WORKING GROUP SUMMARY AND UPDATE

In order to strategically and quickly begin to solve problems that have arisen in Waco as result of COVID-19, Mayor Kyle Deaver formed four work groups:

- Business and Individual Financial Recovery, chaired by Council Member Jim Holmes and Sarah Roberts (KSR Advantage, Waco Business League president)
- Communications, chaired by Council Member Hector Sabido and Natalie Kelinske, Director of Communications, Waco Foundation)
- Health Response and Coordination, chaired by Council Member John Kinnaird and Dr. Jackson Griggs (CEO, Family Health Center)
- Social Services and Education, chaired by Council Member Andrea Barefield and Suzii Paynter March (Executive Director, Prosper Waco)

The City alone cannot solve all the problems COVID-19 has caused but Waco is a great community armed with great competent leaders, partners and collaborators.

The goals of each group are fluid and a work in progress. Furthermore, this is a collaborative, community effort and we appreciate all participation. All credit for anything accomplished is owed to each organization participating in these conversations with the singular goal of propelling Waco forward.

All working groups have been encouraged to think about not only the current issues facing our city but also problems that we will face six months, one year and beyond as a result of the pandemic.

If organizations or individuals want to participate in the working groups, they should contact the chairs.

If organizations or individuals want to benefit from the products of these working groups, they should contact the team member they have the closest working relationship with or, alternatively, the chairs.
**Individual and Business Recovery Working Group**

Chaired by Council Member Jim Holmes and Sarah Roberts (KSR, Waco Business League president)

**The Goals of this working group are to:**

- Leverage community partners to advance recovery
- Robust communications with business community
- Develop and Communicate Small Business Lending Strategy
- Develop and Communicate Federal and State Advocacy Plan

**The Team for this working group is:**

- Central Texas African American Chamber of Commerce
- Central Texas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce
- Start Up Waco
- The City of Waco

**Work Done So Far:**

- Team members of this working group have developed strategies to hear from the business community, including:
  - The CTHCC and CTAAC conducting a business surveys focused primarily on small businesses (80% of respondents have <10 employees) specifically in service and food & beverage industries.
  - The Greater Waco Chamber (GWC) has standing industry calls with the following:
    - Area Industry Managers
    - Association of General Contractors
    - Auto Dealerships
    - Heart of Texas Homebuilders Association
    - Waco Hotel Association
    - Waco Realtors Association
    - Waco Restaurant Association
    - Posting and promoting Public Policy info and resources [waccohamer.com/wacosupportingwaco](http://waccohamer.com/wacosupportingwaco)
  - Start Up Waco has launched a new website that includes focus on self-employed & “gig” workers at startupwaco.com and Public Health resources for businesses.
  - Creative Waco has launched a virtual marketplace for makers and local businesses found at [MakeItInWaco.com](http://MakeItInWaco.com)
  - CTHCC and CTAAC are collaborating to launch a virtual marketplace

- Coordinated communications and virtual events to communicate the opportunity of the CARES Act and the opportunities recently set forth by Texas Workforce Solutions
- Increased problem-solving for businesses trying to access Texas Shared Work Plans and individuals applying for unemployment
• Providing education and best practices to employers and employees for operationalizing Public Health best practices in the workplace
• Driving businesses to online marketplaces set up for consumers to buy locally from home
• Promote virtual programming and information from each team member
• Engaged in Federal and State Advocacy for additional local funding opportunities
• Identifying local government and public-private models to provide small business loans and/or grants most impacted by closures in order to make recommendation to City.
**Communication Working Group**

Chaired by Council Member Hector Sabido and Natalie Kelinske (Director of Communications, Waco Foundation)

**The Goals of this working group are to:**

- Distribute fact-based information in English and Spanish to community members via identified channels.
- Develop method for communication between key partner entities.

**The Team for this working group is:**

- City of Waco | Larry Holze, Deidra Emerson
- City Managers from other communities
- Public Health District | Kelly Craine
- Family Health Center | Dr. Neumann
- Emergency Operations
- Business/Individual Financial Recovery Liaison
- Health Response Liaison
- Social Services & Education Liaison
- McLennan County | Commissioner Patricia Miller
- Baylor University | Dr. Jeremy Vickers
- McLennan Community College | Frank Patterson
- Texas State Technical College | Nick Alvarado
- Waco ISD | Kyle DeBeer, Josh Wucher
- Midway ISD | Rick Tullis, Traci Marlin
- La Vega ISD | Sharon Shields
- Greater Waco Chamber | Matt Meadors
- Cen-Tex African American Chamber | John Bible
- Cen-Tex Hispanic Chamber | Jonathan Olvera

**Key Message Areas for this working group include:**

- Ordinances/State Orders
  - What do they entail?
  - How long are they in effect?
  - How will they be rolled out?
- Relief Efforts for Individuals/Businesses/Nonprofits
- Health Response
- Education and Social Services
- Community Stabilization

**Components are:**

- Key Partner Contacts and Email List
- Regular Key Partner Meetings
- Public Information Distribution Outlet List
- Message Refinement and Design
- E-newsletter (2x each week)
- Interviews on TV and radio to get the messages out to a broader audience
- Begin working on a communication plan for when the current county and city orders are lifted
- Continue tapping into the Spanish-speaking citizens of McLennan County
Social Services and Education Working Group

Chaired by Council Member Andrea Barefield and Suzii Paynter March (Executive Director, Prosper Waco)

The Goals of this working group are to:

- To provide a method to facilitate communication about issues and opportunities that are related to COVID-19 and its impacts in each of the working areas;
- To help us engage our community partners to address these issues and opportunities; and
- To provide better leadership and communication to these important issues as we work through the crisis and move toward recovery.

The Team for this working group includes local non-profit organizations, churches, foundations and educational institutions.

The Strike Force Process for this working group is:

- Identify/clarify the PROBLEM
- Identify/convene the PLAYERS
- Change or add a new PROCESS
- Clearly take STEP 1 of a SOLUTION

Strike Force Issues include (but are not limited to):

- Childcare for essential workers
- Women and Infant Children (WIC) – in need of baby formula
- Elder care in the community
- Medical need for homeless
- Shelter capacity/ mobile charging stations for homeless
- School Meals on site / delivery
- Family meal insecurity
- Alternative education
- Faith Community functional challenges, policy discrepancies
- Volunteer coordination
- Immigrant and Spanish-speaking population matters

Progress Made So Far:

1. **Women Infant & Children (WIC)** baby formula access and supply chain issues. With daycare and EOAC closure, formula supply is interrupted. There is no national shortage but local access was disrupted and mothers eligible for baby formula through WIC could not get it at local grocery stores. Solutions enacted for this disruption include: Redeployment of WIC vans, sites, creating Facebook messages and groups for moms, texting chains, formula and resource swap among clients and other community moms.
2. **Elder Care** monitoring and coordination with HOTCOG, Meals on Wheels and other elder care agencies to resupply volunteers, align policies and communicate with individual for-profit elder care organizations.

3. **Homeless Need for Medical Service** and isolation site. The homeless need medical care and isolation while awaiting testing, positive cases, social distancing, community outreach and testing. Shelter services in Waco do not provide 24-hour services, but with sheltering-in-place order, many complex adaptations are needed. Coordination was instituted with our local Homeless Coalition, City of Waco Continuum of Care coordination, Emergency Operations Center and Shelter providers. The group worked with Dr. Harkins (Family Health Center) to create plans for an alternative medical site, and are currently working with service providers and City of Waco for short term options like hotel vouchers, tents, separation and temperature scans for all population, in addition to locating sanitizing and cleaning services and PPE for shelter workers.

4. **School Meals Sites and Volunteers**. Recruiting 42 cycle volunteers for 14 school meal delivery sites. Working in partnership with WISD school staff at delivery sites and Texas Hunger Initiative staff. Working within the changing landscape of meal delivery as WISD Food and Nutrition policies adjust to degrees of isolation required by the city, and also degrees of reluctance for contact on the part of volunteers.

5. **Faith Alliance and Faith Leaders**. Convening and aligning faith leaders in McLennan County region in partnership with City of Waco, Centex Interfaith and other denominational groups to address disparities in policy between City requirements and Governor Abbott’s declaration of churches as essential businesses.
   a. Two Zoom town hall meetings of more than 150 pastors and faith leaders with Mayor Deaver.
   b. Developed a Clergy Pledge sign-on to articulate a common commitment to staying home so that peer support for staying at home.
   c. Created and managing a survey to all faith leaders to assess congregational needs and also congregational resources committed to COVID 19 response. Data collection and mapping.

6. **Spanish Language Call Center**. There is an urgent need for a call center for Spanish speakers to get questions regarding the COVID crisis answered (there are multiple call-in lines currently for both public health and business provided in English). La Puerta ministry, which currently serves immigrants and Spanish speakers in education, job training and referral services, has stepped up to fill the call center need. Staffing the call center requires two more full time people and some technology. (Emergency Operations Center and other city and community websites have some information in Spanish, but do not have a personal response line for Spanish language conversation about topics as they do for English.)

7. **Food & Basic Needs Insecurity for Families** referred through WISD. Children in WISD are eligible for meals through the summer meals program, but other family members are not eligible to receive food from the program. Also these families may need diapers, formula, paper goods and other necessities. As a result, Prosper Waco, in coordination with Grassroots, several Waco Churches, the three Chambers of Commerce are stocking and delivering items to families who are referred by WISD school nurses and campus-
based Family Support Specialists. Donations and supplies are being collected by one
team and referrals and needs coordinated by another team.

8. **Childcare for Healthcare and Essential Workers.** Healthcare workers and other
esential workers need access to childcare, even if their own daycare setting and schools
are closed. Finding and matching open slots is difficult and requires complex
coordination. The first pairing of sites has been Family Health Center with YMCA to
provide childcare for medical staff. One essential problem in this area is that the closed
daycare providers require payment to keep the child’s slot occupied for post COVID
enrollment, so if the parent does find an open daycare slot, they essentially pay twice
during COVID 19 for daycare. This limits the number of healthcare and essential worker
that can take advantage of daycare openings. Texas Workforce Commission, is working
to relax caps on eligibility for supplemental funding for daycare to make COVID daycare
affordable to all healthcare and essential workers.

You can find childcare opportunities by zip code here:
[https://frontlinechildcare.texas.gov/index.html](https://frontlinechildcare.texas.gov/index.html)

9. **Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund.** We were invited respond to an RFP for a
grant. Prosper Waco coordinated and is submitted on Friday.

10. **Higher Education.** Goals: Minimize higher-education students falling out college and
skilled workforce training during COVID; maximize opportunity for online college,
skilled workforce training.

11. **Volunteers.** Documentation of the many volunteers who have helped agencies in this
season. This is being done the EOC web site or [wacoworkingtogether.org/covid](http://wacoworkingtogether.org/covid)

These are some, but not a complete list, of the type of work that is being managed by PW
staff as a result of COVID 19.
Health Working Group

Chaired by Council Member John Kinnaird and Dr. Jackson Griggs (CEO, Family Health Center)

The Goals of this working group are to:

- Fostering communication and coordination between health providers to build capacity for handling this pandemic.
- Educating the public relating to ‘flattening the curve’ and accessing the health system in the event they fall ill.
- Provide critical information and data updates to the healthcare providers and the public
- Coordination of health-related COVID-19 issues
- Shared health-related problem solving related to COVID-19

The Team for this working group includes:

- Healthcare providers (including leadership from Family Health Center, Baylor Scott and White–Hillcrest Ascension Providence, and Premier ER)
- City Leadership (including the Mayor, City Manager’s office, key staff)
- County Leadership (including County Judge Scott Felton)
- McLennan County Medical Society president, Dr. Bill McCunniff.
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Dr. Farley Verner, health authority, infectious disease physician
- Dr. Brenda Gray, Waco-McLennan County Public Health District
- Christine Reeves, Heart of Texas Regional Advisory Council, an administrative body responsible for coordinating time-sensitive, emergency needs

Work Done So Far:

- Coordination of medical and public health services
- Personal protective equipment needs
- Predictions regarding the peak of COVID-19 in McLennan County
- Contingency plan for needs
- Public Health Education
- Communication with all local healthcare providers

Next Steps:
Facilitating discussion and providing recommendations and policy guidance towards eventual ‘re-opening’ of economic functions within the community in a prudent and public health-conscious manner

**Plan to Lift Existing City and County Orders (AKA “Reopen the City”)**

County and City leadership and stakeholders are beginning to discuss and plan for when and how the current orders will be lifted. Gov. Greg Abbott said Monday he would detail plans for reopening the economy later this week.

These discussions are happening with these presuppositions:

- First, full containment in Waco is virtually impossible in the foreseeable future, given the asymptomatic spread of this virus and Waco’s location on a major interstate corridor.

- Second, the economy must be able to function so that we don’t create circumstances for a future wave of economically induced disease and death.

At this time, leadership is developing a plan to:

- Grow our public health infrastructure with testing (both virus and antibody testing) and contact tracing plans and procedures.

- Implement a gradual, stepped approach to opening the economy and lifting the current orders.

The City and the County are committed to working in collaboration with experts in public health and business in developing said plans. Further, leadership is committed to utilizing best practices that are currently being implemented across the country and the globe.