**Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana**

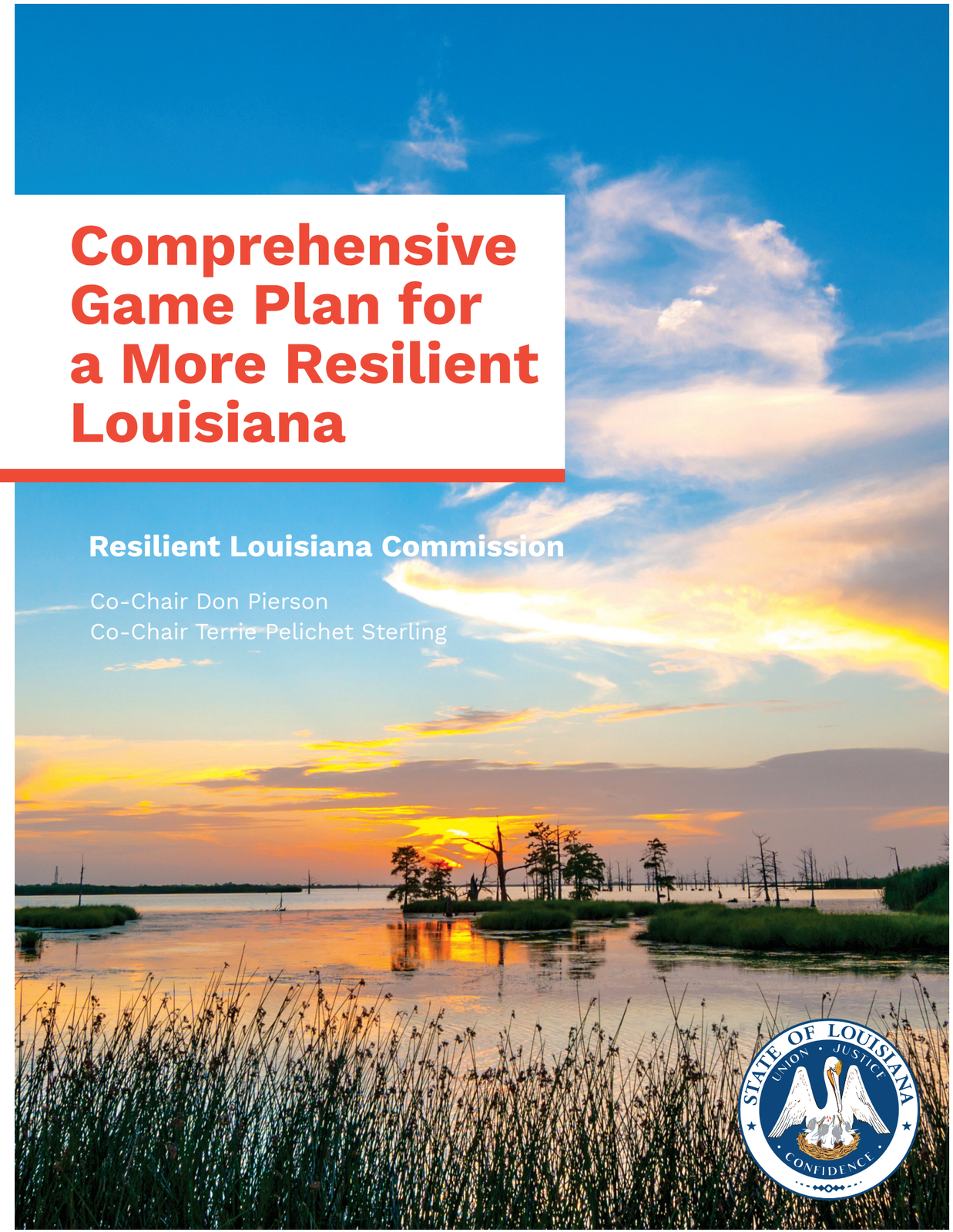
Resilient Louisiana Commission

opportunitylouisiana.com/resilientlouisiana

# Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana


**Resilient Louisiana Commission**

Co-Chair Don Pierson
Co-Chair Terrie Pelichet Sterling

# Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana

**Co-Chair Don Pierson**
**Co-Chair Terrie Pelichet Sterling**

**November 2020**

# Table of Contents

4 Strength through Resilience
6 Background
6 Vision
7 The Resilient Louisiana Commission
7 Commission Members
8 Task Forces
10 Foundational Elements
14 Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana
15 Introduction to Task Force Findings
18 Near-Term Recommendations
18 Putting health and safety first
18 Supporting employees
18 Taking care of our children and teachers
18 Extending federal funding
19 Stimulating our economy
19 Supporting our small businesses
19 Establishing guidelines for liability
19 Improving regulatory efficiency
19 Investing in infrastructure
20 Long-Term Recommendations
20 Equity, inclusion and quality of life
24 Digital access and physical infrastructure
26 Education and workforce development
33 Small business and entrepreneurship
36 Government engagement
42 Supplementary Documents
45 Conclusion

This Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana is derived from the hard work of the 15 Resilient Louisiana Commission Task Forces, which collectively encompass more than 300 Louisiana citizens. To view the detailed findings and recommendations from the Task Forces, please visit the Commission website at **opportunitylouisiana.com/resilientlouisiana** and review the document titled Appendix.

# Strength Through Resilience

As Louisianans, we love our state because of the strength we draw from our rich and diverse culture, the ingenuity of our people and the unique resources that surround us.

Those strengths make us who we are, and they propel us on a path toward a better Louisiana. That same path has also brought a new strength, the strength of resilience.

Undeterred by obstacles, our collective resilience is our track beyond recovery.

Louisianans are using resilience to join together on an equal footing to share ideas, develop strategies and aim for new goals. Perhaps most importantly, our goals have become more attainable because of the work that has already been done to strengthen and diversify our economy, better our quality of life and take advantage of our unique resources.

Gov. John Bel Edwards has recognized a broader vision. He understands the importance of short-term recovery but welcomes ideas for longer-term goals and how to achieve them.

Given the historical context of the situation, a purposeful and actionable plan needs to be enacted.

Understanding the uniqueness of our state, ideas should draw from its citizens and their culture and heritage. The ideas also need to recognize areas where success could be maximized because of our special resources.

In order to create and execute this plan, Gov. John Bel Edwards established the Resilient Louisiana Commission (RLC) which focuses on these core foundations:

**Resilience**
Resilience provides a pathway to a Louisiana that is stronger and healthier than ever before – a state less vulnerable to future disruption that provides better opportunities for all citizens.

**Economic diversification**
The foundation for a diverse economy has already been laid with advancements in IT, communications, cybersecurity, water management, aerospace and workforce development, assuring that our success is not reliant on a single industry.

**Public input**
Broad input and feedback have established this report as one that all Louisianans can own.

**Equity**
Our state succeeds when opportunity, access, equity and gender inclusiveness are present.

**Sources of strength**
Louisiana is gifted with resources that provide a pathway toward continuously strengthening our economy and quality of life.

The Resilient Louisiana Commission has charted a course beyond recovery.

It is up to all of us to convert these ideas into action.

**The time to act is now.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide, Louisiana's leadership was tested with its first challenge – ensuring the health and safety of all citizens in the state. Gov. John Bel Edwards quickly responded with a number of key measures to meet this initial challenge, including a statewide stay-at-home order, expanded testing, enhanced business support, unemployment guidance and relief, and enhanced coordination with local healthcare officials and federal government partners. Gov. Edwards, along with leaders across the state, made sure that these types of actions would address short-term challenges and that residents could adapt to new realities safely.

All the while, Gov. Edwards was focused on potential outcomes that would be presented in the coming weeks and months. The goal? To chart a course beyond recovery from the pandemic.

**Vision**

The RLC believes in a broader vision – to not only respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, but to come back stronger, and more resilient, than ever before.

"The RLC is aimed at guiding the state through the crisis and expanding the economy so that it can cope more easily with any future crises. Economic diversification is essential for the long-term well-being of Louisiana citizens."

**Dr. James Richardson**

Resilient Louisiana Commission Ex-Officio Member,
Louisiana State University Professor of Economics

# Resilient Louisiana Commission

The formation of the RLC began with the appointment of 18 commissioners chosen because of their expertise in the public and private sectors.

## Co-Chairs

**DON PIERSON**
SECRETARY
LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**TERRIE PELICHET STERLING**
CEO
HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

## Ex-Officio Members

**KIMBERLY ROBINSON**
SECRETARY
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT
OF REVENUE

**JAY DARDENNE**
COMMISSIONER
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

**DR. JAMES RICHARDSON**
ECONOMICS PROFESSOR
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Commission Members

**REP. PAULA DAVIS**
COMMERCE COMMITTEE CHAIR
HOUSE DESIGNEE

**SEN. RONNIE JOHNS**
COMMERCE COMMITTEE CHAIR
SENATE DESIGNEE

**BILLY NUNGESSER**
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF LOUISIANA

**MICHAEL LAFITTE**
OWNER
SHREVEPORT HABERDASHERY

**JADE BROWN-RUSSELL**
CHAIR
URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA

**SCOTT HENSGENS**
CHAIRMAN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH COUNCIL

**BILL HOGAN**
PRESIDENT & CEO
CENTURY NEXT BANK

**WALT LEGER III**
SENIOR VP & GENERAL COUNSEL
NEW ORLEANS & COMPANY

**TI MARTIN**
CO-PROPRIETOR
COMMANDER'S PALACE

**SONIA PEREZ**
SOUTHEAST STATES PRESIDENT
AT&T

**TYRON PICARD**
CHAIRMAN
COUNCIL FOR A BETTER LOUISIANA

**LOUIS REINE**
PRESIDENT
LOUISIANA AFL-CIO

**TIM TEMPLE**
C100 FOR
LOUISIANA

As the RLC set forward with helping chart the state's path in the wake of COVID-19, distinct task forces were established to examine all aspects of Louisiana's economy, including each of its critical sectors, to make recommendations for a more resilient Louisiana.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

FINANCIAL SERVICES, INSURANCE & REAL ESTATE

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

ENERGY

HEALTHCARE & HUMAN SERVICES

GAMING

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

RESTAURANTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CONSTRUCTION

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

SMALL BUSINESS & RETAIL

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

MANUFACTURING

"We are living through truly unprecedented times during which social, race and health issues have appropriately risen to the forefront of public discourse. How do we make sure to address these issues and form a Louisiana that is far better than when this pandemic started? The RLC has framed critical issues and is making significant recommendations for the best policies, practices and actions so that we can create a more equitable Louisiana. Our best future depends on it."

**Don Pierson**

Resilient Louisiana Commission Co-Chair,
Louisiana Economic Development Secretary

# Foundational Elements

"The broad-based RLC will provide Louisiana with a blueprint for managing change and focusing on how to diversify and expand our economy as the future unfolds."

**Jay Dardenne**
Resilient Louisiana Commission
Ex-Officio Member, Louisiana Division of Administration Commissioner

"The Governor challenged the RLC to be innovative and to be open to new ideas. I found the process very open with ample chance for public comment."

**Dorien Nunez**
Member of the Public and Director of Research, OMNI Research Group

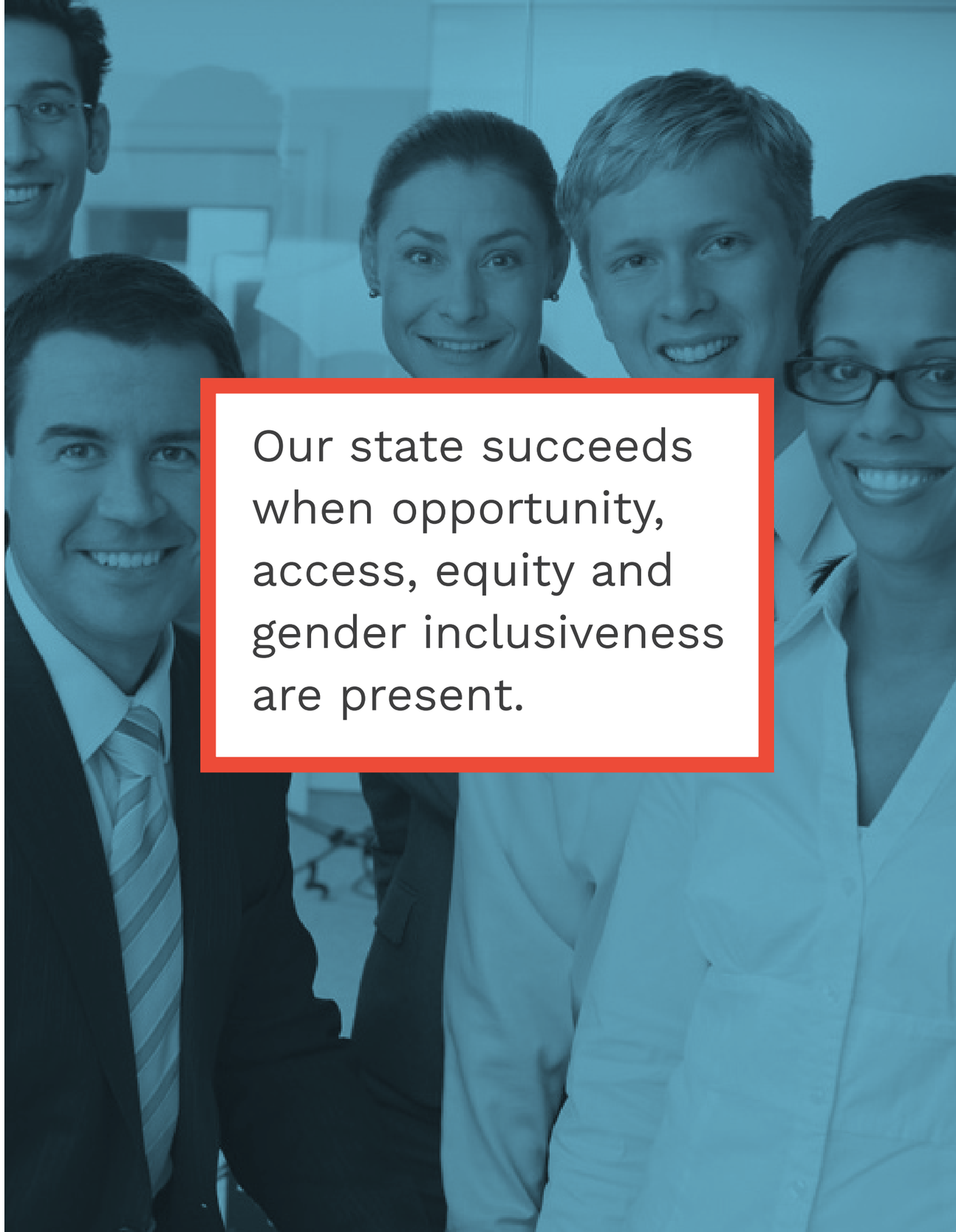
**Resilience**
Resilience is more than recovery. Resilience provides a pathway to a Louisiana that is stronger and healthier than ever before – a state less vulnerable to future disruption, and a state that provides better opportunities for all Louisiana citizens.

**Economic diversification**
The RLC recognizes that interaction among all sectors is key to resilience. The foundation for a diverse economy in Louisiana has already been laid with advancements in information technology, advanced manufacturing, water management, communications, cybersecurity and workforce development, assuring that our success is not reliant on a single industry.

**Public input**
Recommendations to the RLC are based on input from business leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers and residents throughout the state in an open, public forum that welcomed all voices. The RLC report represents the hard work of more than 300 Louisiana leaders and citizens volunteering their time, experiences and expertise. Their input and feedback have established this report as one that all Louisianans can own.

**Equity**
The rich cultural diversity of Louisiana defines us. It also influences our ability to grow. A wide range of viewpoints, life experiences and expertise guides us to make the best decisions and ensure our prosperity. Our state succeeds when opportunity, access, equity and gender inclusiveness are present. The Resilient Louisiana Commission is committed to this principle.

**Sources of strength**
Louisiana is gifted with a rich culture, a diverse population and abundant natural resources, which provide a pathway toward continuously strengthening our economy and improving our quality of life. Acknowledging and leveraging these assets can guide our state to a more resilient future.



Our state is gifted with resources that provide a pathway toward continuously strengthening our economy and quality of life.

# Sources of Strength

Louisiana will not lose sight of its strengths.

Our state is gifted with resources that provide a pathway toward continuously strengthening our economy and quality of life.

The state's five Mississippi River ports comprise the largest port complex in the world. Our ports carry 25% of the nation's waterborne commerce, including 60% of the nation's grain and 20% of its coal.

The state's transportation infrastructure is bolstered by six interstate highways, six Class I railroads, and the nation's greatest pipeline density.

These strengths help explain why Louisiana refines one-fifth of the nation's fuel and boasts a chemical manufacturing payroll of over $3 billion. A $73 billion energy sector is responsible for more than one of every four dollars in Louisiana's economy and one of every nine jobs.

Agriculture, forestry, healthcare and advanced manufacturing are other sources of economic strength. Over $300 million in targeted higher education partnerships in the past decade are driving rapid growth in software and IT services. Louisiana is showing it can be both an energy leader and a climate leader, with emerging strengths in coastal and water management, carbon capture, solar and wind power, and renewable fuels, including new projects to produce over one billion gallons a year of renewable diesel.

A sector that exemplifies building on Louisiana's economic strengths is aerospace. NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans helped put humans on the moon during NASA's Apollo missions. As America works toward landing the first woman and next man on the moon by 2024, part of the spacecraft and much of its enormous rocket – the most powerful in history – are being built in Louisiana. NASA plans to use this Louisiana-built technology to take the next leap of sending astronauts to Mars.

Louisiana's nationally recognized strengths in advanced manufacturing and workforce development are serving as a model for continued growth and future resilience.

"More inclusive opportunities for all people propels growth, attracts business, and enhances quality of life."

**Adam Knapp**
Economic and Community Development Task Force Member, Baton Rouge Area Chamber President and CEO

# Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana

With a mission of charting a course toward a stronger and healthier state that is more resistant to future disruptions, the RLC developed this report – *Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana.*

Recommendations for the report came in an open, public forum that welcomed all voices. The report represents the hard work of more than 300 diverse leaders from across the state – all with different backgrounds, different experiences and different worldviews. This diversity ensures that the various viewpoints and interests of Louisiana citizens are reflected and supports our ultimate goal of making our state stronger, more inclusive and more resilient than ever before.

**Introduction to task force findings**
*Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana* synthesizes the foundational elements of the RLC, major themes articulated by the 15 task forces and recommendations for both the near and longer terms.

## Near-term Recommendations

Nine specific near-term categories were previously identified as possible solutions for challenges related to the initial reopening period and remaining open:

1. Putting health and safety first
2. Supporting employees
3. Taking care of our children and teachers
4. Extending federal funding
5. Stimulating our economy
6. Supporting our small businesses
7. Establishing guidelines for liability
8. Improving regulatory efficiency
9. Investing in infrastructure

## Long-term Recommendations

Five long-term categories were identified as part of the road to resilience:

1. Equity, inclusion and quality of life
2. Digital access and physical infrastructure
3. Education and workforce development
4. Small business and entrepreneurship
5. Government engagement

"Access to healthcare is broader than bricks and mortar. It is important to create systems and structures to support the health of our citizens, as we certainly may face pandemics and public health challenges in the future."

**Terrie Pelichet Sterling**
Resilient Louisiana Commission Co-Chair,
Healthcare Management Consultant and CEO

# Near-Term Recommendations From The Task Forces

As a brief recap, the nine near-term categories of recommendations issued in May of 2020 reflected the immediate needs that existed as a result of the public health emergency. While the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 continue to evolve, these near-term recommendations remain relevant as Louisiana continues to manage the ongoing aftermath of the public health emergency. These near-term recommendations can better position our state to attain the longer-term goals set forth in this report:

**1. Putting health and safety first**
- Establish consistent reopening guidelines that are accessible and understandable
- Continue to increase statewide testing as well as mobile testing in low-income areas
- Follow and encourage policies that prioritize health and safety, including social distancing, wearing of face coverings, and conducting temperature screenings
- Emphasize and enforce that customers and employees wear masks
- Reshape physical spaces and revise operations to protect employees and customers
- Increase signage and other prompts in businesses
- Create a publicly available dashboard to track and monitor cases by industry

**2. Supporting employees**
- Create resources to quickly connect high-skilled workers to jobs within their industry in order to retain more employees within the state
- Add more training resources to maximize opportunities for employees to work from home

**3. Taking care of our children and teachers**
- Facilities should reopen in a careful and thoughtful manner with full respect given to best practices that prioritize health and safety
- Provide distance-learning opportunities to those who are immunocompromised or live with at-risk individuals
- Allocate funds toward testing and PPE for teachers and childcare workers

**4. Extending federal funding**
- Push for changes to the PPP program and improvements to the Main Street lending program to make them more accessible to small business owners, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) and community banks
- Broaden Opportunity Zone definition and coverage



**5. Stimulating our economy**
- Consider eliminating the Corporate Franchise Tax
- Address net operating loss deductions
- Develop a parish-by-parish tax relief program and guidance for property taxes

**6. Supporting our small businesses**
- Develop and fund financial support systems for small businesses, including loan programs, gap funding and seed capital
- Prioritize using Louisiana small businesses, especially for state projects when feasible
- Allow sole-source contracting for Louisiana Small Business Innovation (SBIR) or Small Technology Transfer (STTR) companies
- Offer financial support connections, access to customer networks and mentoring opportunities for disadvantaged businesses
- Market and promote small and local businesses and signal to customers that they are open

**7. Establishing guidelines for liability**
- Provide specific clarity and guidance on liability protection and protocols
- Protect and insulate employers from fraudulent and unreasonable exposure to liability related to COVID-19
- Encourage employer confidence so that businesses can welcome back both employees and customers

**8. Improving regulatory efficiency**
- Make state-issued documents accessible on the State of Louisiana website
- Allow for self-auditing and reporting to reduce in-person interactions
- Waive or reduce penalties that are involved in tax disputes
- Guidance from GOHSEP regarding hurricane events while COVID-19 is still prevalent

**9. Investing in infrastructure**
- Develop a state infrastructure investment package that is funded by a gas tax and/or other revenue streams
- Suspend or lift the state's self-imposed bond cap for construction borrowing
- Invest in public health infrastructure and expand access in rural locations, tribal communities and areas of poverty

"

The RLC and its fifteen Task Forces have put together a plan that will carry us forward. If we are faithful to the plan, we will be better, stronger, and more resilient."

Scott Hensgens
Resilient Louisiana Commission Member
Public Affairs Research Council Chairman

# Long-Term Recommendations From The Task Forces

Through several months of discussion and evaluation, five major categories have emerged for long-term guidance that will lead to a stronger, more inclusive, resilient Louisiana.

Defining specific timeframes and the people responsible for implementing these recommendations is beyond the scope of this document. Rather, these recommendations can serve as a roadmap to a more resilient Louisiana, regardless of the composition of leadership in Louisiana at a particular point in time. No matter the circumstances, members of the Resilient Louisiana Commission will remain committed to supporting the goals set forth in this report.

**Building a Resilient Louisiana**

- EQUITY, INCLUSION & QUALITY OF LIFE
- DIGITAL ACCESS & PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

## 1 Equity, inclusion and quality of life

- An equity-driven growth model, improved quality of life and improved health outcomes all go hand-in-hand.
- Improvements in these areas can spur economic growth and ensure that all people – especially lower-income residents, rural residents, people of color and other vulnerable groups – have opportunities to create and benefit from economic growth.
- Economic inclusion and equity must be prioritized as a new Louisiana growth model. Achieving equity requires erasing social and geographic disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Equity is not only a matter of social justice; it is an economic necessity.



Detailed findings and recommendations

**1. Create a place where equity is prioritized and championed**
*Achieving equity requires focus, strategy and execution. Charging a unified group of people with a common goal is critical to realizing a more equitable Louisiana.*

- Create an Office of Social Equity within the Governor's Office to develop and lead essential equity initiatives, such as:
    - Measure Louisiana's equity and social vulnerabilities to determine if the infrastructure in communities is sufficient and develop strategies to address shortcomings
    - Create teams among state entities to build consistency and produce more equitable outcomes
    - Use an equity lens to determine policy impact and embed newly found principles in decision and policymaking
    - Account for social equity concerns in planning and recovery while focusing on modes of participation and communication for underserved communities
    - Employ a leadership strategy to examine housing, homelessness, gender and LGBTQ-related issues

**2. Increase economic inclusion**
*Equity is the new growth model. Achieving equity requires erasing social and geographic disparities in opportunities and outcomes.*

- Initiate an Inclusive Economic Development incentive with the goal of developing economic development incentives in a manner that supports equitable economic opportunities
- Support and attain living wages either by enhancing the state's Earned Income Tax Credit or by establishing a minimum wage higher than the federal threshold
- Expand awareness of LED's Small Business Development Center programs, especially with small-to-midsize rural, women, minority and veteran-owned businesses
- Enhance funding for programs through Southern University AgCenter and other appropriate HBCUs to increase awareness of food-and agriculture-related career opportunities
- Create an Office of Rural Development within LED
- Focus recruitment efforts on "Agriculture of the Middle" industries to support entrepreneurship in rural areas
- Increase support for outdoor recreation businesses such as destinations, outfitters, guides and manufacturers in rural areas

**3. Community investment and development**
*Investing in communities that do not have adequate infrastructure, development or amenities will create more opportunities and lead to better outcomes.*

- Commission a study and create guidelines that specifically define community resilience and development, and what planning and investments should be prioritized
- Maximize programs like Opportunity Zones, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and tax-exempt bonds to support the creation of mixed-income and affordable housing
- Convert existing infrastructure and historic structures into affordable housing by increasing the commercial historic tax credit for properties that use Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- Prioritize blight removal using CDBG funding to establish a statewide program that incorporates best practices from the New Orleans BlightSTAT program
- Assess Louisiana communities with land-banking capabilities so that they can return properties to active use
- Create incentives to incorporate healthy building elements and support healthy places, including smart growth, complete streets and safe routes to schools
- Organize a team of grant writers and experts at the state level to help rural communities seek additional funds and grant opportunities

**4. Public health infrastructure investments**
*Quality and accessible healthcare leads to better outcomes and more productive citizens.*

- Increase investments in public health infrastructure programs that have proven results and ensure they have the resources needed to respond to future health emergencies
- Incentivize investments that can expand the state's ability to offer physical and mental health services and improve healthcare access

**5. Improve health and well-being**
*Healthy, happy individuals better contribute to the overall productivity of the state.*

- Support investments toward community design projects that improve access to transportation, bike paths, sidewalks, parks and grocery stores with healthy food options
- Maintain the principles of the Rural Hospital Stabilization Act: stabilize payments, increase reimbursement levels, expand telemedicine access, transportation services, broadband services, grant funding and tax relief programs for Louisiana's rural hospital system



- Allow nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, clinical nurse specialists and certified nurse midwives to practice to the full extent of their licensure and education by removing practice barriers, which will expand access to care in health professional shortage areas (rural, tribal) in Louisiana and improve Medicaid recipients' access to care
- Develop public-private partnerships that focus on chronic disease initiatives supporting disease-specific collaboratives that establish standards of care, create accountability measures and track outcomes
- Create plans to address the health professional shortage by implementing policies like increasing funding for nursing schools, CNA programs, developing career pathways for healthcare professionals to upskill (e.g., LPN to RN), increasing academic partnerships with healthcare institutions and streamlining and standardizing certified nursing assistant training
- Consider grant funding for low-income areas to ensure public swimming pools, parks and other recreational areas can remain open
- Improve awareness of the availability and benefits of local parks and recreation options
- Work with community partners – such as local health departments, Councils on Aging, and Housing Authorities – to connect residents with essential services such as healthcare providers, grocery delivery and affordable housing

2

## Digital access and physical infrastructure

- Upgrades to modern technology, such as 5G and fixed wireless, and improvements to transportation infrastructure are essential to increasing the resilience of our state
- Broadband internet access has become a necessity. Investments must be a high priority for Louisiana to assert its competitiveness in such areas as digital education, telehealth, e-commerce and e-governance.
- Statewide connectivity also requires a modern transportation structure that is capable of enhancing productivity and safety while also supporting community and economic growth.
- New post-pandemic priorities could shift to focus on upgrades to existing infrastructure that has deteriorated and new projects that could relieve traffic congestion and provide additional safety measures. Previous funding has been sparse. As a result, 47% of major roads are labeled as poor or mediocre while 13% of the state's bridges are rated as poor/structurally deficient.
- Investing in broadband and transportation infrastructure provides an opportunity to create jobs, spur economic development and allow access to education and public services. Investments also prepare our cities and towns for future growth, development and sustainability.

Detailed findings and recommendations

**1. Increase access and adoption of broadband**
*Access to broadband delivers benefits to communities and individuals, including access to jobs, productivity gains and a tighter knit, more connected state.*

- Decrease the digital divide by removing state and local obstacles to investment in broadband infrastructure and by adopting broadband statewide
- Develop financial incentives for providers that include rural or less-profitable areas, including assistance in 'last mile' infrastructure
- Leverage existing broadband infrastructure through public-private partnerships to maximize broadband penetration
- Create initiatives or financial assistance programs to increase adoption of broadband in areas where it is already available, especially for those with school-aged children
- Increase mobile network capacity and access in rural, underserved and unserved areas
- Accelerate Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana program to align with urgent need for all educational and economic development processes across the state

**2. Invest in transportation infrastructure**
*Transportation infrastructure investments enhance productivity and safety, improve quality of life and help support community and economic growth.*

- Secure additional funds to work through transportation backlog and address transportation infrastructure needs
- Increase investments in more affordable and quality public transit, micro-transit and bike and pedestrian options
- Increase the fuel tax temporarily to help fund transportation infrastructure investments
- Create an infrastructure emergency fund for rural and underserved communities
- Request federal stimulus for interstate widening, bridge repair and replacement, congestion relief and other public works projects

**3. Invest in utilities infrastructure**
*A sturdy utilities infrastructure increases resilience of communities and quality of life.*

- Strengthen the infrastructure grid to protect utility customers from outages related to severe weather
- Continue commitment of increasing power output to support the utilization of natural gas, nuclear and other affordable power sources
- Use annual surplus with a local match requirement to fund local drainage, sewer and water projects

**4. Coastal restoration and water management**
*Investments in coastal restoration and water management protect our economy and culture, and secure the sustainability of our state's ecosystem*

- Capitalize on Louisiana's experience, position as a world leader, and investments to further business opportunities that contribute positively to the state's coastal restoration efforts
- Protect and leverage funding for coastal restoration projects
- Maximize the beneficial use of floodplains and green infrastructure to reduce flood risk and improve resilience statewide

"Addressing rural challenges requires both thoughtful grass-roots engagement and creative use of emerging technologies – for entrepreneurial support, healthcare, education and other applications."

**Jim Clinton**

Rural Development Task Force Leader,
Central Louisiana Economic Development
Alliance President and CEO

3

## Education and workforce development

- Equitable practices within education can lead to increased opportunities for all citizens, economic and community growth, and a viable and abundant workforce that can meet the needs of Louisiana employers.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate is 33% for people who do not graduate from high school, compared to 5% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher. It is imperative that educational opportunities and outcomes are maximized and accessible for all Louisianans.
- To stay competitive and continue the diversification of our economy, Louisiana must also emphasize workforce development and continuing education efforts.
- As of 2015, nearly 50% of working adults in Louisiana lacked the skills and/or education to qualify for better employment opportunities. Increased training, and reskilling and upskilling of the state's workforce can support more economic growth, as well as better earnings and opportunities for Louisiana employees.

"When we don't invest in ensuring that kids are ready to start kindergarten, it is the equivalent of starting them on an educational marathon one hour after all other runners."

**Tyron Picard**
Resilient Louisiana Commission Member,
The Picard Group Principal

"A high-quality higher education system develops and retains talent in Louisiana, seeds innovation, grows opportunity, and launches us into a high-tech, highly connected future."

**Dr. Kim Hunter Reed**
Education and Workforce Development Task Force Leader,
Louisiana Board of Regents Commissioner of Higher Education



Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Focus on the individual and family

*Historical inequities place a great burden on those least able to respond with resilience – those least prepared to find opportunity in the midst of chronic stress events. We must reimagine our systems for a resilient and equitable Louisiana by breaking down structural silos and leveraging resources with our people and their families at the center of our collective work.*

- Transform the necessary education and workforce systems to center on the person and the family
- Ensure Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund solvency, recognizing its critical role in supporting resiliency for individuals, families and businesses
- Restore the Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP), upon which many Louisiana businesses, including small and mid-size enterprises, depend to reskill and upskill their workforce and offer opportunities for advancement
- Provide resources to help families transition to working and/or learning from home
- Align state plans to allow the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to enhance service delivery and coordination of services provided by state partners
- Prepare a crisis-informed snapshot of the state of the economy and opportunity in Louisiana
- Provide trauma-informed support for Louisiana children and families
- Ensure collaborative regional processes include all agencies and entities focused on human development to maximize efficiency and responsiveness

**2. Increase access to early childhood education**
*Young children who receive high-quality early care are more likely to grow into citizens who positively contribute to our communities. Access to childcare is critical for parents who make up the state's workforce.*

- Increase investments and address funding gaps to ensure more children from economically disadvantaged families take part in early childcare education programs
- Address funding gaps in infant care identified by the Louisiana Early Childcare Commission
- Explore incentives for businesses to assist employees with childcare challenges

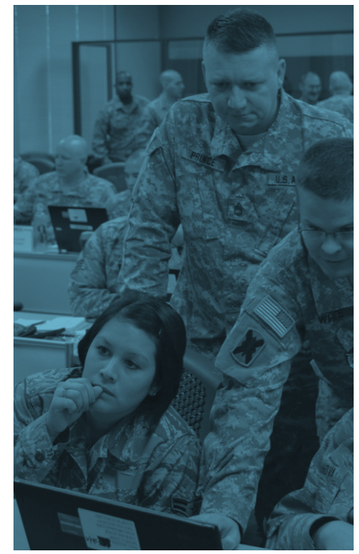
**3. Improve K-12 education outcomes**
*A strong K-12 program prepares students to enter the workforce and higher education. High school graduates have more career opportunities and are much less likely to live in poverty.*

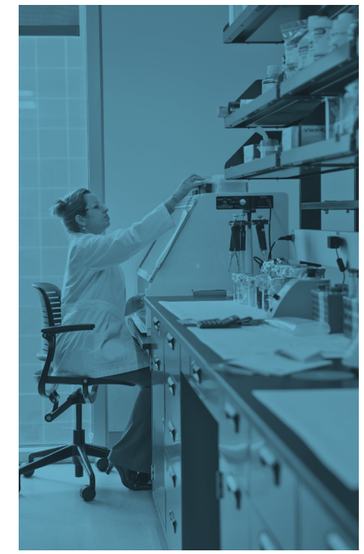
- Expand digital learning opportunities and improve access so that every K-12 student has a digital device
- Ensure access to high-quality career counseling
- Adopt a continuous learning plan in the event of future school closures or disruptions
- Develop more work-based learning models, such as immersion programs and apprenticeships
- Increase education and awareness of career opportunities in traditional Louisiana sectors like manufacturing, agriculture and other growth industries of the future

- Support and leverage regional Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Centers to build early STEM literacy and later acquisition of STEM skills important to resiliency, with a specific focus on underrepresented populations and underserved locations
- Expand Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) programs across the state

**4. Improve higher education outcomes**
*Higher education is a significant contributor to the state's ability to compete in the global marketplace and is critical to our economic strength and social well-being.*

- Develop strategies for specific challenges to resiliency encountered by HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions
- Implement best practices in higher education funding to maximize equity and alignment of skills to the state's economic needs
- Continue to direct funding to higher education in conjunction with economic development projects and opportunities
- Promote more innovation and research focused on issues faced in traditional Louisiana industries (e.g., LNG, petrochemical)
- Strengthen investments in statewide research universities
- Provide flexible curriculum options that make it easier for students to complete programs
- Increase focus on recruiting and retaining rural students
- Develop more work-based learning models, such as immersion programs and apprenticeships





**5. Increase coordination between workforce-focused agencies**
*More collaboration between workforce-focused agencies at the local, regional and state levels can reduce redundancy, strengthen partnerships and provide enhanced job opportunities for Louisiana citizens.*

- Build upon engagement and collaboration opportunities between Louisiana Economic Development (LED), Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), regional partners and others to produce skilled workers that are employment-ready for Louisiana businesses
- Secure funding and services for agencies focused on increasing economic opportunities for citizens through workforce development and skills training
- Support regional and local economic development organizations to identify and address the shifting requirements and alignment of skills in their respective locations
- Secure and fully utilize available sources of federal, state and special-use funds for the best outcomes at the state, regional and local levels

**6. Create pathways for underemployed and unemployed populations**
*Our economy cannot thrive without engaging a large percentage of our workforce.*

- Include pathways in education and training programs for under-educated and formerly incarcerated residents
- Determine strategies to establish safety nets, educational opportunities and support programs for adult learners
- Use comprehensive and effective data analysis and assessment tools to better understand the factors affecting the underemployed and unemployed populations, including social determinants of health, mental health stressors and the challenges faced by Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households
- Interwork resilient skill sets in learning programs through the support and leverage of STEM centers to build STEM literacy and skills

**7. Improve and increase training centers and ongoing learning**
*Quality and easy-to-access workforce training programs allow adults to improve their skills and pivot to better-paying, more career-oriented jobs.*

- Transform Louisiana into a hub for advanced manufacturing training
- Explore funding models for short-term credentials that are in high demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Create medium-term training opportunities in fields that are in high demand because of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Establish funding for apprenticeships and training programs to increase real-world learning experiences
- Partner with the Cybersecurity Commission, the CyberInnovation Center/National Integrated Cyber Education Research Center and others to advance skills development and education related to cybersecurity



- Create training programs through LED FastStart to assist companies that may need to adapt to new economic realities

**8. Access to available jobs and information**
*It is important that people seeking employment can easily locate available jobs. If job postings are not easily accessible, it can lead to a lack of opportunities and increased frustration for jobseekers.*

- Employ collaboration between local and state leaders to encourage job seekers and employers to use the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) system to maximize central data collection and ensure more jobs are posted on a single, accessible site
- Create videos and electronic guides to demonstrate how job seekers and employers can use the HiRE system
- Update the occupational forecast to accommodate current economic conditions
- Develop data infrastructure that allows for the collection and reporting of workforce and industry-based certifications

"Through the Resilient Louisiana Commission, FastStart has developed strategies and solutions with Louisiana's outstanding education and workforce development partners. Our collective body of work provides a pathway to a stronger Louisiana with a more resilient workforce."

**Paul Helton**

Education and Workforce Development Task Force Member, LED FastStart Executive Director

# 4

## Small business and entrepreneurship

- Removing barriers and assisting small businesses creates economic growth and increased opportunities for all Louisiana citizens.
- A strong economy depends on a thriving small business environment. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), before the pandemic, Louisiana's small businesses employed 53% (900,000+ people) of the state's private workforce.
- Small businesses have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Louisiana must develop sound strategies and policies to help mitigate damages to existing small businesses, while also developing ways to foster new small businesses in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Detailed findings and recommendations

**1. Increase access to capital**
*Lack of access to capital is a primary roadblock entrepreneurs face and it particularly affects low-income, minority and other disadvantaged entrepreneurs.*

- Adopt and implement best practices and models that have been successful in other states
- Implement recommendations identified by the Governor's Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council
- Create a minority capital investment fund for small businesses

**2. Increase entrepreneurship opportunities**
*Entrepreneurship is an effective means to increase standards of living and create wealth not only for the owners but also for the entire community. Entrepreneurs also help drive change and innovation with new and improved products.*

- Clear the entrepreneurial path by creating better, easier paths to business creation, reducing licensing requirements and increasing awareness of barriers to entrepreneurial action
- Appoint a state Chief Entrepreneurship Officer to work across agency lines to make Louisiana a more entrepreneur-friendly state
- Increase entrepreneurship education and mentoring and build upon LED's Main Street and Economic Gardening successes

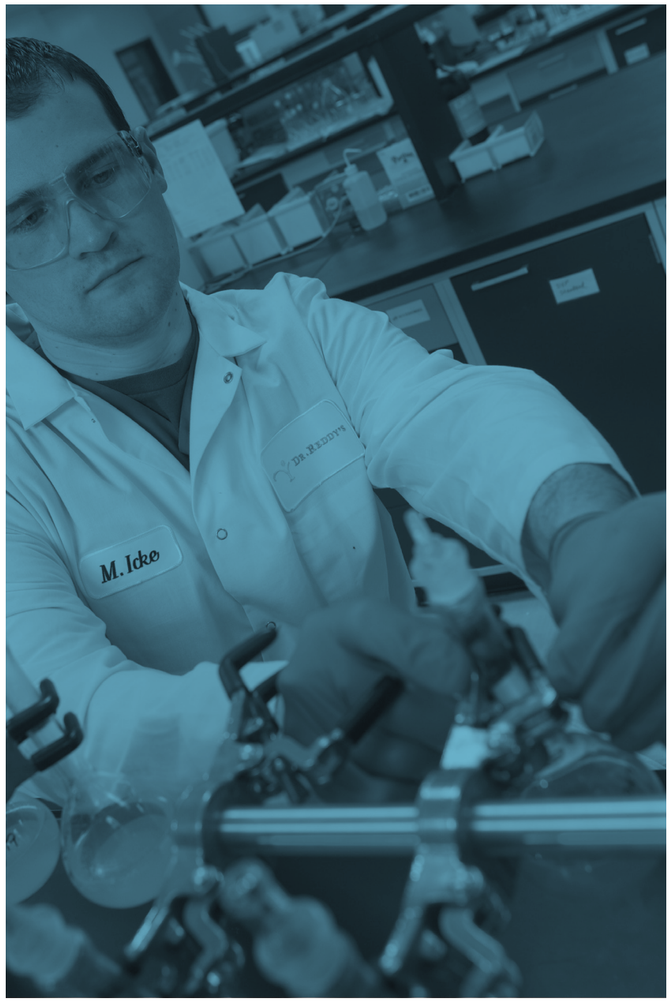
> "The single most important investment we can make as a state is an investment in the education and skills of our people."

**Dr. Monty Sullivan**
Education and Workforce Development Task Force Ex-Officio Member,
Louisiana Community and Technical College System President

“

To attain more resilience, our state needs appropriate levels of funding to provide for adequate public services and foster widespread, attainable opportunities for its people. A fair and balanced tax structure can help us achieve this goal.”

**Kimberly Robinson**
Resilient Louisiana Commission Ex-Officio Member,
Louisiana Department of Revenue Secretary






**3. Incentives and training**
*For small businesses, where capital is often limited, incentives can help them survive and grow. Training and mentorship programs help create a small business network and increase the chances of success.*

- Provide incentives for small businesses to complete necessary retrofitting for COVID-19
- Foster a statewide small business and startup mentoring network
- Increase access to broad technical assistance, business counseling and reopening advice
- Consider offering tax credits to businesses that purchase PPE
- Re-establish sales tax holidays to incentivize local purchases

**4. Increase opportunities for small businesses**
*Access to potential customers greatly increases chances for survival and growth.*

- Expand the Louisiana Procurement and Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)
- Increase e-commerce capabilities for small businesses to help them reach a larger customer base
- Encourage manufacturers and other economic driver companies to source and use local small businesses in Louisiana
- Support rural startups by enhancing access to state purchasing opportunities

“

Small business is the backbone of the economy and provides employment for the majority of those within our local workforce. In an effort to create a more diverse, equitable and thriving Louisiana, the small business and retail community will need the full support of our industry leaders, administration and community stakeholders so that we can ensure the continued production and delivery of the goods and services we provide.”

**Kelisha Garrett**
Retail and Small Business Task Force Leader, New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce
& Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation Executive Director

# 5

Detailed findings and recommendations

## Government engagement

- This moment provides an opportunity to enact policies that address the more acute problems created by COVID-19.
- Officials can support economic competitiveness by enacting modern tax and regulatory standards that will position the state to attract and retain the best companies and workers.

### 1. Fiscal reform

*A simplified and broader tax structure will make Louisiana more competitive, provide greater stability and predictability for revenue and is fairer to all taxpayers.*

- Evaluate deductions and credits for possible elimination, broaden the tax base, and lower tax rates
- Simplify Louisiana's business tax structure to increase economic competitiveness against other states
- Modernize and streamline sales tax collections

### 2. Business liability and risk management policies

*Confidence to reopen is improved when liability considerations are factored in.*

- Monitor classification of infectious diseases as it relates to workers' compensation claims and being listed as a 'recordable incident' by OSHA
- Create guidance for employers that they can use to prevent spreading infectious diseases while not violating HIPPA laws

### 3. Tax incentives

*Tax incentives must target sustainable industries and jobs to create growth.*

- Evaluate and modernize incentives to ensure they are targeting high-paying, growing industries
- Make incentives flexible so they can be altered to remain up-to-date and focused on new, emerging and growing industries
- Renew the Louisiana New Markets Tax Credit to leverage available capital
- Expand the Angel Investor Tax Credit to allow for a larger tax allocation for investments that promote inclusivity and equity (e.g., DBEs, women- and veteran-owned businesses)
- Consider incentives for building owners who are altering properties to better prevent the transmission of infectious diseases

### 4. Business development strategies and economic diversification

*Growing the state's foundational industries while also attracting new, expanding industries to the state helps create a more diversified, inclusive and resilient economy.*

- Develop strategies within Louisiana Economic Development (LED) to capture reshoring opportunities in manufacturing and technology
- Utilize Louisiana's geographic advantages to increase Louisiana's presence in areas like water management and carbon capture and isolation
- Work to attract more corporate and regional headquarters for companies in traditional Louisiana industries (e.g., oil and gas, chemical)
- Grow traditional gaming and tourism industry by authorizing sports betting and iGaming
- Evaluate potential impacts of automation and artificial intelligence and map out ways for Louisiana to take advantage of it
- Create relocation incentives that target remote workers who can work from any location
- Protect existing funding and provide additional support to Convention and Business Bureaus/Destination Marketing and Management Organizations for marketing and promotional efforts that can help stimulate the tourism, hospitality and entertainment industries across the state

### 5. Regulations and planning for future disruptions

*In the event that another disruption to the economy occurs, the state should have written procedures and guidelines to assist companies.*

- Instruct appropriate state regulatory agencies to create a pandemic or economic disruption playbook that guides businesses regarding appropriate procedures and policies
- Develop a distance learning plan for all schools that includes surveying for what limitations (internet, digital devices, childcare) might exist for implementation

> "Working to correct systemic inequities is both a moral imperative and a superior growth strategy that will benefit the entire state."

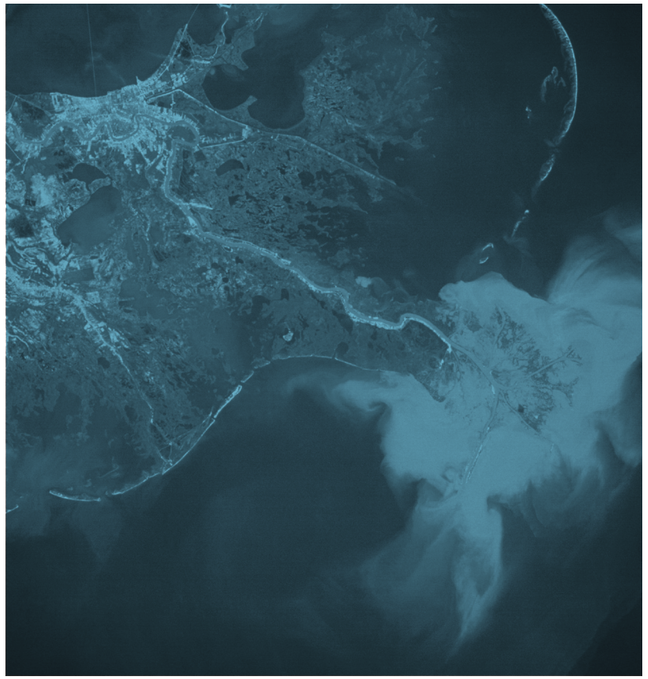
**William LaBar**

Information Technology and Communications Task Force Leader, CGI Consulting Services Vice President

**6. Climate change**

*The effects of climate change – such as rising sea levels, increased risk from flooding and exacerbated health outcomes related to heat and other factors – can be especially harmful to Louisiana. Portions of our economy, and our culture, are directly tied to the condition of our coast. Inland regions will also be challenged by flooding, changes to agriculture, extreme heat and additional pressure on the state's health system. Playing our part to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to its impacts are fundamental to a more resilient Louisiana.*

- Follow the recommendations made by Gov. John Bel Edwards' Climate Initiatives Task Force
- Encourage investment in new energy technologies such as engineered carbon capture, solar, wind and other renewable technologies from both an economic development and fleet diversification perspective
- Develop partnerships with utility companies to better understand customer needs and associated costs
- Consider offering incentives for larger-scale generation versus individual consumer diversification to help mitigate ratepayer cross-subsidization
- Research and develop policies that encourage the development of more renewable energy sources



“The Louisiana Workforce Commission is building resiliency through our commitment to increase skills, productivity, and career-readiness in our workforce. Erasing poverty by providing family-sustaining employment, closing income inequality gaps, and creating employment that provides more than a ‘paycheck-to-paycheck’ lifestyle are all traits of a more resilient state.”

**Ava Dejoie**
Education and Workforce Development Task Force Leader,
Louisiana Workforce Commission Secretary

The overall findings and recommendations featured in the following documents align with much of the Resilient Louisiana Commission's vision of creating a stronger and more resilient Louisiana.

**2020-2024 State of Louisiana Consolidated Plan for Housing**
Developed every five years in order to qualify annually for HUD block grant funding, this most recent consolidated plan outlines Louisiana's community development and housing needs, goals, strategies, and resources. The needs assessment and market analysis identified four priority needs: affordable housing, housing for special needs populations, homelessness, and barriers to competitive and sustainable communities. The plan addresses needed funding to increase affordable housing, including for special needs populations, decrease homelessness, decrease owner-occupied units with housing problems, and create competitive and sustainable communities.

**Board of Regents Master Plan for Higher Education**
This report details an attainment goal for 60% of all working-age Louisianans holding a degree or high-value credential by 2030. Outlining an inclusive Prosperity Pipeline plan, it calls on the state to expand access to postsecondary education, eliminate persistent and damaging equity gaps, and significantly increase the education level of adults.

**Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast**
The Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority developed a $50 billion vision for the state's coastal and hurricane protection infrastructure. Updated every five years since 2007, the 2017 plan focuses on how to build and maintain land, reduce flood risk to communities, and provide habitats to support ecosystems.

**Louisiana's Opportunity: Comprehensive Solutions for a Sustainable Tax and Spending Structure**
This report was designed to provide recommendations on how to create permanent solutions to the state tax and budgeting structure that would balance annual state revenues and spending. It includes a package of 30+ recommendations garnered over six months of information gathering and deliberation.

**RESET Louisiana's Future**
Developed by the unique partnership of The Committee of 100 (C100), the Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL), and the Public Affairs Research Council (PAR), this is a non-partisan policy platform focused on four essential issues: education, state finance, criminal justice/public safety, and transportation/infrastructure. Specifically, it outlines proposals to send all children to kindergarten ready to learn, advance K-12 education policies that work, build the talent pool in Louisiana, create a fair and competitive tax environment, transform state retirement systems, design a modern, workable state constitution, build an efficient criminal justice system that improves public safety, and make transportation infrastructure an asset.

**Travel in the New Normal**
The U.S. Travel Association developed a report for industry guidance that promotes the health and safety of travelers based on CDC and White House guidelines and with consultation from public health experts. With emphasis placed on creating transmission barriers, enhancing sanitation, promoting health screening, and following food & beverage service guidance, it offers guidelines to the travel industry with checklists of concrete suggestions.

**United Way ALICE Report**
This data-driven study of financial hardship in Louisiana examines the economic outlook of ALICE households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) for every Louisiana parish since 2010. Among the key findings were that households continue to struggle, the basic cost of living is still on the rise, workforce changes are destabilizing, and a number of emerging trends impact ALICE families. These trends include changing American household patterns, market instability, and health inequality.

## Conclusion

The Resilient Louisiana Commission has charted a course beyond recovery. Recovery only puts the state back where it was before. Instead, Louisiana is using the power of resilience to join together on an equal footing to share ideas, develop strategies and aim for new goals.

Through this resilience, Louisiana will be more inclusive, more equitable and more prosperous for all of its citizens.

The Resilient Louisiana Commission and task force members continue their commitment to the goals and vision set forth in this report. With support from leaders across our state and continued input from the public, we can advance our path from recovery to resilience.

It is up to all of us to convert these ideas into action.

**The time to act is now.**

This Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana is derived from the hard work of the 15 Resilient Louisiana Commission Task Forces, which collectively encompass more than 300 Louisiana citizens. To view the detailed findings and recommendations from the Task Forces, please visit the Commission website at **opportunitylouisiana.com/resilientlouisiana** and review the document titled Appendix.