

Telecommuting Resource Guide for Managers

While telecommuting has been a viable option for KRS Chapter 18A employees for several years, its use became widespread in response to COVID-19. As a result, and based on evaluation for continued appropriateness, some agencies continue to offer the ability to telecommute post-pandemic. For that purpose, this guide has been designed to assist managers that telecommute and/or manage telecommuting employees. It is not intended to cover all aspects of telecommuting and may be updated at any time.

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First and foremost, it's imperative to know that professionalism by employees in all communications (in-person, by phone, or electronically) regardless of work station, is of the utmost importance, with those we serve, as well as co-workers and vendors. Offensive comments, jokes, emails, social media posts, and any other form of negative communications are strictly prohibited. Whether on-site or remote, employees must maintain a professional appearance and workspace during the work day and refrain from offensive clothing, signs, etc. Let's work together to maintain a professional workplace environment that values diversity and inclusion and is committed to providing excellent service to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Telecommuting Requirements

Basic Requirements:

Agencies who wish to authorize telecommuting must have an established telecommuting policy ([PM 21-10](#)). The policy should include criteria for determining the appropriateness of telecommuting for the position/employee, as well as the process for submitting telecommuting requests. At a minimum, employees authorized to telecommute must sign and submit the telecommuting agreement and complete the required training before the telecommuting arrangement commences. Employees will also be required to complete a telecommuting safety checklist with their manager. Questions regarding the agency's telecommuting policy should be directed to the agency HR office.

General Recommendations:

I. Tips for Home Workspaces:

Managers may share the following tips for setting up an ergonomically appropriate workspace at home, as appropriate;

- Use a hard flat surface like a desk or table on which to work – a couch or bed does not make a good workstation;
- Use an external mouse and keyboard to help maintain a neutral work position and keep frequently used items close to you;
- Make sure the monitor and paperwork are directly in front of you, to keep your neck in a straight and neutral position;
- Keep your monitor at eye level or slightly below to assist with a neutral position for your neck. Use books to raise your laptop if it is too low;
- Keep your wrists as straight as possible while typing;

- Keep your feet flat on the floor and maintain your knees at a 90-degree angle. Use a foot rest or box top to help raise your feet;
- Use a cushion or pillow if you need to sit higher to reach your keyboard;
- Change tasks during the day and take periodic breaks;
- Avoid screen glare by placing your monitor away from windows.
- Tilt your monitor slightly downward to prevent glare from overhead lights.

II. Tips for Managing Telecommuting Employees:

Management is different when you do not see your employees every day. Below is a combination of tips for telecommuting managers and those managing telecommuting employees:

- Valuing Diversity and Inclusion - The contributions of all employees should be valued and respected. Please be mindful of the importance of maintaining a culture of respect in the workplace, while working from home, or managing telecommuting employees.
- Communicate with employees regularly and be deliberate about communications.
 - Keep your employees informed. Employees feel better being in-the-know.
 - It is appropriate to continue to expect your employees to complete their work, even if they are working remotely. It is up to you, the manager, to clearly communicate the continued goals and expectations. Communicate in a variety of ways, both individually and with the entire team.
 - Use engagement surveys for employees who may not vocalize their concerns.
 - Make sure employees have what they need to work from home; work together to address any barriers that may be making on-site or remote work more difficult.
- Focus on ways to motivate staff and help them stay engaged and productive. This can be as simple as asking each employee how they are adjusting to telecommuting and actively listening to their concerns.
 - Remember to continue to show [appreciation and celebrate](#) accomplishments and milestones. Within MyPURPOSE, there are several options for supervisors and employees to recognize one another, even when employees are working remotely. For instance, supervisors and employees have the ability to award badges and to provide feedback to one another (peer-to-peer, manager-to-employee, or employee-to-manager). Employees also receive recognition after completion of training courses in CommonwealthU.
 - Badges and feedback acknowledge that an employee's work is valued and appreciated, which helps to increase employee morale. Employee recognition helps build a supportive work environment and increases employee motivation and retention. Badges are also useful during the employee evaluation process when the supervisor is documenting employee performance. [Click here](#) for more information on badges and see the "Awarding Badges and Giving Feedback" document for step-by-step instructions on how to award a badge in MyPURPOSE.
 - Let your employees know that you are thinking about them.
 - Build in some social talk time before getting to business. Ask questions such as, "How was your weekend?" or "What are you doing this weekend?"
 - A feeling of isolation or lack of belonging can be a common complaint with telecommuting. Provide opportunities to connect at work through [virtual meetings](#) or virtual group celebrations. Utilize technology (Skype, Teams, etc.) to make your availability status known, so employees can communicate with you when they need you.
 - If an employee alerts you to personal concerns or a pattern of deteriorating performance begins to develop, make sure you know [how to refer](#) them to the Kentucky Employee Assistance Program (KEAP). State employees may confidentially talk about personal or work-related concerns with the staff of KEAP. They can be reached at 502-564-5788 or 800-445-5327. Additional information is available on their website at <https://personnel.ky.gov/Pages/KEAP.aspx>.
 - Additional Resources:
 - [A Guide to Managing Your Newly Remote Workers](#)
 - [Top 15 Tips to Effectively Manage Remote Employees](#)

III. Tips for Managing Virtual Meetings:

- Sharpen the agenda. Organize the agenda as a set of questions. It creates focus and helps ensure the meeting's success.

- Do not over invite. Remote meetings plummet in quality as size increases. However, be mindful that some employees may feel excluded; therefore, give them the option to attend future meetings.
- Have all users mute their microphones when not speaking and minimize distractions in their physical space.
- If meeting attendees are not familiar with one another, have everyone identify themselves prior to speaking.
- Establish some norms about what makes a good remote meeting, such as keeping contributions to no more than 60 seconds, so everyone has a chance to speak.
- Have instant messenger or chat room technology in place. This way folks can notify you during the meeting if they need to speak or ask for something to be repeated.
- Interject some humor to virtual meetings by starting with an icebreaker.
- Active facilitation is key. Meeting leaders should attempt to draw virtual attendees in and encourage each individual's participation during the meeting.
- Encourage feedback from meeting participants. There are some great applications available that allow participants to vote in real time to help facilitators gauge consensus.
- End meetings well. Leave a few minutes to clarify takeaways. Identify the directly responsible person for each action item, so no one leaves wondering what was accomplished.
- Ask people how the meetings are going. Send a quick survey periodically; ask what is going well, what is going not so well, and ask for ideas for improvement. Take the challenge to make your remote meetings different and worth the time invested.
- Additional Resources:
 - [9 Tips for Running an Effective Virtual Meeting](#)
 - [Best Practices on Leading a Remote Team](#)

IV. Tips for Virtual Hiring and Selection:

As part of hiring and selection, employers may choose to utilize in-person or virtual interviews. Please consider the below tips for conducting virtual interviews:

- **Be prepared:** As with any interview, familiarize yourself with the candidate's application and the job description in advance. It is important to give the virtual interview the formality of an in-person interview. Inform the candidate of interview panel participants. Regardless of the technology platform utilized for the interview, test the technology and ensure it is working properly in advance of the scheduled interview.
- **Remove distractions:** During the interview, be sure to position yourself away from distractions, including your cell phone, as you would in an in-person interview. Also, be aware of and eliminate other possible distractions in your environment. Lastly, be sure to have an appropriate visual background for your virtual interview.
- **Reinforce employer brand:** Ensure interviewers at all stages of the recruitment and hiring and selection process convey a consistent message about your agency's mission, values, and purpose. Like face-to-face interviews, be sure to take the time to share information about your agency, the position, and the benefits of joining the Commonwealth of Kentucky - an Employer of Choice.
- **Give time to the candidate and other members of the interview panel:** After a candidate answers a question, pause to ensure the candidate is finished with their response before moving onto the next question. This is necessary to account for time lags and lack of usual social cues due to the virtual environment. Be sure to allow adequate time for participants, candidates, and panel members in the interview to finish their question or comment before moving on.
- **Maintain open communication:** Keep candidates well informed at each stage of the interview and hiring and selection process. Without being able to give candidates a warm, in-person greeting, it is especially important to show the candidate their time and efforts are valued. Finally, provide information on next steps and follow up timely after the interview.

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