

2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government Fact Sheet

Intro

The effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic have prompted a significant interest, nationwide, in using telework and remote work as important tools for safely and efficiently delivering mission-critical services in the public and private sectors during emergencies.

Agencies now have an opportunity to revisit how they were operating prior to the pandemic and leverage lessons learned to integrate telework and remote work into their strategic workforce plans.

It will be important for the Federal government, and its workforce, to remain flexible, resilient, and ready to continue their critical work on behalf of the American public, no matter the challenge.

As we look to the future, OPM is encouraging agencies to strategically leverage workplace flexibilities such as telework, remote work, and alternative/flexible work schedules as tools to promote effective mission delivery and help attract, recruit, and retain the best possible workforce

Background

The updated 2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government is designed to replace the contents of OPM's 2011 Guide to Telework in the Federal Government. This new guide offers resources to help contextualize the continued evolution of telework and remote work as critical workplace flexibilities given the increased adoption and use of these flexibilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Telework is defined and authorized by the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, which is now codified within 5 U.S.C. Chapter 65. Remote Work, which has sometimes previously been referred to as "full-time telework," is now defined in this Guide as "an alternative work arrangement" under a written remote work agreement, under which an employee is scheduled to perform work at an alternative worksite and is not expected to perform work at an agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis. Agencies retain the discretion to determine whether they will offer remote work arrangements to its employees.

Design and Intent

The guide is composed of two parts, which, although distinct, may be used in conjunction with each other as an interdependent resource intended to provide comprehensive flexible workplace guidance for Federal agencies, Telework Managing Officers, telework program coordinators, managers, supervisors, and employees.

- Part 1, the Technical Guide on Telework, is an overview of telework arrangements, laws, agency roles, and responsibilities, and guidance to develop agency telework policies.
- Part 2, the Technical Guide on Remote Work, is a *new* guide that is a review of implications, considerations, and strategies for the appropriate use of remote work arrangements.

The intent of this 2-part Guide is to help agencies leverage Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government to better meet our human capital needs and improve mission delivery.

Key Changes and Updates

Part 1:

- Expanded use of Key terms (including definition of Remote Work)
- Additional Guidance on Weather and Safety Leave, Telework and Dependent Care, Conduct, and other topics
- Sample Telework Agreement, Telework Agreement Guidelines, and a Safety Checklist for the Home Workspace

Part 2 (*All New*):

- Definition of Remote Work as an “alternative workplace arrangement,” with guidance that agencies retain both the *discretion* to decide whether to offer Remote Work, and, if so, the *authority* to determine employee eligibility for remote work subject to business-related operational needs
- Policy Implications on such matters as: Pay and official worksite, Travel/Relocation, Performance Management, and several others