



# A Safe Return to Business for the Charleston Region

PHASE 1 PLAN

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN  
For Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties

**MAY 11, 2020**



**ONE REGION**  
A GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- |          |  |           |   |
|----------|--|-----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | <b>One Region</b><br>A comprehensive, collaborative initiative focused on building a stronger, more inclusive regional economy.  | <b>9</b>  | <b>Workplace Procedures</b><br>Guidelines to help provide additional consumer confidence.   |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Reigniting the Economy</b><br>A phased blueprint for employers, their employees and our community to safely reopen when the time is right.  | <b>12</b> | <b>One Region's Government Stakeholders</b><br>The One Region Executive Committee recommends significant state and local action to support our region's businesses and employees.         |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Our Health. Our Economy.</b><br>Balancing the calls for action while following the guidance of the medical community and protecting citizens.   | <b>13</b> | <b>Protecting Our Most Vulnerable Neighbors</b><br>While we work to One Region Ready our region safely, we must keep in mind our neighbors who are most at risk due to COVID-19.          |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Moving From Stabilization to Recovery</b><br>Full economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will require sustained focus and effort from our region's leaders and citizens.                          | <b>14</b> | <b>Acknowledgements</b><br>Many organizations and leaders have supported and informed the development of this Phase 1 One Region Ready Plan guiding our region's safe return to business. |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Defining When Economic Reopening Can Begin</b><br>Key parameters that signal the beginning of the STABILIZATION phase.  |           |   |
| <b>8</b> | <b>The Return to Economic Prosperity</b><br>The One Region Ready plan recommends allowing phased subsets of companies to resume operations beginning when the Governor lifts his State of Emergency order. |           |   |

**Our three-county region is strong, and by working together we will emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic ready with opportunities for all to thrive. With support from business, health care, nonprofit and government leaders across Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties, One Region provides a ready platform for a unified approach to reopening our economy, as we continue to fight a virus that spreads without regard to geographic boundaries.**

## ONE REGION

One Region is a comprehensive, collaborative initiative focused on building a stronger, more inclusive regional economy. The vision is for the Charleston region to become a globally competitive place where all people and businesses flourish.

### **Four shared, regional values**

form the foundation of One Region. Each is supported by specific goals and actions to sustain economic momentum, address interconnected regional issues, and generate prosperity for all local residents:

- 1 | A strong, resilient economy
- 2 | Attainable opportunities for all residents to live, learn and earn
- 3 | Balancing growth with nurturing our unique character
- 4 | Being a connected community

Since May 2016, a broad group of public- and private-sector organizations have come together to implement many One Region recommendations.

**This same aligned approach is required now as we face a historic and unprecedented threat to our community's health and economic well-being.**

## A REGIONAL APPROACH TO REIGNITING THE ECONOMY

Under the One Region strategy, representatives from the public and private sectors, working closely with top medical professionals, have created a phased blueprint to One Region Ready our region's safe return to business. This recovery roadmap is meant to provide confidence for employers, their employees and our community to safely reopen when the time is right. It aligns with accelerateSC, the statewide recommendations set forth by S.C. Governor Henry McMaster.

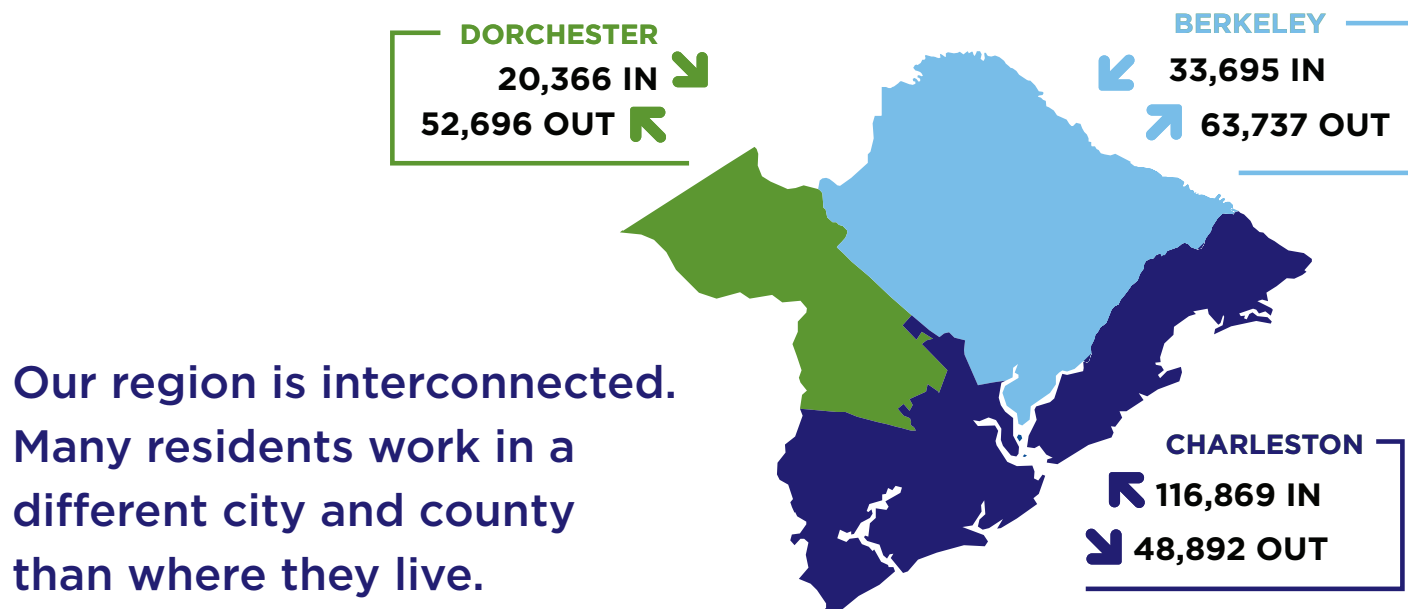
THE ONE REGION READY PLAN WILL EVOLVE AND EXPAND OVER TIME, OFFERING CLARITY FOR OUR REGION TO:

- 1 Reengage responsibly and restart our economy
- 2 Reinforce the guidance of our medical community
- 3 Safeguard our most vulnerable neighbors
- 4 Sustain the recovery

The One Region Executive Committee and affiliated stakeholders have researched best practices for a collective and aligned COVID-19 recovery plan. The group is providing relevant information and guidance to local governments and businesses to support the safe reopening of our regional economy, operating within public health guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

## CHARLESTON'S COMMUTING PATTERNS

COVID-19 CAN COMMUTE WITH YOU



## OUR HEALTH. OUR ECONOMY. HOW DO WE PROTECT BOTH?

Although fundamentally a public health crisis, COVID-19 has created a corresponding economic crisis in our community. Businesses and individuals are suffering financially and the calls to reopen the economy grow louder each day. But how do we balance these calls for action while following the guidance of the medical community and protecting citizens?

### Recommendations:

# 1

#### Lean Into Data

Engage in a smart and responsible reopening of the region's economy, continually informed by, and responding to identified metrics

# 2

#### Learn to Adapt

Encourage employers to implement best practices to meet employee and customer health and safety needs

# 3

#### Lead with Purpose

Provide and sustain employee and consumer confidence – this is a health and economic imperative

# 4

#### Look Ahead

Understand that the threat of COVID-19 will continue to have an impact until a vaccine or effective treatment is widely available

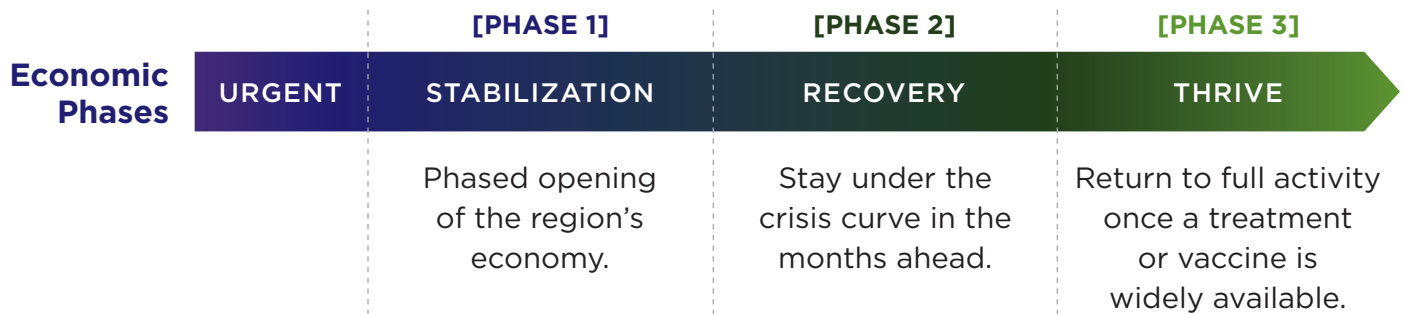
## WE STAYED AT HOME. WE FLATTENED THE CURVE. NOW WHAT?

Federal, state and local governments have partnered with the public health sector to provide guidance for slowing the spread of COVID-19 during the **URGENT** phase of this public health crisis. Governor McMaster acted in March to curtail the spread with a series of orders that directed South Carolinians to stay at home (except for essential activities) and mandated closure of non-essential businesses.

Now, we move into a period of **STABILIZATION**. The federal government has issued broad guidelines for Opening Up America Again. Governor McMaster is implementing a statewide economic recovery plan, accelerateSC. Our regional plan, **One Region Ready**, addresses the responsible restart of our region's economy while aligning with public and health care efforts to continue to control COVID-19 and protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

## MOVING FROM STABILIZATION TO RECOVERY

Full economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will require sustained focus and effort from our region's leaders and citizens. As we are now past the initial phase, three projected stages of returning to economic resiliency remain:



**This One Region Ready plan and recommendations focus on the first phase, STABILIZATION.**

### KEY INDICATORS

#### DEFINING WHEN THE REGION'S ECONOMIC REOPENING CAN BEGIN

The goal in the **STABILIZATION** phase is an expedited return to normal economic activity that does not force our region's public health system into a crisis. That would only delay the broader economic recovery and likely cause further damage to the lives and livelihoods of the region's citizens. As the number and rate of new positive cases begins to trend favorably, continuing to monitor key indicators is essential. Our local health system has prepared well for increased numbers of COVID-19 patients.

According to the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the two key parameters that signal the beginning of the **STABILIZATION** phase are:

- 1 Our local hospital systems have the assets and capacity to treat patients with COVID-19 with adequate staff, beds, ventilators and PPE.
- 2 We maintain a very low average daily growth rate (ideally, less than 5%) and prevalence of new COVID-19 infections in our community.

MUSC has created a **COVID-19 Monitor and Respond Dashboard** to provide regional leaders with criteria metrics to support informed decision making. This information is critical to determining when business operations can safely begin. Through their participation in the Protection sub-committee of Governor McMaster's accelerateSC, MUSC will work to align public health guidance at the local and state levels by monitoring COVID-19 infection data trends and advising on appropriate community response if problems begin to emerge.

## COVID-19 MONITOR AND RESPOND DASHBOARD

The two key overarching parameters that should be monitored during the stabilization phase are:

- 1 Our local hospital systems have the assets and capacity to treat patients with COVID-19 with adequate staff, beds, ventilators and PPE.

INDICATOR	KEY METRIC	THRESHOLD METRICS
Hospital Patient Care	Tri-county Hospitals have ability to treat all patients requiring hospitalization without resorting to crisis standards	<b>G</b> Maintain number of COVID patients below 50% non-surge hospital and ICU bed capacity
		<b>Y</b> Number of COVID patients 50-70% non-surge hospital and ICU bed capacity
		<b>R</b> Above 70% non-surge hospital and ICU bed capacity

**G** Metric achieved / **Y** Signs of progress / **R** Metric achievement not in sight

- 2 Very low average daily growth rate (ideally less than 5%) and prevalence (less than 1/1000 population) of new cases of COVID-19 infections in our community.

INDICATOR	KEY METRIC	THRESHOLD METRICS
# NEW COVID-19 reported infections	Growth rate of NEW infections for tri-county	<b>G</b> 5 day average less than 1
		<b>Y</b> 5-Day average 1-5
		<b>R</b> 5 day average >5
Prevalence of COVID-19 reported infections	Number of weekly reported infections/1000 people for tri-county	<b>G</b> less than 1
		<b>Y</b> 1-2
		<b>R</b> >2

**G** Metric achieved / **Y** Signs of progress / **R** Metric achievement not in sight

## View the MUSC COVID-19 Assessment

<https://web.musc.edu/coronavirus-updates/epidemiology-project>





## THE RETURN TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WHEN AND HOW?

The **One Region Ready plan** recommends allowing phased subsets of companies to resume operations beginning when the Governor lifts his State of Emergency order. These companies, as well as those deemed “essential” in Governor McMaster’s orders, will be encouraged to follow a series of agreed upon best practices to control the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Examples include workplace distancing and cleaning procedures to prevent infection, screening of employees for symptoms and exposures associated with COVID-19 infection, and the use of personal protective equipment.

To reopen safely, a business should be able to operate effectively without bringing people close together. One Region medical and business leaders are developing a framework and schedule that categorizes companies along a risk continuum

(low, medium, high) based on occupational health standards and known characteristics of disease spread. This flexible framework will take into account factors including industry type and geographic location, each company’s unique operating capabilities, and a company’s ability to implement workflow processes that maintain appropriate physical distance between employees, customers and other stakeholders. The framework will be developed in consultation with several organizations, including the CDC and regional public health leaders/experts, minority-owned businesses, and local businesses.

CARTA offers a mobility lifeline for many who play key roles in our regional workforce. The public transit system has taken efforts to safely transport residents throughout the tri-county region as they

return to work. The system continues to encourage only essential trips, in addition to maintaining numerous social distancing policies both onboard vehicles and at transit facilities. It is making gloves, masks and hand sanitizer available to passengers and requiring that drivers wear masks and gloves at all times.

The system is also strongly encouraging as much separation as possible among passengers, while driver partitions have been installed and rows nearest the front of each bus have been closed to encourage distance between passengers and drivers.

CARTA vehicles are undergoing nightly disinfection, in addition to extra cleaning during the day. The Cosgrove Avenue SuperStop is being cleaned throughout the day and the number of people inside at one time is being limited.



## “BEST PRACTICE” WORKPLACE PROCEDURES

All companies meeting the definition of essential under Governor McMaster’s orders, as well as those beginning operations under this plan, should put into practice a series of procedures to limit situations which may introduce, expose or spread COVID-19. Following these guidelines will help provide additional consumer

confidence. We recommend that state and regional resources be made available to assist companies in developing and implementing these procedures, including a strong push for worker education around, but not limited to hand washing, physical distancing and remaining home when not working.

Note: The best practice procedures list is likely to change in future phases of the economic recovery to address operating practices of other types of businesses. The procedures may also be modified in response to changing statewide COVID-19 infection patterns.

### A CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

We recommend setting up a “system for businesses” that are trained and comply with health protocols. This certification would serve as an incentive for businesses to take health protocols seriously and to instill public confidence in those businesses. We recommend the creation of a searchable, public website where companies taking the pledge are listed. This would be especially useful for consumer-facing companies, giving the public confidence that they are not incurring undue risk by patronizing a business. This confidence is key to the broader goal of returning our region to economic normalcy. For information, please contact [businesshealth@musc.edu](mailto:businesshealth@musc.edu).



### WORKPLACE PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS

The region’s companies are encouraged to follow procedures and protocols that mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Each company’s written plan should be updated regularly based on evolving guidance from the CDC and state/local public health agencies. The following are best practices for companies to consider in developing their own COVID-19 response plans.

## WORKSAFE PRACTICES



### EMPLOYEE SCREENING

- Before returning to work, health screen employees.
- Employee must immediately report symptoms associated with COVID-19 exposure.
- Employee must report contact with any person who tests positive for COVID-19.
- Review CDC's frequently updated [quarantine and return to work guidelines](#) for COVID-19 positive employees.
- Regular body temperature scans performed for on-site employees (contingent on availability of scanning devices) or self-administered temperature checks must be reported by employees. [CDC Temperature Log](#)



### TRAVEL

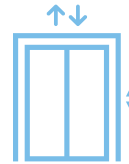
- Policy that minimizes domestic and international travel. Business travel requires management approval.
- Any employee returning from a Level 2 or 3 CDC travel country must self-quarantine for 14 days and be symptom-free before returning to work.



### ON-SITE PRACTICES

- Require employees to work from home until approval except the minimum required for baseline on-site functions.
- Limit in-person meetings of any size and employee gatherings to those deemed essential and maintain social distancing practices of at least six feet of distance between individuals. Communicate virtually when possible.
- Workflow audit that removes instances of employees being within six feet of each other wherever possible.
- On-site employees wear face coverings and gloves where appropriate and feasible (contingent on availability of PPE and employee-specific conditions).
- Reduction of on-site work hours to minimum needed to sustain operations.
- Staggered shifts and work hours to minimize on-site presence at a given time.
- Staggered use of all shared spaces, including bathrooms, and break rooms, and frequent documented cleaning of those facilities.

- Staggered facility entry and exit procedures maintaining at least six feet physical distancing.
- Ban on non-essential deliveries.
- Ban on non-essential visitors except those approved by management for essential business operations only.



### LOBBIES AND ELEVATORS

- Employees should follow safety measures and guidance of both the company and the property manager, if different or are in rented space and not the majority tenant.
- If the lobby has turnstiles, keep a safe distance of six feet behind the person passing through the turnstile ahead of you. Individuals exiting the building through the turnstiles should be given the right to pass through first.
- Lobbies and elevators should routinely be cleaned throughout the day.
- Maintain social distancing guidelines in the lobby.

- When proceeding to the elevator areas, be conscious of only allowing the number of people that can be in this area when allowing six feet between them. If the area becomes crowded and social distancing cannot be maintained, depart from the area and wait until a smaller group of tenants are able to maintain the six feet spacing between them.
- Limit the number of individuals in the elevator to no more than four with squares marked off in each corner and avoiding facing one another. If having to touch the screens or buttons in the elevator, individuals should avoid touching their faces until they can get to a place to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.



### RESTROOMS

- Restrooms pose unique challenges when attempting to maintain social distancing.
- Individuals entering the restrooms should be mindful of the number of people in the restroom and maintain the appropriate six-foot distance if possible.
- Individuals using the sinks should maintain social distancing if it is practical to do so.



### OFFICE-BASED SERVICES

- Certain services may be provided in offices (such as laptop repair, pickup, package/mail services, food services, etc.) Employees in these roles should be provided with gloves and other safety measures to lessen any direct contact.
- Utilizing these services must maintain six feet of distance when waiting in a line at a service desk/window. Individuals are also encouraged to wash their hands after obtaining an asset or item from the service window.



### SERVICE AREAS

- Those using printer/copier rooms must maintain at least six feet of separation. If it is a confined room, limit access to one or two people.
- Use a stylus or some other functional pen to make selections; if the machine does not function like this then machines should be disinfected throughout the day and employees must wash / sanitize hands immediately after.



### EMPLOYEE AREAS

- Employees should not congregate in cafeterias, pantries, break rooms. Additionally, employees should purchase or collect food and immediately return to workstation.
- Depending on size of rooms, management may need to limit to one or two people at a time to maintain social distancing.
- Wash/sanitize hands before entering and after leaving.
- Consider use of disposable cups and utensils or encourage individuals to bring their own and to be kept with them or at their work space at all times.



### FACILITY CLEANING

- Sanitary processes implemented throughout the facility using EPA-quality disinfectants (soap, hand sanitizer, single-use gloves, doors propped open, hands-free capabilities, no shared food).
- Blue tape marking of surfaces that receive frequent human contact; documented disinfection of these surfaces multiple times daily.

## SUPPORT FROM ONE REGION'S GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

The One Region Executive Committee recommends significant state and local action to support our region's businesses and employees. We cannot avoid the economic disruption caused by COVID-19, but we can choose to manage it wisely. We also recognize that each of our government entities cannot adopt a "one size fits all" approach, as there are differences among the jurisdictions that might require unique solutions.

### Ideas for state and local government consideration:



#### Protocols

Provide specific health protocols aligned to each color-coded health guidance scheme



#### Liability

Address business liability issues related to COVID-19



#### Regulations

Relax business regulations, like those for sidewalk dining for restaurants



#### Education

Provide parents flexibility in work schedules and opportunities to telework



#### Assist with Federal Programs

Assist and emphasize access to business and household assistance from federal programs

- Paycheck Protection Program
- Unemployment insurance for those laid off or furloughed
- Fund performance-based contracts to help small businesses get federal help



#### Business Assistance

Use CARES Act funding controlled by the state to provide short-term assistance to help businesses that fall through the cracks of federal programs (loans and/or grants)

- Short-term rent assistance for businesses and people
- Operating capital
- Consider offsetting a portion of unemployment insurance rate increases for employers



#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Ensure businesses and their employees have access to PPE and other items "regular" businesses will need to comply with safety protocols, including potentially building a supply chain within the state and region

## PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE NEIGHBORS

While we work to One Region Ready our region safely, we must keep in mind our neighbors who are most at risk due to COVID-19.

### INDIVIDUALS CONSIDERED HIGH-RISK INCLUDE THOSE:

- Over age 65
- Residing at senior living facilities
- All ages with underlying medical conditions, including chronic lung disease, asthma, heart conditions, severe obesity, chronic kidney disease, liver disease or otherwise immunocompromised (undergoing cancer treatment, smoker, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune-weakening medications)

### WE CAN HELP PROTECT HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS BY:

- Wearing face coverings/masks when within six feet of others, especially if unsure of personal COVID-19 antibody status (worldwide, numerous individuals have been shown to be asymptomatic carriers of the virus and may not be aware they were ever infected)
- For all individuals, following proper hygiene standards and physical distancing guidelines, especially around high-risk individuals
- Limiting visitation to hospitals, nursing homes and other residential care facilities
- Encouraging retailers to create established hours for high-risk individuals to shop
- Practicing social distancing and minimizing in-person contact in workplaces, and allowing high-risk individuals to work from home when able

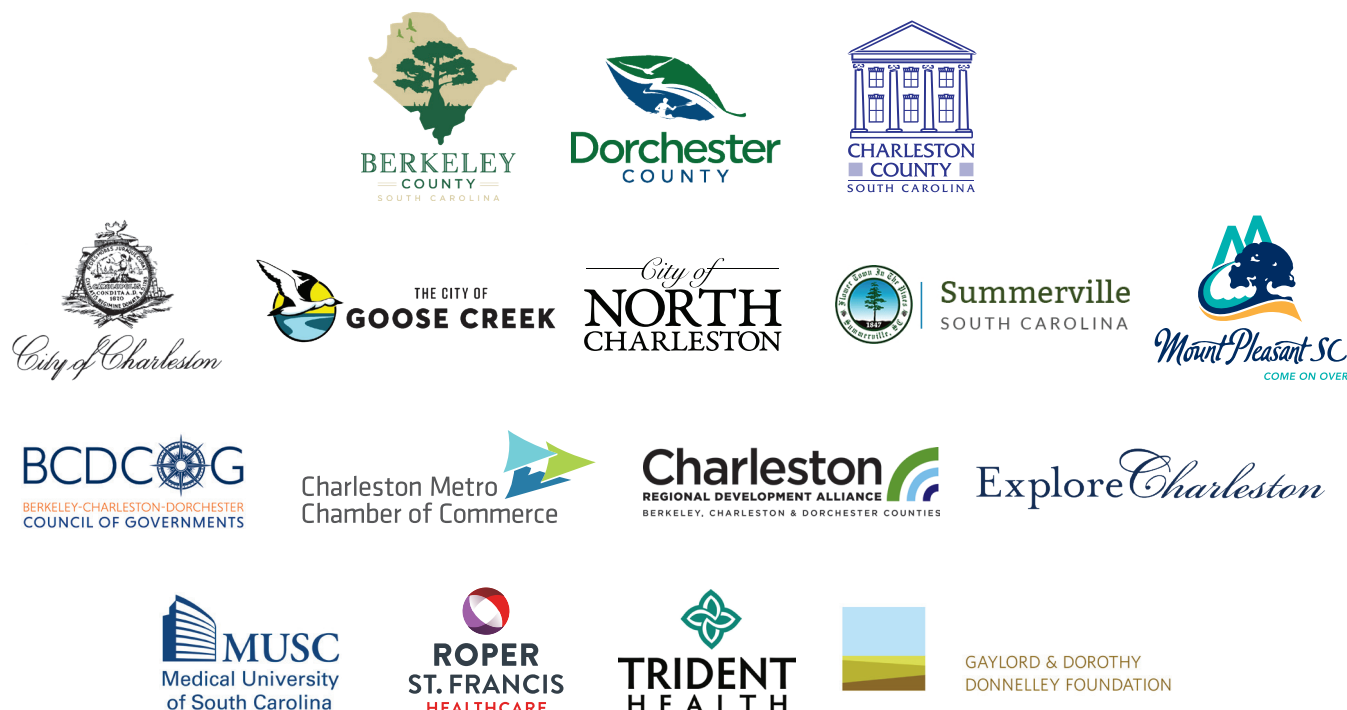
### HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS SHOULD PROTECT THEMSELVES BY:

- Limiting travel to work-related travel only if unable to work from home
- Limiting visits to friends or family and avoid attending gatherings outside your household or residence
- Not visiting hospitals, nursing homes or other residential care facilities
- Undergo daily screenings/symptom monitoring and being tested if symptoms develop
- In households with vulnerable individuals, taking extra precautions including wearing a face covering and washing hands frequently when interacting or caring for the person, cleaning surfaces regularly, and if possible, providing a protected space for the vulnerable individual
- Seek the advice of your medical professional via telemedicine for individual recommendations.

**Together, we can  
safely protect  
our community.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many organizations and leaders have supported and informed the development of this Phase 1 One Region Ready Plan guiding our region's safe return to business.



Berkeley Chamber of Commerce  
Cantey Tech Consulting  
Charleston Trident Association of Realtors  
Coastal Community Foundation  
College of Charleston  
Greater Summerville/Dorchester County  
Chamber of Commerce  
Home Telecom  
The InterTech Group

Lowcountry Land Trust  
Lowcountry Local First  
Nelson Mullins  
South Carolina Community Loan Fund  
Thomas & Hutton  
Trident United Way  
Urban Land Institute  
Wells Fargo

### DISCLOSURE

This strategy was created by the One Region: One Region Ready initiative in response to the COVID-19 crisis and designed to support businesses across the Charleston region as they proactively seek to reopen. The suggestions and recommendations herein are based on consultation with business, medical, nonprofit and governmental professionals in accordance with data and information available at the time of this document's publishing. As the COVID-19 situation evolves, so will the strategies, recommendations and requirements for businesses, nonprofits and other organizations to keep employees, customers/clients, and vendors safe. The practices outlined in this document are not intended as legal advice and should not be interpreted as such. We strongly suggest consulting with your own legal counsel prior to implementing any advice that has the potential to expose you and/or your organization to litigation.



# ONE REGION

A GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY

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