

## LSU AgCenter

### **GUIDELINES - Telecommuting and Remote Work**

While many positions require a physical presence at their assigned work location, the LSU AgCenter is supportive of remote work arrangements for certain positions (i) when the work is conducive to it, (ii) when it can mutually benefit both the AgCenter and the employee in achieving work deliverables, (iii) when the work performed can be appropriately monitored, (iv) when it does not result in additional overall expenses or costs, and (v) in emergencies declared by the Vice President for Agriculture and/or the Executive branch.

A remote working arrangement for qualifying employees may be established for the qualifying instances outlined above on an ongoing, temporary (specific length of time), or emergency remote work basis and is not an entitlement or organization-wide benefit. The agreement between the AgCenter and an employee for telecommuting and/or remote work does not change the terms and conditions of employment with the AgCenter.

This remote working arrangement may be on an ongoing basis, temporary basis, or only during a declared emergency. During an emergency where one or several offices of the LSU AgCenter are unavailable for use, it may be appropriate for faculty or staff who would normally be assigned to the affected location(s) to work remotely. It is the goal of the AgCenter to maintain maximum continuity of operations during an emergency and telecommuting is one mechanism that can minimize the disruption caused by such a closure.

#### **Position Specific Considerations**

Telecommuting is not a viable work option for many jobs within the LSU AgCenter. Certain positions do not lend themselves to telecommuting such as physical jobs that work primarily outdoors, jobs that require lab access to complete testing and research, jobs that are required to interact directly with the community, or jobs that depend on inputs from other AgCenter entities that are not functioning during the emergency. However, many jobs with regular office duties may be suitable for telecommuting or working remotely. Department heads must evaluate each position and determine if the duties make the job viable for telecommuting.

#### **Employee Eligibility**

Employees whose work is conducive to telecommuting and who have demonstrated initiative, good attendance practices, and strong productivity may be eligible for an ongoing remote work or telecommuting arrangement. Telecommuting or working remotely may also be necessary during emergency closure for employees whose duties must continue or can be maintained without significant investment on the part of the AgCenter. A computer may be provided, or the employee may use their personal device with appropriate security measures in place, as described by the LSU AgCenter's Information Technology Department. Computer guidelines and policies of the AgCenter IT department must be followed.

### **Employee Performance and Program Objectives**

Employees who are working remotely are expected to effectively and efficiently perform the duties and obligations of their position. Telecommuting should not have a negative impact on employee productivity and/or performance. Employees will continue to be required to meet program objectives and deliver services in a positive, professional, and efficient manner that reflects well on the AgCenter.

### **Remote Work Location**

The location from which the employee will telecommute must have the necessary equipment for the employee to perform the requirements of their position. The employee should also have a mechanism to participate in conference calls or video meetings from their remote worksite. In an emergency, managers reserve the right to assign other work relevant to the employee's regular assignment, as necessary. Telecommuting employees are required to return to their on-site office if any in-person meetings are needed, or if telecommuting is not available (eg, VPN or internet is not functioning), or their manager instructs the employee to be on-site.

In an emergency remote working situation, a manager may also require that the employee report to an alternate AgCenter work location.

### **Schedule/Hours Worked**

The employee's work schedule and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) remain the same as was in effect prior to beginning the remote work assignment unless changes are specifically outlined in the Telecommuting Agreement. If an employee is unable to work their regular schedule during the period of teleworking, he/she is required to use personal leave or other appropriate leave to cover that time. Employees should continue to utilize personal leave for hours that they are unavailable to work such as during vacation or personal illness. Employees should not use their regular work time to accomplish personal tasks and should deduct such time from their hours worked. Non-exempt employees may only work overtime or earn compensatory time with prior approval from their supervisor.

### **Equipment and Supplies**

Equipment that is issued by the AgCenter to the employee shall remain the property of the AgCenter and be the responsibility of the AgCenter to service and maintain. The employee and supervisor must execute the appropriate property management forms needed for home storage of equipment. Any personal equipment that is utilized for remote work is the responsibility of the employee to repair and maintain. Equipment and supplies provided by the AgCenter are only to be used for AgCenter business. The AgCenter is not liable for damages that occur to personal property during remote working and is not responsible for personal operational costs such as internet service nor other utilities and costs. It is the employee's responsibility to secure all equipment and supplies that are assigned to them. If the telecommuting agreement is revoked, the employee is to return AgCenter equipment and supplies as directed.

Any employee that agrees to work remotely will be responsible for maintaining phone service (mobile or landline) for their remote location.

### **Travel Expenses – Mileage**

When traveling on AgCenter business and departing from a designated remote work location, employees should always request mileage reimbursement for the lesser of the miles from their official domicile or from their remote work location. Please contact Jan Bernath ([jbernath@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jbernath@agcenter.lsu.edu)) or Melinda Marshall ([mmarshall@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:mmarshall@agcenter.lsu.edu)) if you have questions.

Documentation of miles travelled must be provided in the same manner as currently required (odometer readings or website mileage calculator using physical address). Mileage for commuting back and forth between designated remote work location and the AgCenter work location (official domicile) will not be reimbursed. As always, only mileage allowed in accordance with University Travel Regulations (PM-13) will be approved for reimbursement.

### **Communication**

Employees who are working remotely should maintain sufficient contact with their supervisor, coworkers, and clients as though they were working in their regular location. Employees should adhere to regular work hours to facilitate communication and accessibility.

### **Safety**

Employees working from home or other remote locations must take reasonable steps to ensure that the work environment being used is safe and free from hazards. If an injury does occur at home while the employee is working, the employee must notify his/her supervisor immediately. Supervisors should follow normal reporting procedures to Human Resources and the Safety Office for accidents and/or injuries. Human Resources will assist with workers compensation reporting as per normal procedures.

### **Security**

It is the employee's responsibility to follow the same best practices for protecting the physical assets, electronic information, and resources of the AgCenter as is required at all other times. This includes protecting information and remote working equipment from being stolen or accessed by unauthorized persons. This also includes the security of information in paper form and its proper disposal. Users may not store AgCenter confidential or protected information (PI) data on their personally owned devices.

### **IT Support**

The AgCenter may not be able to provide hands-on assistance for any equipment or connectivity issues to employees working remotely outside the university. IT may be able to access university-owned computers remotely to resolve issues. IT will make every effort to support remote workers who are utilizing their personal devices but will be limited in the assistance that can be provided.

## **Reporting**

Employees who telecommute will provide their supervisor with a report (verbally, in writing, or as otherwise required), generally outlining the duties performed and/or projects completed while telecommuting. Nonexempt/ hourly employees must maintain a daily log of hours and tasks completed and submit that information to their supervisor.

## **Revocation**

The AgCenter may withdraw an employee's approval to telecommute. The employee will be notified in writing when they are expected to return to their AgCenter work location. An employee may request to revoke their telecommuting agreement in writing to their manager. If approved, the revocation would usually be effective 7 calendar days from the date of approval. Consideration will be given to the status of the office, available office space for the returning employees, and equipment needs. If an employee is approved to telecommute during an emergency, it is understood that the arrangement will end when the office again becomes available following the end of the emergency.

## **Agreement**

Employees who are approved to telecommute or work remotely should have a signed Telecommuting Agreement approved by their supervisor and Unit Head. The form must contain the employee's preferred phone contact information as well as the physical address of the remote work location. Employees are required to notify their supervisor should the phone number and/or remote work location change. Remote work locations that are outside the state of Louisiana may result in personal income tax implications for the employee. The completed form should be submitted to HRM prior to the beginning of telecommuting. However, it may be necessary during emergency situations to have employees work remotely for a short period of time while working to have the agreement completed.

## **References**

[PM-13](#) University Travel Regulations

[PM-20](#) Leave Policies for Academic & Unclassified & Classified Personnel