

TRS Policy

Remote Work (Telework) Program

Purpose

To provide eligible TRS employees with the option of working remotely (teleworking) from home in accordance with the requirements of the Remote Work Program in support of TRS' commitment to work practices that enhance productivity and further the agency's ability to achieve its mission.

Participation in the **remote work (telework) program is a privilege and not an entitlement.** Remote work may be revoked on an individual or department level at any time or for any reason.

Values

This policy demonstrates TRS' values, including ethics, respect, and excellence.

Applies To

All eligible TRS employees whose jobs have been approved to participate in the remote work (telework) program.

Remote work (telework) for non-TRS workers is addressed as part of their assignment and contract.

TRS may expand participants in the remote work program at times to maintain business continuity (e.g., emergencies, pandemic response, long-term facilities planning, etc.).

Definitions

Remote Work or "Telework": A work arrangement that allows an employee to conduct all or some agency business from home during all or a portion of established work hours, in addition to working on TRS premises.

Remote Work Program: A TRS program which allows employees to work remotely from an employee's place of residence (defined as the residence approved through the Remote Work Agreement). The program includes both fully remote and hybrid working arrangements.

The employee's remote workspace must be approved in accordance with applicable policies. Working remotely from a location other than an employee's designated remote location requires approval from management. Any alternative location must meet all program requirements, see below. Employees are prohibited from providing in-person TRS services at their personal residence.

General Statement

Pursuant to Texas Government Code § 658.011, TRS may authorize an employee to work remotely to address a lack of available office space or to provide reasonable flexibility that enhances TRS' ability to achieve its mission. Eligible employees may request approval from their manager to work

from home to conduct official TRS business. TRS may request that employees participate in the remote work program if it is determined to be in the best interest of TRS.

The expectation for remote work is that the employee will effectively accomplish their regular job duties, regardless of work location. Management will apply the same performance standards to employees regardless of work location. Accordingly, timely completion of work, meeting attendance (in person when requested), responsiveness, professionalism, appropriate dress code, and other performance criteria are the same for remote and onsite employees. Employees engaged in remote work are subject to the same rules, policies, and performance standards as employees who do not work remotely, including TRS' Corrective Actions policy.

Eligibility for remote work is dependent on the job position, employee performance, and TRS business needs. Some positions will not be eligible for remote work, while other positions may be designated as 100% remote.

This policy addresses assigned work locations, whether onsite or remote. This policy does not cover work while an employee is traveling for TRS business purposes. Business travel is not considered remote work. Remote work for activities that are more than incidental is limited for employees traveling for personal purposes unless an exception has been granted based on business need.

Eligibility

Management is responsible for determining if positions are eligible for remote work based on operational and business needs. Management may determine that remote work is not a productive option for the business unit, team, or job position. When evaluating whether a position is eligible for remote work, management must consider the nature of work, the responsibilities and functions performed, department and team needs, whether daily face-to-face interaction is required, supervision requirements, and current performance of the employee. If utilizing remote work, the employee's department must be able to meet operational needs.

A full-time or part-time employee may be eligible to work remotely if they have met the following requirements:

- Works in an eligible position in a department that has determined that remote work is an option.
- Has met any onsite training requirements.
- Meets or exceeds performance expectations for their position.
- Is not currently on a corrective action plan or performance improvement plan unless approval is granted by the department Chief or Deputy Chief.
- Demonstrates the ability to work independently, communicate effectively, establish priorities, manage distractions, and meet deadlines.
- Must be able to report onsite for meetings or other business needs as required.
- Satisfies all administrative aspects of the remote work program. The employee must respond promptly to requests for information related to the program.
- Must have access to sufficient internet service and an appropriate workspace to perform their job successfully. Bandwidth requirements may vary depending on job function and assignment. If an employee loses connectivity, they must contact their manager as soon as

possible. If connectivity cannot be restored within 30 minutes, business needs may dictate that the employee complete their work onsite. Employees may be required to use their own accrued leave if the circumstances dictate.

- Must adhere to technical guidelines in the Information Security Policy and Standards, and the Acceptable Use Policy (or other guidelines from IT and IS), limitations, and expectations for remote work participation.

The ability to work remotely can be revoked by TRS without notice at any time and for any reason. TRS also may require an employee to report to their regular, onsite place of employment, or another work location, for the purpose of attending a meeting, special event, or other engagement for which TRS determines in-person interaction is necessary, even if an employee is authorized to work remotely on that day.

Remote work cannot be offered as a condition of employment.

The ability to work remotely can be revoked by an employee's manager at any time. Employees may be required to be onsite during their new hire probationary period.

Requesting and Approving Remote Work

Interested employees should contact their manager to discuss remote work options. If an employee is approved to work remotely, TRS and the employee must enter into a written agreement describing the terms under which the employee may work remotely ("Remote Work Agreement"). The Remote Work Agreement must include the reasons for which remote work is being authorized, state the terms under which the agreement may be revoked, and be renewed at least once a year after the employee begins working remotely.

The following circumstances may result in an employee losing their remote work participation:

- Failure to obtain prior written approval to remote work.
- Failure to sign the Remote Work Agreement including the terms under which the employee may work remotely.
- Employee's remote work causes demonstrable productivity loss to the employee or their team.
- Employee has violated TRS IT, IS, security, ethics, or privacy policies, including not protecting the confidentiality of information from unauthorized disclosure or access as indicated in TRS' *Confidentiality Policy, Confidential Information Procedures and Standards, and Employee Ethics Policy*, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
- Employee does not demonstrate appropriate level of responsiveness during remote work.
- Employee's department or TRS ceases to offer an option to work remotely.
- Employee is unable to self-manage the necessary IT requirements to work remotely.
- Any other reason determined to be in the best interest of TRS by the employee's department leadership or the Executive Director in collaboration with OE and L&C.

Eligibility for remote work will be reviewed at least annually by management to determine whether the arrangement is still in the best interest of TRS. In the event an employee is approved to continue remote work, the Remote Work Agreement between the employee and TRS will be renewed. An employee's Remote Work Agreement must be renewed at least annually.

Note: This policy does not apply to remote work arrangements made through the Workplace Accommodations process. A request to remote work as an accommodation for a disability must be made in accordance with the provisions of the *Workplace Accommodations* policy.

Modifications to Remote Work Locations

Any permanent modification to an employee's remote work location must be approved in advance by management in collaboration with OE and L&C. TRS will review the circumstances to determine if the request can be accommodated.

Out-of-State Remote Work

Out-of-state and out-of-country remote work is not being approved at this time for any length of time, including working remotely in a different location to extend a period of personal leave. However, under limited circumstances, the Executive Director may approve requests for out-of-state remote work after completion of an analysis by L&C, OE, and Employee Payroll & Time Administration. Employees need to seek prior approval if seeking to engage in work while on leave out-of-state or out-of-country.

Confidentiality

The same standards for maintaining confidentiality that apply to employees working at their on-site TRS office apply equally when working remotely. Employees working remotely are expected to maintain the confidentiality of TRS and trust participant information as required by law and TRS policies and procedures. Employees should consult their manager and comply with the Confidentiality policy and Information Security Policies and Standards prior to taking confidential documents to a remote work location. When it is appropriate to use confidential documents at the remote work location, as approved by manager confidential documents must be secured in transit and at the employee's remote work location. Documents containing PHI, and PII should not be taken to a remote work location. **Printing while working remotely is not permitted.**

Employees have no expectation of privacy while remote working.

Dependent Care

Remote work is not a replacement for appropriate childcare or the care of other dependents. Children and other members of the household who need regular attention must be under the care of another adult while the employee is working remotely. Care arrangements should be such that the employee may leave home immediately to take care of job-related matters.

Workspace

Employees are responsible for self-certifying that their remote workspace complies with identified health and safety requirements as specified in the Remote Work Agreement.

Employees approved to work remotely must consider their location as an extension of working onsite at TRS. Each employee participating in a remote work arrangement may be asked to submit a photograph of the offsite work area to be kept on file. The remote work location must provide an adequate working area, lighting, power, ventilation, and temperature control. The employee agrees to maintain safe working conditions and to practice the same safety habits as if working onsite at TRS.

With appropriate notice or given cause, TRS reserves the right to have a spot check of the home office environment or to make inquiries as to the status of the environment. Reasonable notification will be at minimum 24 hours, except in cases of emergency.

If an employee incurs a work-related injury while performing remote work activities, workers' compensation laws and rules apply just as they would if such an injury occurred in the traditional office environment. Employees must notify their management immediately and complete all necessary documentation regarding the injury.

As previously mentioned, employees working remotely are expected to maintain the confidentiality of TRS and Trust participant information as required by law and TRS policies and procedures. Confidential documents must be secured when working remotely (see Information Security Policies and Standards for details).

Reimbursable/Shared Costs

Office Expenses

It is permissible for approved remote work participants to take a reasonable number of office supplies (pens, pencils, notepads, etc.) home for use during remote work.

Any other reimbursable expenses must be approved in advance by an employee's manager. TRS will not be liable for unapproved expenses. **Printing while working remotely is not permitted at this time.** TRS will not reimburse for the provision in whole, or part, of internet or phone services.

Travel

For employees working remotely, TRS generally will not reimburse travel expenses between the employee's home/remote work location and their TRS office work location(s). Refer to the *TRS Travel Guide* for additional information on the required information and the treatment.

Note that travel time is considered hours worked while the employee is in transit between job related sites or is in transit, during working hours, to attend work related trainings, conferences, or meetings. Travel time is not considered hours worked when the employee is commuting between their home (before the regular workday or after the end of the workday) and regular duty location unless they are actively working while commuting. If employees plan to work during their commute, they must receive prior approval from management. Time spent working on TRS business is considered compensable time.

Services, Equipment, Assignment, Repair, Maintenance and Replacement

Participating in the remote work program does not necessarily entitle employees to TRS-owned equipment, including computers, software, printers, fax machines, furniture, or a phone line or mobile devices. Not all participants will be engaged in functions that require the provision of this equipment.

Each manager, when feasible and consistent with budget constraints and IT initiatives, may provide TRS-issued computers and related supplies for remote work. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.

IT is responsible for maintaining the compliance and management of TRS-issued laptops and other computer workstations, patching, anti-malware, firewall, and host-based security features. Services that require in-person assistance may take place on TRS premises and require the employee to travel onsite.

In certain situations, where prior approval is obtained, employee-owned personal computer equipment may be used for remote work, provided the equipment has met the minimum standards set by the Information Technology & Information Security departments and all TRS policies and procedures. The remote work employee will be responsible for performing the installation and configuration of employer-provided software on their personal equipment.

Without management approval, technical support of employee-owned equipment is limited.

If there are equipment malfunctions or service interruptions that force the employee to discontinue remote work, the employee must notify their supervisor immediately and may be required to return to the office until the malfunctions are rectified. If this is not a viable option, the employee may need to use their accrued leave until they are able to access the agency network.

TRS does not assume any liability for loss, damage, or wear of employee-owned equipment because of remote work-related activity. Employee-owned equipment maintenance and repairs remain the responsibility of the employee.

When remote work is terminated, or employment is terminated, the employee must return all TRS-owned equipment, software, and confidential information within 24 hours or make arrangements with TRS to return equipment due to extenuating circumstances.

Emergency Situations

All TRS employees are required to complete remote work orientation. If there is an emergency situation that requires the closure of TRS offices, TRS may require employees to work remotely. This may be different from their normal work schedule or agreed upon remote work plan. Some employees (e.g., emergency response team, essential workers, etc.) may be required to report onsite due to the nature of their position to support TRS business operations. TRS will follow federal, state, and local guidance in these matters.

TRS employees that work fully remote should follow emergency declarations issued by a State or Federal Government that impacts them. If an emergency prevents a remote employee from conducting their work, the employee should inform their manager when able and safe to do so to obtain guidance based on their circumstance. Chief Officers will collaborate options for appropriate support with OE and the Executive Director (or designee) based on business need.

Timekeeping During Remote Work

TRS Work Hours

During remote work, employees are expected to adhere to their agreed upon hours or proactively communicate exceptions to their manager for prior approval.

Timesheets and Time Management

Employees engaged in remote work have the same expectations as employees who do not work remotely to keep accurate and up-to-date timesheets, whether working remotely or onsite.

Leave, Overtime, and Compensatory Time

Employees may accumulate compensatory time during remote work with prior management approval. Employees may not use remote work as a substitute for leave. Employees who work remotely will still record vacation, sick and compensatory time when they take such time, as appropriate.

Violations

Violation of this policy may be grounds for corrective action, including termination without warning.

Cross Reference/Related Documents

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Confidentiality
- Confidential Information Procedures and Standards
- Information Security Policy and Standards
- Corrective Action
- Workplace Accommodation
- Flexible Scheduling
- Remote Work Program FAQ

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This policy does not constitute a contract, a promise or guarantee of employment, or a guarantee of access to TRS premises or information resources, as applicable, and may be modified, superseded, or eliminated by TRS without notice to the employee.