

Planning for Telework Inside Federal Agencies

At the Labor Department, over 31% of workers no longer have the stress or expense of long commutes. This figure is even higher at the Departments of Education and Treasury.

And it's all because of Telework, which provides a relatively cheap and easy way for agencies to become more resilient and performance-oriented while enhancing employees' lives.

Telework is any work arrangement in which an employee regularly works at an alternate worksite under circumstances that reduce or eliminate commuting time. (According to recent Federal definitions, "regularly" means a minimum average of 1.5 days per week.) While Telework can be done anywhere, such as in the employee's home, it's often done at a telecenter—a cooperatively used and supported satellite office close to users' homes.

The federal mandate behind Telework

It all began when the Federal government recognized the need to be an ahead-of-the-curve employer in order to compete with the private sector. To help accomplish this, a precursor to Telework called "Flexiplace" was initiated in 1990. Three years later, the Federal Telework Initiative was established to examine the feasibility and benefits of Telework centers.

Finally, in 2001 Congress passed the Federal Telework Mandate (Public Law 106-356, Section 359), which requires that each Executive agency establish a policy under which eligible employees of the agency may Telework to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance. There's also a requirement for certain Executive agencies (Public Law 105-277, Title IV, Section 630) to reserve a minimum of \$50,000 annually for employees' use of telework centers.

Why this mandate? Because Telework works.

Among its many benefits, Telework:

- Improves recruitment and retention.
- Advances employees' quality of life.
- Reduces facility costs.
- Enhances productivity.
- Reduces absenteeism.
- Accommodates people with disabilities.
- Allows for flexible hours.
- Reduces stress and saves time and money by eliminating long commutes.

"Instead of spending four hours commuting, I spend the time being more productive."

TREASURY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE

In fact, a June 2008 report by the non-profit Telework Exchange stated that if 53% of America's white-collar employees Teleworked two days a week, they'd save \$38.2B at current gas prices annually. Talk about a solution to the oil crisis!

Telework is an especially effective solution in emergency situations when customary facilities are inactive or inaccessible due to disasters or other events (such as the Northridge earthquake and the Oklahoma City and Atlanta Olympic bombings). And there's one more advantage—telecenters serve as convenient government service outlets, literally bringing government to the people.

Telework success stories

Here are just three popular national Telework success stories; you can probably find one of your own in most any urban area or Federal agency:

- Like many urban areas, Boston suffers from massive traffic congestion. But for the General Services Administration New England Region (GSANE), the construction nightmare called "The Big Dig" was the final commuting straw in prompting their Telework program. After implementing it, managers not only found that employees were working harder and more productively than they did at the office, but some of the most skeptical managers became active telecommuters themselves.
- The Telework program at the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) eliminated so much traditional office space that the agency is saving around \$200K per year in facility costs.
- The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has saved roughly \$3M in space rent alone since the inception of its pilot Telework program in 1995.

Seven steps to creating a Telework program

Enjoying these benefits does require significant preparation on the part of each participating agency. An effective Telework program must be reliable, persuasive, built on easily accessible technologies and deliverables, have the full support of management and vendors, and be empowering to users.

Following each of these steps will help your agency realize the perfect Telework program for your agency. You should also be aware that nearly all Federal agencies have Telework agreement templates.

1. Plan

- Designate a Telework coordinator.
- Establish a cross-functional project team, including Information Technology (IT), union representatives, and other stakeholders.
- Establish measurable Telework program goals.
- Develop an implementation plan for the Telework program.
- Develop a business case for implementing a Telework program.
- Provide funding to meet the needs of the Telework program.
- Establish a pilot program.

2. Establish policies

- Establish an agency-wide Telework policy.
- Establish eligibility criteria such as suitability of tasks and employee performance.

"Studies show that Teleworkers help reduce traffic congestion, are more productive, are happier, and are spending more time with their families."

**U.S. GENERAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION**



- Establish policies or requirements to facilitate communication among Teleworkers, managers, and coworkers.
- Develop a Telework agreement for use between Teleworkers and their managers.
- Develop guidelines to ensure that Teleworkers have safe and adequate places to work off-site.

3. Manage performance

- Make sure the same performance standards are used to evaluate both Teleworkers and non-Teleworkers.
- Establish guidelines to minimize adverse impact on non-Teleworkers before employees begin to work at alternate work sites.

4. Obtain managerial support

- Secure support from top management and address any resistance.

5. Train and publicize program

- Train everyone involved, including managers.
- Inform your entire workforce about the Telework program.

6. Assess and secure technology needs

- Assess all technology needs for each Teleworker and your agency.
- Develop guidelines about who (agency or employee) will provide necessary technology, equipment, and supplies for Telework.
- Provide technical support for Teleworkers.
- Address access and security issues related to Telework.
- Establish equipment standards.

7. Evaluate your Telework program

- Develop a reliable system to track participation.
- Collect data to evaluate your program.
- Identify any problems or issues and make appropriate adjustments.

Special considerations for Telework planning

- Equipment issues – each agency’s Telework solution is likely to be different from any other, simply because every agency has a unique mission and different stakeholders. For that same reason, the equipment each worker may need (for example, laptops, second phone lines, air cards, and PDAs) and how it’s deployed may vary even within an agency, depending on the situation. And because many Federal agencies provide such equipment to home-based worksites, each agency should also establish its own policies on the provision and installation of that equipment.
- Residence issues – because Teleworkers usually perform part of their job at an official duty station, the place that workers live can have a continuing impact on their ability to attend that duty station on a regular basis, and as-needed for meetings and other special activities.

“Telework has been a terrific opportunity for me...I save time and money working close to home and my concentration on work tasks has greatly improved.”

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY
ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEE**

- When to Telework – Telework is great for work that requires thinking and writing, such as data analysis, reviewing grants or cases, and writing decisions or reports. It's also suitable for such telephone-intensive tasks as setting up a conference, obtaining information, and following up on participants in a study. A third application can be computer-oriented tasks, such as programming, web page design, data entry, and word processing.
- When not to Telework – Telework is not suitable for employees who need to be in the office to learn the organization, require on-the-job training, need close supervision, or thrive on interaction with coworkers. Such workers would suffer from the isolation of working alone, with obvious team impacts.
- Teleworker criteria – a successful Teleworker is an organized, disciplined, and conscientious self-starter who requires minimal supervision. Teleworking should not adversely affect either the worker's performance or that of their coworkers. Thus, if their job involves frequent interaction with coworkers or customers, they should be expected to be available at the same times as if in the office. And although Telework will give some employees more time for their family responsibilities, they should not use work time for providing dependent care or any purpose other than official duties.
- Worksite issues – it's the Teleworker's responsibility to provide a safe and adequate place to work off-site that is free from interruptions and provides the necessary level of security and protection for Government property. If this is not available in the worker's home, they should be directed to use the Telework center that serves their local area.

Verizon Wireless: your partner for Telework planning

For a successful Telework program, agencies need a technology partner who fully understands their mission and objectives, and has the insight, resources, orientation, and experience with Telework programs elsewhere to provide full support to your agency's own Telework deployment.

Verizon Wireless is especially qualified to give you this support. Along with close working relationships with the leading voice and data device developers, we have a highly redundant and inherently secure CDMA-based network backed by multiple network operations centers, dispatchable emergency cell sites, and a dedicated government support center.

Working closely with agencies or lead system integrators, we can determine the ideal solution for your Telework mandates while respecting legacy investments and budget objectives. We then draw together the devices, services, third parties, and deployment strategy necessary to assure success.

The key assets Verizon Wireless offers are:

- Mobile Broadband built-in from mobile-computing specialists like Panasonic and Itronix that can enable continuous productivity in the field, even under unusually harsh and demanding conditions.
- AirCard products and matching EvDO data service that bring affordable and widely-supported broadband-quality connectivity to your agency's existing pool of mobile computing devices.
- Smartphones pre-configured with mobile applications that are especially suited to the needs and roles of specific work teams, proficiencies, functions and regions.
- Push to Talk service—built on a modern IP network—that enables agency staffers to use a single contact number regardless of the service used, and to retain and recall the industry's largest dedicated contact database.



- Fleet Administrator and products that help agencies keep track of their in-field assets, and ensure that in-field staffers have the exact information and resources they need, when they need it.
- Wireless Email service that works seamlessly with popular enterprise email solutions to keep teams connected.
- Global access services to keep staffers who are working abroad in touch with their teams and data.
- Wireless Priority Service that ensures access to an open channel during emergencies.
- A dedicated Verizon Wireless Crisis Response Team (VCRT) created specifically to support government agencies during extraordinary situations, from national security threats and severe storms affecting entire regions to agency-specific emergencies affecting a single campus.

We're honored to serve our government

At Verizon Wireless, we're proud of our decades of service to government, especially during some of our nation's most defining historic moments. We'd be honored to serve you by helping you achieve a successful Telework program.

To arrange a private consultation about your agency's Telework goals, along with an assessment of your current Telework readiness, please contact your Verizon Wireless Account Manager today.

Resources for Telework Policy

- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management and U.S. General Services Administration**
Federal human resource laws, guidelines, and individual agency policies and materials including step-by-step guides:
www.telework.gov
- **WorldAtWork**
Teleworking issues, practices, programs, and events:
www.workingfromanywhere.org
- **Telework Exchange**
Focuses on the value of Federal telework initiatives, gives updates on emerging education and communications requirements, and measures the progress of Federal agencies on telework requirements:
www.teleworkexchange.com

For custom help with your own wireless voice and data deployment challenges, turn to the team that's always got your back.

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