

The Telework Spectrum

June 2021



CHAMPIONS
OF THE COMMUTE



Introduction

Champions of the Commute | The Telework Spectrum

The Champions of the Commute is a table of Greater Washington Partnership employers dedicated to advancing employer-led solutions to build a better way to work and commute around the Capital Region, from Baltimore to Richmond. The Champions of the Commute discuss transportation-related issues to learn from each other, identify shared priorities and implementation strategies, and influence positive transportation outcomes for the Capital Region.

The Champions of the Commute came together in early 2020 to discuss how employers could be a part of the solution to some of the worst congestion in the country. Like all of our lives, the pandemic shifted the table's focus. More than a year into the pandemic, some employers' workforces have been entirely remote while others have continued to come onsite throughout the pandemic. Many employers had to reduce staff or hours for jobs that were dependent on people coming together in large numbers. All employers, however, are trying to understand what changes made during the pandemic are here to stay and what those changes may mean for the future of their work.

The Champions of the Commute aim for the Telework Spectrum to support organizations in having more informed internal discussions about the benefits and challenges of various remote work possibilities, frequencies, and combinations. Before the pandemic, the general expectation for most employers was that employees would work full time onsite. Our interviews demonstrated that many employees hope the future is more flexible. The decisions employers make today will shape the professional norms of tomorrow.

The Capital Region is at an inflection point with regard to telework. In making decisions about the future of work and the commute, employers should consider what is best for their employees, their organizations, and the Capital Region.

The Telework Spectrum outlines some of the many possibilities and considerations for employers to factor in their future of work planning.

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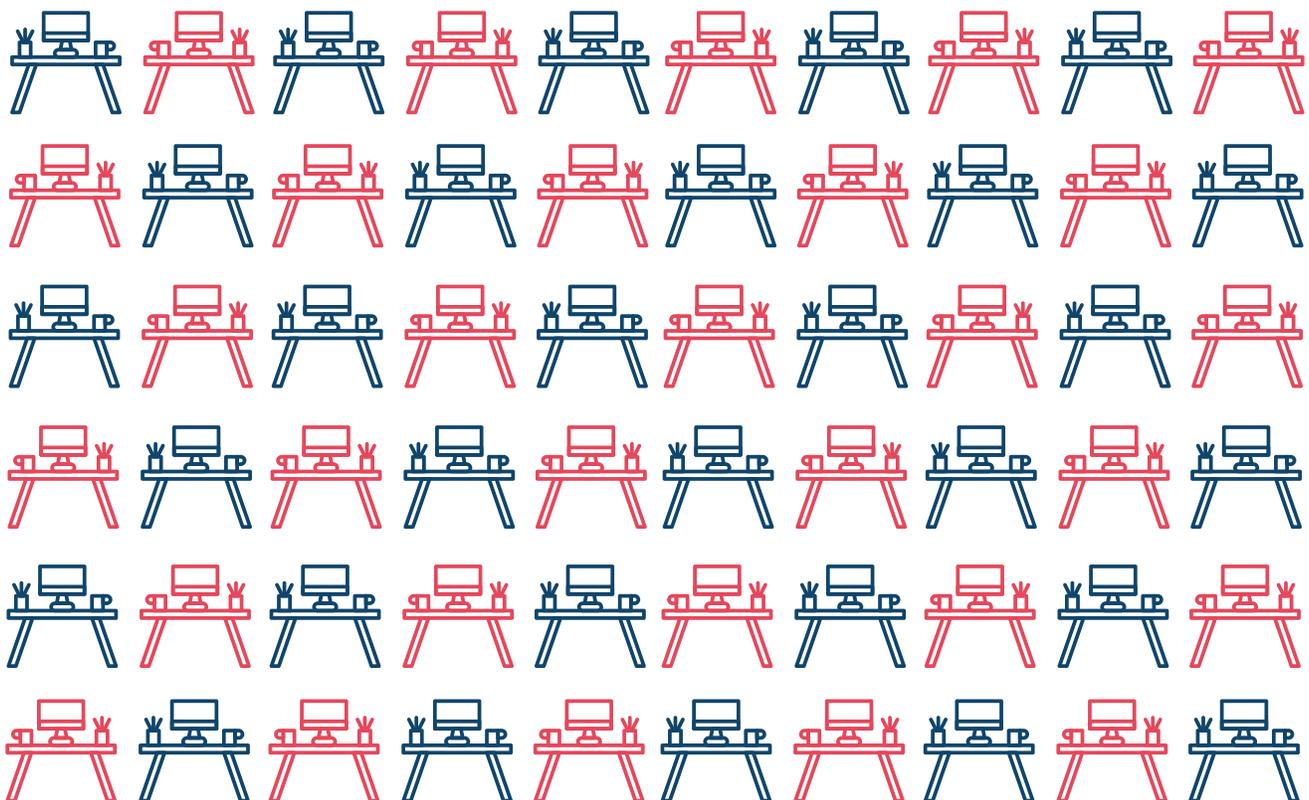
The Telework Spectrum

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From full-time remote work to full-time onsite, employers are charting new territory as they plan for what the future of work will look like after the pandemic.

The Telework Spectrum highlights some of the configurations employers are adopting. There is no one answer that applies to all stakeholders or all types of employers. Each organization, and even each team, may have different needs based on the nature of their work, e.g. how much work is customer-facing versus internal, is the work team-based and collaborative or more individual and solitary?

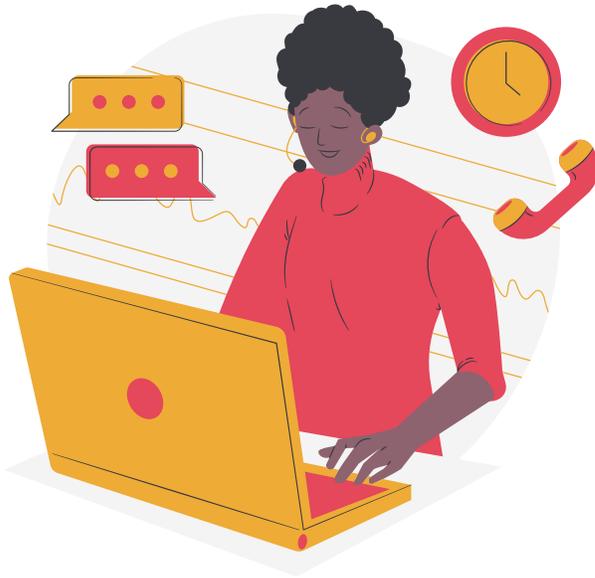
The Telework Spectrum is designed to help employers learn about the various ways organizations are responding to and shaping the future of work and the commute. This brief outlines five models for the future of work, including benefits and drawbacks of each model, and considerations employers must face in developing their own policies.



5 Days Remote

Full-Time Telework

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Before the pandemic, many employers assumed full-time remote work was not compatible or possible with their business model. The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to adapt. Many employers learned that remote work was not only possible, it offered more flexibility for employees and turbo-charged the adoption of new technologies and electronic communication.

Stakeholder	Benefits	Drawbacks
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Commute• Lower Transportation Costs• Work-Life Flexibility• Housing Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weaker Relationships• Limited Networking• Limited Access to Office Support & Supplies
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced Real Estate Costs• Talent Attraction• Talent Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of Office Culture• Sunk Costs in Worksite Equipment or Real Estate
Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congestion Reduction• Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office Occupancy Rates• Less Vibrant Business Districts• Inequitable Access to Telework

4 Days Remote

Majority Telework

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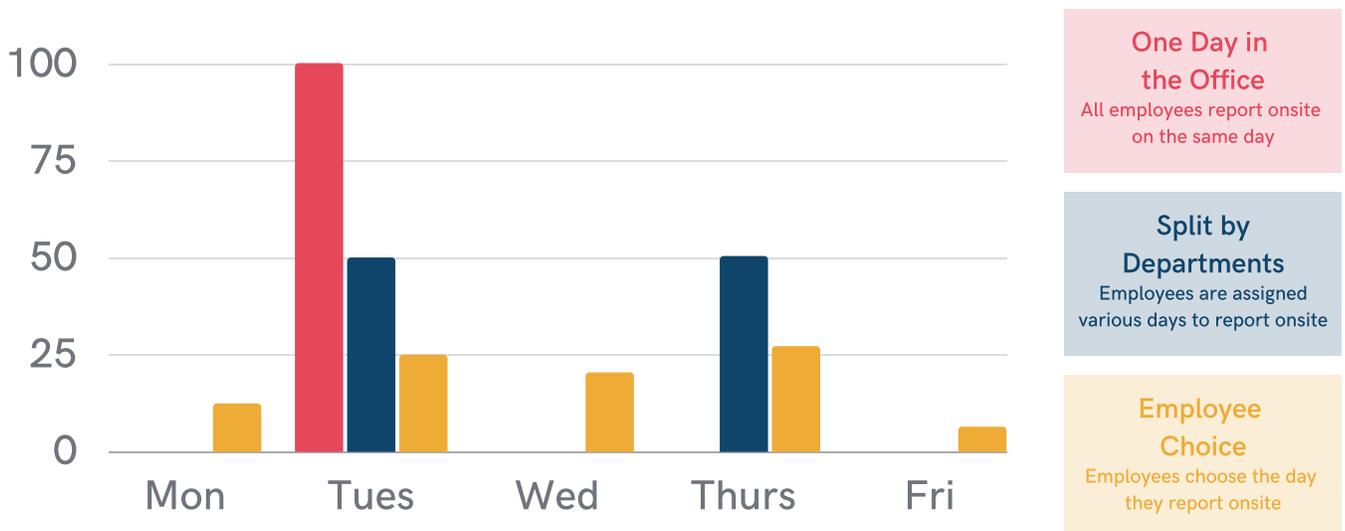
Combining remote work with a day onsite can give your team the benefits of both. In a mostly remote scenario, employees can benefit from the work-life balance and flexibility of remote work, but also have opportunities to collaborate and build relationships and the team's culture in person.

The one day onsite could be used for in-person collaboration that is more difficult in a virtual format, rather than working alone at a desk.



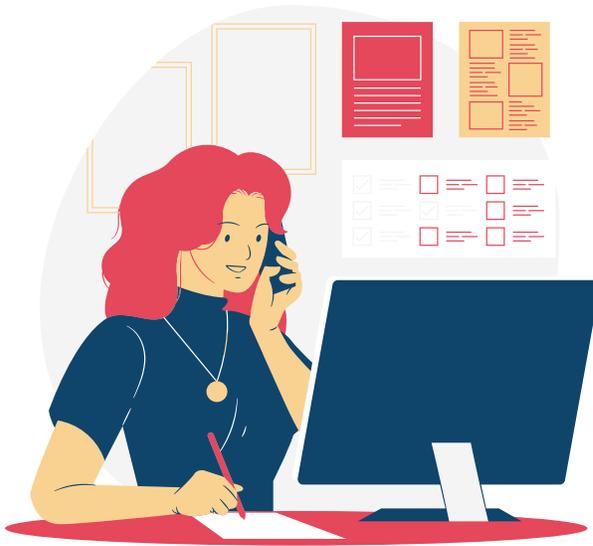
Worksite Occupancy Models

There are many ways to organize and structure time at the worksite, from one day onsite for the entire team, splitting by department, or letting employees decide. The chart below shows illustrative examples of how a model may impact worksite occupancy levels.



2-3 Days Remote Hybrid Telework-Onsite

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Hybrid models of partial remote, partial onsite work offer employees the benefits of both, but, depending on the worksite occupancy model, can be hard to manage logistically.

Employers must decide if all employees come onsite the same day, if onsite days are split by team or department, if employees should choose their days onsite, or some other model. There are pros and cons to each approach.

Worksite Occupancy Models

Model	Benefits	Drawbacks
Same Days Onsite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplicity• Office Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unused real estate some days of the week• Lack of flexibility for employees
Split by Teams or Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplicity• Team Comradery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hard to manage org-wide meetings and culture• Lack of flexibility for employees
Employee Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attraction & Retention• Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uncertainty around real estate planning• Team Culture

1 Day Remote

Majority Onsite

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Even one day of remote work can reduce worksite real-estate needs by up to 20% for employers, while employees gain the flexibility and benefits remote work entails.

Depending on the worksite occupancy model, organizations adopting long-term remote work policies can shrink their real estate footprint, increase occupancy in their existing footprint, and/or rethink their floorplans.

"Remote work will change how we manage our real estate. We will quickly move to a more "open seating" arrangement, in which digital tools will help manage seating arrangements, as well as needed amenities, such as conference room space. As a result, for every 100 employees, we may need seats for only 60 on average."

- Jamie Dimon, CEO, JPMorgan Chase, Annual Report 2020

0 Days Remote

Full-Time Onsite

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Before the pandemic, full-time onsite work was the norm and full-time telework was the exception.

The pandemic challenged our notions of what is possible in terms of telework. As we emerge from the pandemic, employers are re-evaluating not just what is possible, but what is preferable, for their employees, their organization, and the Capital Region.

The decisions we make today will decide the future of work. Where will your organization fall on the Telework Spectrum?

Stakeholder	Benefits	Drawbacks
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Comradery• Networking Opportunities• Office Support & Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation Costs• Required Commutes• Less Housing Flexibility
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office Culture• Efficient Use of Real Estate and Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real Estate Costs• Talent Attraction and Retention
Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office Occupancy• Vibrant Business Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congestion Reduction• Air Quality

Custom Policies

Model Deviations

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Strict adherence to one model, whether full-time remote, full-time onsite, or hybrid, is not possible for many employers. Business needs may require alternative models or extra policies depending on the nature of the work. The sampling below contains some baseline policy deviations that may be layered on top of a team's standard telework model.



Event-Focused Work

In-person events, whether regular or irregular, require in-person staff. Telework policies can outline a baseline remote, onsite, or hybrid model, while outlining clear responsibilities and expectations around event days.

Customer-Focused Work

Some roles require employees to be periodically or regularly onsite or at a customer's facilities, but can otherwise work from home. Telework policies should outline clear responsibilities and expectations for staff around their ability to respond to clients or customers in person when needed.

'All Hands' or Emergency Response

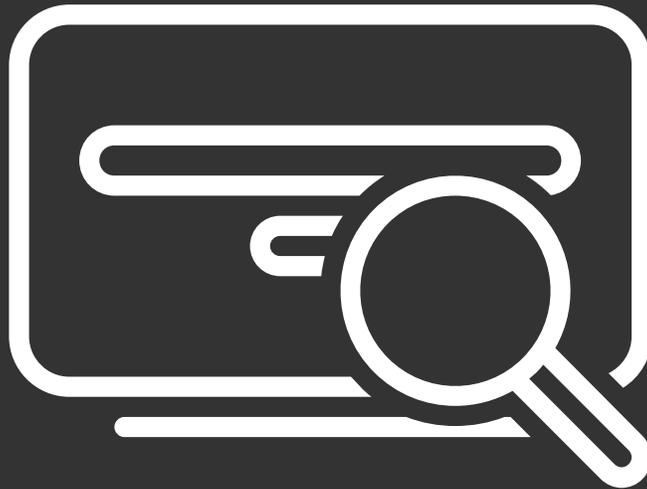
Some employers have days when 'all hands' are needed, onsite or in the field, to accomplish business mandates. Telework policies should outline clear responsibilities and expectations for staff around their ability to respond in person when needed.

In-Person Rotation

Some employers need at least one person onsite each day, whether to answer phones or receive legal documents, etc. Rotating onsite duties between a few staff can allow for a baseline of remote work.



**What are other
employers doing?**



Examples & Insights

In the News

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Google

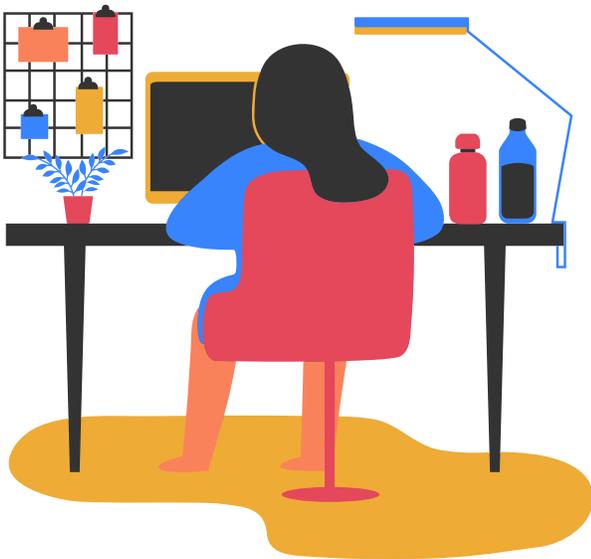
We'll move to a hybrid work week where most Googlers spend approx. three days in the office and two days wherever they work best.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai, May 5, 2021

Under Armour

At the new headquarters, only about 65% of employees are expected on campus at any one time. Office space will be designed for individuals who need to be on campus every day, such as in manufacturing, as well as for those who rotate in and out of the buildings and can share space.

- Baltimore Sun, April 19, 2021



Microsoft

Hybrid work requires a new operating model and strategy that encompasses flexible work policy, inclusive space design and innovative technology solutions.

- Official Microsoft Blog, March 22, 2021

Additional Resources

[Microsoft's 2021 Work Trend Index: The Next Great Disruption is Hybrid Work](#)

[Harvard Business Review: A CEO's Guide to Planning a Return to the Office](#)

[Georgetown's School of Continuing Studies: Leading Remote Teams in 2021](#)

[EY and the Greater Washington Partnership: Remote work in the Capital Region](#)

Voices from the Region

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The Greater Washington Partnership interviewed managers from Champions of the Commute employers as well as public sector agencies to gather anecdotes and lessons learned from managing remote employees over the past year. The quotes below and throughout the following pages were taken from interviews conducted in May 2021.

Similar Productivity

Almost all of the managers interviewed thought their team was as productive or more productive working remotely than before the pandemic.

New Business Leads

"Business development has been a challenge; we aren't seeing people at conferences, although we are saving a lot of money on travel expenses"

- *Manager of Development Team*

Flexibility as Trust

"Flexibility isn't seen as a reward, you are taking away a privilege and not trusting us by telling me I've got to go back to the office when I've proven I don't need to always be in the office."

- *Manager of Engineering Team*

Redefine Boundaries

"For some employees, I had to say, you have to turn yourself off at some point; it's okay to turn it off sometimes even if you are at home."

- *Manager of Policy Team*

Training is a Challenge

"We are missing out on some teaching moments, those impromptu water cooler moments where you say, 'Hey, I would have done that email differently.' I think having new folks in the office is going to be more vital."

- *Manager of Engineering Team*

Foster Social Connection

"As time set in, it was really important to create social time and not just business time."

- *Manager of Consulting Team*

Management Styles

"There are different personality spectrums across employees; some employees are very communicative. If something comes up I am going to know about it; whereas for some folks, if you leave them alone too long and don't force them to communicate, they can become more and more in their bubble; As a manager, I need to go into your bubble and pull you out of it."

- *Manager of Policy Team*

Scheduling Check-ins

"None of the back and forth between desks is happening throughout the day so you have to take time to schedule time to talk about things that used to be done face to face or impromptu."

- *Manager of Finance Team*

Self-Selected Connections

"We've done employee morale and team-building, but it is self-selected; in the office, you go to microwave your lunch and three people are sitting there and it forces a conversation. Since working remote, I've used the chat function almost as if I've been walking around the office"

- *Manager of Public Agency*

Set Realistic Expectations

"I think sometimes people manage where they want to know you are at your computer and you are being productive at all those hours; almost like busy work if you will; a layer of busy work that wasn't there before."

- *Manager of Marketing Team*

Support Junior Staff

"Remote work works well if they have enough experience under the belt that they know the drill. It is more of a challenge with junior colleagues who are struggling in this environment. I've had to be more deliberate about giving feedback and attention to new and more junior colleagues."

- *Manager of Finance Team*

Commute Freedom

"The time my staff used to spend commuting they are using to exercise, spend time with kids, or make dinner so they aren't eating at 9pm. They are happy not to have to drive and don't miss the expense of filling up the gas tank every week."

- *Manager of HR Team*

Survey Says

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Glassdoor Harris Employee Poll

February 2021

Q: Would you prefer to continue working from home at least part of the time after offices reopen?

86%
Want to remote work part of the time

As of June, 2021, there is no census of employer remote work plans. Many employers are still drafting their return to worksite plans. Telework policies and remote work plans set today will surely evolve over time to reflect tomorrow's business and employee needs. This page highlights a small sample of recent employer and employee surveys on remote work preferences.

Read More

[Glassdoor Harris Poll](#)

[PwC's US Remote Work Survey](#)

[GWP's Capital COVID Snapshot](#)

PwC's US Remote Work Survey

December 2020

Q: If COVID-19 was not a concern, how often do you think a typical employee needs to be in the office, if at all, in order to maintain a distinctive culture for the company?

Top Result:
29% said
3 days
per week

Capital COVID Snapshot

Nov/Dec 2020

Q: After the COVID-19 pandemic, I anticipate most of my organization's employees will...

56%
Telework some of the time
(1-2 days per week)



**What's right for you
and your organization?**



Considerations

Work-Life Flexibility

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Employees are not just professionals, they are family members, spouses, siblings, parents, roommates, caretakers, and often the heads of the household.

One of the primary benefits of remote work is the flexibility it offers employees to better manage their multiple competing professional and personal priorities, from home repairs to home deliveries, picking kids up from school, and cooking healthy meals. If workplace policies allow, remote work can give employees the flexibility to self-manage their time to benefit themselves and their families, but also the roles and responsibilities of their job.

"In some ways the work-life balance is better. In some ways there's a blurring. It's on me as the manager to get folks who are natural workaholics to not burn out."

- Manager of Public Agency



Organizational Flexibility

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Flexibility is the primary benefit of remote work, both for employees and employers. In interviews for the Telework Spectrum, managers expressed the desire for remote work policies to be flexible enough to accommodate the different business needs of various teams and roles, but also the personal needs and unique circumstances that may arise for individual employees. Even within an organization, each employee may have different wants and needs regarding telework.

"Remote work is more flexible and helps with overall appreciation and general happiness of the job. That is a big benefit that I don't want to understate."

- Manager of Sales Team

"Without flexibility around telework, I worry we may lose people, because there are many companies who have learned a lot and are not going back."

- Manager of HR Team

"In my line of work, the market now expects there to be some level of flexibility."

- Manager of Consulting Team



Flexibility for Individuals

Employees desire flexibility. Policies without flexibility do not respect the complexity and shifting nature of employees' lives. Remote work can make it easier for employees to:

- Care for a sick loved one
- Work a few days on a vacation
- Go to a doctor's appointment
- Take a pet to the vet
- Manage home repairs

Flexibility for Teams

Organizations can set the tone for remote work by aligning toward one model but providing flexibility for some teams to use other models based on business or employee needs, such as:

- Seasonal business needs
- Front vs Back of house roles
- Essential roles and duties
- New hires and trainees
- Day vs Night shifts

Fairness in Application

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Remote work creates new opportunities for employees and employers, but it also presents new challenges for management in ensuring fairness and equity in its application.

In adopting hybrid models of remote work or remote work flexibility, leadership must consider and create policies around fair access and equitable management.

Employers must decide who has access to the benefits of remote work and how to respond to the unequal access to information and visibility between remote and non-remote employees.

For example, remote employees may feel they lack visibility and connection to management and leadership. However, non-remote employees may feel they lack the flexibility and the trust that remote work entails. Successful remote work policies must find a balance that feels equitable, fair, and authentic to their organization's culture and business needs.

Fair Access

Employees desire fair policies, as written and as practiced. Remote work policies must balance the responsibilities and privileges of various roles. Remote work policies should answer:

- How to determine eligibility?
- How to ensure fairness in the application of flexibility?
- Should essential, non-remote jobs have a compensatory benefit?

Equitable Management

Remote employees have different access to real-time information, technology, office supplies, leadership, and levels of visibility with managers and colleagues. Equitable remote management should:

- Recognize differences in visibility
- Equally acknowledge remote team members and their good work
- Foster culture where employees speak up for their distinct needs

Commutes

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For many employees, commutes are one of the most stressful parts of the day. Whether sitting in your car stuck in congestion, waiting for a bus, or crowding onto a subway car, avoiding rush-hour commutes is one of the many benefits of remote work, for the individual and for the region.

Remote work can not only reduce transportation costs, it can make it less daunting to experiment with new commute modes on days the employees do go to the worksite. Employers should consider coordinating new remote work policies with new commute programs.

Daily Parking Charge

Switching from monthly to daily parking passes can save money for employees who mostly work remote, incent alternative modes of commuting, and reduce long-term parking costs by lowering the number of parking spots per employee.

Flexible Schedules

Shifting schedules away from the standard 9-5 can allow for easier, less stressful commutes.

Transit Benefits

Fewer commutes per week can make switching to transit, which is often slower than driving, more attractive, thereby reducing parking demand and encouraging healthier, more sustainable transportation options.

Bike Facilities

Secure bike racks and shower facilities make biking more attractive for employees.



Real Estate Needs

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Remote work can transform an organization's real estate needs and enable new worksite configurations. During the pandemic, many worksites sat largely empty and unused for more than a year. While most employers expect their teams to return to the worksite, many employers also expect more remote work and telework flexibility moving forward.

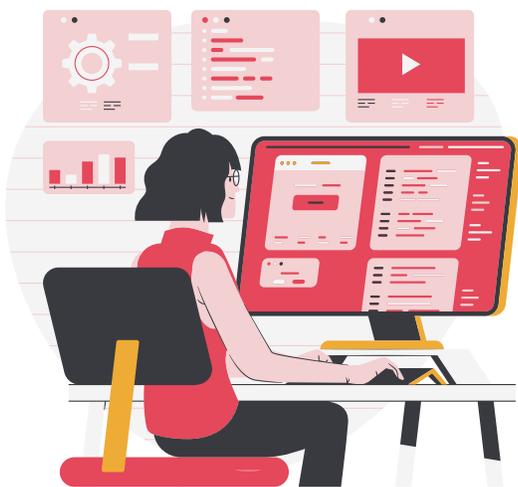
Meeting Spaces

In-person collaboration is one of the primary motivators to come onsite. Solitary work can usually be done at home. Worksites need more meeting spaces and new collaboration spaces that could be unlocked with fewer people onsite each day.



Extra Square Feet

More remote work means fewer people in the office. In the short term, that means more square feet per person, improving indoor air quality. In the long term, that can reduce real estate needs or allow roomier and quieter work environments for those at the worksite.



Office Hoteling

Hoteling is a reservation-based unassigned seating system. Instead of assigned desks or offices, workers schedule their use of workspaces. This works best for mostly remote teams or teams that travel frequently.

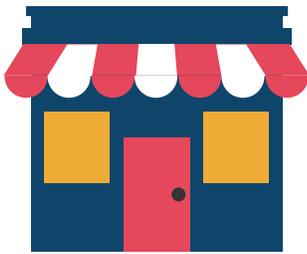
Hot Desking

Hot desking does not involve reservations. Workers choose a workspace upon arrival, rather than in advance. Unassigned seating can enable new, unplanned collaborations, as employees interact most frequently with people sitting next to them.

Regional Impacts

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In February 2021, EY and the Greater Washington Partnership released a report on *Remote work in the Capital Region: Implications for the region and an inclusive recovery*. The report found that the increased prevalence of remote work after the pandemic is likely to disproportionately impact the region's most vulnerable and underserved communities. Creating a more inclusive economy will require leaders at all levels putting equity at the center of their decision making. How employers structure their workplace policies has impacts beyond just their business needs and their employees.



Small Businesses Near Worksites

Many small businesses struggled to survive the pandemic or closed their doors entirely, especially those near business districts. Ongoing remote work, even hybrid work, will make it harder for these businesses to survive long-term. Jurisdictions may need to evaluate how to support small businesses in central business districts and neighborhood centers as more employees work from home. Strategies such as updated land use policies and ongoing financial support may be needed. Preserving small businesses is key to local employment and regional vitality.



Disparities in Access to Remote Capable Work

Remote work opportunities are not equitably distributed. Our report found that only 28% of Hispanic workers and 41% of Black workers were in jobs that were remote-capable, compared to 56% of White workers and 56% of Asian workers in the Capital Region.



Support More Vibrant Communities

Vibrant, diverse, and inclusive communities help employers attract and retain talent. Employers should encourage local leaders to support an inclusive recovery from the pandemic and through the likely transition to elevated levels of remote work. Employers should also explore new ways to support local businesses such as offering catered lunches for events or as an incentive to work onsite, distribute gift cards to local businesses, or support and encourage employees to run errands near the worksite as needed or on certain days/times

Telework Management

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Over the past year, thought leaders have studied the shift to full-time remote work for tens of millions of employees around the country. The highlights below share some of the lessons learned and tips to best support employees who are working remotely.

Communicate

Stay in touch and check-in regularly.

- Daily, weekly, and monthly check-ins
- Constant communication is distracting
- Daily check-ins can simply be a quick email

Avoid Zoom Fatigue

Adapt meetings to virtual format.

- Shorten meetings
- 'No meeting' days or hours
- Audio-only when appropriate

Virtual Support

Support employee's technical needs.

- Remote IT support
- Stipends for home office supplies
- Offer trainings such as ergonomic workshops and remote technologies

Experience Matters

New workers need additional support.

- Communication strategies
- Virtual collaboration tools
- Connections to colleagues

Celebrate Staff

Remote workers need appreciation too.

- Thank your team and express gratitude
- Recognize and share great work
- Highlight company values in action

Comradery & Culture

Support employees' emotional needs.

- Create a virtual office 'water cooler'
- Foster virtual traditions and customs
- Schedule periodic in-person events

"Going 100% remote was a huge step, but going hybrid is the next big step. You can't just go and push reset. You must continue to be intentional. I'm working with my team to create guidelines around communication channels between staff at the office and staff at home so no one misses a beat."

- Manager of Operations Team

Telework Policy Checklist

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The checklist below is designed to make sure your organization is having the conversations needed to design, implement, and maintain robust telework policies over time.



Commitment to review remote work policies & expectations for the betterment of my employees, my organization, and my community



Remote work policy that sets the general tone for the organization



Remote work policies by team (if applicable)



Flexible/additional remote work approval and tracking processes



Clear expectations for remote employees

(E.g. Work hours: standard 9-5 or 12-4 online and responsive or flexible as long as work is satisfactorily completed on time)



Expectations for inclement weather or school holidays



Expectations around external clients, funders, customers and whether they must come onsite or can meet with staff offsite



Policy to encourage staff not to come onsite if they may be sick



Remote work supportive technology & equipment benefits



Remote-capable HR and mental health support systems



Commitment to annually review and update policies as needed

Acknowledgements

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The Greater Washington Partnership would like to thank all of the Champions of the Commute members, especially the Future of Work & the Commute subcommittee members who provided guidance and feedback on this document.

The Partnership would also like to thank the interviewees who graciously gave their time to be interviewed remotely on the benefits and challenges of remote work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an exceedingly challenging time for each and every individual and organization on many levels. We are grateful for the time and energy that our partners have continued to devote to the conversation around how employers can help design and elevate solutions to the Capital Region's transportation challenges.



The Telework Spectrum outlines some of the many possibilities and considerations for employers to factor into their future of work planning to help employers lead on creating a better way to work and commute for all residents of the Capital Region.

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