

Executive Summary: A Call for Action and Collaboration

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 is exposing the strengths and vulnerabilities of New York City. This report chronicles COVID-19's impact to date on the city and metropolitan region, suggesting actions that must be taken to recover and prepare for a "new normal."

Nationally and locally, both the health care system and government were poorly prepared for COVID-19 and have been in crisis response mode since New York's first case was identified on March 1. Global companies that had been through the SARS epidemic and onset of COVID-19 in Asia provided early leadership and support. They had disaster plans and equipment, the capacity to operate remotely, and access to the best research and protocols. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo exercised emergency powers to shut down the economy and to mount a strong response that has so far contained the spread more effectively than any other state.

It will be far more difficult to restart and repair the economy than it was to shut it down. The attractions that New Yorkers value most in the city—its cultural, social, and entertainment assets—will remain at least partially shuttered until next year. As many as a third of the 230,000 small businesses that populate neighborhood commercial corridors may never reopen. The unemployment rate has risen to 18.3%, leaving as many as a million households struggling to feed their families and pay rent, with hardship concentrated among Black and Hispanic communities and lower wage workers.

Most business leaders are confident that the city will remain a leading financial and commercial center, but it will be more difficult to attract and retain talent until people trust that the urban environment is healthy, secure and welcoming. Many of Manhattan's 1.2 million office workers will continue to work remotely through the end of the year or until they know that transit is safe, and that schools and childcare centers are fully functional.

Going forward, governments will need to spend less and depend more on leveraging private financing and expertise. Challenges that predate COVID-19—rising cost of living, aging infrastructure, racial disparities in health, education, job skills and entrepreneurial opportunities—have become more pressing. Significant federal aid is essential to stabilize city and state budgets but will not be enough to fill the gaping holes left by the pandemic.

Recovery starts with ensuring that the health care system is prepared to deal with any recurrence and that a robust program of testing, tracing and monitoring is in place. Long term, the COVID-19 experience revealed the necessity of reorganizing health care delivery around community health hubs and care management, utilizing telemedicine and local organizations to provide preventative services and to address social determinants that impact public health. **This will require changes in funding and delivery of health and human services, and a commitment to data sharing and interoperability among health care providers.**

Economic recovery requires a multi-sector approach, with leadership from business, labor, academia, civic and community sectors. Extra-governmental partnerships should be structured to design and implement solutions to immediate needs for job training, hiring, small business relief, affordable housing, renewable energy and digital infrastructure.

New York City has a wealth of tech savvy entrepreneurs and innovators who should be called upon to reinvent education, health and transit and to update the technological capacity of state and local government in order to meet the demands of a highly digitized, post-COVID-19 economy. This will require initial investment but quickly generate efficiencies, cost savings and greatly improved performance.

The metropolitan region has chronically suffered from fragmentation of efforts and failure to aggregate its assets to tackle problems at meaningful scale. The enormous cross-sectoral dimensions of the COVID-19 impact render such a siloed approach useless. The three-month *NY PAUSE* has demonstrated that virtual networks and social media can support large scale, fast-paced collective action by diverse groups.

The Partnership for New York City is committed to organize leadership from business and its extended networks to take action pursuant to the findings in this report, including:

- Small Business Restart & Recovery Clearinghouse, co-sponsored with the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the five borough chambers of commerce and others to create a comprehensive network of resources to aid small and minority-owned businesses, including capital access, technical assistance, marketing and procurement opportunities;
- Health Innovation Partnership to establish consensus on standards, a health passport and other trust markers to accelerate the restoration of public confidence in the health and safety of offices, transit and public gathering venues as well as advance the region as a global hub of telemedicine, medical device and personal protective equipment and life sciences;
- Education Innovation Partnership to support the transition of the public education system to a model for blended classroom and online learning, making New York (the nation's largest market for digitized education products) into a global Ed Tech hub;
- A job council comprised of large employers that will collaborate with public schools and colleges to create and improve pathways to careers;
- Cross-sectoral problem-solving sessions among diverse leaders to build consensus on issues such as transit, security and criminal justice, racial justice, community development, and tax and regulatory reform.

The 14 global consulting firms that contributed to this report will continue to be a resource on the topics covered and provide support to public-private partnerships that are working toward the recovery and reinvention of the city and region. Timing is critical to recovery, and actions to mobilize broad-based, coordinated efforts to deal with urgent issues must start now.