



# COLORADO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

For business. For Colorado. For tomorrow.

## Colorado Chamber COVID-19 Business Impact Survey: How Should Colorado Re-Open for Business?

April 24, 2020

### About the Survey

The Colorado Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey of its membership on how the Colorado business community is adapting to coronavirus (COVID-19). The survey was conducted online **between April 20 and April 22, 2020**. The Colorado Chamber received responses from 82 businesses of all sizes across the state representing a wide variety of diverse industries.

The following report summarizes the survey results for each question. Several questions requested open-ended responses and excerpts have been included in those results\*. Open-ended responses were categorized to quantify business sentiments and capture common themes.

### About the Colorado Chamber of Commerce

The Colorado Chamber of Commerce represents hundreds of companies across the state and is the only business association that works to improve the economic climate from a statewide, multi-industry perspective for businesses of all sizes. It was created in 1965 based on the merger with the Colorado Manufacturers' Association. Visit [www.COChamber.com](http://www.COChamber.com) for more information.

*\*Some open-ended excerpts have been edited for grammar and spelling.*

# Colorado Chamber Reopening Survey Highlights

## Employers Broadly Support Reopening Businesses with Phase-In

- 50% of businesses surveyed support reopening non-essential businesses but with a phased-in approach.
- 37% survey said it should be as soon as possible.
- 12% said it is too early to consider reopening non-essential businesses.
- 20% of business indicated that they should be given leeway to adopt their own solutions to continue to keep employees, customers and vendors safe.

## Assistance and Guidance from the State

- When asked what can be done at the state level to help assist the unique challenges facing their industries, **27.8% said they are experiencing financial hardships or would like to see additional financial assistance** from the state.
  - 15.3% say they are already an essential business or don't need assistance from the state.
- When asked what resources and essential services businesses anticipate needing to support a phased reopening, the **top requests from businesses were (1) improved COVID-19 testing capabilities, (2) support for additional PPE and safety equipment, and (3) clear guidance from the state** for businesses to reopen. Out of those businesses that anticipate needing support:
  - 26.1% would like to see improved testing for the virus.
  - 23.9% expressed the need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like masks and gloves, or safety equipment like thermometers for screening stations and hand sanitizer.
  - 15.2% indicated that they hoped to have clear state guidance to follow.
  - 10.9% mentioned financial assistance from the state.
- When it comes to any new regulatory guidance, **businesses need clarity, certainty, and specificity**. Of those participants that said additional guidance would be beneficial:
  - 21.8% indicated that they'd like to see very specific guidelines relating to health and safety, including social distancing in the workplace, how to conduct meetings, how many employees can be in one place at one time, and other workplace requirements.
  - 12.7% would like the guidelines to be very specific to different industries or types of businesses, regarding when and how they can open, and what safety protocols they will have to follow.
  - 14.5% mentioned the need for effective communication, outreach, and/or accurate information when it comes to any new guidance.

- 16.4% emphasized that new guidelines should be clear, concise, and/or consistent.
- 9.1% expressed concerns with whether and how any new guidelines will be enforced.
- **48% of businesses would like to see tax relief** to assist with a phased reopening. Of those that indicated they'd like to see some form of tax relief:
  - 40.6% support general tax relief for businesses.
  - 28% would like to see property tax relief.
  - 18.8% would like to see payroll tax relief.
  - 18.8% would like additional time to file taxes.
- **Businesses are very concerned about legal liability issues** and would like to see the state provide liability relief.
  - 45% indicated liability concerns, mostly with being sued if employees contract the virus when returning back to work.

### UI Claims Should Not Affect Employers' Experience Rating

- A striking **97% of those surveyed** do not want unemployment insurance (UI) claims to count against their unemployment insurance experience rating.
- Businesses said that since they were forced to shut down by the state, unemployment insurance claims should not impact their rating.

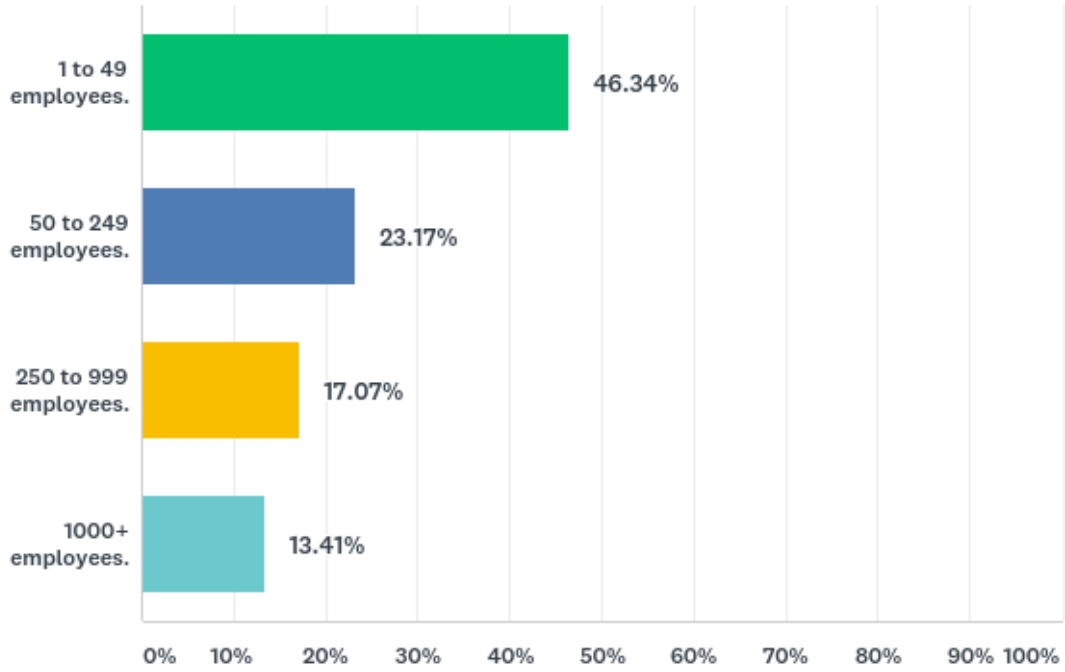
### Federal Assistance Isn't Helping Everyone Who Needs It

- Only **31.25% say they have benefitted** from federal assistance like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).
- Out of those that did not receive support, it was mostly due to not qualifying for the program because of their federal tax status or business size.
  - 70.5% of those who said "No," indicated that they haven't benefitted because they don't qualify for the federal PPP loans.
  - 9% said of those who said "No," indicated that they didn't need the assistance at this time.

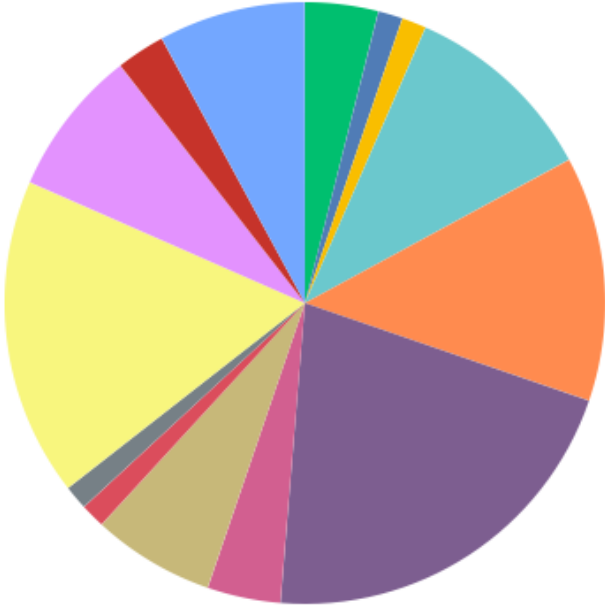
### Reflecting on Post-Pandemic Policies and Business Strategies

- **46% of businesses would like the state to review the regulations that have been temporarily waived** during the pandemic and consider whether they should be permanently repealed.
- While most businesses expressed uncertainty about how their company will move forward after the pandemic, **many respondents said they will look at continuing or expanding their working-from-home policies** post-pandemic (17.2%) and several are reconsidering their long-term office space (5.7%).

## Question: Approximate Company Size.



Question: Which of the following best describes the principal industry of your company?



- Advertising, Marketing, Consulting
- Agriculture
- Automotive
- Chamber of Commerce
- Construction
- Finance & Financial Services
- Food & Beverages
- Health Care & Pharmaceuticals
- Higher Education Institution
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Nonprofit
- Technology
- Utilities, Energy, and Extraction

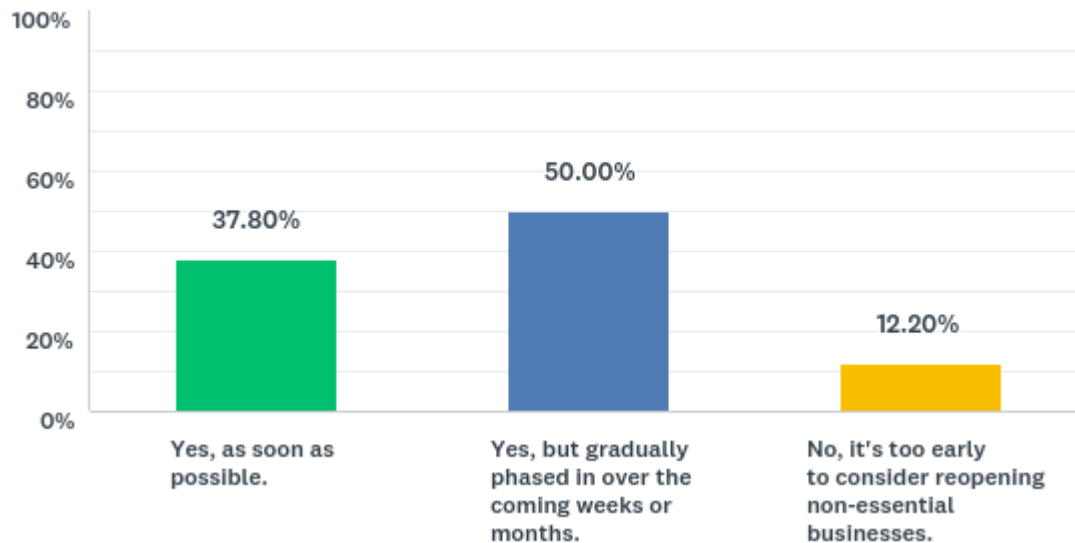
Other:

“Professional Services”

“Temporary Staffing”

“Hospitality, Tourism”

Question: Do you think Colorado should allow non-essential businesses to resume regular operations with added social distancing and safety precautions?



Summary: In the comments, some businesses (60%) expressed the need to open non-essential businesses slowly and with caution, while others (20%) shared that businesses should be given leeway to adopt their own solutions to continue to keep employees, customers and vendors safe. Several businesses mentioned social distancing and the need for testing.

Excerpts from Comments:

“I think it needs to be done very slowly and monitored to quickly identify any rise in outbreaks.”

“Essential businesses have adapted business processes to continue to operate while keeping employees, customers and vendors safe. Let's allow the rest of our economy to do the same!”

“It is important that people work. Furthermore, business leaders and people are smart, let them come up with creative solutions to meet necessary needs.”

“Rural counties should be allowed to make this decision, as the infection rates are extremely low and rural businesses need to reopen soon to avoid complete failure.”

“Re-opening decisions should be made in consultation with public health experts and based on data and testing stats.”

“Small businesses are getting killed, so it's very important to our economy that we allow small businesses to open up but with strict guidelines.”

“I'm concerned that with every passing day, more businesses will fail, more will be laid off, and business owners and managers will lose hope that things get back to normal in time to avert business failures.”

Open-ended Question: When it comes to reopening the state, what unique challenges does your industry will face and what do you think can be done at a state level to assist?

Summary: Financial assistance was the primary request from businesses. Additional PPE and testing availability were also cited frequently. Specific requests, like continuing electronic remote notary services and delaying an increase in the minimum wage were recommended.

- 27.8% indicated that they would like to see financial assistance or are experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic.
- 13.9% said they would like to see the state lift certain restrictions or allow businesses more leeway to decide how to reopen.
- 15.3% say they are already essential or don't need any assistance from the state.

Excerpts from Comments:

“Government assistance programs, including unemployment insurance, will need to be robust.”

“The State needs to refrain from mandating banks from deferring payments or ceasing foreclosures. We are voluntarily working with our customers positively.”

“We're finding increased demand for e-notary services as a result of COVID-19.”

“Our county is focused on tourism. Allowing tourists, in-state or out-of-state, back in the mountains may cause a resurgence of what happened at the ski resorts.”

“Postpone the scheduled minimum wage increase.”

“Cash flow for any 501c6... We do not qualify for any financial assistance at this time.”

“Masks and gloves should be a requirement in the construction industry for at least 2 months or until the risk is low. Temperature checks each day should be required.”

“Hospitals are being asked to perform at or above our traditional service and capacity levels, and invest in staff, supplies, and space needed to maintain an ongoing response



to COVID. At the same time, we are facing dramatic cuts in our revenues that will persist for months.”

“Relief from the vendor fee cap would be greatly needed.”

“From a security perspective in bank lobbies, customers with face masks is a concern.”

“The State can make sure testing is available so that people know if they have it.”

“We will need additional PPE and might need help from the State for securing this equipment.”

“The State can help by reopening tourism-related businesses and activities.”

“Our office is located in a workspace shared with other companies, and some employees take public transportation. We would welcome guidance on keeping everyone healthy and safe.”

## Open-ended Question: What resources and essential services do you anticipate needing to support a phased reopening?

Summary: The top requests from businesses to this open-ended question were (1) improved COVID-19 testing capabilities, (2) support for additional PPE and safety equipment, and (3) clear guidance from the state for businesses to reopen.

- 35.2% said they do not need additional resources or essential services or are already an essential business.
- Out of those businesses that do anticipate needing support:
  - 26.1% said that they would like to see improved testing for the virus.
  - 23.9% expressed the need for PPE like masks and gloves, or safety equipment like thermometers for screening stations and hand sanitizer.
  - 15.2% indicated that they hoped to have clear state guidance to follow.
  - 10.9% mentioned financial assistance from the state.

### Excerpts from Comments:

“Technology to facilitate efficient temperature checks as employees enter the building. Our largest challenge is with social distancing. Our office space (cubicles), does not meet the suggested guidelines of 6 feet between individuals.”

“Resources to secure PPE for returning employees, advance communication of changes as much as possible so we can prepare to increase or decrease business.”

“Employer liability legislation to protect employers if workers become sick.”

“Educational materials for local & state funding opportunities. Funding from banks and grants.”

“A reasonable approach to social distancing protocols while in an office environment.”

“Capital for vulnerable hospitals to maintain operations; federal funding that does not require repayment; FEMA reimbursement for increased capacity build-out.”

“PPE - gloves, hand sanitizer, face shields, masks, contactless thermometers.”

“Access to COVID testing at all private and public health care facilities, from internal medicine to mental health care.”

“Guidance on basic steps to keep employees healthy and safe when we return to work.”

“Flexibility to allow hospitals to perform scheduled and elective procedures.”

Open-ended Question: What additional guidance, including specific regulatory guidance, from the state government would be beneficial for a phased reopening?

Summary: When it comes to any new regulatory guidance, businesses need clarity, certainty, and specificity. The open-ended responses to this question highlighted these concerns.

- 19.1% said no additional guidance was needed.
- Of those participants that did say additional guidance would be beneficial:
  - 21.8% indicated that they'd like to see very specific guidelines relating to health and safety, including social distancing in the workplace, how to conduct meetings, how many employees can be in one place at one time, and other workplace requirements.
  - 9.1% expressed concerns with whether and how any new guidelines will be enforced.
  - 12.7% would like the guidelines to be very specific to different industries or types of businesses, regarding when and how they can open, and what safety protocols they will have to follow.
  - 14.5% mentioned the need for effective communication, outreach, and/or accurate information when it comes to any new guidance.
  - 16.4% emphasized that new guidelines should be clear, concise, and/or consistent.
  - 5.5% would like guidance on what steps will be taken should another outbreak occur.

Excerpts from Comments:

“Guidelines needed on group meetings or gatherings and how the rules will be enforced.”

“Better clarity by industry as to when each type of industry is to reopen.”

“The phases - stay at home; safer at home - guidelines are very helpful. State presentations and documents are our source material for making reopening decisions.”

“Communications on a weekly if not daily basis, with alerts and information pertinent to businesses and industry specific would be helpful.”

“I hope that the State defers to the federal guidance so that businesses like ours in multiple states don't have to adopt different standards.”

“What will be the policy if second wave of virus were to hit? Knowing that would help us plan for another closure if needed.”

“Would like to see remote notary continue permanently to reduce in-person signings.”

“Recommendations/requirements to landlords of shared commercial spaces for cleaning common spaces and office suites. And increase sanitation efforts for all public transportation.”

“Restaurants should open with strict guidelines, numbers, and distance separated.”

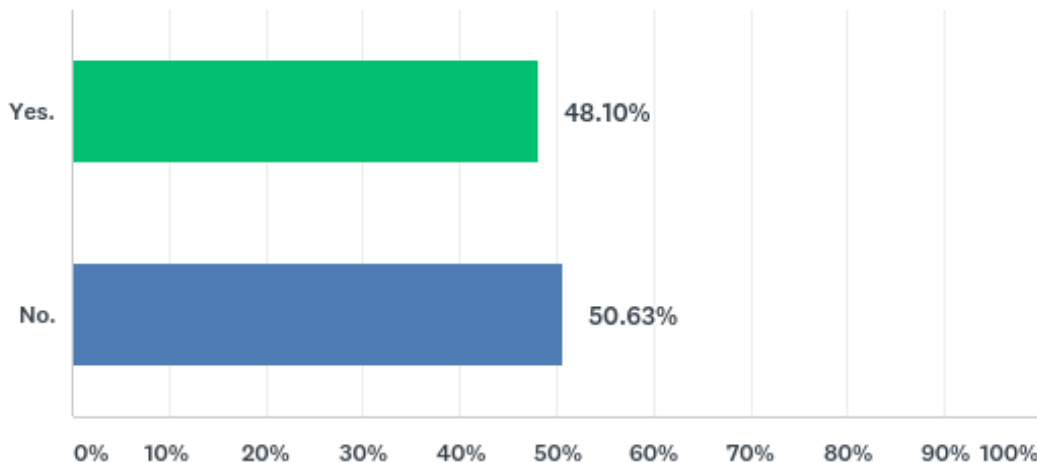
“We have sought relief from FINRA to to continue testing and licensing of financial representatives. We may need assistance from the State securities office to facilitate.”

“Clear comprehensive construction site requirements for workers and crews as well as subcontractors and vendors working on jobsites.”

“A more active presence by CDPHE in our business (construction) as well as with other industries is needed to ensure compliance.”

“Suspend vendor fee cap.”

Question: Would you like to see additional tax relief from the state to help your business through a phased reopening?



Summary: Of those that indicated they'd like to see some form of tax relief (based on the open-ended comments of this question):

- 40.6% support general tax relief for businesses.
- 18.8% would like additional time to file taxes.
- 28% would like to see property tax relief.
- 18.8 would like to see payroll tax relief.

Excerpts from Comments:

“Payroll tax elimination for all of 2020 would keep more folks employed through the recession.”

“Business personal property tax relief.”

“Extended time to file tax returns.”

“Direct assistance for businesses and residential with utility payments.”

“Many small businesses are about to fail and may not make it through re-opening during mud season. Almost none received the PPP or EIDL. The State needs to support small businesses.”

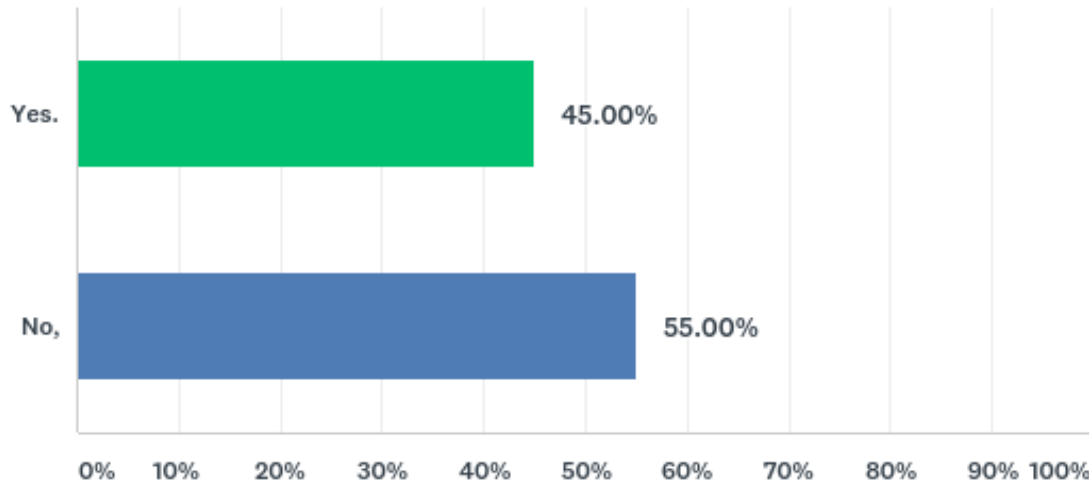
“Solopreneurs have had very few options for assistance. Would appreciate a refundable tax credit for solopreneurs that have \$0 taxable income.”

“Credits and consideration for hardships related to employer mandates for employee safety and social distancing, sick leave, family leave and caring for children and family members.”

“Tax relief has limited benefits for most of the state's hospitals, which are nonprofit. Please consider coupling tax relief efforts with relief that can support nonprofit businesses as well.”

“Waivers of interest and penalties on late returns not just the 2019 income tax returns.”

Question: Are you concerned about any legal liability issues during a phased reopening?



Summary: The primary liability concern expressed in the comments of this question is about employees or customers contracting COVID-19 and suing their business.

- Over half (54.5%) of respondents who said “Yes,” indicated a concern over employees or customers contracting the virus and suing their company.
- 9.1% specifically mentioned concerns for the restaurant industry in particular.

Excerpts from Comments:

“We have serious concerns about malpractice liability for health care professionals and facilities.”

“What if as an essential service one of our employees is sick or dies. We are taking every precaution but could use liability relief.”

“Contracts may not be written to handle this type of disaster.”

“If a business is non-compliant, how will that be determined?”



“We have concerns with reopening without testing capacity and the possibility of one or more team members become ill and exposing others in our workplace.”

“If employees get sick can they sue my company?”

“It should be a concern for everyone - and compromising some of our essential workers should also be a concern. We would be impacted if a number of our linemen got sick.”

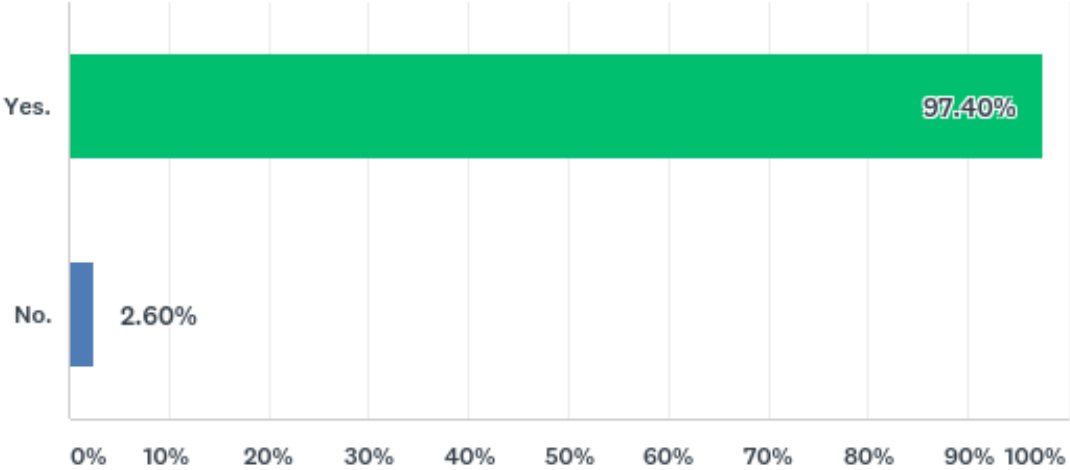
“Wearing PPE is not enforced. What happens when someone not wearing it infects someone that thought it was safe?”

“Yes. Employers might be subject to OSHA and workers compensation claims for COVID-19 cases that develop during the phased opening period.”

“Should an employee get COVID once they return to work, we need assurances that they cannot later sue us if we take necessary precautions.”

“If we have an outbreak in a restaurant, will we be held liable? What if we cannot get access to gloves and masks needed?”

Question: Do you think the state should clarify that Unemployment Insurance claims relating to COVID-19 should not be counted against an employer’s experience rating?



Excerpts from Comments:

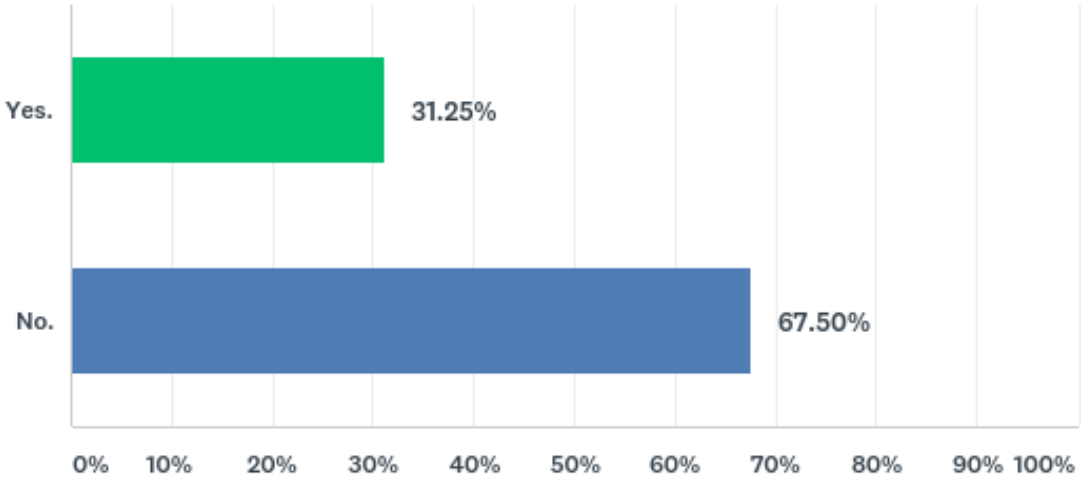
“Most employers did not make this decision to close down. They were forced to do so, so absolutely, the employer should not suffer on the insurance claims counting against their experience rating.”

“Because no matter the industry, all employers are impacted and should not suffer as a result.”

“The unemployment office understandably seems overwhelmed, and as an employer we are receiving duplicate claims for the same employee two or three times through different methods. What is process for reporting when an employee returns to work? What is employer required to do when an employee is offered a position, but they decline returning to work?”

“We've heard this concern from many, many restaurants.”

Question: Have you benefitted from any of the federal support, including the SBA’s Paycheck Protection Program, implemented since the onset of the pandemic?



Summary: Most of the survey respondents who said that they have received federal support were referring to the SBA’s Paycheck Protection Program. Out of those that did not receive support, it was mostly due to not qualifying for the program because of their federal tax status or business size (either being too large or having no employees).

- 70.5% of those who said “No,” indicated that they haven’t benefitted because they don’t qualify for the federal PPP loans.
- 9% said of those who said “No,” indicated that they didn’t need the assistance at this time.

Excerpts from Comments:

“We are using the funds exactly as they were designed to be used – for payroll, rent and utilities only. We currently only need half of our staff to keep up with the diminished demand, so this program allowed us to keep almost all our 100+ employees. If the economy doesn’t rebound in the next 90 days, we’ll be forced to lay people off. We need the State reopened.”

“No - We are a 501-c6 and as of now we are not eligible for the PPP program.”

“As a financial institution, I have seen two types of applications: those directly/immediately affected; and businesses not impacted today but could be and applied for relief.”

“Yes - SBA Debt Relief payment program and PPP.”

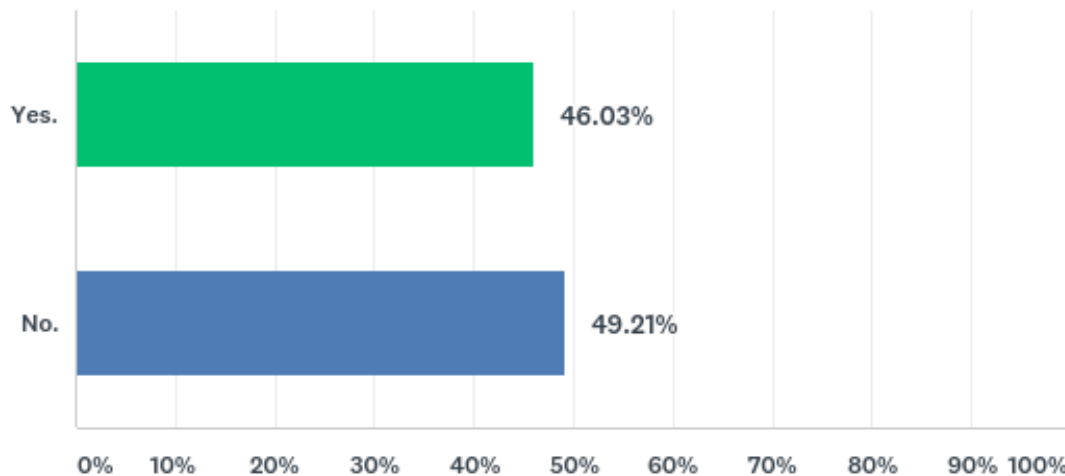
“Didn't qualify because I have no employees.”

“No support from the SBA - rural hospitals small enough are not eligible because they are government-owned. The direct-to-hospital support we received the week of 4/13 was roughly 1/3 of the \$100 billion national program and funded just 3-6 days of hospital operations.”

“We did not fit the requirements.”

“None of my companies have gotten their funding. All 3 applied, none have received a penny.”

Question: The State of Colorado has temporarily waived many regulations on businesses due to the emergency. Do you believe any of these regulations should be permanently repealed? If so, which ones?



Summary: Out of the 46% of survey respondents who answered “Yes,” most were generally supportive of the concept of reviewing any regulations that have been temporarily waived. The issues of alcohol delivery and pickup, remote notaries, oil and gas, and telehealth came up several times in open-ended answers.

- 67.7% of those who answered “Yes,” were supportive of generally reviewing temporarily waived regulations.
- 9.7% said the waived regulations surrounding alcohol pick-up and/or delivery should remain permanent.
- 6.5% mentioned the benefits of maintaining remote notary services.
- 6.5% mentioned tele-health regulations.
- 6.5% mentioned oil and gas regulations.

Excerpts from Comments:

“Sun-setting regulation and enforcing fewer regulations with more discipline seems wise.”

“Making remote notary process permanent – helps the elderly.”

“Allow the pick-up of alcohol from restaurants. That's wonderful.”

“Oil and gas, otherwise we potentially could lose another 75,000 jobs.”

“Alcohol delivery and to-go. Minimum wage increases need to stop. Any new burdens put on businesses should cease through 2021.”

“We should make expanded telehealth access permanent and maintain relaxed rules for health professional scope of practice and facility licensing. The State should push for some federal rules to also be permanently relaxed, i.e., Medicare.”

“Truck gross weights should be re-examined before the restrictions are put back in place.”

## Open-ended Question: How have you changed how you operate your business as a result of COVID-19 and what changes do you anticipate continuing after the pandemic?

Summary: While most businesses expressed uncertainty about how their company will move forward after the pandemic, many respondents said they will look at expanding their working-from-home policies. Several are reconsidering their current office space and will utilize modern technology more in the future.

- 17.2% indicated that they are considering expanding working from home policies after the pandemic.
- 5.7% indicated that working from home is not optimal for their business and will discontinue after the pandemic.
- 5.7% of respondents said they will reconsider their office space post-pandemic.
- 5.7% indicated that they will increase their use of virtual meeting technology after the pandemic.

### Excerpts from Comments:

“We have decreased our staff by more than 50% at a time in the shop. We are wearing masks and I see this continuing for some time.”

“Deployed 2/3 of our workforce to work from home. We learned better ways to provide customer service.”

“We have closed our lobbies at the bank and probably won’t reopen until June 1 or later. We have found remote work successful and may allow more folks to work from home.”

“We have 1/4 of our workforce working offsite and using shifts to distance other employees.”

“We have had to lay some very good people off. We would like to hire them back.”

“Forced to eliminate or drastically reduce paper processes.”

“We are 100% working remotely and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.”

“90% of our team has been furloughed. Two restaurants have been temporarily closed. Sales in the restaurants remaining open are down 85-95% from prior year. We are re-negotiating contracts, suspending services such as cleaning & cable, and limiting the number of hours and people within the building. We are trying to remain flexible to remain a viable business.”

“Need banking support for marijuana growers. The amount of cash we have to handle has always been ridiculous, but this issue has been compounded with the COVID situation.”

“While our 100% remote work policy has helped in curbing the spread of COVID-19, we find that it cannot be sustainable as a permanent policy in our business.”

“Hospitals have doubled their ICU capacity and have been asked to maintain this higher capacity - this is costly in space, supplies, and staffing. We also expect to be involved in surveillance and monitoring of public health to better predict future outbreaks and necessary responses. We expect it will take time for non-COVID "routine" health care services to recover.”

“Right now, we have long-term leases but can work remotely. May reconsider office space.”

“We’re doing more with less. We are cutting our budget by 1/2.”