County Telework Policy

Sensitivity: Public
Criticality: Low
Primary Type: Policy

Summary

Purpose

If done correctly, Teleworking can potentially increase productivity for both the employee and the organization. Teleworking can positively impact employee morale and organizational culture as well as reduce demands on County facilities. However, Teleworking can also adversely affect the County through lack of supervision, misuse of resources, and exposure of the County's IT network to security risks. The cooperation of all County leaders is necessary to ensure a safer and more successful Teleworking program. This Policy defines the standards, eligibility, and other rules, requirements, and guidance for Telework. Elected officials, appointed officials, and Department directors, collectively referred herein as "Officials and Directors," may require additional standards or eligibility criteria that enhance and further the purpose of this Policy.

Scope

This Policy applies to all County employees, County Departments, Offices of elected officials and appointed officials who are approved to Telework in any capacity, collectively referred herein as "Teleworkers."

Definitions

Department

Unless specifically noted otherwise, the use of the word "Department" or related forms of that word includes Commissioners Court departments.

Office

"Office" shall mean and include offices of all elected officials and appointed officials that utilize Williamson County IT infrastructure.

Telework

"Telework" or "Teleworking" shall mean the performance of individual County work functions at approved locations outside of County worksites at the discretion of the Official or Director.

Telework Schedule

"Telework Schedule" shall mean the days and hours agreed upon by Officials and Directors and Teleworkers about when the Teleworker may Telework and when they must present for work at their County worksite.

Telework Site

"Telework Site" shall mean the location away from the Teleworker's assigned County worksite where a Teleworker has been authorized to Telework. The Telework Site should be in the Teleworker's home unless the Teleworker's Official or Director authorizes the Teleworker to work from an alternative Telework Site.

Roles and Responsibilities

A. Teleworkers

1. All Teleworkers must adhere to this Policy and any Department/Office specific Telework policies when Teleworking.
2. Teleworkers shall follow their Department's/Office's call-in and leave request procedures. Personal leave time must be arranged in the same manner as non-Teleworkers working at the County worksite. Teleworkers who are unable to work due to illness or medical appointments must use sick leave or other paid leave and report their absence in accordance with County and Department/Office policy.
3. Teleworkers shall be available to attend in-person meetings or report to a County worksite when requested by their Official or Director. Teleworkers understand that they may be called to report to their County worksite on their regular Telework Schedule to meet Department/Office needs.
4. Teleworkers should adhere to the same standards of professionalism, personal appearance, workspace/background appearance, customer service, and other requirements as defined by the Teleworker's Official or Director.
5. Teleworkers shall read and attest to this Policy and any applicable Department/Office policies regarding Telework.

B. Officials and Directors

1. Officials and Directors shall submit a request to Technology Services for Teleworking access for each Teleworker in order to account for software licensing.
2. Officials and Directors shall ensure that each Teleworker understands, accepts, and acknowledges this Policy in writing or through the County's policy management software system (e.g., PowerDMS) prior to authorizing Telework.
3. Officials and Directors have the right to refuse to make Telework available and to terminate an existing Telework arrangement, individually or office-wide, at any time.
4. Officials and Directors are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and productivity of their Teleworkers.
5. Officials and Directors may define specific requirements regarding Teleworker comfort and safety in the Telework Site.
6. Officials and Directors should communicate the standards for professionalism, personal appearance, workspace/background appearance, customer service, and other requirements to their Teleworkers.
7. A Reasonable Accommodation Request Form on the Human Resources SharePoint page must be completed for any request to Telework as an ADA accommodation .

Policy

C. General

1. Telework does not change compensation, benefits, vacation, or other paid leave.

2. Telework does not alter a Teleworker's obligation to comply with job duties and responsibilities and County and Department/Office policies.
3. Teleworkers shall not conduct any non-County employment during their Telework Schedule.
4. Officials and Directors may have additional policies unique to their operations. Department policies must not conflict with or be less stringent than this Policy.

D. Telework Eligibility (as defined by Officials and Directors)

1. The nature of the position's work functions and the Teleworker's individual skills set and ability must allow for Telework.
2. The eligibility of an individual position and/or Teleworker is defined by the Official or Director.
3. Officials and Directors shall consider a Teleworker's performance and/or attendance issues when determining or continuing eligibility to Telework.
4. A Teleworker's access to Williamson County IT infrastructure during Telework must also be authorized by Technology Services. Any Teleworker who adversely impacts or threatens the security of the Williamson County IT infrastructure is subject to immediate termination of access by Technology Services. .

E. Telework Site Requirements

1. The Telework Site must provide for the effective performance of the position, Teleworker safety and productivity, and maintenance of information security.
2. It is the responsibility of the Teleworker to provide the space, furniture, network connectivity, and other items needed to meet the Telework Site requirements, the functions of the position, and any other Departmental/Office requirements.
3. Safety and injury prevention should be practiced in the Telework Site to avoid injury or incident.
4. Teleworkers shall refer to the current Safety Checklist to ensure their Telework Site meets safety requirements.
5. The Telework Site must allow for adequate noise control and connectivity to ensure clear telephone and video conference calls and maintain professionalism and good customer service.
6. The Telework Site must allow for privacy to ensure that other individuals do not have access to confidential matters.
7. Certain software packages or processes may not perform as well from a remote location, and Officials and Directors should take this into account when authorizing Telework.
8. If the Teleworker cannot work effectively, safely, and securely from the Telework Site, Telework should not be authorized.
9. Teleworkers shall not hold in-person business meetings with internal or external clients, customers, or colleagues at their Telework Site without prior approval from the Teleworker's Official or Director.
10. Regularly scheduled Telework must be performed within the State of Texas.

F. Technology Equipment & Support

1. Teleworkers are responsible for providing an internet connection sufficient to communicate (audio and video) and perform the job from their Telework Site in a manner that is satisfactory to

their Official or Director. The County will not provide cellular internet devices (i.e., MiFi, hotspots) for this purpose.

2. Teleworkers are responsible for providing, testing, and validating the network connection before scheduling Telework with their Official or Director.

3. Resolution of any issues with network connectivity will be the responsibility of the Teleworker. If connectivity issues cannot be resolved in a timely manner or if intermittent issues persist, the Teleworker will need to report to their assigned work site or utilize their leave accruals.

4. Teleworkers must use County-owned computers or mobile devices to Telework, except as otherwise authorized or required under this Policy. This ensures compliance with County policies pertaining to hardware, security, and encryption.

5. Use of the County's Virtual Private Network (VPN) software is always required when accessing County data from a wireless or wired network not managed by Williamson County (e.g., home and public networks).

6. Using non-County devices (smartphones, iPads, etc.) for Office 365 applications is permitted, but devices must comply with the security requirements below.

7. Use of personal smartphones (or tablets) may be required to access the Multi-Factor Authentication system (see Security section).

8. The County will not provide additional technology equipment for the express purpose of Teleworking per County Budget Policy. While assigned technology equipment may be used for Teleworking at the Officials' and Directors' discretion, duplicate setups of monitors, docks, computers, etc., or any equipment required for Telework will not be provided or supported by Technology Services.

9. Technology Services will support Teleworkers as much as possible but will not be able to support issues related to home/private internet issues or personal equipment (routers, firewalls, etc.), as well as networked devices on non-County networks (e.g., network printers).

10. Technology Services will provide remote assistance to Teleworkers via phone, email, and remote support. No onsite support for Teleworkers is possible, so any issues that cannot be solved remotely will need to be performed at IT or at another County office.

G. Security

1. Utmost care must be taken to protect County data when Teleworking. This includes physically placing computer screens away from windows, unauthorized persons, or cameras.

2. Computers, phones, and tablets must not be left unattended at any time while unlocked.

3. In public settings, extra precautions should be taken to ensure the privacy and security of County data.

4. There may also be legal regulations on the data, such as CJIS or HIPAA, that require additional security measures when working outside a secure location.

5. Officials and Directors are responsible for ensuring employees are compliant with all applicable regulations while Teleworking.

6. Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) is required to access County data and/or networks from a Telework Site.

7. All Teleworkers must utilize the MFA application and notifications on a smartphone or tablet. Those Teleworkers issued a County-owned smartphone or tablet pursuant to other policies may use that device for this purpose. For all other Teleworkers, the use of a personally owned smartphone or tablet is required for the MFA application. Alternative methods of MFA require an exemption and approval from Technology Services. A County-owned smartphone will not be issued to employees solely for this purpose.

H. Liability

1. Compensability for Teleworker injuries or occupational diseases will be determined by Workers' Compensation as in any other off-site incident.
2. In the event of a job-related injury at the Telework Site, the injured Teleworker must immediately report the incident to his/her supervisor.
3. The County is not liable for any third-party (family, visitors, etc.) injuries which may occur at a Telework Site.
4. In the event of a reported injury or workers' compensation claim, Risk Management and/or Human Resources may be required to inspect the Teleworking site for compliance with this Policy and investigations.

I. Communication Requirements

1. All Teleworkers must be reachable throughout their shift according to the standards set by their Official or Director.
2. Communication methods that are supported by Technology Services are email, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Jabber, and County-issued smartphones.
3. Video chat/conferencing may be required depending on the position and nature of the work as defined by each Official and Director.

J. Performance Monitoring

1. Officials and Directors are responsible for determining the measurement of performance of their Teleworkers, as well as supervising staff while Teleworking. Absent business necessity, as determined by the Official or Director, the same standards of performance for in-office work should apply to Telework.
2. The criteria of performance should be clearly communicated to each Teleworker by the Officials and Directors before engaging in Telework.
3. Teleworkers may be asked to log into the County's timekeeping system or check in with a supervisor at the start and/or end of a Teleworking shift, as required by the Teleworker's Official or Director.
4. Officials and Directors may conduct performance monitoring, to include a review of computer logs, email and Teams messages, or other electronic means.
5. Failure to meet performance criteria or policies may result in loss of eligibility to Telework.

K. Ad Hoc Arrangements

1. Temporary Telework may be approved by Officials and Directors for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, facility issues, family and personal issues, or business travel.

These arrangements are approved by Officials and Directors on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

2. Other short-term Telework arrangements may be made by Officials and Directors for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate. Generally speaking, an employee may not Telework as a substitute for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) without participating in the reasonable accommodations process with Human Resources.

3. All ad hoc Telework arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis by Officials and Directors.

Exceptions

Requests for exceptions to this Policy must be documented via the Policy Exception Procedure and approved by the management of Williamson County Human Resources or Technology Services (depending on the exception requested).

Violations

Violation of this Policy may lead to disciplinary actions up to and including loss of remote access technologies or, at the discretion of Officials and Directors, termination of employment.

Related Statutes, Policies, and Authorities

Safety Checklist published by Williamson County Risk Management (available on SharePoint)

Policy Exception Procedure published by Williamson County Technology Services (linked on SharePoint)

Department Policies: Please refer to any Department/Office specific policies your Department or Office may have that may reference this document.

Contact Office

Human Resources: Contact your designated HR Generalist or 512-943-1533 (x31533)

Technology Services: servicedesk@wilco.org or 512-943-1456 (x31456)

Risk Management: riskmanagement@wilco.org or 512-943-1980 (x31980)

Administrative Notes

Policy Class: Resource Management
Policy Family: Human Resource Management
Policy: Williamson County Telework Policy

Revision History

Version	Date	Description
3.1	TBD	Clarification of responsibilities of Department Heads/Elected Officials/Appointed Officials
3.0	11/21/2023	Addition of Risk Management/Legal/HR Items
2.0	10/18/2022	Adoption by Commissioner's Court and Republication

1.2	9/22/2022	Point of Clarification: MFA Required for all remote access (Sections C.7, D.5, and D.6 of this document.) Section format change (re-designated Letter/Number in listings) Added Violations section for uniformity with other modern policies Added Exceptions section for uniformity with other modern policies
1.1	7/27/2021	Clarified language and made for more broad use cases.
1.0	6/2/2020	First version – COVID-19 specific.