K-State Research and Extension Telecommuting Policy

K-State Research and Extension recognizes that telecommuting may benefit the employee and the organization when there is a good fit between the type of job and the skills and abilities of the employee. Telecommuting is defined as working from outside the physical office by use of an electronic connection with the main office.

Types of Telecommuting
One type of telecommuting is recurring formal arrangement of one or more days of telecommuting where the employee also works from the office on a regular basis. Another type of telecommuting is an alternate workplace where the primary workplace is the employee’s home or other remote location. Both recurring and alternate workplace telecommuting are covered by this policy and require a voluntary agreement between the employee and supervisor.

Temporary special and informal arrangements made for inclement weather or other special conditions are not covered by this policy or the agreement.

Telecommuting may be used for the following reasons:

- To reduce office operation costs, and reduce travel costs for employees who work in the field
- To enhance opportunities for 'shared' office space
- To enhance employee productivity, creativity and satisfaction
- As a mutually agreed upon work alternative between supervisor and employee, rather than a reward or a job requirement
- If clear communication exists between supervisor and employee, and between telecommuter and the rest of the office
- If the practice is transparent to the public
- If standard work practices are maintained
- If consistent criteria for participant selection is employed
- If structured time policies are used to ensure attendance at meetings, events, etc

Policy Statement
Telecommuting is a prerogative of the employer, not an entitlement of employees. It is approved on a case-by-case basis consistent with the mission of KSRE respective department or unit. An agreement will be implemented only when it is in KSRE’s best interests. Not all employees or positions are suitable for telecommuting if the nature of the job does not require the employee’s physical presence, or regular face-to-face interaction with staff, visitors or the
general public. Exceptions must be justified and shown to enhance the KSRE mission and must be approved in advance by the local unit director and/or board and the regional director.

Telecommuters must comply with all policies, regulations and laws regarding their employment and generally have the same conditions for compensation, benefits, leave, privileges, rights and review procedures as non-telecommuting employees.

The supervisor must review the suitability of the position for telecommuting. The supervisor must consider the skills, abilities, performance and characteristics of the employee. Refer to the Managers and Supervisor's Guide to Telecommuting (pdf) for more information.

Employees must have satisfactory performance that at least meets expectations of his/her current supervisor to enter into a telecommuting arrangement. Supervisors must be evaluating performance based upon clear goals and expectations.

Telecommuting is voluntary and the employer or employee may terminate the agreement at any time. All obligations, responsibilities and terms and conditions of employment with the KSRE remain unchanged, except those specifically addressed in the telecommuting agreement. Any breach of the agreement by the employee may result in modification or withdrawal of telecommuting privileges under the agreement, termination of the agreement and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

**Telecommuting Agreement**

The **Telecommuting Agreement** will include the following:

**Terms**
The agreement must include the employee information, the start date, end date or renewal date and performance review dates. Performance evaluations will follow the applicable KSRE timelines.

**Location for Telecommuting**
The physical address for telecommuting and designated work location within will be included.

**Liability**
The employee is liable for any damage to KSRE property arising from abuse. The agreement must include a statement that non-business people are not covered by the University and that business meetings at the employee's home worksite are prohibited. The employee is responsible for applicable zoning and tax laws related to his or her remote office.

**Remote Office Setup**
The agreement will cover the specific hardware, software, communication lines and tools to be used as well as who is procuring or providing for those, what area constitutes the employee’s
workplace, and other pertinent information. Data security must be addressed in the agreement. The environment must be free of safety and fire hazard. Information regarding office set up best practices, such as ergonomics and security, will be made available to the employee by K-State, and will be the employee's responsibility to implement.

**Accidents/Injuries**
K-State employees are covered for work related accidents or occupational diseases arising out of and in the course of performing the duties of their employment, regardless of where the situation occurs. All on-the-job accidents and injuries must be reported by the employee to the Extension Operations within three working days of the accident/injury. The University reserves the right to inspect remote offices in the case of injuries.

**Type of Telecommuting**
The agreement must include the type of telecommuting, reoccurring or alternate workplace.

**Hours of Work, Leave and Overtime**
The agreement must include specific hours and days of work. Employee must be accessible during specified work hours. Employees who are non-exempt must accurately report time and leave. Overtime must previously be approved by the supervisor.

**Expenses**
The agreement will include a statement about whether KSRE provided supplies or whether the employee must provide them and be reimbursed. Normally the supplies are provided by the employer and no home expenses for furniture, connections or renovations are reimbursable.

**Communications**
The agreement must include the employee's contact information and required availability for communications during business hours, including how and when the employee communicates with his/her supervisor, coworkers and others. The agreement must also state if the employee is expected to report to the office for specified meetings or events. Normally, any commuting costs to/from the office meetings or events will be the employee’s responsibility. If travel reimbursement is to be made, the agreement must specify the details.

Effective communication is key to the success of telecommuting. From the perspective of professionalism and productivity, telecommuters must strive to ensure that telecommuting has no negative impacts, especially on anyone outside the local unit office.

- Telecommuters are responsible for maintaining effective communication and work flow with their supervisor and co-workers.
- Each telecommuter must devise an appropriate strategy for communication which is approved by their supervisor. This must include clear, consistent communication with their immediate supervisor about telecommuting days. The telecommuter's alternative
work station telephone number must be known so that he/she can be reached by co-workers or supervisors.

Additional Terms
Additional terms such as the duties, obligations, responsibilities and conditions of employment; agreement termination notice.

Dependent Care or Illness
Telecommuting is not intended for providing dependent care, convalescing, or for caring of an ill family member.

Signatures and Approvals
The employee, supervisor, board chair and regional director must sign the Telecommuting Agreement. Completed form is sent to the regional director.

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