



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

Flexible Workplace/Telework Policy

06/21/2021
VERSION 3.0

From the Office of the Bishop

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Where the work permits, this policy provides employees with the flexibility to work where they can have the greatest impact on achieving our vision and mission. The arrangement is intended to benefit the employee by providing work/life integration and flexibility, without putting an undue burden on the supervisor or the rest of team. It also allows the Office of the Bishop to retain valued employees who might otherwise change jobs.

Our goal is to focus on the work, giving employees tools and resources they need for success. Depending on the details of the arrangement, either a portion of the employee's work time or all of it may be eligible for a Flexible Workplace/Telework arrangement.

A request to set up an agreement is typically initiated by the employee through their supervisor. Sometimes an agreement is part of or a condition of employment. Supervisors determine the feasibility of a proposed arrangement before requesting approval as noted below.

To ensure that employees continue working effectively under this policy, supervisors must work with the employee to develop a work plan, and set times and processes to review and approve the continuation of the agreement.

Initial Considerations

1. Is the position appropriate for a flexible workplace/telework arrangement?
2. Is off-site work appropriate for the individual? (*See determining employee readiness below*).
3. Is the team prepared for the changes in working relationships and processes that will occur when one or more employees work off-site? (*See supervisor and team readiness below*).
4. What additional issues is the employee likely to encounter when working from home? Are they dealing with issues such as childcare, elder care, spousal care, or other care situations, that may positively or negatively affect this arrangement? Please note that if these rise to the level of the need for an ADA accommodation, this is covered separately and should be discussed with the HR director.

Determining Employee Readiness

Employee work styles and job duties vary. Some employees may be better prepared than others to manage the unique requirements of a flexible workplace/telework arrangement. When evaluating a request, supervisors should consider how well the employee has demonstrated the kind of skills and work habits that working from an alternate location will require. These include the ability to:

- Prioritize work to meet deadlines;
- Accomplish job duties with minimal supervision;
- Communicate effectively with staff, team members and the wider diocese;

- Attend meetings and other events on time.

Determining Supervisor and Team Readiness

When an employee begins working remotely, the way the supervisor and team work with that employee may also change. Before supervisors approve a request, supervisors should consider any management adjustments needed to ensure the team continues to meet its objectives. Supervisors must ensure that the employee will continue to get work done effectively. To maintain this accountability, determine:

- How the supervisor will stay informed about the employee's work;
- How the team will stay informed about the employee's work;
- Effective ways to facilitate communication;
- When in-person attendance is required;
- If daily check-ins are required.

Consider the practical details about the arrangement such as technology access, equipment needs, time and leave accounting, and any safety concerns about the off-site environment.

Eligible Employees

All employees are eligible for flexible workplace/telework arrangements. Differing requirements and legal rules apply to exempt and non-exempt employees. Amount of time an employee may work from home:

- non-exempt: up to 60%
- exempt: up to 100%

Types of Arrangements

The Office of the Bishop recognizes two general types of arrangements:

- Regular remote work
- Occasional remote

Regular arrangements are supported by a written agreement that specifies the requirements and details of the arrangement. The arrangement can last for a defined period or can continue indefinitely. The arrangement may specify a maximum percentage of employees' work time, or a position may be considered a 100% remote position. These arrangements are either requested by the employee or required due to the nature of the position.

Occasional arrangements are approved on a case-by-case basis and are not regularly scheduled. Approval must be documented, which can be done by email. Occasional arrangements can be used when an employee:

- Has a personal need at home, such as meeting a service technician;

- Has a temporary workplace disruption, such as office remodeling or inclement weather;
- Needs to devote concentrated effort to a project.

Reviews & Continuation of the Agreement

A timeline for review and continuation of the agreement should be specified. Periodic reviews, as well as annual reviews are required to continue the agreement. Work product and productivity are to be part of the review process. If either the supervisor or Canon to the Ordinary/Chief of Staff is unsure that the proposed arrangement can be successful, it may be recommended to allow the employee to work off-site on a pilot basis. Designate an initial review period after which a final decision on the arrangement will be made.

Communications

A specific chain of command for communications is essential within departments and across departments. This should be discussed and outlined clearly on the agreement.

Crossover Work Hours

In establishing this policy, the Office of the Bishop has established Crossover Work Hours when all employees will be available either in the office or by phone/email/video. Crossover Work Hours are Monday through Friday, 10 am-2 pm. Employees regularly scheduled to work on these days are expected to be available during the Crossover Work Hours on a regular basis; occasional exceptions being communicated with employee's supervisor. Some employees may choose to start work at 8 am and finish soon after the end of the crossover hours, while others may choose to start work at 10 am and continue in to the early evening.

Staff Days

In establishing this policy, each team/department is asked to consider identifying a "staff day" when all members of the team will be together in-person and available at Diocesan House.

In Person / Zoom Meetings

When feasible staff are expected to be present in person at the Diocesan House or at an announced location for the meetings listed below. Attendance via phone or video will be allowed in certain situations as cleared by the supervisor and should be noted on the agreement under Job Duties and Expectations.

- Monthly staff meetings
- Staff retreats
- In service and training events

Process to Establish a Flexible Workplace Arrangement

1. Employee initiates request with supervisor.
2. Supervisor determines eligibility and initiates completion of Agreement. When evaluating the request, the supervisor determines that the employee can effectively perform the job duties of the position while working off-site. The supervisor must also determine that the arrangement conforms with applicable policies and procedures outlined in the Office of the Bishop Personnel Handbook. Requests to work remotely as a disability accommodation are handled through a separate process.
3. Supervisor makes the initial decision about an employee request after evaluating its feasibility and then works with the employee to evaluate the proposal and develop a plan. Considerations:
 - a. How arrangement will affect employee, the supervisor, and the rest of the team.
 - b. Identification of potential issues and ways to address those issues.
 - c. Clear communications and chain of command decisions.
 - d. Clearly outlined trouble shooting support and tools that exists to make remote work successful including a who to call list.
 - e. Non-exempt employees require a specific work plan, identification of resources to be provided, and outlined reimbursements.
4. Final approval of the request and plan rests with the Canon to the Ordinary/Chief of Staff in consultation with the Bishop; final approval for Executive Team members requests rests with the Bishop.

Response to the Request

If the supervisor approves the request, the next step is to request final approval from the Canon to the Ordinary/Chief of Staff (who may consult with the Bishop); executive positions are approved by the bishop. After final approval, the supervisor is to document the agreement.

If the request is not approved, supervisor will explain the decision based on both the proposal's impact on department operations and, if relevant, the employee's work record. Discuss concerns about accommodation-related telework requests with the HR director.

Documenting the Arrangement

Once the proposed arrangement has been determined to be feasible and is approved a formal agreement will be created and documented using the approved form. The goal when creating the agreement is to ensure that both the supervisor and the employee have a clear, shared understanding of the arrangement. The content of the agreement should follow the general provisions of the flexible workplace/telework agreement. At a minimum, the agreement should define:

- A work schedule that specifies off-site workdays and work times during each day;
- How to make short-term changes to specified days;
- The length of the arrangement;
- How the arrangement may be terminated;
- When the employee is required to be available, either at home or at the office, including discussion of Crossover Work Hours;
- How the employee will work with the Resource Team regarding things such as reimbursements, mail, and hosting of on-site meetings when the employee is not at Diocesan House.
- Protocol for attending meetings via technology.

Related Policies and Practices

The flexible workplace/telework agreement must comply with all policies outlined in the Office of the Bishop Personnel Handbook. In addition, both supervisors and employees must understand and comply with the following policies:

- A. Office of the Bishop property and data security:** Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that Office of the Bishop property is used in compliance with established policies, particularly related to cyber security. This includes complying with all software licensing agreements. Employees must also maintain the security and confidentiality of Office of the Bishop records.
- B. Equipment insurance:** Office of the Bishop equipment and resources located at an alternate worksite are not automatically insured. The agreement should specify whether the Office of the Bishop or the employee bears the risk of loss. The agreement should require that the employee immediately report any damage to Office of the Bishop equipment. Use of personal equipment and resources is covered under Bring Your Own Device in the Personal Handbook and is different for exempt and non-exempt personnel.
- C. Public records disclosure:** The work employees do while remote remains subject to Office of the Bishop and other applicable regulations including the Washington State Public Records Act. All work product is the property of the Office of the Bishop and the Diocese of Olympia.
- D. Overtime eligible employees:** For overtime eligible (non-exempt) employees, certain activities, such as travel to and from required meetings that occur during scheduled work time are included as hours worked.
- E. Workers' compensation:** Remote employees are covered by workers' compensation for job-related injuries that occur in the course and scope of employment. When the remote site is in the home, workers' compensation does not cover injuries that are not job related.
- F. Tax implications:** Employees are responsible for addressing and resolving any questions about the employee's ability to deduct expenses related to remote work.