

**Idaho Division of Human Resources**  
Executive Branch Statewide Policy  
Section 7: Telecommuting  
Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions

This document establishes the guidelines for effective telecommuting arrangements. The intent is to support telecommuting while ensuring a high-level of operational continuity across state agencies.

## **Guidance**

The State of Idaho (State) may consider telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual and job characteristics are suited for such an arrangement. Telecommuting allows an employee to work at an identified alternate work location for all or part of their regular workweek. Telecommuting is not a statewide benefit; however, it may be offered for some employees and some jobs at the discretion of the agency. Telecommuting is not a term or condition of employment and telecommuting arrangements are subject to review, modification, or termination at any time. Employees who telecommute are subject to the policies, duties, obligations, and codes of conduct outlined in statewide policies.

The Statewide Telecommuting Policy can be found [here](#).

## **Eligibility and Applicability**

Before entering into any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and supervisor, with the assistance of the agency human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement. Employees working remotely may be required to attend in-person meetings or trainings at their primary work location as necessary for the performance of their job duties.

Considering an employees' suitability for telecommuting can be tricky. Below are things to consider in determining appropriate roles and behaviors for telecommuting:

- Does the employee work independently most of the time?
  - Employees in entry-level positions may need extensive supervision that does not lend itself well to the telecommuting environment.
  - If the employee is new in their role and has a substantial learning curve, it may be very difficult to support their onboarding remotely.
- Is the employee good at documenting deliverables?
  - Can the employee clearly demonstrate consistent achievement of their deliverables? Is it clear that they are meeting objectives without actually seeing the activities? If not, the position would likely not be a good candidate for telecommuting.
- Is the employee consistent about communicating logistical changes?
  - When there is a schedule change, need for resources or tactical advice needed, does the employee proactively approach those with their supervisor?
- Is the employee in need of performance management?
  - If you are providing extensive coaching or written expectations for performance, it is advised that you discontinue allowing telecommuting during the process for the best result.

**Q:** How do I know what jobs are appropriate for telecommuting?

**A:** Agencies may utilize a Job Classification Assessment Tool, which is a tool to assist agencies in identifying positions that may be eligible for telecommuting. Use of the tool is optional and not required. If an agency determines a classification is eligible for telecommuting, this does not require that every person within that classification telecommute.

**Q:** If I am already on an approved telecommuting schedule, do I need to reapply?

**A:** Due to the updated statewide Telecommuting Policy and related documents, agencies may require employees to submit a new Telecommuting Application. Regardless of if a new application is required, a signed Standards and Expectations Acknowledgement must be completed for all employees on approved telecommuting schedules.

**Q:** What about occasional, temporary, or emergency telecommuting?

**A:** This telecommuting, known as incidental telecommuting, occurs when an employee requests to work from home due to an emergency for a few days, or on other unplanned occasions. In these instances, the employee is not required to complete a telecommuting application nor use a telecommuting time code but should still request preapproval from their supervisor. Should the temporary arrangement continue into a consistent pattern or practice, the employee is required to submit a formal telecommuting application for consideration.

**Q:** If an employee is authorized to work remotely from one location, can they work remotely from a different location?

**A:** The telecommuting application should list the location from where the employee will telecommute. Deviation from the application may result in a new application, and for temporary changes the employee should discuss the alternate arrangement with their supervisor.

## **Work Schedule**

The employee and supervisor will agree on the number of days of telecommuting allowed each week, the work schedule/hours the telecommuter will customarily maintain, and the manner and frequency of communication. The telecommuter must be accessible by phone, email, video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams), or instant messaging during the agreed upon work schedule as set forth in the Telecommuting Application. The telecommuter may be required to work on-site or at other locations on certain days, as business needs dictate.

## **Time Reporting**

Telecommuters will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the agency and must follow the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

The timecode **TEL** should be used when telecommuting pursuant to the statewide policy.

## Telecommuting and Probation

DHR recommends employees begin telecommuting after successful completion of probation and an “Achieves Performance Standards” performance appraisal rating or higher. Agencies may modify this to their needs and allow employees to telecommute prior to completion of probation or may require a performance appraisal rating of “Solid Sustains” or higher or require other performance-based metrics. It is recommended that any employee with recent documentation to manage performance (letter of expectations, performance improvement plan, Notice of Contemplated Action, etc.) should have their telecommuting option removed, at least temporarily.

## Telecommuting and Supervising Employees

Managing staff remotely requires an intentional approach to communication and setting regular expectations. Below are some supervisor best practices:

- Clearly keep all shared calendars up to date, including yours.
  - Both the employee and supervisor should be able to quickly assess each other’s availability.
- Have a consistent method of approving time away from the approved work location.
- Create a consistent communication schedule with each employee that includes a variety of methods (individual meetings, team meetings, instant messaging, shared documentation with tracking).
  - Communication should be initiated by both the employee and supervisor.
- Ensure in-person connection. Use video over the phone when possible. Schedule in-person meetings and work time where the appropriate people are present.
  - Create agendas that cover all aspects of the employee’s position. This ensures that you communicate about things that you may forget with a telecommuter.
- Remember to keep the human involved. Connect on a personal level.
- Remember to acknowledge accomplishments. It is more difficult to remember to do this when connection is limited.
- Ensure that projects are fairly distributed, ensuring even distribution amongst in-person staff and telecommuters.
- Focus on results and ensure that you are providing consistent expectations for work product across all staff members.

## Dependent Care

Telecommuting is not a replacement for appropriate childcare, elder care, or other dependent-related arrangements during scheduled work hours. The focus of the telecommuting arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting organization demands.

**Q:** Can I still telecommute if my children are at home, or I am taking care of an ill or dependent-care family member?

**A:** Employees should not be engaging in dependent care activities when performing official duties and time taking care of dependents is not paid time. Agencies will continue to provide work flexibilities to support employees, including those with dependent care responsibilities.

## **Rural Exemption**

Employees who qualify for a rural exemption are eligible to telecommute. Eligibility for the rural exemption can be found in the statewide policy.

**Q:** If I am eligible for a rural exemption, am I required to telecommute?

**A:** No. Employees who live in rural communities are not obligated to telecommute.

**Q:** If I am eligible for a rural exemption, what time code do I use?

**A:** Employees who telecommute full-time from rural communities should code their time the same as if they were working at their assigned work location, utilizing ACT for hours worked, and other accrued leave codes, if applicable, when they are not working.

**Q:** How do I determine if I qualify for the rural exemption?

**A:** Rural exemption is determined by the distance between the employee's home address where they telecommute and the address of the nearest agency office location. To qualify for the rural exemption, this distance must be fifty (50) miles or more.

## **Field Workers**

Employees whose position is field-based and requires them to perform the majority of their primary duties outside of their assigned work location are not considered telecommuters.

**Q:** What percentage of time does an employee need to work in the field to be considered a field worker?

**A:** There is not a set percentage, but it should be the majority of their time and an essential part of their position. For example, an employee who travels to different agencies to meet with a variety of people would not qualify as a field worker. However, an employee who travels between construction sites for most of their day may be considered a field worker.

## **Out-of-State Telecommuting**

Out-of-state telecommuting is discouraged and should only be considered in compelling circumstances. All out-of-state requests must be reviewed and approved by the Division of Human Resources (DHR) Administrator prior to implementation.

Considerations for requesting a position be approved for out-of-state telecommuting:

- Agency description and justification of why they feel it is necessary to hire someone out of state and implement a full-time telecommuting approach.
- Explanation of how long the position has been vacant.

- Information on applicants received, including applicants from Idaho.
- Attempts at filling the vacancy with an applicant from Idaho.
- A description of how the position will be supervised.
- How often the employee would be expected to travel to the primary office in Idaho.
- Any other justification factors to be considered.

Employees and agencies should refer to the [Out-of-State Telecommuting Guidance](#) for more information.

**Q:** Do I have to request out-of-state telecommuting if I only work from a different state for part of my schedule?

**A:** Yes. Regardless of full-time or part-time out-of-state status, the employee must follow the out-of-state requirements.

**Q:** Do out of state telecommuters count against the 20%?

**A:** Yes.

## Training

Employees must complete the required training prior to beginning a telecommuting schedule.

**Q:** What if I begin telecommuting immediately upon hire?

**A:** If newly hired into the agency, employees who will telecommute must complete the required training within 30 calendar days of their start date.

## Tracking and Reporting

DHR and agency leadership will have access to reports designed for assessing telecommute compliance. Agencies are expected to monitor and ensure compliance with the Telecommuting Policy.

**Q:** How closely are we going to manage the 20%? For example, if John was supposed to be in the office today but needed to work from home, does that mean Jane, who was supposed to telecommute, must come in?

**A:** The intent of the statewide policy is to allow no more than 20% of an agency's workforce employees to be on a regular telecommuting schedule. The focus should be on meeting the overall intent of the policy which is the total percent you approve to be out each day.

**Q:** Will DHR provide reports to us?

**A:** Yes, DHR will run reports for your agency after payroll processing for each pay period

**Q:** What if my agency goes over 20% for a pay period?

**A:** The agency will need to identify what happened and correct it moving forward.

**Q:** If our agency is not affected by the 20% (we have less than that currently), do we need to do anything?

**A:** You will still need to have those currently telecommuting complete a new Telecommuting Standards and Expectations Acknowledgement (previously called an agreement). It is also recommended you discuss the policy change with your leadership team to help them understand that 20% is only part of the goal and the other goal is to ensure professionalism, customer service, promoting responsible government, and leadership standards are adhered to while working remotely. For instance, having a professional appearance/background and ensuring there are no members of the household who can be seen/heard. At a minimum, take this opportunity to reiterate the standards and expectations with your agency.