CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS
Work From Home Resources For Employers
Welcome!

As you’re aware, employers all over the world are working to prevent any possible business disruptions as a result of COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Offering employees more choices for how and when they work can be key to ensuring business continuity and emergency preparedness for your workplace. We have compiled some resources for you to help quickly start or refine work from home options for your workforce.

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9 Steps to Design, Implement and Monitor a Successful Telework Pilot Program

If you are new to teleworking, you may want to work through the 9 steps sequentially. Otherwise, review your current situation and organize a tailored implementation plan following only the steps that are needed.

1. Define Program Goals
Work with your team to explore your goals and objectives and the potential benefits of telework to your organization, to your employees and to the community. Define with management what aspects of teleworking make sense for your company (i.e. working from home, working from a satellite centre or other locations including coffee shops, libraries and neighbourhood centres).

2. Select the Program Manager
The Program Manager will have decision-making ability to form the internal steering committee and will serve as the main contact for the telework pilot process. In most cases, the Program Manager is a human resource professional.

3. Develop Policies
Develop telework policies and procedures to clarify employee, supervisor and employer roles and responsibilities, as well as the process for selecting telework jobs, employees, the frequency of teleworking, and any other issues regarding the telework arrangement.

4. Assess Costs and Savings
Assess costs and savings to determine any added financial requirements for telework implementation. Often during an initial period, employers do not invest much in the way of new equipment or satellite work locations. Employers assess the program to determine the benefits before committing to a budget for teleworkers.
5. Develop Technology Component

Ensure that the technology is in place to support each job function selected. An array of software packages can help with remote access, teleconferencing, teamwork, archiving and instant messaging. This toolkit provides a list of links to currently available software that support working remotely.

6. Select Teleworkers and Supervisors

Select employees who are top performers and whose jobs are conducive to telework. Don’t assume that a whole department is ineligible due to the nature of their work, often departments have different job functions. For example, police departments have often been excluded from teleworking, however, experience has shown that detectives can benefit from working from home one day per week to prepare all their paperwork. Selecting appropriate supervisors who can effectively manage by objective is an important element. If a supervisor needs to see their employees working to feel comfortable that work is being accomplished, having an employee work from home can be challenging.

7. Train Teleworkers and Supervisors

Most teleworkers and their supervisors need training to understand the rules, and to establish a communication arrangement between the employee and supervisor. Training may include exercises where employees and managers work together to define performance measurements for remote work.

8. Implement and Evaluate

Implement the pilot program and monitor performance. Surveying the teleworkers and supervisors is critical around the six-month point. This allows for enough time for the program to be established and offers the opportunity to make improvements to the program. Nearly every employer testing teleworking modifies elements of their program within the first year.

9. Expand the Program

Expand the program as warranted, based upon the results of the first six months and with input from middle managers.
Home Office Set-up

- Employers should make their employees aware of setting up a safe workspace at home. The following guidance is offered by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. A copy of this information should be provided to teleworkers with the understanding that they need to abide by Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) guidance.
- A home office should meet the same health and safety standards as those available at work. For example, you should make sure that:
  - Your desk, chair and other accessories are of a comparable (equal) quality to that in the office. For example: the desk should be appropriate height and sturdy enough to handle the weight of any peripheral equipment that you may place on it (e.g., computers, printers, fax machines, scanners, etc.).
  - Your workstation is adjusted properly: the keyboard is at the right height (wrists are in a neutral position). The kitchen table is not an ideal work surface as the table is too high and doesn’t allow for proper positioning of the wrists in relation to the keyboard.
  - Lighting is properly arranged: there should not be reflections on or glare from the computer monitor.
- For more information on how to set up a workstation, please see the Ergonomics section of OSH Answers.

TEN ERGONOMIC TIPS FOR TELEWORKING

1. Ensure that the office chair is set for your height and then adjust the work surface to allow both arms at your side at right angles.
2. Directly face the display screen. Avoid any placement that requires you to twist your neck.
3. Avoid placing object needed for your work at a distance that requires stretching. Organize your desk with items placed within easy reach.
4. Maintain mouse in proximity of keyboard and within your forearm reach.
5. A footrest can offer support for both your feet and back.
6. Use a headset instead of a phone cradle since it requires your shoulder to be raised.
7. Take short breaks to stretch and walk around. Too often teleworkers become engrossed in their work and without any distraction, can be seated for too long. Some teleworkers set their alarm/phone to ring various times during the day for these breaks.
8. Avoid being in the same position for long periods of time. This is often difficult to avoid when your work is mostly in front of a screen.
9. Be cautious when purchasing items called “Ergonomic”. There isn’t a published standard and thus, you should evaluate the ergonomic value before purchasing.
10. Do not overload a plug with too many items and avoid loose cords around the work area.
A Sample Telework Program Policy

Teleworking is the concept of working from home on a full or a part-time basis. Teleworking is not a formal, universal employee benefit. Rather, it is an alternative method of meeting the needs of the agency. The agency has the right to refuse to make teleworking available to an employee and to terminate a teleworking arrangement at any time. Employees are not required to telework. Employees have the right to refuse to telework if the option is made available. The agency’s policies for teleworking are as follows:

- **Compensation and Work Hours** - The employee’s compensation, benefits, work status and work responsibilities will not change due to participation in the teleworking program. The amount of time the employee is expected to work per day or pay period will not change because of participation in the teleworking program.

- **Eligibility** - Successful teleworkers have the support of their supervisors. Employees will be selected based on the suitability of their jobs, an evaluation of the likelihood of their being successful teleworkers, and an evaluation of their supervisor’s ability to manage remote workers. Each department will make its own selections. Upon acceptance to the program both the employee and manager will be expected to complete a training course designed to prepare them for the teleworking experience.

- **Equipment/Tools** - Most teleworkers are expected to have their own equipment at home. In rare instances, the agency may provide specific tools/equipment for the employee to perform his/her current duties. This may include computer hardware, computer software, email, voicemail, connectivity to host applications, and other applicable equipment as deemed necessary.
• **Dependent Care** - Teleworking is not a substitute for dependent care. Teleworkers will not be available during agency core hours to provide dependent care.

• **Income Tax** - It will be the employee’s responsibility to determine any tax implications of maintaining a home office area. The agency will not provide tax guidance, nor will the agency assume any additional tax liabilities. Employees are encouraged to consult with a qualified tax professional to discuss income tax implications.

• **Communication** - Employees must be available by phone and email during core hours. All client interactions will be conducted on a client or agency site. Participants will still be available for staff meetings, and other meetings deemed necessary by management. The agency will pay work-related voice and data communication charges.

• **Evaluation** - The employee shall agree to participate in all studies, inquiries, reports and analyses relating to this program. The employee remains obligated to comply with all agency rules, practices and instructions.

• **Workspace** - The employee shall designate a workspace within the remote work location for placement and installation of equipment to be used while teleworking. The employee shall maintain this workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and equipment. Any agency materials taken home should be kept in the designated work area at home and not be made accessible to others.
• **Office Supplies** - Office supplies will be provided by the agency as needed. Out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of the employee’s manager.

• **Workers’ Compensation** - During work hours and while performing work functions in the designated work area of the home, teleworkers are covered by workers’ compensation.

• **Liability** - The employee’s home workspace will be considered an extension of the agency’s workspace. Therefore, the agency will continue to be liable for job-related accidents that occur in the employee’s home workspace during the employee’s working hours.
  
  o The agency will be liable for injuries or illnesses that occur during the employee’s agreed-upon work hours. The employee’s at-home work hours will conform to a schedule agreed upon by the employee and his or her supervisor. If such a schedule has not been agreed upon, the employee’s work hours will be assumed to be the same as before the employee began teleworking.

  o The agency assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee’s home workspace outside the agreed-upon work hours.

  o The agency is not liable for loss, destruction, or injury that may occur in or to the employee’s home. This includes family members, visitors, or others that may become injured within or around the employee’s home.

  o No third-party visitors are to be invited to the employee’s home for work purposes, during the telework day.
Options for Telework Access

• **Document Storage** - Twenty years ago, teleworkers would work on documents at home and physically carry a storage drive back and forth from home to work. While this was an effective method, it presented security issues of having potential sensitive information on a device that could be lost or stolen. The same issue applies when using laptops as a storage device on the hard drive.

• **Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)** and virtual desktop software provide a near seamless method for storing data in one location and be accessed remotely. VPNs can encrypt data when transferring. Virtual Desktop goes an addition step of allow access to software and essentially maintains the same office work computer at home. Lastly, Software as a Service (SaaS) provides an online software environment that can be access through any computer using a login. A variety of product are currently available

The following links are for your information and not an endorsement or recommendation of Telework Peel.

- Citrix XenDesktop
- VMware vCenter
- TeamViewer
- OpenVPN

**Video Conferencing and Online Collation Tools** - Technology today can allow for people to meet face-to-face, virtually through a variety of products available online. Note that having a good computer at each end ensures that connectivity is seamless and not subject to poor volume and visual display.

- GoToMeeting
- BigBlueButton
- Google Hangouts
- Skype via Office 365

New tools are available that allow for collaboration between staff located remotely. Tools can allow for active communication through messaging, storing and sharing documents, using video conferencing easily, and more.

- Slack
- Yammer
- Stride