CHAPTER IV (BENEFITS)

PR – 423 Telework

A. Purpose

Telework is a cooperative arrangement between employees and employing departments/offices.

Telework is defined as work arrangements in which an employee performs assigned job duties at home or at another worksite and may include utilizing various forms of county owned telecommunications technology.

Telework will provide flexibility when determining employee work schedules and work locations. This telework policy will authorize employees and their directors to adjust their work arrangements within the guidelines and requirements contained herein**.**

Benefits:

- Ability to function and provide services during an emergency when the regular worksite is inaccessible;
- Preserving productivity;
- Efficient use of county resources;
- Recruitment and retention of highly qualified employees;
- Greater flexibility for employees, departments and offices; and
- Improved employee morale and job satisfaction.

B. Policy

Telework is an alternative work arrangement developed by the department head/elected official in consultation with the employee. Telework may be appropriate for some employees and some positions; however, telework is not a countywide benefit and may be discontinued at any time at the sole discretion of the board of supervisors and/or department head/elected official.

All telework programs shall comply with county and department/office policies and state statutes.

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) delegates authority to the County Administrator for the implementation and execution of this policy.

Teleworking is a privilege, not a right. All county employees who telework must have an approved telework agreement under this policy.

Telework does not change the essential duties, obligations, responsibilities or terms and conditions of county employment. Telework employees must comply with county rules, policies, practices and instructions. Approval will be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with this policy.

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Telework employees must perform work during scheduled teleworking hours. Employees may not engage in other activities while teleworking that would not be permitted at the regular worksite, such as a child, elder, other dependent care or personal business.

Telework employees may address personal business during their unpaid lunch period or during scheduled PTO leave, as they would at the regular worksite.

C. Eligibility

Eligibility for teleworking is based on both the position and the employee. Not every job or every employee will qualify for telework.

1. Position eligibility
   An employee's position may be suitable for telework when the essential job duties:
   - Are independent in nature;
   - Are primarily knowledge-based;
   - Do not require frequent interaction at the regular worksite with supervisors, colleagues, clients or the public, in person or by phone;
   - Do not require the employee's immediate presence at the regular worksite to address unscheduled events, unless alternative arrangements for coverage are possible; and
   - Are not critical to the continuation of operations on a limited basis.

2. Employee eligibility

   Employees may be suitable for telework when their personal characteristics, as determined by the supervisor, include:

   - Dependability, responsibility and productivity;
   - Effective communication with supervisors, coworkers and clients;
   - The ability to work independently;
   - A thorough knowledge of their job duties and an exceptional skill in performing them consistently and accurately;
   - The ability to prioritize work effectively;
   - Possess reliable internet if needed; and
   - Exceptional organizational and time management skills.

Employees who are under disciplinary action, not meeting performance or conduct expectations or are on a probationary period are not eligible to telework.

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D. Implementing telework

Telework is available on an occasional or regular basis. Regular telework means the employee teleworks at least one day per pay period. Telework may be appropriate for attracting potential applicants, retaining employees and providing reasonable accommodations to current employees.

Occasional telework means an employee works away from the office on an infrequent, one-time or irregular basis. This option provides an ideal arrangement for employees who generally need to be in the office but who sometimes have projects, assignments or other circumstances that meet the eligibility criteria.

Employees who telework must be available to work at the regular worksite on telework days, if needed. Occasional requests by employees to change their regularly schedule telework days should be accommodated by the supervisor, if possible. Employees must obtain prior authorization to change a regularly scheduled telework day.

The teleworker will attend job-related meetings, training sessions and conferences as required by the department head/elected official or designee. While teleworking, the teleworker must be available via telephone, email and electronic messaging during agreed-upon work hours. The department head/elected official or designee will agree on how to handle telephone messages, including feasibility of call forwarding and frequency of checking telephone messages.

E. Work hours

All the rules applicable at the regular worksite are applicable while telework is being performed. Such rules include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Employees must perform designated work during scheduled work hours;
- Employees must account for and report time spent teleworking the same way they would at the regular worksite, or according to the terms of the telework agreement;
- Time accounting should be included in the telework agreement;
- Employees may work overtime only when directed to do so and approved in advance by the supervisor;
- Employees must obtain approval to use paid time off (PTO) or other leave in the same manner as departmental employees who do not telework;
- Employee is required to satisfactorily complete all assigned work in a timely manner during telework days; and
- Employees who become ill must report the hours actually worked and use PTO for hours not worked in accordance to their department/office attendance policy.

F. Regular worksite

The official regular worksite for employees covered by a telework agreement shall be considered for all Arizona locations.

G. Telework worksite

A teleworking employee must designate a work area suitable for performing official County business. Requirements for the work area will vary depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed and may be determined by the department/office.

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that all of the requirements to perform official work at their residence are met to ensure tasks are performed safely and securely. Employees must maintain a professional background in video meetings. Employees will conduct an inspection of their telework worksite, complete, sign the required inspection form, and submit it to their supervisor prior to their first day of teleworking.

Employees approved by their Department Head/Elected Official to telework are covered by workers' compensation laws while performing work duties at their designated alternate locations during regular work hours. Employees who suffer a work-related injury or illness while teleworking must notify their supervisor and complete the required forms immediately as outlined in the Yuma County Risk Management policy.

H. Request, approval and termination for telework

A telework agreement is required for any teleworker and must be approved in advance by the Department Head/Elected Official.

An employee may request telework as provided under PR 104 (D) as a reasonable accommodation. Human resources will prepare the required documentation for Department Head/Elected Official approval and shall provide copies of approval, if granted, to the employee and the employee's Department Head/Elected Official.

In approving the telework schedule, the Department Head/Elected Official will take into consideration the overall impact of the teleworker's total time away from the regular worksite. Considerations include flextime and compressed workweek schedules, meetings, consultations, presentations and conferences. Consideration will be given to the overall effect of the teleworker's and co-workers' schedules in maintaining adequate communication.

Approval of telework agreements will be made on a case-by-case basis and in consideration of the employee's performance and abilities, job duties and technical requirements as assessed by the Department Head/Elected Official or designee.

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Approved telework requests shall be forwarded to human resources. Human resources will forward a copy of the request to Information Technology Services (ITS) and a copy placed in the employee's personnel file.

A Department Head/Elected Official shall terminate the telework agreement should the employee's performance not meet the minimum standards or the arrangement fails to meet the needs of the department/office and/or county.

Upon conclusion of an approved telework period, the department/office is responsible for submitting the requisite forms to ITS for terminating the employee's remote access to his or her email and electronic documents and folders.

I. Equipment and supplies

A telework employee does not obtain any rights to county equipment, software or supplies provided in connection with telework. The employee must immediately return all county equipment, software and supplies at the conclusion of the telework arrangement, employee termination or at the department/office request.

Equipment, software or supplies provided by the county are for county business only. Any equipment, software, files and databases provided by the county shall remain the property of the county and shall not be used by anyone other than the teleworking employee.

As part of any telework agreement, the employee's department head/elected official or designee shall request an assessment of the requesting employee's computer equipment and software needs through the ITS support desk at least 20 days prior to the implementation of the telework agreement. The assessment will look at the employee's current county computer equipment and software and provide recommendations to the department head/elected official or designee during the agreement approval process.

For security reasons teleworkers should never use open Wi-Fi networks (typically free Wi-Fi in public places) to perform county business. Internet connections shall be password protected. Employees must have access to a reliable high-speed internet connection sufficient to perform their work-related duties.

Products, documents and records used and/or developed while teleworking shall remain the property of the county and are subject to county policies regarding confidentiality and records retention requirements.

For telework jobs that have security and/or confidentiality requirements, procedures must be established to guarantee protection of confidential information. Procedures may include a locked or secure workplace, computer access passwords, or restricted use of files at the telework site. If security and/or confidentiality issues exist, they need to be addressed in the telework agreement.

The county does not provide coverage for employee-owned property unless agreed to in writing prior to any loss or damage, as per A.R.S. § 41-621(a)(4). Covered employee property damage claims are paid based on the actual cash value and not replacement cost.

County equipment in the home office must be used and maintained in accordance with county policies and guidelines. The employee is responsible for reporting lost or damaged equipment to their supervisor and to Risk Management.

Historical Note: Adopted, Eff. 12/19/2022