

IT-BPM Sector – Lockdown Exit Recommendations

Exit Strategy from the Lockdown

India will need to plan a safe, calibrated exit from the lockdown that is undertaken in a phased manner with all necessary checks in place to ensure we do not have a resurgence in the virus spread.

NASSCOM has categorized the recommendations for the IT-BPM sector on the following parameters:

1. Staggered Exit Strategy and Getting Employees to Workplace in a phased manner.
2. Co-ordinated Approach for movement of employees and goods
3. Workplace Safety and measures industry will take
4. Incident Management

1. Staggered Exit Strategy and Getting Employees to work in a phased manner

- **Country, State, District level heat zone dashboard:** It is critical that there is one view of the overall impacted areas across the country and government (central, state, district officials and enforcement agencies), industry and employees all have access to the same dashboard to enable decision making on where a partial opening can be done and which areas we need to avoid. Currently, there is some state data in a few places, but an integrated heat map and dashboard would be key for right decision making.
- **Staggered Opening:** It is critical that adequate notice (3-4) days is given for organisations to prepare for the unlock down and similar time should be provided before announcements of any for future lockdowns. Prior to opening up, 2-3 days will be needed for deep cleaning, complete office sanitization etc and necessary movement of support staff will need to be enabled for that.

The lockdown exit should be implemented in a staggered manner across 15 day cycles.

- i. Phase 1: 20 April – 3 May: This phase will be the most critical to ensure that a rush of employees returning to work does not lead to any recurrence of the infections. Hence companies, should use this period to only enable 10-15% of their workforce to travel to office. Wherever possible and the work from home model is working, companies will not ask these employees to travel to office. The partial opening will be used for moving more assets, better infrastructure at employee homes and initiating critical projects which had to be closed due to non approvals from clients to work from home or other reasons. The percentage of employees per centre will follow this cap and only will be applicable for areas that are in the safe zone.
- ii. Phase 2: 4 May – 17 May: Based on the success of the first phase, the percentage of employees can be increased to 15-30% in this phase. For areas that were impacted in the first phase and are now safe, the 10-15% model can be implemented.

- iii. Phase 3: 18 May – 31 May: The ratio can be increased to 30-50% in this phase.

Start-up Incubators facilities: There can be gradual opening of Govt supported Start-up incubators with implementation of strict hygiene, screening & social distancing guidelines. This will enable Start-ups to continue product development and operations whilst maintaining minimal personnel at the facilities.

Post the successful implementation of these three phases across states, the government can consider a complete opening up by end June 2020.

The support staff needed for office maintenance will be included in this percentage above and companies will need to ensure minimal level of support staff as needed.

2. Coordinated Approach for Movement of People and Goods

Since movement of employees and goods will be coordinated at the state level and implemented at the local districts, it is extremely important that standardized processes are created to ensure there is no harassment at the ground level. A state nodal officer should be appointed to be the one point of contact for decision making and standardized templates and advisories be announced for each state that opens up.

We recommend that the government move to a self attestation model by industry, Each company will submit a weekly plan to the state nodal officer for number of employees that will be in office the coming week. Individual serial numbered letters will be provided to the employees alongwith a copy of the email sent to the state nodal officer, for any checks as needed. Employees will carry their office id cards at all times alongwith a copy of this letter.

Inter-state cross border travel to be permitted based upon organization pass to the employee (especially for NCR, Pune -Pimpri-Chinchwad). Companies will minimize cross-border travel and passes issued by one state should be applicable for crossing the border of another state.

3. Workplace Safety and Measures that Industry will take

- **Social Distancing and other precautions:** Companies will ensure that employees that are coming into the workplace will maintain social distancing, all seating will be reconfigured to meet the necessary norms, temperature checks will be undertaken at the time of arrival of employees, office timings maybe staggered to ensure there is no rush of employees at any one time.

Social distancing will also be managed in common areas, conference rooms, training centers etc. Cafeterias will stay closed at least in phase 1 and box lunches will be provided to employees, if needed. As per ICMR guidelines, minimum one quarantine room per building at a safe distance from the creche, if any is to be kept on reserve at all times. (in any case, existing creche is not to be used for this purpose).

Employees will be advised to wear masks at all times and subject to availability, companies can consider providing masks to employees.

Meetings will continue to be virtual and all events / townhalls / gatherings will be avoided.

Medical facilities including doctor and paramedic staff will be available / on call as needed.

Employees with high risk, pregnant, expecting mothers, PwD, mothers with creche going children, pre-existing illness, anyone showing symptoms of cold + fever (whether or not tested) will be asked to work from home.

Employees and all support staff will be encouraged to download the Arogya Setu app and this can be monitored to ensure that the employee has not come into contact with a suspected case.

Visitors will be discouraged to enter the office premises unless approved by the management and will need to follow all precautionary measures of self declaration, Aarogya setu app status, temperature checks etc.

Enhanced cleaning of the workplace will be conducted at regular intervals using ICMR prescribed sanitization guidelines.

- **Employee Transportation:** Transportation of employees and support staff will be undertaken through a mix of personal vehicles and organization authorized cabs. Organizations shall use Buses for Nodal Pickups & Drops and take care of social distancing in the vehicles as well. Health checks of drivers, cleaners will be done and employees with self- transportation will be prioritized and a record kept of such activity. Employees and drivers will always be advised to wear masks during the commute and sanitisers etc will be provided in the vehicles.

Companies will maintain a register of all vehicles that are at the workplace to track employee movement.

- **Domestic and International Travel:** All travel will be discouraged by design and 100% adherence with government regulations. All international business travel to be suspended for first four weeks, except for exceptional cases whereby employees who are stranded outside the country due to expiry of visa need to travel to India. Government should enable special flights for travel of these employees to India. Employees returning from these countries will follow the necessary quarantine norms. All domestic travel within India will be suspended for the first two weeks, except in extraordinary circumstances with the approval of organization's management on need basis only. For employees that have travelled to their home towns and need to return to work, company authorized transportation will be arranged once inter state movement is opened. Post the first phase, the government is requested to enable movement of migratory staff in a controlled manner.
- **Employee Communication:** Companies have been in regular touch with their employees and communicating with them on their personal well being as well work related priorities. In the post lockdown scenario, companies will provide clear guidelines on which employees will need to come to office and who will continue to work from home. All precautionary measures and dos and donts will be explained for employees that need to come to office. These will also be published at prominent places in the office buildings. Employees will also be

asked to state who to contact in case any medical help is required and such information to be displayed at prominent places in the campus/office.

4. Incident Management

Companies will publish elaborate guidelines for any suspected / confirmed case of employee coming to work or in contact with an impacted employee / friend / family regarding reporting, diagnosis, quarantine and treatment. A response team will also be created across the company to ensure quick action in case there is any suspected case or exposure. Details of testing facilities, quarantine centers, Covid-19 facilities will all be available and published to employees.

Government should enable a standardized process that in case an infection is diagnosed at a building, what will be the process for sanitization and re-entry in the building as per ICMR guidelines. If possible, government may consider creating certain health facilities at IT parks for handling emergencies, testing facilities, sanitization facilities etc.