

Remote Work Arrangement

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Purpose statement

To establish guidelines and provisions for remote work arrangements. The town supports a flexible work culture and encourages remote work arrangements, when feasible. It is important that remote work arrangements be designed to ensure that sense of community and organizational culture can be maintained and operational requirements, collaboration, information sharing, innovation and effective service delivery needs can continue to be met.

Scope

This procedure applies to full-time permanent and temporary non-union employees subject to the specific provisions outlined in this procedure. It may also apply to union employees, subject to the terms and conditions of their respective collective agreements.

Where an employee is represented by a union and a general provision of this procedure conflicts with a specific provision in that employee's collective agreement, the collective agreement provisions will prevail.

Procedure

The town may assign specific jobs and/or positions to be appropriate for remote work. In addition, the town will permit, where feasible, eligible employees to apply to work remotely and to support their remote team members in a safe, productive and inclusive manner as applicable and agreed to by their department. It is not the intent that remote work arrangements be permanent or full time, but rather it is the expectation that a regular presence in the office is still maintained, even for those positions the town designates for remote work. What is considered a "regular presence" in

the office may vary by department and position, however the employee must be on-site a minimum of one to three days per week. Consideration may be given to remote work arrangements alternating weeks to maximize team collaboration and communications.

Balancing individual requests with the service delivery expectations of both the department and organization as a whole must be considered. Where regular remote work arrangements exist or are determined by the town, office space allocation may be reviewed and hotel office space arrangements may be created by the town to accommodate and maximize space efficiencies.

Remote work arrangements are not an employee's right or guaranteed, nor is it an entitlement or a condition of employment. All remote work arrangements require the approval of an employee's Director or designate.

While there are many benefits of a remote work arrangement, these benefits tend to lessen over time, particularly in the areas of innovation, collaboration, information sharing, sense of belonging and career development to name a few. Balancing remote work arrangement requests with the performance of the department and organization as a whole must be considered.

References and related documents

[Employee Related Business Expense Procedure](#)
[Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy](#)
[Absence Reporting Procedure](#) |

Definitions

Remote Work Arrangement: an arrangement where an employee can complete their core job duties from an alternative worksite subject to the conditions outlined below and that such an arrangement does not compromise the confidentiality and ability/productivity of the work that the employee may be performing. An employee must sign and submit the attached Remote Work Agreement for review and approval prior to the remote work arrangement commencing.

Alternative Worksite: for the purposes of this procedure, is defined as an area in an employee's residence that has been designated as a workspace and that adheres to Ontario employment standard and WSIB jurisdiction and legislation as well as health and safety, ergonomic, security and privacy specifications outlined in this procedure. Alternative worksite locations should allow for flexibility in scheduling changes required to meet the demands of the job as operational needs may change with short notice, and a regular presence may be required in the office. Such agreements may be discontinued or suspended for operational reasons outlined below.

Eligibility

1. Not all jobs may be suitable for a remote work arrangement. The ability to participate may vary between departments, work units within a department, or within jobs within a work unit, depending on the nature of the work. If established, a remote work arrangement does not serve as a precedent for a future arrangement within the workplace.

2. Jobs that entail working alone are often suitable for remote work arrangements. Jobs that require physical presence to perform effectively are normally not suitable for remote work arrangements.
3. New employees or existing employees who start a new role with the town may be required to work onsite for the probationary period of that new role before becoming eligible for remote work. Any arrangement that is agreed to prior to the completion of the probationary period is at the discretion of the Director and/or delegate.
4. The work habits, skills and abilities of employees may impact the decision to approve or deny a remote work arrangement. Employees that are considered for remote work arrangements must be able to work independently, be self-starters, demonstrate commitment to work time and be able to continually meet the productivity requirements of their position.
5. The success of a remote work arrangement lies in it being mutually beneficial for the organization and the employee. For a remote work arrangement to be successful, participants must be fully accountable for the quality and quantity of their work. In some cases, employees may be asked to maintain an activity log.
6. No requests will be approved if there are additional costs (i.e. premium pay, overtime directly related to the remote work arrangement).
7. No approval request will contradict the collective agreements, if applicable.
8. Infrequent or emergency remote work arrangements can be agreed on verbally by the employee and their Manager.
9. Where management has determined that a regular remote work arrangement is appropriate and viable, a Remote Work Agreement must be entered into between the employee and the town as a means of tracking this arrangement and must be reviewed no less than annually.
10. The resources that an employee needs to do his/her job must be easily and securely transportable or available electronically.
11. Management may establish work rules to support remote work arrangements to ensure access, safety and timely completion of work.
12. Remote work arrangements are not an alternate to child or family care. If applicable, the remote worker must make appropriate arrangements for dependent care.
13. Remote work arrangements must be reviewed and renewed at least annually or whatever shorter term determined by the Director. The Director or their delegate may discontinue the arrangement at any time. The Director's decision shall be deemed final.
14. The alternative worksite set up/environment must be suitable. It is not the expectation that an employee's alternative work site fully replicate on-site office set-up.
15. Employees who have specific ergonomic needs may not be eligible for an alternative worksite and may be required to work onsite in order to ensure a safe ergonomic set-up of their workspace.

Schedules and hours of work

1. Remote work arrangements should not adversely affect an employee's ability to complete day-to-day functions, including communicating with colleagues, managing customers and clients, maintaining a high level of work quality, and meeting deadlines. Employees must also keep their direct supervisor informed on the progress of assignments and reach out to their direct supervisor for support if and when needed.
2. Remote work hours may be different from office hours, however, the employee and supervisor must agree on the designated hours of work. A regular schedule, including specific days and hours, must be established by the employee and approved by their

supervisor. Changes to the agreed upon schedule must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor.

3. The number of hours an employee works per week will not change due to participation in the remote work arrangement. It is still the expectation that the employee continue to work five days per week or the same number of days per week as they would normally be scheduled as this arrangement is not intended to create a compressed work week arrangement or include weekends, unless these are regularly scheduled days of work.
4. The number of days for a remote work arrangement may vary between 2 and 4 days to accommodate a presence in the office of between 1 and 3 days per week. A review of remote work arrangements must take into account productivity, the ability to share information and collaborate effectively with a wide variety of colleagues, accomplish work objectives and meet operational needs.
5. An employee must be available through all town-provided channels including but not limited to email, telephone, messaging, Smart Phones, etc. during the scheduled hours of the remote work arrangement, with the exception of their scheduled lunch period or breaks to ensure timely responses in accordance with the Town's [communication](#) standards. This includes the expectation that phones or voicemail will be forwarded appropriately. Any changes to their home contact information must be reported to their supervisor immediately.
6. Employees are expected to be flexible with their time and adjust their work hours or remote work days, even with short notice as required to meet business and/or operational emergencies, demands and requirements, including team meetings and events. If a meeting requires an employee's attendance in the workplace on a day that is not typically a day they are in the office, it would not be acceptable to decline the meeting with the rationale that it is not a normal day in the office.
7. Employees are expected to adhere to the meal and break requirements - a one (1) hour unpaid lunch and two (2) 15 minute paid breaks - as set out in the [Absence Reporting Procedure](#) or relevant Collective Agreement provisions, and be mindful of taking breaks throughout the day in accordance with this procedure.
8. All Hours of Work provisions of the *Employment Standards Act (ESA)* must be adhered to when participating in the remote work arrangement.
9. Overtime hours must be pre-approved by the supervisor. Any overtime pay will apply only when the supervisor requires the employee to work during hours where the overtime policy or Collective Agreement provision would apply.
10. Absences will be reported according to the town's Attendance Management Policy or an employee's respective Collective Agreement, regardless of where the employee would be working that day. Recording and tracking work hours is the responsibility of the remote worker, regardless of the location where the work is performed.
11. Supervisors may require an employee to return to the Town of Oakville's office on a regularly scheduled remote work day should work situations warrant such an action. If an employee is frequently asked to return to the office during regularly scheduled remote work days, the supervisor may re-evaluate the compatibility of the employee's suitability for remote work and with appropriate notice to the employee, terminate the remote work arrangement.
12. If an employee is required to be in the office on a regularly scheduled remote work day, mileage is not paid.
13. Remote work arrangements will vary among departments and business units, depending on the function and responsibilities of the employee. Each department must consider maintaining some appropriate complement of employees who work on site at the Town of Oakville's offices in order to function effectively.

Maintaining a Safe Alternative and Appropriate Worksite

1. Employees who are approved for a remote work arrangement must have an appropriate work area in their homes that considers ergonomics, appropriate equipment, noise and interruption factors. Lighting, internet service, power and temperature control should all be consistent with a typical office environment. It is the responsibility of the employee to provide all of these elements that are associated with a typical office environment. It is also the responsibility of the employee to ensure their internet and phone service is of an appropriate quality to ensure proper functioning of video and/or conference calls. Employees who have specific ergonomic needs may not be eligible for an alternative worksite and may be required to work onsite in order to ensure a safe ergonomic set-up of their workspace.
2. The Town of Oakville's liability for job-related incidents will continue to exist during the approved work schedule and in the employee's designated work location since the home office will be considered an extension of the Town of Oakville's workspace.
3. In the case of an injury while working at home, the employee must report the injury to his/her supervisor or human resources immediately (or as soon as circumstances permit).
4. Failure to maintain an ergonomic workplace can result in injuries to the employee, including muscular and visual fatigue. Employees therefore are required to familiarize themselves with proper office ergonomics, including furniture and computer set up, lighting and temperature control, and other ergonomic tools that may be necessary. A helpful summary of office ergonomics should be reviewed and can be found here: <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/> (also see tips for working from home, in Appendix B)
5. Employees are also required to maintain a clean and clutter free workspace, free of tripping hazards and any other conditions that may cause harm to the employee or the employee's workplace equipment.
6. Any adjustment to an employee's homeowner's insurance or coverage is the responsibility of the employee. Any increases to the employee's home utility or internet related costs are the responsibility of the employee.
7. To ensure the above standards are met, all employees who are approved to work remotely will be required to complete a Home Office Safety Checklist (Appendix C) prior to commencing remote work. This checklist must be submitted to their direct supervisor in advance of beginning remote work.
8. Employees are encouraged to contact the Senior Coordinator – Health & Safety if they have any questions regarding home office safety or ergonomics.
9. A professional and neutral backdrop for virtual meetings is also required.

Approved Devices and Technology Use

1. Employees will be provided with the appropriate remote access to Town systems as required and available to complete their work remotely.
2. Information Technology Solutions (ITS) will determine the appropriate standard equipment requirements for Remote Work Arrangements. Other desired items such as larger monitors, printers, etc. will not be provided at Town expense. Remote work arrangements are not intended to replicate two offices and expenses.
3. Should employees require specialized equipment to perform their duties, they can return to the office for use as required. The Town reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization.

4. Equipment supplied by the Town is to be used for business purposes only in accordance with the Town's [Information Technology General Use and Practices Procedure](#). Employees must agree to take appropriate action to protect Town property from theft, damage or misuse and must comply with any required maintenance. Upon termination of Remote Work Arrangement or at the request of the Town, all equipment is to be returned immediately. The Town will take necessary steps to track the issuance and locations of its devices.
5. Employees must immediately notify their direct supervisor and, if appropriate, ITS, of any technical issues with hardware, software, internet access or Town systems that prevent the employee from performing the full extent of their duties.

Confidentiality and Security

1. It is the responsibility of the employee to take all precautions necessary to secure all business-related information and to prevent unauthorized access when working outside the Town of Oakville's office to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of information. Steps to take to secure information include, but are not limited to, use of locked file cabinets or desks; regular password maintenance; privacy from any household members during confidential business meetings and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.
2. The employee must agree to allow an authorized Town of Oakville representative to access the home workspace during prearranged times for business purposes as may be deemed necessary and appropriate for safety inspections; security assurance; and retrieval of town property purposes. It is also the employee's responsibility to bring equipment to town hall for installations and repairs and to return equipment at the end of a remote work arrangement or upon resignation or termination.
3. All provisions identified in the [Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy](#) apply while working from home whether on town provided technology or personal technology while conducting town business and interacting with the public remotely.

Expenses and Compensation

1. No changes will be made to an employee's salary or method of payment as a result of remote work arrangements.
2. Roles/positions determined by the town to be eligible for remote work will be compensated at the same level as they would if they were required to be performed from a Town facility.
3. Costs associated with preparing the home workspace and conducting business in the workplace are the responsibility of the employee (installation of telephone lines, electrical upgrades, appropriate internet connections, etc.).
4. In addition, employees are required to provide, at their own cost, basic home office furniture including a suitable desk, chair, monitor and other peripherals.
5. Prior approval will be required if an employee wishes to use town owned equipment at their off-site workspace. All items remain the property of the Town of Oakville and may not be used for personal or other purposes. All equipment must be returned if the remote work arrangement ceases.
6. All typical office stationary supplies (with the exception of printer ink) will be supplied by the Town of Oakville and must be returned if the remote work arrangement ceases. Staff are to collect supplies required while onsite.

7. Expenses incurred must be consistent with the [Employee Related Business Expense Procedure](#). Questions pertaining to this procedure must be directed to the Finance department. It is the expectation, though, that business expenses incurred by an employee would be rare and minimal. For example, office supplies will still be ordered through the department's normal ordering procedures and the employee is able to take the minimum amount required for them to work at home.
8. All files, programs and electronic content is to be produced using the town standard software technologies based on minimum specifications.
9. The intent is that staff working remotely will use the remote computer work environment to ensure that corporate data repositories, proper software and audit controls are maintained.
10. Employees will only be reimbursed for travel that exceeds what is required to get them to and from their normal/base location once per day. For clarity, the normal/base location for employee's working remotely is the location they would have to report to if the role was to be performed from a Town facility and/or a remote work agreement was not in place.
11. Refer to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website for guidelines and up to date information regarding tax benefits for employees who have remote work arrangements. The eligibility to deduct employee expenses is a matter between the employee and the CRA. The Town will not provide advice on CRA eligibility rules and employees are encouraged to review CRA publications and/or seek advice from their personal tax consultant/accountant.
12. If an employee determines they are eligible to claim home office expenses on their tax return they are required to complete a T2200 Request Form to be submitted to Payroll for consideration by January 15. Contact payroll for further details regarding this process.

Responsibilities

Employee

1. Ensures all eligibility requirements are met in accordance with the above, if appropriate.
2. Ensures the designated remote workplace meets the standards as outlined.
3. Maintains regular and meaningful communication with supervisor, colleagues and clients to the standards set corporately.
4. Demonstrates their ability to be self-motivated, well-organized and self-disciplined in their approach to work.
5. Ensures availability and service delivery is seamless to all other parties (internal and external).
6. Agrees to be flexible with their time and adjust their work hours or remote work days as needed to meet business and/or operational emergencies, demands and requirements.
7. Ensures appropriate connections by phone, email and internet to required systems.
8. Ensures the remote workstation meets safety and ergonomic standards.
9. Ensures that any materials of a sensitive manner are properly protected according to the [Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy](#) and confidentiality requirements of the Town.
10. Records and accounts for time accordingly.
11. Understands that the remote work arrangement may be discontinued at any time if the requirements of the department or town change, such that remote work is no longer feasible.
12. Understands that failure to abide by the remote work procedure, or associated work rules determined by the supervisor, may result in discipline up to and including dismissal.

Supervisor/Manager

1. Reviews the type of work that can be completed remotely.
2. Ensures provisions of this procedure are applied and adhered to in accordance with the above.
3. Monitors productivity and maintains communication with the employee regardless of the location of the employee.
4. Ensures the approved schedule for remote work is not impacting the job duties and service levels/hours of the department.
5. Ensures other employees are aware of the location and arrangement.
6. Ensures service delivery/service provided is seamless to all other parties (internal and external). Supervisors and managers should have regular virtual group chats or meetings with their team to facilitate team communication and avoid individual isolation.
7. Ensures a balance is struck between remote work arrangements and appropriate onsite staffing presence to deliver services and ensure departmental tasks are covered.
8. With reference to confidentiality, decides whether information can leave the Town premises or be communicated electronically.
9. Reviews the request for remote work and makes recommendation for approval to the Department Head or delegate.
10. Provides a copy of the Remote Work Arrangement Agreement to Human Resources for the employee's file.
11. Keeps in regular contact with the employee and reviews the work completed.
12. Promptly follows up on performance issues that may be related to working from home.
13. Ensures annual review of all remote work agreements.
14. Ensures that staff are in compliance with related legislation in all jurisdictions such as the *Employment Standards Act*, *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

Director

1. Ensures corporate directives are followed as they pertain to remote work arrangements
2. Ensures a balance is struck between remote work arrangements and appropriate onsite staffing presence to deliver services and ensure departmental tasks are covered.
3. Approves or denies the remote work agreement and schedule submitted by the employee for remote work.

Information Technology Solutions

1. Provides capability for remote access to selected corporate applications via approved mechanisms.
2. Remotely assists with connecting staff to corporate systems via email or phone. This might include verifying the internet connectivity available, performing password resets and/or guiding staff on connecting to software. Ensures all software and hardware upgrades are implemented for employees working remotely.

Human Resources

1. Ensures that staff are aware of and comply with related legislation in all jurisdictions such as the *Employment Standards Act*, *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

2. Guides and advises supervisors and employees to ensure that employer and employee interests are protected.
3. Ensures copies of the Remote Work Arrangement Agreements are updated and maintained.

Appendices

Appendix A – [Remote Work Arrangement Form – To be revised](#)

[Appendix B – Basic Workstation Checklist](#)

[Appendix C – Tips for Working From Home](#)

[Appendix D – ITS minimum/recommended bandwidth requirements and considerations](#)