

URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER



GRADUAL RESTART OF ON-SITE WORK

**ALL-STAFF SUMMARY**

# Introduction

As we continue to learn more about COVID-19 and how it is spreading, communities across the country are shifting their mindset and approach to how we will collectively cope with this new reality. Since we now understand that the pandemic may not be truly “over” for 1 – 2 years (until a vaccine is available), that means we are all having to move from thinking about "getting back to normal when the pandemic is over" to asking "how can we reimagine our lives and work *during* a pandemic?"

First of all, we want to acknowledge that this is *hard*. We are in uncharted territory, and we are all navigating this new landscape together for the first time. The GROW team has created a GROW Procedure Manual to provide safety guidelines that will aid in ensuring consistency and flexibility as UEC returns to onsite work.

We have created the Procedure Manual in alignment with the guidance in Wisconsin’s Badger Bounce Back plan (see Appendix A of the procedure manual), along with recommendations from CDC (Center for Disease Control) , WHO (World Health Organization), local health authorities (see Appendix E of the procedure manual) , as well as the immense expertise right here on our staff. **We are basing this plan on scientific information, guided by expert advice, while ensuring that our plan reflects our values.**

Our procedure manual will provide guidance for all of us as we gradually re-start our on-site work in this new reality. It is designed to be flexible and responsive as things change and new information becomes available, but we also acknowledge that the GROW approach itself may need to change as we learn more.

When you read through the procedures, it will become obvious that a lot of our work may look really different than it has in the past. Most notably, the re-start of on-site work must be gradual, in keeping with health guidelines and to ensure the safety of our staff and our constituents. We recognize that this approach, while necessary, may feel uncomfortable because it means that some of the people in our community will have access to on-site engagement before others and our normal work responsibilities may shift to accommodate this new reality. We also want to emphasize that our on-site work is not our *only* work! Through all stages of GROW, many of us will continue to work remotely and we will continue to generate virtual content in order to reach as much of our community as possible, even if our on-site activity is limited.

# Priorities

Based on trends we are seeing in our community relative to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Leadership Team has identified the following priorities for on-site initiatives that we can offer as an organization to accommodate what our community needs most:

We want to find the ways that UEC can:

- Serve the kids in our neighborhoods and their families
- Preserve the availability and integrity of urban green spaces and environmental programs for those we serve
- Promote the health and safety of those we serve
- Keep UEC relevant and viable through the pandemic and into the future

What are we focusing on?

- Supporting our NEEP schools (virtual programs & the phased return of on-site programs)
- Caring for the land and promoting opportunities for people to be outside to experience the healing powers of nature
- Doing what we can to help with food security (e.g. lunch program, community gardens, food transport)
- Doing what we can to help with childcare (e.g. summer camps, other day camps).

## What is the GROW Approach?

Under the GROW Plan:

- There will be a gradual, phased return to on-site work with a focus on the priorities listed above. The timing of the return to on-site work will be driven by public health indicators and department of health guidance.
- Many of us will continue to work remotely, or mostly remotely, for some period of time.
- To help contain the spread of COVID-19, those of us doing on-site work will be assigned to a single branch location. (Limited, multi-location work may be permitted on an exception basis with the observance of appropriate social distancing and hygiene practices).
- To help slow the spread of COVID-19, those of us doing on-site work will complete a daily personal health assessment each day before coming to work, and will follow prescribed social distancing and hygiene practices.
- Our facilities will be thoroughly cleaned each day.

## What does this mean for us?

At the core of our identity as an environmental community center is being responsive to our community, and because the needs of our community are different now than they have ever been, so might some of our approaches.

Might that be uncomfortable and challenging for us? Yes. Might we need to think differently about how we collaborate across departments to accomplish some of our adjusted goals? Definitely. Do we have 100% confidence that this team of creative, resilient, and empathetic staff can come together to rise to the challenge? Abso-frickin-lutely. With your support, engagement, and leadership, we can continue to be the resource that our community knows and loves.

It will take all of us to navigate our organization (and our community) through this time of transition, and the GROW approach will help us do so in a way that keeps our staff and constituents safe, and focuses on what our community most needs from us in this moment.

## What does success look like?

By following the proper protocols for both preventing the spread of COVID-19 and responding to COVID-19 cases, we can continue to be a safe and trusted space in the community, which is our ultimate goal.

Our shared focus will be to deliver our mission while doing our part to promote public health. As Wisconsin gradually re-opens and we gradually return to in-person community activity we expect the public health focus to be on **protecting vulnerable populations** and **continuing to slow the rate of transmission** so that COVID-19 doesn't overwhelm the health care system. With that understanding, our objective at UEC is **to follow prescribed public health practices to limit the spread of COVID-19 and respond quickly and appropriately if cases do occur**. While it may be difficult to accept that people in our community may get sick, it is important to understand that **we will be doing our part if we mitigate risk as much as possible by following the protocols outlined in the procedure manual, and by responding quickly and effectively when cases do emerge**.

# What to Know Before Returning to On-site Work

Before you return to on-site work at any of the three branches there are things you will need to do in order to prepare:

- **Review the Procedure Manual** (especially the General Safety Guidelines and the Activity Guidelines for your specific area/activity) and be prepared to follow all guidelines for on-site work.
- **Know your branch assignment**, and confirm your schedule with your manager and the appropriate branch manager.
- Ensure that you **have an appropriate mask or face covering** (refer to the General Safety Guidelines in the Procedure Manual). If you do not have one and are not able to obtain one, please connect with your supervisor and/or branch manager to ensure that you receive one before returning on site.
- Complete the required **“Return to On-site Work” training** facilitated by the HR Manager.

Every day you work on-site you will need to:

- **Confirm that you are scheduled** to work on that day/at that time, either by checking an outlook calendar that will be shared with all staff working on site, or by communicating directly with a branch manager. Ensure that you have your proper mask or face covering.
- Complete the **daily self-administered health screening** and confirm that you completed it. (As of the writing of this document, the process for reporting this self-screen is in development: it will be covered in detail in the “Return to On-site Work” training.)
- Follow proper **protocols for on-site activity**, including frequent hand washing, social distancing, wearing a mask, proper disinfection of equipment and surfaces, and all other guidelines outlined in your area of the Procedure Manual.
- Prepare to be on-site without using common areas such as the kitchen (so, e.g. **pack a lunch that does not need to be refrigerated and microwaved**). Required common areas (such as entry ways and bathrooms) will have rigorous sanitizing practices in place.

# Branch Assignments

Throughout the stages of GROW, each staff member working on-site will be assigned to **only one branch**. The key reason for the single branch requirement is to avoid contact and cross-contagion between “populations” of staff. We need your help with this, as reducing your exposure to staff working at other branches plays an important role in slowing the spread of the virus while we continue to deliver our mission. If there is a COVID-19 case at one location, this approach will help allow the other two locations to safely remain active.

As an employer, Urban Ecology Center cannot dictate what you do when you are away from work. Your free time is yours to use as you wish. We recommend that you consider using rigorous social distancing practices if your out-of-work time includes connecting with someone who is assigned to a different branch. This will keep each of you safer and will be helpful to other staff at both locations. If there is a COVID-19 case at the branch you are assigned to, you may be asked who you have come into contact with from other branches. Please know that your open and honest communication will be well received. Your cooperation in helping keep everyone safe will be appreciated, especially if it alerts us to the need to follow additional COVID-19 exposure protocols at more than one location.

# Summary of Phased Approach

The UEC has aligned our GROW phasing with the phases of the Badger Bounce Back Plan. In the absence of specific health department direction we will use our own assessment of the Badger Bounce Back Plan checkpoints to determine whether to move to the next stage of GROW. When we decide UEC is ready to move to the next GROW stage we will also determine the pace at which we move, with the understanding that we may “lag” behind the Badger Bounce Back Plan phases if not all departments are ready to move forward onto the next stage of GROW.

A brief overview of the parameters in each GROW stage is outlined below. For all stages of GROW, we will follow the state recommended best practices for limiting contagion (e.g. washing hands often, covering coughs, etc.) **See the graphic at the end of this document for a snapshot of which activities will be happening on-site during each GROW stage.**

## Pre-GROW

***Aligned with “Safer at Home” Phase in Badger Bounce Back***

- This refers to the period of time when the City of Milwaukee stay-at-home order is still in place
- Virtual/remote work continues

## GROW 1

***Aligned with “Phase 1” of Badger Bounce Back.***

- “Partial re-open.” Schools and daycares are allowed to open.
- Social distancing and hygiene guidelines still in place
- Gatherings of up to 9 people allowed. (For our purposes, we are defining “gatherings” as groups of people in the same confined space (e.g a classroom or office).
- \*Note: Because we are licensed as a “daycare center” by the Dept of Children and Families (from June 1 - Aug 31, for summer camps), the guidelines for gatherings of children are slightly different from the overall state guidelines. We will be adhering to these for all summer camp programming. (See Appendix E: “Additional Resources” for links to DCF guidelines).
- Staff are restricted to one branch
- PPE requirements in place
- Only scheduled staff are allowed to work onsite. Unscheduled drop-ins are not allowed. Department managers will determine onsite work needs and will coordinate the schedule with the appropriate branch manager.

## GROW 2

***Aligned with “Phase 2” of Badger Bounce Back***

- “Reopen with best practices”
- Social distancing and hygiene guidelines still in place
- Gatherings of up to 50 people allowed

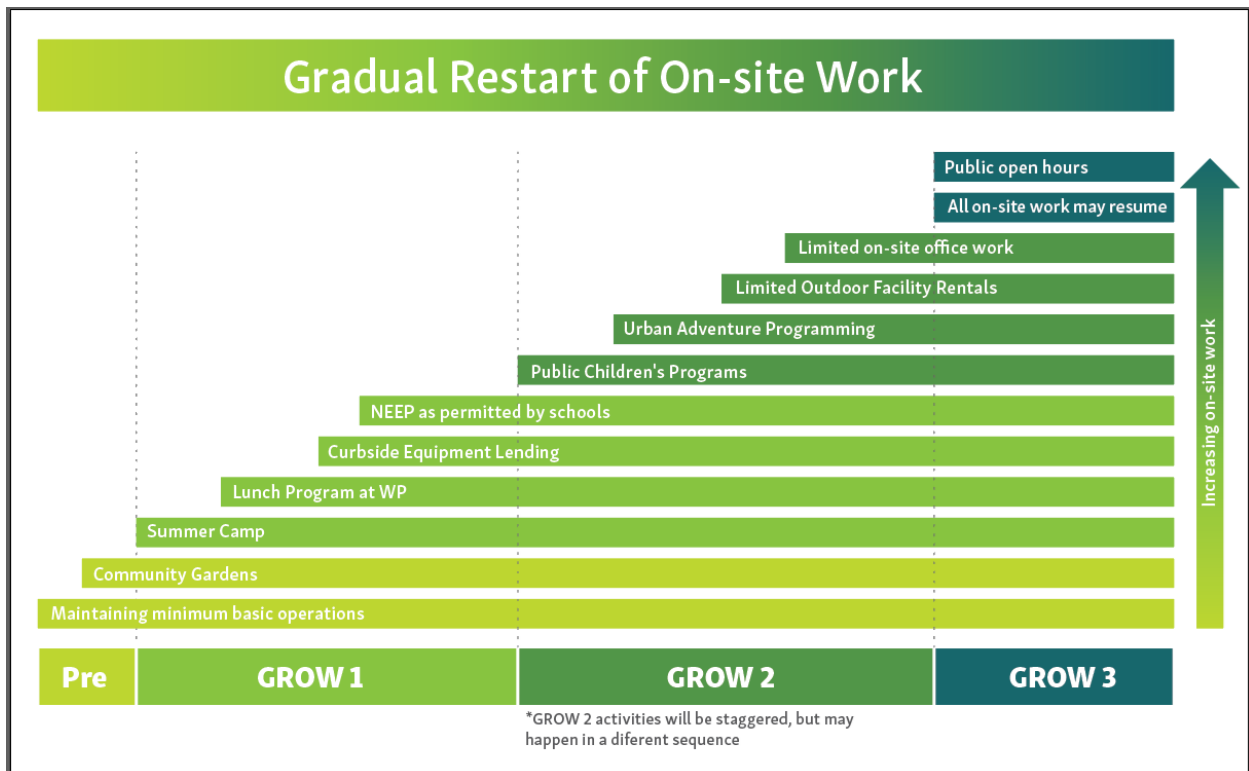
- Staff are restricted and assigned to only do on-site work at one branch and will not be able to do on-site work at the other two branches.
- PPE Requirements in place
- Only scheduled staff are allowed to work onsite. Unscheduled drop-ins are not allowed. Department managers will determine onsite work needs and will coordinate the schedule with the appropriate branch manager.

### GROW 3

#### Aligned with “Phase 3” of Badger Bounce Back

- “Re-open”
- Social distancing and hygiene guidelines lifted (hygiene practices still recommended)
- PPE requirements lifted
- Gathering limits lifted

*[Note: GROW 3 is unlikely to be reached until a COVID-19 vaccine is available.]*



Detailed procedures for each on-site activity can be found in the Procedure Manual in the section for each GROW stage.