handled frequently—such as water coolers and coffee makers—with alternatives.

Considerations for Other Common Spaces

Be aware of employee health and safety in areas where people could come into close contact.

Behavior and Etiquette
Cleaning and Disinfection

Copy/Print Rooms

Space Configuration

- Consider installing printers/copiers/scanners with mobile or remote connectivity to minimize physical contact.
- Consider placing removable covers on high-touch equipment surfaces, for ease of cleaning.

Other Considerations

- Establish protocols around access to shared office supplies and replenishing.
- If feasible, limit the number of people in the room at any given time—one person at a time if necessary.
- If possible, use a vestibule and/or hallway for queuing.

Shipping/Receiving

Space Configuration

- If possible, maintain a clean zone for wiping down packages before they are delivered or marked for pickup.
- If necessary, install physical barriers such as clear plastic sneeze guards at windows or desks for pickup and drop-off.
- If feasible, provide drive-through and/or pickup service windows .

Other Considerations

- Establish procedures and places to accept deliveries.
- Consider posting signage to stress the importance of proper hand hygiene toward maintaining a clean zone.

Nursing Mothers'/Wellness Room

Space Configuration

- Consider removing or cordoning off seats and other furniture that should not be used.

Other Considerations

- Recommend that sanitation protocols are employed between uses.
- Establish and communicate protocols regarding who should, and should not, use these spaces.

Storage Spaces

Space Configuration

- Identify additional storage for furniture and equipment removed from other spaces. Potential sites include decommissioned training rooms, cordoned-off portions of a floor, or off-site storage.
- Depending on the type of furniture and equipment stored, the storage area may need fire-resistant construction and/or enhanced sprinklers. Please discuss your storage needs with the GSA Building Manager and the Regional Fire Protection Program Office.

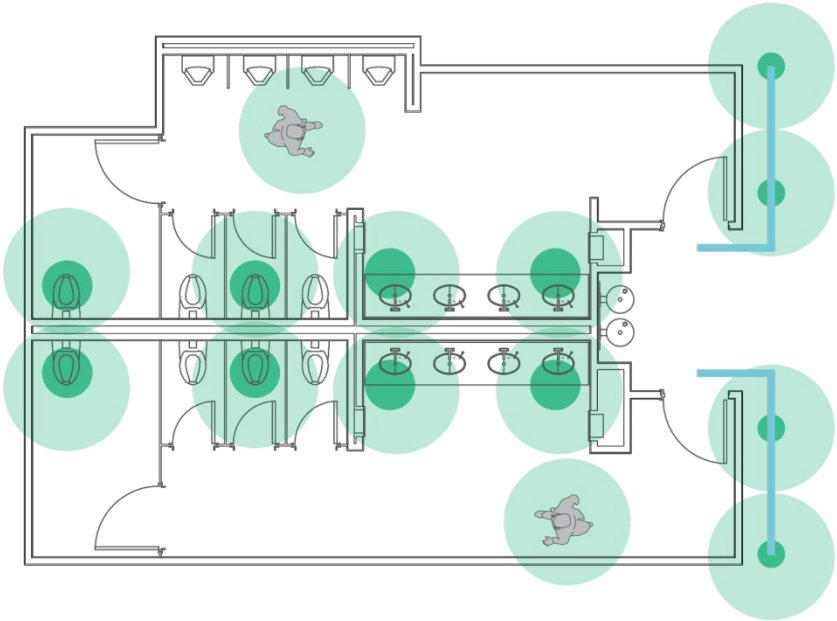
Other Considerations

- Establish and communicate ways for retrieving stored items.

Restroom Considerations

Many restrooms are shared among multiple tenants, making it critical that users take individual precautions to stay physically distanced, whenever feasible.

Behavior and Etiquette
Cleaning and Disinfection



Circles with half of the required physical distance as the radius - For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Preferred fixtures for physical distancing. All fixtures should remain usable, per OSHA requirements.

Queue outside the restroom, where applicable

Space Configuration

When feasible, employees should attempt to stagger usage of restrooms to facilitate physical distancing. GSA and lessors may not cordon off restroom fixtures (e.g., toilets, urinals, sinks, etc.) per OSHA requirements.

When using fixtures within a restroom that is occupied by others, leave a space between you and other occupants, whenever possible.

Provide paper towels in restrooms and disconnect or block hand air dryers.

Consider touchless approaches for restroom exit doors. If not feasible, then consider adding trash cans to receive paper towels or wipes that were used to open the door.

If queuing will be necessary, designate physically distanced waiting locations outside of the restroom.

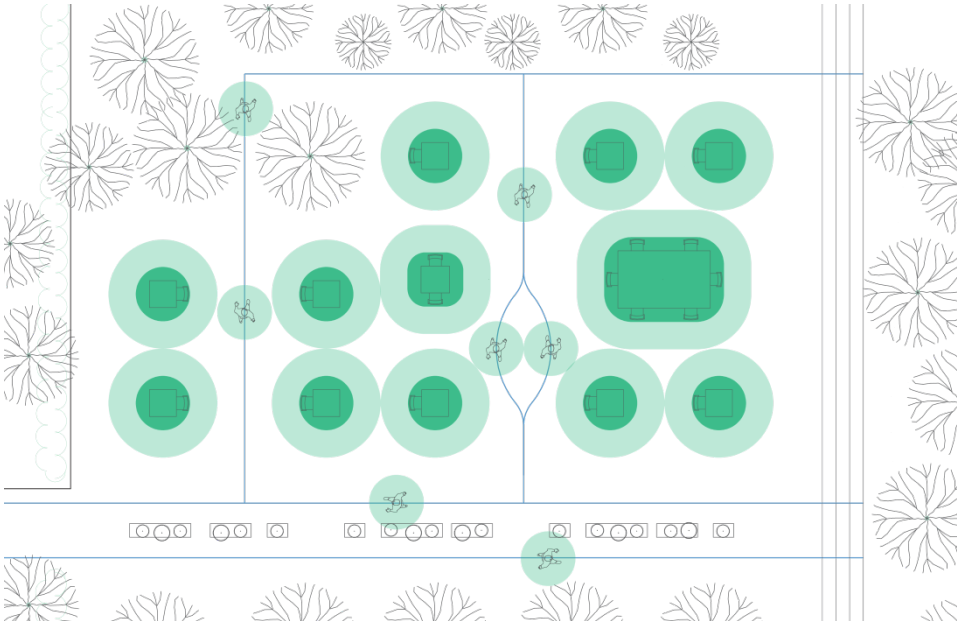
Consider the location of nearby workstations when designating waiting locations outside restrooms. Consider adding physical barriers to nearby workstations.

Other Considerations

In GSA-controlled and operated space, the GSA Building Manager will make all decisions related to restrooms that are not in the agency's space. Agencies should consult with the building manager before making any changes to restrooms within an agency's space.

Outdoor Seating Considerations

With proper physical-distancing and cleaning procedures in effect, outdoor areas can provide seating for lunches, breaks, small group meetings, and individual work.



Natural range of movement

Half of the required physical distance measure required - For reference, we are showing a three foot radius around the natural range of movement.

Circulation paths

Space Configuration

Promote Physical Distancing

Courtyards, roof terraces, and balconies may be used as-is, or converted into outdoor meeting spaces, alternate individual workspaces, or break areas.

When fixed furniture is provided, consider cordoning off excess seats to promote physical distancing for users who have not been vaccinated.

When movable furniture is used in outdoor settings, consider rearranging or removing furniture to facilitate physical distancing, as appropriate.

Provide adequate spacing between tables to allow safe movement.

Ground markings can help direct traffic flow.

Furniture

Provide shade and wind barriers where needed.

Seating Capacity

People may choose to sit at any side of the table. To facilitate optimal physical distancing, consider measuring distances from the edge of the area that people may occupy, i.e., their natural range of moment.

Other Considerations

Data and power access may be needed.

Refer to CDC's Choosing Safer Activities guide.

Signage

This section includes information on signage in building common areas and within a tenant's space.

The concepts shown are meant to be conversation starters—**not specific solutions**.

Workplace Reopening Signage 30
Workplace Reopening Signage Package 31

Workplace Reopening Signage

As employees and customers return to the workplace, signage offers a clear, effective way of communicating, educating, and encouraging healthy behavior.

Workplace Signage

Refer to GSA's Safer Federal Workplace website for current signage guidance for federally owned buildings.

Your agency may want to introduce wayfinding and/or floor indicators that encourage employees to practice physical distancing and overall safety. Consider using signage whose size is proportionate to the environment. For example, signs at entrances, individual workspaces, inside and outside common spaces, and along circulation paths may have different scales.

Signage can be printed directly from the CDC website or procured from the Federal Acquisition Service's Multiple Awards Schedules signage vendors, and for your convenience, GSA is providing printable versions of the signs shown on the following pages at www.gsa.gov.

The following pages present workplace signage that is intended to augment GSA, lessor, and CDC guidance. These solutions address return-to-workplace needs while encouraging practices that will:

- Support new protocols outlined in this strategy book and in CDC guidelines
- Facilitate new habits
- Set a new precedent for coworker interaction
- Build a sense of community

The workplace signage designs strike a friendly and human tone, to help instill a sense of community and common purpose.

Space Types and Zones

This strategy book encompasses typical administrative office workplace environments, as shown at right.

Specialty and mission-support spaces such as public counter areas, labs, operations centers, etc., are not included in this strategy book. Signage needs for these spaces should be addressed or coordinated within each agency based on the specific needs of each space and team.

Signage for common building spaces such as building entrances, lobby areas, and elevators are not included here. In federally owned facilities, contact your GSA Building Manager to learn how the signage package has been deployed for common areas. In leased buildings, please ask your GSA Lease Administration Manager to determine common areas' signage needs with the lessor.

For agencies that have a customer counter or other public-facing space where visitors might show up unannounced, use clear and concise signage to direct those visitors to new processes.

WELCOME AND ARRIVAL

Workplace Entry and Reception Lobbies

CIRCULATION

Workplace Elevators, Internal Stairs, Hallways

PANTRY AND BREAKROOM

INDIVIDUAL AND GENERAL WORK AREAS

Desks, Conference/ Team Rooms, Supply/ Copy Rooms

RESTROOMS

WELLNESS AND WELL-BEING

First Aid and Quarantine Areas

Workplace Reopening Signage Package

Implementation

The Workplace Reopening Signage Package is represented in the thumbnail illustrations on the following pages.

For your convenience, you can access a print-ready PDF to produce any of the signs. This signage PDF package is available at gsa.gov.

Printing with a color printer is recommended. Note that the brighter color palette and warm messaging tone is deliberately reassuring and friendly.

The print-ready PDF is formatted to an 8.5x11 standard letter. Most of the signs are formatted to this size, although some will require trimming and folding. Smaller signs or table tents are best for placing on desktops, worksurfaces, or equipment such as copy machines, microwaves, etc.

Ideally, signs will be displayed in a simple frame or clear plastic sleeve depending on placement. Please also consider low-tack tape or removable adhesives when mounting the signs to painted or finished surfaces, to minimize any physical damage within the workplace.

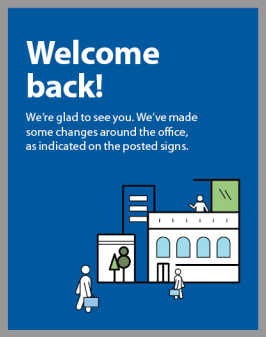
While printing in the office may be most convenient at this time, these signs may need to be posted for a longer period. In turn, please consider engaging a signage fabricator who can produce a more durable set of signage. Direct printing to easily procured, effective, and affordable materials such as heavier card stock or sintra panels is recommended, as those materials can withstand handling over time.

GSA contractor support for producing and implementing additional or customized signage solutions for your workplace is available through the Center for Workplace Strategy program at workplace@gsa.gov or through the GSA Multiple Award Schedule.

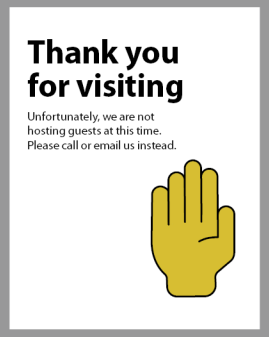
WELCOME AND ARRIVAL

Workplace Entry and Reception Lobbies

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE

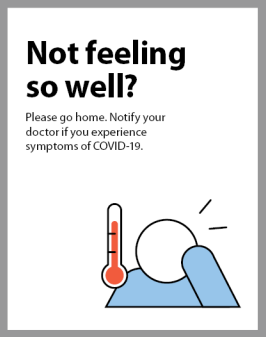


Welcome Back Poster



Guest / Visitor Protocols Sign

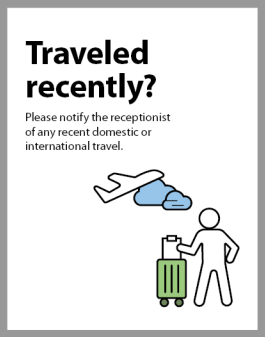
General Hygiene / Safety Poster



Return Home Sign

Package Delivery Protocol Sign

Package Processing Protocol Sign



Travel Monitoring / Check-in Sign

Workplace Reopening Signage Package

CIRCULATION

Workplace Elevators, Internal Stairs, Hallways

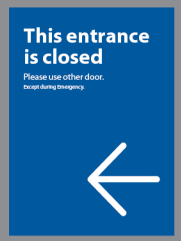
8" DIA FLOOR DECAL

One-Way Directional Floor Decals

Arrow Directional Floor Decals

5" x 7" PLAQUE

One-Way Directional Wall Sign



Closed Entry Sign

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE

Physical Distancing Sign

3 1/2" x 5" PLAQUE

Do Not Enter Sign

Not In Use Sign for doors, equipment or appliances

PANTRY AND BREAKROOM

5" x 7" PLAQUE

Table / Person Capacity Sign

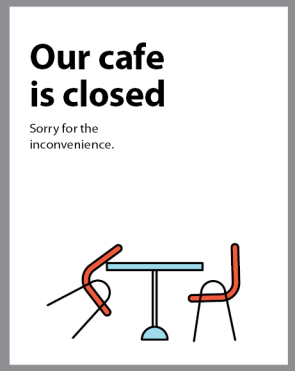
Disinfection / Cleaning Assurance

Dish Cleaning / Moving Sign

Fridge / Microwave Protocol Sign

Mask & Glove Disposal Sign

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE



Closed Sign

3 1/2" x 5" SIGN AND TABLE TENT

Not In Use Sign for doors, equipment or appliances

Not In Use Sign Tent for tables/seats or appliances

Workplace Reopening Signage Package

RESTROOMS

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE

Handwashing Sign

3 1/2" x 5" PLAQUE

Stall Not in Use Sign

5" x 7" PLAQUE

Disinfection / Cleaning Assurance

Cleaning Surfaces Reminder Sign

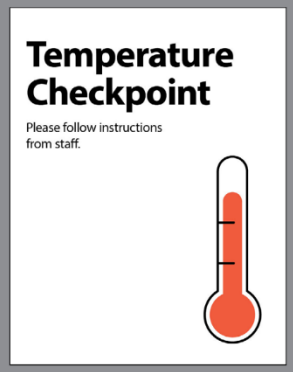
Avoid Surface / Handle Touching Reminder Sign

Mask & Glove Disposal Sign

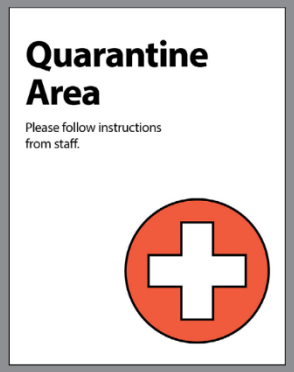
WELLNESS AND WELL BEING

First Aid and Quarantine Areas

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE



Temperature Checkpoint Poster



Quarantine Area Poster

5" x 7" PLAQUE

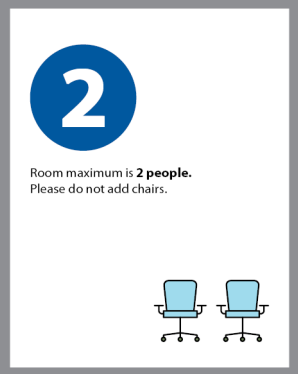
First Aid Room SIgn

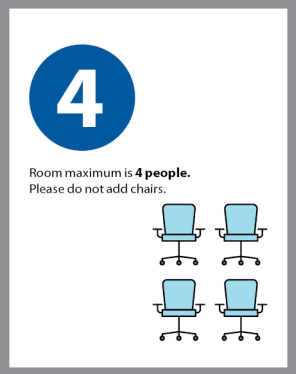
Workplace Reopening Signage Package

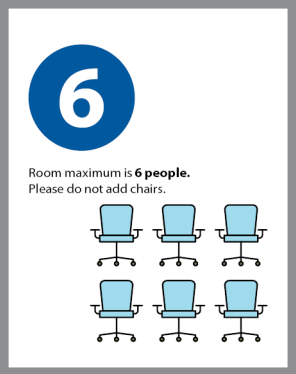
INDIVIDUAL AND GENERAL WORK AREAS

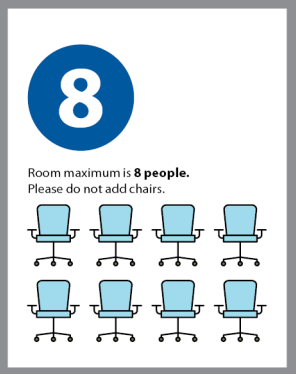
Desks, Conference/Team Rooms, Supply/Copy Rooms

8 1/2" x 11" PLAQUE









Room Max. Capacity Sign

5" x 7" PLAQUE

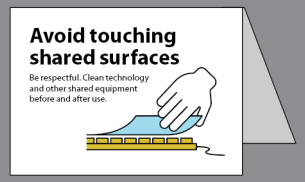
Cleaning Shared Space Protocol Sign

8" DIA FLOOR DECAL

Desk Not In Use Decal Sign

7" x 5" TABLE TOPPER

Seat Not In Use Sign



Disinfection / Cleaning Assurance Sign

3 1/2" x 5" TABLE TOPPER

Cleaning Desk Protocol Table Tent Sign

Desk Not In Use Table Tent Sign

Additional Resources

This section includes information on desk sharing, future space usage and how to get in touch with GSA's Center for Workplace Strategy experts.

The concepts shown are meant to be conversation starters—**not specific solutions**.

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GSA Regional Workplace Expert Network 37
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Desk Sharing

Desk sharing can provide workplace flexibility and may help agencies strategically return staff to the workplace while maintaining physical distancing.

Link to GSA Safer Federal Workplace

Desk Sharing

GSA's Center for Workplace Strategy Experts can help evaluate if a desk sharing ratio can be applied to support a footprint reduction. This may help your agency achieve a lower utilization rate and real estate cost savings.

Planning for desk sharing should include consideration of the needs of employees with disabilities, and agencies should be prepared to handle requests for reasonable accommodation.

The following is a series of considerations when utilizing desk sharing:

Clear Desk Policy

As a best practice, employees should remove or store personal belongings and documents away from the workstations in preparation for other users and to facilitate surface cleaning.

Workspace Reservation Tools

Utilizing a workspace reservation tool (ideally a digital platform) will allow staff to select a workspace where they feel most comfortable and effective. This may be a workspace away from other staff, away from main circulation paths, near natural light, etc.

A digital workspace reservation platform allows an agency's facility team to track overall workspace utilization and have a record of where staff were sitting, in the event that a COVID-19 incident occurs.

Workspace reservations may be set up to allow employees to reserve or drop into a workstation for a full day or more.

Frequent Cleaning by Individuals

Employees should clean and disinfect all frequently used individual workspace surfaces and equipment before and after use (e.g., desktop, keyboards, chairs, telephones). They should not rely on others to clean surfaces.

An agency may wish to provide disinfectant wipes or cleaning supplies in common and shared space and throughout the office for employees to use for individual workspace cleaning.

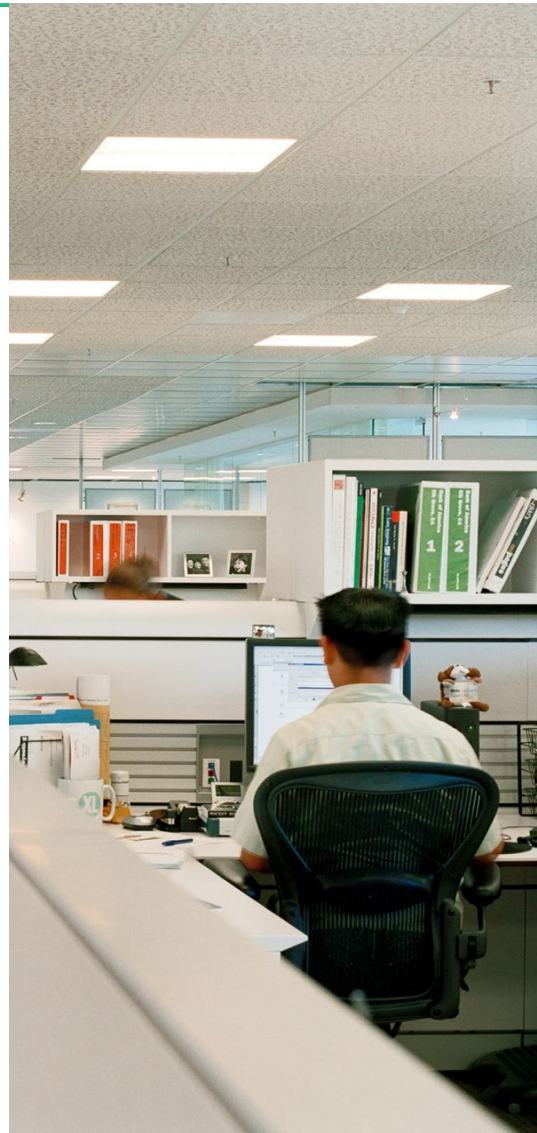
Employees' active participation toward the protection of the public health in the workplace is important. Each employee has the opportunity to contribute toward a safer work environment.

Personal Tools

Consider assigning personal peripheral equipment, such as a keyboard and mouse, to individual employees. Assess the need for additional storage to safely store equipment that is not in use.

GSA Technology Support

GSA can help your agency procure a range of technology solutions, including workspace reservation tools to assist with transitioning back into facilities through the Acquisition Gateway.



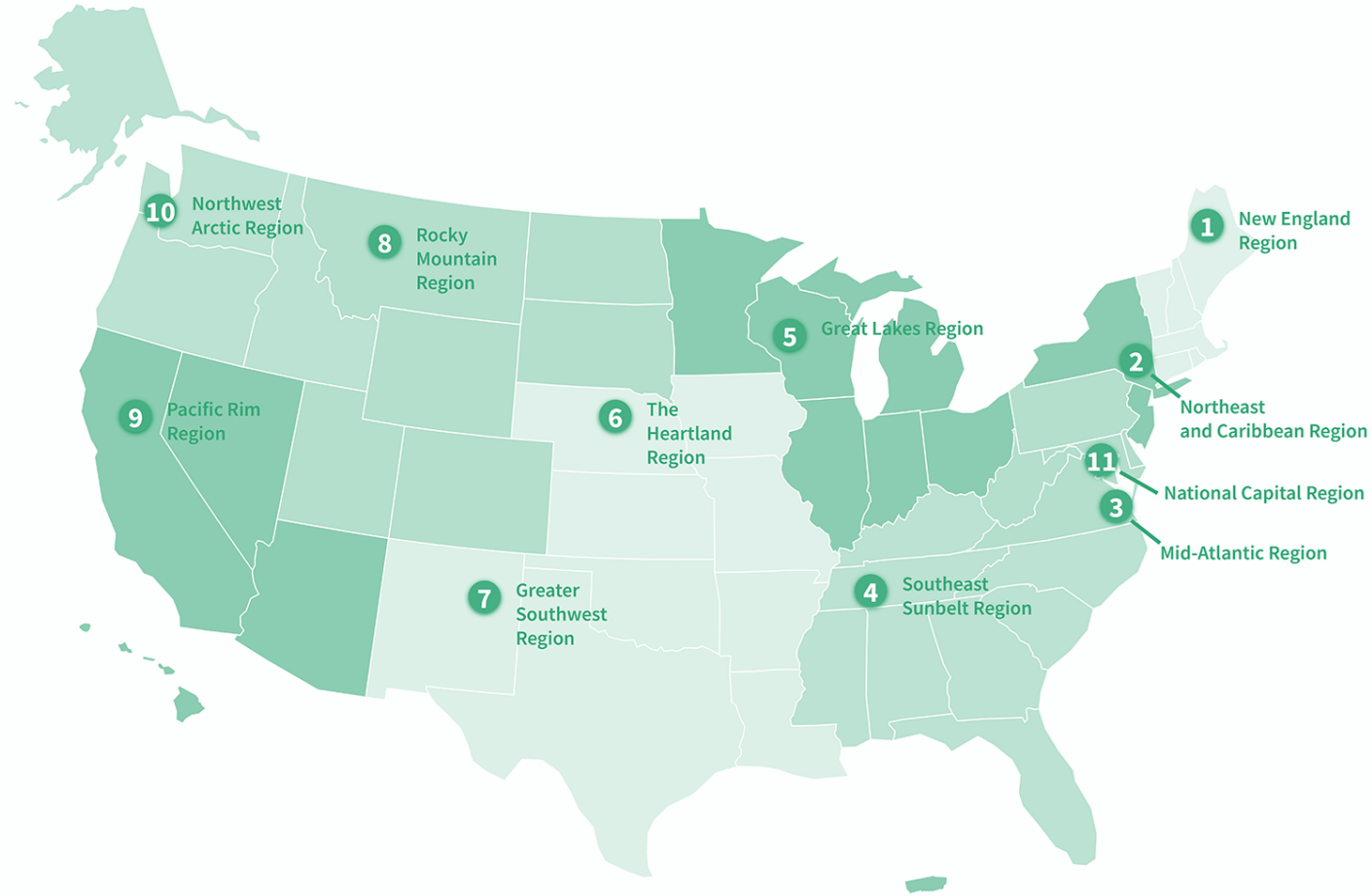
GSA Regional Workplace Network

Working with GSA

GSA has tools and resources available to assist your agency with returning to the workplace. Visit www.gsa.gov for up-to-date information and to find available products and services.

GSA's Center for Workplace Strategy can help your agency utilize existing contracts for design and consulting services that support reopening and your future workspaces.

Contact the Center for Workplace Strategy team at workplace@gsa.gov to get started or reach out to the Regional Workplace team member in your area.



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Resources and Acknowledgements

This document reflects the combined effort of many individuals.

Thank you.

GSA Resources

GSA Safer Federal Workplace Website

GSA COVID-19 Support and FAQs

GSA 2021 Global Supply Annual Catalog

GSA Advantage!

Additional Resources

The White House – Priorities: COVID-19

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Office of Personnel Management – COVID-19

Occupational Safety and Health Administration – COVID-19

Environmental Protection Agency – COVID-19

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