



## EL PASO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

### Telework Policy

**Adopted Date: August 31, 2020**

#### I. Purpose

Teleworking is a work arrangement between an eligible County employee and their supervisor that allows them to engage in work in an area that is outside of their designated office space for all or part of their workweek. The County of El Paso considers teleworking to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the work duties are suited to such an arrangement.

This policy offers general guidelines for Department Heads/Elected Officials to allow appropriate levels of remote work within their departments, while continuing to provide great value and service to the County of El Paso.

Teleworking arrangements shall be used at the discretion of the Department Head/Elected Official. However, such arrangements may also be used at the County Commissioner's Court direction as part of an emergency order (See Section II.H. below).

#### II. Policy

##### A. Eligibility

1. Individuals requesting formal teleworking arrangements must be employed with the County for a minimum of 6 months of continuous, regular employment, must have a satisfactory performance record, and must have the appropriate equipment to perform such work. Due to the County's wide range of services and obligations, this policy may not be feasible for all Departments/Offices. All employee requests to participate in a telework capacity will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

##### B. Employee Responsibilities

1. All County employees who have received supervisory approval to telework must sign the **Teleworking Agreement** under this policy. A department head may have additional guidelines, requirements, or procedures provided they are in conformance with the general intent of this program.
2. Teleworking employees are subject to the same professional standards they normally would be when engaged in onsite work and must adhere to all El Paso County policies.
3. Teleworking employees must ensure they have the appropriate training, equipment and supplies to conduct their work in an offsite capacity and have completed the **Telework Acknowledgement – Receipt and Return of County Equipment**.

4. In accordance with the ***Teleworking Agreement***, teleworking employees must perform work related activities during their scheduled teleworking hours as agreed to between the supervisor and employee, and must be responsive and available as required when working onsite. If necessary, the employee must be prepared to arrive to their normal working site within one hour (as requested by their supervisor).
5. Teleworking employees must designate a professional work area that is suitable for performing their assigned duties, including the ability to tele-conference via meetings and calls as necessary. Requirements for these areas will vary, however, employees should use good judgement when selecting a location to work offsite.

### **C. Department Responsibilities**

1. Department Heads/Elected Officials shall be responsible for identifying which work activity qualifies or does not qualify for telework, and ensure consistent applicability of telework arrangements among their employees throughout the departments.
2. Departments shall establish effective management controls that will be used to assure telework performance is equal to or greater than performance conducted onsite.
3. Departments shall ensure all teleworking employees have completed the ***Teleworking Agreement*** required as part of this policy before telework arrangements begin.
4. Departments must ensure teleworking employees have the appropriate training, equipment and supplies to conduct their work in an offsite capacity and have completed the ***Telework Acknowledgement – Receipt and Return of County Equipment***.
5. This policy is subject to the County's Working Hours Scheduling Policy. If deemed necessary, the employee or County have the option to terminate the ***Teleworking Agreement*** at any time. A supervisor or department leader may deny, terminate, or modify a teleworking arrangement for any business reason. A supervisor may also impose a temporary teleworking probation period to ensure the employee is both compliant with the arrangement and successful in performing their duties as assigned.

### **D. Procedures**

Employees who must engage in a telework arrangement, or request to engage in a telework arrangement, must comply with the following process in order to be considered for a telework arrangement:

1. Discuss teleworking eligibility and requirements with their supervisor;
2. Read and agree to this Teleworking Program Policy; and
3. Complete the Teleworking Agreement and Telework Acknowledgement – Receipt and Return of County Equipment as required by the department.

- i. Should an employee wish to modify or terminate the Teleworking Agreement, the employee should inform their supervisor as soon as possible. A modified Teleworking Agreement is subject to the same approval process as the original Agreement. If the employee is terminating the Teleworking Agreement, the employee must provide an effective termination date.

#### **E. Equipment**

1. A teleworking employee must identify all equipment, supplies, software, and other job-related items necessary to successfully complete their duties as assigned. If neither the employee, nor the department can provide this equipment, the teleworking arrangement may be denied.
2. All County equipment being used to assist with a teleworking arrangement must be included in the ***Telework Acknowledgement – Receipt and Return of County Equipment***.
3. Equipment, software, or supplies provided by the County are subject to the same rules as when in the workplace and should only be used by the employee.
4. Employees who use their personal equipment for teleworking are responsible for the installation, repair, and maintenance of their own equipment. However, the County may require certain software be uploaded, and may require access to any personal equipment used while teleworking and conducting official County business. Employees shall release the County from any and all liability resulting from the use of his/her own equipment.

#### **F. Safety & Security**

1. Employees are expected to maintain their teleworking workspaces in a safe manner, free from safety hazards.
2. The County assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee's workspace outside of work hours or any injuries sustained that are not within the employee's scope of employment. Employees are responsible for any injuries to third parties and/or members of the employee's family on the employee's premises during the employee's teleworking period.
  - i. If an employee incurs an injury while teleworking, workers' compensation law and rules apply. The employee must immediately notify his/her employee and complete all necessary documents regarding the injury.
  - ii. "Teleworking" is directly related to working in an approved work site, and does not include non-covered actions that the employee may take during break periods from working. These non-covered actions include all actions that the employee would not be able to perform at his/her regular office environment or those non-covered actions that are directly related to the operation of the home. Examples of non-covered

actions include caring for a child(ren) or parent(s), domestic tasks, yard work, checking mail, etc.

3. Consistent with the County's standards and expectations of information security for employees while working onsite, teleworking employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary and confidential information accessible from their teleworking workspace.

#### **G. Time Worked**

1. Teleworking employees shall record their time worked in the County's timekeeping system.
2. For FLSA Non-Exempt employees, hours worked in excess of those scheduled per day and per workweek require the advance approval of the teleworker's supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the termination of the ***Teleworking Agreement***.
3. If an employee is unable to telework and is needing to use sick, vacation, or personal time, then the employee must report those absences to their supervisor for approval as they would in a normal office setting.
4. If an employee is required to return to their normal worksite, such travel time to and from the normal worksite is not considered work time in this context.

#### **H. Ad Hoc & Emergency Arrangements**

1. Temporary informal, or short-term teleworking arrangements may be approved for various circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, business travel, or for employees on family or medical leave. These arrangements are subject to the approval of the Department Head, depending on the business needs of the department.
2. During periods of emergency, Commissioners Court may direct County departments to engage in teleworking arrangements wherever possible.
  - i. When emergency periods are activated, employee eligibility under this policy changes so that all employees become eligible, regardless of their duration of employment, or performance levels with the County.
  - ii. All other provisions within this policy remain the standard when engaging in teleworking arrangements under an emergency period.
  - iii. In accordance with their required Continuity of Operations Plans (CoOP), County departments are responsible for projecting all equipment which may be necessary during a mass-telework arrangement and shall coordinate such efforts with the Information Technology Department in advance.