



## ***Telecommuting***

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Cancels: None • Reference: None

This policy applies to employees of Whitman County unless otherwise stated in a collective bargaining agreement.

### **Definitions:**

**Telecommuting:** Telecommuting means working one or more days from home or other designated alternative worksite instead of commuting to a centrally located worksite.

**Centrally Located Worksite:** Centrally located worksite means the Whitman County worksite where the employee would be required to work if they did not telecommute.

### **1. Implementing Telecommuting Arrangements**

Elected Official/Department Heads are allowed to implement telecommuting arrangements when it is necessary to accomplish County business. The telecommuting option is not an employee benefit – it is a management right that provides an alternative means to fulfill work requirements.

Telecommuting is not appropriate for all positions. No employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity. Offering the opportunity to work at home is a management option based on the discretion of the employee's Elected Official, Department Head and/or designee.

An employee's participation is strictly voluntary. All telecommuting agreements must meet the criteria in this policy and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or their immediate supervisor (although it is recommended that two weeks' notice be given if possible).

### **2. Departments Incur the Cost for Expenses**

All departments will incur the cost for any expenses they approve for telecommuting agreements. Expenses for telecommuting agreements require the approval of the

Elected Official or the Department Head. The Elected Official/Department Head may allow managers/supervisors the authority to approve minimal telecommuting expenses and should set spending limits accordingly.

### **3. Implementation and Termination of Telecommuting Agreements**

Implementation and termination of telecommuting agreements within individual departments will be at the discretion of the employee's Elected Official/Department Head or their designees. An employee wishing to request a telecommuting arrangement shall submit a written request to their Elected Official/Department Head. A telecommuting arrangement must be mutually agreed upon by the employee, the employee's immediate supervisor and the Elected Official/Department Head. Any changes to the written arrangement must also be documented in writing and approved by the employee's Elected Official/Department Head.

### **4. Telecommuting Agreements and Reviews**

Departments consult with Information Technology on services they will/will not provide before creating a telecommuting agreement.

Elected Official/Department Head must set-up telecommuting agreements so that they expire on a routine basis, such as every three or six months (up to a maximum of 12 months). At the expiration of a telecommuting agreement, the employee would have the option to request renewal of the arrangement by filling out another telecommuting application. This process allows management and employees to evaluate and adjust telecommuting arrangements to meet their workload needs.

After an employee begins a telecommuting arrangement; management shall conduct periodic reviews with the employee to evaluate the success of the arrangement. (It is recommended that a first time telecommuter would be reviewed during the first 45 days, at the end of three months, at the end of six months and after one year).

Should a conflict arise between two or more employees concerning a telecommuting arrangement, the employee's Elected Official/Department Head or designee shall have final authority to resolve the matter.

### **5. Movement Between the Telecommuting Site and the Centrally Located Worksite**

Employees may, at the discretion of their immediate supervisor, be called to work at their centrally located worksite on their regular telecommuting workday during their regular work hours to meet workload requirements.

If an employee is telecommuting and during the workday they come in to their centrally located worksite, the time traveling from the employee's home or designated alternative work site to the centrally located worksite must be treated as "job site" to "job site" travel, and the employee's travel time must be counted as hours worked and compensated accordingly.

Whenever possible, when telecommuting employees are requested to report to their centrally located worksite, they should be so notified by the end of the work day prior to the day they are to report to the central worksite. In such cases, travel time between home and the central worksite is treated as regular commuting time and is not counted as hours worked and compensated.

## **6. Work Rules While Telecommuting**

The duties, obligations and responsibilities of an employee who telecommutes are the same as employees at the centrally located worksite.

A set procedure and schedule for regular communication between a telecommuting employee, staff and customers must be identified in the telecommuting agreement. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempt employees must indicate the hours they will be available to be reached by staff and customers. For non-exempt and bargaining unit employees, the telecommuting agreement must indicate the hours the employee will be on work status as well as be available to be reached by staff and customers. Supervisors will also outline specific job assignments and expectations of the telecommuting employee. Work schedule variations are subject to Elected Official/Department Head approval. For non-exempt employees covered by the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, any hours beyond their normal work schedule must be authorized in advance by the employee's supervisor.

In order to utilize accrued leave on a telecommuting workday, employees must contact management according to their department policy/procedure.

Employees who telecommute are expected to be working at their designated work site during their telecommuting work schedule. Personal leave time normally scheduled during a telecommuting employee's scheduled workday must be arranged in the same manner with their immediate supervisor as employees at the centrally located worksite.

## **7. Maintaining a Safe Work Space**

Employees who telecommute will be covered by worker's compensation for all job-related injuries occurring at their designated work site during their defined work period. The employee is responsible for maintaining a safe and ergonomic working environment, including the work area, bathroom, and other areas that may be necessary for work during the telecommuting arrangement. Worker's compensation will

not apply to non job-related injuries that occur at the designated work site. The employee also remains responsible for injuries to third parties and/or members of the employee's family on the employee's premises. Whitman County will not be responsible for injuries to third parties or members of the employee's family that occur on the employee's premises.

In the event of a job-related incident, accident or injury during telecommuting hours, the employee shall report the incident to their supervisor as soon as possible and follow established procedures to report and investigate workplace incidents, accidents or injuries. The employee must allow home office inspections conducted by the county if a job-related incident, accident or injury has occurred.

#### **8. Meetings While Telecommuting**

Telecommuting employees shall not hold business meetings with internal or external clients, customers or colleagues at their residence. On-line meetings are permissible.

#### **9. Unauthorized Non-county Work During the Telecommuting Schedule is Prohibited**

#### **10. Telecommuting Eligibility**

1. An employee's work must be of a nature that face-to-face interaction with internal or external customers or project workgroups is minimal and the employee's tasks can be performed successfully away from the county worksite.
2. The need for specialized material or equipment in order to telecommute should be minimal. Employees interested in telecommuting from home must already have a safe and ergonomic home office environment.
3. Characteristics of the employee will include a demonstrated conscientiousness about work time and productivity, self-motivation and ability to work well alone.
4. The employee communicates effectively with supervisors, co-workers, support staff and clients.
5. The employee operates computer or other equipment independently, to the degree that will be required to work from their home or designated work place.
6. The employee must be currently performing at an overall satisfactory level or above in their position.

7. The employee shall participate in any county-sponsored telecommuting and/or technology training as requested by the employee's supervisor. The employee shall also participate in any county evaluation of telecommuting.

8. The employee shall complete a calendar each month showing the days they telecommute.

## **11. Hardware, Software and Supplies**

1. Although the need for specialized material or equipment in order to telecommute should be minimal, the county may provide equipment (hardware and software) and services (such as technical support) if it is approved in advance by the IT Director or designee.

2. General office supplies (such as paper and pens) will be provided by the county and should be obtained by the employee at the centrally located worksite. Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available at the centrally located worksite will not be reimbursed.

3. Employees who telecommute from home are subject to the same internal county policies regarding the use of county provided equipment (hardware and software) and services as that of employees at the centrally located worksite.

4. Employees who telecommute shall not allow anyone, except authorized county employees, to use county equipment (including hardware and software) and services.

5. **HARDWARE:** New or existing computer equipment may be provided on an as needed basis to employees by the county if approved in advance by the IT Director. This equipment may consist of a personal computer, modem and related supplies. All supplies must be returned to the county as soon as the telecommuting arrangement is no longer valid, if the equipment will no longer be needed by the employee to do their work or if employment with the county is terminated. The county will provide routine maintenance and repairs for county equipment if the equipment is returned to the employee's centrally located worksite..

6. Office furniture will not be provided to employees who telecommute.

7. **SOFTWARE:** Employees must conform to the county's software standards. Departments will consult with IT to ensure that the software needed conforms to the county's software policies. Only county approved software will be installed on county equipment.

8. Remote access to the county's network may be provided to the employee at the discretion of the employee's Elected Official/Department Head and IT Director. Remote access may also be updated periodically. If the county's remote access system includes internet access or VPN services, the employee may only use the county provided

internet access or VPN services in a manner consistent with that of employees at the centrally located worksite. Employees who telecommute are subject to the same internal county policies regarding the use of county provided equipment and services as that of employees at the centrally located worksite.

9. The county will not purchase or reimburse employees for the cost of an internet service provider or internet use. If the county's remote access system includes internet access or VPN services, the employee may only use the county provided internet access or VPN services in a manner consistent with that of employees at the centrally located worksite. Employees who telecommute are subject to the same internal county policies regarding the use of county provided equipment and services as that of employees at the centrally located worksite.

10. The county may purchase or reimburse employees for software that is installed on county provided equipment if approved in advance by the employee's Elected Official/Department Head or designee and the IT Department.

11. Management shall retain the right to visit the home office work site during business hours. Such visits shall be made with 24-hour notification from the Elected Official/Department Head or designee, except in the case of an emergency. Failure to maintain a safe work environment or ensuring that county owned equipment is secure will terminate an employee from the telecommuting program.

## **12. Telephones**

1. Telephone equipment (such as a fax machine) and service may be provided on an as-needed basis to employees by the county if approved in advance by the Elected Official/Department Head or designee and the IT Department. All equipment must be returned to the county as soon as the telecommuting arrangement is no longer valid, if the equipment will no longer be needed by the employee to do their work or employment with the county is terminated. The county will provide for routine maintenance and repairs for county equipment if the equipment is returned to the employee's centrally located worksite..

2. The county may reimburse an employee on a case-by-case basis for business related long distance telephone expenses incurred at the employee's home on telecommuting days if approved in advance by the employee's Elected Official/Department Head or designee. Long distance charges for remote access to the county's network are permissible if approved in advance by the employee's Elected Official/Department Head or designee. Reimbursement will require an itemized copy of the employee's telephone bill.

3. Telecommuters will check their voice mail messages or contact the office on a regular basis throughout the day and will return phone calls promptly.

4. Phones at the alternate work site will be answered in a business-like manner during business hours. Answering machines, if used, will convey an office image during telecommuting hours.

5. The county will not reimburse the employee for local telephone calls or service.

### **13. Confidential Information:**

The employee will maintain the confidentiality of county information and documents, prevent unauthorized access to any county system or information, and dispose of work related documents in a manner that will not jeopardize the interests of the county.

1. Employee ► Makes a written request and submits it to immediate supervisor.

2. Immediate Supervisor ► Reviews request. ► May request a written analysis of work tasks from employee. ► May deny agreement for any equipment or service expenses requested. ► If agreement is acceptable, forwards agreement for approval to Elected Official/Department Head or designee.

3. Elected Official/ Department Head ► Denies or grants equipment or service expenses. If denied, provides the immediate supervisor written explanation of why the expenses are not approved. ► Informs employee in writing of denial or granting of request for telecommuting arrangement and equipment and service expenses if applicable, including date the arrangement will be implemented and date it will end.

If denied, provides the employee with a written explanation of why the request has been denied.

### **14. Responsibilities:**

1. Employees who telecommute or plan to telecommute are responsible for:

a. Ensuring that a high level of public service is maintained, and that abuses of this policy do not occur.

b. Initiating a written request if they are interested in entering into a telecommuting agreement.

c. Reporting to their immediate supervisor as early as possible if they are unable to work on a telecommuting day.

d. Establishing and maintaining an adequate, safe and ergonomic work space in their home.

e. Maintaining appropriate care and security of any county equipment used at the employee's home. Employees who telecommute from home are subject to the same

internal county policies regarding the use of county provided equipment (hardware and software) and services as that of employees at the centrally located worksite. Employees shall return all county provided equipment promptly upon completion of their telecommuting agreement. Employees are responsible for maintenance and repair of their own equipment.

f. Maintaining the confidentiality of county information and documents, preventing unauthorized access to any county system or information, and disposing of work related documents in a manner that will not jeopardize the interests of the county.

g. Any injuries to third parties and/or members of the employee's family on the employee's premises during the employee's telecommuting work period.

h. Abiding by all of the terms of Whitman County's telecommuting policy.

2. Immediate Supervisors are responsible for:

a. Ensuring that a high level of public service is maintained, and that abuses of this policy do not occur.

b. Reviewing employee requests for telecommuting, denying requests or forwarding eligible requests to Elected Official/Department Head or designee for approval.

c. Providing written notice granting or denying requests and written notice for termination of agreements to employees.

d. Communicating to the employee performance expectations and monitoring accomplishment of those expectations.

e. Abiding by all of the terms of Whitman County's telecommuting policy.

3. Elected Official/Department Head or designee are responsible for:

a. Ensuring that a high level of public service is maintained, and that abuses of this policy do not occur.

b. Reviewing employee requests for telecommuting, granting or denying employee requests and forwarding equipment and service expenses that exceed the minimum standards set up by the department director for approval to the department director. If they deny an employee's request, a reason must be provided to the employee's supervisor, so the supervisor may forward the reason to the employee.

c. Monitoring policy use by immediate supervisors to insure that the policy is being applied consistently.

d. Abiding by all of the terms of Whitman County's telecommuting policy.

- e. Allowing division, section or unit managers to approve minimal telecommuting expenses.
- f. Setting up additional procedures for division managers should the director choose to review or track telecommuting agreements with their employees.

**15. Appendices: Agreement**

**TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT**

Employee's Name:

Department:

Supervisor's Name:

Date:

Department Head/Elected Official or designee:

Outlined below are the terms and conditions for teleworking as agreed upon by the participating employee named above and his/her Department head/Elected Official or designee.

The employee agrees to work at the following location:

Time parameters on the employee's telecommute (days/week, hours/day, duration, etc.):

Future dates for review of this agreement:

Other Special schedule requirements:

The following duties must be performed/not performed by the employee at the secondary location [attach additional documentation if insufficient room]:

The following company-owned equipment will be used by the employee at the secondary location:

The employee will be reimbursed for the following costs:

IT Department Comments:

I, (supervisor's name), have reviewed the above information with program. (employee's name) prior to his/her telecommuting.

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

I, (employee's name), have read and understand the Telecommuting Policy, and agree to abide by its rules. I also understand that this Telecommuting Agreement is not an employment contract or an employment benefit. This agreement is being entered into by me voluntarily, and may be terminated by my supervisor at any time, for any reason.

Employee's Signature:

Date:

I, (Department Director or Elected Official), have read and agree to the application for Telecommuting. I also understand that this Telecommuting Agreement is not an employment contract or an employment benefit. This agreement may be terminated by me at any time, for any reason.

Department Head Or Elected Official's Signature:

Date: