

# ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

## *Policies and Procedures*

**Title:** The REE Telework Program

**Number:** 402.5

**Date:** November 13, 2008

**Originating Office:** Human Resources Division, AFM/ARS

**This Replaces:** All previous telework policies within the REE Mission Area  
(excluding the current NASS Telework Program - Operational Manual)

**Distribution:** All REE Employees

This policy contains the REE policy and procedures for establishing telework agreements, including the responsibilities of supervisors and/or approving officials. This program formerly excluded Help Desk activities from participating. Advancements in technology now allow these positions to telework under both types of agreements.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Program Description.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Types of Telework Agreements.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Medical Agreements.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Eligibility.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Exclusions.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Procedures.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Approving Officials.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Prohibitions.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Records Maintenance.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Impact on Position Descriptions, Performance Standards, Work Schedules, and Other Situations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Telework Sites and Requirements.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Information Technology Security.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Worker's Compensation.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Termination of Telework Agreements.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Summary of Responsibilities.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Definitions.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Resources.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Exhibits</b>	
<b>Exhibit 1.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Exhibit 2.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Exhibit 3.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Exhibit 4.....</b>	<b>22</b>

# 1. Introduction

Telework is consistent with sound business practices and has been shown to increase productivity, promote a spirit of innovation, and boost employee morale. The telework program will make the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) agencies more competitive in the market for highly qualified employees by providing them greater flexibility to manage their work responsibilities and personal pursuits while reducing the stress of commuting. The REE agencies seek to be responsible corporate citizens by recognizing telework as one of a number of initiatives employers may take to reduce the demand on the region's transportation network, traffic congestion and air pollution.

This Policy and Procedures (P&P) follows the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) guidance to make a telework option available to all employees who meet certain eligibility criteria.

## 2. Program Description

The telework program allows employees who meet certain eligibility criteria, as outlined in this P&P, the opportunity to perform their official duties at an alternative worksite. This location can be the employee's home, a telecenter, or a satellite office that would typically be closer to the employee's home. Research has shown that telework increases productivity, more timely completion of work, and better quality work as reported by employees, supervisors, and customers. Greater productivity occurs because of fewer interruptions and greater ability to concentrate. The program also enhances quality of life and employee morale by reducing commute time, thereby allowing more time for family, civic, and social commitments. In conjunction with these benefits, and many others, the telework program creates job opportunities for people with disabilities and accommodates employees who have temporary or continuing health problems.

It is the REE policy to allow employees to participate in the telework program when advantageous to the agency. The telework program is a voluntary program and should not be a burden on staff remaining at the official duty station. **Participation in the telework program is not an entitlement to employees.** Since this is a management option, there is no automatic right of the employee to continue a telework arrangement if there is a change in supervision.

Established telework agreements must be administered according to the procedures detailed in this P&P.

## 3. Types of Telework Agreements

- **Core** – Telework that occurs on a *routine, regular, and recurring basis* away from an employee's official duty station not to exceed 2 days per week for full-time employees and 1 day per week for part-time employees. Management may, but is not required to, permit an employee to reschedule his/her telework day. Employees who are allowed to reschedule their telework day must provide 8 hours (i.e., 1 work day) notice to their immediate supervisor.

**Note:** CSREES employees may not exceed 1 day per week at the alternative worksite.

- **Situational** – Telework that occurs on an *occasional, non-routine basis* away from the employee's official duty station not to exceed 2 days per week for full-time employees and 1 day per week for part-time employees. Employees on situational agreements must provide their immediate supervisor advance notice of 2 work days before teleworking.

For situational agreements, Approving Officials may approve a deviation from the maximum number of days allowed not-to-exceed 4 days per week for full-time employees and 2 days per week for part-time employees on *rare occasions* when the situation warrants.

## 4. Medical Agreements

Eligible employees who telework under a core or situational agreement for medical reasons are exempt from the 1 or 2 day per week maximum at the alternative worksite, if appropriate medical documentation is submitted. The medical documentation should include a statement from the attending physician as to the number of hours each day or week the employee can work. Employees may not work more than the limited number of hours indicated by the attending physician, if applicable. Any hours that exceed the limit must be entered on the time and attendance record as sick leave, annual leave, compensatory time, leave without pay, and/or credit time when approved by the immediate supervisor.

Approval of a telework agreement under these conditions should be made judiciously and on a case-by-case basis. Consultation with the REE Work/Life Program Manager, the Employee Relations Branch, and in some cases, USDA's Medical Officer, may be advisable.

Telework agreements for medical reasons are not generally intended to be in effect on a permanent basis, but as a reasonable accommodation for a given period of time. In some cases, employees may be advised to apply for disability retirement when a telework arrangement is no longer advantageous to the agency.

Recipients of the Leave Transfer Program should notify the Pay and Leave Staff, (301) 504-1443, of any hours worked in the pay period to avoid erroneous credit of transferred leave.

## 5. Eligibility

All REE employees are eligible to participate in the telework program under a core agreement **and/or** a situational agreement subject to **all** of the following:

- The employee must be with their agency for the length of time listed below:
  - ARS** – 6 months for all agreements, excluding medical
  - CSREES** – 1 year for core agreements; no waiting period for situational agreements and agreements for a medical reason
  - ERS** – 1 year for all agreements
  - NASS** – 1 year for core agreements; no waiting period for situational agreements and agreements for a medical reason
- The arrangement must be in the best interest of the agency.
- The employee must have duties in his/her current position which lend themselves to a telework arrangement.
- The employee must meet certain teleworker characteristics.

(i.e., trustworthy, organized, works well independently, reliable, time management skills, etc.)

- An approved agreement must be in place prior to teleworking.

## 6. Exclusions

Some occupational groups in REE are excluded from “core” telework agreements. When most of the work being performed can only be performed at the official duty station, a “situational” agreement may be the only option. The following positions within each of the specified REE agencies are excluded from teleworking under a “core” agreement.

**ARS** – SES, Wage Grade, most support scientists and technicians, positions that require access to sensitive and confidential records, and other positions as determined by the approving official.

**CSREES** – SES, GS supervisors, and employees in clerical, technical, and administrative support/assistant positions in the following GS occupational series--303, 318, 326, 335, 344, 503, 561 and other positions as determined by the approving official.

**ERS** – All ERS employees are excluded under “core” agreements.

**NASS** – All supervisors, managers, and secretaries are excluded under “core” agreements.

Employees should consult their immediate supervisor or their designated telework record keeper to determine whether they are eligible under a “core” agreement if none of the above apply. For a listing of REE Telework Record Keepers, please visit [www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife).

## 7. Procedures

Supervisors and employees must receive an orientation regarding the program prior to executing an agreement. Minimum orientation consists of reading and understanding the contents of this P&P and reviewing information regarding telework identified in section 18, “Resources” of this P&P. The OPM Telework Video (October 2003) is available from the headquarters REE Telework Record Keepers and/or the SMART Center located in the George Washington Carver Center, Beltsville, Maryland. The SMART Center may be reached on 301-504-1428. For a listing of REE Telework Record Keepers, please visit [www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife).

Prior to implementation in an entire organizational unit or location, management is strongly encouraged to pilot test the telework program. For managers who opt not to pilot test the program or the program was piloted prior to the manager joining the staff, it is required that the responsibilities outlined in section 16, “Summary of Responsibilities” be followed in order for the arrangement to be successful. The supervisor and teleworker must:

- Meet to discuss the duties to be performed, the type of agreement, the tour of duty while teleworking, equipment/resources needed, etc.

- Attend telework training conducted by HRD, when available. Contact the REE Work/Life Program Manager or refer to Section 18, “Resources” for information regarding online training when formal training is unavailable.
- Complete the REE Telework Agreement (Exhibit 1) and get appropriate signatures.

Management retains the right to have an employee report, with an 8 hour (1 work day) notification, to the official duty station on days the employee would normally work at an alternative worksite. Management may, but is not required to, permit an employee to reschedule his/her telework day(s).

The supervisor is responsible for monitoring the employee’s work performance both onsite and offsite. Supervisors can measure the teleworker’s productivity by examining the projects or results of the teleworker’s effort. The supervisor may require teleworkers to submit a written list or statement of what he/she expects to accomplish on his/her telework day(s) as well as a short report of the accomplishments and activities performed.

The Union must be notified prior to implementation within the unit if bargaining unit employees are affected.

## 8. Approving Officials

The following individuals have been designated as the final approving authority for all telework agreements within each agency:

**ARS** – Area Directors, Administrator’s Staff Heads, and AFM Division Directors. The Area Director may redelegate this authority down to the Deputy Area Director or the Area Administrative Officer.

**CSREES** – Deputy Administrator or Associate Administrator (whichever is the second level supervisor)

**ERS** – Division Directors

**NASS** – Branch Chiefs, Directors, or Staff Directors

## 9. Prohibitions

Telework agreements must not exceed 1 year, or September 30 of each year, whichever comes first. At the beginning of each fiscal year, prior year expirations may be extended by the immediate supervisor via e-mail or by completing the REE Recertification Form (Exhibit 2). Extension e-mails or recertification forms must be sent to the telework record keeper. In addition, all telework agreements must be reviewed periodically and/or annually to determine if the agreement should be continued/discontinued or if changes to the agreement are needed. When modifications are necessary, a new agreement must be completed, and the telework record keeper must receive a copy.

OPM regulations specifically prohibit approving telework agreements and official duty time for child care, dependent care, or for any purpose other than official duties (e.g., to care for a sick child, spouse, or parent, and/or to await the arrival of a repair or delivery person).

Under no circumstances should supervisors allow employees to work from home unless there is an approved telework agreement on file. This provision includes employees who occasionally take work

home in the evenings and the weekends. Supervisors who have employees that often do this are advised to put them on a situational agreement. This protects the agency, the supervisor, and the employee.

## 10. Records Maintenance

Annually, REE is required to report to OPM, USDA's Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), and/or other government organizations the number of teleworkers. For this reason, it is essential that each agency designate a telework record keeper. Telework record keepers maintain copies of all telework agreements for their designated area and report to the REE Work/Life Program Manager the number of teleworkers as requested. For a listing of current REE Telework Record Keepers, please visit [www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife).

Upon approval, a copy of the approved agreement must be returned to the teleworker, the supervisor, and the designated telework record keeper. The immediate supervisor is responsible for maintaining the original copies of the agreements of all teleworkers in his/her work unit and ensuring that the designated telework record keeper receives a copy. Telework agreements should be kept on file for 1 year after the expiration date.

## 11. Impact on Position Descriptions, Performance Standards, Work Schedules, Leave, Overtime, and Emergency Closures

**Position Descriptions/Performance Standards** - There is no need to modify position descriptions or performance standards for teleworkers. The work has not changed, just the location at which the work is performed. Employees are expected to adhere to performance standards for their work regardless of the worksite. Inability to meet performance standards would be cause to terminate a telework agreement, and appropriate action should be taken to correct the employee's performance.

**Work Schedules** - Work schedules need not be modified; however, a teleworker may request to start work earlier under a telework agreement due to the time saved by not commuting. Whether the teleworker works the same work schedule when teleworking, or whether modifications are made, it must be specified in the telework agreement.

**Note:** CSREES and NASS employees are required to keep their same work schedules at their alternative worksite.

**Leave and/or Overtime** - Teleworkers must obtain prior supervisory approval to work overtime, compensatory time, credit time, and/or to use leave on their telework day(s).

**Emergency Closures/Early Dismissals** – As a general rule, teleworkers follow the same provisions as the non-teleworkers for both emergency and non-emergency closures and dismissals. A supervisor may require teleworkers to continue working when the alternative worksite is unaffected by emergencies that lead to closures and/or early dismissals from the official duty station. This requirement should be discussed in the initial meeting between the employee and the supervisor.

If the work is disrupted at the alternative worksite (i.e., loss of electricity, IT issues), the supervisor must be notified as soon as possible. After discussion with the employee, the supervisor will make the determination as to whether any work can be performed at the worksite, whether administrative leave would be appropriate, or whether the employee should proceed to the official duty station. In the latter

case, the employee may request, and the supervisor may approve, leave for the remainder of the workday.

If the official duty station is closed after the workday begins for reasons affecting only the individual location or building (for example, early dismissal due to loss of electricity or water), the supervisor may excuse the teleworker if he/she cannot perform work because employees or systems at the official duty station are unavailable.

If there is an announcement that “Federal agencies are closed” before the workday begins, teleworkers are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave if the closure falls on their telework day. Supervisors may designate certain and/or all teleworkers as “emergency” or “mission critical” employees, which would require them to work during all situations when the official duty station is closed. This requirement *must* be discussed and included in the telework agreement prior to approval.

## 12. Telework Sites and Requirements

**Residential Telework:** Employees who telework from their residence must describe his/her work space in the telework agreement and take proper security measures so that work products are kept secure from unauthorized access. The Management Unit (MU) may provide equipment (loaned) if there is excess equipment available. Government-owned equipment is to be used only for official work purposes. Management is not required to provide equipment and will not provide furniture. When necessary, management will provide e-mail access, word processing software, and/or calling cards.

The loan of equipment or software to an employee for the purpose of teleworking will be documented via form REE-1, Receipt for Loaned Property (Exhibit 4). Employees may be held financially responsible when property is lost, stolen, or damaged due to carelessness or negligence. Government-owned equipment will be serviced and maintained by the Government. Employees are responsible for servicing and maintaining their own equipment.

All loaned equipment must be returned to the official duty station at the conclusion of the period of the telework agreement or when the employee leaves his/her position or separates from the agency.

Departmental Regulation (DR), 3440-2, Control and Protection of Sensitive Security Information dated January 30, 2003, requires that all teleworkers who work with Sensitive But Unclassified/Sensitive Security Information (SBU/SSI) use Government issued equipment. If Government issued equipment is unavailable, teleworkers may not perform this type of work offsite, however, there may be other tasks in his/her job description that can be done offsite. DR 3440-2 can be downloaded at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR3440-002.pdf>

**Note:** CSREES will only provide personal computers to individuals who work with Sensitive But Unclassified/Sensitive Security Information (SBU/SSI); however the agency will not provide printers, telephones, fax machines, other equipment, office supplies, or office furniture for teleworkers.

Teleworkers must have an Internet Service Provider (ISP). The agency **will not** incur the installation cost for a second telephone line, the monthly service fee associated with a second line, the ISP, insurance, home maintenance, nor will the agency pay for increased utility costs. These costs and others such as damages to personal property while teleworking are the responsibility of all teleworkers.

**Note:** CSREES and NASS employees who wish to telework under core agreements **are required** to have a second phone line (may be a cell phone) if using a telephone modem for their internet access.

Teleworkers are responsible for ensuring the safety of the work space at home. Teleworkers and their supervisors should refer to the Safety Guidelines for the Home Work Space by OPM prior to approving the telework agreement. To view the guidelines, visit [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov) and click on “Telework Manual.”

Supervisors or a designee may conduct periodic inspections of a teleworker’s alternative worksite with at least 8 hours (i.e., 1 work day) notice. Inspections will be done during the teleworker’s normal working hours. The purpose of the inspection would be to evaluate proper maintenance of Government-owned property, the availability of employee-owned equipment needed for teleworking, and conformance with work safety standards.

**Telework at Telecenters (excludes field employees):** GSA-sponsored telecenters are fully equipped with computers, printers, phones, fax, and copy machines; therefore, the agency does not provide any equipment for teleworkers who work at a telecenter. Employees will need to coordinate with the Telecenter Director and their Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) representative to install/configure software needed by the employee. Costs associated with loading and configuration of software and for the use of the telecenter will be incurred by the individual MU. There is no requirement for a supervisor to approve an employee to work in a telecenter.

A listing of Federal telecenters, telecenter fees, and the Telework Facility Reimbursement Sheet (TFRS) can be found at [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov) and click “Telework Centers.” Please contact the REE Work/Life Program Manager on 301-504-1489 for additional information. The TFRS is updated each fiscal year (FY); therefore, a new form will need to be completed if the agreement will be extended into the next FY. A copy of the TFRS must be attached to the telework agreement when forwarded to the telework record keeper.

**Telework at Other Locations:** Although most teleworkers in REE telework from their residence or a GSA-sponsored telecenter, there are rare instances where an employee will telework from an office located at a University, or similar location. In such cases, when applicable, negotiated agreements and/or contracts including associated fees would be coordinated by the employee, their immediate supervisor, and their Approving Official.

## **13. Information Technology Security**

Teleworkers must conform to USDA software standards, including legal use of licensed software products. Under most circumstances, employees will be allowed to run a licensed copy of standard office software on their home computers or telecenter computers based on USDA Licensing Agreements.

Positions deemed portable will undergo scrutiny to determine the type of information used in the job in terms of mission criticality and sensitivity. When available, Government-owned equipment will be issued to individuals who work with SBU/SSI. SBU/SSI information **must not** be stored on personal computers or computers used in telecenters.

Teleworkers must follow USDA, DR 3300-1, Appendix I, Internet Use and DR 3140-2, Internet Security Policy. Teleworkers must complete Computer Security Awareness Training and understand their responsibilities for properly safeguarding Government information. It should be understood that

during duty hours, while performing official functions on a personal computer, there is neither expectation of, nor Right of Privacy. The performance of inappropriate activities such as viewing inappropriate Web sites, pornography, or copyright violations during work hours and while connected to USDA's networks can result in seizure of personal computers and peripherals and disciplinary action against the employee.

Teleworkers are responsible for maintaining the security of the equipment, work products, and software, whether teleworking from home or from a telecenter. This includes using passwords on computers and guarding sensitive information, either on the computer or in hard copy, from being observed by others.

Teleworkers should follow agency specific procedures for disposal of sensitive information and removing sensitive information from a computer prior to having it serviced. Additional information on security issues, procedures, and precautions can be obtained from each agency's OCIO representative.

## **14. Worker's Compensation**

Teleworkers are covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act if injured while performing their official duties at the alternative worksite. Any accident or injury occurring at the alternative worksite must be brought to the attention of the supervisor immediately.

For additional information and guidance, please contact the Worker's Compensation Staff, 301-504-1487.

## **15. Termination of the Telework Agreement**

A supervisor may terminate a telework agreement with a minimum of 2 weeks advanced notice in writing via e-mail or hardcopy, except in certain situations. Supervisors may immediately terminate telework agreements when an employee is abusing the program. All termination notices should include the effective date of the termination and the reason. The opportunity to telework is not an entitlement; therefore, an employee may not grieve the termination of a telework agreement by the supervisor. An employee, however, may terminate a telework agreement at anytime since this is a voluntary program.

The agency's designated telework record keeper must be notified of an early termination for record keeping purposes. For a listing of REE Telework Record Keepers, please visit [www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife).

## **16. Summary of Responsibilities**

### **REE Administrators**

- Provide leadership in implementing a telework program in line with the President's Management Council, the Office of Personnel Management, and the USDA Secretary's commitment to addressing work/life balancing needs of employees.

## **REE Telework Champion (AFM Deputy Administrator)**

- Promote mission area policies and practices that support and encourage teleworking among all eligible employees.

## **Approving Officials and/or Supervisors**

- Read this P&P prior to approving telework agreements.
- Participate in formal telework training or online telework training, when available.
- Establish implementing guidelines within their units.
- Meet with interested employee(s) to discuss specific telework guidelines and requirements including operational procedures, security issues, work to be performed, and funding for telecenter usage, as well as whether the employee will be deemed an “emergency” employee.
- Determine whether excess equipment is available to be loaned to employees who are working at an alternative worksite.
- Decide whether they will fund (or permit management units to fund) employee participation at a Federal telecenter.
- Make appropriate Union notification or conduct negotiations prior to implementing the telework program within the unit.
- Concur with the telework agreement and forward (including the TFRS, if applicable) to the next level **if not** the final approving official.
- Approve the telework agreement and/or the TFRS (when using a telecenter), if applicable.  
**Note:** The TFRS should be approved by the account holder at the authorized funding level.
- Send a copy of signed agreements (including the TFRS, if applicable) to the designated telework record keeper.
- Send an e-mail or a copy of the REE Recertification Form (Exhibit 2) to the designated telework record keeper.
- Notify the designated telework record keeper of an early termination of telework agreement(s).
- Discuss reasons for disapproval, if applicable.
- Review agreements periodically to determine if they should be continued, changed, or terminated. Immediately notify the designated telework record keeper of the decision.

**Note:** New supervisors should review all telework agreements on file in the unit and certify their concurrence by initialing that agreement. There is no need to send the concurrence forward for higher level approval unless a change is made to the initial agreement. If the previous supervisor did not maintain a copy of the employee’s telework agreement, the new supervisor must have the employee complete a new agreement.

## Employees

- Read this P&P prior to requesting a telework agreement.
- Meet with supervisor to discuss his/her interest and the specific task(s) that can be performed at the alternative worksite. A supervisor may request that an employee provide a brief, written summary on how the arrangement will be advantageous to the agency to support the request to telework.
- Participate in formal telework training or online telework training, when available.
- Complete and sign the telework agreement (including the TFRS, if applicable).
- Display appropriate notification at the official duty station when teleworking. This includes placing a notice at the official duty station to notify co-workers or drop-in visitors that the employee is teleworking and how he/she can be reached (i.e., sign-in boards and/or a sign on the office door/computer will suffice).
- Check voice mail often to assure internal/external customers aren't adversely affected by the telework arrangement.
- Provide emergency contact information to the immediate supervisor, or designated others, should an urgent situation arise that requires immediate attention.
- Report on work planned and accomplished at the alternative worksite if required by the immediate supervisor and/or approving official.
- Adhere to all other policies and procedures as outlined in this P&P and by the immediate supervisor and/or approving official.

## Telework Record Keepers

- Read and become familiar with this P&P.
- Review each telework agreement for compliance and completeness before forwarding to the approving official.  
**Note:** This is not required by the telework record keepers in CSREES and NASS.
- Maintain a log of teleworkers in your coverage area and keep copies of all agreements, including termination notices and recertification e-mails/forms.
- Upon request, report to the REE Work/Life Program Manager annual reporting data as required by OHRM, OPM, and others.
- Address questions regarding the program by approving officials, supervisors, and employees who are interested in executing an agreement.
- Consult with and/or direct inquiries to the REE Work/Life Program Manager when needed, for additional guidance.

## **REE Work/Life Program Manager**

- Provide guidance and clarification to all REE employees regarding the information outlined in this P&P.
- Develop and/or amend necessary information found in this P&P.
- Provide information to all REE employees regarding resources, training, and/or orientation materials regarding the program as well as conduct orientation seminars and/or formal training as requested.
- Assist approving officials and supervisors with implementation and execution of agreements within their units.
- Assist in evaluating medical documentation for substantiating medical/disability agreements and obtaining the assistance of the USDA Medical Advisor, when necessary.
- Provide additional guidance and approvals of exceptions and special temporary circumstances that do not meet the general rules outlined in this P&P.

## **17. Definitions**

**Telework** – Any work that is portable.

**Teleworking** – Performance of work at an alternative worksite with a formal telework agreement.

**Telecenter** – A building or facility equipped with cubicle-style workstations complete with computers, printers, telephones, copiers, and fax machines.

**Alternative Worksite** - Any location other than the official duty station at which an employee is designated to work while not at the official duty station. The alternative worksite will be identified in the telework agreement.

**Official Duty Station** - The “regular” Federal office where the teleworker typically reports to work. It is also the official duty station for purposes of locality-based comparability payment, special salary rates, travel allowances, and relocation expenses which are based on duty station.

## **18. Resources**

### **On-line Video**

- The REE Telework Program

Please visit <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife/flex-workplace.htm> to launch the video.

## **Booklets**

- The REE Flexible Workplace Handbook “Is it For You”
- Telework: A Management Priority (A Guide for Managers, Supervisors, and Telework Coordinators) (Download at [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov))

Contact the REE Work/Life Program Manager on 301-504-1489 to obtain copies of booklets.

## **Telework Web Sites**

- [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov)
- [www.opm.gov/employment\\_and\\_benefits/worklife](http://www.opm.gov/employment_and_benefits/worklife)
- [www.wmtc.org](http://www.wmtc.org)
- [www.teleworkexchange.gov](http://www.teleworkexchange.gov)
- [www.usda.gov/da/employ/teleworking.htm](http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/teleworking.htm)
- [www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/worklife)

## **19. Exhibits**

**EXHIBIT 1:** The REE Telework Agreement

**EXHIBIT 2:** The REE Recertification Form

**EXHIBIT 3:** Frequently Asked Questions

**EXHIBIT 4:** REE-1, Receipt for Loaned Property

/s/

David F. Love  
Director  
Human Resources Division

11/13/08

Date

REE Telework Agreement

The following is an agreement between the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Agency and the employee named below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/Series: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit/Division/Location and/or Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a supervisor? Yes  No  Work Schedule: Full-Time  Part-time

Type of agreement: Core  Situational  Is this agreement for medical reasons? Yes  No

Telework start date: \_\_\_\_\_; end date: \_\_\_\_\_.

(Note: End date must not exceed 1 year and may be no later than September 30)

Employee’s official duty station address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employee’s alternative worksite or telecenter address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** If using a telecenter, employee must complete and attach the Telework Facility Reimbursement Sheet (TFRS) to this agreement. (Please visit [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov) and click “Telework Centers” for the latest TFRS.)

For residential telework only, please provide a detailed description of the designated work area, including where the home office is located.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number that will be published to internal/external customers when calling the teleworker:

\_\_\_\_\_ (typically the work number of the official duty station)

**(If using a telecenter, provide the phone number of the telecenter)**

Telephone number of the second line (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**(This requirement is excluded for situational agreements)**

Telephone number for the immediate supervisor when urgent matters arise: \_\_\_\_\_

**(This is required for both core and situational agreements)**

Please check how you obtain your internet connection (check one):

DSL  Cable Modem  Telecenter  Telephone Modem

(if checked, must provide second line phone number above for Core Agreements)

**Note:** CSREES and NASS employees must have the same tour of duty at both the official duty station and the alternative worksite.

Employee's tour of duty at the official duty station will be:  
from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ on the following day(s):  
Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday

Employee's tour of duty at the alternative worksite will be:  
from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ on the following day(s):  
Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday  As Needed (Situational Only)

Employee has been issued the following Agency equipment:      N/A

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An REE-1 (Exhibit 4) has been completed for each item. Yes

**The teleworker agrees with the following statements:**

- I have read P&P 402.5, The REE Telework Program, and have participated in either formal or informal training.
- I have read A-4-04, NASS Telework Operations Memorandum, and have participated in either formal or informal training. **(NASS Employees Only)**
- By participating in this program, I do not relinquish any entitlement to reimbursement for authorized expenses incurred while conducting business for the government as provided for by statute and implementing regulations.
- I will complete all assigned work according to work procedures mutually agreed upon with my supervisor and according to guidelines and standards stated in my performance plan.
- I will adhere to P&P 158.1, Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act Guidelines, with respect to the safeguarding and the release of information.
- I certify that my work area at my alternative worksite is safe and free of obstructions and hazardous materials.
- I agree to perform only officially assigned duties at the alternative worksite. I understand that failure to comply with this provision may result in loss of pay, termination of the telework agreement, and/or other appropriate disciplinary action.
- My supervisor and I have discussed, and I understand (  I have been) ( I have not been) designated as a mission critical and/or emergency employee and ( will be) ( will not be) required to continue operations from my alternative worksite in the event of an early dismissal, closure, or other similar situation. **(ARS, CSREES, and ERS Employees Only)**
- I understand if the alternative worksite is unaffected by early dismissals, closures, or other similar situations at the official duty station, I am expected to continue operations. If work cannot proceed at the alternative worksite, I will either report to the official duty station or request leave for the remaining work hours. **(NASS Employees Only)**





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. Does an employee have a right to telework?**

No. Management decides whether an employee can work offsite.

**2. Who will determine which employee and/or position will be appropriate for telework?**

The immediate supervisor determines whether a position is suitable for telework and whether the employee in that position is an appropriate candidate for telework based on specific eligibility criteria and the needs of the agency.

**3. What qualifications will the employee need?**

At minimum, the employee must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 5, "Eligibility" of this P&P. In addition, the employee must be organized, disciplined, a self-starter, and reliable. He/she must have the ability to establish priorities, manage time well, and have a proven track record of personal motivation reflected in past performance ratings.

**4. Will work suffer without direct onsite supervision?**

Research has shown that employees working away from the official duty station have fewer interruptions and distractions and have a strong incentive to demonstrate the value of teleworking. As a result, they are more productive.

**5. What impact on the office would an employee create when working offsite?**

The telework program must never put a burden on the staff remaining in the office. Job requirements must take precedence over worksite privileges. A supervisor may require an employee to work at the office on a scheduled offsite day if the need arises.

**6. What equipment will the employee need at the alternative worksite and who will provide it, pay for it, and maintain it?**

REE will not incur any additional expenses for employees to participate in the telework program, with the exception of calling cards for those employees who communicate with clients outside of their local calling area. Equipment requirements must be addressed in the initial meeting with the employee and his/her immediate supervisor. Occasionally, excess, Government-owned property may be available for employees to borrow. When such property is issued, it is the employee's responsibility to return the property to the official duty station for repair, if needed.

**7. Are there limitations to the employee's tour of duty at the alternative worksite?**

ARS and ERS employees should speak with their immediate supervisors regarding tour of duty limitations/options at the alternative worksite. NASS and CSREES employees are required to work the same tour of duty at the alternative worksite as their official duty station.

**8. How are telephone calls handled?**

External/internal customers and non-teleworkers should not be adversely affected by teleworkers. Therefore, it is recommended that the voice mail greeting be the same as it would be if the teleworker was working at the official duty station. Messages should be checked frequently and an alternate number for immediate assistance must be provided.

**Note:** The immediate supervisor, and designated others must be able to reach the teleworker at all times.

**9. What are the maximum number of teleworkers allowed to telework on any given day?**

There are no agency requirements on the number of employees who must be at the official duty station on any given workday. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining adequate coverage to ensure that customer service is provided.

**10. What happens if there are systems problems (i.e., if the LAN were down more than a few minutes?)**

Teleworkers should always have more than enough work on hand which they can perform if the LAN or other systems are unavailable. If the problem persists, the employee must contact their immediate supervisor. The employee may need to come to the official duty station or request leave.

**11. How is the scheduling of meetings handled for teleworkers?**

Unless the teleworkers presence is needed, a supervisor may continue to schedule meetings as usual and connect the teleworker through teleconference. When attendance by the teleworker is required, the supervisor may request that the teleworker come into the official duty station. Mileage may not be claimed for these trips, and the supervisor may, but is not required to allow teleworkers to reschedule their normal telework day.

**12. How can the supervisor monitor work performance when the employee is at the alternative worksite?**

Supervisors can measure employee performance by requiring a work plan for each telework day, reviewing the employee's work, requiring the use of work logs, project schedules, regular status reports, and/or team reviews.

**13. Can an employee use the Telework Program to help with child care or other dependent care needs?**

As outlined in Section 9, "Prohibitions" employees must not, under any circumstances, care for children or other dependents while in duty status at their alternative worksite. Teleworking can, however, provide valuable assistance with dependent care since less time will be spent commuting.

**14. Is the maximum number of days per week for teleworkers based on hours or actual days?**

It is based on actual days; **not** hours. For example: A teleworker who works a regular 8 hour per day schedule may telework a maximum of 2 days per week, **not** 16 hours. The teleworkers **could not** telework 4 days per week; 4 hours each.

**Note:** Teleworkers who telework for medical reasons are excluded from this provision. Medical documentation, in conjunction with supervisory approval, determines the maximum number of days/hours they are allowed to work.