

## Hospitality / Tourism Task Force (HTTF) Preliminary Top Line Recommendations Phase One Re-opening Submitted May 7, 2020 by Co-Chairs Kyle France and Jill Kidder

The purpose of today's report is to list initial recommendations for implementing Phase One guidelines only, beginning May 15. As a reminder, the HTTF is responsible for gathering input from our task force member-volunteers assembled from across many different travel industry business sectors and across the entire geographic area of Louisiana. Today's recommendations are not necessarily final, nor the result of voting from all members, just the general consensus of the group to date. The HTTF has met twice as a full group (April 28, May 5), with many dozens of individual calls continuing in-between those meetings.

As you read, please remember the economic impact of tourism in Louisiana ([2019 stats](#))—52.3 million visitors, \$18.9 billion in sales generating \$1.92 billion in state and local taxes, saving every Louisiana household \$1,100 a year. At present, the State of Louisiana is losing \$363 million **per week** in direct spending by visitors. In the seven weeks since March 16, 2020 that equates to \$2.5 billion in lost sales. Our industry is Louisiana's 4<sup>th</sup> largest employer, creating and supporting 242,200 jobs. Is it needless to add that this Louisiana industry is among the hardest hit?

Just three days ago, the U.S Travel Association published their comprehensive "[Travel in the New Normal](#)" report which focuses on the six main areas below. Your Task Force agrees with these safety and hygiene protocols and recommendations to be implemented as we move through phases to recovery. The following Phase One recommendations and our final report will follow these common themes.

1. Travel businesses should adapt operations, modify employee practices and/or redesign public spaces to help protect employees and customers.
2. Travel businesses should consider implementing touchless solutions, where practical, to limit the opportunity for virus transmission while also enabling a positive travel experience.
3. Travel businesses should adopt and implement enhanced sanitation procedures specifically designed to combat the transmission of COVID-19.
4. Travel businesses should promote health screening measures for employees and isolate workers with possible COVID-19 symptoms and provide health resources to customers.
5. Travel businesses should establish a set of procedures aligned with CDC guidance should an employee test positive for COVID-19.
6. Travel businesses should follow best practices in food and beverage service to promote health of employees and customers.

Inside our final report you will see many commonalities as relates to policies and procedures to ensure the safety and health of the travel industry employees and the guests we serve, but there are also issues specific to each tourism sector. These are initial recommendations only:

### Cultural Attractions\*

- Cultural attractions should re-open under Phase One, and our Cultural Attractions sub-committee has compiled its first draft of excellent supporting recommendations (which are yet to be posted on the Resilient Louisiana Commission [website](#)).
- Cultural attractions include museums, art galleries, historic sites, science and technology centers, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens and walking tours, which are vital to stitching together the fabric of our culture while respecting social distancing. These attractions are among the most trusted institutions in our communities and are vital to the well-being of the people of Louisiana.

### Outdoor Recreation, Adventure and Natural Attractions\*

- Louisiana remains famous as the Sportsman's Paradise, and we recommend *all* these outdoor resources—including state parks—be fully opened during Phase One
- Fishing, boating, hunting, camping, bird watching, biking, hiking and similar activities are inherently low in people-density,

however, established social distancing norms and other recommended protocols should still be enforced.

### Youth Sporting Events\*

- Youth Sports (18 and under) should be allowed to resume in Phase One.
- Since March 16, under the governor's executive order, all youth sports event and league play have halted.
- Similar to allowing families to return to restaurant open spaces, we believe youth sports activities can be managed properly to ensure safety and hygiene protocols are enforced.
- No access to organized youth sports not only removes needed physical and mental activity, its economic impact is devastating across Louisiana and beyond. For example, Lafayette and Lake Charles, alone, are estimated to have lost over \$50 million due to cancellations of youth sports in the last two months.

### Convention & Visitors Bureaus/Visitor Centers\*

- This Task Force believes these places that welcome and guide our visitors should be allowed to re-open in Phase One.
- Since March 16, under the governor's order, all visitor centers operated by the Louisiana Office of Tourism, by convention and visitor bureaus and tourism commissions, or by private sector operators have been closed.
- By properly executing safety and hygiene standards and acting as a first point of contact for our Louisiana destinations, these visitor centers will assist in restoring visitor confidence.
- There should be posting of all standards and protocols in clear public view.

### Hotels/Accommodations

All hotels are "essential" and allowed to remain open to overnight guests. • Moving into Phase One it is recommended all Louisiana hotel owners and managers adopt the recommended American Hotel Lodging Association's (AHLA) [Safe Stay](#) cleaning/hygiene standards focused on enhanced hotel cleaning practices, social interactions, and workplace protocols, while ensuring transparency. • According to STR, Inc., Louisiana has over 101,000 hotels rooms which, in March 2019, ran an occupancy of 72% and an average daily rate (ADR) of \$130.23. The hotel industry started out in 2020 on positive trajectory with realistic hopes of ending with a banner year, but instead, March 2020 saw a 42.4% decrease in occupancy and a 25.3% decrease in ADR, year-over-year. • For example, the week of April 26 through May 2, hotel occupancy was down 52.3% with a decrease in ADR of 48.6% compared to the same week in 2019.

### Convention and Event Centers

- Remain closed, no Phase One implementation standards recommended, wait for Phase Two and later timelines.

### Fairs and Festivals

- Remain closed, no Phase One implementation standards recommended, wait for Phase Two and later timelines.
- Festival and event organizers have asked for leaders to provide a minimum of a three- to four-month lead time for cancellations due to the long preplanning period and advanced expenses incurred for even the smallest of these events. For example, fall festival organizers are asking to be informed by June 30 whether they will be permitted to move forward with their events.
- **It is important** for planning purposes for fairs, festivals, and outdoor events that we look ahead to Phases Two and Three and announce what will be permitted under a best-case scenario. If what will be allowed in Phases Two and Three could be announced with Phase One recommendations that would be ideal.

\*NOTE: Task Force strongly recommends Phase One re-opening