

Remote Work Policy



Effective Date: 11/14/2023

POLICY SCOPE:

The Town of Stow is implementing a Remote Work Policy. This Remote Work Policy allows approved employees to work from an alternate location on a scheduled or situational basis. Employees, regardless of their remote work arrangement, must have prior approval to work from an alternate location. An employee who is approved for Remote Work must still work their regular weekly schedule of full time, or if part time, work regular part time hours.

There are no positions where it would be practical to work remotely five (5) days per week. An employee approved to work remotely must physically report to their office location at least three (3) full days per week, except for rare short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. Any employee who is regularly scheduled to work part time, 3 or 4 days per week, must physically report to their office at least two (2) days per week. There are some customer facing positions where it is not possible to work remotely. Occasional Remote work is not covered by this policy.

APPLICABILITY:

This policy applies to full and part time employees who may be able to be productive, on a full or part time basis, at a remote site depending on the essential duties of their positions. Employees whose positions are governed by collective bargaining agreement are subject only to those portions of this policy that are not specifically regulated by law or agreement.

DEFINITIONS:

Remote Work – work done outside of the traditional office setting.

Remote Work Environment – remote space suitable for working, free of obvious safety hazards and distractions.

Occasional Remote Work – temporary and approved by employee's direct supervisor.

Regular Remote Work – an alternative schedule allowing some remote work time each week recommended by the employee's supervisor and pre-approved by the Town Administrator.

Town Issued Equipment – includes computer, email, and network access, only for the purposes of work, not personal use.

POLICY DESCRIPTION:

This policy allows employees in some appropriate positions to work at a remote location while working their full regular hours and being equally productive while working in this remote location as they would in the workplace.

PROCEDURES:

To be eligible, employees must meet the following requirements:

A. Employee Eligibility: Must possess several employee attributes which indicate the employee can work well and meet job expectations with this type of work arrangement:

1. Employed by the Town for at least six (6) months and completed their probationary period.
2. Solid performer who knows the duties of the job and the department's standards and expectations.
3. Be able to work independently without close supervision and fulfill job duties and expectations.
4. Able to prioritize work effectively and utilize good time management skills.
5. Be reliable, disciplined, and self-motivated with a high sense of responsibility in accomplishing work assignments.
6. No recent history of performance or conduct issues, including but not limited to sick time abuse to be eligible.
7. Employee must be meeting work expectations and fulfilling the full duties of their job description.

B. Suitable Position and Assignments: The nature of the work performed, and service provided must be considered in determining whether remote work is an option for a particular position. Not all positions can perform essential functions remotely. Whether a position is suitable for remote work shall be made at the discretion of the Department Head and will be evaluated on an individual basis considering the following criteria:

1. Some or all of the job functions may be portable, or can be accessed electronically, and therefore, can be performed effectively while working away from the primary work location.
2. The work does not require access to equipment or materials that cannot be removed from the primary work location.
3. The employee's participation in the remote work program will not adversely affect the department's ability to meet and/or exceed customers' needs.
4. The position does not require daily unscheduled face-to-face contact with other employees or the public at the primary work location.
5. The employee can set up meetings with other employees, supervisors, or customers/residents at the primary work location or at a remote location.
6. The remote worker must have access to a working telephone/cellphone, and a reliable internet connection.

C. Work Expectations: Remain consistent with essential duties:

1. Remote workers are subject to the same work expectations, including hours of work, the work schedule, and job performance competencies as if the employee were at the primary work location.
2. Employees are expected to provide the same level of customer/resident service, work outcomes, and quality of work while working remotely and will make themselves available to attend scheduled meetings, whether in-person or electronically.
3. Time spent and work accomplished from a remote location should appear seamless to customers/residents.
4. Remote workers are responsible for getting their work from their workplace whether it be electronically or in person.
5. The Town will not reimburse the employee for mileage to go to their workplace to get their work or to attend in-person meetings. Such time is considered commute time and not hours of work.
6. Remote employees will check in with their supervisor using the appropriate methods (i.e., phone, email, text, video conference) daily and as necessary throughout the workday.
7. During any period of remote work, employees are expected to be available to receive and respond to emails and telephone calls during normal work hours.

D. Confidentiality

1. Employees must maintain appropriate confidentiality of all work-related information, including written documents, electronic files, and verbal communication.
2. Any work performed at the remote location is considered official Town business and may be subject to retention and public records laws.
3. If an employee requires hardcopy confidential information at the remote location, they shall first obtain approval from the Department Head or data owner, and once said information has been transferred to the remote location use best efforts to store said information temporarily.
4. Electronic files and automated records must be safeguarded to protect unauthorized disclosure or damage.
5. Employees must store all protected health information, Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and confidential records in a secure location.
6. Any verbal communication of confidential work-related information should be conducted in a private area.
7. Confidential information shall not be downloaded to a local laptop or workstation or placed in the cloud.
8. Printing of confidential Town materials in the remote location should be done in a secure manner.

Workspace:

1. Employees are responsible for designating a workspace for the purpose of performing work for the Town.
2. The workspace must be sufficient for the employee to perform the requirements of the job, including appropriate furniture, equipment, supplies and lighting.
3. The remote work location must be safe and free from hazards.

4. The Town is not responsible for operating or maintenance costs of any personal equipment or other incidental costs associated with the use of the remote work location.

Town Policies and Procedures:

1. All Town policies, state, and federal regulations, including policies on Technology use, sick leave, vacation, leave and overtime/comp time will remain the same for time spent working remotely.
2. Time off must be approved in advance per Town policies.
3. All Town policies related to standards of conduct, privacy, customer service, Massachusetts Public Records Law (M.G.L. Ch. 66 §10), Massachusetts Ethics law (M.G.L. Ch. 268A), email use apply to all employees during time spent working remotely.
4. Employees will be responsible for the proper use and care of all Town-owned equipment.
5. While this is temporary for some employees, employees are not entitled to remote work and not all positions will be eligible to work remotely.
6. Remote work is voluntary.
7. Employees in positions that are suitable for remote work may be permitted to work remotely on designated days, or on a situational or emergency basis.
8. Either party may terminate the remote work arrangement, without cause, with two weeks' notice.

How to request a Remote Work Assignment:

1. An employee interested in working remotely must first initiate a discussion with their Department Head to determine eligibility.
2. If the Department Head is supportive of the request to work remotely, the employee must submit the Remote Work application to the Human Resources Department.
3. The request will be evaluated by Human Resources, the Department Head, and Town Administrator (or their designee) for approval.
4. If approved, the employee will be required to read and agree to this Remote Work Policy and the Technical Guidelines and submit confirmation of this to Human Resources
5. Prior to starting their remote work assignment, the employee will be required to complete the Remote Work Survey to help the Town gather data and evaluate the program.

Requirements if approved for remote work:

Employee must agree to the following:

1. The employee will remain accessible and productive during scheduled work hours.
2. Nonexempt employees will record all hours worked, breaks taken, and meal periods taken in accordance with regular timekeeping practices (i.e., complete all timesheets).
3. Nonexempt employees will obtain supervisor approval prior to working any unscheduled hours beyond their typical workday including overtime hours.
4. Departments must remain open. If there are multiple employees in one department, remote schedules must be staggered to allow for in-person communication.

5. However, if an employee is on a scheduled Remote Work-Day and another departmental employee would like to use accrued time causing the office to be closed, it will be allowed provide there is proper signage on the door and the Town Administrator's Office is notified.
6. The employee will report to their regular work location as necessary upon directive from their supervisor.
7. The employee will communicate regularly with their supervisor and co-workers.
8. The employee will comply with all Town of rules, policies, practices, and instructions that would apply if the employee were working at their regular work location.
9. The employee will maintain satisfactory performance standards.
10. The employee understands that they must still attend and participate in meetings as required by the nature of the work.
11. The employee will plan for regular dependent care and understands that remote work is not a substitute for dependent care.
12. The employee will maintain a safe, confidential, and secure work environment at all times.
13. Remote work arrangements may be adjusted or cancelled, with or without cause, at any time by an employee's Department Head or the Town Administrator based on the needs of the Town or Department. Either party may terminate the remote work arrangement, without cause, with two weeks' notice.
14. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, the Town reserves the right to modify this policy at any time without notice.