Telework Supervisor Toolkit

Updated April 2023

STATE OF IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
Health AND Human
SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

This Telework Supervisor Toolkit is intended to provide guidance and insights for Managers and Supervisors at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services regarding the telework process.

Contents of this document include brief information regarding what telework is and why it is important, as well as guidance on how to address eligibility, the Telework Agreement, management, and productivity.

After consulting the Toolkit, Managers and Supervisors may still have case-specific questions. In such instances, please consult with your agency HR staff.

WHAT IS TELEWORK?

Telework is a work flexibility arrangement where an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of his or her position, as well as other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

This definition of telework does not include any part of work done while on official travel or mobile work. Rather, mobile work is characterized by routine and regular travel to conduct work in customer or other worksites as opposed to a single, authorized worksite. Examples of mobile work include site audits, site inspections, investigations, property management, or work performed while commuting or traveling.

WHY TELEWORK?

The opportunity to telework may prove to be a valuable recruitment and retention incentive, as a telework arrangement may provide a degree of flexibility and enhance employee quality of life.

Telework has also been proven to improve employee productivity when implemented with quality supervision and resources.

If state employees can telework, the state may be able to attract talented individuals from rural Iowa, as well as metro- and micropolitan areas outside Des Moines, providing economic opportunity while also potentially filling hard-to-fill positions.

If enough state employees routinely telecommute and thus require no fixed office space, the state can save on construction and maintenance costs for both current facilities and future building needs.

LAWS AND POLICIES

Fair Labor Standards Act

While a benefit of telework may be increased flexibility for employees, it is important that Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) non-exempt employees maintain a schedule permitting a standard 40-hour workweek, and that they accurately record their hours worked. Hours worked over 40 hours in a workweek must be pre-approved by management. Employees must be paid for all hours worked. Additional information about FLSA is found in the Overtime and Compensatory Time Section in the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Managers and Supervisors Manual.

Family and Medical Leave Act

While benefits of telework may include decreased leave usage, teleworking employees still reserve their right to take leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), in addition to the leave normally afforded to them by DAS rules. During a period of approved FMLA leave, a teleworking employee must not be required to perform work, submit reports, take part in conference calls, or attend meetings. Additional information about FMLA is found in the Family and Medical Leave Act Policy and FMLA webpage.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will not conduct inspections of employees' home offices. OSHA will not hold employers liable for employees' home offices, and does not expect employers to inspect the home offices of their employees. It is important employees work in a safe environment regardless of the worksite. Employees who telework may want to complete the Alternative Worksite Safety Checklist (Appendix A) to assist with identifying and mitigating any safety risks. Additional information about OSHA is found in the Health and Safety Section in the DAS Managers and Supervisors Manual.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities. Telework may be considered a reasonable accommodation. If an employee requests the option to telework due to a health condition (their own or that of a family member), contact your agency Human Resources staff. Do not deny the request without such consultation.

Workers' Compensation

Regardless of the work location, employees must report all on-the-job injuries and illnesses immediately to their Manager/Supervisor, however slight the injury, and complete the First Report of Injury or Illness Form. Additional information about workers' compensation is found in Section B-3 Reporting of Injuries in the DHS Handbook and on the DAS website.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Determining the Best Roles for Telework

As the Departments' telework policy rolls out, you may be asked to define how it might be best implemented within your work unit. When performing this analysis, try not to focus on answering the, "Should we telework?" question – rather, focus on the question, "Why can't we telework?"

Begin with the assumption that all positions include at least some tasks that may be suitable for telework. While most jobs have aspects that can be completed away from a traditional office, not every job role and task is currently conducive to telework. Changes in methods, technology, or procedures may be required for telework to be successful.

Telework as a Recruitment Tool

Keep in mind that telework can be used as a recruitment tool to attract potential applicants for a position. As you develop Position Description Questionnaires (PDQs) for job postings, consider including information in the PDQ about the suitability of the position for telework. If you're not sure how best to accomplish this, consult your agency HR staff.

Role Considerations

Job classifications or specific positions should be evaluated to determine if the employee roles and assigned tasks are capable of being completed successfully at an alternative work location. Entire job classifications may be considered for telework, if appropriate; or specific positions only may be identified to participate in telework.

The ideal situation is to divide up the work and the workweek so the tasks that can be done best from an alternate worksite are done via telework, and the tasks that require or benefit from being in the office are done in the office.

As job or position tasks are evaluated, consider the following factors.

▸ The roles and tasks require infrequent face-to-face communication

▸ Communication can be managed by telephone, teleconference, email, etc.

▸ Responsibilities have clearly defined results

▸ Tasks which require concentration or large blocks of time when the employee works independently of others

▸ Work which can be performed without close supervision

▸ Minimal requirement for special equipment which can't be set up at the employee's home or can't be replicated

▸ To the extent that the work involves matters or information which is private or confidential, that privacy and confidentiality can be maintained

Remember, in the spirit of focusing on, "Why can't we?" consider if job duties requiring an employee to be present in the office can be reassigned to non-teleworking employee or reconfigured such that they don't require the employee to perform them in the office. Alternatively, consider if these are duties the employee can perform on days he or she is in the office.

Individual Considerations

Not all employees are well suited for telework on a regular basis, at least at the outset. In many cases, this might be due to personal preference (i.e., the employee enjoys the collegiality associated with coming into work every day). In other instances, an employee's home situation may not be amenable for teleworking; for example, the employee's home

does not have a separate office workspace, yet the employee has young children at home who would likely be distracting. Still other employees do not have work practices conducive to telework (i.e., they require constant supervision to get the work done – even while coming into the office everyday).

Good candidates for telework typically:

▶ Are able to work with minimal direct supervision

▶ Currently meet performance expectations and standards

▶ Have demonstrated the ability to "deliver the deliverables" on time and according to specifications

▶ Have good time management skills

▶ Have demonstrated the ability to initiate and guide their own work and are the proverbial "self-starters" who do not need the Manager/Supervisor hovering nearby to be reminded to get the job done

▶ Communicate effectively with others, using a mix of personal and electronic means

▶ Work effectively in an isolated environment

If you're not certain about the individual fit, consider executing an agreement for a time-limited, trial basis.

Determining Work Schedules

Telework schedules should be developed collaboratively with teleworkers. A convenient mechanism should be established to provide teleworker schedules to coworkers and others who need the information. Keep these points in mind about telework schedules:

▶ Arrange teleworkers' schedules primarily to meet the business needs of the work unit, not only the convenience of the teleworkers. The latter is important but is not the main objective. Think carefully about how your business operates and the staffing needs of your work unit. Have a collaborative discussion with your team about the business needs to work together to determine teleworkers' schedules.

▶ Keep coverage in mind, remembering that coverage is more important that convenience.

▶ Flexibility on both sides is crucial. Teleworkers must understand there are times when you need them in the office on a planned telework day—and you, as Manager/Supervisor, should be open to requests for schedule changes from the teleworkers.

The optimal telework scheduling blends the needs of the Department and its clients with the preferences of the teleworkers. The more flexible everyone remains, the better the changes of making best use of telework opportunities.

A "cookie cutter" approach in which all teleworkers must telework the same day(s) week after week can be counterproductive. Regardless of the determined schedules,

managers should emphasize the importance of employees accurately reflecting time spent teleworking on time-and-attendance sheets submitted at the end of each pay period.

Employees can continue to flex their schedule, as allowed, and telework. One has no impact on the other.

Denying a Request

Although the intent of the Telework Policy is to promote flexibility via the use of telework, specific business and operational needs of the organization or individual considerations may be cause for denying an employee request to telework. Remember, telework is not an employee right or entitlement and denial may be an appropriate action, as long as employees are treated consistently.

Decisions to deny a request to telework should be based on sound business management principles and not for personal reasons. Denials should be communicated timely, in writing, and include an explanation for the denial. If the denial is based on individual considerations, a conversation with the employee about the reason for denial can also present an opportunity to initiate a discussion about areas for professional growth and improved job performance that, in the future, could lead to a reconsideration of the telework request.

Ultimately, if you are unsure about how to proceed, contact your agency HR staff.

COMPLETING THE TELEWORK AGREEMENT

As a supervisor of teleworkers, you will formalize an agreement with each teleworking employee to give the employee formal telework authorization and to set the stage for an effective telework arrangement. It is required that you work with each prospective teleworker to complete the written Telework Agreement. These agreements are important because they let you clarify the terms of the arrangement and the responsibilities of both parties before telework begins, which can help head off many preventable problems.

As you think about the specific telework arrangements you make with an employee, seek to mitigate potential teleworker disconnection from the larger social dynamic of your work unit.

Consider:

▸ How can you enhance teamwork and promote knowledge sharing?

▸ How can you reduce feelings of isolation by ensuring regular contact with the teleworker?

▸ How can you help ensure the employee's work-life boundaries do not become too blurry?

▸ When is it important for the employee to be in the office and when is it okay to utilize virtual options?

While these questions are not part of the official Telework Agreement, you should discuss them with employees prior to executing the Agreement.

Telework Sites

An important element of the Telework Agreement is the agreed-upon Telework Site. Per the Telework Policy 6.5, only in-state and contiguous state Telework Sites are allowable without further discussion with upper management and agency HR staff. Should an employee desire to telework from a location that is not in-state or in a contiguous state, gather the appropriate information on rationale and consult with your agency HR staff.

Telework Agreement Worksheet

In addition to completing the official Telework Agreement, consider working through the Telework Agreement Worksheet (Appendix B) with each prospective teleworker.

The worksheet includes five main elements:

1. COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS

Establish expectations for how frequently you intend to contact the employee and the method through which you expect to generally contact them (e.g., phone, messenger, email, etc.). How quickly do you expect them to get back with you if they miss your call or message?

2. TEAMWORK

How important is teamwork to your teleworker's job functions? If employees need to collaborate to get their jobs done, think through and establish standards for what this collaboration should look like. What technologies will be utilized? What behaviors will be required to achieve successful collaboration?

3. REQUIRED ONSITE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

If you anticipate any need for teleworkers to attend onsite meetings or events, make sure they know in advance when these events will take place. Take into account the distance a teleworker will have to travel and consider using teleconference technologies in lieu of travel when feasible.

4. INFORMATION SECURITY

Are there any information security requirements beyond what is found in the Acceptable Use Agreement? It may be a good idea to specifically review the types of information and documents the teleworker will be working with to identify all requirements and precautions the employee must take.

5. REPORTING WORK TIME AND USING LEAVE

Identify a regular schedule for your employees, and ensure that they have sufficient work to keep them busy 40 hours per week. Employees must accurately report their actual hours worked in accordance with DAS policies. Tell the employee the conditions under which overtime may be authorized, remembering the employee must obtain approval prior to working any overtime. Establish standards for how teleworkers request or notify you of leave.

Modifying or Revoking an Agreement

If you face a situation in which the employee does not demonstrate appropriate work habits or adequate performance, your modification/suspension/revocation should be fair and balanced and take into consideration what you, as a responsible manager, have done and not done to resolve the problem. You should be able to state why it is necessary for the employee to work at the agency worksite until the performance issue is resolved. This would be a good time to restate your performance expectations and describe what the employee needs to do to demonstrate improvement. Keep the door open to reconsidering if the employee begins to consistently demonstrate effective job behaviors.

Revoking telework is not a form of progressive discipline, but may be done as part of a professional development plan. Before modifying or revoking an employee's ability to telework, contact your agency HR staff and your assigned DAS-HRE PO. Do not modify or revoke an employee's ability to telework without such consultation.

Renewing an Agreement

Telework Agreements must be renewed annually, at minimum. Rather than rubber stamping the renewal, take this opportunity to review the existing Telework Agreement with the employee and make any necessary modifications. Like original Telework Agreements, renewals should be kept in the employee HR file.

MANAGING TELEWORKERS

TIPS

- Make sure that you and your employees understand your agency's telework policy and that your employees know it exists.
- Work with your employees to establish comprehensive telework agreements.
- Develop management and communication techniques for maintaining effective relationships with teleworking employees.
- Manage and treat employees who are teleworking as you do employees who are in the office, including expectations for appropriate business attire and having cameras on during virtual meetings.

REMINDERS

- Successful telework arrangements meet both management's and employees' needs. Consider your employees' work habits and job tasks.
- Develop telework agreements that give you and your employees a clear understanding of the terms and conditions of the work arrangement.
- Telework agreements are not permanent and can be modified or canceled as needed.
- Manage your employees by results, whether teleworkers or not.
- Communication should flow with your teleworking employees, and between teleworkers and coworkers and customers.
- Monitor your employees' productivity using a variety of measures.

MANAGING TELEWORKERS REQUIRES AN ADJUSTED MINDSET, FOCUSED ON THREE KEY ELEMENTS:

- High performance
- Collaboration
- Trust

TO ESTABLISH A CULTURE CONDUCIVE TO EFFECTIVE TELEWORK, MANAGERS MUST:

- Identify desired performance outcomes at both the team and individual levels with timeliness, quality, quantity, and behavioral expectations that support high performance.
- Provide the tools and insist on collaboration between all employees to include those who telework and those who work in the office. Be sure to model the way for establishing collaborative relationships with your own behaviors.

▶ Trust employees to do good work even though you may not see or even talk with them every day; let the performance indicators inform you of any corrections that should be made or additional oversight needed.

Success Factors and Common Mistakes

DO
- Work to get comfortable with telework-related policies and procedures.
- Take steps to ensure telework works for everyone to ensure seamless coverage of responsibilities.
- Put agreements in writing.
- Set clear expectations.

DON'T
- Distribute work and assigning projects based on how frequently an employee is present in the office.
- Establish different performance standards and work requirements for teleworkers and onsite employees.
- Not provide feedback for employees who telework.
- Exclude employees from collaboration or teambuilding.

Maximizing Your Effectiveness

1. LEARN THE PARAMETERS OF THE TELEWORK POLICY.
To effectively manage teleworkers, you need to be thoroughly familiar with the telework policy to ensure all relevant telework agreements comply with requirements. If an employee is interested in telework, you should refer him or her to the policy and encourage the individual to review it carefully.

2. BE SPECIFIC TO ENSURE UNDERSTANDING ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
Tell teleworkers what is expected of them in terms of work procedures. As with any kind of work arrangement, ensure there is a clear mutual understanding of, and agreement on, work assignments, expected products, and timeframes. One big difference between telework and office-based work is that telework removes many of the opportunities for casual encounters where work goals and progress can be discussed "on the fly." Those casual meetings are replaced in telework by more deliberate discussions planned in advance.

3. MAINTAIN EQUITABLE EXPECTATIONS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR TELEWORK.

Although working at home or other alternative site may allow teleworkers to get work done with fewer distractions, this does not mean that you should assign them more work or change your expectations or their performance standards. Avoid assigning teleworkers more or less work than you normally would if they were in the office. Confirm that you do not expect other office workers to take on a teleworker's duties. Telework does not change an employee's job responsibilities—it just changes where the work gets done. However, if you do notice that a teleworker has been able to produce more or better work, as is often the case, be sure to compliment him or her so the teleworker will not feel the extra effort is taken for granted.

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – DETERMINE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ASSESS PROGRESS.

Performance management techniques create a results-oriented environment that enables managers to make a smooth and easy transition to managing teleworkers. Performance standards for employees do not change whether they are on-site or off-site, teleworkers or non-teleworkers.

5. ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR STAYING IN TOUCH WITH TELEWORKERS.

▶ As with most work situations, effective communication is an asset. You may need to change your typical worksite style when working with a teleworker. You will probably find that you start relying more on a mix of face-to-face conversations, live phone calls, voicemail, email, and virtual conferencing.

▶ Take the time to update yourself on the techniques and technology available to facilitate and maintain effective and convenient communication with your teleworking staff. Encourage and facilitate ongoing communications between teleworkers and their in-office peers, and clients. Coworkers and clients should not feel that it is any harder to access or get a response from a teleworker than it is when he or she is working in the office. Keep in mind, however, than no manager has 100% access to his or her staff all the time even if they all work in the office.

6. CLARIFY PROCEDURES FOR DISCUSSING TELEWORK PROBLEMS.

▶ No matter how well you plan for telework and how much you and your employees want it to succeed, there may be times when a teleworker's performance becomes unacceptable. You should not accept that from a teleworker any more than you would an in-office employee.

▶ When a teleworker starts to exhibit performance problems, however, it is not necessarily due to the telework itself. Make it clear to your teleworkers when they begin that you will be focusing on their work results, and if those results begin to slip, you will address them as you would if they were still full-time office workers – by confronting and analyzing the problem to determine its causes, not by jumping to conclusions. Your teleworkers should know that their ability to remain in that role depends on continuing to meet your performance expectations.

▸ If they do not, you will work with them to uncover causes and to implement a solution (perhaps with some coaching, training, additional feedback, etc.). Should the problems continue, you have the right and the responsibility to require the person to suspend his or her telework and return to the office until the performance returns to acceptable levels. If acceptable performance as a teleworker cannot be sustained, then the telework arrangement is just not suitable for that employee. Making this process clear at the outset can avoid unpleasant conversations later, especially if the teleworker believes it is a permanent privilege to telework.

Teamwork

Telework can enhance teamwork if the right expectations for collaboration are established and effective technologies are put in place. As telework is initiated in your work unit, be sure to orient all team members to the policy, describing why the state is pursuing telework and how it will affect your work as a team. Here are a few tips which may be useful:

▸ **Be sure to discourage "us vs. them" thinking** by showing the same levels of respect for both your teleworking and non-teleworking employees. Check yourself and caution others when they talk in those terms.

▸ **Continue to hold team meetings**, utilizing the days all employees are in the office or video conferencing capabilities to get all employees together at the same time.

▸ **In your team and individual employee meetings, openly discuss any obstacles your team members are facing** as they try to work together. Analyze the obstacles to determine whether they are systemic, interpersonal, or situational. Identify and implement solutions to these problems.

▸ **Keep in mind: There is not a unique way to manage teleworks separate from non-teleworkers.** You must not treat teleworkers differently or separately. There is no remote workers vs. office workers – there is only the team.

▸ **Assign special projects** and assignments equitably.

Creating and Executing a Check-in Schedule

There is perhaps nothing more important to the success of telework than checking in with your employees on a frequent and regular basis. When employees work in the office, check ins may take place more naturally as we see the employees each day. With teleworkers, on the other hand, establishing a check-in plan may be useful.

Predictable access is more important than instant access in most cases. You probably do not need to be able to reach your teleworkers immediately all the time, but you do need to be able to agree on a time when you will be able to reach them, or at least hear back from them if you leave a voicemail or send an email.

Your teleworkers should be reachable in roughly the same ways. Teleworkers should have the same responsiveness when working out of the office as they do in the office. For example, calls should be returned within the same interval.

Here are some possible check-in routines you may consider that will allow you to thoughtfully establish a cadence of communication with teleworking employees. They are not mutually exclusive and can be mixed and matched. Remember, a formal check-in schedule may benefit non-teleworking employees as well.

▶ **Daily touch points:** Designate a daily check-in time during which you and the teleworker can discuss what they are doing and any assistance they may need.

▶ **Weekly feedback:** Have a weekly meeting, which may be accompanied by production data or a prepared activity report, to discuss how the week went and the plans for the following week.

▶ **Weekly/monthly teleconferences:** To enrich your discussions with a face-to-face element, teleconference capabilities (e.g., Microsoft Teams) may be utilized.

▶ **Formal quarterly reviews:** To ensure teleworkers know how they are doing, you are encouraged to more frequently provide formal reviews of their performance.

▶ **Occasional chats to nurture familiarity:** It's a great idea to take time out for occasional chats, just like you would with traditional office employees.

▶ **Annual or biannual face-to-face meeting:** Depending on how remote the teleworker lives, it may be mutually beneficial to have annual or biannual face-to-face meetings. A best practice is to combine any scheduled one-on-one meetings with team meetings; that way, the teleworker is only traveling once.

Now that you've identified strategies for checking in with your teleworkers, what should you plan to talk about? Perhaps the best way to check in with your teleworking employees is through questions. Consider the following examples, grouped by key area.

▶ **Professionally Perform Core Job Responsibilities**

- When checking in on the employee's core job responsibilities, here are some items you may want to discuss.
- Have you faced any challenges in performing your job functions?
- Do you have any questions about the expectations I have of you?
- What are you working on right now?
- What have you most recently accomplished?
- Is there anything I can do to facilitate your work?
- What do you like most about your responsibilities? What do you like least?

▸ Work Effectively as a Team Member

- When discussing goals you've given the employee in relation to teamwork, here are a few questions that might be asked.

- Who have you most regularly collaborated with? In what ways?

- Which technologies do you most frequently utilize in your interactions with teammates? Are they adequate?

- Have you had any challenges in working with other members of our team?

- Is there anything I can do to help you build better relationships?

▸ Comply with Agency Policies and Work Standards

- Use these questions to discuss policies and work standards.

- Do you have any questions about the requirements of the policies and standards associated with your Telework Agreement?

- Are you currently experiencing any challenges in meeting the requirements outlined in the telework policy?

▸ Work Effectively with Supervisor

- Here are a couple of questions you might ask in relation to how the teleworker works with you.

- Is there anything you want to make me aware of that I may not know about yet?

- How do you feel about our check-in schedule? Would you like to talk more frequently, less frequently, or is it just about right?

▸ Engage in Professional Development

- Here are some questions you might ask when conversing with a teleworker about their professional development.

- How are you doing on your professional development goals?

- What are you doing right now to develop professionally? What's next?

- How can I assist you in accomplishing your goals?

▸ Complete Projects in a Timely Manner

- When talking to employees about project-based assignments, here are some questions to ask.

- Can we review your project status report?

- What are you working on right now? What's next up?

- How are you doing on timelines? Are you going to be able to get it all done?

- What successes have you had with each project?

- What challenges are you facing with each project?

- What assistance do you need from me or others to complete your projects?

Creating a Training and Development Strategy

As a manager of teleworkers, you should consider your roles in training and developing your employees differently.

Telework Orientation

When formally implementing routine telework within your work unit, you should advise all employees on your team of what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how it will be done. With your team, you should carefully explore how telework will change the interactions you've typically had and how you can address the needs for teamwork and collaboration using technology. All team members should be familiarized with the communication and collaboration technologies you've chosen to use.

Skills Development

Most Department jobs require a great deal of on-the-job training. If you hire teleworkers who haven't been previously trained in an in-office setting, you may have to make plans for how they will receive the required on-the-job training.

Should they be asked to come into the office for the first few weeks?

Can you assign them a coach and use teleconference technology to provide the training?

You are encouraged to give some forethought to these questions before hiring an individual who will initiate their employment on your team as a teleworker.

Addressing Changes in Performance

Despite everyone's best intentions and careful planning, problems may arise in telework arrangements.

If a teleworker is not performing up to your expectations, then, as with any performance problem, you should respond in a constructive and timely manner.

It is usually beneficial to ensure a full discussion and consideration of the employee's explanation of the circumstances that have created the problem. You want to achieve a results-oriented solution at the end of your conversation. Solutions may include:

▸ Terminating the telework arrangement

▸ Modifying the telework agreement to better define your expectations

▸ Setting a timeframe for the employee to demonstrate a significant improvement

▸ Resolving other circumstances that may have contributed to the unsatisfactory performance

▸ Performance Improvement Plan

▸ Training

Time Tracking

There may be times when you wonder what a teleworking employee is working on. For example, the employee is not meeting performance standards or not responding in a timely manner when you try to contact them. It may be time to have a conversation with the employee about how they are spending their time. If you still have doubts after that conversation, per Telework Policy 10.2.1.8, you may request the employee track their time and submit to you on a regular basis. Remember, time tracking is not meant to replace measuring employee performance or having a coaching conversation with the employee. If you are unsure when or how to track an employee's time, consult your agency HR staff.

MANAGING BY RESULTS

Performance management is a responsibility to effectively manage the performance of all employees, both on-site workers and teleworkers. Remember that the key is to focus on the final product, not the processes used to develop it.

Following clear and consistent performance management principles and techniques should result in a seamless transition for managers and their employees moving to telework arrangements.

Performance management involves two distinct operations: Specifying attainable work objectives and standards AND reviewing performance and giving feedback.

Ask yourself the question: "How would I know a fully satisfactory end product if I saw it?" The answer to this question is so important because it minimizes the chance that all of your employees will waste time and resources going after the wrong objectives. A clear discussion of objectives must take place up front between you and all of your staff members, not just those who plan to telework.

▸ What must be done?

▸ Why must it be done?

▸ How well must it be done?

▸ By when must it be done?

▸ What constitutes a job that is complete?

Just like any other employee, teleworkers should not have to guess your intentions. Be clear and provide feedback often. Also be clear with your teleworkers about your assessment of their performance. Keep these five tried-and-true feedback guidelines in mind.

1. **Be descriptive.** Describe what the person did ("You have three mistakes in the budget for the next quarter."), and do not use subjective labels such as, "This is sloppy work."

2. **Limit feedback to priority changes.** Do not try to fix everything at once, but begin with the changes that will account for the most improvement and most value. Remember to provide positive feedback when work is done well.

3. **Give feedback sooner rather than later.** Do not wait for "the right time" because the employee might make the same mistake over and over again in the meantime.

4. **Give positive feedback.** Describe what needs to be changed, but also describe what is being done well so the employee can repeat it and will know that you have recognized a job well done.

5. **Praise in public** (if appropriate), criticize in private. This statement is long-standing wisdom about giving feedback. All of us like to hear good news about what we have done when our peers are around—but the negative feedback is not meant for public knowledge.

MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY

Measuring and managing productivity are tricky. The term "productivity" is used when talking about white-collar knowledge workers as if we actually can measure their output with great precision.

The simple fact is that productivity just does not fit with the complex nature of most office work. This does not mean we should give up on trying to measure what office workers produce. Our measurements must reflect the nature of office work and should not be overly simplistic in a widget-counting sense.
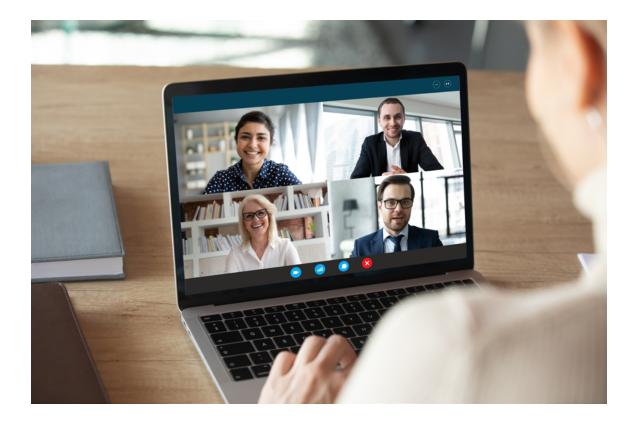
For example:

▶ A customer service agent who takes incoming calls from customers can handle more calls per hour than anyone else—but in doing so, the agent gives short, impolite answers and does not take time to fully understand the nature of the callers' problems.

▶ An auditor who visits field locations to do inspections always completes the assigned inspections on time—but often omits important elements of inspection reports and is late filing them.

The expectation should be that a teleworker would be as productive working offsite as when working in an office.

Implement Solid Performance Measures

It is essential to establish procedures to measure whether your teleworkers are productive. These procedures should be the same procedures you already use for staff no matter where they work—and if you do not have solid performance measures for your group, implementing telework is a great opportunity to develop them.

You can measure productivity by establishing specific objectives for your employees to meet, individual and as a group.

You then judge the group's performance, and the performances of individual employees, according to how well they meet these objectives.

It is rare that any single measure of productivity—especially quantity measures—can suitably capture the true nature of work in today's office.

Components of productivity measurement may include:

▸ **Quality.** The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence achieved.

▸ **Quantity.** The extent, size, or sum of countable or measurable discreet events, objects, or phenomenon, expressed as a numerical value.

▸ **Written and Verbal.** Written or verbal progress reports or reviews.

▸ **Timely and Appropriate.** Timeless of work products submitted, timely and appropriate communication with managers and coworkers, timely and appropriate responses to email, phone calls, and requests from managers and coworkers.

▸ **Juggling.** Ability to "juggle" multiple tasks simultaneously.

APPENDIX A
Alternative Worksite Safety Checklist

	GENERAL	YES	NO
1	Workspace is away from noise, distractions, and is devoted to your work needs?		
2	Workspace accommodates workstation, equipment, and related material?		
3	Floors are clear and free from hazards?		
4	File drawers are not top-heavy and do not open into walkways?		
5	Phone lines and electrical cords are secured under a desk or along a wall, and away from heat sources?		
6	Temperature, ventilation, and lighting are adequate?		
7	All stairs with for our more steps are equipped with handrails?		
8	Carpets are well secured to the floor and free of frayed or worn seams?		

	FIRE SAFETY	YES	NO
9	There is a working smoke detector in the workspace area?		
10	A home multi-use fire extinguisher, which you know how to use, is readily available?		
11	Walkways, aisles, and doorways are unobstructed?		
12	Workspace is kept free of trash, clutter, and flammable liquids?		
13	All radiators and portable heaters are located away from flammable items?		
14	You have an evacuation plan so you know what to do in the event of a fire?		

ELECTRICAL SAFETY	YES	NO
15 Sufficient electrical outlets are accessible?		
16 Computer equipment is connected to a surge protector?		
17 Electrical system is adequate for office equipment?		
18 All electrical plugs, cords, outlets, and panels are in good condition? No exposed/damaged wiring?		
19 Equipment is placed close to electrical outlets?		
20 Extension cords and power strips are not daisy chained and no permanent extension cord is in use?		
21 Equipment is turned off when not in use?		

OTHER SAFETY / SECURITY MEASURES	YES	NO
22 Files and data are secure?		
23 Materials and equipment are in a secure place that can be protected from damage and misuse?		
24 You have an inventory of all equipment in the office including serial numbers?		

APPENDIX B
Telework Agreement Worksheet

TOPIC	OUTCOME
Communication expectations and methods Establish expectations for how frequently you intend to contact the employee and the method through which you expect to generally contact them (e.g., phone, messenger, email, etc.). How quickly do you expect them to get back with you if they miss your call or message?	
Teamwork How important is teamwork to your teleworker's job functions? If employees need to collaborate to get their jobs done, think through and establish standards for what this collaboration should look like. What technologies will be utilized? What behaviors will be required to achieve successful collaboration?	
Required onsite meetings and events If you anticipate any need for teleworkers to attend onsite meetings or events, make sure they know in advance when these events will take place. Take into account the distance a teleworker will have to travel and consider using teleconference technologies in lieu of travel when feasible.	
Information security and confidentiality Are there any information security requirements beyond what is found in the Acceptable Use Agreement? It may be a good idea to specifically review the types of information and documents the teleworker will be working with to identify all requirements and precautions the employee must take to maintain security and confidentiality.	
Reporting work time and using leave Identify a regular schedule for your employees, and ensure that they have sufficient work to keep them busy 40 hours per week. Employees must accurately report their actual hours worked in accordance with DAS policies. Tell the employee the conditions under which overtime may be authorized, remembering the employee must obtain approval prior to working any overtime. Establish standards for how teleworkers request or notify you of leave.	