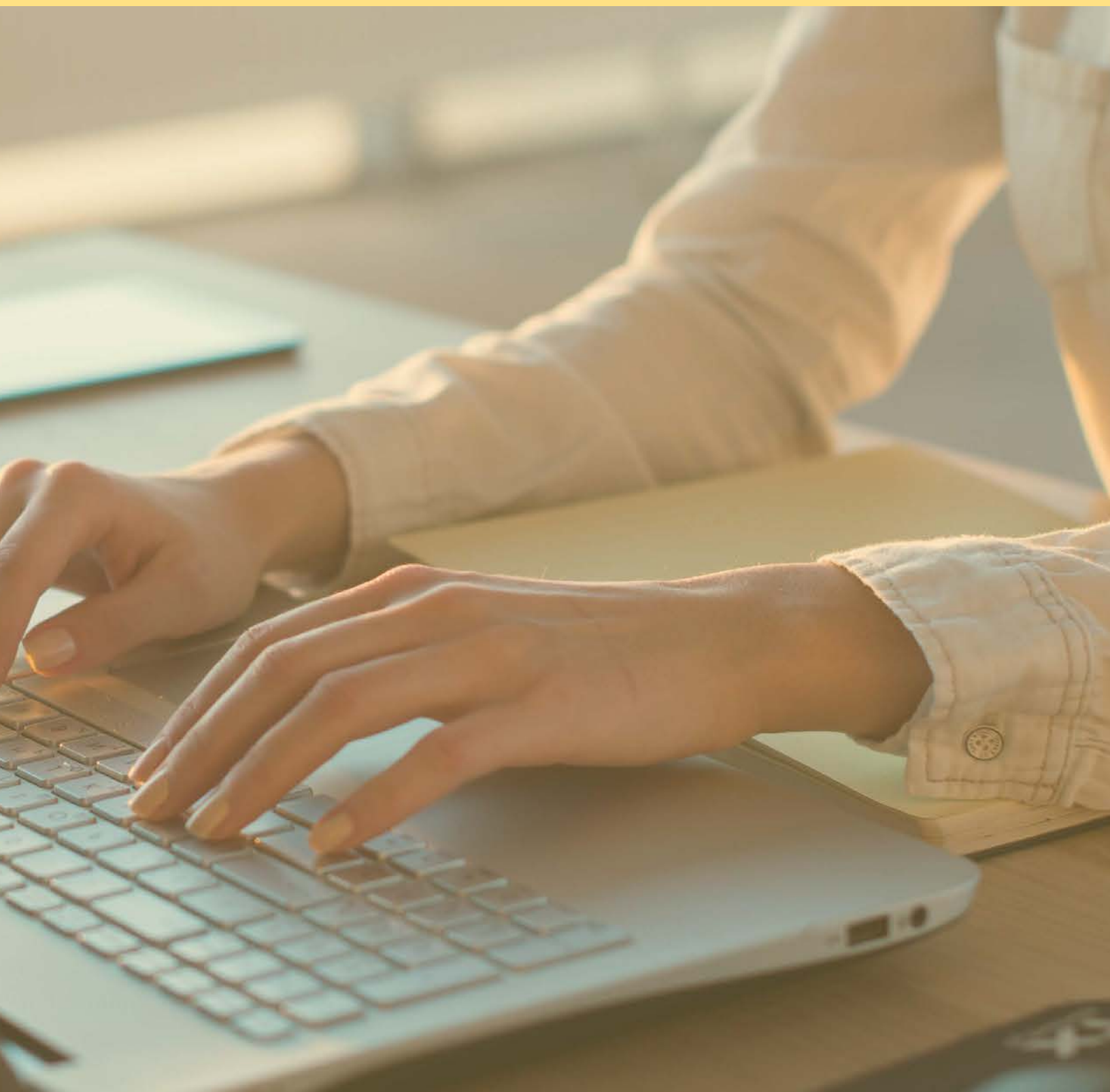# MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS GUIDE TO HYBRID WORK

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Managers and Supervisors Guide to Hybrid Work

This guide will help Commonwealth managers and supervisors successfully and effectively manage their teleworking teams.

Hybrid Work at the Commonwealth

Telework Policy

The [Executive Department Telework Policy](#) has been updated as of August 9, 2021. Additionally, there is a [Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)](#) that adds additional details that need to be followed with bargaining unit staff. Managers and Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the Policy and the MOA prior to meeting with their staff. Updates to the Policy include the following:

- The prohibition on providing dependent care while teleworking has been reinstated. In certain situations, employees and their managers/supervisors may establish and document a Telework Temporary Flexible Work Program (TTFWP).
- Employees must be able to travel to their officially designated work location with as little notice as the same workday. Employees cannot rely on air transportation to meet this requirement.
- On an approved telework workday, Employees who need to travel for a work related assignment shall have their mileage reimbursement determined from their home or their approved alternative work location, whichever is shorter. However, Employees shall not be reimbursed for commuting between their home/alternative work location and their regularly assigned office.

- Workstations may be unassigned and employees will be provided a a reservation system to reserve space.

Secretariats/agencies must distribute the new Telework Policy and Acknowledgment Form to all teleworking employees to review prior to meeting with their supervisor/manager.

Acknowledgement Form

All teleworking employees and their supervisors must sign an [Acknowledgement Form](#) which:

- Identifies the employee's alternative work location which must be approved by the manager or supervisor.
- States the core business hours of the agency when the employee must be available.
- Defines the employee's schedule - when they will work in the office and when they will work from the alternative work location.
- Lists the equipment inventory which identifies equipment and software that has been provided to the employees by the agency.
- Supervisors/managers and employees should update or fill out a new form when work arrangements change. Forms should be reviewed and renewed at least annually.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

- Ensure the teleworking employee receives a copy of the [Telework Policy](#) and the [Acknowledgement Form](#) prior to meeting with the employee.
- Review the Telework Policy and Acknowledgement Form with your employees who telework.
- Determine your employee's schedule – when will they work in the office and when will they work from an alternate work location.
- Identify the alternative work location(s) – in many cases this will be the employee's home.
- Fill out and sign the Acknowledgement Form with your employees who telework.
- Send the Acknowledgement Form to HR for record keeping.
- Talk with your employee about how they will reserve workspace for the days they work in the office.
- Revisit the form annually, or whenever the employee's schedule changes.

IT Support

- Resources for IT support including VPN access, requesting help with a computer problem and how to remain secure while working from home can be found on the [Hybrid work webpage](#).

Value of Working in the Office

As we move forward with hybrid work and a reduced office footprint, it is important to consider which tasks and activities are more effective in person than via telework. This requires a new approach to thinking about how we manage employees and how to maximize time in the office. Industry experts have found that activities that require in-depth collaboration tend to benefit from meeting in person. In addition, there are valuable opportunities for side conversations before and after meetings that can be helpful in resolving issues or brainstorming new ideas. These spontaneous interactions may be difficult to recreate while teleworking.

These interactions can also strengthen working relationships and employees' sense of belonging. Employees who feel connected to the Agency are more likely to feel respected and engaged in the work they perform. Additionally, this access to social interactions helps employees feel more connected and less isolated.

Here are some examples of activities that could benefit from taking place in the office:

- **Onboarding**: It will be important for new employees to spend some time in the office as they go through the onboarding process. It's a great opportunity for them to meet peers, supervisors, and managers, as well as to get a firsthand understanding of the Agency and its culture.
- **Training**: There are certain in-depth, interactive group training activities that are best implemented for all employees together in person, as it facilitates opportunities to engage with and learn from each other.
- **Brainstorming and group work**: Activities that involve brainstorming or collaborative group work tend to be more successful in person. Managers should think about the specific function of their teams and determine which activities would benefit from being accomplished in the office.
- **Supervisor-employee relationship building**: Office time can be used for individual meetings to develop the supervisor-employee relationship and set clear expectations for when the employee is working remotely. This model appreciates that one size does not fit all. In-office time for employees will vary significantly depending on the function and success of the unit.
- **Team building**: Time spent in the office can also be used to develop positive team dynamics, team morale, overall engagement, setting group expectations and informally communicating and establishing workplace culture. Team building can include not only

formal team meetings, but also celebrations of employee and team accomplishments, promotions, birthdays and holidays.

- **Access to specific equipment or resources**: Some resources or tools might only be available on site. Employees should continue to work in the office when they need to use these tools.

Hybrid Work Best Practices

Setting clear expectations

Clarify expectations

Be sure to lay out clear expectations around job performance and responsiveness.

Be specific

Employees should fully understand what is expected of them when they telework. Outline communication and system tools and expectations (such as open calendars with banner notices including telephone numbers) to deliver on work and projects in the same way that you require when the employee is onsite.

Agree on expectations

Ask the employee to reflect what they understand as telework expectations to ensure your agreement and alignment.

Plan ahead

Plan Ahead

There are several issues—workspace, work hours, expected productivity, IT support, among others—that need to be decided and discussed with teleworkers to ensure a positive start to a telework program or arrangement. Work with your IT group to ensure the provided technology is effective, efficient, and operates consistently. Ensure that teleworkers have email and phone numbers to contact IT in case of questions or emergencies.

Designate "office" space

Encourage teleworkers to create a quiet place to get their work done. While it need not be an elaborate set-up, a dedicated area helps teleworkers

concentrate on their work, minimize distractions, and ensure that phone calls and video conferences are effective.

Establish communication guidelines
Set up guidelines around responsiveness. For example, you may establish the expectation that emails be responded to before the end of the workday, and any missed calls should be returned within two hours. These guidelines should be clearly communicated and should be compatible with the operational needs of the agency and the work that employees are expected to complete.

Reinforce expectations around work hours

As part of the telework arrangement, be clear about when teleworkers are expected to be completing tasks and when they should be responsive to incoming calls or emails.

Get IT support
Teleworkers are dependent on fast, reliable, consistent connections. Work with your IT group to ensure the provided technology is effective, efficient, and operates consistently. Ensure that teleworkers have email and phone numbers to contact IT in case of questions or emergencies. More information about IT support can be found on the [Hybrid work webpage](#).

Communicate regularly

Communicate Regularly

Effective teleworker management requires strong communication and collaboration practices. Set guidelines regarding response times, shared calendars and documents, and preferred communication methods for various situations.

Establish a virtual presence
Transparent communication tools and team norms like shared calendars can be useful. One tip is to require that teleworkers' calendars indicate they are working from home and show a phone number where they can be reached.

Engage your teleworkers daily
Regular interaction and engagement provide opportunities for managers to clarify expectations about the work to be done, helping to ensure that the time working away from the office is productive.

Be available to teleworkers

You don't want to micromanage teleworkers, but you do want to be available and supportive, track progress, and keep them in the loop. The same goes for employees working in the office—make sure they are available to collaborate and communicate with teleworkers as needed.

Use reliable technology tools

If teleworkers can't access files or struggle to make themselves heard on a conference call, the telework arrangement will hinder the employee's productivity. Make sure teleworkers have access to reliable tools to make collaboration possible.

Foster effective teamwork

Foster effective teamwork

If more than one employee is working remotely, treat telework as a team activity rather than an individual one. Develop a team schedule and a teleworking system that is consistent with the needs of your agency.

Help teleworkers avoid multi-tasking

With your teleworkers, figure out ways to avoid multi-tasking. Video conferences instead of phone conferences work well. Encourage people to stay in working mode and off email back-and-forth as much as is feasible while still ensuring agency operational goals are met.

Establish strong relationships with teleworkers

Check in as needed using collaboration tools, shared docs and spreadsheets, phone calls, chat and video conference calls which are available through Microsoft Teams. Invest in your professional relationship by showing you are supportive of their success and want to help them achieve their goals rather than just check on their progress and numbers.

Build effective project management practices

Organization is critical for teams that mix teleworkers and office workers. If available, it's a good idea to use cloud-based tools so that everyone can access the files and information they need at any time. These tools also offer efficient ways to communicate, organize projects across teams and set deadline reminders

Reflect and adjust

Reflect and adjust

Over time, you are likely to face challenges related to managing teleworkers. It is important to build in time to have open and honest discussions with employees regarding telework and work performance. Solution-oriented discussions can help ensure the sustained success of telework programs and arrangements.

Establish regular check-ins

Set aside time on a regular cadence (e.g. monthly, quarterly) to discuss telework. Discuss what is working well with the current arrangement and what could be improved. Brainstorm changes to address any issues and follow up at the next check-in to see if those changes have led to improvement.

Learn more

Additional information on hybrid work at the Commonwealth.

Additional resources for training

Check out the available trainings related to telework in MassAchieve.

Back to Hybrid Work Home Page for Commonwealth Employees

Hybrid Work Home Page