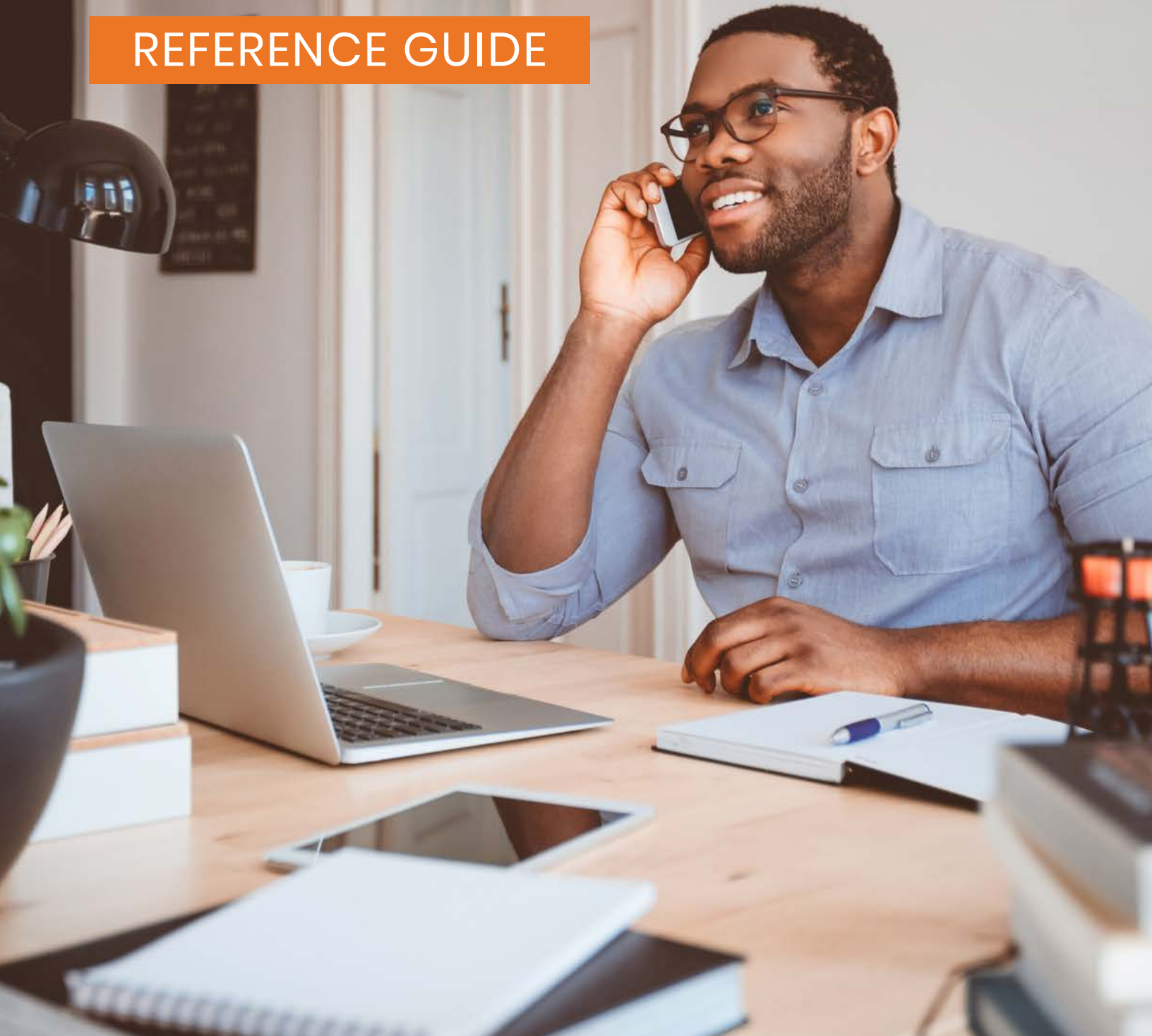


# Remote Work

REFERENCE GUIDE



Updated May 2020



## Introduction

**For the purposes of this guide, remote work is defined as working from home or another location outside of a traditional office one or more days per week.**

Flexible work arrangements and remote work are on the rise in the U.S. Advancements in technology and improved communications have allowed employees to remain engaged and productive without being physically present at work. Organizations of all types are moving forward with flexible work arrangements. At some workplaces, people now have several choices in how they structure each day of their work week.

This remote work guide describes recent national and local trends in the workplace, types and potential benefits of flexible workplace arrangements, successful case study examples, and key components for starting a flexible workplace or remote work program at your organization.





## Trends

National and local trends indicate a desire for more flexibility in the workplace and show an increase in the number of people participating in flexible work arrangements.

### National

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Approximately **10,000 baby boomers are reaching retirement age every day**. The increase in retirees will result in an influx of new workers to fill vacancies.<sup>1</sup>



Census data indicates **about 4.6% of all U.S. workers work from home**.<sup>2</sup>



According to the “2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce” report, **in the last 10 years, telecommuting has grown 115%**, surpassing the rate of people who take transit.<sup>3</sup>

### Local

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**↑ 6.4%**

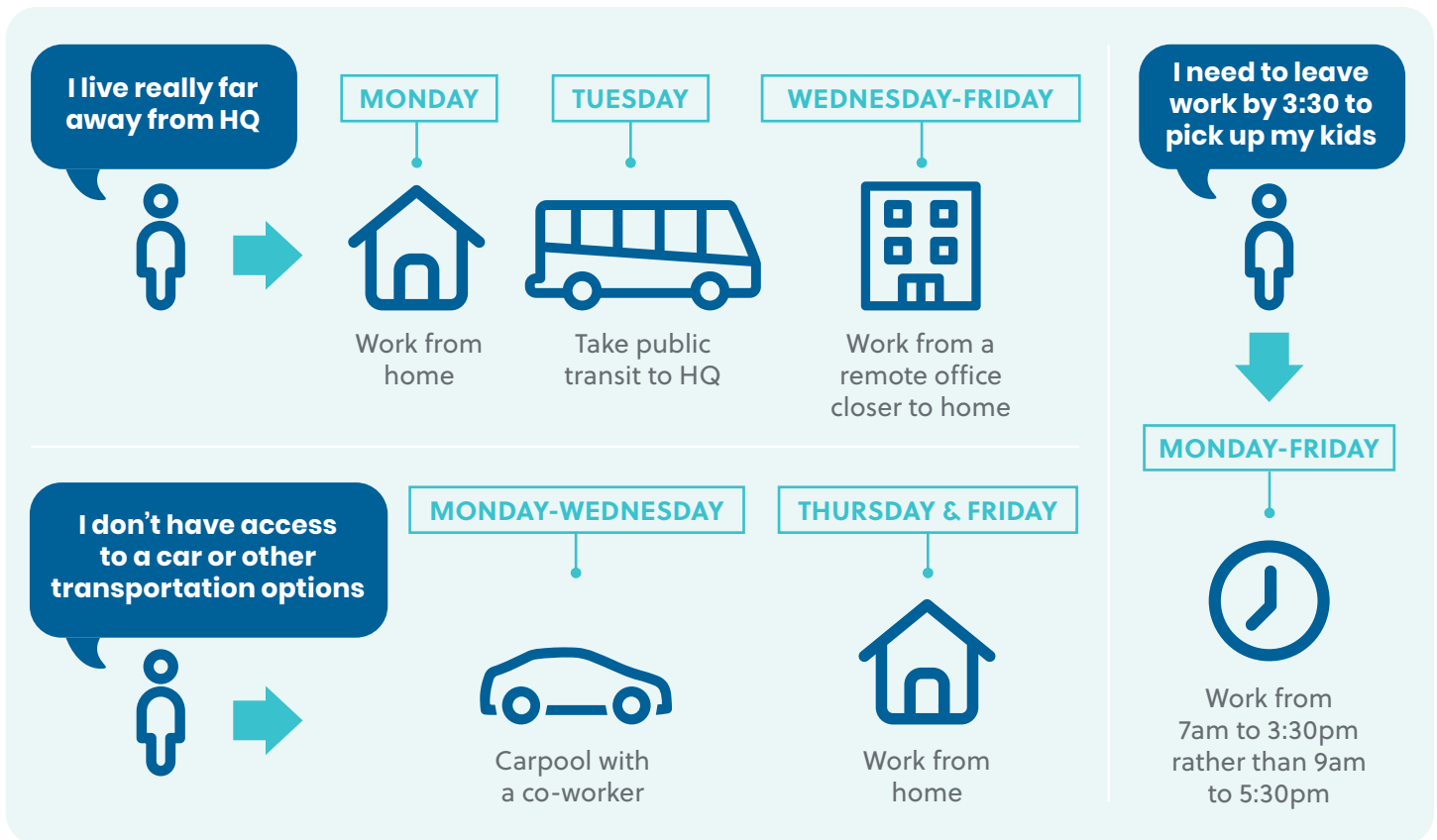
Oregon has the third largest percentage of full-time employees that work from home.<sup>4</sup> **Working from home in Oregon has been on the rise, increasing from 5.1% in 2005 to 6.4% in 2016**.<sup>5</sup>



**Several metropolitan areas in the state have more full-time employees working from home than the average**, including Bend at 9.4%, Corvallis at 7.5%, and Portland at 7.5%.<sup>6</sup>



## Types of Flexible Workplaces



There are several different types of flexible work arrangements employers can offer to their employees to support a variety of lifestyles. This may include flexibility in the location, schedule, or number of hours worked.

- **Flexibility in location** or remote work can include working from home or working from an alternate location.

Flexibility in schedule can include:

- **Flextime:** employees work eight hours per day but can adjust their arrival and departures times from the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Compressed work week:** employees work full time but in fewer than five days, such as four, 10 hour shifts.



## What are the Potential Benefits?

Flexible work arrangement can provide numerous benefits, such as:



### ***Increased productivity.***

Studies have shown that employees who work from home are happier, healthier, and more productive. A 10-month study conducted by Stanford University showed that people who worked at home in one company of 16,000 employees contributed to a 13% increase in productivity. Employees worked more hours, took shorter breaks, and used less sick leave.<sup>7</sup> Statistics compiled by Global Workplace Analytics show that employees working remotely at JD Edwards were 20 to 25% more productive than their colleagues at the office, and that American Express employees who work remotely were 43% more productive than workers in the office.<sup>8</sup>



### ***Improved recruiting and retention.***

Offering flexible workplace arrangements helps employers attract a wider range of employees with varying lifestyles. Statistics compiled by Global Workplace Analytics indicate 46% of companies that allow employees to work from home say it has improved employee retention and reduced attrition.<sup>9</sup>



### ***Cost savings.***

Flexible work arrangements make employees more productive, providing cost savings for their employers. They also help retain staff, which can eliminate the need for costs associated with advertising job openings, conducting interviews, and training new employees. Employers can also lower costs associated with office space. More employees working remotely can reduce the amount of office space needed and cut down on rent and mortgage expenses. Statistics provided by Global Workplace Analytics indicate that companies can save up to an average of \$10,000 per year for each full-time employee that works from home.<sup>10</sup>



## What are the Potential Benefits? (cont.)



### ***Disaster preparedness.***

In the event of extreme weather, a natural disaster, or a pandemic, employees may not be able to get to the office. Companies that already had strong remote work policies and infrastructure were better prepared to keep operations going during the COVID-19 pandemic. Allowing people to work remotely helps ensure employees will stay safe and be productive in the event that they cannot travel to work. If there is an emergency at the office (e.g., earthquake, fire, etc.), having fewer people in the office to account for and evacuate can help employees at the office stay safe.<sup>11</sup>



### ***Improved health.***

Health, happiness, and satisfaction are lower for people who have longer commutes.<sup>12</sup> According to the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, flexible work options can reduce stress, improve work-life balance, and contribute to a better physical and mental well-being. Flexible work arrangements can also reduce the risk of spreading illnesses at the office. Employees are able to stay up-to-date with work but take the time to rest at home so they recover more quickly and get back to work feeling 100%.<sup>13</sup>



### ***Reduced carbon footprint and congestion.***

Communication technology removes the need for people to travel into the office every day. This helps reduce pollution and removes the need for people to travel on roadways. Research conducted by Flexjobs showed that Xerox, Dell, and Aetna flexible work arrangements translated into 95,294 metric tons less of greenhouse gas emissions, which is equivalent to removing 20,000 cars off the road.<sup>14</sup>



## Getting Started

**If you are interested in developing a flexible work program at your organization, consider these steps to get started.**



### **1. Develop a Policy**

Identify program goals and draft a policy to address eligibility (e.g. suitable positions and characteristics), any limitations on frequency, alternative location requirements, and equipment requirements and responsibilities. Collaborate with departments across the organization in these conversations (e.g., HR, IT, Communications, etc.).

Supervisors can help to determine if a position is suitable for remote work based on a number of factors, such as the types of responsibilities and tasks the employee is responsible for. Examples of responsibilities that are suitable for remote work are listed below.

- Accounting
- Analyzing data
- Auditing reports
- Calculating
- Computer programming
- Phone work
- Data entry
- Design work
- Drafting
- Editing
- Evaluations
- Graphics
- Work planning
- Preparing budgets
- Programming and monitoring contracts
- Project management
- Reading
- Report writing
- Research
- Software development
- Spreadsheet analysis
- Typing
- Word processing
- Web training
- Writing



## Getting Started (cont.)



### **2. Determine Eligibility and Sign an Agreement**

Develop a standard remote work and flexible schedule agreement for both the manager and employee to sign. It should include information about the expected schedule for being in the office versus working from home, what circumstances might change that arrangement, and what the responsibilities are for providing equipment and internet access.

When reviewing eligibility to work remotely, the supervisor should consider employee characteristics and performance. Some employees may demonstrate characteristics that are well suited to work remotely, where others may not. The following is a list of characteristics observed in successful remote workers, and the Remote Work Suitability Tool in Appendix A can be used to help make an assessment.

- Requires minimal supervision
- High level of job knowledge and skill
- Is self-motivated
- Is well organized
- Demonstrates a high level of productivity
- Comfortable working alone
- Has a reliable work history
- Has a full understanding of the operations of the organization
- Has a relationship of trust with supervisor
- Establishes priorities and manages time
- Likes to work independently
- Schedules/plans work ahead
- Knows job goals and objectives
- Keeps in touch with supervisor
- Informs supervisor when a deadline can't be met





## Getting Started (cont.)



### 3. Assess Agreements Annually

Consider making remote work arrangements renewable as part of an annual performance review. Questions to consider include:

- Is the work getting done on time and of sufficient quality? Is it consistent (or better) than work done at the assigned work site?
- Is the employee staying in contact with coworkers and/or the supervisor to ask clarifying questions or provide updates as needed?
- Is the employee available when expected (e.g. is their calendar up-to-date, they are the available on Skype, etc.)?





APPENDIX A  
**Remote Work  
 Suitability  
 Tool**

This Remote Work Suitability Tool includes two checklists to help you determine if a remote work arrangement is right for a specific position or employee, including:

1. Position suitability checklist: based on tasks and whether the job requires an in-person presence
2. Employee suitability checklist: based on characteristics and past performance.

**1 – Position Suitability Checklist**

A position is suitable for remote work when it has responsibilities that can be conducted from a remote location without affecting the quality of service or organizational operations.

**Determine if a position is suitable for remote work by asking:**

- Can any of the job duties be done somewhere other than the office?  
 YES  = Suitable      NO  = Unsuitable

OR

- Does the position require the employee to be onsite 100% of the time?  
 YES  = Unsuitable      NO  = Suitable

**Examples of types of responsibilities and tasks that work well when working remotely:**

- Accounting
- Analyzing data
- Auditing reports
- Calculating
- Computer programming
- Phone work
- Data entry
- Design work
- Drafting
- Editing
- Evaluations
- Graphics
- Work planning
- Preparing budgets
- Programming and monitoring contracts
- Project management
- Reading
- Report writing
- Research
- Software development
- Spreadsheet analysis
- Typing
- Word processing
- Web training
- Writing

If the type of work is “unsuitable” for remote work, then remote work shouldn’t be an option for the position.



APPENDIX A  
**Remote Work  
Suitability  
Tool  
(cont.)**

## 2 – Employee Suitability Checklist

If a position is suitable for remote work, the employer can then assess employee(s) in the position to determine if working remotely is a good option for them. As part of the assessment, employers may want to consider the employee’s performance at work. For instance, some employers may only offer remote work to employees who have no active disciplinary and/or corrective actions on file.

An employee’s supervisor can use the following questions to help with the decision. For instance, if the answer to any of the following questions is “no,” remote work may not be an appropriate option.

1. The employee is self-motivated and responsible.  
YES  NO
2. The employee can work independently.  
YES  NO
3. The employee is familiar with the job requirements.  
YES  NO
4. Many of the employee’s duties may be performed remotely.  
YES  NO
5. The employee is aware of the agency’s procedures.  
YES  NO
6. The employee meets standards in his/her current position.  
YES  NO
7. The employee is an effective communicator.  
YES  NO
8. The employee is not currently serving a probationary trial or service or transition review.  
YES  NO
9. The employee has not received corrective or disciplinary action in the last year.  
YES  NO
10. The supervisor is committed to discussing expectations of the remote work day with the employee.  
YES  NO



APPENDIX A

**Remote Work  
Suitability  
Tool  
(cont.)**

***Notifying Employees***

Once a position is determined to be eligible for remote work, employees should be made aware of the decision.

If the employee is approved to work remotely, the supervisor should prepare a remote work agreement, discuss it with the employee, and have both parties sign it.

If an employee is not approved to work remotely for reasons other than performance, it is recommended you consult HR before talking to the employee. If the non-approval is due to performance, the employee's supervisor may want to consult with management to confirm the decision before informing the employee.



## Endnotes

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