CommuterChoice Maryland

MDOT MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MISSION STATEMENT
The Maryland Department of Transportation is a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, exceptional, and inclusive transportation solutions in order to connect our customers to life's opportunities.

TOOLKIT

2023 EDITION

COMMUTER CHOICE MARYLAND

Telework Toolkit for Employers and Commuters

Helping Maryland's employers and commuters

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INTRODUCTION

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About the Commuter Choice Maryland Program

Diminished productivity, frustration and lost time are felt by many Maryland employees who experience traffic with their daily commutes. In an effort to ease commuter challenges, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) launched Commuter Choice Maryland. Commuter Choice Maryland is a Travel Demand Management (TDM) program that works with employers to maximize traveler choices and deliver transportation solutions and services that can reduce congestion, conserve energy, protect the environment, and facilitate economic opportunity.

How can we help you?

We aim to help take the stress out of the daily commute by promoting alternative options to driving alone such as the use of public transportation, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, biking, **teleworking**, and alternative work schedules, to enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders. The Commuter Choice Maryland team, in conjunction with local TDM specialists, provide free support to help commuters find their best way to work, and to help employers establish commuter benefits programs that help recruit and retain top talent, meet sustainability goals, and qualify for financial benefits including the Federal Transportation Fringe and Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.

Visit **CommuterChoiceMaryland.com** for more information.

Contact Commuter Choice Maryland

Commuter Choice Maryland

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Find us on social media:

Facebook: facebook.com/CommuterChoiceMaryland

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/commuter-choice-md1

PURPOSE

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This document is intended to help employers in the state of Maryland craft a telework policy that works for their employees and for their bottom line. In this document, you'll find a set of sample policies that you can choose from, a sample telework agreement, a brief discussion of technology considerations, and a list of co-working and teleworking spaces that your employees may choose to telework from located across the state. The information contained in this guide comes from many different sources, all of which are listed in the references section at the end of this document.

Why Telework?

There are many reasons that businesses choose to implement teleworking policies. Not all of them are relevant to every business, but many businesses find that allowing their employees to telework is beneficial for both employees and the bottom line. Reasons that businesses implement teleworking policies include, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Increase productivity and job satisfaction among employees.

2. Improve the organization's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees.

3. Reduce costs associated with physical office space, including overhead costs, real estate leases, energy, and parking expenses.

4. Assist workers with mobility challenges and those returning to work after a job injury.

5. Enhance work-life balance for your workforce.

6. Allow employees to remain productive if the physical office is affected by an emergency or disaster.

7. Reduce absenteeism in the form of sick days, snow days, family leave, and personal appointments.

8. Help manage demand for parking.

9. Achieve company sustainability goals and increasing environmental quality through commute trip reduction goals.

10. Take advantage of tax savings on eligible telework costs with the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.

Maryland Commuter Tax Credit

On July 1, 2022, the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit expanded to include telworking! Now, Maryland employers (including 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 businesses) may be eligible to claim 50% of the cost of a subsidy provided to employees for eligible telework-related expenses (up to $100 per employee per month).The telework subsidy is the amount paid by an employer to an employee to cover prorated costs associated with teleworking such as:

- Internet costs
- Computer equipment costs
- Telephone costs

Did you know?

Maryland employers may be eligible to claim 50% of the cost of a telework subsidy, up to $100 a month per employee!

- Costs for software and supplies not provided by the employer but necessary for the employee to perform the employee's job
- Membership costs for co-working spaces and telework centers

Visit **www.mdot.maryland.gov/mdcommutertaxcredit** to learn more about claiming the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit.

3 WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A TELEWORK POLICY?

There is no single telework policy that suits the needs of every business or every employee. However, most telework policies contain some or all of the following sections. Telework policies are often written through collaboration with Human Resources and Information Technology departments, managers, and if applicable, union representatives.

Purpose

This is generally a short section that explains why your organization is offering a telework option to employees. It may take the form of a vision statement.

Definition

Not all telework policies are created equal. Telework policies usually define what telework means to your company. Can employees telework full-time or only some of their working hours? Which of your employees are eligible for telework? Is telework a universal benefit, or a privilege to be awarded at the discretion of management?

Application and Scope

Your organization probably already has policies that govern when employees are expected to be at work, and when they may be excused from those obligations—for example, policies governing personal leave. To what extent does your telework policy supersede those existing policies? To what extent is your telework policy subordinate to them?

Eligibility Requirements and Considerations

In this section, you may go into more detail about which of your employees are eligible for telework, and under what circumstances. Are your part-time employees eligible, or only your full-time employees? Exempt employees, or non-exempt employees? You may also wish to limit telework based on the extent to which your employees interact with your customers, or to the extent that those interactions must occur face-to-face.

Application and Approval

How do your employees request part-time or full-time telework? How do managers and/or your company's Human Resources departments go about deciding whether to approve or deny that request? This policy should be as simple as possible while ensuring that your organization's interests are protected; a telework policy that is difficult to use provides few benefits to your organization.

Manager Responsibilities

What additional requirements, if any, will your company place on managers who supervise teleworking employees? Will your company provide additional training for managing remote employees? How will your company ensure that teleworking employees and on-site employees are treated fairly and equitably?

Training

Some organizations find it useful to provide training to employees who telework and their supervisors, to ensure they are familiar with organizational policies on telework and, if necessary, to provide guidance on how teleworking employees will be evaluated.

Duration

Some organizations prefer to determine the duration of telework arrangements on a case-by-case basis. These organizations will simply write the duration of the arrangement into the teleworking agreement. Other organizations prefer to standardize the duration of telework arrangements, though these are usually renewable.

Reviews and Evaluations

Many teleworking employees can be evaluated in the exact same manner as their performance was judged prior to the start of their telework agreement. However, some teleworking employees may need to have their evaluations changed, either in frequency or in methods. This section allows the employer to lay out any changes to employee evaluations for teleworking employees.

Communication and Accessibility

Your employees use a variety of tools to communicate with colleagues, supervisors, and clients. Usually, these tools can be easily used from outside the office. This section can be used to describe communications protocols for teleworking employees. For example, how an employee and their manager might be expected to communicate with each other (i.e., phone, virtual meeting, etc.) and whether a teleworking employee needs to be visible to internal and/or external parties during virtual meetings. It can also be used to describe how you will roll out new communications technologies to teleworking employees, including installation and training. Some policies require the manager and employee to jointly develop a communications strategy as part of a telework agreement.

Work Hours

This section may address issues including when employees are expected to be available for contact when they are expected to be in the office or teleworking, and how overtime and leave hours are affected by telework. Some organizations have standardized policies about these issues, while others prefer to use a more individualized approach.

Travel Expenses

If your teleworking employee has to travel to the main office or to a project site, who pays for their travel expenses?

Emergency Operations

This section describes how your teleworking employees should handle an emergency situation, either at your main office or their telework location. Emergencies covered often include, but are not limited to, power failures, road closures, illness, or injury.

Non-Employment Responsibilities

Many organizations recognize that telework enhances work-life balance through the flexibility it can provide in managing child or elder care, or handling personal issues.Organizations vary in the level of flexibility they provide to handle situations like these. Many leave it to the discretion of individual managers, though some prefer to have universal policies in place.

Set expectations early and clearly

A telework policy that is difficult to use provides few benefits to your organization.

Performance Standards

Many employers are concerned about productivity declines as a result of employees choosing to telework. While telework generally does not lead to declines in productivity, many employers consider it important to reiterate that teleworking employees will be held to the same performance standards as their peers who work from an office.

Workspace and Equipment

Where will your teleworking employees be expected to physically locate themselves during the workday? What equipment and software do they need to ensure their continued productivity, safety, and the security of sensitive internal information? How will the company provide it for them? Organizations that try to address every single possible contingency often find themselves with inflexible policies that still do not address every issue, so try to stick to essential issues of safety, security, and liability when writing these policies.

Information Security

Every employer knows how vital it is to protect their data and internal information. While teleworking employees do not necessarily increase data vulnerability, they do add complexity to an organization's information security needs. It is worthwhile to consult your company's IT staff, or an IT consultant when crafting this part of your telework policy.

Modification or Termination

This section lays out the circumstances under which a telework agreement can be changed or ended.

SAMPLE TELEWORK AGREEMENT

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The Telework Agreement is a written agreement between the employee and the supervisor requiring them to adhere to applicable guidelines and policies. Organizations with a universal telework policy may not need a separate telework agreement, particularly if their telework responsibilities are clearly stated in an employee manual or other documentation which the employee has signed. The telework agreement is NOT an employment contract and may not be construed as such. Each employee and supervisor must sign the Telework Agreement.

A sample telework agreement is provided below as a resource. Each company should develop its own telework agreement format that includes the provisions that are specific to their telework policy.

Sample Telework Agreement

This TELEWORK AGREEMENT effective _____ is between _____

(referred to as "Employee") and **INSERT COMPANY NAME** (referred to as "Employer").

Term of Agreement

This agreement shall become effective as of the date written above, and shall remain in full force and effect, if employee teleworks, unless the agreement is terminated by the employer.

Employee's Alternate Work Site

Address: _____

Alternate Phone Number(s): _____

Fax Number (if applicable): _____

Work Schedule:

Week Day	Office	Alt Worksite	Start	Finish
Mon	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tue	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thu	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fri	_____	_____	_____	_____

___Fixed (complete schedule below) or ___Flexible (submit schedule, in advance, each week)

The daily work schedule for the days when working at home is subject to negotiation with and approval by Employee's manager. The manager may require that Employee work certain "core hours" and be accessible by telephone during those hours.

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Sample Telework Agreement, continued

Work Hours, Overtime, Vacation

Work hours are not expected to change during the program. In the event that overtime is anticipated, this must be discussed and approved in advance with the manager, just as any overtime scheduling would normally have to be approved.

Equipment

Employee agrees that use of equipment, software, data supplies and other accessories are limited to authorized persons and for purposes related to the organization, including self-development, training and tasks.

At its sole discretion, (**INSERT COMPANY NAME**) may choose to grant the Employee use of laptops and similar equipment but as a normal course of action, the Employee is expected to have personal equipment that makes Telecommuting possible.

Employee may use personal equipment for teleworking purposes. In such cases, Employee will be responsible for the maintenance and insurance required for the equipment.

(**INSERT COMPANY NAME**) does not assume liability for loss, damage or wear of Employee-owned equipment.

In event of equipment failure or malfunction, Employee agrees to notify supervisor immediately. Employee understands that any malfunction that is not repaired in a reasonable amount of time will temporarily suspend the telecommuting privilege.

Termination of Agreement

Employee's participation as a teleworker is entirely voluntary. Teleworking is available only to eligible employees, at Employer's sole discretion. Teleworking is not an employee benefit intended to be available to the entire organization. As such, no employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to, telework. Either party may terminate Employee's participation in the program, with or without cause, upon reasonable notice, in writing, to the other party. Employer will not be held responsible for costs, damages or losses resulting from cessation of participation in the teleworking program. This Agreement is not a contract of employment and may not be construed as such.

Employee Acknowledgment

I understand teleworking is voluntary and that my supervisor or I may end this telework agreement at any time. I also understand that this agreement is not a contract for employment.

Furthermore, by signing this telework agreement I acknowledge I have read and will abide by the (**INSERT COMPANY NAME**) Telework Policy, including the Telework Guidelines, Home Office Safety Guidelines, and the Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist.

Sample Telework Agreement, continued

Employee's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor's Review

_____I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and approve this request.

_____ I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and I am unable to approve this request at this time for the following reason(s):

_____

_____

_____

Supervisor's Signature:_____

Date:_____

Please Return a Copy of this Form to the Human Resources Department.

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS

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In general, employees who telework are expected to be able to accomplish all the same tasks while working remotely that they would be able to accomplish in their office. This means outfitting their remote offices with equivalent technological equipment. This section covers some of the technological needs employers may need to consider when instituting a telework program.

Computers

Some companies allow workers to use their personal computers for work, though this brings its own set of concerns. How will you ensure that the computer is sufficiently powerful to do the tasks your employee needs to do? How will you ensure that the employee's family members don't use the computer in ways that jeopardize its functionality or your data security? For this reason, many companies provide laptops to their teleworking employees.

Software

Whatever computer your employee uses, it is important to be sure that they have access to the software they need to do their jobs. Issues that companies often encounter with teleworking employees include software licensing and version compatibility. The latter issue can be solved by providing the teleworker a dedicated work laptop, but it is advisable to consult an IT professional about the former.

Internet and Networking

Many companies have internal networks for data storage and transfer between employees. If your teleworking employee needs access to an internal network to do their job, their employer will have to ensure that they can connect to it securely from a remote location. In any case, the employee will almost certainly require a high-speed internet connection. How it will be provided, and who will pay for it, is a decision that has to be made prior to the start of any telework policy.

Telephones and Other Communications Technology

Most employees need a telephone to complete their assigned tasks. Will your company provide them a cell phone strictly for business use? Or will they be expected to use their home phone for that purpose? Some companies provide their employees with VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) connections that operate similarly to standard telephones. Also, if your company uses other internal or external communications technologies, such as Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or GoTo Meeting, your teleworking employees will need secure, easy access to these tools.

Peripherals and Other Equipment

Will your teleworking employees require printers, fax machines, copiers, paper shredders, or scanners? Will they require a desk or desk chair? For some employees, teleworking with just a laptop on their kitchen table will be sufficient. Others will require a much more substantial setup. It is important for businesses to evaluate their employee's technology needs before the start of any telework policy.

CO-WORKING SPACES

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Some firms encourage or insist that teleworking employees make use of co-working spaces, which have become much more common in recent years. These flexible office spaces are more costly than simply working from home (typically charging a rate per desk per month, in addition to shorter and longer-term membership options), but provide their users with dedicated workspaces, high-speed internet, and, in many cases, many of the perks of office life. Employees may choose to use one of these instead of a home office because they find them more conducive to productivity, because they allow for a shorter commute, or because they are conveniently located to other family members for whom your employee is responsible. Co-working spaces are not right for every employee or every organization, but they have become an increasingly popular option in recent years. Co-working spaces are now available in most cities in Maryland, and some smaller towns as well.

This list of co-working spaces is current as of February 2023 and may not be an exhaustive list of all available co-working spaces. Please visit CommuterChoiceMaryland.com for a current list of co-working spaces available across Maryland.

Allegany County

Startup Portal Cumberland
startupportal.com/co-working-space

Anne Arundel County

My Annapolis Office (Annapolis)
myannapolisoffice.com

Regus Annapolis
regus.com

Baltimore City

Brewers Hill Hub
brewershillhub.com

Charles Village Exchange
charlesvillageexchange.com

Co-Balt Workspace
cobaltworkspace.com

Co_Lab Workspace
colabbaltimore.com

The Cube CoWork
thecubecowork.com

ETC Beehive
etcbaltimore.com/beehive

Impact Hub
baltimore.impacthub.net

Officense

officense.com

Open Works
openworksbmore.org

PIVOT
pivotmd.net/catonsville-co-working

Regus Baltimore
regus.com

Spark Baltimore
sparkcoworking.com/baltimore

Vision FedHill
visionfedhill.com

Baltimore County

Launch Workplaces Towson
launchworkplaces.com/towson

Regus (Hunt Valley, Owings Mills, Pikesville, Towson)
regus.com

Caroline County

hotDesks Denton
hotdesks.org/coworking-offices

Charles County

Suber and Company (Waldorf)
subercompany.com

Dorchester County

hotDesks Cambridge
hotdesks.org/coworking-offices

Frederick County

Cowork Frederick
coworkfrederick.com

Harford County

GroundFloor (Bel Air)
harfordcountymd.gov/3374/The-GroundFloor-at-Harford

Howard County

Maryland Innovation Center (Columbia)

mdinnovationcenter.com

PIVOT

pivotmd.net/ellicott-city-co-working

Regus (Columbia, Elkridge)

regus.com

Kent County

hotDesks Chestertown

hotdesks.org/coworking-offices

Montgomery County

Creative Colony Spaces (Silver Spring)

creativecolonyspaces.com

I/O SPACES (Silver Spring)

iospaces.com

Launch Workplaces (Bethesda, Gaithersburg, Rockville)

launchworkplaces.com/maryland

Navigate Bethesda

navigateoffice.com/maryland

WeWork The Wilson (Bethesda)

https://www.wework.com/buildings/the-wilson--bethesda--MD

Prince George's County

Clout Workspace (Capitol Heights)

clout.space

Regus Melford Plaza I (Bowie)

regus.com

WeWork UMD (College Park)

wework.com/buildings/university-of-maryland--college-park-md--MD

Wicomico County

hotDesks Salisbury

hotdesks.org/coworking-offices

Co-working spaces are not just for startups!

Low-commitment desk rentals may help your employees avoid long commutes and increase productivity.

TELEWORK CHECKLIST

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Use this checklist to ensure that you have addressed the issues that may arise when you introduce a telework policy.

- Which employees are permitted to telework, and how often are they allowed to telework?

- How can employees request telework?

- How will your telework policies affect your existing paid leave policies?

- How will your remote employees be trained?

- How will your remote employees be supervised and evaluated?

- How will you ensure your remote employees can easily communicate with co-workers and clients?

- How will you ensure teleworking employees have access to the technology they need to do their jobs?

- Will your remote employees work at a co-working space, or will they work from their homes?

- Who will be responsible for paying for your remote employees travel to your office or to other worksites, if that travel is necessary?

- How will you ensure that proprietary resources remain secure as they are handled by remote employees?

- How will your telework policy affect your existing policies on emergency operations?

- How will you ensure that your remote employees have a workspace and equipment suitable for the needs of their position?

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REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Global Workplace Analytics Telework Savings Calculator

https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/resources

Guide to Telework in the Federal Government

www.telework.gov

Telework Toolkit

www.teleworktoolkit.com

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