

# **Safely Reopening NYC Museums**

*Developed by the NYC Museums Reopening Task Force  
and distributed with guidance from the NYC Department of  
Cultural Affairs*

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# NYC Museums Reopening Task Force

Comprised of the COOs and reopening teams from over twenty of New York City's major museums, representing all five boroughs, the NYC Museums Reopening Task Force has convened weekly since April to develop common guidelines to inform a safe reopening of NYC museums to the public. The guidelines address all aspects of museum activity that may be required to safely reopen our doors once government restrictions are lifted, including but not limited to staff and visitor health and safety, staff return to work plans, visitor operations plans, procurement, and communications.



# Safely Reopening NYC Museums



**New York City's museums, at their core, are neighborhood institutions whose missions are to engage and support the emotional and intellectual health and growth of our City's residents.** Our museums are within short reach of nearly every community, accessible by foot or bike to the majority of New Yorkers around the five boroughs. Of all the City's cultural institutions, most **museums are well positioned and operationally able to implement conditions for safe visits** as the downstate region cautiously and carefully reopens.

**New York City's museums employ thousands of union and non-union staff across all five boroughs and from diverse backgrounds and professions:** from electricians to security guards to building engineers to education staff to curators and conservators, all of whom are there to serve our missions. Reopening as early as is safely possible enables museums to save thousands of jobs and limit the financial damage to these beloved institutions. A safe reopening of our museums will also be a lift to the local economy.

# Safely Reopening NYC Museums (Cont'd)

**Among the arts and culture community, and more broadly entertainment, museums are uniquely positioned to meet standards required to ensure safety of staff and visitors.** Museums already have highly trained and professional security staff in place whose jobs have always been to facilitate safe and orderly visitor flows and keep staff, visitors, and our extraordinary works of art safe and secure. Most museums have large, carefully designed floor plans that allow for adherence to social distancing guidelines. We have the ability to flex up and down allowable occupancy immediately.

**Museums can help to regenerate our communities.** They give citizens of all ages and abilities the chance to find a place of quiet contemplation and repose, and offer a respite from the tensions of living in a state of emergency, with its period of protracted isolation. Given the trauma of the coronavirus pandemic, **safely re-opening New York's museums will help relieve pent-up anxieties and restore a sense of well-being.**



# Safely Reopening NYC Museums (Cont'd)

**Museums can be ready to open when government leaders and public health authorities give the go-ahead.** Starting in April, a task force of over twenty prominent museums from across the boroughs was assembled to develop and implement common guidelines for safely reopening to staff and the public.

New York City's museums are using May and June to develop a comprehensive reopening strategy, including developing detailed policies, practices, and training for our respective staffs. **We welcome engagement and counsel from city, state, and public health leaders, and are committed to doing all we can to help facilitate a safe and as early as possible recovery from this unprecedented pandemic.**

Arts and culture, and museums in particular, help make up the essential character of New York City. It is paramount to the morale of New York City residents and New York's messaging to the world that we are resilient and able to take planful and safe steps toward restoration of daily life. **This document highlights the approach and various measures our institutions are considering employing in order to protect public and staff safety.**



## Five critical components of our approach:

1. **Managing visitor density & congestion**
2. **Implementing a safe, contactless, visitor experience**
3. **Quickly operationalizing and complying with evolving government guidance**
4. **Creating a flexible and safe working environment for staff**
5. **Providing COVID-19 training**

# 1. Managing visitor density & congestion



- Limit initial attendance to 20-25% of stated building occupancy; utilize vast indoor spaces for safe social distancing, following CDC best practices
- Focus outreach to local NYC audiences
- Adjust museum hours and tightly manage capacities per square foot
- Utilize a variety of systems, such as timed ticketing, to space out arrivals and control building capacity
- Clearly demarcate, separate, and control one-way entry and exits
- Use floor markings and signage to demarcate 6-foot social distance in areas of possible lines
- Deploy our professionally trained security officers in lobbies, in galleries, on floor landings, and throughout museum premises to minimize congestion and ensure 6-foot perimeter for social distancing
- Remove excess furniture and seating to maximize floor space for visitors
- Install robust signage throughout our museums to remind visitors of requirement for 6-foot social distancing, frequent hand sanitization, hand washing, and other health and hygiene measures
- Provide directional signage to streamline visitor flow in our galleries
- Limit durations of museum visits (“dwell times”), if necessary
- Train professional security staff on social distancing and other health measures, in preparation for reopening

## 2. Implementing a safe, contactless, visitor experience

- Mandate that visitors wear masks and provide masks when possible
- Reduce contact as much possible throughout the visitor experience; most museums are already predominantly “contactless” experiences. Constant cleaning and rigorous hygiene measures will take place where this is not possible.
- Provide hand sanitizers throughout museum spaces; encourage frequent hand-washing
- Enforce strict rules already in place to ensure safe distances, whether from artworks, exhibits, or other people
- Bolster already robust security teams that enforce visitor conduct rules
- Accommodate seniors, families, and other audience segments through specially designated hours or days, attending to audiences in higher risk categories
- Institute rigorous protocols of enhanced cleaning and sanitizing during public hours, including frequent disinfecting of contact points and regular "deep cleaning"
- Minimize or eliminate high-contact activities and shared resources, such as audio-guides
- Limit cash transactions, when possible
- Suspend group tours and other activities that promote clustering
- Orient visitors prior to arrival of enhanced health and safety requirements, including social distancing and requirement to wear facemasks, through museum websites, online ticket sites, membership and education outreach, social media, and other forms of visitor communications.



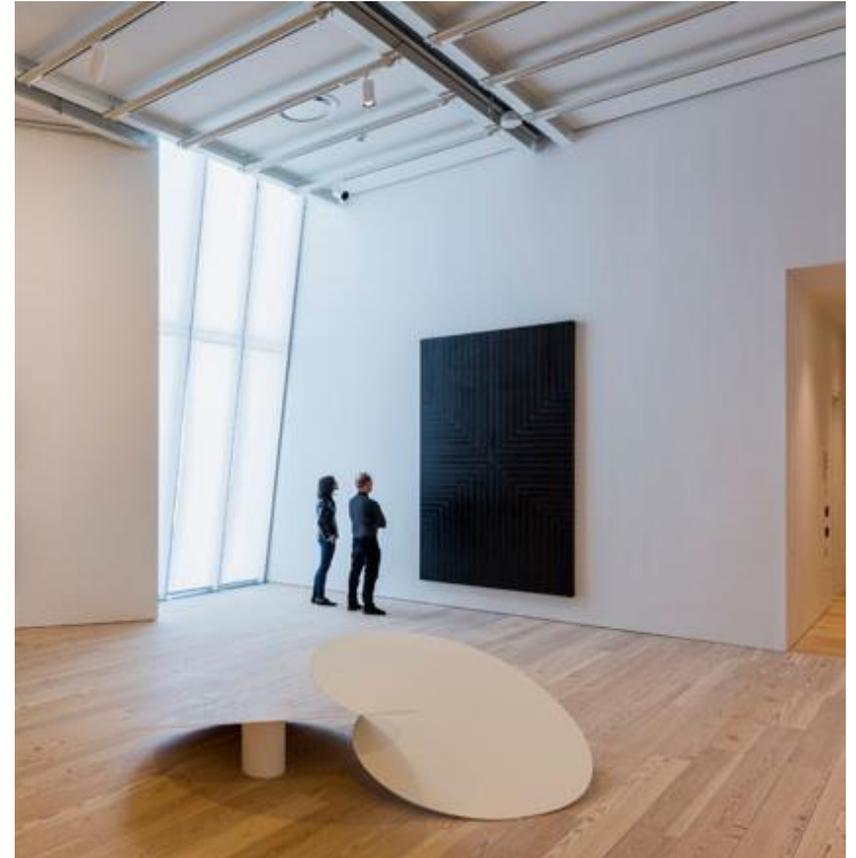
# 3. Operationalizing evolving government guidance



- Phase reopenings to allow for gradual ramp-up to test and evaluate conditions
- Prioritize local audiences in line with government and travel restrictions; encourage walking and biking
- Ensure flexible operations that can pivot or shut down quickly, to respond to the possibility of periodic closures
- Implement, test, and learn from a variety of pilots – based on time, audience makeup (e.g., families, seniors, students) or other – to identify the best means to reopen
- Maintain continuous communications programs that ensure continual attention to changing scenarios and provide regular updates to audiences and stakeholders regarding adjustments they may need to be aware of

# 4. Creating flexible, safe working environment for staff

- Mandate that all staff wear masks when working with the public and when not able to socially distance; conduct daily health checks, such as wellness questionnaires for all staff; and provide PPE for staff who may require additional protection due to their job function
- Reinforce the requirement for social distancing and hygiene measures by means of clear signage throughout workplace
- Institute work shifts, work-from-home protocols, and adjusted schedules when possible to reduce workplace density
- As work continues to make public transit safe, prepare to address transportation needs for staff returning to work, including encouraging biking and walking and providing bike racks and exploring special parking arrangements and carpooling
- Via building maintenance teams, continuously clean and disinfect staff areas and public spaces; implement robust cleaning protocols, including deep cleans; and provide continual access to hand sanitizers
- Via human resources teams, communicate policies that encourage staff who are sick to remain home; provide clear procedures sick staff should follow before returning to work; and provide accommodations for staff members in high risk categories



# 5. Providing COVID-19 training

- For security staff and other museum teams regularly trained to deal with visitor and staff health emergencies, train on COVID-19-specific protocols and procedures
- Work with medical advisers and public health experts to review reopening plans and ensure staff and visitor safety, including the provision of training for security and visitor operations teams
- Be prepared to outsource critical medical processes, as may be required, to ensure expertise
- Ensure that visitor-facing staff wear personal protective equipment, such as masks and face shields, when interacting with visitors, as is necessary to their jobs
- Explore a contact tracing protocol, such as registration with advance tickets, to effectively assist governments with any contact tracing requirements

# Reopening readiness timeline

The following flexible timeline lays out the critical steps for planning, preparation, and implementation of reopening our institutions.

## IF CITY REOPENS ACCORDING TO STATE AND CITY CLEARANCE:

### Phase 1: PLANNING

- Launch individual museum and sector reopening planning task forces
- Develop operating and staff return to work plans, informed by medical and public health expertise and government guidance
- Procure supplies

### Phase 2: PREPARATION

- Finalize operating plans
- Continue to procure supplies
- Train staff
- Communicate staged reopening plans to internal and external audiences
- Communicate health and safety requirements and visitor conduct expectations

### Phase 3: IMPLEMENTATION

- Reopen successfully, implementing safe protocols & procedures
- Measure success & recalibrate as needed
- Collect and socialize learnings with peers, especially those with limited resources, to inform best-practice reopening plans for NYC museum sector

# Our commitment to our communities

We will be ready to adhere to safe reopening guidelines and can be responsive to government directives.

We can be a safe, healthy place for New Yorkers to get out of the house this summer while staying cool.

We can help proactively educate New York City residents about new norms of activity and engagement, both creating and perpetuating responsible behaviors.

We can carefully test the common reopening guidelines developed by the NYC Museums Reopening Task Force, to the benefit of the sector.

We can help our peer NYC museums reopen safely and successfully, which can provide a lift for the entire cultural sector in New York City.

