

Telecommuting

Policy Number: 2020-0002
 Issue Date: 12/23/2020
 Revision Date: 4/25/2022
 Replaces: PER 18-4 (AEP)

PURPOSE

King County is a welcoming community where every person can thrive. As an employer, King County is committed to:

- Attracting and retaining a diverse and talented work force that reflects our community;
- Reducing operational costs without sacrificing quality of service or employee productivity;
- Supporting the region by ensuring county salaries benefit the local economy;
- Reducing its carbon footprint; and
- Promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees.

The County supports telecommuting as a work arrangement that strengthens the resiliency of our workforce and connectivity to our customers and stakeholders. At the same time, because of the breadth and depth of King County's services and responsibilities, telecommuting levels will vary and may not be an option for every department, agency, line of business, team or individual.

Departments and agencies shall manage their workforces in accordance with this policy and implement consistent and equitable telecommuting procedures for employees whose duties can be managed remotely. This policy shall supersede all prior and existing telecommuting or telework policies.

POLICY APPLICABILITY

The County's Telecommuting Policy applies to all employees in the executive branch departments, offices, divisions, and agencies, including the Assessor's Office and King County Elections. This includes all career service, provisional, temporary, probationary, and appointed employees. Departments may have additional telecommuting rules or requirements due to the nature of their work. In the event any provision of this policy conflicts with an applicable provision of a collective bargaining agreement or binding past practices, the latter shall prevail.

DEFINITIONS

"*County Workplace*" means any King County owned or operated building or site where county employees perform the duties of their position.

"*Regularly Assigned County Workplace*" means one of the pre-determined, pre-approved workplaces an employee is required to perform the duties of their position from on a regular or recurring basis. Regularly assigned workplaces can be county workplaces or remote workplaces, and are documented in an employee's *Telecommuting Agreement*. Telecommuting employees will have multiple regularly assigned workplaces, typically their home and at least one county workplace.

"*Telecommuting*" means a work arrangement where an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of their position from a remote workplace. Telecommuting involves the use of county-provided communication/collaboration technology that enables the employee to avoid travelling to a regularly assigned county workplace to conduct business when no in-person interaction is required.

"Remote Workplace" means any non-county workplace where county employees perform the duties of their position by telecommuting. In most cases, an employee's remote workplace will be their home.

POLICY

King County departments and agencies shall manage their respective workforces based on business needs, the needs of those they serve and the roles and responsibilities of their employees – all of which can shift and evolve over time. The use of telecommuting is a management option, at the discretion of each department director, and no employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to telecommute. Additionally, no employee is entitled to work from a county workplace if their department determines the duties associated with their position will be performed remotely. Temporary telecommuting arrangements may also be mandated in response to emergency situations.

Employees may request a telecommuting arrangement; or a waiver from a mandatory telecommuting arrangement. The County may, at its discretion, set up alternative county work sites for employees whose departments require telecommuting. Waiver requests shall be in writing and submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor. Denied requests may be appealed to the employee's department director or designee.

Independent of workplace or telecommuting status, all employees are subject to the basic duties, obligations and responsibilities of county employment and are expected to adhere to all county policies, including but not limited to:

- [King County Personnel Guidelines](#)
- [Nondiscrimination, Anti-Harassment & Inappropriate Conduct](#)
- [Emergency Responsibilities](#), including employee designations
- [Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace](#) (for non-safety-sensitive positions)
- [Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace](#) (for safety-sensitive positions)
- [Public Records Management](#)
- [Information Privacy Notice](#)
- [Acceptable Use of King County's Technology Assets](#)
- [Use of County Property and Equipment](#)
- [Use of Vehicles for County Business](#)
- [Take-Home Policy for County-Owned Vehicles](#)
- [The King County Code of Ethics](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention](#)
- [Domestic Violence in the Workplace](#)

Failure to abide by the terms of this policy and the policies listed above may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

Location

Because King County is a public employer, whose taxpayers pay its employees' salaries, it is important that King County employees live in or near the region they serve. Additionally, telecommuting employees may be directed to report to a county workplace on or during any regularly assigned remote workday. *Therefore, all employees must reside in Washington State¹ and within a*

¹ In rare instances, due to certain necessary and specific circumstances, out-of-state remote work arrangements may be approved.

"reasonable distance" to their regularly assigned county workplace. "Reasonable distance" will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the department director based on departmental business needs.

Employees may telecommute from locations outside their home, provided those locations are also within a reasonable distance to their regularly assigned county workplace. Employees wishing to *temporarily* telecommute from locations outside a reasonable distance to their regularly assigned county workplace shall obtain prior approval from their immediate supervisor.

Employees who wish to *temporarily* telecommute from a location outside Washington State shall submit a written request to their department director². If the request is to temporarily telecommute from outside the state for up to thirty calendar days in a single instance or cumulatively within a calendar year, the department director may approve or deny the request. The approval or denial shall be in writing. If the request to temporarily telecommute from a location outside the state exceeds thirty calendar days in a single instance or cumulatively within a calendar year, the department director shall review the request and, if supported, must submit the request to the Director of the Department of Human Resources.

The Director of the Department of Human Resources will evaluate out-of-state telecommuting requests that exceed thirty days on a case-by-case basis. Approval will only be granted in cases of extraordinary circumstances and therefore such approvals will be rare. The approval or denial of individual requests shall be in writing.

The County will not approve employee requests to temporarily telecommute from international locations, locations within U.S. Territories, and the states of Ohio, North Dakota and Wyoming.

The Telecommuting Agreement

As a pre-condition to telecommuting, each employee shall work with their supervisor to complete and sign a King County [Telecommuting Agreement](#) to acknowledge their understanding of, and agreement with, the terms of this policy. The *Telecommuting Agreement* shall include:

1. The employee's regularly assigned schedule, including the days of the week they will be telecommuting, and hours worked per day;
2. The employee's regularly assigned workplaces; and
3. The employee's responsibilities as a remote worker.

Telecommuting Agreements may be terminated at any time by an employee's immediate supervisor. It is recommended that two weeks' notice be given, if possible, or notice as required by an applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Timekeeping

County employees' wages, benefits and leave accruals are unaffected by the location of their workplace. Telecommuting employees are subject to the following standard practices:

- Hourly employees must document their daily shift start and end times, and their break and meal periods;
- Hourly employees must enter their time into the County's PeopleSoft payroll system during the workday;

² Employees who are approved to temporarily telecommute from out of state are highly encouraged to seek professional advice on the potential impacts of any and all employee taxes and deductions required because they work out of state.

- Any hours worked beyond an hourly employee's normal work schedule must be authorized in advance by the employee's immediate supervisor; If an hourly employee works beyond their normal work schedule without prior approval, they must report the additional time worked to their immediate supervisor the next workday; and
- Any leave or benefit time off during a telecommuting employee's scheduled workday must be pre-arranged according to departmental guidelines for requesting leave.

No employee shall be prohibited from having access to an alternative or flexible work schedule due to their telecommuting status. Agreed upon alternative or flexible schedules should conform with existing [Alternative Work Schedule](#) policies and be documented in the employee's *Telecommuting Agreement*.

Workplace Travel

In the event a telecommuting employee is directed to report to their regularly assigned county workplace after the employee has started working, the time spent traveling from the employee's home (or other approved remote workplace) to their regularly assigned county workplace shall be treated as "workplace-to-workplace" travel, and the employee's travel time shall be counted as hours worked and compensated accordingly. However, if the telecommuting employee is directed to report to their regularly assigned county workplace to begin their workday, travel time shall be treated as regular commuting, or "home-to-workplace" travel, and considered time spent commuting which is not compensable. Whenever possible, supervisors should give at least 24 hours' notice when directing telecommuting employees to report to their regularly assigned county workplace.

For additional guidance on the compensability of travel time for hourly telecommuting employees, and reimbursement for workplace-to-workplace travel expenses for all employees, see [Workplace Travel Guidance for Telecommuting Employees](#).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for abiding by the terms of this policy and the conditions of their individual *Telecommuting Agreement*. Telecommuting employees shall:

- Maintain a high level of public service;
- Successfully balance the expectation of productive work with personal or household responsibilities during the telecommuting workday;
- Perform according to established workplace expectations and communication protocols, including workplace-appropriate dress and video conferencing backgrounds;
- Refrain from performing non-county work during their telecommuting work schedule;
- Refrain from holding work meetings with external clients or customers at the employee's home; and
- Limit use of county equipment for personal use to de minimus use consistent with the County's [Acceptable Use of IT Assets Policy](#).

Employee home workspace and safety responsibilities – employees shall:

- Maintain a workspace with an internet connection where they can reliably log into the county system, perform work and remain available and responsive during scheduled work hours;
- Maintain a safe, productive and functional workspace, in addition to other areas that may be necessary to support telecommuting. To assist in assessing workplace safety, review the following:
 - [Home Workspace Safety – Best Practices](#); and
 - [Ergonomic Evaluation Resources](#);
- Be responsible for injuries to third parties, including members of the employee’s family on the employee’s premises; and
- Receive authorization from their immediate supervisor before using their personal vehicle to conduct county business.

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 injuries or incidents](#). The employee must also allow the County to inspect their home workspace if a job-related incident, accident or injury has occurred.

Employee security responsibilities – employees shall:

- Maintain and secure county-provided equipment in the employee’s home or alternative remote workplace. County laptops should not be left unattended in a vehicle, if possible;
- Return county-provided equipment promptly when requested;
- Maintain the confidentiality of county information and documents;
- Prevent unauthorized access to county systems and data;
- Maintain and dispose of work-related documents in a secure and appropriate manner; and
- Not have an expectation of personal privacy for any activity they engage in using county resources, as all activity on county equipment is public record.

Employees will be responsible for the maintenance and repair of their personal equipment. County information stored on an employee’s personal device may be subject to public records disclosure requirements.

County Responsibilities

The County shall provide the following equipment and services that support the employee’s ability to telecommute in an effective manner:

- A county issued laptop with access to needed county systems;
- General office supplies;
- Any specialized equipment needed to complete the employee’s standard work or for reasonable accommodation;
- Routine maintenance and repair of county-provided equipment; and
- In certain cases, the County may provide remote working employees with a wireless internet connectivity solution to provide adequate remote internet service.

Additional equipment that an employee needs for their home workspace requires the approval of the department director, or their designee.

The County will not:

- Furnish the remote workplaces or home offices of telecommuting employees or reimburse employee out-of-pocket expenses for office furniture;
- Reimburse employees for home internet service, utility costs or any other unapproved out-of-pocket expenses; or
- Maintain, repair or provide technical support for an employee's personal devices.

Workers' Compensation program:

- Covers telecommuting employees when job-related injuries occur in the home during the employee's scheduled work period;
- Does not apply to non-job-related injuries that occur in an employee's home or injuries sustained during a commute trip in the employee's personal vehicle; and
- Does not cover claims for injuries to third parties, including members of the employee's family, or damage to property that occurs on the telecommuting employee's premises.
- The employee is liable for any and all liability arising out of the use of their home. For these reasons, it is not advisable to hold work meetings with other King County employees, at their home.

Use of Personal Vehicles for County Business:

- King County provides coverage for personal liability to a third party, and property damage to an employee's personal vehicle, if the use of their personal vehicle was authorized, and for business purposes. Coverage does not extend to personal vehicles used for non-business purposes such as commuting to a county workplace.
- Failure to operate county or personal vehicles while on county business consistent with county policies, may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

County Management Responsibilities

King County management shall ensure that telecommuting employees abide by the terms of this policy while maintaining a high level of public service. Management shall:

- Establish, document and implement processes for employees to submit requests to telecommute or requests for waivers from telecommuting;
- Establish, document and implement processes for reviewing, granting or denying such employee requests; and

King County supervisors and managers shall:

- Be available to engage in regular, predictable and supportive communication with their telecommuting teams and employees;
- Establish and monitor performance expectations and protocols for their telecommuting employees; and
- Ensure that employees are provided with the resources, training, equipment and supplies necessary for effective telecommuting, and
- Monitor their employee's telecommuting schedules.

Division Directors shall:

- Monitor policy use by immediate supervisors and managers to ensure the policy is being applied consistently and equitably.

Department Directors shall:

- Establish department spending limits for telecommuting expenses;

- Establish and implement a process for division directors, section or unit managers to approve minimal telecommuting expenses based on established department spending limits; and
- Monitor policy use by division managers to ensure the policy is being applied consistently and equitably.

QUESTIONS

Refer questions or comments to your department's [Human Resources Manager](#) or the Department of Human Resources.