PURPOSE

Consistent with the University's desire to maintain an efficient and effective work environment, telecommuting may serve to reduce absenteeism, improve employee recruitment and retention, improve productivity, and provide employees with greater flexibility in meeting their job and family needs. In addition, the reduced travel could provide direct air quality, transportation, and energy conservation benefits.

SCOPE AND ELIGIBILITY

Identifying a Position as Appropriate for Telecommuting

Not all positions are suited for telecommuting. To assess whether telecommuting would fit the position, the supervisor (as necessary in consultation with HRS), will analyze the nature of a position and how work is performed and determine whether a position is appropriate for telecommuting. Many factors should be considered in determining the feasibility of telecommuting, including the congruence of telecommuting with the university's mission and goals, the ability to supervise the employee adequately, and whether any duties require use of certain equipment or tools that cannot be accommodated at a location other than campus. Other important considerations include:

(1) The extent to which job duties involve face-to-face interaction and coordination of work with other employees and students;
(2) The need for and frequency of in-person interactions with outside colleagues, clients and customers;
(3) What access to on-campus resources will be needed to effectively perform the work;
(4) Whether service quality or university operations or workload of others will be impacted;
(5) Whether the position can be performed independently based on the level of support and face-to-face interaction needed; and
(6) Whether performance can be assessed accurately (e.g., using established evaluation tools for the employee's job classification) and working hours appropriately documented.

Identifying an Employee as Eligible for Telecommuting

In addition to assessing the position's appropriateness for telecommuting, the employee must also be eligible, as determined by their supervisor in consultation with HRS. In considering whether to approve an employee for telecommuting, the university will consider:

(1) Length of time in position;
(2) Disciplinary actions on file;
(3) Demonstrated ability to work productively (as shown by consistent and satisfactory performance of essential functions);
(4) Performance evaluations in previous evaluation cycle;
(5) The circumstances or rationale provided for consideration of telecommuting.

EXPECTATIONS

Work Hours

Work hours and leave benefits do not change as a result of telecommuting. Requests to use leave must be approved by the University in the same manner as when working on campus. Unless otherwise specified in writing by the employee's supervisor, and except as noted for Faculty

telecommuting below, telecommuting hours are 8 am to 5 pm, mountain time, Monday through Friday, except for University – observed holidays and hours of approved leave.

A telecommuting employee may be requested to attend meetings, project reviews, or other business purposes. If necessary, the University/supervisor will seek to designate certain times or events when the employee is expected to be on campus and give adequate notice if those expectations change. Nonetheless, the employee's supervisor may require the employee to report to their University campus work location during normal business hours with reasonable notice.

Work Standards/Performance

The conditions of employment and the work performance standards for telecommuters remain the same as for non-telecommuting employees. The employee will meet with their supervisor to receive assignments and to review completed work as requested, necessary, or appropriate. The employee will complete assigned work, according to work procedures and expectations established by the supervisor.

Employee Access and Availability

Telecommuting employees must be available by telephone during scheduled work hours. Telecommuting employees are required to modify their voice mail announcement to indicate that they may be reached at an alternative number or that the employee will be regularly checking for messages. Employees are required to frequently check for messages during the day. Telecommuters must notify the office if they leave their telecommuting location during work hours.

Equipment/Expenses

Office equipment needed to participate in telecommuting may vary by employee and task. The University will not purchase or reimburse a telecommuting employee for equipment necessary to function in a telecommuting work environment. Employees may use their own equipment (e.g., personal computer, modem, answering machine, fax machine, etc.) provided the University incurs no cost. Repair and maintenance of employee-owned equipment is the responsibility of the employee.

Employees may use University-owned equipment and/or supplies, with prior supervisory approval, provided only the authorized employee will use the equipment for work-related purposes and supplies. Employees who use University equipment at home must agree to protect such equipment from loss or damage.

Compensation/Benefits

The employee's compensation, benefits, work status, and work responsibilities will not change due to telecommuting.

Employees who work overtime with advance approval, or at the request of their supervisor, will be compensated in accordance with applicable laws, collective bargaining agreement, and University policy. Failure to obtain prior approval for overtime work may result in removal from telecommuting and/or other appropriate action.

Confidentiality/Security

To ensure hardware and software security prior to installation, the supervisor must approve all software used for telecommuting. Restricted-access materials cannot be taken out of the office or accessed through the computer unless approved in advance by the supervisor.

The employee must follow all laws and university and department-level data security and privacy policies, procedures and guidelines at the alternate work site to protect the department or University records from unauthorized disclosure or damage, and comply with the privacy requirements set forth in state law and University policy.

In the event of an actual or suspected breach of security, the employee will promptly notify their supervisor and Information Technology Services.

WORK SPACE and WORK LOCATION

Staff or Temporary employees may telework from home or an alternate work site only within the state of Montana only (MT Code 2-18-101).

The employee must provide a written description of the intended workspace. The workspace must provide adequate work area, light, telephone service, power, and temperature control. The employee must maintain the workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and equipment. The worksite must have adequate broadband internet access to allow remote work. The employee is responsible, at their own cost, for the purchase, setup and installation, support, and maintenance of internet service at their off-campus location. While working remotely, the employee is responsible for making the changes needed to receive phone calls made to their university extension. Any associated costs are the responsibility of the employee. The employee or their department is responsible for the purchase, installation, support, and maintenance of any additional accessories needed to telecommute (monitor, printer, keyboard, mouse, etc.).

EXCEPTIONS

Faculty Telecommuting

Except for face-to-face teaching, and faculty whose appointment requires on-location work for specified hours, it is an accepted practice for faculty, to carry out their work with varied schedules on campus and elsewhere. Thus, Sections (B & F) of these procedures will not apply to faculty. For the avoidance of doubt, teaching courses assigned for delivery in an online or remote mode will not necessitate a formal request to telecommute. If an alternative work location is a negotiated term of faculty employment, this will be documented in the appointment letter.

University-Required Telecommuting

The University may determine that employees in a particular department need to work off campus for a short period of time to accommodate unusual circumstances, such as a brief closing for renovations or relocation. In addition, the university may establish telecommuting as a condition of offered employment or mandate telecommuting due to public health emergencies or other circumstances as determined by the President or designee. In such case, Sections (B & F) of these procedures will not apply.

Telecommuting for Health-Related Reasons

An employee with a documented disability may request telecommuting as a reasonable accommodation to enable an employee to perform their essential job functions. Those requests will

be handled by Human Resource Services in accordance with their usual procedures for such accommodation requests. In such cases, Sections (B & F) of these procedures will not apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Employees wishing to telecommute must discuss the possibility with their supervisor. A Telecommuting Agreement must be completed and filed with Human Resource Services.

TERM

Telecommuting arrangements are limited to one-year arrangements. Agreements automatically expire on June 30th each year unless another date prior to June 30th has been established. A supervisor may end a telecommuting agreement at any time upon written notice to the employee. Unless telecommuting is required by the University of Montana, an employee may end the teleworking arrangement at any time upon reasonable notice to their supervisor.

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