Lenz-Vig North Dakota COVID-19 Crisis Management Plan (CCMP)

North Dakota is a hotspot for COVID-19 and has seen significant increases in cases across the state. Although this is a global crisis - the harm is local, personal and economic. In the absence of a clearly-articulated, well-managed, and collaborative crisis management plan, the state will continue to suffer. North Dakotans deserve a clear action plan that addresses the reality of the pandemic and its effect on our economy, our way of life, and our health.

Addressing any crisis demands decisive leadership that puts in place clear lines of authority and communications to minimize confusion and to provide benchmarks for making progress. Other states and nations have learned that even with the most proactive strategies for containment in place, containment of the virus can take months to achieve. The Lenz-Vig COVID-19 Crisis Management Plan intends to outline a proper structure and operational plan for the state of North Dakota. Cooperative leadership from the State of North Dakota, our Tribal nations, and fellow governors from across the region will be imperative for effective pandemic management. Otherwise, non-containment anywhere within our nation can undo even the most effective control efforts by states, counties, tribes, and territories.

Background: In consultation with internationally recognized epidemiologists, medical professionals, and community members from across North Dakota, this plan was created to lead North Dakota through this public health and economic crisis. North Dakota's rugged individualism is only matched by its history and culture of helping our neighbors, pitching in during times of need, and making sacrifices for the greater good.

This crisis is unprecedented in our recent history. COVID-19 does not discriminate. It is not political—and the response must not be political. Our response must be driven by data from reliable, neutral sources and must evolve as new information emerges.

We must acknowledge that COVID-19 is a threatening infectious disease that very little is known about at this time, including its severity. Likewise, we must recognize that we are learning more every day about how to address the crisis and must identify information sources that are reliable, unbiased, and constantly evolving to guide our response.

The core values that drove the development of this plan and the proposed structure are as follows:

- Decisive action, collaboration with key leaders, clear communications, transparency, and guidance and education with the public are essential to making the plan and structure work;
- Recognition that we cannot effectively restore economic resilience until the virus is under control;
- Loss of life and long-term damage to the health and well-being of North Dakotans is too high of a price to pay for short-term economic recovery;
- Partisan politics should not be a factor in decision-making related to addressing this crisis;
- Follow the best science and knowledge.

The Plan

1) **Working with Tribal Nations, Create a Crisis Management Structure for North Dakota:**

The COVID Crisis Management Structure (CCMS) emphasizes **unity of response**. This COVID Crisis Management Plan (CCMP) has separate political and non-political roles and provides a single point of contact where each individual participating in the operation reports to only one supervisor; as well as on clear management structure, where each position is responsible for adequate staff resources in order to achieve their objectives and prevent the risk of overload. This structure will also demand common terminology, management by objective, flexible and modular organization, coordination, accountability, specific action plans, and collaboration with Tribal Nations to develop targeted strategies for each of our unique communities.

The plan has a clear delineation between the roles of elected officials and non-elected staff. Governor and **Lt. Governor** and **leaders of the 5 nations** will work to develop a shared understanding and articulate a shared vision for the implementation of the CCMP. It is the responsibility of each leadership role to facilitate response plans and communicate high-level goals to their constituents, the general public, and the executive branches of other states. The North Dakota Executive Branch will work collaboratively with the **Legislative Assembly** to engage its Legislative Management process and thereby provide the fiscal and statutory means to facilitate the plan. A State-of-Emergency Legislative session would be called in order to implement the CCMP.

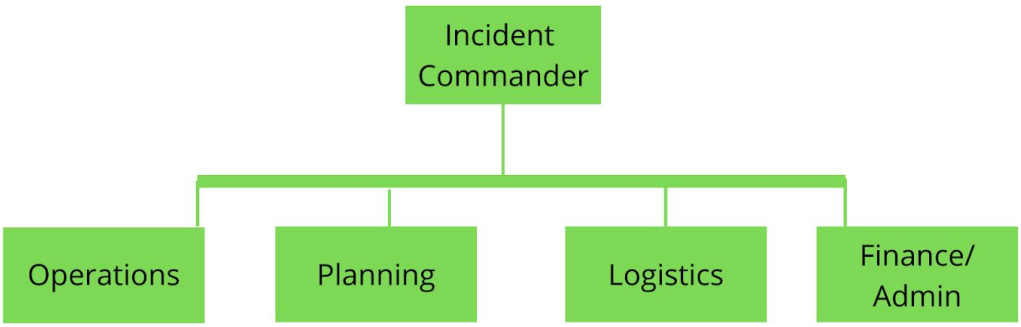
2) **Staff the structure with the following:**
   - **COVID Crisis Commander**: Works collaboratively with the governor/lt. governor, legislative leadership, and the Department of Health; has overall responsibility for CCMP implementation, operations, central communications, and establishment of ongoing goals and objectives; manages all other units that are independent of the gov/Tribal leaders/legislature.

   - Identify other staffing needs based on goals and objectives below.

3) **Create and implement clear, transparent goals and objectives to address the virus:**
   - **Implement robust and reliable testing:** Currently, not enough tests are being conducted and there is a lack of transparency as to how the test results are being reported. The plan would increase access to testing, staffing for testing programs, and lab capacity and/or access.
   - **Provide clear guidance on best practices to reduce the spread of the virus:** The State must implement proven CDC preventive measures including mandated masks, social distancing, and restrictions on inside gatherings in order to decrease testing needs so that risk level and local response can be assessed accordingly.
   - **Convene a multi-state cooperative strategy to work with surrounding states to reduce transmission and increase purchasing power:** It will be imperative to develop strong collaborative partnerships with more populous states which have stronger private company interests in developing and distributing next-generation COVID tests and vaccines and to share information and guidance with the public to reduce the spread of the virus across borders.
   - **Develop ongoing plans based on the best data by monitoring and tracking new developments and best practices from other states as the pandemic evolves:** Use scientific data and analytics, contact tracing, tracking, and a dedicated and secure Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) to centralize information that supports all activities of the CCMS. Include developing tools that provide clear guidance on reopening the economy and information for businesses on how to keep their employees and the public safe.
     - https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/chart-washingtons-phased-approach

- https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_10765972/File/Applications%20and%20Forms/COVID.19.SafetyPlan.Template.pdf

4) The COVID Crisis has revealed the fragility of the health care and economic systems in North Dakota. CCMP will work to ensure appropriate fiscal and policy management of CCMS, including policy recommendations to slow the spread of the virus and speed economic recovery for North Dakotans.

- Restricted and prioritized state investments for businesses (and schools) to implement virus control measures and expand capacity for COVID safe environments in a timely manner. This will include possible expansion into outside public areas including public streets and weather-resistant outdoor infrastructure;
- Percentage of payroll paid by state during the reconstruction phase of business;
- Paid family/medical leave;
- Extend unemployment insurance;
- NDCare for All North Dakotans health insurance buying group established;
- Diseases of despair mitigated through state investment into Human and Health services including telehealth, support services, and peer mentorship advocacy.

Crisis Management System: