

Policy Title: Flexible Workplace Policy

Chapter: 4

Section: 1

Policy No.: 14

Effective Date: Wednesday, May 9, 2022

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 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 set up 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 of workspace provided to flexworkers at their primary county facility when working onsite.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all county employees (except for elected officials).

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. This policy replaces the temporary and former Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Flexwork: Also known as flexible work, is an arrangement that allows an employee designated as a hybrid worker to perform job duties at an alternate worksite that is not their primary Ramsey County facility, office, or project site 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.

Primarily onsite worker: An employee whose job functions require them to be largely working at a Ramsey County facility, office or project site with occasional remote tasks, or an employee who voluntarily chooses to work onsite four days or more per week.

Flex space: Workspace prioritized for use by hybrid-designated employees in their primary county facility, office, or project site during their scheduled onsite workdays.

Drop-in space: A shared workspace available to employees at a Ramsey County facility, office, or project site for nonscheduled onsite work or meetings.

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: A countywide work status declared by the county manager in response to special or unique circumstances, in which employees under the hybrid or mobile designation may perform their work duties offsite. During this status, such employees are not expected to meet their onsite location requirements.

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 submit job classifications and functions that are eligible for flexwork to 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:

1. Complete and keep up with any required employee trainings for flexworkers.
2. Work with their direct supervisor(s) 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.
3. Follow Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites 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 [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 onsite 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.
- It is recommended that flexworkers working from home maintain a dedicated workspace at home, if possible.
- 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 at 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.

- 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.

Furniture, Equipment and Technology at Alternate Worksites

Mobile and hybrid employees will be provided with a laptop, bag, docking station, and wired headset with support from IS on these items, as outlined in Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites document that accompanies this policy. Under this policy, the installation of software device drivers is not allowed on county-owned laptops; at-home printing will not be supported; departments shall not pay for home internet connectivity; and employees should adhere to bandwidth minimum recommendations and hardware guidance as outlined in the Flexible Workplace Home Office Hardware Guidelines. Exceptions or additional equipment requests require approval by the Chief Compliance and Ethics Office, Chief Information Security Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, and must be covered by the respective department's budget. Employees are responsible for establishing and maintaining an internet connection that is adequate for performing their job functions at their home, if it is used as an alternate worksite. The county is not responsible for network hardware or difficulties due to service provider issues or the use of incompatible equipment.

To support a flexible work environment, employees designated as hybrid or mobile under this policy who work at a county facility or office fewer than four days a week are eligible for a one-time \$500 home office and connectivity stipend. This stipend is intended to help offset the cost of setting up the home office, including chairs, monitors, keyboards, and mice. The payment is subject to taxes. Stipends are conditioned upon (1) completion of the Flexible Workplace Policy training, and (2) return of furniture and equipment taken home under the Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy, and completion of the Furniture, Technology and Equipment Log. Hybrid and mobile employees hired between the start of this program and December 31, 2024 are eligible for a one-time \$500 home office and connectivity stipend. The payment is also subject to taxes and will be made automatically after completing six months of employment.

Employees must obtain management approval prior to transferring county-issued furniture, technology, and/or equipment to an alternate worksite. Supervisors/managers 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 voluntarily or involuntarily terminated from the County, they are responsible for returning all technology and equipment back to their manager/supervisor within their respective departments.

Professional Etiquette

All employees must practice professional etiquette whether they are working in-person or remotely. How we present ourselves to Ramsey County residents, clients, stakeholders, community partners, coworkers, managers, and supervisors impacts our work culture, office environment and how to model Ramsey County's Core Values. Expectations of professional etiquette include but are not limited to:

- **Dress appropriately** – Wear professional, tidy, or business casual attire when showing up for work.
- **Show up professionally** – Whether working in person or remotely, show up as if you are serving our residents in person. When in virtual meetings, keep your camera on if feasible.
- **Minimize distractions** – Pay attention to your body language and habits and make sure you are not distracting others or being distracted by phones or other activity, whether onsite or in a remote environment.
- **Be clean and tidy** – If working in a shared flex space or drop-in space, keep your personal belongings in your personal space. Make sure that the environment is not cluttered and is cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- **Maintain meeting etiquette** – Always be on time for meetings. If you enter a meeting late, apologize and avoid interrupting the flow of the meeting. In virtual meetings, mute yourself when you're not speaking, so that there is no unnecessary disturbance. If you need to take a call while in an in-person meeting, excuse yourself and step outside. If you need to take a call during a virtual meeting, excuse yourself before you answer it and then mute yourself.
- **Be flexible, respectful, and a team player** – Keep an open mind at work. Be flexible to new ideas, thoughts, and diverse perspectives. Understand that people are unique and

have different learning, communication and working styles. Be professional and cordial in your interactions. Communicate with your teammates and if conflicts arise, manage or resolve them collaboratively.

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 on the Flexible Workplace webpage.

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 Home Office Hardware Guidelines
- Flexible Workplace webpage
- Furniture, Technology and Equipment Log
- Mission, Vision, Goals and Values
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Office Ergonomics
- Residents First Strategic Priority
- Strategic Facilities Plan
- Workplace Standards Policy
- Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites
- Workplace Incident Reports
- Workers Compensation

CONTACTS / SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Compliance and Ethics Office

- Data Compliance Manager: [651-266-8000](tel:651-266-8000)
- Health Care Compliance Manager: [651-266-8000](tel:651-266-8000)

Property Management

- Property Management Manager: [651-266-2262](tel:651-266-2262)

Human Resources

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

REVISION HISTORY

| Date | Brief description of change | Revision approval |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Nov. 1, 2021 | Initial policy | Ryan O'Connor |

| Date | Brief description of change | Revision approval |
|---------------|---|-------------------|
| Apr. 19, 2022 | Added definition of primarily onsite worker and flex space, added section on professional etiquette, and updated section on technology, equipment, and furniture. | Ryan O'Connor |
| Apr. 29, 2022 | Updated applicability section, requirements on the Furniture, Equipment and Technology at Alternate Worksites section, and eligibility for home and connectivity office stipends. | Ryan O'Connor |
| May 9, 2022 | Updated requirements for employees handling Federal Tax Information. | Johanna Berg |

APPROVAL

Ryan O'Connor
County Manager
November 1, 2021