



SARPY COUNTY REMOTE WORK PROGRAM POLICY

I. Purpose

A Remote Work Program (“Remote Work”) is an arrangement that allows eligible Sarpy County employees to work in a designated area outside the office while still being accountable for their work. Remote Work is a cooperative arrangement between employees, their supervisors, and employing departments.

II. Policy

Remote Work is a privilege, not a right. County employees who work remotely must have an approved remote work agreement with their supervisor under this policy. A department may have additional remote work requirements, guidelines, or procedures, provided they are consistent with this program.

Remote work does not change the duties, obligations, responsibilities, or terms and conditions of County employment. Employees who work remotely must comply with all County rules, policies, practices, and instructions.

The employee’s compensation, benefits, work status and work responsibilities will not change due to participation in the remote work program.

Employees may not engage in activities while on the remote work program that would not be permitted at the regular worksite. Employees working remotely may take care of personal business during breaks and unpaid lunch periods as they would at the regular worksite. Remote work is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child or adult dependent care. Although an individual employee’s schedule may be modified to accommodate child or adult dependent care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands.

Eligible employees are required to read the remote work policy and technical guidelines and submit an agreement through the departmental approval process before proceeding to work remotely.

A supervisor or a department may deny, end, or modify a remote work agreement for any reason. Similarly, an employee working remotely may end or request to change a remote work agreement at any time. Employees may be removed from the program if they do not comply with the terms of their remote work agreement.

The program is intended to be cost neutral. The County is required to provide a dedicated lap top computer for employees approved for remote work. All other supplies needed to work remotely (desk, chair, cell phone, fax, copier, etc.) are the responsibility of the employee and the County assumes no responsibility for set-up or operating costs at an alternate worksite (telephone or internet services, etc.).

Each department has the sole discretion to provide equipment, software, or supplies, or allow employees to use their personal equipment, with the notable exception of computers. Departments providing equipment, software, or other supplies to employees working remotely must reasonably allocate those resources based on operational and workload needs. No additional funding or resources will be allocated to accommodate remote work activities.

All County rules regarding the use of computers and the internet apply while an employee is working remotely, regardless of whether the employee is using County-provided or personal equipment.

A. Public Accountability:

While operational approval of a remote work agreement resides with the specific Department Head or Elected Official, the Sarpy County Board of Commissioners will require an aggregate public accounting of all remote work being performed on behalf of Sarpy County.

County Clerk will provide the County Administrator a monthly report with the following statistical data:

- # of Total FTE's on the payroll
- Aggregate # of hours worked remotely
- # of employees that worked remotely the previous 30 days, broken down by department
- # of employees working remote on an FT basis (40 hours per week)
- # of overtime hours worked remotely, broken down by department

The County Administrator shall provide a copy of the monthly report to each of the County Commissioners.

III. Eligibility

Eligibility for working remotely is based on both the position and the employee. Not every job, or every employee, is well suited for the remote work program.

A. Position eligibility

When determining if a position is eligible for remote work, the Department Head or Elected Official shall consider the following:

- Position is independent in nature
- Position is primarily knowledge-based
- Position does not require the employee's immediate presence at the regular worksite to address unscheduled matters; and
- Position is not essential to the management of on-site workflow.

B. Employee Eligibility

When determining if an employee is eligible for remote work, the Department Head or Elected Official shall consider the following:

- Employee has demonstrated dependability and responsibility
- Employee has effective communication with supervisors, coworkers, and clients
- Employee has demonstrated motivation
- Employee has the ability to work independently
- Employee consistently demonstrates a high rate of productivity
- Employee has a high level of skill and knowledge of the job
- Employee can prioritize work effectively; and
- Employee has good organizational and time management skills

Employees who are not upholding County obligations, such as meeting performance or conduct expectations, are not eligible to participate in the remote work program. Employees under disciplinary action may become ineligible for participation.

IV. **Agreement Options**

Remote work agreements can be on a recurring or an occasional basis.

Recurring means an employee works away from the regular worksite on an established day or days, and on a recurring schedule.

Employees who work remotely on a recurring basis must be available to work at the regular worksite on designated days if needed.

If an employee is approved to work remotely on a full-time basis (40 hours per week) the department head shall notify human resources. That information will be provided to the County Administrator who will then notify the County Board.

Conversely, occasional requests by employees to change their regularly scheduled remote workdays should be reviewed by the supervisor. Employees must obtain prior authorization to change a regularly scheduled remote workday.

Occasional remote work means an employee works away from the office on an infrequent, one-time, or irregular basis. This option provides an ideal arrangement for employees who generally need to be in the office, but who sometimes have projects, assignments, or other circumstances that meet the eligibility criteria.

V. Performance Expectations

Each approved remote work assignment shall set firm goals, identify the required outcomes, and establish a timeline for specific milestones.

Many managers worry that remote employees will not work hard without supervision, although studies consistently show that remote employees are more productive than their office-based counterparts.

When there are productivity problems, it is most often due to unclear expectations between the manager and employee and not to employees intentionally slacking off. With the strategies outlined in this policy, managers can ensure that expectations will be met.

Managers should properly define what success looks like in the operational context of the specific assignment and make sure that both the manager and employee have a shared vision.

Managers should regularly check-in with remote staff, monitor progress, and ensure that they are moving toward their goals in a timely fashion. If clear direction has been given on the required outcomes, there is no need to make a personal judgment about whether someone is working hard. By investing time in the planning stage, it will pay off in productivity and provide transparency for the public.

VI. Work Hours

County work rules that are applicable at the regular worksite are also applicable while working remotely. Those include but are not limited to:

- Employees working remotely shall be available during scheduled work times and shall respond to supervisor requests promptly.
- Employees must account for and report time spent working remotely the same way they would at the regular worksite, or according to the terms of the remote work agreement.
- Employees may work overtime only when directed to do so and approved in advance by the supervisor.
- Employees must obtain approval to use vacation, sick, or other leave in the same manner as employees who do not work remotely.

VII. Worksite

Employees working remotely must designate a work area suitable for performing official business. Requirements for the designated work area will vary depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed and may be determined by the supervisor.

Employees working remotely must work in an environment that allows them to perform their duties safely and efficiently. Employees shall not invite third parties into their homes for purposes of conducting County business. Such meetings shall ordinarily take place at a County location.

Employees are covered by workers' compensation laws if injured while working remotely and in conjunction with their regular work duties. Employees who suffer a work-related injury or illness while working remotely must notify their supervisor and complete any required forms immediately. The County is not liable for damages to an employee's personal or real property while the employee is working at an alternate worksite. The employee shall hold the County harmless for any injuries sustained by visitors at their remote work location

Employees agree to electronic monitoring of work product and time by the employer.

VIII. Equipment and Supplies

An employee working remotely must identify the equipment, software, supplies, and support required to successfully work at an alternate location and must specify those items in the remote work application and agreement form. If a department does not provide the needed equipment, software, supplies, or support, and the employee does not have them, the employee will not be eligible to work remotely.

A. County Equipment

Equipment, software, or supplies provided by the County are for County business only.

A remote work employee does not obtain any rights to County equipment, software, or supplies provided in connection with working remotely. The employee must immediately return all County equipment, software, and supplies at the conclusion of the remote work arrangement or at the department's request.

A remote work employee must protect County equipment, software, and supplies from possible theft, loss, and damage. The remote work employee may be liable for replacement or repair of the equipment, software, or supplies in compliance with applicable laws on negligence or intentional conduct in the event of theft, loss, or damage.

Any equipment, software, files, and databases provided by the County shall remain the property of the County. An employee working remotely must adhere to all software copyright laws and may not make unauthorized copies of any County-owned software. Employees working remotely may not add hardware or software to County equipment without prior written approval.

Employees must contact their supervisors if equipment, connectivity, or other supply problems prevent them from working remotely.

Remote work employees must understand and agree that the County is entitled to, and may access, any personal equipment used by the employee in order to obtain County records including, but not limited to a personal computer, telephone, fax machine, monthly bills, and internet records.

IX. Security of Confidential Information

All files, records, papers, or other materials created while working remotely are County property. Remote work employees and their supervisors shall identify any confidential, private, or personal information and records to be accessed and ensure appropriate safeguards are used to protect them. A department may require employees working remotely to work in private locations when handling confidential or sensitive material.

Employees shall safeguard documents, equipment and other materials transported from Sarpy County to the remote worksite. Employees shall not store County records or information on their personal computer or device. All confidential information shall be printed on County equipment at the County worksite. Employees may not disclose confidential or private files, records, materials, or information, and may not allow access to County networks or databases to anyone who is not authorized to have access.

X. Public Records Law

The Nebraska Public Records Law regarding public information and public records apply to remote work employees. Public records include any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, or retained by the County regardless of physical form or characteristic. Public information means the contents of a public record. Upon receipt of an appropriate request, and subject to authorized exemptions, a remote work employee must permit inspection and examination of any public record or public information in the employee's custody, or any portion of a public record, within required time limits. This requirement exists regardless of where the public record is located.

XI. Procedures

Employees must complete the following steps before being allowed to work remotely:

1. Talk with the supervisor to determine eligibility
2. Read and acknowledge the Remote Work Program Policy
3. Complete the Remote Work Application and Agreement form as required and submit for approval to the Department Head or Elected Official.
4. Document remote work hours in the timekeeping system.

XII. Denial of Application

Remote work is not an entitlement, it is not an employee benefit; and it in no way changes the terms of employment.

The denial of an application or termination of the ability to work remotely is not grievable.