The Rockefeller Foundation’s **Testing Solutions Group**

**GOAL:**

To facilitate the exchange of best practices for public health authorities and federal, state, city, and tribal officials working to scale up pandemic testing in order to reopen their economies while safeguarding public health.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- **Peer Network:** Drive collaboration among cities and states to share and implement best practices.
- **Learning:** Support government officials and other community leaders to collect real-time data, evidence, and feedback to improve testing strategies.
- **Knowledge Products:** Bring together expertise from industry and academia to develop strategy and policy recommendations that support government officials and other community leaders and their leadership teams.
- **Technical and Financial Assistance:** Provide support to government officials and other community leaders to enhance testing particularly among vulnerable people. This may include direct funding and/or technical assistance to strengthen policies and strategies.

**Testing is Key to this Public Health and Economic Crisis**

Testing is crucial to ending this crisis. Decision makers need to know who has active Covid-19 infections to implement tailored social distancing policies and protect workers, communities, and families. This cannot be achieved without timely data, which requires real-time, widespread testing.

While progress is being made to increase the number of test administered each week, the numbers are still too low to adequately monitor the workforce and rapidly detect recurrent outbreaks. This is due to a range of market failures and gaps across the value chain—from development and production, to distribution and use, to analysis and monitoring.

- Tests are not yet being produced at the scale needed in part due to the financial risks companies face in expanding production without guaranteed demand.
- Beyond financing, testing availability varies by region, and procurement remains fragmented and uncoordinated across states and cities.
- Shortages of key supplies, such as swabs and reagents, are limiting scale-up. Some labs are overwhelmed—causing delays in testing results—while other national, university, and local labs have untapped capacity.
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A coordinated and comprehensive effort is needed to resolve these disconnects. Enter the National Covid-19 Testing Action Plan.

The National Covid-19 Testing Action Plan

Against this backdrop, The Rockefeller Foundation launched the National Covid-19 Testing Action Plan. As the largest public health testing program in U.S. history, it provides pragmatic steps to enact robust testing and contact tracing to more safely reopen workplaces in coordination with public authorities and federal, state, tribal, and local government officials.

The Action Plan calls for an increase in testing from 1 million per week currently, to 3 million per week within the next eight weeks, to ultimately 30 million tests per week in six months; deploying a workforce of up to 300,000 Americans in a community health corps that would be accessible and allow for cities and states to scale up their public health workforce; and facilitating larger-scale, longer-term pooled procurement that brings together the supply and demand side of the market.

To help achieve these goals, the Foundation launched a Testing Solutions Group to help provide real-time feedback on solutions and scale up access to testing.

Testing Solutions Group Structure

The coalition will consist of three types of core partners, with oversight and support from a third party.

- **City, Tribe, and State Officials:** Members are leading ambitious efforts to scale up testing in their communities as a pathway to safe and accelerated economic recovery. They participate in the TSG sessions to share learnings and feedback to better understand their needs and the challenges to scaling and developing solutions. Each member commits at least one participant, who is involved in the testing efforts, to attend the meetings, convened for the first time on May 8, 2020. Examples of attendees include, but are not limited to, chief innovation officers, chief information officers, and health and emergency management department leads.

- **Funders:** The Rockefeller Foundation, which seeded this effort with a $5 million commitment, has received interest from a number of who have expressed interest in to contribute and help enhance the impact of this effort.

- **Technical Assistance Experts:** help answer real-time questions from members as they expand their testing efforts, such as: How do I ensure tests can reach our most vulnerable citizens? Is there any evidence that previously infected individuals can develop immunity? What are some best practices for how self-isolation can be enforced for individuals who have tested positive?
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Scaling Up Solutions

In order to help operationalize the Action Plan, The Rockefeller Foundation will convene its Testing Solutions Group regularly around a specific topic or geography, along with curating an online platform of resources to answer real-time questions. This support will evolve as needs shift.

Lesson Learned From New Orleans

Achieving widespread Covid-19 testing requires combining data with local insights to determine where and how to reach all citizens.

New Orleans reported its first coronavirus case on March 9, and two days later, they had community spread. Initially offering drive-by diagnostic testing in partnership with the National Guard, New Orleans officials quickly learned from mapping data that critical neighborhoods were going untested. They found numbers were low in some neighborhoods populated by the most vulnerable, including elderly, low-income, and those with medical conditions that make them more susceptible to Covid-19 like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.

Recognizing that they still were not reaching some of the targeted communities, the city began running mobile walk-in centers in rotating locations, setting up in trusted community gathering spots such as church parking lots and cultural centers in order to try and remove more barriers to accessing testing. Because of these adjustments, the city now tests about 250 people per walk-through site per day.

Testing Solutions Group Members

Demand-driven and local-solutions centric, this coalition is committed to scaling up access to testing for COVID-19 and collaborating with other leaders and experts to find solutions to common challenges – and get their citizens back to work more safely.

Cities: Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Greater Miami and the Beaches (a partnership including Miami, Miami Beach, and Miami Dade County), Honolulu, Louisville, New Orleans, Tulsa, and Washington, DC

States: Oregon

Tribes: Navajo Nation and White Mountain Apache Tribe through the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health
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Leaders dedicated to expanding access to testing for their citizens:

“Our community embraced the importance of testing since the very beginning of this crisis. Our strategic partnerships have been crucial in making Florida the third most tested state in the country and our partnership with The Rockefeller Foundation will keep pushing Miami towards being able to navigate a safe and effective reopening strategy.”
— Francis Suarez, Mayor of Miami, Florida

“Testing has been a key component in the fight against COVID-19 and will be integral to the safe and phased reopening of New Orleans. Because of the successful testing measures we have taken, we were able to reduce the transmission rate more than any other U.S. city weeks ago. Consistent and bold action will show results. I want to thank The Rockefeller Foundation for being an unwavering partner to our city and for uniting leadership at all levels behind robust testing efforts to slow the spread and protect our people.”
— LaToya Cantrell, Mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana

“Testing is absolutely central to our COVID-19 response – because it’s critical to our ability to track, trace, and ultimately stop the spread of this virus. We wasted no time ramping up our capacity to test everyone in Los Angeles, with or without symptoms – and by connecting our efforts to fellow cities nationwide, The Rockefeller Foundation has equipped us with another essential tool in our fight to save lives.”
— Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles, California

“Testing is critical to slow the spread of COVID-19 disease. Despite a shortage of resources, Navajo Nation has been working to secure more test kits and now we are testing our Navajo people at a higher rate than the national average, but we know much more is needed. We are pleased to join The Rockefeller Foundation and other leaders across the country to bring Native voices to the Testing Solutions Group.”
— Jonathan Nez, President of the Navajo Nation

“We know that fighting and defeating this virus takes a city-wide, region-wide, and nation-wide effort. We appreciate the work of The Rockefeller Foundation to support localities as we continue working to save lives and blunt the spread of this virus through our communities. Through enhanced testing and contact tracing, we can better understand who has the virus and who has been exposed to it. And with that information, we can get ahead of the virus, contain it, and prepare to safely and sustainably reopen.”
— Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC