

## TELECOMMUTING

<b>Policy Number:</b>	HR-409
<b>Effective Date:</b>	Approved by the <b>Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS)</b> Board of Trustees on March 4,2020
<b>Application:</b>	Applies to all full-time permanent employees of the <b>EWSHS</b> .
<b>History:</b>	This policy replaces BP #134

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**Purpose - Advances in telecommunications, increased traffic congestion, and changing workplace practices have increased interest in telecommuting arrangements. Benefits of telecommuting can include fewer commute trips to the office and improve employee job satisfaction and performance. It must, however, balance these benefits with the operational efficiency of the organization. This policy provides a framework to ensure that these potential benefits do not come at the cost of reduced service to customers, are not unduly inconvenient to co-workers, and do not reduce organizational efficiency. This policy describes the principles and standards for evaluating employee requests to telecommute and expectations of telecommuting employees.**

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### Definitions

**Telecommuting** – A formal, ongoing worksite alternative that is mutually agreed upon by a full-time permanent employee and their supervisor, subject to approval by the agency director.

**Teleworker** – A full-time permanent employee who has received formal approval to telecommute.

**Alternate Worksite** – May be an employee’s home or a satellite office closer to the employee’s home.

**Official Workstation** – The city or town where the employee’s office is located as assigned by the agency.

### Policy Statement

Telecommuting is neither a right nor should it be an expectation of employees. Telecommuting is available only when it improves efficiency, or it serves the mission of the agency as determined pursuant to the evaluation criteria below.

Occasionally working off-site for a few hours or a day does not constitute “telecommuting” as defined in this policy. These informal arrangements are permitted but must be negotiated between an employee and supervisor and must be for the purpose of meeting a specific business need.

Teleworkers may work at an alternate location one day a week on a scheduled basis. In exceptional circumstances, or for employees exempt from RCW 41.06, as set out in RCW 41.06.070, the agency director may authorize additional days. Employees must complete the Telecommuting Application and Agreement form. Telecommuting arrangements are mutually

agreed upon by the full-time permanent employee and their supervisor, subject to the approval of the agency director. The teleworker, supervisor or agency director may terminate the telecommuting arrangement at any time, for any reason, with one day's notice.

### **Evaluation Criteria for Applications to Telecommute**

An effective telecommuting arrangement is one that benefits both the employee and the agency and will depend on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the duties assigned to an employee, performance of the employee, and the nature of work performed by their agency.

When considering a telecommuting application, employees and supervisors shall consider the following:

- Whether the employee's duties require regular in-person interaction with co-workers, customers, or the general public.
- If the absence from the office would be detrimental to the productivity of the work group or information sharing.
- Whether the employee has demonstrated an ability to consistently work independently and productively.
- If the employee demonstrates sustained good performance.
- Whether telecommuting requires specialized material or equipment.
- The distance of an alternative worksite from the employee's official workstation.
- Whether telecommuting will be beneficial to the employee and not reduce the agency's organizational efficiency.

### **Requirements for Telecommuters and Telecommuting Arrangements**

- Telecommuting is not an employee right and an employee's participation in the telecommuting program is entirely voluntary on the part of the employee and the agency.
- A current position description and performance and development plan must be in place to apply for and receive approval for telecommuting.
- Telecommuting arrangements will encompass a full workday that coincides with a teleworker's regularly assigned work hours, e.g., 8am to 5pm. A change in work schedule requires pre-approval of the supervisor. A teleworker is covered by the same provisions as a non-telecommuting employee regarding work hours, overtime compensation, the use of vacation, sick, and other leave, and they must comply with normal office reporting procedures. The employee may request, and the supervisor may approve either temporary or permanent changes to the teleworker's work hours on telecommuting days. Supervisors will document permanent work hour changes in the telecommuting agreement.
- During work hours, the teleworker shall not be responsible for childcare, dependent adult care or other duties outside of their assigned job responsibilities. Additionally, during work hours the teleworker shall not engage in outside activities including, but not limited to, work related to other employment, including self-employment, conducting a personal business or participating in community organizations or club activities.
- Employees that telecommute will work standard hours as defined in BP 132.

- Equipment, software, and furniture that an employee uses while telecommuting from home are to be provided and paid for by the employee. The employee is also responsible for telephone, data lines, utility expenses, installation, monthly charges or costs incurred by the telecommuting employee in connection with approved telecommuting plan.
- The employee's supervisor may determine that certain equipment is essential for the employee to perform the job satisfactorily while telecommuting. The supervisor will provide justification for requiring such equipment. The agency director will approve or disapprove the cost of the essential equipment. Equipment and supplies furnished to the teleworker by the agency remains the property of the agency and is to be used only by authorized persons for official state business as specified in RCW 42.52.160.
- The teleworker's workspace is considered an extension of the primary worksite. Worker's compensation liability will be limited to standard work hours and the workspace, as defined as the space where the work takes place (i.e. a room in one's home that serves as an office), as opposed to applying to all areas of the alternate location. The workspace and work hours will be identified in the telecommuting agreement. The employee is responsible for ensuring that the workspace is reasonably hazard free. If the supervisor determines it is appropriate to verify that the workspace is adequate, the supervisor may choose to make on-site inspections at the alternate worksite. The teleworker must follow office procedures for reporting work-related injuries.
- Teleworkers are responsible for the security of information, documents, and records in their possession or used during telecommuting. Teleworkers shall maintain public records in compliance with the public records act.
- The teleworker may be expected to return to work at their official workstation when requested or necessary. If the supervisor makes such a request, the teleworker shall comply and should not expect to telecommute on an alternate day that week.
- Telecommuting agreements expire June 30 of each year. Employees seeking to continue telecommuting must reapply at least two weeks prior to expiration. The renewal of a telecommuting arrangement through a reapplication will be subject to the same review as the initial application and will utilize the criteria set forth in this policy.
- Teleworkers must be available to their supervisor, co-workers, and customers by email and telephone when telecommuting. The teleworker's accessibility by telephone and email should be the same as when working at the official workstation.
- Teleworkers must post their telecommuting days and hours on the on-line calendar. Teleworkers must update their phone message at work on the telecommuting day.
- The teleworker must stay current on agency events, information, and business documents by regularly using email and remote access to agency databases during the telecommuting day as they would if working at the official workstation.
- If an office closure or emergency excuses other employees from working and work can proceed at alternate worksites, teleworkers must continue working.
- If an emergency, such as a power failure, affects the alternate worksite but not the official workstation, the teleworker must report to their official workstation, unless excused by their supervisor.

- The teleworker must notify their supervisor of any emergency as soon as possible. The supervisor may excuse the teleworker from required attendance at the official workstation, if appropriate.
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**Primary roles and responsibilities for Telecommuting within the EWSHS.**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Employee</b>	Prepare the Telecommuting Application and Agreement form and forward it to the immediate supervisor.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Approve or disapprove the Telecommuting Application and Agreement.
<b>Supervisor</b>	If disapproved, discuss with the employee.
<b>Supervisor</b>	If approved, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and sign the Telecommuting Application and Agreement form and have the employee sign it.</li> <li>• Forward it to the agency director.</li> </ul>
<b>Director</b>	Approve or disapprove the Telecommuting Application and Agreement. This includes authorization of costs for telecommuting.
<b>Director</b>	If disapproved, return the form to the supervisor with an explanation.
<b>Director</b>	If approved, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign the form and return it to the supervisor.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send fully executed copies of the form to the telecommuter and the agency's Information Services.</li> <li>• Send the original to the agency HR Liaison.</li> </ul>
<b>Agency HR Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• File the original Telecommuting Application and Agreement form in the employee's personnel file.</li> </ul>
<b>Agency Information Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess data communication needs of the telecommuter and inform the supervisor of the cost and time frame for installation.</li> <li>• Process orders for hardware and software as needed.</li> </ul>

**References that apply to this policy**

RCW 70.94.547 (transportation demand management)	Executive Order 01-03 (commute trip reduction)
RCW 42.56 (public records act)	RCW 42.52.160 (use of persons, money, or property for private gain)