



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

SECTION: 300 – Human Resources	PROCEDURE #: 311–A
TITLE: Telecommuting / Remote Work Procedure	IMPLEMENTS POLICY #: 311
SPONSORING DEPARTMENT/DIV: Department of Human Resources	
EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/19/2021	REVIEWED: 10/03/2022

OBJECTIVE: To establish procedures for administering telecommuting agreements on an ongoing/recurring basis or ad hoc/occasional basis. This procedure supports departments in the ability to support the County’s sustainability efforts including reduced commuting miles, resource conservation, and supporting a healthy environment.

AUTHORITY: The authority to issue or revise these procedures is reserved to the County Administrator or their designee. The Appointing Authority or designee is responsible for the fair, consistent and inclusive application of this policy within their department.

DEFINITIONS:

Active Engagement: Consistent focus and effort being applied to achieve employer-driven deliverables and goals.

Ad Hoc/Occasional Telecommuting: A pre-approved telecommuting arrangement of a non-recurring, irregular nature.

Appointing Authority: A Department Head (elected or appointed) or designee with the authority of appointment within their department.

Commuting Area: Locations in which employees can reasonably travel back and forth to a work location owned or leased by Washington County.

Eligible Employee: A County employee whose performance has been assessed without regard to their position and found to meet the requirements for telecommuting spelled out in this procedure.

Eligible Position: A County position or role which has been evaluated without regard to the employee(s) filling the position/role and found to meet the requirements for telecommuting spelled out in this procedure.

Productivity: A performance standard of work product expectations applied consistently among staff in positions of comparable character. This measure is not dependent upon work location or reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable Efforts: Actions that do not impose an undue hardship on County operations.

Regular and Recurring Telecommuting: A pre-approved standing schedule and agreement where eligible employees may regularly work from home or another off-site location in a repeating and predictable pattern.

Telecommuting or Remote Work: The practice of working in a home office in lieu of traveling to a central County workplace.

Telecommuting Agreement: A document signed by the employee, supervisor and Appointing Authority that describes the conditions of each telecommuting arrangement.

Undue hardship: Significant difficulty, expense, or impact on services or operational needs.

PROCEDURES:

1. Appointing Authority/Department Responsibilities:
 - 1.1. Appointing Authorities or their designees are responsible for establishing the components of Telecommuting Agreements for their departments as set forth in these procedures.
 - 1.2. Requests for a telecommuting schedule for the purposes of accommodating a medical condition or disability must be evaluated by Human Resources through an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant interactive process prior to approval by an Appointing Authority.
 - 1.3. Requests for a telecommuting schedule for reasons of employee convenience instead of County need must be approved by an Appointing Authority.
 - 1.4. An employee's telecommuting schedule, whether regular or ad hoc/occasional, will be outlined in the Telecommuting Agreement and kept on file in the department.
 - 1.5. A regular Telecommuting Agreement should be reviewed and reassessed at least every six (6) months or at regular intervals as determined by the department, not to exceed twelve (12) months.
 - 1.6. Departments may be required to provide information periodically regarding their participation to comply with state-mandated sustainability reporting requirements.
2. Employee Responsibilities:
 - 2.1. Employees are responsible for requesting the ability to telecommute by completing the Telecommuting Agreement and submitting to their supervisor for approval.
 - 2.2. Ad hoc or occasional telecommuting as defined in this Procedure should be requested by the employee and approved by the supervisor prior to the start date.
 - 2.3. Ad hoc or occasional telecommuting from outside of the Commuting Area must be disclosed by the employee to their supervisor and approved by the Appointing Authority prior to the start date.
 - 2.4. A new Telecommuting Agreement must be completed with any change in an employee's schedule or location, including a change in their regular residence.

3. Telecommuting Out of the Commuting Area or Out of State
 - 3.1. Telecommuting from out of the Commuting Area and/or out of the state of Oregon is only allowed on an ad hoc or occasional basis with Appointing Authority approval prior to the start date.
 - 3.2. Employees who live in Washington State must work a regular schedule that includes a minimum of one (1) workday per month at their assigned Washington County work location.
 - 3.3. Employees are not allowed to have a permanent address and/or live and telecommute outside of the Commuting Area.
 - 3.4. Telecommuting employees must remain available to come onsite as soon as possible if requested by a supervisor or a county need arises.

4. Eligibility:
 - 4.1. Both the employee's position and the employee must meet the eligibility below for a telecommuting agreement to be authorized: The position requires minimal direct supervision and physical interaction or face-to-face contact or contact that can be scheduled.
 - 4.2. The position tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished without being on County premises and are not location dependent.
 - 4.3. The position responsibilities and deliverables can be clearly defined and could be verified if needed while working at a remote location.
 - 4.4. Position eligibility requirements must be applied consistently throughout the department, division and/or team.
 - 4.5. Employee eligibility: An employee should meet the following criteria to be allowed to participate in the telecommuting program:
 - 4.5.1. Demonstrated dependability, responsibility, self-motivation, satisfactory attendance record, and acceptable organizational and time management skills with the ability to work independently and prioritize effectively.
 - 4.5.2. Effective communication with supervisors, co-workers, and clients/customers.
 - 4.5.3. Consistent acceptable rate of productivity, skill, and knowledge of their position.
 - 4.5.4. Any additional departmental employee eligibility requirements, so long as they are applied equitably throughout the department, division, or team to which they apply.
 - 4.6. Additional criteria that should also be considered by the department when determining an individual's eligibility may include:
 - 4.6.1. Impact on the operational needs, customer service level, or productivity goals of the department or team.
 - 4.6.2. Any current performance or behavior concerns which are unable to be effectively monitored while telecommuting.
 - 4.6.3. For employees in a new position or new hires, managers should ensure that the employee has received sufficient training in their new role to perform their job effectively and with relative independence; or the employee is effectively able to be trained via screensharing, technology platforms, or other means of instruction.

5. Telecommute Workday Expectations:

- 5.1. Employees who are telecommuting will have the same expectations as on-site workdays including, but not limited to, workload size and management, work quality, professional communications, schedule adherence (scheduled start time, break, meal periods, ending time), overtime pre-authorization, and use sick, vacation or other leaves.
- 5.2. When telecommuting, employees must be available via computer and phone (if applicable) and provide a contact phone number where they can easily and readily be reached during their regular workday.
- 5.3. County-issued laptop computers must be connected to the County network, so employees have access to all drives and internal County eb resources necessary to complete the work, unless pre-approved by specific exception.
- 5.4. Telecommuting employees must remain available to come onsite as soon as possible if requested by a supervisor or County need arise. Exceptions need pre-approval from the supervisor not to come into the office on an occasional basis (see Section 3 above). Time taken to come into the workplace is not considered time worked.
- 5.5. Participating employees commit to active engagement in work activities for the full equivalent of a regular workday. Being ‘available if needed’ is not equivalent to ‘active engagement’.
- 5.6. Employees must attend all scheduled meetings using remote tools with full participation, including use of cameras for online meetings when possible or as instructed by the meeting facilitator.
- 5.7. All employees who are telecommuting will adhere to their approved teleworking schedule, however, it is understood that emergencies and unplanned appointments or conflicts may arise. Occasional requests by an employee to change their regularly scheduled telecommute day may be accommodated by the supervisor if practical and consistent with operational requirements.

6. Child and Elderly Care:

- 6.1. A telecommuter will not provide primary care for a child or for an elderly adult that would otherwise require consistent and direct supervision, interaction, or the care of a nurse, while working at home. Telecommuters must make or maintain child and/or eldercare arrangements to permit concentration on work assignments while telecommuting.
- 6.2. If a child is ill, the employee may, on a temporary basis, provide primary care for that child, subject to the approval of the employee’s supervisor.

7. Equipment:

- 7.1. The County will provide a laptop computer at the discretion of the telecommuter’s supervisor and manager. Information Technology Services (ITS) can provide instructions for the data communications setup through the employee’s internet connection.

7.2. The employee has the same responsibility for taking appropriate steps to minimize damage to County property used at a home office as would exist at the regular worksite. Employees are responsible for obtaining and maintaining an appropriate internet connection, desk, chair, monitor, and other necessary home office equipment at their own expense.

7.2.1. If an employee requires specialized home office equipment due to a medical condition, the employee should contact Human Resources and ask for an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

8. Workers' Compensation Injuries:

8.1. The County will have the same responsibility for job related accidents or injuries as it does at a county location. Employees are expected to follow safety guidelines when telecommuting as are expected in a county location.

8.2. If an employee sustains an injury related to the scope and course of employment, the employee should contact their supervisor immediately.

8.3. Workers' Compensation will apply to job-related injuries that might occur in the home.

9. Components of Telecommuting Agreements:

9.1. Each Telecommuting Agreement must describe terms of the arrangement, at minimum including the specific days for which the employee may work remotely; anticipated workday start and end time; duration of their meal period; and overall hours expectation which correlates with an employee's FTE.

9.2. Telecommuting Agreements may also include any information to assist in successful management of responsibilities, such as the specific time period for an employee's meal break, to assure uninterrupted service to the community or any other coordinated operational needs.

9.3. Productivity and communication expectations should be clearly documented to ensure understanding between both employee and supervisor. Regular supervisory check-ins should occur to maintain the ongoing success of the arrangement.

10. Request and Approval:

10.1. Employees are not authorized to telecommute without prior supervisory approval.

10.2. Telecommuting Agreements can be required and placed on file for occasional telecommuting at the request of the supervisor or Appointing Authority.

10.3. Employees and/or supervisors will propose a Telecommuting Agreement via the County's approved form.

10.4. An Alternative Work Schedule and Telecommuting Agreement can be in place concurrently so long as they have been agreed to after an evaluation considering their compound impact and not without consideration of the other.

10.5. Telecommuting Agreement Request Workflow:

10.5.1. Requests will be proposed on the Telecommuting Agreement Request Form and submitted to the Supervisor.

- 10.5.2. The request will be reviewed by the Supervisor and Appointing Authority.
 - 10.5.3. The final decision will be provided in writing to the employee within a reasonable timeframe (after approximately fourteen (14) days of submission).
 - 10.5.4. The final form will be saved in the department's employee file.
 - 10.6. The Appointing Authority or designee may allow for an initial trial period of the requested schedule to determine if it is reasonable for the department.
11. Modifications, Suspension, or Dissolution of Telecommuting Agreements:
- 11.1. Telecommuting Agreements may be modified, suspended, or ended at any time for a temporary period or permanent basis for an individual or section of the department based on management's discretion.
 - 11.2. Ongoing modification of a regular and recurring telecommuting agreement requires submission of a new Telecommuting Agreement Request Form which then supersedes all prior submissions. A revision request is subject to the same approval/denial timelines as the original request.
 - 11.3. Employees may be required by their supervisor to adjust or forego their telecommuting day when needed on-site for business, operational, or other needs as determined by their supervisor. Rescheduling a cancelled telecommute day is at the discretion of the supervisor.
 - 11.4. The Telecommuting Agreement may be revoked at any time by either the Appointing Authority or the employee so long as there is adequate workspace available for the employee to return to a full on-site schedule at the traditional workplace.
 - 11.5. An employee found to be failing to adhere to their agreements shall lose their eligibility to participate in the telecommuting program for a period to be determined by the Appointing Authority and may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of their employment.
12. Employees experiencing technology difficulties while telecommuting should notify their supervisor and take the following steps:
- 12.1. Step 1: Troubleshoot the issue including an assessment of their personal internet services and notify their supervisor of the outcome.
 - 12.2. Step 2: If technical difficulties persist and are not resolved through the trouble-shooting process, contact and request assistance from the County's ITS Help Desk.
 - 12.3. Step 3: If technical difficulties are not resolved by County ITS within a short and reasonable timeframe, contact their supervisor and discuss the productivity options for the remainder of the telecommute workday. For example, if technical difficulties prevent work from being performed after Steps 1 and 2 have been exhausted by 10:00 am, the employee should proceed to commute to their regular worksite OR if technical difficulties occur toward the end of the workday, an employee may be permitted to take the last hour or two as vacation time after speaking with and gaining approval from their supervisor or their designee.

12.3.1. Employees will not be expected to make up time that was lost due to technical difficulties that are the result of an unplanned County system disruption or outage.