

COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of May 04, 2020

In the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, across the country and the world, we are seeing innovations in communities that highlight the best of human ingenuity. We highlight these stories to show how many are helping those around them and prompt everyone to think about how they can help others.¹

Mask Program

To expedite the timeline for reopening the economy, the Governor of Connecticut announced a mask distribution program for small businesses, where they can apply online to request a maximum of two free masks per employee. The state has secured over 4 million masks over the past week for this purpose.²

Mobile Testing

In the United Kingdom (UK), to prepare for the return to work, trained military personnel will operate mobile testing units to travel across the UK and prioritize testing for vulnerable sites, such as care homes and police stations. 96 units are expected to be ready for deployment by the beginning of May.³

Managing Call Influx

Company call centers across industries are fielding an abundance of calls from customers inquiring about online orders, seeking refunds, or forbearance. Many employers are seeking new workers to manage the heightened call volume. One option is hiring individuals with disabilities. The National Telecommuting Institute, a non-profit that works with the Social Security Administration to fill telecommuting jobs for people with disabilities, has been approached by numerous companies seeking workers. The institute trains individuals and aids them in acquiring necessary equipment and broadband internet connections allowing them to efficiently work from home.⁴

Senior Citizen Call Center Resource

Henrico County, Virginia, has launched an “isolation-specific” call outreach center to aid senior citizens. The call center is staffed by furloughed librarians to help to combat negative effects of social isolation. Senior citizens may

¹ This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

² <https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/state-of-ct-distributes-free-face-coverings-for-small-businesses/>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52428509>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/26/business/call-centers-disabilities-coronavirus.html>



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call with questions regarding resources, to set up times for wellness checks, or to simply talk. The center staff is available daily from 7 a.m. -7 p.m. to provide a resource to talk to during COVID-19.

Mask Disinfection

Los Angeles recently opened the country's first COVID-19 Decontamination Center, which will have the ability to decontaminate 10,000 masks per cleaning cycle and can run multiple cycles per day. Using vaporized, highly concentrated hydrogen peroxide, the center can decontaminate equipment like N95 masks for reuse up to 20 times.⁵

Medical Supplies Facebook Group

A Facebook group called Open Source COVID-19 Medical Supplies (OSCMS) supports an international network of medical professional, engineers, writers, and more in sharing ideas and information and asking for help. Posts on the group so far have included mask, gown, and face shield designs, and companies that have manufactured PPE and are looking for places to donate.⁶

COVID-19 Shuttle Service

In the Philippines there has been a country-wide shutdown of public transportation. A Filipino web app company, in partnership with other agencies, has launched a website and downloadable application to aid frontline workers in finding the best routes to report to work. Shuttles are available to be requested by frontline and healthcare workers to get to work. This is an example of support to essential workers that others could replicate.⁷

Seattle's Approach to COVID-19

The first diagnosis of COVID-19 in the United States occurred in a Seattle suburb. Upon learning of the first diagnosis, doctors and nurses recognized that what they communicated was just as important as the response. As a result, members of the public entering Seattle-area hospitals were asked questions regarding foreign travel, respiratory issues, and recent interactions with others upon arrival. Epidemiologists began persuading citizens to forgo travel and socializing even when it is not evident that they were directly at risk.⁸

FEMA's Best Practice Initiative

Nationwide, there are extraordinary efforts nationwide to support personnel and resource needs to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA is working to highlight these efforts and encourage everyone to think about what they can do to be a part of providing solutions to help. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/best-practices> for more information.

⁵ <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/n95-mask-decontamination-center-opens/2352812/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/670932227050506/permalink/673493760127686/>

⁷ <https://www.topgear.com.ph/news/motoring-news/sakay-ph-covid-19-routes-a4354-20200429>

⁸ <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/05/04/seattles-leaders-let-scientists-take-the-lead-new-yorks-did-not>

Topics for the “Best Practices” series are generated from crowd-sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

For more information on how to help during COVID-19, visit [FEMA's website for information on donations and volunteering](#).

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