

11.1 **Telecommuting Policy**

Telecommuting is a work arrangement where the employee works from home or another remote work site away from the primary traditional work place.

Purpose

Consideration for telecommuting arrangements may be made on a case by case basis and only in situations where the employee can demonstrate a benefit to the City. Telecommuting is not appropriate for all employees, it is not a City wide benefit or entitlement, in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with the City and is not a substitute for dependent care.

Benefits of Telecommuting

Telecommuting offers ~~Recent events have demonstrated~~ a wide range of benefits to the City and its employees. In ~~in~~ allowing telecommuting, the City has witnessed:-

- More efficient employees
- Improved morale
- Employee recruitment and retention advantages
- More efficient meetings with outside groups
- Ability to reach out to other individuals and groups regardless of distance
- Better work/life balance, especially for employees with Council/Commission liaison responsibilities
- More flexible use of office space

Participation

~~Full-time~~All employees, ~~except those under collective bargaining agreements,~~ may apply to participate if their job class allows for telecommuting. Employees must have successfully completed probation, received a satisfactory rating on their last performance evaluation and not had ~~any~~ documented disciplinary action taken against them during the past year. Seniority will not be a basis for selecting employees to participate in this program.

Eligible Employees: Employees working in the office as their primary role.

Ineligible Employees: Employees working in the field as their primary role.

Note: Both eligible and ineligible job classes to be determined if a revised policy is to be considered.

Application Process

The telecommuting application must be completed indicating how the telecommuting will benefit the City. All applications must be signed by the Department Head and then forwarded to Human Resources. The Department Head, Human Resources and the City Administrator will evaluate the application to determine whether or not the application will be approved or denied, at the sole discretion of the City Administrator. The Department Head will then meet with the employee regarding the determination. The Department Head is responsible for ensuring adequate coverage in the office.

Telecommuting Program

It is recommended that employees who telecommute do so for a maximum of two days per week, or on a short-term project basis. The telecommuter and the Department Head should agree upon a regular schedule of work hours and work location. Following the regular work schedule is necessary to ensure maximum accessibility. However, the employee must be willing and able to return to the primary work place at the request of the Department Head for any reason with minimal notice, but not greater than 48 hours' notice. An employee's salary, benefits and job responsibilities will not be affected by participating in telecommuting. Overtime must have prior approval. A remote work site is considered a City work space and the employee, therefore, continues to be governed by applicable City policies, procedures, or practices.

The employee is to be available for ~~telephone, computer and/or fax communication~~ virtual meetings with a webcam with the City at the times as agreed by the signers on the application. The telecommuter must also be available for telephone, email or other communication required by the Department Head and/or City Administrator. The employee will respond to telephone calls at the telecommuting work location, and will respond to telephone messages left for the employee at the employee's City work location.

The Department Head and telecommuter must establish an agreed upon schedule where the telecommuter contacts the office to report progress.

The telecommuting projects must have measurable objectives. For example, writing a section of a manual, working on a special project, processing regular business (such as permits, licenses, A/P, etc.) or preparing spreadsheets and financial analysis where being out of the "office environment" could lead to its accomplishment in a more timely manner.

Telecommuters may be assigned a different workstation space at the office if it is determined that coverage is better suited by an office rearrangement as a result of the telecommuting agreement.

Equipment

If an employee is approved for telecommuting and the project requires the use of a computer, the City shall provide the telecommuter a City-Issued Computer with Virtual Private Network (VPN) as well as soft phone software that allows the telecommuter to make and receive phone calls from their City Assigned Office Phone Number. The telecommuter must have access to any required technology to complete their task such as permit/license software, financial software, agenda software, etc. If the telecommuter desires a printer or other computer equipment, the cost of the equipment, maintenance repair of the equipment, equipment insurance, electricity, and/or phone lines/internet subscriptions are the employee's responsibility, unless otherwise approved by the City Administrator.

The cost of installing and licensing software will be at the City's expense as long as a software license already exists for that particular user.

The telecommuter must have access to virtual meeting software and hardware (such as Zoom Room) to connect to walk in traffic.

City Supplied Software/Hardware

- Computer (desktop or laptop)
- Virtual Private Network (VPN)
- Softphone or Cell Phone 'twinned' with Office Phone
- Customary software on desktop

In the case where an employee owns a personal computer, the employee must provide a copy of the appropriate documents to verify that the software being used is legally licensed and receive virus detection training from the IT Division. The City assumes no liability for loss, damage or wear of employee owned equipment. Due to security concerns, the telecommuter shall not use a personal computer for purposes of telecommuting. The City assumes no liability for loss, damage or wear of employee owned equipment. If the IT Division determines that the telecommuter is using a personal commuter that is not using legally a personal computer with software that is not licensed and/or does not receive virus detection training, the telecommuting agreement may be terminated.

Telecommuters will take all precautions necessary to secure confidential and/or proprietary information and prevent unauthorized access into any City system.

Insurance

The employee will be covered by Worker's Compensation while working at the telecommuting work address during the hours of work as indicated on the Telecommuting Application. The city of Ramsey's liability is limited to injuries resulting directly from the work and only if the injury occurs in the designated work area. Any claims will be handled according to regular Workers Compensation procedures. If injured while telecommuting, the employee should follow the appropriate procedures for reporting the injury. Other family members or visitors to the telecommuting work address are not covered by the City's Worker's Compensation program. The city of Ramsey is not liable for any injuries to family members, visitors, or others in the employee's home. Employees should consider carrying insurance to cover these instances.

Telecommuters working at home will have a designated space maintained by the employee. With advance notice, the employer may visit the work site to ensure that safe work conditions exist. For projects involving extensive computer use, staff may request an ergonomics evaluation of the work area.

Expenses

The City will not reimburse the employee for any expenses the employee incurs to participate in telecommuting. This includes equipment, utilities, supplies and furniture. The City will provide a small and reasonable number of office supplies (such as pens, paper, post-it notes, and paper clips) for use by the telecommuter.

Travel time from the home to the workplace is not compensatory, even if the employee reports to the regular workplace on a day scheduled for telecommuting.