

Guidelines for Identifying Job Classifications and Positions Appropriate for Telecommuting and Determining Employee Eligibility

As outlined in Section 110.171(3), F.S., each agency is required to identify and maintain a current listing of the job classifications and positions that the agency considers appropriate for telecommuting. Telecommuting is defined by Section 110.171(1)(c), F.S., as a “work arrangement whereby selected state employees are allowed to perform the normal duties and responsibilities of their positions, through the use of computers or telecommunications, at home or another place apart from the employees’ usual place of work.” Positions with all or a portion of duties that are able to be performed away from the main office (i.e., normal work site) may be eligible for telecommuting. In identifying appropriate jobs for telecommuting, some basic considerations are:

- Whether the job requirements accommodate working away from the normal work site on a recurring basis;
- Whether necessary contact with other employees and "clients" is predictable (and therefore, manageable);
- Whether there are identifiable portions of the job which can be done away from the normal work site; and
- Whether the job duties can be accomplished just as well at an alternative work site.

Identifying Appropriate Positions

Agencies may use the following guidelines when considering a position’s potential for telecommuting status:

1. **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED** - Can all or some of the duties of the position be performed at a remote location, or does the position need continual supervision or input from others that is only available at the primary work location? ***Section 110.171(3)(a), F.S. requires that equal consideration be given to career service and exempt positions.***
2. **PUBLIC/AGENCY CONTACTS** - What portion of the job is devoted to face-to-face contact with other staff or the public? Can an arrangement be structured to allow for communication via telephone? Can required contacts be grouped into non-telecommuting days for those who report to the main office on scheduled days or can alternatives be established to provide contact requirements while telecommuting? ***Section 110.171(3)(k), F.S., prohibits employees from conducting “face-to-face” business at the employee’s home site.***
3. **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS** – Are there training requirements that require a position to report to the main office for a particular time period? Can job training be administered remotely through software programs?
4. **REFERENCE MATERIAL** - What portion of the job is dependent on the use of reference material or like resources located in the main office? Can these resources be mobile for a day or two without interfering with the job performance of co-workers? Can these resources be duplicated for long-term use? Are these resources available through other means such as a computer accessible library service or a community or university library?
5. **USE OF COMPUTERS** - Do job functions require access to files stored on networked servers? Is remote access available for employees to access the appropriate files needed to

complete tasks? **Section 110.171(3)(h), F.S., prohibits state maintenance of an employee's personal equipment used in telecommuting.**

6. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT - What portion of the job relies upon access to specialized equipment, i.e., photocopiers, fax machines, etc.? If an employee telecommutes on scheduled days of the week and reports to the main office on others, can the special equipment needs be met on non-telecommuting days? If job functions allow for telecommuting while performing all duties without a need to report to the main office, can special equipment requirements be met by a facility near the employee's telecommuting work site? Do job functions require the ability to conduct conference phone calls from their home office? Do job functions require making long distance phone calls? If so, can a business phone line be installed at an incumbent's alternate work site to accommodate this need?

7. INFORMATION SECURITY - What portion of the job uses secured or classified information and how can the integrity of that secured print or electronic information be upheld if that data is used or accessed off site? **Section 110.171(3)(i), F.S. requires that agencies identify appropriate security controls.**

8. TASK SCHEDULING – If all of the job duties for a position can not be performed away from the main office, can those tasks which can be completed away from the main office be grouped and scheduled for telecommuting days? Can staff meetings and conferences be grouped and scheduled for non-telecommuting days?

9. TRAVEL - Does the job involve field work? Can trips begin or end at the employee's alternate work site rather than at the main office? Can paperwork be done away from the main office?

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - Can the duties be evaluated by quantitative or qualitative measures even if the incumbent is performing the duties remotely? Are the duties to be performed remotely results-oriented? What are the deliverables that will be produced by performing the job functions remotely?

The following is a sample list of job types that may be eligible for telecommuting but it is not all inclusive. Specific functions of your agency will dictate whether similar or different types of jobs are eligible for telecommuting.

accountant	programmer	data entry clerk
engineer	financial analyst	systems analyst
agent	appraiser	economist
attorney	auditor	manager
consultant	training designer	writer
contract monitor	researcher	inspector

The positions that are determined to be eligible for the telecommuting program should be posted on the agency's website along with any other documents that pertain to the agency's telecommuting program as required by Section 110.171(4), F.S. The agency should specify the position number and working title (e.g., the class title based on legacy classification system). It is important to remember that compliance with Section 110.171(3), F.S., requires that all agencies identify positions (not position incumbents) that are eligible for telecommuting.¹

¹ Pursuant to §110.171(2)(c), F.S., employees who currently telecommute are to be tracked by means of the personnel information system. Accordingly, agencies should be using the indicator flag located under the Work Information submenu in the People First System, to mark employees who telecommute.

Identifying Appropriate Employees

Ultimately, agencies that adopt a telecommuting program will need to establish a process for identifying individual employees who, if occupying telecommuting eligible positions, will be permitted to participate. Telecommuting is not an ideal work arrangement for all employees. Agencies should consider the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively perform a particular job while telecommuting. When creating a process to identify individual employees that may participate in a telecommuting program, agencies may want to consider individual employee factors such as:

1. **ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY;**
2. **COMFORT LEVEL WITH REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY;**
3. **PAST PERFORMANCE LEVELS;**
4. **ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY COMMUNICATE WITH OTHER PARTIES;**
5. **DEPENDABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS;**
6. **NEED FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION; and**
7. **LEVEL OF SELF-MOTIVATION**

An employee's participation in a telecommuting program should not adversely affect eligibility for advancement or any other employment rights or benefits (as per §110.171(3)(b), F.S.), must be voluntary (as per §110.171(3)(c), F.S.), and may be terminated at any time that the agency determines that continuation in the program is not in its best interests (as per §110.171(3)(d), F.S.).

Additionally, employees who telecommute may not be currently under a performance improvement plan (as per §110.171(3)(e), F.S.), will be subject to all the same personnel rules and policies as other employees (as per §110.171(3)(f), F.S.), and will be covered by workers' compensation when performing official duties at their alternative work site (as per §110.171(3)(j), F.S.).

Summary

Telecommuting has the potential to create mutually beneficial outcomes for employees and employers. In addition to accommodating a variety of employee needs, telecommuting can be an effective recruitment and retention strategy, as well as a useful tool for supporting the agency's Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP), improving employee productivity, and reducing office space requirements.

However, in seeking to expand the program to leverage its benefits, the agency must ensure that the business needs of the organization are not compromised. Whether a position is appropriate for telecommuting on a regular basis (with all work being performed away from the main office) or one to four days each week (and reporting to the main office periodically), the most critical components in the strategic design of a successful telecommuting program are accurately and realistically identifying suitable positions and then ensuring that the employees filling those positions also have the appropriate attributes to telecommute.