

Policy Title: Flexible Workplace Policy

Chapter: 4

Section: 1

Policy No.: 14

Effective Date: November 1, 2021

## POLICY STATEMENT

Ramsey County is implementing a flexible workplace environment that enables employees whose job functions are designated as “mobile” or “hybrid” to be eligible for work arrangements that involve a combination of in-person and remote work. Flexible workplace arrangements, also called flexwork, provide eligible employees the opportunity to work outside of their primary county facilities at offices or locations in the community or from their homes with supervisor approval. This organizational culture shift aligns with the county’s [Residents First Strategic Priority](#), service delivery framework, [Strategic Facilities Plan](#) and its mission, vision, and goals.

The implementation of flexwork will:

- Enhance the delivery of resident-facing services in the community.
- Support a healthy work-life balance and improve work productivity while maintaining human interactions and connections to a team environment.
- Attract more prospective employees and help retain a talented workforce.
- Reduce employee travel time and the county’s carbon footprint.

Departments may make seasonal modifications based on service needs. Eligible employees must work with their direct supervisor to implement their flexible work arrangements using this policy and associated guidance documents. Supervisors have the discretion to modify individual work arrangements based on business continuity needs and documented work performance issues impacting work outcomes. The [Workplace Standards Policy](#) will be used to determine the type workspace provided to flexworkers at their primary county facility when working onsite.

## APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all county employees (except for elected officials) and those conducting county business (e.g., contractors, volunteers, students, interns).

This policy also applies to all county facilities and offices, whether owned or leased. It replaces all previous ad hoc and department-specific policies and programs related to telecommuting, telework, and flexwork arrangements.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created barriers that challenged the county to reimagine service delivery and provide employees innovative ways to continue to conduct business without interruption. A temporary **Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy** was quickly developed to authorize eligible employees to perform some or all of their job duties from an alternate worksite, such as their homes. A Flexible Workplace Policy Team was convened in February 2021 to begin developing a countywide policy and to designate job classifications and functions within each department as 1) primarily onsite, 2) mobile or 3) hybrid.

## DEFINITIONS

**Flexwork:** Also known as flexible work, is an arrangement that allows an employee to perform job duties at an alternate worksite that is not their primary Ramsey County facility or office on a regularly scheduled and recurring basis, as identified and approved by the appropriate supervisor or manager.

**Hybrid worker:** An employee whose work arrangement involves a combination of onsite and offsite workdays, which includes coming into a county facility to perform job duties at least twice per week.

**Mobile worker:** An employee who works primarily in a community-based environment and whose duties, which are primarily resident-facing, may be performed at multiple locations in a given week based on job function.

**Drop-in space:** A shared workspace available to employees at a Ramsey County facility or office.

**Alternate worksite:** A place of work physically situated outside of a Ramsey County facility, office, or drop-in space, such as an employee's home.

**Primary worksite:** An employee's work location at a Ramsey County facility or office, as designated in Summit. All employees, regardless of job classification or work arrangements, have a primary work facility.

**Remote-first work environment:** Under special or unique circumstances, employees are not expected to meet their onsite location requirements under the hybrid or mobile designation and may perform their work duties offsite.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Department directors must ensure all employees in their department are informed of the scope and nature of this policy. Flexworkers and their supervisors are responsible for complying with this policy. Failure to comply with this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

The County Manager's Office is responsible for updating and maintaining this policy.

## PROCEDURES

Department directors have the responsibility to classify job classifications and functions that are eligible for flexwork with their Deputy County Manager and the County Manager for approval. Employees in a job classification and function deemed eligible for flexwork will be required to certify selection of a primarily onsite or hybrid work arrangement. Directions on how an employee will make a selection of primarily onsite or hybrid work will be included in the **Flexible Workplace Guidance**.

### **Eligibility**

Employees are eligible to be flexworkers based on their job classification, primary function, and business need. Each job classification and function has been assigned one of three workplace designations: 1) primarily onsite, 2) mobile, or 3) hybrid. Individuals with job classifications and functions with either a mobile or hybrid designation must meet the following criteria to qualify for a flexible workplace arrangement:

- Physical presence at a county facility or office is not essential to the success of the job function. Job duties can be successfully completed at an alternate worksite without disruption of services to residents, a reduction in efficiency and workflow, or communication and accountability to coworkers and management.

- In-person contact with residents at a county facility or office is not always required to provide a service or perform job duties.
- Work completed outside of county facilities and offices complies with state and federal laws regarding data privacy requirements.

### **Expectations**

Unless otherwise indicated, all terms and conditions of employment with Ramsey County remain unchanged by an employee's status as a flexworker. Flexwork arrangements for eligible employees are not permanent. They are subject to change based on the discretion of work requirements and management, who may track performance to ensure conditions and expectations agreed to by the employee and supervisor are met. Failure to uphold these expectations in a flexwork environment may result in revocation of a flexible workplace arrangement or discipline up to and including termination.

All flexworkers must:

- Complete and keep up with required flexwork training.
- Work with their direct supervisor to develop a flexwork arrangement with agreed upon expectations regarding performance and review. Performance expectations should include effective and consistent communication, the completion of job duties within the assigned timeframe, adherence to work schedules set forth by the supervisor, regular reporting, and compliance with departmental standards.
- Follow **Workspace and Technology by Designation** for setting up alternate worksites as appropriate.

During the days of the week flexworkers perform their duties onsite, they must do so at a primary location approved by their supervisor. During the days of the week flexworkers perform their duties offsite, they may do so at a location of their own choosing without supervisor approval.

In the event of a "remote-first" work environment declaration by the County Manager, all impacted hybrid employees will be notified and may work offsite until given notice to return to their previous flexible work arrangements. Employees must ensure their contact information is up to date in in **Summit Self-Service** to receive timely workplace alerts when needed.

### **Review of Employee Designation**

All employees that are eligible for flexible work will be provided with an annual opportunity, on or around the organization's healthcare and benefits open enrollment period, to select a designation as either primarily on-site or hybrid work. An employee may request a review of their existing designation and/or workplace arrangement between that annual review period at any time in response to a change in life circumstances. All life-circumstance based requests must be shared with and approved by the employee's direct supervisor.

### **Data Privacy and Document Handling**

Flexworkers must comply with all county policies, and state and federal laws for handling files, computer data, and other sensitive information:

- All files must be transferred to and from the office in a secure manner and not left unattended at any time.
- All files containing Ramsey County employees' or clients' sensitive data must be stored in a locked drawer, file cabinet, case, or other secured location that is inaccessible to others.
- The appropriate county-mandated secure log-on procedures must be used when accessing county systems (e.g., SSIS, MAXIS, MMIS) and any other private information databases. All users must log off these systems when not working at the computer.
- When working from an offsite location, unauthorized individuals must be prevented from looking at computer data and files.
- All paper copies of private data or private health information printed at an alternate worksite must be kept in a secure location until they can be shredded sufficiently to make the text unreadable or disposed of in county secure shredding bins.
- Flexworkers must take all reasonable precautions to protect Ramsey County documents from theft, damage, or misuse. If county data is compromised, the employee must immediately notify their supervisor.
- In-person client meetings in an employee's home are prohibited. Work-related documents must not be sent via US Mail to an employee's home nor mailed from an employee's home.
- All work-related mail or confidential or private client documents printed remotely must be mailed from a secure site, which include the employee's office location, the US Post Office, or deposited into a Post Office box.

### **Data Protection - Home Inspections for Employees Handling Federal Tax Information**

Employees handling Federal Tax Information are subject to the same safeguard requirements and the highest level of attainable security as applicable to in-office employees. The IRS may visit home worksites to conduct safeguard reviews for all employees that handle Federal Tax Information. In addition, Ramsey County is also required to perform home visits and visits to community partner sites to ensure data is safeguarded.

Ramsey County home visits are conducted by the employee's direct supervisor in accordance with IRS Publication 1075. These visits may be announced or unannounced at the discretion of management and may happen during any day an employee is working from their alternate worksite. During the visit, the supervisor uses a checklist to confirm that the worker is available during work hours and all data is being protected according to IRS Publication 1075.

### **Furniture and Technology**

Surplus furniture and necessary technology equipment, such as chairs, file cabinets, laptops, computer monitors, and keyboards, may be taken home for work-related purposes as approved by supervisors. See the **Workspace and Technology by Designation** for additional information. Employees must obtain management approval prior to transferring county-issued furniture and equipment to an alternate worksite. Supervisors must maintain a log of equipment and technology items for each employee. Employees are responsible for the transport of furniture and equipment and at home set-up, while exercising caution and good judgment when lifting and transporting items. See Ramsey County's **Office Ergonomics** for guidance on ergonomic workstation setups.

Ramsey County-provided equipment and office supplies remain the property of the county and are to be used only for work-related purposes. Employees who are issued technology equipment by Ramsey County must comply with the **Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy**. If employees are voluntary or involuntary terminated from the County, they are responsible for returning all technology and equipment back to their manager/supervisor within their respective departments.

Employees are responsible for establishing and maintaining an adequate network at their home if it is used as an alternate worksite in order to perform their job functions. The county is not responsible for network hardware or difficulties due to the use of incompatible equipment or service provider issues.

### **Requesting Reasonable Accommodations**

Requests for reasonable accommodations under the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** needed to perform job duties at a county facility or worksite due to disability or medical (including pregnancy-related) reasons will be received and evaluated on an individual case-by-case basis consistent with state and federal law.

Employees seeking accommodations are encouraged to speak with a supervisor or manager in their department, their department's ADA Liaison or their **Human Resources Business Partner**. Complex situations should be referred to the County's ADA Coordinator. Although not required to do so, an employee may complete the **Request for Job or Workplace Modification Form** and submit it to their supervisor or their department ADA Liaison. Human Resources will work with the employee and supervisor through an interactive process where needed to determine if an employee's request can be granted and the employee can be accommodated without causing an undue hardship.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING PLAN**

Department directors must ensure their department employees understand this policy and that those in flexwork arrangements are compliant with the expectations outlined in it. Training on the procedures will be made available to employees with resources including FAQs in the **Flexible Workplace Guidance**.

## **AUTHORITY**

This policy was authorized by the County Manager:

Home Rule Charter, Sec. 3.02 - Powers and Duties of the County Manager

Administrative Code, Chapter 3.30.00 - Powers and Duties of the County Manager

## **LINKS AND RESOURCES**

Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy

Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



- Flexible Workplace Guidance
- Mission, Vision, Goals and Values
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Office Ergonomics
- [Residents First Strategic Priority](#)
- Strategic Facilities Plan
- Workplace Standards Policy
- Workspace and Technology by Designation

## CONTACTS / SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

### Compliance and Ethics Office

- Data Compliance Manager: 651-266-8000
- Health Care Compliance Manager: 651-266-8000

### Property Management

- Property Management Manager: 651-266-2262

### Human Resources

- Safety and Occupational Health: 651-266-2929
- Disability and Leave of Absence Administration: 651-266-2729
- Human Resources Business Partners: 651-266-2700 or HR Business Partner
- Labor Relations Manager: 651-266-2728

## REVISION HISTORY

Date	Brief description of change	Revision Approval
(Most recent date and revision first)		

## APPROVAL

Ryan O'Connor

County Manager  
November 1, 2021