



## Iowa's Emergency Business Response Guide for Promoting Survey Participation

By now you have no doubt received communication and the questionnaire link from the Iowa Economic Development Authority – [Please forward this link](#). The importance of this statewide effort cannot be understated. Think of it as conducting a statewide census of how micro to major businesses are being impacted by COVID-19 in four days...because that is exactly what it is. Information collected will be used to gain an accurate understanding what Iowa can anticipate so that the Governor, legislature and IEDA can plan an effective, comprehensive and appropriate response. Data will certainly be shared with you and your colleagues as soon as possible but it may take some time – bear with us.

Getting as complete a response as possible from your main streets, districts, malls, industrial parks, communities, county, and region should be your highest priority in the coming hours and days. It is worth canceling meetings, re-assigning staff, putting board members and committees to work, calling in media favors, and reaching out to any and all who could help you get your businesses to participate. Make no mistake, this will be a difficult and imperfect process. There will likely be several speed bumps, stumbles over each other, and technical hiccups along the way. Preach patience, participation, and more patience.

We also recognize that you may have sent out your own survey and/or poll. Thank you so much! However, we ask that you also have your businesses complete IEDA's questionnaire so that we have a consistent and comprehensive level of information. Please thank your owners and managers for their time and input, we apologize for any redundancies and/or confusion.

The following are simple steps to help you plan the next 24 to 48 hours. It is not an exhaustive list. Add and amend with your own actions. When you have time, email those additional recommendations to [idm@uni.edu](mailto:idm@uni.edu).

### Step 1-Consider Your Businesses

On a whiteboard, flipchart, notebook, or Google Doc create your target response map. Identify the various sectors and pockets of businesses you have from major manufacturers and other large employers down to homebased businesses. Consider businesses that are established, startups, minority owned, very rural/very urban, industrial, tourism, hospitality, and retail. Everyone. Many of these businesses may be outside of your normal sphere of interest - that is ok. We are simply creating an image to serve as a visual reminder of who you and your colleagues are targeting.

Figure 1. Map Your Businesses



## **Step 2-Identify & Engage Your Colleagues**

Next, identify as many points of contact to your businesses as possible. While you, as an economic development organization (EDO), chamber of commerce, main street organization, or tourism office may be very connected to the business community. It is highly unlikely that your organization is totally connected. If you think outside of the box, you will identify organizations and individuals in the public and private sectors that have members, clients, users, sales/prospect lists etc. that can help recruit participation over the next few days.

On a second sheet of paper, create the Response Team of organizations and individuals needed to achieve high levels of participation throughout your map. You need to contact these people, inform them of the effort and its importance, and recruit them and their respective teams to help with reaching out to area businesses. Certainly, identify and work with any existing response groups that your area may have already assembled.

It may be at this time that you wonder if yours is the appropriate organization to be taking the lead in this grand undertaking. Someone must and you don't have time to hesitate. You may find that you get the ball rolling and some other organization runs with the baton – that is just fine.

You may also be wondering if you need to convene a meeting to divvy up business lists to avoid duplicating contacts and annoying businesses. How you approach this is your call. However, note that the survey will only allow one response from the same computer; the directions at the beginning of the questionnaire explain it should only be completed once; and you can instruct everyone making contacts to provide a friendly disclaimer when they call or email a business, "Hello, you may have already been contacted by others today and that reflects the importance and urgency of my asking you to make time in the next 24 to 48 hours complete this questionnaire."

Your Dream Team may choose to share emails, cell numbers, meet daily or have check in conference calls to improve communication and ensure coverage – again your call but all could be very beneficial. Similarly, it could be very helpful to create and share two or three talking points about the effort that are tailored to your area. This will ensure that everyone is calling and referring to the questionnaire in the same way, communicating the same response timelines and preaching patience and multiple tries if businesses should happen to experience any unforeseen glitches online.

Table: Sample Points of Contact to Engage

Economic Development Corporations	Chambers of Commerce	Main Street Organizations
Community College Business Services	Small Business Development Centers	Regional Councils of Government
SHRM Chapters	Tourism Groups	Radio / TV Station Sales Departments
City Clerks	Local Accountants & Attorneys	Churches
Minority Interest Groups	Immigrant/ Refugee Organizations	Industrial Groups
Ag Coops – Ag Related Organizations, Dealers, Service Providers	Unions (e.g. plumbers, electrical, contractors)	Building & Contractor Services Professional Organizations/ Chapters
Realtors – Commercial	Mixed Use Property Owners/Developers	Food Distribution Companies (for restaurants, coffee shops etc.)
County Health Inspectors (for restaurants, coffee shops etc.)	Co-work Spaces/ Incubators/ College-University Student Incubators	Business Networking Coordinators (e.g. Million Cups, Coffee Fridays, Techbrews)

### Step 3-Connect, Recruit & Remind

Step 3 is rolling up your collective sleeves and getting business owners or managers to complete the online questionnaire. Remember the goal is not just contacting and informing businesses, it is getting them to complete the questionnaire as soon as humanly possible. Call • Email • Text • Repeat

Plan to make your initial contact and then send out a reminder 24-36 hours later. Consider using a shared Google Doc or Spreadsheet to record and monitor contacts.

Volunteers do not have to limit their contacts to an 8am-5pm window. Early and late communication may catch business owners at less busy times and again convey the sense of urgency and immediacy. The questionnaire link will be closed at 5 p.m. Monday, March 23, 2020.

### Step 4-Monitor

Step 4 is about inserting a pause in your process to revisit your Target Business Map to consider if you have any gaps. It may be the time you assign groups to reach out to very rural or specific industry that may need additional attention.

Unfortunately, time does not allow us to process requests to determine if responses have been submitted by community or county or to identify if a specific business participated. It may be more effective and “real time” if you simply create your own Gmail address for this effort and aggressively request that all businesses simply send you an email with their Business Name and Completed or Done. This will provide you with the most insightful and up to date information for monitoring your participation recruitment efforts.

## **Step 5-Thank**

Step 5 involves you and/or your fellow Dream Team members emailing/texting a word of thanks on Monday March 23 to all your businesses for their attention and willingness to participate. Honestly, this is a very important step but you really do not have time to filter out who has and who has not participated at this point. Thank everyone and share that IEDA and the Governor’s office are impressed with the level of local participation. Mention that if anyone has not participated to do so by 5 p.m on Monday to make sure their information is included in this historic community/county/regional and statewide effort. Respondents are asked to, if willing, include an email address in their responses. The contact list created may be used for follow up questionnaires or information sharing by the State of Iowa as the situation unfolds. You will appreciate that survey confidentiality does not allow the State of Iowa to share these emails or specific responses with you. Again, we encourage you to ask your businesses to notify you if they completed the questionnaire.

Similarly, reach out to Response Team members to express your thanks and support. Convey that there are similar efforts in all of Iowa’s 99 counties and that such a widespread collaboration, fast response, and outpouring of concern and commitment to Iowa’s businesses would be impossible without their time, talents and hard work.

## **Step 6-Evaluate**

Unfortunately, Step 6 will involve a bit of waiting. It will take some time for information to be reported and exactly how reporting will occur is yet to be determined. We pledge to keep you posted and share information as we can. However, it seems quite probable that this will not be the last time you will be asked to help collect similar information. A much more manageable and realistic response window will be a high priority as we plan.

We encourage you to make time next week to debrief with your Response Team to identify what worked well, what could be improved upon, and who else should be included in future efforts. Please feel free to submit comments, questions, recommend, and concerns about the overall process to [ids@uni.edu](mailto:ids@uni.edu). We will work to reply to these as soon as we can.

Thank you for all your help and your leadership.