

States Insights Review

Based on 2020 Research Insights
Published March 2021



Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought businesses and policymakers together and made partnerships between the two—from the federal to the local level—increasingly important.

In 2020,
we spoke with

377 policymakers

across **10 states**¹

and surveyed

1728 policymakers

across **4 states**²

to understand how

businesses and policymakers

are interacting during the

pandemic and how they want

to work together in 2021.

Manufacturing Spotlight



- Policymakers praise manufacturing companies for stepping up and using their capabilities to produce necessary PPE and other supplies.
- Policymakers want continued engagement from the manufacturing industry, particularly in emergency planning.

1. In 2020, we conducted policymaker interviews in Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas.

2. In 2020, we conducted surveys in California, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Business Response to COVID-19

Business Response Effectiveness

- Across both state and party lines, policymakers believe the private sector has been effective in its response to COVID-19.

Collaboration

- Policymakers appreciate businesses that proactively reach out to see how they can help.
- Policymakers, local businesses, and nonprofits are working together to address issues exacerbated by the pandemic, such as high utility bills, debt and financial stress, and food insecurity.

Private Sector Philanthropy

- The private sector earns praise for its donations of time, money, and resources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What Policymakers Want to See From Businesses

- Policymakers want businesses to focus on keeping their employees and customers safe and giving back to their communities.

Business Response to COVID-19

Business Response to COVID-19

A majority of policymakers, surveyed across both parties in California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida, believe that the private sector has been effective in tackling COVID-related issues. More than two-thirds (68%) of Republicans and a majority (54%) of Democrats believe businesses and associations have been somewhat or very effective in their response.

Private Sector Effectiveness in Tackling COVID-19 Challenges

"In your view, how effective has the response of the private sector (e.g., businesses and associations) been in tackling COVID-19 challenges?"

n = 1728



■ Very Effective ■ Somewhat Effective ■ Neither Effective nor Ineffective
■ Somewhat Ineffective ■ Very Ineffective



Policymakers highlight two important components of the business response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1 The private sector's collaboration with policymakers to address COVID-related challenges
- 2 The private sector's philanthropy to help mitigate COVID's financial impact on communities and individuals

How the Public and Private Sectors are Collaborating on COVID-Related Challenges

Across the states we study, policymakers express appreciation for businesses and nonprofits that work collaboratively with state and local governments.



“Mercedes has been reaching out to see if there is anything that we could do as a state to assist them. And of course, on the flip side, they said, ‘How and what can we do to help you, the state?’ And so, that’s an open line, a two-way street, a sort of partner that you really love to have.”



-Alabama State Senator, R

During the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers praise businesses and nonprofits that use their resources to help government officials address specific issues exacerbated by the pandemic, such as **high utility bills, debt and financial stress,** and **food insecurity.**



Keeping the Lights On

“We’ve been working very closely with Florida Power & Light. They’ve been amazing with speaking to a lot of their customers and not disconnecting their lights or shutting down their power because they could not pay.”

-Florida Commissioner, Municipal, D



Feeding Communities

“Our legislator partnered with World Central Kitchen to provide meals to our community. World Central Kitchen is not a food pantry: chefs volunteer their time and cook and then they make those meals available to people who need food. So that particular operation took on a huge role during the pandemic. World Central Kitchen was providing the legislator’s office at first, with a few hundred meals, but by a few weeks into it, that turned into 2,500 meals per day.”

-Senior Staff, New York State Legislature, D



Providing Financial Assistance

“A multitude of financial institutions have been helpful to us. From the major banks all the way down to the smaller banks, they have helped us navigate PPP issues and other debt and bond insurance type questions. JP Morgan Chase and First Commonwealth have worked with us on addressing debt service issues and structuring programs to assist with COVID-related financial issues like rent assistance for parts of the community.”

- Ohio Department Director, Municipal, I

Private Sector Philanthropy During COVID-19

In addition to working collaboratively with policymakers, the private sector earns praise for its philanthropy during the COVID-19 pandemic, including donations of time, money, and resources.



"I saw a lot of organizations donating a lot of time, donating materials, donating money, donating food, giving discounts, and really just trying to get on top of it. It came almost like a race of organizations to see who was the most conscious and mindful, but I like it. Those are races I like to see. We give you lots of business, so take care of people in their time of need, and people will remember those things."

-New York State Assembly Member, D



*"It really warms my heart to see what the private sector has done. Businesses are stepping up. **They are using their money to donate to groups so that they can go out and buy PPE for the hospital.** They buy it and they turn around and donate it. That is awesome. That's what the private sector is doing."*

-California City Council Member



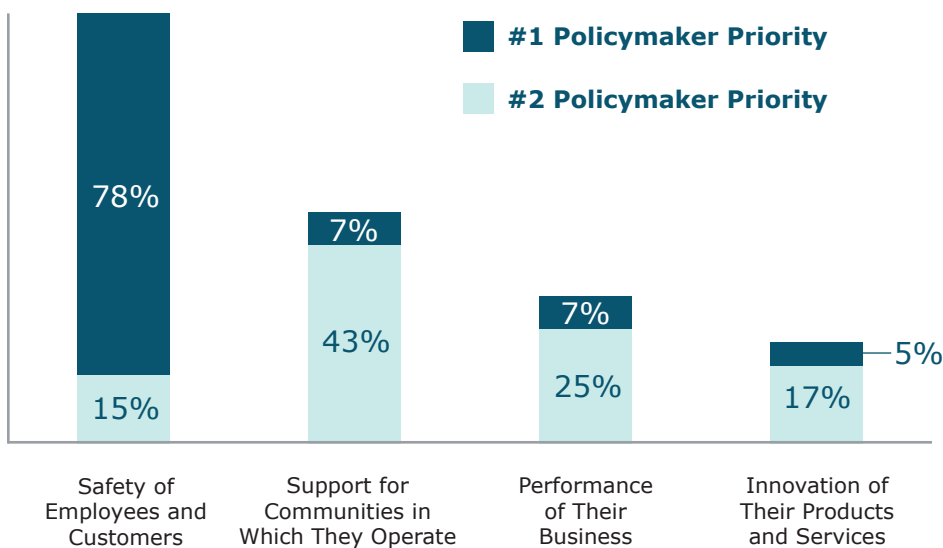
*"Yeah, I think the private sector has been great. **We've seen lots of philanthropy and assistance from corporations and nonprofits.** Nonprofits have been especially great in making sure people in the district have what they need. You've probably heard about increases in food insecurity—the **nonprofits have been ramping up donations to food banks, which is essential.**"*

-New York State Senator, R

Looking Forward: What Policymakers Want to See from Businesses

While policymakers express approval for the effectiveness of overall business response to COVID-19, they believe there is still room for improvement and acknowledge the important role the private sector must play in COVID-19 recovery and mitigation efforts.

What to Focus on to Support State Recovery



n = 1189

"To support your state's recovery, what should businesses focus on? Please click and drag options to rank your highest priority focus (1) to lowest priority focus (5)."

Support Local Communities

"The first thing companies should do is invest in their employees and make sure that workers are paid and have safe working conditions. Then they can invest in their local community, for example, by helping to keep small businesses open.

Companies should reinvest in the communities from which they made their profit."

-Pennsylvania State Senator, D

Ensure Secure, Clean, and Safe Workplaces

"I definitely think that the private industry has a responsibility to ensure that they're safer, that they provide a clean facility on a regular basis. I think it's ultimately the responsibility of the business owner or the business leadership to provide facilities and a workspace that is secure, clean, and safe, especially until we are able to get a vaccine for COVID-19."

-Trustee, California Municipal Board

"Keeping people safe in the workplace is number one. Getting people back into particular office buildings and other spaces where you're uncertain about ventilation and how to get appropriate social distancing are real challenges."

-Director, Florida Executive Branch, D

Manufacturing Case Study

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the manufacturing industry has been asked to step up and use its capabilities and resources to produce PPE and other necessary products to combat COVID-19. Policymakers express gratitude for the response of manufacturing companies to COVID-19 and want continued engagement moving forward.

What Manufacturers Have Done



Informing Policymakers of PPE and Testing Supplies Allocation Across States

"There's an association right now that represents some of the large manufacturers of testing reagents, equipment, et cetera. They have a weekly report that goes out to Governors' Offices all across the country about allocations to each of the states. That type of effort amongst different companies that all share associations has also been really helpful."

-Division Chief, Illinois Executive Branch



Converting Existing Operations to Produce Hand Sanitizer

"We've had a lot of manufacturing companies really step up to increase their production. We've also had a couple of our local vodka distilleries like Tito's convert some of their production into creating hand sanitizer instead of vodka."

-Policy Advisor, Texas Executive Branch, R



Producing Cloth Face Masks for Distribution to Reduce Community Spread

"We got boxes of cloth face masks from the state that were made by Hanes Corporation, and we made sure to distribute those to the various municipalities and to the different nonprofits. And then, we did have some local manufacturers in our area who wanted to get involved. A company that manufactures sails for sailboats wanted to make masks. So we connected them, through the county, with the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). EDC would take those kinds of requests from companies that wanted to help."

-District Director, New York State Assembly, D



Using Innovative Technology to Produce Ventilators in Partnership with Higher Ed

"The manufacturing industry has partnered with higher ed institutions to get people in the degree and certificate pipeline to move into manufacturing jobs. But then also, manufacturers are using some of the research facilities at higher ed institutions to help them with their design work. For example, a lot of the 3D technology can be used to produce ventilators and such that's necessary to combat COVID-19."

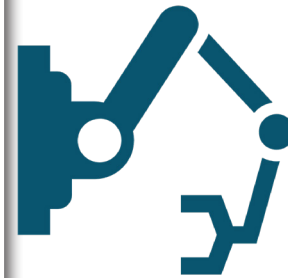
-Education Policy Advisor, Texas Executive Branch, R

Looking Forward: What Policymakers Want to See from Manufacturers

Demonstrate Positive Impact on State and Local Economies

"In this case with manufacturing companies, they should be advocating on their own behalf. It's kind of like a job interview almost all the time. This is your time to brag about yourself, what your company does, how it impacts the local economy or the state economy or maybe humanity in general. That's the way to advocate. And we're a great listening office."

-Legislative Coordinator,
New York State Assembly, D



Proactively Engage with Policymakers on Emergency Response

"As a legislator, I think manufacturers should engage more with us during these emergency responses. In fact, the companies that have engaged with me are the ones being awarded these contracts; I was able to connect them with the right people so they could share what their capabilities are, what they could provide, and find ways for them to engage on COVID response. I think manufacturers communicating with our elected officials is important because, one, we can help them get out correct information and, two, there may be an opportunity that they are not aware of that could be coming up for their facility."

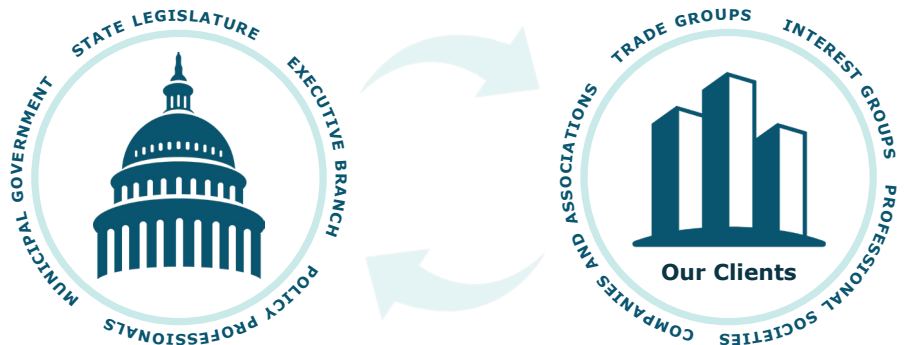
-Alabama State Representative, R



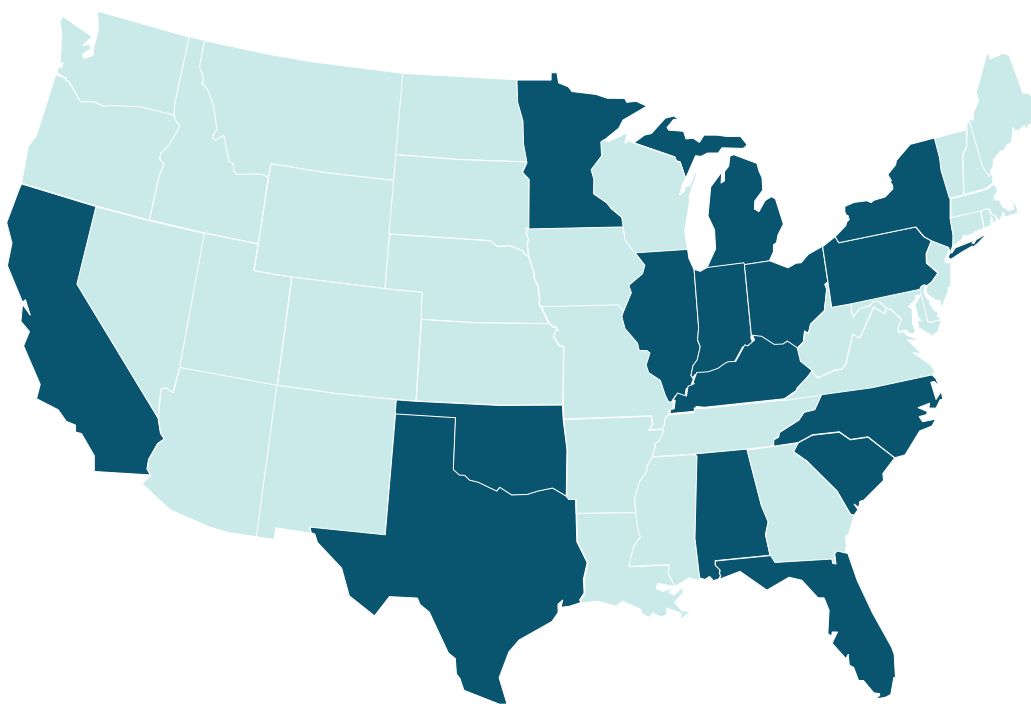
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States Insights Review**

States Insights Review

Ballast Research provides direct feedback from senior policymakers to government relations professionals, helping advocates make better use of policymakers' time and provide the resources most useful to those in government.



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- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Texas

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