



Policy: 2.2.21	Telecommuting Policy and Procedure
Date: August 10, 2021	Revision Date: November 2021

Objective:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and expectations for telecommuting and alternative work arrangements, and a procedure for requests and approval of such arrangements.

Telecommuting is a valuable work arrangement and workplace tool. A telecommuting work arrangement can promote employee engagement and retention, be a useful tool in recruitment and employee attraction, increase employee productivity and certain work efficiencies, increase employee morale, and have positive impacts on employee well-being and health. Telecommuting also has a variety of benefits to the local community and environment, such as greenhouse gas emission reduction due to lower commuting, and other potential benefits to the District, and District operations such as space saving/sharing opportunities and better leveraging of available technology and encouraging innovation.

Telecommuting has been demonstrated to be a viable tool for accomplishing the objectives described above through the District' Telecommuting Pilot Program as well as more than 17 months of extensive telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

As such, the District provides this Telecommuting Program as a potential work arrangement for all eligible, interested staff, and encourages staff and management to fully participate in this Program.

Policy:

Telecommuting is an arrangement between the District and the employee that allows an employee to perform work during regular paid work hours, at an approved, alternative, non-District worksite or location. The District considers telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job duties are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some positions and certain employees but not for others.

1. Regardless of the location from which employees perform work, District business, work, and operations are the priority at all regularly scheduled work hours. Participating employees must maintain excellent communication, productivity, customer service, collaboration, work performance, and all other work and performance standards.
2. Telecommuting arrangements will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that the employee's work quality, efficiency, and productivity are not compromised by the arrangement.
3. Telecommuting should generally increase, but never decrease internal and external customer service, employee productivity, employee collaboration and development, and inter-divisional and inter-departmental collaboration, and coverage of onsite work.
4. Telecommuting should not result in increased costs to the District. Any District costs related to the Telecommuting program shall be di minimis and negligible.

5. Telecommuting is not an entitlement and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with the Alameda County Water District.
6. Telecommuting may be terminated at any time, and for any reason, by the District or the employee.
7. This Policy and Procedure and resulting telecommuting arrangements with individual employees are not subject to the grievance procedure as outlined in applicable Memorandum of Understanding

Eligibility:

Not every District employee is eligible for telecommuting. Eligibility is based on various criteria, including an assessment of the job requirements and responsibilities as well as employee performance. Meeting the eligibility requirements does not guarantee approval of telecommuting. The District has the discretion to grant telecommuting arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Due to the nature of the services offered by the District, employees in some positions may not be approved for telecommuting. Employees who would not be eligible for telecommuting have jobs that are entirely, or primarily, location-dependent, and/or require access to resources that are not allowable, or practical, from a telework location.

The following provisions will be used to assess if an employee is eligible to participate in a telecommuting arrangement and if his/her work assignments are appropriate and allow for telecommuting. The employee's supervisor is responsible for the final determination if an employee's position is appropriate for telecommuting and if the employee meets the specific work standards.

An employee may be eligible to telecommute if:

- 1) The employee is a full-time, permanent District employee.
- 2) The employee must be employed in their current position with the District for a minimum of six months, full-time, continuous, permanent employment, and have had at least one formal performance evaluation.
- 3) The employee must be in good standing and have received excellent work evaluations, minimally having a "meets expectations" or higher on his/her most recent performance evaluation. In addition, the employee must:
 - a. be self-motivated and demonstrate high dependability and work ethic.
 - b. demonstrate a consistently high rate of productivity as well as work quality.
 - c. demonstrate a high level of skill and job knowledge.
 - d. demonstrate strong communication skills.
 - e. demonstrate strong organizational and time management skills; and
 - f. demonstrate ability to work with minimal in-person supervision.
- 4) The employee has access to the required supplies and equipment to telecommute and has an acceptable workspace and environment to effectively work remotely, as outlined in this Policy and various Exhibits.

A job/position may be eligible for telecommuting if the nature of the job:

- 1) Is primarily "knowledge-based" and involves handling of information, including but not limited to reading, writing, analyzing, or processing data.
- 2) Job duties are independent in nature.

- 3) Job duties possess measurable deliverables.
- 4) Entails project-oriented activities or work with measurable milestones or deliverables.
- 5) Allows for work to be performed at a non--District location during a regularly scheduled workday or portion thereof and quantity of work that can be performed off-site is appropriate for a telecommute day.
- 6) Will not, as a result of telecommuting, compromise any of the functions of the work unit, other departmental units, other departments or outside agencies, or any District operations. Will not negatively impact the service level provided to other District employees, work units, or District customers and stakeholders.
- 7) The type of work must be such that the immediate supervisor can establish clear performance measures for evaluating the results of the teleworker's efforts.

A job/position is not a good candidate for telecommuting if the job requires such things as:

- 1) Frequent face-to-face interaction in the office with supervisors, customers, co-workers and/or the public.
- 2) Coordination and participation in team-based, quick-reaction, and/or turnaround tasks that require the employee's presence.
- 3) Customer service to the public or other District employees which cannot be performed to the same level of service, response time, and/or productivity while telecommuting.
- 3) Access to highly secured or protected information/resources in which access is not permitted or possible from the telework location according to departmental and legal confidentiality requirements.
- 4) Access to special District and site-specific resources, such as tools, equipment, software systems, large machines, special files, etc.
- 5) Access to the District's computer databases and/or applications while telecommuting if remote access to necessary applications/database is prohibited or creates unmitigable risk.
- 6) Immediate presence or attendance at his/her principal work location to address unscheduled events. The frequency of this need will determine eligibility for telecommuting. It is expected that all telecommuting employees may experience an unforeseen, immediate need to return to the principal work location as needed. Telecommuting employees must be available and able to come to the principal location at any time, as needed and as identified by the supervisor.
- 7) Answering direct incoming telephone calls or otherwise being immediately available on the telephone for which access at a non-District work location is not possible.
- 8) Field work.
- 9) Onsite coverage for cyclical or rotating tasks.

The above guidelines are minimum guidelines for eligibility. Departments, divisions, and work units may have additional requirements and eligibility standards based on operational and procedural needs. Eligibility to participate in a telecommuting arrangement is subject at all times to the needs of the District and may be modified as those needs dictate. It is essential that each department be staffed appropriately during regular business hours. Ultimately, certain positions may be ineligible for participation due to business necessities.

Job Expectations and Work Standards:

While telecommuting, employees should be performing the full range of their normal job duties. Employees and supervisors should maintain communication throughout the day, through email, by

phone, video chat, or other means and employees are expected to be fully available during their regular work hours. Managers and supervisors are expected to establish and communicate work expectations of employees working remotely, including setting work priorities, deadlines, and reviewing work assignments.

The operations of the District are to remain the same, or be improved, by telecommuting. Any negative impact to District business, operations, customer service, quality or quantity of work, etc. may result in the termination of individual telecommuting arrangements.

The following general work standards apply to all telecommuting assignments in order to minimize any impact to District business. Additional standards may be added as identified to support District business.

Employees participating in telecommuting are expected to adhere to the following work standards, in addition to position-specific work standards as established by their supervisor and department:

- 1) Teleworkers must be as accessible and responsive while telecommuting as they are during their regular on-site workdays, regardless of work location. Telecommuting must be seamless with regular operations.
- 2) Timeliness, quality, and quantity of work must be maintained or improved while telecommuting.
- 2) Attendance and punctuality should be observant of regularly scheduled work hours and must be maintained during telecommuting, unless otherwise approved in advance by the supervisor.
- 3) Voicemail, emails, and other correspondence must be responded to timely and in the same manner as if the employee were in his/her District work location. There should be no impact to the flow of business as a result of telecommuting. Employees will be required to forward their District phone to a cell phone or other phone while they are working off-site so that calls are answered in the same way they would be if the employee were at his/her District worksite.
- 4) Employees are expected to respond promptly to District communication, such as email, text, instant messaging, video chat, etc. in the same way employees are expected to respond promptly while working at a District worksite.

Telecommuting Work Schedules:

An employee telecommuting must work on-site a minimum of six full, regular workdays per pay period. The remaining four workdays per pay period may be utilized as an alternative day off (for staff on an approved 9/80 or 4/10 schedule) or as a telecommuting day.

Each supervisor/manager is responsible for establishing the telecommuting schedules for their division or work group. Consideration should be given to in-person coverage needs within a workgroup as well as the customer service the work group provides to others within and outside of the District.

Telecommuting should not result in additional work to other work units or customers, delay in work or response, or any impact to another employee or work group which may rely on a telecommuting employee for service and operations.

In order to maintain collaboration within each team, to assist in the coordination of in-person meetings, trainings, and other on-site needs, and to encourage direct communication, collaboration and innovation, each work group or division should establish a “core business day” each pay period in which all employees in that work group/division are required to be on-site.

Additionally, regular work schedules for all office-based positions must include the core business hours of 9:00am to 3:00pm. Exceptions to the core office hours occur for certain field-based and 24-hour operations classifications.

Each work group and individual employee telecommuting schedule is subject to Department Director approval prior to an employee initiating telecommuting.

Limited exceptions to these schedule requirements may be considered where significant adverse impact to District operations may occur as a result of this policy. In no event will an employee work on-site less than 50% of their regular work schedule without prior approval by the Department Director and General Manager.

Individual Employee Schedules:

Each employee participating in telecommuting will be required to complete a Telecommuting Program Agreement (Exhibit A), clearly outlining their permanent work schedule and location, including which days each pay period will be on-site, telecommuting, and/or alternative days off, as applicable.

Any requests to amend a schedule and/or telecommute outside of the employee’s agreed upon telecommute arrangement requires approval from the Department Director and notification to Human Resources, prior to the modification/exception event.

There may be circumstances in which the employee is needed to return to their normal work site, as determined by the supervisor, manager and/or department director. In the event such on-site attendance is required, supervisors will notify the employee with as much advance notice as reasonably possible.

In the event an employee’s Telecommuting schedule and arrangement is permanently terminated, the supervisor will provide this employee at least two weeks’ notice prior to terminating the arrangement, unless terminated due to discipline or significant performance issue, in which case less notice may be provided. This notice requirement only applies to the permanent termination of an ongoing Telecommuting arrangement and does not apply to operational/coverage needs in which an employee is required to work on-site with short notice.

Travel and Reimbursement:

Teleworkers do not receive travel pay for the times when they have to report to their regularly assigned workplace on their telecommute day. Any time spent driving from a remote work location, such as a personal residence, to a District facility, is not considered compensable work time and not subject to compensation or reimbursement.

General Telecommuting Requirements and Considerations:

1. While telecommuting, the employee continues to be subject to all applicable District, State and federal rules, policies, and procedures. All the rules applicable at the regular worksite are applicable while telecommuting.
2. Existing laws, rules, policies, and contract provisions of the District are applicable to all teleworkers, including department and division level policies and procedures. If the teleworker is conducting authorized District business and his/her actions are within the course and scope of his/her employment, the same workplace rules that apply to District facilities will be applicable to teleworkers' home workplaces. This would include, but not be limited to, policies on Internet usage, cybersecurity, safety and health, and standards of conduct.
3. Special training related to telecommuting may be conducted from time to time to emphasize the practical aspects of telecommuting, such as: deciding when and how much to telework; workplace safety and ergonomics; scheduling meetings and maintaining fluid operational functions; collaborating with fellow employees; and generally dealing with the problems and issues that may arise. Should these trainings occur, every teleworker and his/her supervisor will be required to attend.
4. In the case of an employee who has been formally reprimanded through a disciplinary action that results in the placement of a document in an employee's official personnel file, and/or the employee's performance evaluation overall score is less than "meets expectations", telecommuting privileges and arrangements shall be immediately revoked.
5. Telecommuting employees must not engage in any non-work-related activities while telecommuting that would not be permitted at the regular worksite, such as non-work travel, childcare, elder care, or other dependent care. Telecommuting is not a substitute for childcare, elder care, or other dependent care. Adequate child or dependent care arrangements must be made to assure the employee's work time remains uninterrupted. If persons requiring continued care are expected to be present in the place where a worker telecommutes, another adult individual must be present to provide the continued care.
6. Telecommuting employees may take care of personal business during unpaid lunch periods, as they would at the regular worksite. A telecommuting employee must report any problems he/she may develop with, or because of, telecommuting to his/her supervisor (such as relatives or friends causing distractions from work, absence of childcare, feeling isolated and needing more interaction with co-workers, etc.).

Remote Work Location:

Telecommuting employees must designate a workspace(s) at home or another approved remote location(s) that is suitable for performing official business and is maintained in a safe condition, free from hazards. The employee must perform his/her work in the designated area(s) when telecommuting. Requirements for the designated work area will vary depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed and may be determined by the department.

Telecommuting employees must work in an environment that allows them to perform their duties safely and efficiently. Employees are responsible for ensuring their work areas comply with the health and safety requirements covered in Workspace, Equipment and Safety Requirements Agreement (Exhibit B).

If utilizing a home office space, in order to maintain a businesslike atmosphere and minimize the chance of accidents, the telecommuting employee is expected to keep his/her home offices as clean and free from obstructions as if he/she were in his/her regular District offices. Each teleworker will be required to certify that his/her home office or remote location meets or exceeds those requirements and that he/she will maintain a safe telecommute environment. Teleworkers will need to complete a checklist (Exhibit B) of home safety rules and workspace ergonomic requirements before beginning to telecommute.

As part of telecommuting responsibilities, the employee must ensure that safety and ergonomic standards are met in the remote workspace. Although the workspace does not have to be a separate room, it must have adequate lighting, ventilation, and furniture that is ergonomically comfortable and safe to use. Home-based teleworkers will be required to keep their office free of dangerous obstructions, loose wires, and other hazards. They should also have desks, seating, keyboard heights, task lighting, glare reduction, acoustic isolation, and lighting that is conducive to a good work environment. Additionally, electrical and telecommunications outlets should be available and in good working order.

Telecommuters must have a method for expediently receiving and responding to communications (phone calls, messages, emails, etc.) from other staff, supervisors, and when applicable, clients and/or the public. Communication method(s) will be incorporated into the written agreement (Exhibit A) between the supervisor and the employee.

Telecommuters will take all precautions necessary to secure District information and equipment in his/her workspace and prevent unauthorized access to any District system or information. Data and information used by telecommuters must be treated with the same caution and respect that confidential material is given in the regular workspace. Telecommuters must comply with all District IT policies related to technology use, data security, and remote access. Telecommuting employees may be required to have a document shredder and lockable desk area or drawer for any sensitive District information.

Safety:

If a teleworker has a work-related accident at their remote work location during designated work hours and while conducting authorized District business, he/she will be subject to the same District rules and regulations regarding work-related accidents and must report the incident immediately to his/her supervisor. District Risk Management will investigate work-related accidents reported to have occurred while telecommuting, which could include an inspection of the remote work location. The claim investigation will include evaluation of the telecommute work location in relation to the workspace and safety requirements as set forth in this policy.

If an employee is injured during telecommuting hours while conducting District business, the employee must suspend telecommuting, notify his/her supervisor at the first available opportunity, and follow District policy for reporting on-the-job work injuries. If the supervisor is not available, the employee should contact Human Resources Risk Management or an alternate supervisor to report the injury. The supervisor is to follow all applicable rules and procedures governing employee injuries. Such injuries may be covered by Workers' Compensation provided that all eligibility requirements are met. The District assumes no liability for injuries to the employee that occur outside the employee's scheduled work hours or while not engaged in District business. The District assumes no liability for injuries to any

third parties and/or the employee's family members on the employee's telecommuting workspace. Telecommuters remain solely liable for injuries to third persons and/or members of employee's family or friends on employee's premises. The District is not liable for damage to the employee's real property or personal items.

Telecommuting Workspace Requirements:

The employee's telecommuting workspace is the employee's responsibility and is not the District's responsibility. The employee's telecommuting workspace must comply with recommended safety rules for the workplace and, at minimum, include:

- Smoke detector
- Working fire extinguisher
- Clear unobstructed exits
- Removal of hazards that could cause falls
- Adequate electrical circuitry
- Appropriate furniture
- A productive, well-lit, ergonomically appropriate environment
- Be secured, so that District data is not compromised, shared, or lost
- Be secured to minimize theft or damage to equipment
- Be available for telecommuting use and free of any contractual, legal, or other restrictions on use
- Workspace must have high-speed internet service.

Equipment and Technical Support:

Similarly, the employee is responsible for ensuring they have the appropriate equipment in order to successfully telework. The District is not required to provide telecommuting employees with materials or supplies needed to establish an alternate worksite (desk, chair, computer, software, cell phone, fax, copier, etc.), and assumes no responsibility for set-up, safety compliance, or operating costs at an alternate worksite.

The District may provide equipment but is not obligated to do so. The use of any District supplies and/or equipment at non-District remote work locations must be pre-approved by the supervisor. The District retains ownership of all equipment, tools, supplies, licenses provided, as well as District electronic communication and work product. Should District equipment, such as laptops, cell phones, etc. be used at a remote work location while telecommuting, the telecommuting employee is responsible to reasonably protect District equipment, software, and supplies from possible theft, loss, and damage. The telecommuting employee may be liable for replacement or repair of the equipment, software, or supplies in compliance with applicable laws on negligence or intentional conduct in the event of theft, loss, or damage.

The District will not provide funding or reimbursement beyond what is standard practice for District work locations. The District will not fund or incur costs as a result of telecommuting or in order to support an employee's telecommuting activities.

The following equipment, supplies, workspace, and other considerations are the responsibility of the employee:

- The acquisition maintenance and repair of personal equipment, such as personal computer, printer, etc. and other equipment and supplies required to work from a remote location.
- Remote location workspace furniture, ergonomic equipment, and related modifications.
- Costs associated with the initial setup or maintenance of the telecommuting workspace.
- Internet and network access and related continuing charges (except as provided as part of the standard Management Allowance – see MCP Compensation/Handbook for details).
- Purchase, repair, or replacement of employee-owned equipment and supplies. *Note:* The District will not provide technical support for non-District equipment. Employees are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their own equipment.
- Purchase, repair, or replacement of District-owned equipment and supplies if mishandled or lost during employee's use.
- Homeowner's and Renter's insurance covering the home office space, including any changes in rates or coverage required for telecommuting and maintaining a home office.
- Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available in the office will not be reimbursed.
- Legal expenses and associated financial liabilities of setting up and maintaining a home office, which include but are not limited to injuries to third parties and liability related to claims by third parties, including family members.
- Cost of utilities while working remotely, including cell phone/telephone charges (except as provided as part of the standard Management Allowance – see MCP Compensation/Handbook for details), heating, electricity, home maintenance costs, etc.

Should the employee's remote workspace and/or remote workspace equipment become unusable, the employee will return to his/her regular assigned work location to conduct his/her work.

Portable District Workspaces:

If the employee is currently assigned a District portable workstation, such as a Surface or laptop, the employee may use this device while telecommuting. The District may provide an extra docking station to support this portable device. The employee is responsible for the security and safety of all District equipment and may be subject to discipline and/or reimbursement to the District for a lost, damaged or stolen equipment. Equipment supplied by the District is to be used for business purposes only. The employee must sign an inventory Equipment Telecommuting Agreement (Exhibit C) with an inventory of District property authorized for telecommuting use and thereby agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. All District-owned equipment issued to an employee must be returned immediately at the conclusion of the telecommuting arrangement.

Other equipment needed in order to support telecommuting, such as furniture (desk, chair, etc.), equipment (computer, mouse, keyboard, monitors) and internet equipment (high-spec internet) is the employee's responsibility. The District has no obligation to provide an employee a complete workstation in addition to their on-site workspace. The District accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment while telecommuting.

Other Telecommuting Equipment and Infrastructure Guidelines are as follows:

1. Employees must have high-speed internet to connect to and utilize District email, access District records, and/or VPN as necessary. Further, if the employee participates in video

calls and virtual meetings, the employee is required to have their video camera turned on.

- a. If the employee's connectivity does not support use of VPN and/or video calls, such as Teams or Zoom video meetings, the employee will be required to work on-site for such events. If the employee regularly has connectivity issues, the employee may not be eligible to telecommute.
 - b. If the employee's high-speed internet fails or is unavailable on a telecommute date, the employee will be required to work on-site.
2. All non-District devices connecting to District network or accessing District applications must have up-to-date operating systems, browsers, and security software. The District may, at its discretion, specify the use of specific end-point security software.
 3. Remote connections to the District network and District applications must meet all applicable IT policies.
 4. The employee must have access to video conferencing capabilities at all times while telecommuting.
 5. Telework which requires use of District systems accessible only with a VPN connection (*e.g.*, JDE, Cayenta, etc.) will require the employee to use his/her personal computer to VPN into his/her District PC or will require the employee to use a District issued laptop or tablet for VPN connection to District systems. If an employee needs to request allowable District issued equipment, an IT ticket via SharePoint will need to be created and submitted.
 6. Work products must be stored on the District systems (such as JDE, SharePoint, File Share, OneDrive). Work products or other District documents must not be saved on the employee's personal desktop, flash drives, etc.
 7. The District's Information Technology (IT) Division has the right to inspect telework computers and/or to cancel remote access to the District network. Employees may be directed to stop using their personal computer and either bring their computer used for telecommuting into IT for inspection or to have it repaired locally before reauthorization is provided and access is re-established.
 8. District IT is not responsible for troubleshooting or fixing non-District related network equipment, including but not limited to high-speed modems, wireless routers, or gateways. District IT staff is not responsible for supporting any non-District-issued hardware used in a home office environment, including but not limited to computers, monitors, phones, VoIP, or wireless keyboards and mice. District-issued laptops, docking stations, and other District-issued computer equipment used in the employee's remote workspace remain the property of the District. The District reserves the right to access and review electronic files, messages, mail, Internet usage, and other digital archives, and to monitor the use of electronic communications on the District's network and equipment and as required to comply with District policies and legal public records provisions.

Public Records and District Access:

All District rules regarding the use of computers and the internet apply while an employee is telecommuting, regardless of whether the employee is using District-provided or personal equipment. Telecommuting employees must understand and agree that the District is entitled to, and may access, any personal equipment used while telecommuting, such as a personal computer, telephone, monthly bills, and internet records as needed for operational needs such as project reconciliation, Public Records Act requests, legal needs, etc. The California Public Records Act regarding public information and public

records applies to telecommuting employees. Please see Administrative Guideline 1.6.3 – Electronic Communications and Public Records Act Responses and Administrative Guideline 1.4.1 – Public Inspection of District Records, for additional information. Upon receipt of an appropriate request, and subject to authorized exemptions, a telecommuting employee must permit inspection and examination of any public record or public information in his/her custody, or any segregable portion of a public record, within required time limits. This requirement exists regardless of where the public record is located.

All files, records, papers, or other materials created while telecommuting is District property. Telecommuting employees and their supervisors must identify any confidential, private, or personal information and records to be accessed and ensure appropriate safeguards are used to protect them. A department may require employees to work in private locations when handling confidential or sensitive material. Departments may prohibit employees from saving files locally off the network or printing confidential information in telecommuting locations to avoid breaches of confidentiality. Employees may not disclose confidential or private files, records, materials, or information, and may not allow access to District networks or databases to anyone who is not authorized to have access.

If an employee elects to telecommute and keeps District-related records on his/her personal computer(s) or other device(s), he/she may be responsible for all costs associated in preserving and recovering data and information in response to public records requests and/or subpoenas.

Telecommuting Approval Procedure:

Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.

- 1) An employee interested in telecommuting must complete the following forms and provide them to their supervisor for consideration:
 - a. The Telecommuting Application, Acknowledgment and Agreement Form (Exhibit A),
 - b. The Telecommuting Workspace, Equipment and Safety requirements agreement (Exhibit B).
- 2) Requests for telecommuting will be evaluated first by the immediate supervisor. The supervisor shall recommend approval or denial of the telecommuting request.
- 3) The supervisor's recommendations will be reviewed by the applicable Division Manager, then the Department Director.
- 4) If a telecommuting arrangement is approved, and the employee will be utilizing District-provided equipment while telecommuting and working in a non-District location, the employee must complete and sign the Inventory Equipment Agreement (Exhibit C), prior to utilizing any District-provided equipment off-site.
- 5) In the event a Telecommuting application request is denied at any level of review, the employee may request to discuss the decision with the Department Director and/or Human Resources.
- 6) Approved telecommuting arrangements and exhibits will be sent to Human Resources for file maintenance.
- 7) The supervisor, Division Manager, or Department Director may deny, end, or modify a telecommuting agreement at any time.

The authorization for telecommuting on a specific day may be removed at any time for coverage requirements or any other operational or performance reason. 8) If at any time the District determines that telecommuting is no longer meeting the business, operational and/or performance needs and standards, the affected employee will be notified of the termination of

his/her telecommuting schedule The supervisor will provide this employee at least two weeks' notice prior to terminating the arrangement, unless terminated due to discipline or significant performance issue, in which case less notice may be provided.

Responsibility:

Employee:

- 1) Costs associated with and ensuring that his/her own equipment is equal to and compatible with District equipment, software, and network needs in order to fully perform all functions of their positions while at a remote work location.
- 2) Be familiar with and comply with this Policy.
- 3) Complete all required forms and secure approval before beginning to telecommute.
- 4) Be responsible for maintaining any equipment owned by the employee or the District.
- 5) Comply with all District required safety and security policies and procedures.
- 6) Protect all government records and data against unauthorized disclosure, access, mutilation, obliteration, or destruction, etc.
- 7) Ensure District-owned equipment and software is used only for officially authorized purposes.
- 8) Be transparent and accountable for all tasks and responsibilities of his/her position.
- 9) Costs associated with complying with public records requests and responding to subpoenas for information on the employee's computer(s) or other personal device(s).

Supervisor/Manager:

- 1) Review requests from employees and meet with them to discuss requests to telecommute.
- 2) Establish the telecommuting schedule for each employee in the work group, ensuring coverage and the goals and provision of this Policy.
- 3) Review paperwork (forms/agreements) and recommend approval or denial to the Division Manager or Department Director as appropriate.
- 4) Conduct periodic reviews of telecommuting assignments to ensure coverage and other operational requirements are met.
- 5) Remain responsible for day-to-day performance of telecommuting employees, as with other workers under their supervision, including establishing measurable performance and deliverable goals and ensuring that telecommuting is not negatively impacting operations and District business.
- 7) Terminate telecommuting arrangements when deemed not in the best interests of the District.

Department Director:

- 1) Department Directors will conduct periodic reviews of telecommuting assignments to ensure operational requirements and business needs are met.
- 2) Help identify jobs, positions appropriate for telecommuting.
- 4) Ensure telecommuting guidelines are followed on a consistent basis.
- 5) Approve or deny telecommuting requests from employees as well as evaluate if a supervisor is able to successfully supervise and manage the performance of a potential telecommuting employee.
- 6) Terminate telecommuting arrangements when deemed not in the best interests of the District.

Human Resources:

- 1) Maintain record of all telecommuting arrangements and agreements.
- 2) Review telecommuting arrangements for appropriateness and discuss any concerns with the Department Director.
- 3) Periodically review schedule exceptions approvals for consistency and to evaluate potential amendments to this policy.
- 4) Conduct a review of the telecommuting policy and practices periodically and make adjustments to the policy as necessary.

Information Technology:

- 1) Establish standard hardware and software configurations for providing connections to District networks and software as appropriate to assist a telecommuting employee.
- 2) Address any telecommuter-related information security considerations.
- 3) IT, in conjunction with the supervisor and Department Director, will determine the appropriate equipment, software, etc. needs for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The employee will be responsible for acquiring and maintaining any non-District equipment deemed necessary.

Appendix 1

Telecommuting Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors

This document is intended to provide guidance to managers and supervisors regarding their responsibilities for implementing a telecommuting arrangement. Managing telecommuters demands many of the same skills that are required for good supervision of any employee: communication, organization, and trust between employee and supervisor.

To ensure the success of a telecommuting arrangement, here are some tips to remember:

- Close supervision is not necessarily good supervision.
 - Manage by objectives (see below) and results instead of by observation.
 - For the telecommuter to succeed at telecommuting, you need to succeed at supervising.
 - Understand that there may be resistance to managing employees from a remote location.
 - Neither you nor the telecommuting employee should hesitate to modify or if necessary, terminate the telecommuting arrangement if it is not working.
 - Supervisors need to make adjustments in the workplace for telecommuting to be successful. Spend time addressing these issues before an employee begins telecommuting.
 - This program may bring a tremendous amount of flexibility into your work environment. Take advantage of that flexibility.
1. Keep in close and regular communication with telecommuting employees to foster a sense of inclusion and instill the importance of ongoing communication and a high level of work ethic, even when working remotely. Checking in periodically with questions or requests for status reports will convey that the District, their supervisor, and management care about the employees and the work they are doing and will also foster a sense of accountability. For employees that are telecommuting, managers and supervisors will need to make it a habit and allocate time and attention to “virtually popping in” at your remote employees’ desks. This requires added time and deliberate action, as compared to making the rounds at employees’ cubicles while heading in and out of meetings.
 2. Establish clear performance standards, which are particularly critical when an employee is working remotely. Set benchmarks, share best practices, and articulate standards by which the employee’s performance will be evaluated – including standards that are specific to remote access work. Understand the timeframes involved in completing tasks and the resources required to see projects through to completion and set expectations with the employee.
 3. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that they and their staff provide timely responses to telecommuting employees; emails, calls, and questions from employees who are working offsite shall receive the same level of attention and responsiveness as if the employee was working in the office – make sure that these responses are not left for the end of the day or for when he/she returns to the office.
 4. Monitor progress and give timely feedback; make virtual observations of performance by evaluating work outputs and deliverables, including:
 - Documents and reports

- Internal and external email communication
 - Timely responsiveness to phone calls and emails
 - Contributions on conference calls/video conferencing
 - Completion of weekly assignments; meeting project schedules
 - Satisfaction by other departments on interdepartmental support
5. Reinforce the fact that telecommuting does not change the number of work hours that the employee is scheduled and expected to work, even if the employee is being more productive while working remotely.
 6. Mandatory, in-person meetings shall be clearly identified by the manager and/or supervisor, for which the employee is then expected to be present for, regardless of the telecommuting arrangement. This requirement and these meetings take precedence.
 7. Telecommuting arrangements do not work for all positions, likewise not all employees can work well under this arrangement. Managers need to consider past performance, level of independence and supervision needed, ability to focus on work and stay clear of distractions and self-discipline to ensure that an employee can work productively and thrive in a remote location. Moreover, employees who do not have the experience necessary to work independently and/or require more hands-on guidance and supervision to be effective and efficient would not be good candidates for the program.

Examples of employees that are not typically conducive to telecommuting include:

- New on the job and/or have not established good working relationships with others in the department and across other departments.
 - Frequently requires guidance, assistance, or approval from others, including the supervisor and/or manager.
 - Unwilling/unable to measure and report work results.
 - Quality of work is inconsistent.
 - Job requires physical presence to complete work duties.
 - Job relies heavily on face-to-face, in-office communication.
 - Absence from the workplace would cause a significant hardship on other employees.
8. Provide effective feedback, including:
 - Reinforcing positive behavior.
 - Bringing unsatisfactory performance to the employee 's attention immediately and develop the capabilities in your employees to correct deficiencies.
 - Providing timely and ongoing feedback.

Helpful Tips for Managing Employees in a Telecommuting Environment – Management by Objectives (MBO)

Managing by objectives is a management tool that affords you and your employees the capability to clearly communicate your expectations as a supervisor and the employee 's abilities as a telecommuter. Implementing MBO 's can be easily accomplished:

- Prepare an itemized list of what you can expect from the employee. This list can be on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. Expectations should be specific and clear.

- Include the telecommuter in the process of establishing objectives. This enables the employee to have valuable input concerning his/her probability of accomplishing the expectations.
- Create a document to support your agreement. You can treat this document as a contract between you and the telecommuter, agreeing on what is expected. Provide a space for signatures and be sure you and the telecommuter sign it.
- Track the results through meetings and written records. If you have weekly objectives, meet every week to review the telecommuter 's accomplishments and make any necessary adjustments to the timeline, assignment, or objectives. Use a matrix, a graph, or a simple check-off list to record progress.
- Both supervisor and telecommuter should keep copies of the objectives and timelines as well as any adjustments made to the expectations.
- Set clear performance objectives. If appropriate, use the SMART model to develop behavioral objectives.

S – Specific– Be specific about what the objective 's end results will look like/do.

M – Measurable– Determine a way to show tangibly that objectives were accomplished. Some objectives may not require this approach. However, it's an effective way to instill objectivity.

A – Achievable– Make sure the objective is something possible for the employee to achieve.

R – Relevant– Make sure the objective furthers the duties or responsibilities of your department or division. Make sure the objective is relevant.

T – Time Limited– Have a time limit, whenever appropriate.

Objectives should include daily and regular operational tasks and responsibilities, not only special or unique projects. It is best practice to ensure all standard work tasks and responsibilities are included in the objectives first, before special projects and non-routine work are also tasked as objectives.

MBO allows supervisors to manage an employee's work product, not the process the employee uses to reach the objective. In many instances, a supervisor should not focus on how an employee accomplishes a task, but instead on the employee producing a timely and high-quality work product. If the quality or timeliness of the work product is lacking, the employee work process should also be evaluated and potentially directed.

Evaluating Telecommuting Employees' Performance

Telecommuting involves managing by objectives and results rather than by simply observing an employee. Some supervisors may have concerns about supervising and evaluating telecommuting employees. Supervisors should rely on two primary criteria to evaluate telecommuting employees' work: (1) quality of work, and (2) quality completion of projects.

A successful performance evaluation process requires that supervisors and employees jointly set clear performance objectives, including:

- Identifying the specific tasks and behavior objectives to be accomplished during a performance cycle.
- Establishing how to measure the objectives.
- Prioritizing work by identifying which results are most crucial and those that can be deferred.
- Analyzing how objectives support work group goals.
- Defining what responsiveness, good communication, and teamwork mean when coordinating with others.

Managing Non-Telecommuting Employees

1. **Manage Misunderstanding, Distrust or Disappointment** - As you receive employee applications to telecommute, it is important that you clearly indicate the reasons for your approval, modification, or denial of each application to avoid feelings of resentment —why is that person allowed to telecommute, and I cannot? Prepare in advance the necessary documentation you will need to support the decision of why one application was denied while another approved.
2. **Team Effort** - The non-telecommuting employees are as critical to the effectiveness of the Telecommuting Program as those who telecommute. Understanding the individual components of what makes your team successful will guarantee continued success.
3. **Support Strategies** - Establish mutual strategies to support the non-telecommuters as well as the telecommuters. The non-telecommuters should not be expected to do extra work in the office while others are telecommuting.
4. **Contingency Plans** - Establish strategies to guide the work group through “what if” situations. Address all issues pertinent to the team as a whole. Encourage the telecommuters and non-telecommuters to jointly participate in this exercise.

Appendix 2

Telecommuting Tips for Employees

This document is intended to provide guidance and tips for successful telecommuting to employees.

Characteristics of Successful Telecommuters:

Telecommuting requires careful planning and discipline. The following are key characteristics of successful telecommuters:

- Good planner (uses planner or calendar, to-do lists, etc.)
- Self-motivated, self-starter
- Strong communication skills
- Task-oriented, results focused (uses goals and objectives)
- Aware of personal work style preferences
- Able to manage workload effectively
- Flexible
- Knowledgeable in technology
- Able to work with very limited input and support from others
- Trustworthy
- Good time management skills
- Consistently meets deadlines
- Effective problem-solver
- Responsive team member
- Disciplined to follow guidelines and policies

In evaluating whether telecommuting is appropriate, the supervisor and employee should consider each characteristic in relation to the employee.

Get Organized:

Pick an appropriate work location - Remember that your workspace location will have to conform to the specifications in the Telecommuting Program Guideline.

- Make sure to locate your workstation away from distractions
- Establish a routine
- Use to-do lists for work assignments
- Make sure that you have the resources necessary to telecommute
- Do not get caught without necessary tools to work efficiently. Make sure you have uninterrupted access to the tools you need, such as District email, internet access, a printer, telephone, etc.
- It is beneficial to start your telecommuting to-do list a few days before telecommuting, to plan the resources you will need to support your work activities at the remote work location. Schedule your work so you don't need assistance from others while telecommuting.

Develop Good Work Habits:

The key to successful telecommuting lies in managing your workspace, job, family members, neighbors, and yourself. Remember there are rules you follow in the office, and you will need another set of rules for working at home. It is your responsibility to make telecommuting work.

The following habits are detrimental to telecommuting:

- Snacking too often.
- Sleeping late.
- Talking on the phone for non-business purposes.
- Watching TV or cruising the Internet.
- Smoking.
- Wearing pajamas all day.
- Visiting with the neighbors.
- Procrastinating.

Replace the ritual of getting ready for the office with another ritual - On telecommuting days, you will not engage in many of your usual rituals associated with preparing to leave your residence and beginning your workday at your regular worksite. Conversations with coworkers, getting a coffee, or even the commute symbolize the beginning of the workday. Establish new rituals for telecommuting days to begin your workday. Some successful telecommuters actually leave their house, go around the block, and return and begin the workday. Find a ritual that works for you. Also consider establishing a ritual to mark the end of the workday and transition into your non-work life.

Communicate with Your Supervisor:

Understand expectations - Clearly understood expectations between you and your supervisor are imperative for successful telecommuting. Make sure that you know your deadlines, what the end product should be, etc., before embarking on a new project.

Organize a reporting system - It is important to update your supervisor on your progress with your projects and to inform your supervisor of any difficulties you may experience while telecommuting. Schedule and keep regular reporting or check-in times with your boss. Even a five-minute meeting or voicemail message on a regular schedule will help.

Orient Family Members, Friends and Neighbors:

If your remote work location is at home, it is particularly important to train the people at home, so they understand what telecommuting means. The message is: *you're working while at home*. It is important to advise family members and neighbors that while you are telecommuting, you are working and have work responsibilities and tasks that need to be completed. You have the same objectives, goals, and deadlines as you do in the office.

Decide which interruptions are appropriate - Determine the questions, favors, and needs for which you may be interrupted, *e.g.*, medical concerns. Develop ground rules for your family to follow regarding interruptions while you are at home telecommuting. You may also need to establish rules with neighbors and friends.

Don't telecommute if there are problems at home - Avoid telecommuting on days when there may be friction at home, such as family quarrels or other problems. Arrange for caregivers: If you have a family member or child who needs care and attention, it may be difficult to telecommute and complete any work. Use appropriate leave time for the telecommuting days when you cannot work in your remote work location and do not come into your on-site District workspace.

Telecommuting isn't a replacement for child or elder care - Do not assume that because you are at home working you can also take care of children or other dependents. Telecommuting can allow you more flexibility in accommodating family needs as it cuts down on commute time, but it is **not** a replacement for dependent care.

Pets, machines, and third parties at home – If on a phone call, professionalism remains important. Plan in advance to ensure background noise does not distract from the call, *e.g.*, barking dogs, dishwashing, laundry machines, vacuuming, gardening equipment, doorbells, music/radios, etc.