

# Flexible Work Arrangements for Alabama's Workforce

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## Acknowledgments

The Flexible Work Arrangements for Alabama's Workforce project team members would like to thank the following agencies for providing their assistance and support throughout this project.

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## Introduction

While many organizations operate by a fixed work schedule, such as an eight hour per day, five days a week schedule in a traditional setting, there is a growing trend for organizations to offer flexible work arrangements in order to recruit and retain the best talent, allow employees to better manage their personal and professional lives (work-life balance), and better reduce overall costs. Flexible work arrangements may include strategies such as flexible work schedules, compressed work schedules, telecommuting, and job sharing. In the digital age, advances in technology have enabled employees to share information, communicate with colleagues from afar, and collaborate on projects without the burden of a commute. Every employee may not need to be in the office to be productive. In private industry, federal government, and in many State governments across the country, employers are recognizing the benefits of flexible work arrangements, such as flexible work schedules and “telework.”

As new generations enter the work force, they bring new expectations for companies and the workforce as a whole. Each generation has different viewpoints and expectations for their work and the culture of their workplace. This can pose challenges for employers and managers who are tasked with attracting and retaining new generations, while maintaining the workforce already present. There are several generations that make up today’s workforce. Baby Boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of US Census Bureau data, one quarter of the workforce is comprised of Baby Boomers (Fry 2018). In the early and mid-1980s, Baby Boomers made up a majority of the nation's labor force. The youngest Boomer was 53 years old in 2017, while the oldest Boomers were older than 70. With more Boomers retiring every year, the size of the Boomers workforce will continue to shrink. Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) currently account for a third of the labor force. The most recent generations to enter the workforce are the Millennial Generation (those born between 1981 and 1994) and Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2000) (Gourani 2019). More than 35% of the American workforce are Millennials

(Fry 2018). The oldest Generation Z members are the most recent college graduates who are now looking for employment.

According to the United States Census Bureau, more than 20% of the workforce will be over age 65 in 2030 (American Fact Finder 2016). Forty percent of employees age 50-64 expect to retire after age 65 (Clifton, Harter 2019). With that in mind, it is important to attract competent people to fill vacant positions. In order to do so, employers must identify the values of the new, up-and-coming workforce. The Millennial Generation values work-life balance and flexible work schedules (Taylor, 2018).

Millennials seek work opportunities with flexibility, which is often viewed as a perk. The future of work is shifting towards alternative schedules that allow employees to focus on their priorities, which in this case is a healthy lifestyle and more time for family and friends. Because they are tethered to technology, Millennials naturally gravitate toward remote employment situations. They often want to work from home and have flexible hours to balance their lifestyles; they'd also like to work fewer hours, research indicates. Fifteen percent of male employees and 21 percent of female employees would give up some of their pay and slow the pace of promotion in their careers in exchange for working fewer hours (Taylor, 2018.)

In a recent Gallup study, 53% of employees say that greater work-life balance and personal wellbeing are very important in considering whether or not to take a job (Clifton and Harter, 2019). More than half of all employees and 63% of Millennials would change jobs for flextime. These statistics indicate that people want to be in control of their own lives. The availability of flexible work arrangements can have an impact on both engagement and wellbeing, as people have many responsibilities and crave the freedom to balance both work and life that suits their lifestyles and circumstances (Clifton and Harter, 2019).

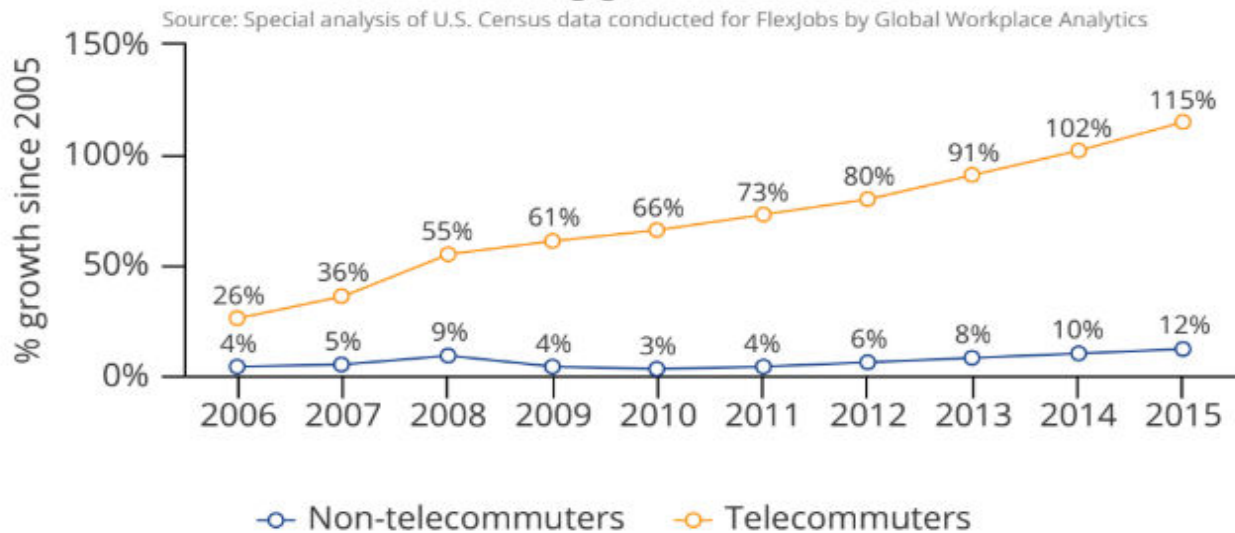
Based on this information, it is evident that the workforce is changing. In the current climate, employers must adapt in order to attract and retain employees. Our team investigated the most effective flexible work strategies utilized by today's workforce. We examined the benefits of flexible work arrangements, researched the policies that are currently in place in State government, as well as the desires and needs of State employees. We also make recommendations about flexible work arrangements

that are feasible for the State of Alabama. In this white paper, we will focus on the governmental agency perspective and utilize private industry to support the data.

## Background

The concept of flexible work arrangements was introduced in Zimbabwe years ago when one group of employees was required to start work at 9:00 AM, finishing an hour later compared to their counterparts. In Australia, flexible time was referenced to accumulated overtime hours that an employee could build up and exchange for the equivalent amount of time off (Jindal, 2018). In the early 1960s, West Germany was experiencing a labor shortage. At the time, German women did not traditionally engage in work outside the home and organizations were beginning to consider ways to attract them. Female engagement in the labor force went against the common gender roles of the population and scheduling conflicts stemmed from the normal workday schedule of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM shifts. In 1965, Christel Kammerer, a consultant and political economist, published an article proposing that Gleitzeit, translated as “sliding time,” or is now known as “flexible time,” could solve this problem and boost female employment (Avery, C. & Zabel, D., 2001). Employees could have the flexibility to both start and end work at earlier times than normal, or alternately start and end at later times. A worker could even take a break during the day and resume work and finish late. As long as the expected hours of work were met, the employee could adjust the time during which they worked. The practice of flexible time spread quickly across Europe and to the United States in 1973. By 2011, more than half of the businesses in the United States offered flextime as a benefit to their employees (Society for Human Resource Management, 2011). Regular telecommuting grew 115% in the past decade, nearly ten times faster than the rest of the workforce that does not telecommute.

## Telecommuting growth since 2005



Since 2005, the percentage of telecommuters nationwide has grown faster than the non-telecommuting workforce (Global Workplace Analytics 2018). However, the percentage of non-telecommuters has not grown significantly. Telework has grown as different industries discover the benefits of telework. According to a 2017 Flexjobs.com report, remote work provides cost savings due to the absence of work space, more focused and productive employees, and better work retention (Radu 2018).

### **Definition and Types of Flexible Work Arrangements**

Flexible time refers to variations in starting and finishing times, but assumes that a constant number of working hours are worked each day. Workplaces today offer a wide range of flexible work arrangements. What arrangements are provided, and how they are defined, varies widely. Listed are some of the most notable flexible arrangements:

#### **1. Telecommuting**

Telecommuting is work performed remotely during some of the scheduled work hours. The position can be full-time, but the telecommuter only comes into the office semi-regularly.

#### **2. Remote Working**

Remote work is entirely performed away from the office. It can be a permanent position or temporary. Since the employee does not have to come into the office at all, they can live and work anywhere around the world.

### **3. Compressed Workweeks**

While a 40-hour workweek is a traditional work schedule, a compressed workweek offers flexibility on where and when these hours are spent. For example, a compressed schedule might consist of four ten-hour days each week.

### **4. Customized Working Hours**

Customized working hours allows workers to choose their own work hours within reason to accommodate personal needs, such as picking up children and attending appointments. Customized work hours are also utilized to help employees avoid rush hour traffic.

### **5. Part-time Positions**

Part-time positions are positions that allow employees to work at a less than full-time rate. Not every position warrants full-time work. Employers that offer part-time positions reduce overhead when part-time employees are not eligible for certain benefits, such as retirement and health insurance.

### **6. Job Share**

Job sharing allows two or more part-time individuals to share the responsibilities of one full-time position. For the employer, job sharing is the equivalent of full-time work without offering benefits.

## **Who Utilizes Flexible Work Arrangements**

Flexible work arrangements are increasing in popularity across a variety of industries. As of 2017, 3.7 million employees were working from home (Fundera, April 2019). According to Depaul, healthcare/pharmaceutical businesses, government, education, communications and HR/Recruiting are five industries primed for flexible work arrangements (Depaul, 2017).

Governmental agencies, both federal and state, have flexible work policies in place, although some agencies choose not to utilize the management tool. It is important to understand which industries are currently using flexible work

arrangements and whether they are successful in order to assess whether flexible work arrangements may be relevant to the State of Alabama.

### **Private Industry**

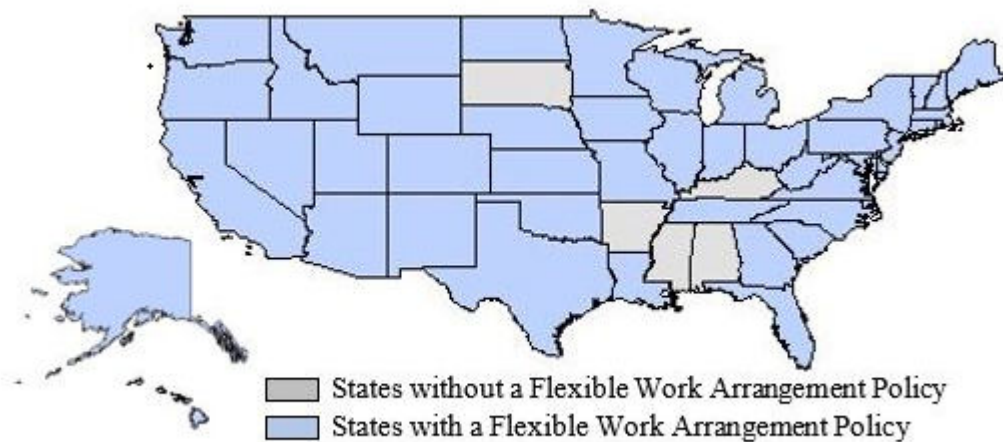
According to a recent Fundera, Inc. study, over the past five years, the number of employers offering a work-from-home option has grown by 40% and the number of employees telecommuting has grown 115% since 2005 (Fundera, April 2019). Larger companies are more apt to offer a telework opportunity. Larger companies are defined as those with 500 or more employees, as opposed to the smaller ones with 100 employees.

Forbes provided a list of the top ten companies out of a list of 250 that offer telework opportunities with many range levels of experience. This list, derived from an analysis of 40,000 companies, shows a great variance in industry types, such as medical/health, resources, computer/IT, education/training, accounting/finance, government, and travel (Forbes, Oct 2016).

AT&T, for example, supports a comprehensive flexible workplace program that enables employees to work from a variety of locations (about.att.com). This company also offers flexible work options to employees for whom flexibility is most feasible. They implemented the Flexible Workplace Program in January 2015. Typically, employees may take up to twelve months of unpaid leave to care for a newborn, adopted child, or an ill family member. They also allow flextime such as compressed work-weeks and part-time schedules. Through this program, they enable teams to work where they are most effective to meet the demands of the global work environment.

### **State Government**

Most states across the nation have implemented flexible work arrangement policies. Based on a desktop survey of the states throughout the country, 45 of the 50 states have an overarching flexible work arrangement policy in place.



#### States with Some Form of Flexible Work Arrangement

During development of the State of Washington's telework policy, Washington State Extension used an online survey to understand existing statewide government telework use (Babine et al, 2011, p. 6). The states that participated in the study were Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming. Thirteen of these states have statewide telework policies already in place for their State employees. These policies were implemented between 1989 through 2008. Seven of these states have Governor-signed telework executive orders in place and four other states started their policies with a house resolution or bill. Employee benefits were major factors that influenced these states to implement telework policies, such as an improved work-life balance, cost of living, and improved morale, as well as reduced fuel consumption and traffic, energy conservation, and the need to accommodate multiple generations in the workplace (Babine et al, 2011 p. 7).

Six of these states used interdepartmental teams to develop statewide telework programs and one state had 17 agencies participate in the development of the program. Five states have telework participation requirements in place, two with participation mandates and three with participation goals. For example, one state requires participation by ten percent of their eligible workforce, two require participation by 20% and one requires participation of 25%. Participation is tracked by various methods, such

as an annual report to the legislature, surveys, or through payroll reporting. Seven of the 13 states with formal statewide programs provide telework training, either online, in the classroom, or both, for managers and/or employees. Although none of the states have a formal tracking system of the benefits of their telework policies, they did report a variety of results, including decreased employee commutes, improved employee productivity, improved employee retention, reduced real estate costs, and telework helped attract new employees (Babine et al., 2011, p. 8-10).

### **Federal Government**

The federal government has already adapted to the new workforce with recent legislation regarding flexible work arrangements with the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, requiring federal agencies to establish telework policies for their employees (Loubier, 2017). This legislation provides a statutory definition for telework that applies to all federal agencies and all federal employees, along with an outline of the responsibilities and expectations for policy guidelines and the reporting of telework. It requires each agency to establish a policy under which eligible employees are authorized to telework, as defined by title 5 USC §2105. Such legislation at the federal level ensures that federal agencies can be sufficiently staffed in order to function, but with the flexibility desired by employees (2018 Telework Report to Congress).

Since the enacting of the Federal Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, federal agencies are required to report their telework programs to Congress. This report includes a number of key items, such as “(1) employee eligibility to participate in telework remains stable; (2) various factors resulted in decreased telework participation; (3) agencies have implemented more accurate methods for tracking telework participation; (4) agencies are leveraging telework to achieve critical goals, including emergency preparedness, improving employee attitudes, recruitment, and retention; and (5) agencies continue to struggle to assess cost savings achieved through telework” (2018 Telework Report to Congress).

**Table 1. Telework Eligibility, Participation, and Frequency, FY 2017**

	Number of Employees	Number of Responding Agencies
Total number of employees	2,193,400	88
Employees deemed eligible to telework	1,013,975	86
Employees teleworking		
Fiscal year data	436,732	78
September data	33,078	11
Total (FY and September)	469,810	89

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) supports federal agency efforts to achieve important goals, such as recruitment and retention of productive federal workforce and enhance federal employee work-life balance. To ensure the feasibility of telework, the federal government provides for agency consultation with various agencies for guidance and support including the OPM, General Services Administration, Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Homeland Security. The federal government requires that the Office of Personnel Management maintain a central telework website and provide a framework for federal agencies to better use technology and maximize the use of telework.

Other proposed legislation encourages flexible work arrangements for federal employees, such as the Schedules That Work Act, which was introduced to the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (HR 2942). If passed, this law would give all federal employees the right to make scheduling requests without employer retaliation and would give employees a say in their work schedules. Also, employers would be required to consider scheduling requests from all employees and provide a response. For an employee who needs a schedule change to fulfill care-giving responsibilities, to work a second job (for part-time workers), to pursue education and workforce training, or to address their own serious health condition, the employer must grant the requested schedule change. However, the employer may deny the request if there is a clear and valid business reason not to allow it, such as an inability to reorganize work among existing staff or the insufficiency to work during the periods the employee proposes to work.

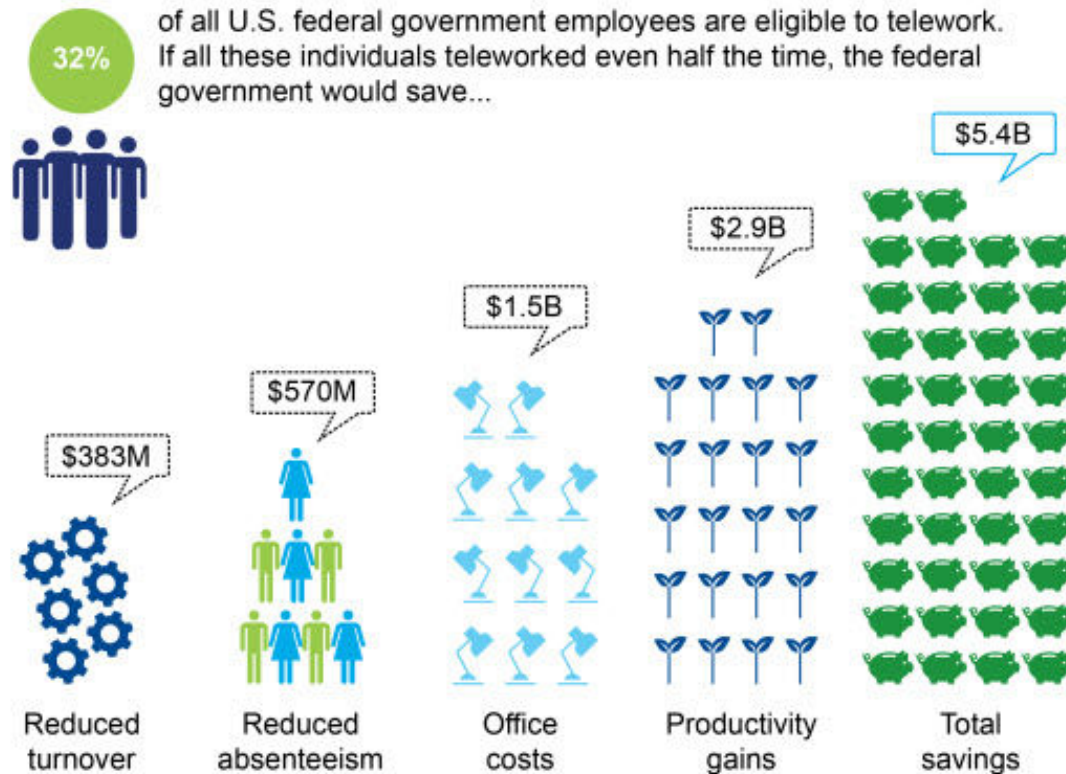
## Benefits of Flexible Work Arrangements

### Employers

According to the Pew Research Center, 10,000 people in the United States become eligible to retire each day (Heimlich, 2010). With this rapid turnover impending, it is important to investigate the values of the younger generations currently entering the workforce. A large majority of the new workforce values flexibility over compensation. According to a recent Qualtrics survey, 76% of workers indicated that they would take less pay in exchange for a more flexible work schedule (Overfelt, 2017). With a new workforce that values experiences over compensation, a flexible work arrangement is a valuable tool that employers may use to attract and retain new employees. The ability for the new workforce to have a flexible work arrangement is key to enticing quality employees not only to come on board, but also to stay on board. The workplace needs to keep up with the current desires of the new workforce.

There are many reasons for employers to embrace flexibility. Flexible work arrangements can help cut costs, improve employee morale, and make employers more attractive to the available talent pool (Depaul, 2017). Based on survey data compiled by Citrix, the top outcomes of working remotely include increased employee morale (51%), increased employee productivity (50%), reduced employee turnover (35%), and attracting more talented job candidates (34%) (Citrix 2017). Other benefits of implementing flexible work arrangements include reduced sick leave usage, increases in productivity, decreases in CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, higher retention rates, more competitive recruitment packages, and ensuring continuity of operations. Global Work Place Analytics found that 77% of employers report an increase in productivity and 95% of employers report an increase in retention (Global Work Place Analytics).

## Mobile Government: Teleworking its way to savings and efficiency



Source: 2012 Status of Telework in Government

The United States Office of Personnel Management researched the societal and environmental benefits of telework (2012 Status of Telework in Government). Seven percent of federal employees telecommute, while 32% of all federal employees are eligible to telework. Based on an analysis by Deloitte of Federal Productivity, if the remaining 25% of telecommuted at least half of the time, the federal government would save \$5.4 billion.

### Recruiting and Retaining Talent

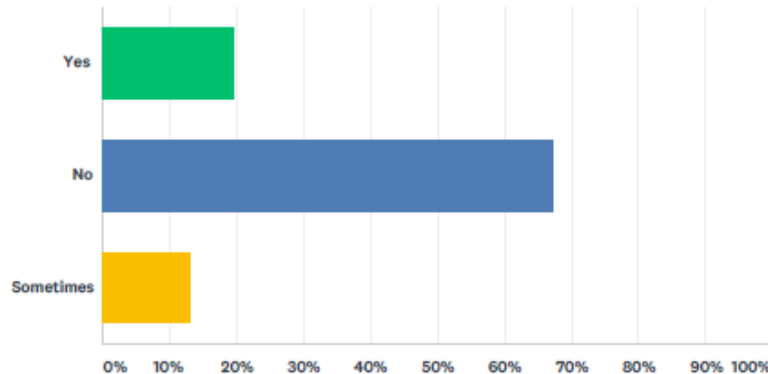
Offering flexible work options is a highly effective recruiting tool to attract qualified employees across generations (Duval, 2018). The mature workforce requires flextime or part-time options to meet health and personal needs, while Millennials desire to work for employers who make their personal well-being and work-life balance a priority.

The new workforce values benefits that improve their well-being, such as greater flexibility, autonomy and the ability to lead a better life (Clifton and Harter, 2019). According to research by Citrix, 40% of professionals would turn down a job offer if the company did not provide a flexible work environment. And according to a recent Gallup study, more than half of employees in the United States would change jobs for a job that offered more flexibility. More than one-third would change jobs for employment that allowed them to work from where they want at least part of the time. Yet less than half said that their employers offer bonuses or flextime. Gallup found that employees of companies that were allowed to work remotely 100% of the time were more likely to be engaged, whereas those who could not work remotely at all were generally more disengaged (Clifton and Harter, 2019). Gallup also discovered that the highest engagement was found where employees could work remotely three to four days per five-day workweek. It is important to note, however, that the effectiveness of working remotely depends on the role. Working remotely works well for employees whose jobs rely on specific knowledge or a specific educational background to complete projects and for those who do not primarily respond to others' immediate needs.

In a recent limited survey of 447 Alabama State employees, it was noted that 10% reported that they are not able to achieve a balance in work and life and 43.74% only achieved a moderate balance. Sixty-seven percent of responders indicated that they are not offered any alternate work hours or work locations, and 12.93% were only offered alternate work hours or locations occasionally.

### Q9 Are you currently being offered alternate work hours or work locations that allow you to vary or make changes in the time you begin and/or end work?

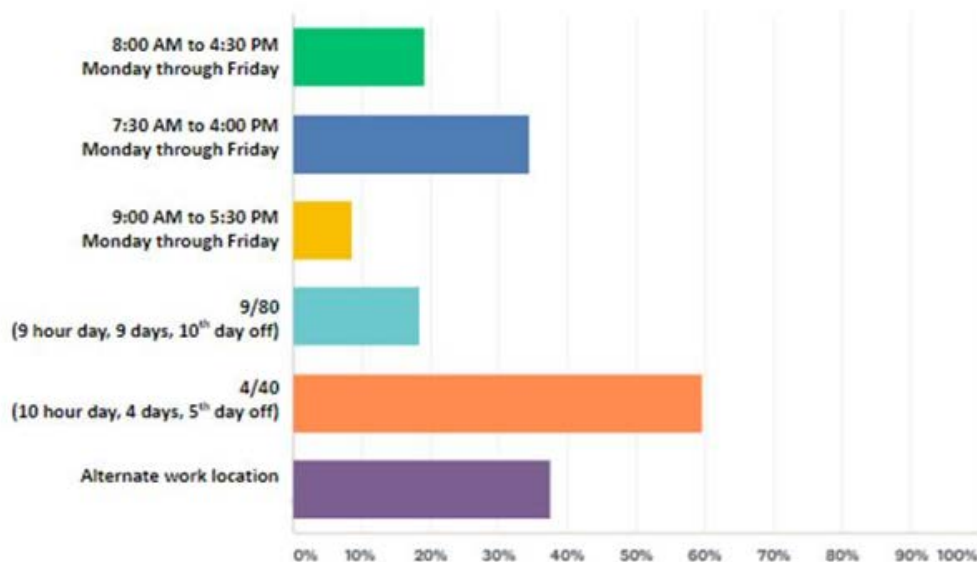
Answered: 441 Skipped: 6



Yet responders indicated a number of flexible work-hour arrangements that interested them, as well as the possibility of working from an alternate work location.

### Q10 Which flexible work arrangement interests you most? Please pick all that apply.

Answered: 431 Skipped: 16



Working from home statistics indicate that companies who offer a telecommuting option for employees have lower turnover rates. Stanford University found that employers who offered a work-from-home option had employee turnover rates fall by over 50% (Fundera, April 2019). Working from home also brings young

talent through the door; 68% of Millennials said a work from home option would greatly influence their interest in working for a company.

#### Broader Talent Pool

Employers' talent pool becomes global when the workplace culture allows employees to work from anywhere (PeopleScout, 2019). Employers that allow for telework can recruit talent across the country or even across the globe. Modern communication tools such as Skype, secure intranet, and video conferencing make distance less of a challenge for collaboration.

#### Improved Branding

A flexible work policy can enhance the company's image as a family-friendly place to work. According to LinkedIn's 2017 Global Recruiting Trends, 80% of talent leaders agree that employer brand significantly impacts their ability to hire quality talent (Gagen, 2016). Offering flexible work arrangement policies communicates to potential employees that an employer is committed to helping its employees achieve work-life balance. This can improve jobseekers' perception of potential employers.

#### Decreased Overhead

When an employer provides employees the ability to work off-site, they reduce costs on necessities such as office supplies, real estate and utilities. Real estate needs are greatly reduced when only a handful of vital employees are needed on site (Fields, 2018). Telework reduces real estate and provides the opportunity to rent office space, which provides an additional source of income (Fundera, April 2019). A larger portion of remote employees reduces cost related to computers, electricity, heating and air conditioning, and other office operating costs. According to Global Workplace Analytics, employers can save over \$11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year.

The Office of Personnel Management's 2017 Status of Telework in the federal government report to Congress, reduced overhead in the way of reduced office space. This has the potential to be a major cost saving measure. This is evident in recent measures taken by the State of Tennessee in implementing flexible work arrangements to reduce the demand for office space. In less than two years since implementing

sweeping new policies on flexible work arrangements, Tennessee's Department of General Services reports that they will have saved over \$6 million dollars in real estate costs alone.

#### Increased Productivity & Lower Absenteeism

Flexible work arrangements can provide a culture that focuses on results rather than attendance by giving employees more accountability and empowerment (Duval, 2018). A Citrix study found that productivity increased by 50% when job policies aligned with employees' work styles and values. According to A Better Balance – a flexible work advocate – if employees can work from home when sick, they will not pass the illness to other employees, resulting in fewer sick days and higher productivity (Kratz, 2019). Two-thirds of managers who offer telecommuting flexibility report that their employees who work from home are more productive overall (Fundera, April 2019).

#### Employees

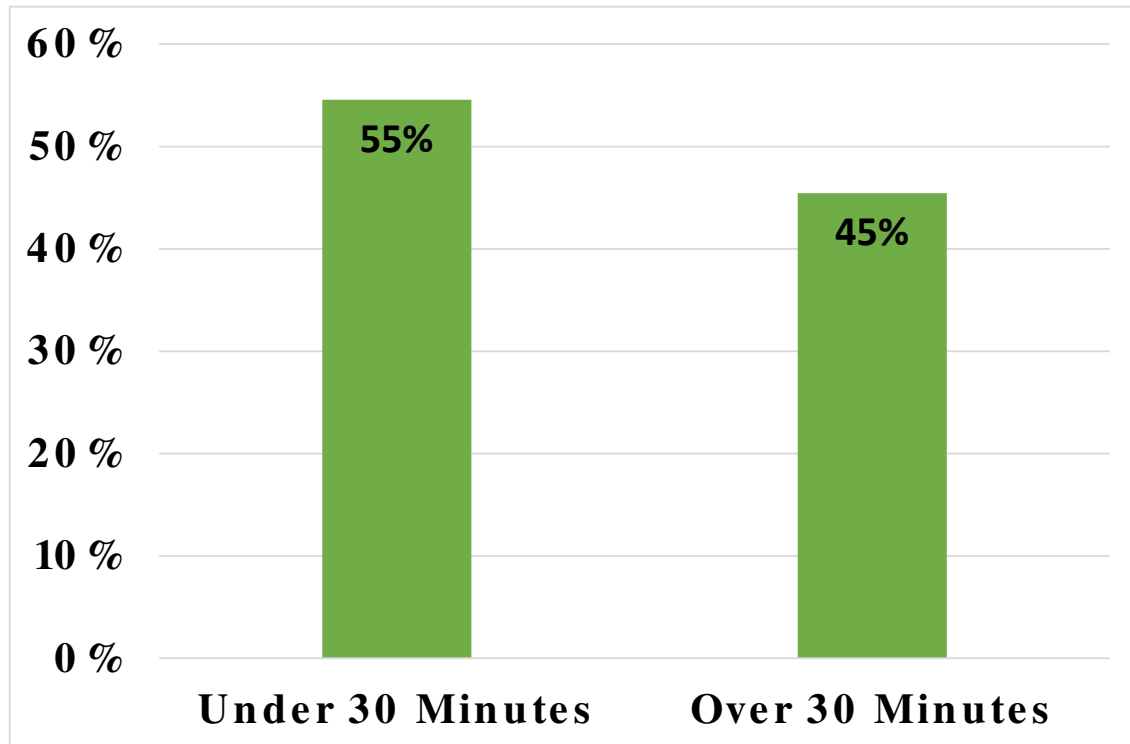
Flexible time benefits both the employee and the employer. A flexible work policy allows employees to better meet family and personal needs and provide a better work-life balance. It would reduce commuting time and gas expenses, especially if employees could work from home. Employees would have more control over their time schedule and working environment. Employees could also work during the hours that best fit their energy cycles, which may result in a better product. Eighty-six percent of employees say that they are most productive when they work alone, devoid of distractions such as inefficient meetings, loud office spaces and office gossip (Fundera, April 2019).

According to a 2011 Washington State University Extension study, there are multiple factors that influence support for telework (Fundera, April 2019). These include employee benefits such as improved work-life balance, cost of living and morale, as well as reduced fuel consumption and traffic, aid in addressing environmental concerns and energy conservation. In addition, respondents indicated that there is a need to accommodate multiple generations in the workplace and offer business benefits such as

cost savings and increased productivity. Eighty percent of telecommuters report a higher morale and 69% reported lower absenteeism.

#### Reduced Commuting Time and Costs

If employees are allowed to work from home, they may potentially save hours of time and money in fuel costs, in addition to minimizing wear and tear on the road and employee's vehicles (PeopleScout). This can additionally affect well-being, as employees are not spending as much time in frustrating and hazardous rush hours. Flexible schedules can also decrease congestion during the typical rush hours. There are also financial benefits for telecommuters. Employees working from home save more than \$4,000 on a variety of costs, such as gas, public transit passes, car upkeep, food costs (such as lunch out of the office), and professional clothing upkeep (Fundera, April 2019). Full-time telecommuters also gain back the equivalent of eleven workdays every year. Another benefit to flexible work arrangements is reduced commuting times. In a limited survey of 447 respondents, 45% of Alabama's State employees commute to work more than thirty minutes one way. Reducing the amount of commute time would benefit employees, would reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions, and would reduce wear and tear on Alabama's roadways and infrastructure. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were approximately 123,000 jobs in Montgomery in 2015. Based on an Envision study, more than 64,000 people commute into the city each day, which indicates that nonresidents work 52% of the jobs in Montgomery.



Flexible work arrangements could allow employees to reduce their commute time which could reduce stress, increase morale, reduce traffic congestion, and decrease Alabama's carbon footprint.

#### Less Stress

Most full-time employees consider the option to use work-related mobile technology away from the workplace as an advantage because it allows them to have some flexibility in where and when they work (Clifton and Harter, 2019). Employees could take advantage of this type of mobile flexibility if allowed to work remotely. According to Gallup, more than three-fourths of employees think that the ability to check work email outside of the office and outside of the traditional workplace is an advantage because it reduces stress. For engaged employees, it is a benefit to be able to complete projects outside of the office.

Work-from-home statistics show that 82% of telecommuters reported lower stress levels. With less stress, employees are happier and more engaged (Fundera, April 2019). According to a study of more than 19,000 employees at nine different companies, stress and burnout was lower among workers engaged in workplace

flexibility arrangements (Kratz, 2019). According to Mental Health America, employees' stress levels spike in an effort to "get it all done," causing productivity to plummet (Kratz, 2019). Stress can affect concentration, make employees irritable or depressed, and over time, it can weaken immune systems, making them susceptible to a variety of illness. When employees are balanced, they are more productive, take fewer sick days, and are more likely to stay in their jobs.

#### Reducing Negative Spillover & Increased Morale

According to the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, spillover is the process where attitudes and behavior carries over from one role to another, such as from the workplace to family life (Kratz, 2019). Spillover can be either negative or positive. Research conducted by the Families and Work Institute shows that employees in more flexible workplaces exhibited less negative spillover between work and family life. The American Sociological Association found that workers at a Fortune 500 company who participated in a flexible work program reported higher levels of job satisfaction and reduced levels of burnout (Duval, 2018).

#### Improved Well-Being

A more flexible work culture can also lead to increased overall well-being, as it allows employees to have more choice or control over their work schedule and location (Kratz, 2019). A recent study showed that employees who worked for managers with low work-family openness and creativity were more likely to have cardiovascular disease risks and diagnoses. They also sleep half an hour less per night than those who work for managers with high levels of openness and creativity regarding work-family issues. Data provided by A Better Balance shows that employees who believe they have workplace flexibility lead healthier lifestyles by better sleep habits, stress management and physical activity habits.

## Can Flexible Work Arrangements Work for Alabama?

This section focuses on the implementation of flexible work arrangements for Alabama's State employees, specifically the logistic and legal requirements, and any public perception issues related to the implementation of flexible work arrangements in Alabama. Currently, there is not an overarching telework policy in place for the State. However, there are State Agencies using telework or flexible work arrangements. State Personnel is willing to review individual policies for other State agencies. Currently in Alabama, the Department of Revenue has a telework policy and employees must sign a general telecommuting agreement. Although limited in scope, there is a formal telework policy in place for this agency. It was most recently revised in 2012.

Flexible work arrangements are not specifically authorized for State employees. One issue with implementing flexible work arrangements is how it would work for both FLSA-exempt and state-exempt versus non-exempt positions. There is more flexibility for exempt positions than non-exempt positions. In recent years, the State Legislature granted two extra exempt positions at each agency. This allowed agencies a little more flexibility within the agency since exempt employees can work on their own schedule and do not use or accrue leave.

If the State Legislature were to enact legislation on this issue, it could authorize each agency to implement their own policy, allowing them to craft it to meet their own specific needs. The State could also provide a general framework for other agencies. The State could promulgate a flexible work policy without legislation, but legislation might be needed to allow for it. To begin the process of implementing a flexible work arrangement policy for Alabama, the first step would be to identify possible sponsors, such as a Senator or Representative. Also, it would be important to speak with associations and groups with significant interest and build support with lobbyists to get their buy-in.

The most important aspect of implementing flexible work arrangements is investigating its feasibility on a task-by-task level. The State of Alabama has over 200

State Agencies, each with a wide range of tasks and missions. As mentioned previously, not all job classifications are well suited for one of the flexible work arrangements; however, at least one of the various flexible work arrangements may be feasible to some extent. Alternative work arrangements are not conducive to all State employment positions, yet flex-work can take on different forms. Although the structure may vary significantly, the majority of State Agencies in Alabama have an analogous agency in other states. Forty-five of the 50 states have some form of flexible work arrangement policy in place that assists individual agencies in implementing agency-specific policies. This is important in determining the feasibility of implementing flex-work for Alabama; the tasks and missions of these agencies are likely very similar to the tasks and missions of the boards, commissions, agencies, and departments in Alabama.

An administrative aspect of flexible work arrangements is how telecommuters are managed and evaluated. Employers must ensure that supervisors and managers are provided with the skills and training to effectively manage those who telework. The State of Tennessee has implemented flexible work arrangements for State government. In this policy, supervisors must complete “alternative workplace solution” training, as well as Change Management and Effective Communication courses. In addition to this training, each agency is responsible for providing guidance to supervisors and managers on advising employees that they will continue to be measured using the current performance management system. Tennessee’s policy is included as an appendix as an example of the successful implementation of flexible work and telework in State government, with specific guidance for managing telecommuters.

The Alabama State Personnel Department determine any legal ramifications that flexible work arrangement may entail. Many questions surround the American Disabilities Act, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act exists when developing flexible work arrangements for an agency. These issues are also present in the private and federal sectors, which have already resolved them. The private and federal sectors have utilized flexible work arrangements for more than two decades. However, our team spoke with State Personnel to understand the legal or policy-based concerns surrounding

implementing flexible work arrangements for the State of Alabama. The State does not currently have a policy specifically for flexible work arrangements but allows each individual agency to make decisions that best suit their mission and/or goal. However, State Personnel would offer assistance to any board, commission, agency or department that requested it during the development or implementation of flexible work arrangements.

Our team contacted the Alabama Department of Finance, Division of Risk Management regarding issues surrounding risk management and workman's compensation. Most, if not all, of the concerns have been carefully worked through during the development of the number of other federal work arrangement policies in place throughout the nation in both the private and government sectors. Risk Management is steadily working on developing a policy and a safety checklist. Different divisions at Risk Management are working on this together to obtain some telecommuting polices from other State agencies to establish guidelines and policies. However, they have not finalized any guidelines at this time.

Lastly, as the majority of state funding comes from taxpayer dollars, it is important to examine the public's point of view regarding flexible work arrangements to determine their applicability. Public perception of State employees varies greatly, and therefore it is imperative that the public is assured that flexible work arrangements are not simply public employee benefits, but mechanisms that provide the services the public relies on in a more efficient manner (Telework 360: A best practices Digest and Guide to getting telework Right in the Public Sector, 2006).

Based on discussions with the State Personnel Department and the Division of Risk Management, as well as a detailed examination of flexible work arrangements throughout the public and private sector, flexible work arrangements for Alabama State employees are applicable. Although no formal policy currently exists within the State, there is neither a policy against flexible work arrangement. The tasks and goals of individual State boards, commissions, agencies, and departments throughout Alabama closely relate to those in the private sector, throughout the federal government, and in

other states throughout the nation, which already utilize flexible work arrangements widely.

## Recommendations

Throughout this whitepaper, flexible work arrangements, their benefits, and their applicability to the State of Alabama have been discussed in detail. It is evident that flexible work arrangements offer a number of benefits for both employers and employees, and these benefits can extend to Alabama if the State implemented a policy. Based on the research provided in this report, flexible work arrangements are an efficient mechanism to increase employee productivity, retention, morale, etc.

The CPM team recommends that individual state agencies begin to implement flexible work arrangements. The team has three recommendations to facilitate the implementation of flexible work arrangements:

1. We recommend a Statewide memorandum to provide guidance to individual boards, commissions, agencies, and departments who desire to implement flexible work arrangements in their own agencies.
2. We recommend that State agencies draft department-specific flexible work arrangement policies that meet their own unique needs.
3. We recommend that management examine their employees' specific tasks and roles to determine which positions are best suited for flexible work and determine their best practices.

## Conclusion

Alabama citizens expect a quality workforce to provide quality services. Yet, it is anticipated that one-fifth of Alabama's workforce will leave in the next few years. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that nearly half of the country's workforce will be Millennials by 2020. It is important to address the changing demographics so that the State can compete with the private and federal industries and continue to provide the best services to the citizens of Alabama. The recommendations provided are aimed at

assisting the State of Alabama in attracting a quality workforce and helping State employees in achieving balance in their lives.

Flexible work arrangements are already in use in other southeastern states, as well as the federal government and private industry. Research shows that the private sector and federal government are already addressing the issues relating to a changing workforce. Alabama has an opportunity to make real changes in the way it attracts skilled individuals. Workplace flexibility has the potential to provide employees with the ability to succeed at achieving a work-life balance, as well as fulfilling personal needs and family obligations. By updating the workplace and implementing flexible work policies, Alabama can increase retention, help its employees achieve a better work-life balance, and make state employment more attractive and competitive.

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# POLICY

<b>Approved by:</b> Rebecca R. Hunter, Commissioner	<b>Policy Number:</b> 14-001 (rev. 8/17)
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Supersedes:</b> 14-001
<b>Application:</b> Executive Branch Agencies, Executive Branch Employees, Human Resource Officers	<b>Effective Date:</b> September 20, 2016
<b>Authority:</b> T.C.A. § 4-3-1703; T.C.A. § 8-30-104	<b>Rule:</b> 1120-02

**Subject:**

## ALTERNATIVE WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS

The purpose of this policy is to outline the various types of Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS) arrangements as well as the requirements for each arrangement. AWS arrangements utilize mobile technologies, flexible work schedules, and multi-user workstations to maximize efficiency of work processes while reducing costs associated with office space. This policy is designed to provide the structure needed for effective implementation and operation of mobility. Agencies are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of this policy. This policy affirmatively rescinds and replaces Department of Human Resources Policy 14-001 (Telework). It should be noted that all employees will not be eligible for participation in AWS and many employees will continue to report to their regularly assigned physical building. This Policy addresses three (3) specific AWS arrangements:

1. Work from Home
2. Mobile Work
3. Free Address

### **Work from Home**

This AWS arrangement provides employees the opportunity to work at a place other than his or her regularly assigned office location, such as the employee's residence or an alternate location approved by the employee's supervisor/manager. An employee using this arrangement will work from his or her residence, or other approved alternate location, a minimum of three (3) days per week or upon a schedule mutually agreed upon by the supervisor and the employee. If a mutually agreed schedule cannot be reached, the supervisor will have the final decision. If a business need arises, an employee may be required to report to the office, even if scheduled to work from his or her residence or other approved

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location. On the days the employee is not scheduled to work from home, the employee will report to his or her regularly assigned office location. For employees utilizing this arrangement, their residence (or other approved alternate location) will be their official designated reporting station for the days he or she works out of the office. The employee's official work station will remain as designated by the agency, as employees may be required to report to this office location as requested by management for meetings, etc. Additional information about this arrangement can be found in Appendix A.

### **Mobile Work**

This AWS arrangement provides flexibility of schedules for employees whose responsibilities require them to be away from the office for much or all of the regular workday due to community interaction. Mobile workers will not be assigned a permanent office, but will instead utilize the Free Address option when reporting to the regularly assigned office location. The employee's official work station will remain as designated by the agency. Additional information about this option can be found in Appendix A.

### **Free Address**

This AWS arrangement may be suitable for an employee whose primary place to conduct State business is in a regularly assigned building, but who frequently collaborates with different groups and/or engages in a variety of different projects. This arrangement is also suitable for Mobile Work and Work from Home employees when they are physically present in the office. This option includes an arrangement whereby employees utilize unassigned, non-permanent workstations on an as needed basis. Agencies may require employees to reserve the workspace in advance, or the workspaces may be used on a first-come, first-serve basis. Additional information about this arrangement can be found in Appendix B.

### **Factors to consider when designating a position as suitable for an AWS arrangement**

Agencies shall consider AWS for all possible job classifications which would lead to efficiencies and effectiveness in daily operations. However, not all job classifications may be appropriate for AWS arrangements. Each participating agency shall identify job classifications eligible for AWS and should consider the following factors when determining which positions may be eligible for AWS arrangements:

1. Nature of the work performed by positions considered for AWS arrangements;
2. Efficiency of work processes;
3. Impact on ability to provide quality customer service;
4. Utilization of office space;
5. Utilization of technology and environmental impact;
6. Effectiveness of existing project teams;
7. Impact on agency travel expenses; and
8. Impact on employee quality of life.

When determining whether to implement AWS arrangements, agencies should ensure that the arrangement does not violate any state or federal laws not contemplated in this Policy.

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### **Eligibility of employees for an AWS arrangement**

All employees in positions designated by the agency as eligible shall be qualified to participate in AWS, and all eligible employees are authorized to participate to the fullest extent possible without diminished individual or organizational performance.

An employee may not be eligible to participate in AWS (*pursuant to agency discretion*) if:

1. He/she is subject to official discipline for performance or conduct, including suspension, demotion, or recommendation for termination;
2. He/she has documented violation of the State's Code of Conduct;
3. He/she has demonstrated diminished individual or organizational performance;
4. He/she has violated the terms of the AWS agreement;
5. His/her position involves the direct handling of secure material (daily or on a frequent basis) which the agency determines is inappropriate for AWS. This may include materials for which the agency maintains a written policy restricting access or use of the material or for which appropriate mitigating IT security measures do not exist; or
6. His/her position requires daily, or on a defined consistent basis, onsite work activities that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternative worksite.

### **Supervisor's responsibilities when utilizing an AWS arrangement**

Supervisors of employees utilizing AWS arrangements have certain responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Setting forth appropriate measures to protect confidential information;
2. Ensuring that customer service is not adversely affected by the AWS;
3. Undertaking the necessary risk assessments of the office design and working practices;
4. Clearly defining and setting forth the AWS employee's responsibilities;
5. Maintaining effective communication with AWS employees;
6. Informing employees of reservation system requirements for Free Address space (agency discretion);
7. Ensuring there is not a hardship or burden placed on other employees (additional work, etc.);
8. Maintaining responsibility and accountability for treating all AWS and non-AWS employees similarly in acts involving managerial discretion, including but not limited to: distribution of assignments among employees in the work unit, use of appropriate tracking and communication tools, performance management, both informal and formal feedback, performance coaching, learning and development, reassignment, promotions, retention, and discipline;
9. Providing advance notice, if practicable, to AWS employees regarding requests to report to the regularly assigned office location (notice is not required and does not absolve an employee's responsibility to be physically present upon request); and
10. Completing AWS training for supervisors and annually signing an employee's AWS acknowledgement form.

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## **Employee's responsibilities when utilizing an AWS arrangement**

Employees utilizing an AWS arrangement have certain responsibilities depending on which arrangement is utilized, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Maintaining established performance standards;
2. Ensuring that the alternative worksite is appropriate and provides the work environment, connectivity, technology, resource access, and security authority consistent with the work in which the employee is engaged;
3. Procuring and providing internet services appropriate to the work effort at their own expense;
4. Maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the supervisor, work team, and agency (communication and collaboration);
5. Reporting to the regularly assigned office location, pursuant to agency needs, for all or part of the workday during which they would otherwise be engaged in an AWS arrangement;
6. Documenting AWS work time in accordance with established DOHR and agency time and attendance policies;
7. Complying with DOHR and agency rules and practices pertaining to requesting and obtaining approval for leave, overtime, or any change to the employee's work schedule;
8. Maintaining effective communication with supervisors and other employees with whom communication is essential for successfully implementing the arrangement;
9. Being considerate of employees sharing workspace, and maintaining a clean workspace at all times;
10. Properly maintaining and protecting confidential information, and following data security procedures at all times;
11. Using a shared workspace only so long as needed;
12. Maintaining a high level of customer service at all times; and
13. Completing AWS training for employees and annually signing an AWS acknowledgement form.

Participation in an AWS arrangement of Work from Home is based on an employee's job responsibilities as determined by the agency. If an employee's productivity decreases or other performance/conduct issues arise, the supervisor should treat the AWS employee no differently than an employee working in the regularly assigned office location. This means that coaching and counseling should take place and, if necessary, the supervisor has the authority to issue disciplinary action as appropriate.

Employees who participate in an AWS arrangement are considered to be in an official duty status during the employee's designated work schedule. Work from Home employees are prohibited from providing dependent or adult care while working from home. Failure to adhere to applicable state and federal laws and State and agency rules and policies may result in discipline, up to and including dismissal.

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Commute time from home to work and from work to home are not considered work hours and are not compensable under 5 C.F.R. § 551.422 and 5 C.F.R. § 550.112 (j)(2). An employee may be compensated for commute time if he or she is officially directed to perform work while commuting. However, an employee cannot be compensated for travel to and from his/her official duty station as a normal incident of employment.

Supervisors retain the authority to disapprove an employee's selection of a particular alternative worksite arrangement if, in the supervisor's opinion, the worksite is not business appropriate and/or fails to provide a working environment compliant with this Policy.

### **Training**

Employees who utilize an AWS arrangement shall complete AWS training (online) for employees prior to the effective date of the AWS arrangement. Supervisors who have at least one (1) employee utilizing an AWS arrangement shall attend or complete the AWS training for supervisors (online), as well as, the Change Management and Effective Communication (face-to-face) courses prior to the effective date of the AWS arrangement. The Agency AWS Coordinator and/or Agency Learning and Development Coordinator is responsible for tracking this information and ensuring that the completion of these courses is entered into Edison ELM in a timely manner.

### **Edison AWS Acknowledgment e-Form**

All employees, supervisors and AWS coordinators will utilize the Edison AWS e-Form process when beginning an AWS arrangement. Employees will initiate the AWS Acknowledgment e-Form, supervisors will approve and those in the agency with the Agency HR Administrator role can issue the final approval these forms. Additionally, agency personnel designated as AWS Coordinators will have the ability to view these forms within their agency.

For any technical questions, please notify the Edison Help Desk at 1-866-376-1014 or 615-741-4357.

### **Agency Guidelines**

Each agency participating in AWS shall create guidelines for administration of the AWS program within the agency. The guidelines should be submitted to the Department of Human Resources for review and approval before being distributed to agency employees. The guidelines should include, but not be limited to, the following information:

1. Job classifications that are eligible for AWS arrangements, including criteria for identification;
2. Process of how employees will be notified of their eligibility to participate in AWS;
3. Reference to this Policy and appendices for clarification on definitions and other important information;
4. Guidance to supervisors/managers on advising employees that they will continue to be measured using the current performance management system;

## Alternative Workplace Solutions

5. Clear communication that employees who participate in an AWS arrangements will be eligible for the same opportunities as employees not utilizing an AWS arrangement, including: assignments, development opportunities, promotions, and awards/recognition);
6. Details regarding the administration of available AWS arrangements within their respective agency;
7. AWS Acknowledgment e-Form link in Edison, along with instructions on completing the e-Form;
8. Information on procedure for Free Address reservation system (if applicable);
9. AWS training requirements;
10. Name and contact information of AWS Agency Coordinator (mentioned below);
11. Information on procedure to request modification of AWS arrangement; and
12. Clear desk protocol.

### **AWS Agency Coordinator**

Appointing authorities shall designate an AWS Agency Coordinator who will be responsible for the following:

1. Maintaining and updating the Edison AWS Acknowledgment e-Form as directed;
2. Serving as primary point of contact for employees who have questions/concerns about AWS arrangements;
3. Developing or assisting with agency guideline development/implementation, as well as development of Edison AWS Acknowledgment e-Form;
4. Serving as an advisor for agency leadership regarding AWS;
5. Serving as a resource for supervisors with AWS issues or concerns; and
6. Assisting with compilation of metrics to ascertain effectiveness of AWS arrangements.

### **Acceptable Use Policy and Information Technology**

AWS employees utilizing State-owned hardware, software, internet, email, and other forms of State-owned communication media shall do so in a manner consistent with the State's Acceptable Use Policy, Code of Conduct, and other State laws, rules, and policies.

Employees have a responsibility to safeguard government property and are responsible for the care, security, and effective utilization of such property, including computers, tablets, phones, and related equipment used to perform official duties. Employees may be financially responsible for the property if it is lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed as a result of negligence, improper or willful actions.

AWS employees may use non-State issued property, but must enable an approved firewall, virus scan, and security patch. Information on the most current programs and other requirements are included in the STS guidelines, included as Appendix C.

### **Clear-Desk Protocols/ Maintaining Sanitary Shared Workspace**

Agencies are encouraged to implement clear-desk protocols when employees have workspace-sharing arrangements. Such protocols typically require employees to clear the workspace of all work and

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personal items after use. Such practices help provide an accommodating workspace for all users, and reduce the threat of confidentiality and data security breaches.

Agencies should take measures to maintain a sanitary workspace, including providing anti-bacterial wipes and hand sanitizer to be used on shared telephones and other such equipment with multiple users. Disinfecting the area on a regular basis will reduce the spread of contagions and promote the overall health of the workforce.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Department of Human Resources' Office of the General Counsel or the Agency AWS Coordinator.