



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

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The Director

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Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments, Independent Agencies, Inspectors General, and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency

From: Robert H. Shriver, III
Acting Director

Subject: **Guiding Factors for Designing Remote Work Policies and Programs**

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is dedicated to supporting agencies as they address their enduring and emerging workforce needs. This work encompasses facilitating human capital support for both traditional and flexible work arrangements, including remote work.¹

Agencies have transitioned from a pandemic-necessitated maximum telework posture to new hybrid work arrangements that balance remote work, telework,² and in-person work to best advance organizational health and performance, in alignment with [M-23-15](#). As a part of this transition, agencies are evaluating the effectiveness of their employees' work arrangements on an on-going basis. In support of this work, agency human capital and other senior leaders have requested additional guidance with respect to the application of remote work policies to provide consistency in the way agencies are considering remote work arrangements across the government and to reflect learnings from across the federal enterprise.

Though remote work has become more commonplace since the pandemic, a relatively small percentage of federal employees have remote work arrangements.³ When

¹ Remote work is an arrangement in which an employee is scheduled to perform their work at an alternative worksite and is not expected to perform work at an agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis.

² Telework is an arrangement where an employee, under a written telework agreement, is scheduled to perform their work from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

³ See, e.g., U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Status of Telework in the Federal Government, Fiscal Year 2022* at 18 (Dec. 2023).

thoughtfully and intentionally implemented, remote work can be a significant benefit to employers for certain types of roles in certain circumstances. Further, remote work has the potential to broaden access to remote-appropriate federal roles for some workers. In the federal government, for example, remote work can support military families by enabling military spouses to maintain and grow careers at federal agencies despite frequent moves. At the same time, remote work is not suitable for all types of roles. Striking the right balance of in-person work and use of workplace flexibilities such as remote work is critical to support the long-term organizational health of federal agencies.

This memo builds upon guidance OPM provided in 2021 to support agencies in determining their remote work posture, in the form of the [Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#). In the 2021 guidance, OPM advised that agencies need to align employee work arrangements to delivery of mission. Accordingly, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Certain flexible work arrangements may not make sense for every agency, function, or team, or be appropriate for every position or individual. Agencies need to ensure that all work arrangements, including remote work arrangements, facilitate, rather than impede, the accomplishment of work and long-term success of an agency's mission. Moreover, agencies need to monitor the performance of employees on all work arrangements and evaluate whether the work arrangements are advancing or impeding employee performance. This memo provides agencies with additional considerations for evaluating and determining their current and future remote work postures.

Establishing Policies and Criteria for Remote Work

Agency heads are responsible for oversight of their agencies' remote work policies, processes, and operations. To promote rigor in program management, it is recommended an agency Deputy head or a member of agency leadership at a similar seniority level oversee tracking and implementation of the remote work program.

Agencies should have up-to-date, written remote work policies that include clear criteria (including the factors described below) for position determination, and employee eligibility and participation in remote work; such policies should be generally reflected in derivative agency remote work agreements. Additionally, the policy should outline roles and responsibilities of supervisors and program coordinators in overseeing program accountability and employee compliance with established work agreements as well as provide a clearly defined process for making determinations about whether to offer remote work for a given position.

To ensure leadership visibility and consistency, agencies should establish a standard evaluation process for the determination of remote work eligibility for each position. Additionally, agency leaders must consider the broader organizational structure when determining what approval levels are most appropriate for remote work authorization (for example, a centralized review and approval process, with designated approving officials, to ensure equity across the Department/Agency).

For reasons discussed in the next section, agencies should establish and implement processes to provide for high-level review of any new remote work requests for senior executives, early career talent, and any employees who live within a reasonable commuting distance of the agency worksite.⁴ Agencies should also systematically evaluate existing arrangements, prioritizing organizational health and performance considerations, and taking into account consistency among similarly situated employees. As part of that criteria, one major consideration should include whether a position or function enables employees to more efficiently and effectively perform duties if working remotely or would result in significant cost savings to the agency if done remotely.

Key Policy and Program Considerations

OPM encourages agencies when designing or reviewing remote work programs to prioritize important factors such as successful agency mission delivery, organizational health and performance, customer service (including that provided by support organizations to internal agency customers), continuity of agency operations, and workplace culture.

When designing and implementing remote work policies, additional considerations should apply in the following instances:

1. Agency Senior Leadership

Senior executives are critical to the culture of our agencies, and employees benefit from in-person engagement with senior leaders. Remote work arrangements for senior executives should be carefully considered. It is important for agencies to

⁴ Agencies should decide for themselves how far from a worksite constitutes a “reasonable commuting distance.” One frame of reference is the 50-mile radius rule that applies under GSA’s travel regulations. But agencies may decide on shorter distances based on the commuter characteristics of their worksites, including, for example, availability of public transportation and other factors that affect commuting times.

consider the particular importance of meaningful in-person work among the agency's senior executives.

2. New Employees and Early Career Talent

Meaningful in-person work for employees new to the federal government or to an agency often aids them in forming essential relationships, learning how the organization functions and its workplace culture, and meeting other business objectives. The importance of fostering employee engagement should be a key consideration prior to approving remote work for early career talent and their teams. As such, remote work opportunities should be carefully considered for early career employees and, if agencies do choose to hire early career talent in remote roles, they should ensure that they have a structured approach to onboarding, mentorship, training, and growth.⁵

3. Employees in the Local Commuting Area

Agencies may use their authority to define remote work parameters as it relates to radius, proximity, or vicinity to the official work site, in alignment with agency travel policy. However, remote work arrangements where the employee lives within a reasonable commuting distance of the official agency worksite to which they are assigned should be a narrowly-used exception, and agencies should instead consider authorizing telework as the offered flexibility. In-office presence of employees often furthers workplace culture and facilitates training and engagement opportunities between newer employees and experienced team members.

4. Largely or Fully Remote Teams

When determining whether to establish largely or fully remote teams or organizational units, agencies should conduct a rigorous evaluation of organizational health and performance to support mission sustainability and effectiveness. Any

⁵ Agencies may want to consider remote arrangements for certain types of internships but should re-evaluate any such arrangements if the intern is converted to a permanent position upon completion of internship requirements.

such arrangements should be regularly re-evaluated and adjusted as necessary to promote organizational health and performance.

5. Equitable Determinations

Agencies should generally prioritize consistent remote work eligibility determinations based on work function categories and mission critical occupations, and broader positional or team criteria, rather than individual employee requests and positions.⁶

In addition, senior leaders and managers should consider the below factors, explained in more detail in OPM’s 2021 Guide, when designing, reviewing, and implementing remote work programs.

Enablers/Dependencies	Mission Delivery	Workplace Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility Factors • Participation Levels • Approval Authority • Budgetary Impacts • Technology/Facility Impacts • Data Collection Maturity • Reporting Standardization and Monitoring • Review and Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksite Location • Position/Category of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job Criteria/Standards ○ National Security Designations ○ Mission Critical Occupations ○ Public/Customer Facing • Productivity • Innovation Goals • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Retention Challenges • Employee Engagement Drivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employee Experience ○ Employee Wellness ○ Connection • Collaboration Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collective Bargaining Agreements (if applicable) • Equity

Agencies have the primary responsibility for determining and deciding how remote work policies and programs are designed and implemented; however, OPM notes that the same

⁶ Traditionally, remote work opportunities have been used to retain critical staff who experience a change in life circumstances requiring them to re-locate. This use of remote work remains valid, but it should be applied judiciously and equitably.

federal human resource laws and regulations (including with respect to pay, leave, work schedules, and performance management) apply to employees regardless of where work is performed.

Agency policies and collective bargaining agreements should emphasize the agency's right to disapprove, terminate, or modify remote work agreements in writing at any time due to business necessity (e.g., increased cost, changing organizational/business needs, workforce reshaping, position abolishment, transfer of function, other reasons unrelated to employee conduct or performance) with reasonable notice. Expenses derived from management directed decisions are the responsibility of the agency. In instances where a determination has been made by management to terminate or modify a remote work agreement to address performance or conduct issues, agencies should follow their established procedures.

Remote work arrangements implicate various logistical and policy questions, including, but not limited to, assignment of official worksite, pay, and reimbursement for travel. Because of these policy and potential costs implications, agencies should make remote work determinations to strategically support mission and business benefits to the agency or organization. Approval of case-by-case requests submitted primarily for the convenience of the employee, without commensurate benefit to the agency, should be rare.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Agencies should conduct a formal and complete assessment of benefits and costs, including the following factors, when considering the classification of positions for remote work and approval or denial of individual remote work requests:

- Any impact on the mission needs of the organization;
- Business reasons including retention of high performing employees, other determined recruitment needs such as hard to fill mission critical positions, or agency real estate and other business cost reduction;
- Cost of terminating or adjusting remote work agreements based on changing or potentially-changing mission needs; and
- Cost of any travel (periodic or otherwise) to the official agency worksite when it is outside of the local commuting area of an employee's official remote worksite, as well as the cost of travel to other locations where the employee is reasonably

expected to travel from their official remote worksite as compared to travel costs from the official agency worksite.

Reasonable Accommodation

Consideration and allowance of requests for remote work to support conditions (for example, medical or physical) that impact an employee's ability to perform their essential duties, either temporarily or permanently, should be made on a case-by-case basis consistent with the agency's Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines. Nothing in this memorandum should be construed as prohibiting or limiting reasonable accommodations that may be available to qualified individuals with disabilities.

Mobile Work

Mobile work is characterized by routine and regular travel to conduct work in customer or other worksites as opposed to a single authorized alternative worksite. Mobile workers are not teleworkers or remote workers, even if they perform some work at their home or an alternative worksite and are not subject to policies covering telework and remote work. Examples of mobile work include site audits, site inspections, investigations, property management, and work performed while commuting, traveling between worksites, or on Temporary Duty (TDY).

Data Collection

Data collection is important to understanding agency remote work programs and furthering equity across the agency and broader federal enterprise, as well as for like occupations. It is critical that agencies transmit accurate and timely remote work data from the agency system to EHRI, consistent with OPM instructions and guidance. Eligibility, agreement type, and usage data should be collected, analyzed, and summarized to demonstrate links between remote work and productivity and outcomes, including employee engagement. In tracking remote work data, agencies should distinguish between employees assigned to remote work as a reasonable accommodation tied to a disability/medical condition and employees assigned to remote work for other reasons. Additionally, agencies should ensure that mobile workers are not included in any remote work data but rather are properly coded as mobile workers as outlined in OPM's March 7, 2023, memorandum on [Remote/Telework Enhancements to Enterprise Human Resources Integration](#).

Additional Information

This guidance does not override any collective bargaining agreements which address remote work arrangements. When agencies update or establish remote work policies, agencies should satisfy collective bargaining obligations, where applicable.

For questions about this guidance, agency headquarters-level HR offices may send their inquiries to Teleworkpolicy@opm.gov. Agency field offices should contact their appropriate headquarters-level agency human resources office. Individual employees should contact their local human resources office.

Attachment: [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, Telework Managing Officers, and Telework Program Coordinators