

CITY OF WATAUGA – PERSONNEL, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

POLICY TITLE	Telecommuting
INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE	November 9, 2020
LAST REVISION DATE	New
POLICY NUMBER	7.07

OBJECTIVE Telecommuting is a flexible work arrangement that allows employees to work at home or in an alternative location for all or part of their workweek. Telecommuting is intended to create flexible conditions that will help employees accomplish their work effectively and efficiently without disruption to City services. Telecommuting is considered a privilege and not an entitlement.

SCOPE This policy applies only to eligible employees and must be approved by the Department Director and City Manager.

POLICY

A. General

Telecommuting is a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees and positions, but not for others. Telecommuting is not an entitlement, it is not a city-wide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms of employment with the City of Watauga. Telecommuting will not affect an employee's compensation, benefits, work status or work responsibilities. The duties, responsibilities, and conditions of employment remain the same as if the employee were working at their regular work site. The employee shall comply with all City of Watauga policies and procedures while working at home or in an alternate location. Telecommuting shall not result in any additional cost to the City of Watauga.

B. Eligibility

Employees are eligible to telecommute if approved by their Department Director and City Manager and when it is in the best interest of the City to do so. Not every job or every employee is well suited for telecommuting. The employee must have a good performance record, no documented absenteeism problems or other discipline problems. Telecommuting by one employee should not negatively affect the workload or productivity of others by shifting burdens, creating delays, or adding steps in the workflow. All telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the City.

C. Term

Telecommuting can be arranged on a long-term, short-term, or as needed basis as long as it is approved. In some situations, employees may be directed to telecommute. The telecommuting schedule may be for all or part of a workweek. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement to a director for consideration.

Temporary telecommuting arrangements (less than 3 months) may be approved for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, or business travel. These arrangements are approved by the department director on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

Telecommuting arrangements may be discontinued at any point at the direction of the City. Every effort will be made to provide notice of such change to accommodate commuting and other issues that may arise from the termination of a telecommuting arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is provided.

D. Working Hours

Non-exempt telecommuting employees shall accurately record all hours worked in accordance with regular timekeeping practices. In accordance with ***Policy 6.02 Overtime and Compensatory Time***, all non-exempt employees are required to receive their supervisor's prior authorization before performing any overtime work. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting arrangement.

E. Telecommuter Responsibilities

1. The telecommuting employee is required to comply with all City of Watauga's policies and procedures as if the employee were at the primary work site.
2. The employee will arrange primary care for children under the age of six during at-home work hours. Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate childcare. In the case of a dependent's illness, the employee must use leave benefits in accordance with City policy.
3. The employee will work at home during the hours agreed upon by the employee and his/her supervisor. Changes to this schedule must be reviewed and approved in advance by the employee's Department Director.
4. Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using the City's time-keeping system. Hours worked in excess of those scheduled per day and per work week require the advanced approval of the telecommuter's supervisor.
5. The telecommuter will be expected to attend in-person meetings relating to his/her job including those held on a telecommuting day.

6. Employees must maintain a professional appearance when interacting with others. Video conferencing will require the employee to wear appropriate clothing that follows the City's Dress Code found in Policy **10.06 Dress Code, Uniforms and Personal Appearance**.
7. Employees agree to maintain safe conditions in the at-home workspace and to practice the same safety habits in the designated workspace as they would on the City's premises.
8. In case of an injury while working at home, the employee shall immediately report the injury to his supervisor per City policy. Worker's compensation liability will be limited to work-related injuries at the designated workspace at the alternate work site during approved work hours.

F. Procedure

All telecommuting arrangements shall be approved by the Department Director and City Manager. Before entering into any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and director will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

1. The employee and director (or designee) will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.
2. The employee and director (or designee) will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
3. The employee and the director (or designee) will review and approve the telecommuting location. The most common telecommuting location is the home of the employee; however, other locations may be considered.
4. The employee is responsible for providing space, telephone, printing, networking, and/or Internet capabilities at the telecommute location and shall not be reimbursed by the employer for these or related expenses. The employee and director (or designee) will review any technology and equipment needs and the appropriate location for telecommuting to determine if telecommuting is feasible.
5. The employee and the director (or designee) will review any scheduling issues and establish expectations for scheduling telecommuting days and working hours.

G. Telecommuting Plan

A telecommuting plan clearly outlines telecommuting expectations and deliverables. **See Telecommuting Plan**. Once the director approves a telecommuting arrangement, the

telecommuting employee, the employee's Supervisor, and the Director shall complete the telecommuting plan. The City Manager must approve the Telecommuting Plan. The Telecommuting Plan form shall be submitted to Human Resources for retention in the employee's personnel file before the commencement of telecommuting.

1. The telecommuting plan shall outline the duration of the telecommuting arrangement, the telecommuting schedule (days and working hours), the telecommuting location, employee contact information, and expectations. It shall also clearly describe the objectives, tasks, deliverables, and due dates of the telecommuting employee's work.
2. Before an employee is placed in a regular telecommuting arrangement, they shall be placed in a trial period. The trial period shall be for thirty (30) to ninety (90) days depending upon the telecommuting schedule and as established by the Department Director. The trial shall be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangement. The telecommuting arrangement may be discontinued at any point during the trial period by the Department Director. If the arrangement is deemed successful, telecommuting may be continued.
3. Supervisors shall ensure that telecommuting employees meet expectations and successfully execute the telecommuting plan. Supervisors shall ensure that productivity and service quality is maintained while employees are telecommuting. The telecommuting employee and their direct supervisor shall review the telecommuting plan and the employee's performance upon the expiration of the plan. Failure to meet Telecommuting Plan expectations and deliverables may result in discontinuation of the telecommuting arrangement.

Employee Telecommuting Plan

Describe the tasks to be performed while telecommuting, include objectives and deliverables:

	OBJECTIVE	TASK(S)	DELIVERABLES	DUE DATE
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				

Trial Period From _____ To _____

Final Approval: *The Human Resources Department will follow up with the Department Director to confirm continuation.*

Yes ___ No ___ Human Resources Signature: _____ Date: _____